

THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

BY SAREJESS

**The continuing adventures of Samuel
Ferreira as he makes his way through
time and history in search of personal
redemption**

Second book of Samuel
CHAPTER ONE
New York 11th September 2001
His Satanic Majesty and the Angelic host

Albeon demon over Persia was in trouble, he knew it he had dallied over long with a matter of small importance. Now as he rushed to join his stannic majesty he knew that his master would be in a devil of a mood.

At the portals of Hell the hordes of demons and the Devil waited. Albeon appeared in there smoky midst. "Fool where have you been" roared the Devil his face a fearsome red glare.

"Apologies master I was busy with a matter that needed my urgent attention" Albeon lied. "You would make a mockery of me on this most important day!" stormed the Devil "No majesty I beg your pardon" said the demon.

"Enough it is time we were gone there are many who are to enter these accursed portals today and I do not want to keep them waiting" said the Devil. As he began to fade on his command the Albeon and the waiting hordes began to fade into the smoke, their mission to reap the unrepentant souls who were about to die and to show the world who was master.

The tower was already burning when the hordes of demons arrived, the Devil's first act of business was to head to the section on the side of the building which was burning. Here he began to command the smoke and fire to thin and thicken until displayed in the smoke and falling debris was the very image of the evil one.

From deep within the smoke his satanic majesty spoke "I command here" he said "Demons, I command you do my bidding go forth to every floor above the fires and posses those souls who are weak who despair, go forth posses them and make them long for death. Make them to cast themselves to the ground below that the harvest might begin" The smoke swirled, the wind threatened to blow away the face of the devil, he re-established his dominion over the smoke and

flames, his image restored for all the world to see a terrible witness to the power of evil.

In the streets below the people were fleeing the terror that reigned above, the dust swirled about soon those possessed who had given up their hope for despair began to fall or jump from the windows, the demons screaming in glee at each lost soul they took captive.

Somewhere in the midst of the building someone was praying now, here too the angels hovered above waiting to take the faithful home yet they did not approach. Their mission was to take the faithful without displaying the awesome might of their master.

His Satanic Majesty had his attention arrested for a moment by two souls who did not seem to belong either to him or the One above, in eternal struggle being reborn phoenix like from the ashes.

The portals of Hell now wide open to receive their victims, the souls of the lost, open wide that all who so wished could fall straight into hell. It seemed that Evil was winning the battle against good as more and more souls, their bodies destroyed, now entered hell a future of eternal torment awaiting them. Yet even at this time some who had served the One above and had died in the explosions were even now beginning to rise heavenward to the waiting hosts of Angels who watched but did not interfere. The Saints of Heaven above. Rising as they did so angered his satanic majesty that he order up from hell below more flames and heat to destroy the buildings faster less more repent and rise heavenward. To melt the strength from the building faster with in the buildings the fires raged to frenzy.

A soul who's faith in Allah was strong fought off the demons who were leading him to the portals of hell the soul began to rise steadily gaining speed "Albeon attend that soul he's mine"

roared the Devil. Hurriedly the form of Albeon appeared from the midst of the burning building his wings extended. Now he rose sweeping a vast cloud of smoke and dust after the soul which he caught in his mouth and drew back to the portal, the victim fighting all the while not yet realizing that his hope of paradise was in vain for he had served a dead god.

For a moment his satanic majesty contemplated the two souls who still fought below. Now as they separated he bethought himself to again an advantage and take one or both of them. Commanding a host he tore after one of them yet at this time the Angelic host from above dispatched warriors their swords drawn after him. "Touch not this man for it is not his time" commanded the angel Gabriel, a fearsome look on his face as he stood over the fallen man. "Is he not a soul who has fallen from the building above" enquired the Devil?

"This soul is reserved of the Lord now leave him be" replied the Angel the light of Gods Justice shining through his eyes. The Devil drew back, defeated in this one, returning once again to the side of the building. In a blink of an eye he once more made his presents felt in the smoke and debris

All around the hordes of hell began to gather, they knew their time for the great gathering of this days harvest now did fast approach. Slowly the first building began to disintegrate down, below the streets were filled with the wail of sirens as more emergency personnel arrived, hurrying to their deaths. Slowly, ever so slowly, the building began to fall its strength now completely gone. Within the falling mass the demonic hordes darted to and fro collecting a soul here passing over one there who was heaven bound. Now the demonic hordes screamed with delight as more and more unrepentant souls they did obtain. In the smoke and falling debris the image of many demons now was clearly visible to see, yet still the sons of man did not see for they were to caught up in this tragedy. It would be some days before those watching the images of the disaster would see within the mess the face of the Devil and those of his minions.

At the portals of hell the demons began to furiously torment the lost to move faster with instruments of unspeakable fear. They moved the lost sons of man to their eternal damnation. While high above the angelic host did wait collecting those souls which rose there way.

Now that the first building laid a vast burning ruin buried deep within the building, the last vestiges of vehicles which had rushed to the scene of the disaster forever, melted as so much scrap iron.

Now his satanic majesty turned his attention to the second building, here to he formed his face in the midst of falling debris smoke and flames his hellish countenance displayed for all the world to see and wonder at his might, for he of course is the God of this world, and it is his prerogative when he will display his power to his subjects.

The heat of the fires deep with in the building now began to build his majesty, no longer interested in taking his time he wanted the souls of the dammed and he wanted them quickly, for time is short before he to will be called to his final account before the judge of us all the Lord above.

Within the building now burning hotly, the Devil sensed the fear now growing as those trapped in the building began to realize there was no hope their hope dyeing in there breasts. They were now filled with despair some crying out “why, why, why I am to young to die.” All these cries he heard yet unmerciful as he was he delighted in their despair he relished it. It gave him a sense of power for which he longed “I command here” he repeated to himself knowing it to be a lie, for the Lord above would not have allowed him to command if he had not so ordained it.

From deep with in the building the spiritual forces began to notice a number of the sons of man praying, this was not good

his satanic majesty for he could hear them praying. These however were not praying for deliverance from the flames of this world but repenting of their sins and asking the Holy one to inhabit their hearts, for they prayed now to be delivered from the flames of the world beyond.

"No, no, NO" roared the devil summoning all his evil hordes he began to envelope the building bringing darkness to the face of the crumbling building, for he knew he was losing the battle yet the more he swirled about the building the more the sons of men within began to pray. Summoning up his last reserve of flames and heat from hell below to complete the destruction of the building "Hear me minions of hell attend me now make manifest your loyalty to me and destroy this building gather all that you can but make no mistake make sure that those children of Mankind know I am master here." Albeon rose from low on the debris filled street as the building slowly began to fall as the demons attacked it. He summoned all his power for this final display of fearsome awe rising from the dust of the falling building the image of Albeon was plain to see, his wings folded, a look of absolute satisfaction on his demonic face.

Now began the final gathering of the lost as the Angelic host drew near to reunite those few who had committed their lives to Christ, once more to their eternal rest and their Lord.

Now as the building began to gather momentum, once more the demonic hordes began to dart among the falling debris snatching a soul here another there. The voices of the demons and minions raised in evil joy as they gathered the harvest of lost souls. The clouds of dust and smoke raising to the heavens, the images of the demonic host now putting a final experience.

Now turning back to the portals of hell the evil hordes began to move, gathering the last of the lost souls, the portal beginning to close. His satanic majesty being the last to enter those accursed gates: turning once more he looked heavenward with a look of fearsome anger at the angelic host.

Angry beyond words at those who had escaped his grasp, angry at the power which the Angelic host held over him, angry that so many of the children of mankind had escaped his power. Then turning once again he entered as the gates of hell closed.

Now the angelic host descended and stood for some moments on the ruins of the towers, a vast mountain of rubble criss crossed with thousands upon thousands of pieces of metal which once made up part of the buildings. Now they stood among the rubble in the form of thousands of crosses, a miraculous testimony to the power of the Lord, who even in this tragedy bore out the witness of his crucifixion, a stark hope for all mankind.

Now the Angelic host and the souls of those who believed in him who were slain for their sins began to rise in a cloud of glory to the heavens, excitement at their first meeting with their Lord clearly showing on the faces of those who had been slain this day.

Joyful in expectation of hearing those words "enter into thy rest my faithful servant."

New York 11th September 2001

Samuel picked himself up of the asphalt. All around him was devastation. The towers over head were in flames, it had been some 25 minutes since the first plane had slammed into the World Trade center. Hurriedly he crossed the small distance which divided him from the place where he had been resurrected and the hotel. On entering the hotel the chaos which he had seen outside was duplicated on a smaller scale, he made his way through the lounge to the lifts. They were not working. Turning to the stair well he was confronted by guests hurrying down to escape the disaster that loomed, it had become apparent in the last few minutes that the drama that was unfolding outside would have world wide repercussions. He climbed the stairs against the flow of human traffic to the seventh floor, opened the door to his room he crossed quickly to where his suit case lay: he picked it up and left the room.

Down stairs again he wondered about paying the bill but there was no one behind the desk, so he left the key on the counter and left the building.

The dust which was swirling around caught in his chest visibility was at an all time low. He began walking in the direction in which most people were now running, a number of emergency vehicles were now on scene; a paramedic stopped him "Are you okay?" the man said "Yes" replied Samuel, wondering why he had been asked. " Geez mister you sure don't look okay" said the man. Samuel at that moment looked down at his clothing; for the first time he noticed that like most people he was coated with a thick layer of yellow dust but what the man was referring to was the fact that the clothes that Samuel was wearing were also covered in large amounts of blood. "Its not mine" said Samuel "I tried helping someone back there" said Samuel pointing towards the towers, now half a block away. "Okay Mister" said the paramedic with a grim smile on his face. Samuel walked on, he turned in the direction of the Hudson river and it took him a while to get there, when he reached the river he turned and looked across the wide bay towards the statue of Liberty. The sight that met his eyes was one of absolute horror the sky line was bathed in a plume of smoke several miles long. The statue Lady Liberty standing resolutely as the smoke drifted in her direction unaware she stood proclaiming liberty while the greatest disaster that the city had ever known was happening. Here the panic was less bad, quickly he found a cab and asked to be taken to the airport. "I don't know mister" said the taxi driver "The radio says all aircraft across the country have been grounded" in the typical accent of the Bronx. "Well then take me to a hotel, any hotel" he said. "Okay mister" said the taxi driver pulling away from the curb.

He needed time to think. One thing he was sure of was that William Longmont needed to be destroyed or he would continue to kill and destroy, it was his nature to kill and destroy. He had been at it for so long that Samuel knew that the man no longer had a soul, one could not see as much killing as Longmont had seen and not change either for the good or for the bad

CHAPTER TWO **HOTEL ROOM 912**

Now Samuel sat in the hotel room looking at the images that flashed across the TV screen, repeatedly CNN played the images of the jet liners flying into the World Trade Center. He shook his head, how could this have happened? He was battling to come to terms with it; he had seen evil in its many forms but this was one of the worst he had ever seen.

When he closed his eyes. He could still see the face of the copilot William Longmont, the same William Longmont who had appeared so board with the events of human history that he confronted. The same William Longmont who had struck the carpenter of Nazareth with a spear so long ago. What had possessed the man to take up the cause of the dammed he wondered? Reaching for the telephone he ordered up from room service. It seemed like ages since he had last eaten, now he was almost ravenous. He paced the floor while he waited for the food to arrive.

The latest reports coming in were that the bombing had been carried out by jihadi of a group called Ah quida lead by the charismatic Osama Bin Laden, an avowed enemy of the United States. Over and over the image of the face of William Longmont set in a maniacal grin flooded Samuel's mind; this was not the face of reason. No not even the face of a sane man. Samuel wondered what had overtaken this man who was once a staunch defender of the bill of rights.

As he ate Samuel began to think in terms of what he would have to do to stop William Longmont from perpetrating another attack on the world such as the one recently witnessed. If he went to the authorities with what he knew he would himself run the risk at best of been locked up and at worst been suspected and maybe even accused of been part of the plot. Better to keep this information to himself, but in the mean time where had Longmont been reborn. Was he any where in the United States or was he further away? Maybe he was at this very moment finding himself rising from the ashes so to speak in some far distant land, already his mind filled with plans to attack America. Samuel needed help and right

now the implications were just too vast for him to contemplate.

The thought struck him like a hammer blow; if William of Longmont had teamed up with the Muslim extremists he would be placing an unstoppable weapon in the hands of terrorists. Even now at this late hour of the night images of Kabul were being flashed across the TV screen, a fuel depot had been blown up. The Americans had yet to respond to this attack in some solid way, right now the president was giving a speech on the TV his voice choked with emotions. The camera flashed back to where the world trade center towers once stood, firefighters and rescue workers heading towards the wreckage. Some one in the downtown area was walking around handing out flyers asking if anybody had seen her husband as he worked in the world trade center. Maybe, just maybe he made it maybe he had been late for work; one could always hope.

The camera switched to another face, a survivor of the first tower to fall. Yes she had made it out, she had been on the lower floors working when the plane hit, she had immediately left the office it was as if the hand of God had warned her. "Thank God I did leave" she said, wiping a tear which had come unbidden to the corner of her eye. The plan that Samuel was working on called for ex-pats which he did not possess. He realized soon after he began that he would need to employ a number of highly skilled operatives in various fields.

The plan was both simple and complex at the same time. In its simple form it called for the long term imprisonment of William Longmont. That is where the simplicity of the plan ended, for to imprison the man Samuel would have to break his silence and confide in a number of men whose participation was paramount to the plan's success.

Shortly before the communications system had been shut down Samuel had e-mailed Chris Van Heerden a South African who had previously worked in the intelligence sector,

wholot the dawn of South Africa's new democracy had turned to religion and had founded his own charismatic church. The two men had struck up a friendship one day a few years earlier at a convention in one of Samuels hotels. At the end of the convention Bote as he was known had thanked Samuel for his hospitality and pressed a business card into his hand. "Sam you call me if you ever have a problem that needs solving." The problem by its nature would need some one like Bote who could appreciate the difficulties, thus Samuel had sent the message. The message was simple "Bote I need you in New York soonest Samuel"

Now all he had to do was wait. It would be the better part of the week before flights would once more be resumed, in the mean time Samuel had nothing to do but wait, and so he found himself moving through the streets looking at faces of people who were struggling to come to terms with loss of loved ones and the loss of innocents. He had seen it all before in his long life but never on the scale it had been visited on the city of New York. Now Samuel found himself looking into faces which were beginning to show strain and an awakening to the awful reality that maybe that loved one who one had seen off to work yesterday morning was not coming home. Some member's families gathered outside eateries handing out flyers asking if any one had seen the loved one whose face was displayed on the flyer. Most times Samuel took the flyer without saying any thing; it was just too awful for him to be the one to tell the person all hope was lost. Of course President Bush and mayor Giuliani had been on TV making speeches giving America hope, telling the public America was not beaten, America could rise above this most grievous attack.

Returning to his hotel room Samuel felt drained, the sorrow of the people on the streets became too much for him. He took another shower trying to wash away the horrible dust from the fall of the towers which seemed to creep into every exposed pour of the skin, it was his third shower since the towers had fallen. Another thing which made it seem so unreal was the vast amount of paper which was finding its way across the city from the fall of the Towers. People every where were finding scraps of paper which had come from some desk or filing

cabinet in the Towers. One day these might be important bits of evidence to speak of the horror that had occurred on that day, now they served only as bleak reminders of the tragedy

What was even more frightening, some local radio talk show host had come across words written by the 16th century fortune teller Nostradamus

"In the year of the new century and nine months,
From the sky will come a great King of Terror...
The sky will burn at forty-five degrees.
Fire approaches the great new city..."

"In the city of York there will be a great collapse,
two twin brothers torn apart by chaos
while the fortress falls the great leader will succumb
third big war will begin when the big city is burning"

Now people were saying if the event had been predicted why had nothing been done to stop it. People were beginning to ask questions which was going to make government sweat.

It had been announced that the following day the stock exchange on Walls street would be reopened.

Samuels dream

Samuel was a sleep. He had been asleep for about two hours when his eyelids flickered rapidly as they do when one is

dreaming. "Wake up Samuel Ben Ezra" said the voice. Samuel sat up; he was surprised to see that he had fallen asleep on a New York park bench he could have sworn he had gone to bed in his hotel room. An eight foot being stood before him with folded wings glowing with a light stronger than the noon day sun, a wondrous being, a creator sent from heaven bathed in a powerful glow which was of tremendous beauty

"Take, eat" said the being handing Samuel a scroll "Who, who, what are you" asked the surprised Samuel "I am Gabriel arch angel I who stand in the presents of the Almighty."

"What do you want with me I am but a humble innkeeper" said Samuel he feared the moment of ultimate death had approached and he was not ready. He still wanted to stop William Longmont. "Fear not Samuel Ben Ezra, now is not yet your appointed time you have work to do" said the angle radiating a wondrous light about the park.

"But who sent you and what for" asked Samuel growing bold his fear subsiding "He whom you rejected has sent me to give you a gift, here, take eat and be satisfied" said the angle who seemed to be growing impatient with the man Samuel.

"What is it that you would give me" asked Samuel? "It is a scroll filled with the wisdom to face the task for which you have been chosen" said the angle. "I have been chosen" said Samuel in bewilderment? "Yes from before the time of foundations of the earth were laid, before the pillars upon which the universe rests, you were chosen for this day and this task."

"But for so many years, so many life times I have wondered the earth like one lost now you tell me it was preordained. Why?"

"Yours is not to question the Almighty" said the angle sternly "Now take the scroll and eat for it will give you wisdom to deal with the task which lays ahead of you." Taking the scroll Samuel put it to his lips and bit into it expecting it to be hard but to his surprise it was like eating a bread roll filled with

healthy filling honey. He ate and as he ate the angle watched smiling

When he had eaten Samuel looked up into the face of the angle and asked Gabriel “tell me what is heaven like? Is my wife Ratsula there? “

“Enough I am not permitted to answer these questions for it is not yet your time to make peace with him whom you rejected, now go and do what the Lord bids you do, you will know when you are operating in His will” so saying the angle began to fade from view Samuel felt a great weariness coming upon him he lay down on the bench once more and fell asleep.

Samuel awoke in the hotel room; it was cool in the room the air conditioning was turned all the way up. For a moment Samuel sat stunned had that incident in the park all been a dream? Was he going nuts? He thought lifting his hand to his mouth he smelt it, the smell of honey was strong upon it. He sniffed his cloths and found that they smelt of fresh summer grass.

301 AD India

Samuel sat on the beach where the waves gently washed ashore. The young boy sat near by, the child had been assigned to look after Samuel until he was fully recovered and the young boy took his duty seriously. Parboo who was five had first thought the man to be dead when the boat had come ashore a few weeks ago, now was Samuel recovering his strength.

If it had not been for the ministrations of the boy’s father, a Hindu priest, it was quite likely that Samuel would have died. The last few days in the open boat with the dying and the corpse of the dead around him was not a memory which Samuel wished to be reminded of, but at times it came unbid into his mind. He had tried to forget but it would be a long time before the memory and the sunburn vanished. The blistered lips had all but healed now and he was able to savor the taste of the food, which the child's mother had prepared. The curry, which the villages ate on a daily basis, was very strong and at first it had burnt Samuel's palette very much. However he had grown a custom to the tumeric spice which

added a bit of color to the food; the flavor of garlic and ginger added to the already spicy dish.

The villagers who had nursed Samuel back to health were of the poorest and of the lowest caste in India untouchables but Samuel had come to realize that. Although they were deemed unclean and of a low caste these people were the salt of the earth, for they showed a kindness which he had never experienced in all his travels.

Parboo's father Raj was a man apart for he had elected to leave his caste and live among the people, who the rest of India rejected. The villagers earned a living by fishing and growing various fruits and vegetables. These they exchanged for things they needed.

The villagers did not travel much and so foreigners were an oddity to them, thus Samuel found himself the center of attraction in the village. For they would look on wherever he appeared looking in surprise and wonder at his fair complexion; never before had they seen some one like him and to satisfy their curiosity he made himself available to them. At first there had been the language barrier to overcome for he did not understand the Hindi Indian that they spoke, how ever there was in the village a old and wise man that had once traveled to the Emperor of the sun. He could speak a little Chinese and with the little he knew and Samuel's thirst to learn they had soon become good friends, talking late into the night. Thus Samuel began to learn Hindi and found to his joy that the language had a certain flow; the voice of a man speaking sounded to his ear like some one singing as the words flowed.

Now that he was able to communicate a little better he found great joy in asking his little companion about the history of the village. The village was located on the far end of a peninsula with a vast mangrove swamp on the landward side. Here through many thousands of years these villages had found protection from invaders from the heartland. For been cut off from the rest of India they had to transport all goods and peoples about fifty miles up the coast to another village, which did have some roads which they used to reach the large cities in the hinterland of India. The first people to settle in the village many hundreds of years earlier had decided that the

best way to protect themselves was to allow the mangrove to grow, cutting them off from the rest of the country, there after the large open boats had become the only mode of transport. It was by accident that Raj the son of a high caste noble family had happened one day upon the daughter of one of the fishermen falling instantly in love with the young girl. He had abandoned a promising career in the court of nobles much to the anger of his father, who was a high official of the Indian City State of that time; Raj had asked the fisherman for the hand of his daughter in marriage. The fisherman had almost fallen off his boat when he heard the proposal and the amount of the dowry the young man offered him for his daughter's hand. They had had returned to the village where an elaborate wedding had taken place; this particular wedding would turn out to be the talk of the village for many years to come, Raj had taken up the work of Hindu priest. It was not uncommon for the families to marry young in those years for Raj was seventeen and Mordla his wife was at the tender age of thirteen and a half pregnant with their first child. When Parboo's mother had been taken in to the home of the mid wife it was assumed that it would be a difficult birth due to her small stature but Parboo had surprised them all by coming into the world with out much fuss. Fearing that this new addition would not live long for he did not wail loudly when born, his grandmother, the fisherman's wife, had taken to rubbing him with lineaments and wrapping him in bandages which did in fact in the long run help the boy to grow up strong and healthy

CHAPTER THREE
The conversion of Chris Van Heerden

Chris Van Heerden scowled. It had been a week since the attack on the World Trade Center. The new rules concerning air travel, which had been beefed up since the attack, were making delays inevitable and he did not like delays. He was in a hurry to meet with Samuel Ferreira who had sent him an e mail shortly after the attack on the WTC, which had sounded intriguing. The cryptic message Come as soon as you can had not meant much in itself; it was however the line underneath this one which had attracted Van Heerden's attention

Chris Van Heerden was the pastor of the Abundant Vineyard Church South Africa. Previously he had worked for the intelligence service of the South African Army during the dark days of Apartheid. It was during that time that he had first come to know Samuel Ferreira as the congenial host of the small south coast hotel. Having been on leave for a few weeks Chris had taken his family down to the coast and booked into the hotel which, although situated in a quite little town, had one of the best buffet tables in the country. Samuel's little hotel was world renowned for the level of service he provided his guest. This little hotel had been the head office of Samuel's growing empire of hotels from her Samuel kept a finger on the activates of all the other hotels he owned. As Samuel liked to say, the little hotel helped him to keep his hand in the practical side of the business. During the two weeks Chris Van Heerden had spent at the coast he had been impressed with the attention to detail which Samuel paid to all his guests requirements and as a result just before he left Chris had occasion to tell Samuel privately that if he ever needed a favor then he could call on him.

After his return to the Transvaal Chris, who happened to be very unhappy with his life in general and specifically his career in the army, for a few more months after the coastal holiday he happened to come in to his office one morning to find his sectary Jane Botha speaking on the phone to a friend. "Yes this weekend" She said. "Oh we are all going a big church service and there will be a live band there we are expecting thousands of people to be there to pray for the country" "Okay I will talk to you later" she said replacing the

hand set. "Morning Major" she said. "Morning Jane so I gather you have big plans this weekend" he said.

"Oh yes, a big church gathering at the stadium in town. You are invited by the way there is going to be a live band, we will be praying for revival and for the country." "I see. Well I don't know, I will have to ask my wife" said Chris.

Oh getting home that Friday evening Chris had mentioned it to his wife Lena, who had agreed to go to the gathering the following Sunday. Thus it had come about that Chris Van Heerden had attended the big church meeting

When they arrived at the stadium they battled to find parking and Chris was in a foul mood. When he and Lena eventually found seating in the stadium which seated a hundred thousand for big sports gatherings, there were about forty five thousand seats taken, the sound of the Christian band playing drifted across the vast arena. People around them were singing along raising their arms and shouting out things like Bless You Jesus and praise God. Chris and Lena felt decidedly uncomfortable as they seemed to be the only people in the arena who were not getting into the spirit of things.

What was even more amazing to Chris was the fact that there seemed to be an equal number of people of mixed race present sitting and sharing with the white folks. Coming from a very strict Calvinistic background and a life long member of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa, this was some thing which he had not seen before. After about an hour of praise and worship most of the people settled down to listen to the sermon. Chris by now very hot and bothered, thought to himself these Charismatic, the first thing they will want to do will be the offering they just after money. However when the slightly build young band leader set aside his guitar and took up the microphone he began to pray
"Lord I want you to open the eyes of those who are here today
To help them find what they really need.
Lord I would ask that you open their hearts to receive the message that they not leave here empty. I ask this in Jesus name. amen."

This simple prayer stunned Chris because he thought he was about to hear how they needed money for this cause, but now as he sat the podium was taken by the speaker for the evening

The man who everybody referred to as Pastor Ron began to speak; he spoke from the heart, retelling the audience the story of his life. How as a young man he had grown up in a poor neighborhood, how as a child he had become involved in crime as a runner for a criminal gang in the inner city of Johannesburg. How at seventeen he had done his compulsory national service in the army, he had become involved in drugs the ever deepening hole of sin that was swallowing his young life. He at eighteen had almost killed a man and been sent to a correctional facility here. Life had been hard and for the first time he had been confronted by the fact that his life was a mess and that sooner or later he would end up been killed. Then the thought had struck him, what then???

Chris sat listening to all of this, wondering waiting for the punch line. He had to admit that the speaker was telling an enthralling tale Chris wanted to hear how it ended.

Pastor Ron continued his story telling how he had been confronted by the fact that he was lost in his own way, he now began to seek to save himself but was hampered by no knowledge of the Bible. The first time he had picked up the Bible had been one night in his cell, and it had not been for reading, he had torn a page from the bible and rolled a cigarette there being no other paper of fine quality available. Later as his conscience began to worry him he sort out the prison chaplain and begged the man to help him. After going over various scriptures and asking some very pertinent questions the prison chaplain had began telling Ron how he might be saved. He had grasped at every word he said, like a drowning man grasps at a rope thrown to him in the deep waters on a dark night.

There in a small office in Pretoria central prison Pastor Ron had found his salvation on a hot winter afternoon. Pastor Ron then invited those present to come to Jesus and leave their burdens at his feet for he Jesus was the only one able to lift the burden of sin.

Chris, strangely moved and warmed by the words, walked forward to the base of the podium with many others when asked to do so. Here Pastor Ron led them in the sinner's prayer. And counselors began moving among them. Chris stood with his eyes looking heavenward, tears rolling down his face as the burden of sin under which he had lived for many years was lifted from his shoulders...

Chris

Arriving home Chris put his bunch of keys down on the hall table and went into the lounge. The drive home had been filled with a stony silence. Lena had grown up in a very strict Calvinistic home and she did not understand the change that had overtaken her husband. She could not understand the strange mood he was in; she had lived with him for twenty years and seen him many different moods. His work, she knew, was very stressful and she had always taken this into account. He was a good provider, the children were well taken care of financially and there was a hefty insurance policy on Chris's life. If anything should happen to him she could live out her days very, very comfortably, not having to worry about money. But this mood that he was in was very different he seemed to be contemplating some thing of a deep nature. She had of course been at the service at the stadium and had listened to the pastor talk about his life. Yes it was an interesting story but she had remained unmoved by it, she had found it very strange that Chris who was normally the most skeptical of people had been taken in by what the man said. Walking to the car Chris's step had been light; he seemed like the young soldier she had married had returned after many years absent. She had remarked on it and this had caused an argument which had resulted in the frosty silence that been their companion on the ride home.

Chris walked over to the drinks table and poured himself a glass of single malt whiskey, specially imported from Canada. Of course he could have drunk the local whiskey but he was honest about the fact that he was a bit of a purist and a snob. He lifted the drink to his lips and took a mouthful, the sour taste which he always enjoyed filled his mouth and he

swallowed. The taste was the same as always but it did not give him the satisfaction he always felt after a mouth full of the amber liquid.

He felt almost guilty for some reason. He knew things had changed as he stood in the open arena of the rugby stadium but he had not realized just how much, he took another mouthful thoughtfully he picked up a manila folder and turned the pages idly. He swallowed hard the liquid burning his throat, the taste of the whiskey was bad he could not believe it could have turned so suddenly. He smelt the whisky bottle and almost reched "this bottle has gone bad" he said to himself. Quickly he opened a bottle of the local whisky he always kept for visitors and poured himself a glass, taking a sip he gagged. "It was not the drink that had changed" he realized in a moment of epiphany it was him. "God must be telling me some thing" he said as he threw the drink down the drain.

He walked through to his study, he still had some work to attend to for the following week. He sat down at his desk, he pulled out a file and began to read the contents. In the background he could hear Lena making coffee in the kitchen; she was banging things he knew she was angry, the sounds coming from the kitchen told him this much.

He had a hard time concentrating on the file in front of him he had an overwhelming desire to go and make things right with Lena, but he knew from past experience that it would be several hours before she calmed down enough to accept his apology. After all you did not stay married for twenty years and not come to know how your partners mind worked.

He stood up and walked threw to the kitchen, the smell of freshly baked muffins filled the air Lena always baked when she was angry or cooked when she was worried.

"Lena can we talk about it he asked?" "Talk, talk all you want" she said angrily, banging a dish down on the counter top. "Lena don't be like that" he said

"Bote you must always have things your own way and now you go and get involved with those Happy Clappys. I blame it on your sectary she is always influencing you to go to her church. Heaven knows why we already have a perfectly good one why upset the apple cart now Chris, tell me" she said

"Lena I did not say any thing about leaving our church I don't really know what to do" Chris said a little bit confused "I really believe in what the pastor said, I believe in a personal relationship with Christ. Come on Lena, when have you ever heard a preacher from our church talk like that, all we have is the ten commandments and more rules."

"Be that as it may Chris we were married in the Dutch Reformed church and we will die in the Dutch Reformed church" said Lena looking very stern. "Now hold on Lena I never said any thing about leaving the church, what I said was there is some thing to be said for a personal relationship."

Lena looked at him for several seconds as if she was unable to believe what he had just said then slowly she put down a dish cloth and said "Do you hear what you are saying? I have never in all the time we have been married questioned your judgment but now you seem to have taken leave of your senses" "I know, this is strange for me too" said Chris "But I have got to believe in it. I cannot go back to the old way, I feel like a burden has been lifted from my shoulders and I can once more look the world in the eye and say I am a man" he said

"I am very glad for you Chris but where does that leave us" she said asked pointedly? "How do you mean he asked?" "We seem to have come to a place where you stand on one side of a bridge and I on the other and neither of us wants to cross over to the other side"

"Lena, sweet Lena I think we need to speak to a church elder and get some clarity on this. We cannot go on like this, I see

the world in a new and wondrous light, I feel like the sins that have bound me since childhood have been taken from me and I must tell you I don't want to sin any more. Well not if I can help it" he said

"I will phone the domanie in the morning and arrange an appointment. I am glad you have seen the light. I knew you would see the reason in my argument in the end" she said. "Lena I don't want to argue with you lets go to bed and we can talk more tomorrow." he said

The following morning when Chris walked through the door Jane Botha stopped what she was doing and looked up "Good morning Major did you have a good week end?" she asked. "Morning Jane yes I did as a matter of fact and how was yours?" he enquired. "Simple the best blessed weekend ever I went to hear Pastor Ron last night. Man what a message what power." she said. "Yes it was some thing quite different" he admitted. "Oh did you go, did you like it?" she asked "Yes I did I listened with great interest. At first I thought it was just another one of those money making ministries but I found it was some thing much better then that."

"I am so glad you liked it." She said "Jane, some thing happened while I was listening and I do not know how to explain it" he said taking a seat at his desk. "Yes" said Jane with a question mark in her voice almost as if she knew what was coming next. "Well, at the end of the service I went forward and gave my heart to the Lord" Chris said. "Praise God!" Jane shouted as she jumped up, knocking her chair over and sending a pile of files fluttering to the floor.

Chris was used to his exuberant sectary saying strange things but even for him this was too much; he blushed as she flung her arms around him and gave him a bear hug. "Jane really if you carry on like this people will say some thing and that could be bad for both of us" he said. "Oh Major you are so old fashioned, of course it the best news ever and I do not care

what people say, the Bible tells us to be witnesses and not to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ” she said.

Later in the morning Chris phoned home. The phone rang for about half a minute and then was picked up by the answering machine. Chris replaced the receiver and tried to get back to work; his work in the intelligence wing of the army was very boring some days. Most days he was stuck in the office going over reports and double checking reports for anomalies before they were submitted to a committee who advised the general of any thing he needed to know. Today Chris could not keep his mind on his work, he kept on replaying in his mind the events of the previous evening and the music that Jane was playing on her little tape recorder was not helping much. Christian songs over and over and over again on several occasions through out the morning he had caught himself humming along with the songs.

The phone rang he picked it up “Van Heerden” he said “Hello Chris” he heard Lena say the anger of the previous evening no longer in her voice “Hello darling how are you this morning” he asked? “I am fine. More to the point how are you today I missed you at breakfast” she said half in jest. “You know the early bird catches the worm “he said.

“I have made an appointment with the dominies sectary for four o’clock this afternoon”
She said. “You know I had quite forgot about that” he said.
“Well four o’clock it is then” he smiled as pictured Lena with her green housecoat on, a duster in her hand holding the receiver in one hand as she toyed with an ornament which did not really need a dusting. She was a wonderful housekeeper and no speck of dust was safe from her.

He replaced the receiver and began to follow the line of typed text in front of him. He really was not enjoying work today, it was almost as if he had forgotten some thing important. After half an hour he stood up and walked to the window; looking out he saw a group of soldiers being marched across the parade ground by a smartly turned out corporal. Maybe I

should get my hand back on the parade ground drills he thought to himself. Leaving the office he walked out into the sunny street in front of the office. He began walking in the direction of the national service mess hall but when he had got half way there he suddenly changed his mind and decided to take a walk in the officers rose garden.

On entering the rose garden he was relieved to find that he was the only occupant of the gardens. He began to walk slowly between the roses stopping now and again to smell them; seating himself on one of the benches under an ancient oak tree he began to go through his mental check list.

He was half way down the list when he suddenly realized what he had been missing the whole day; every morning when he rose as a rule he would pray. Before it had never meant much it was just a formula but now he suddenly realized that he had missed speaking to the Lord this morning and that had left him with a decidedly uncomfortable feeling. Right there he got down on his knees and began to pray, the words he prayed now seemed to be alive and sprung to his lips as if he was anxious to get them out that the Lord might hear them.

Lena

"I will be gone to New York" said Chris, Lena looked up from the study notes she was reading from her sermon notes. "Chris is that wise?" she asked the world was still reeling under the aftershock of the attacks on the WTC. "Will you even be able to get a flight to America" she asked. "I don't know but Samuel Ferreira has sent me an e mail he needs me I promised" he said. "Yes you did" she said "and you must keep you promises.:"

Her conversion to Christ had come about six weeks after that of her husband who had gone with her to listen to what the Dominie would say on the Monday following her conversion. They had both come away from that meeting with different views and expectations. Chris had been more considerate after his conversion he had got rid of all the liquor in the house and stopped smoking; she had been glad that he had stopped

smoking because Chris had a terrible smoker's cough which had gone away after he stopped. The weeks before her conversion had been very strange for her, Chris had taken to reading the Bible and had absolutely refused to watch anything on the TV other than the news and some times the sport.

He had continued to attend the local church to which they both had strong ties on Sunday morning but on Sunday evenings he would go off to the stadium where Pastor Ron Sterley was preaching. Some times Lena would go with just to keep an eye on her husband hoping he would not do some thing which she considered silly or embarrassing; after all if he had lost his sense of dignity then she would make sure that she was there to limit the damage, or so she thought to herself..

In the ensuing weeks she began to go over in her mind her views on religion and the church. She had always been a faithful member of the church in which she had been born, though at times it was hard because the subjects that the dominie spoke on seemed so difficult to understand. Deep theological discussions on the law and the prophets confused her, it was enough for her that she had studied and passed the catechism classes as a teenager before being admitted into the church and being allowed to take communion. Some times she found the subject matter very boring, but she had been convinced that if her husband understood that would be enough and thus she believed that she was assured a place in heaven as one of the righteous, having studied the set rules and passed the exams set by the church as a teenager. In every other respect she was like millions of other Afrikaner women who belonged to the state favored church.

However Chris's fascination with the Pentecostal church had brought certain questions to her mind that troubled her. One evening as she was preparing for the Stadium meeting Chris called out from the lounge "Are you ready love we are going to be late" "Who is this Jesus who is disrupting my life" she thought as she slapped her hair brush down angrily on the dresser "He was not the Jesus who she served in the Dutch Reformed church, that Jesus was distant. He did not evolve

himself in her daily life but the Jesus who Chris now served was evolved in every way with ones daily life.”

The truth of the matter was that this new found zeal of Chris's had forced her to confront issues which she had long put off; in fact the last time she had faced these issues was as a teenager. She believed that all men were intrinsically good at heart and as such the Lord would let them into heaven Hell was for bad people like Hitler and others like him but most people if they partook in church activities and gave to charities, well that was good works they were bound for heaven. She was an active member of the church baking team, she had baked hundreds of cakes in her time to help raise funds for the new roof the church had so badly needed. Surely that counted for some thing in God's big book she reasoned. Yet she still felt empty inside a hollowness when she sang the Hymns in Church. It was lovely the solemn traditional her family, like so many others, had been doing the same service for generations. It had to mean some thing to find out that your family, your beloved grand parents had been wrong in their form of worship of God that beloved old great, great grand mother Lizbet had been wrong in her faithful beliefs. She who had been on the great trek of 1838 who's bible she now owned had been wrong it was just to much to handle.

Yet Lena was coming to realize that maybe this might be the case, and it made her very despondent. On the sixth Sunday after the conversion with her husband at breakfast Chris asked her if she would like to go with him that night. There was a special speaker who was going to address the ladies at the meeting. Petra Sterely, Pastor Ron's wife, had a ministry all of her own, some thing which was new to both of them. Woman in the Dutch Reformed Church, a woman's place was in the home supporting her husband making sure his every desire and need was met. Well that was the traditional view and many tannies (aunties) would agree with it.

The meeting was quite a large one with most of the people there been women, but there were also a fair number of men present. As usual there was the singing of praise and worship

songs before the meeting got started. Eventually when things did get started Pastor Ron introduced his wife Petra and said "We have all previously been blessed by this unique ministry of Petra's and I count it a privilege to be her husband." This brought cheers and hand clapping from the audience.

When Petra Sterley started talking she immediately struck a chord within Lena's heart. She spoke of her teenage years as a young girl going through all the changes that young woman go through, she spoke of the fact that she was brought up in a very strict Calvinistic home, attended church every Sunday, listened to the preacher thunder from the pulpit that sinners were going to hell and one had better watch out. One had to attend church and do ones duty thundered the preacher. This had put the fear of God into the young Petra who, although she was not a naughty girl, did have moments of rebellion against her strict upbringing. There was not much visible love in her fathers home; children were not picked up and cuddled, neither were they hugged when they grew older. They were expected to do well in school and be the model of decorum.

Lena listened as the woman spoke; it seemed to her as if she was listening to another person describing her life as a teenager. Petra moved on to speak of how she had later rebelled and gone out and got a job as a shop assistant, something her father was very much opposed to, as young daughters of wealthy Afrikaans families did not work. They were supposed to stay home and wait until a suitable young man came along and proposed marriage.

It was during Petra's second year as a shop assistant at a large clothing store when one of her fellow workers invited her to attend a weekend retreat. It was then that she first came in contact with the church to which her father was fervently opposed; those Pentecostals they just have no dignity" she had once heard him say, and so it was with a large amount of curiosity and fear that she attended the camp.

On the first evening the young people had gathered round a camp fire to sing songs and tell stories. A young man sitting

nearby she noticed had a beautiful voice. As the evening grew colder he offered her and the friend who had invited her a blanket to share; the sparkle in his eyes showed an inner beauty which she found hard to resist.

The next day after morning pray and reflection they met once more at the breakfast table and the young man introduced himself. He was Ronald Sterley. He had recently been released from jail and was doing his best to be reintegrated into society. He had a job as a motor mechanic and paid much attention to his work; he kept on speaking of been saved and this she found curious no one in her families circle ever spoke like that. Eventually she asked him what he meant by this strange term he began to explain that every body was a sinner and needed to be saved. She agreed that yes every body had sins it was human nature but she said she was trying to live a good life.

“Then you will agree that one has to be saved from going to hell” he had said. “Yes I think you might be right about that.” she said. “Well Jesus can save you” he continued.

Petra continued explaining how she had come to Christ. How many of her ideas and those which had been drummed into her as a young child were wrong or inaccurate. Eventually after much counseling she had prayed that Christ enter her heart and save her.

Petra and Ron had been married a year later her parents did not attend the wedding; they were very angry with her and had cut her off. Petra spoke of her life as a wife and a young mother, how hard it had been at first when Ron had entered the ministry and how her only solace some times was in prayer which the Lord always seemed to answer. She spoke of miracles which happened in her daily life, in themselves they seemed like coincidence but one knew the Lord was at work.

At the end of the evening Petra extended an invitation for all those who would like to know Christ on a personal level to

stay behind and speak with her. As the crowds moved out of the stadium, Chris was way laid by a new found friend which gave Lena the opportunity to linger. She found herself facing Petra at close quarters and so they began to speak after a while Lena asked if it was possible for Petra to pray for her that she to might learn to know Christ on a personal level. Petra was happy to oblige.

The two women knelt in one of the row of seats in the stadium and began to pray when the prayer was completed Lena rose from her knees a new person

CHAPTER FOUR
The New York meeting

Samuel had met Chris at the airport. They shook hands and took a cab to the hotel in which Samuel was staying, there was a spare bed in the room which Chris could use. One thing Chris noticed was the alert look on the faces around him; everybody seemed to be looking deeper examining every thing as if seeing for the first time the world around them, a new world. The attacks on the World Trade Center had changed everybody's perception, nothing was taken at face value any more, People were asking a lot more questions listening more intently. Even the bellhop seemed to be watching for signs of terror as he took them up to room 912.

When Samuel had tipped the bellhop he turned to Chris and said "I guess you will want to sleep a bit before we get started?" "I am alright I am very curious to know how I can help?" said Chris. "I would advise that you sleep first this could take a while and I don't want you making any decisions with a tired mind" said Samuel.

"Alright if you insist but I would like to take a shower now it has been a long flight and I feel that I need to shower before I crawl between the sheets" said Chris. "Of course there are towels, robe and slippers let me order you up some sandwiches and coffee" said Samuel. "I would prefer a nice strong pot of English tea, I find it helps me to sleep better" said. Chris.

Chris woke at about 1 pm, Samuel in the mean time had been busy arranging his thoughts. Because Chris no longer smoked Samuel had gone down stairs and sat in the hotel lobby, he had been making notes for the whole week since he had sent the e mail which had brought Chris to New York. In the last two days he had begun typing these notes up on a laptop computer he had bought. Now as he sat smoking camel cigarettes and drinking coffee he went over these notes once more; if any one had chanced to look over his shoulder and ask him what he

was doing he would have replied that he was doing research for a novel.

At twelve forty five he had returned to the room and ordered more coffee and another pot of English tea for his South African friend. When Chris had finished drinking his second cup of tea Samuel said "I suppose there is no time like the present to start this, but I want you to understand that what I am about to tell you is to be held in the strictest confidence and it is true to the best of my knowledge."

"I guess that I can do said I do, however hope that I am able to be able to help you as you know I have been out of the military for some time now so I am not on top of the latest intelligence Intel" Chris said.

"No Chris it has nothing to do with current events just yet we will get to that later" said Samuel. Chris sat back in the chair and waited for Samuel to begin. "Now I am sure you might have heard of the movie the Highlander" said Samuel. Born in the 15th century fated to live forever until some one cuts off his head" "Yes" replied Chris "are you about to tell me it is true." he said with a look of surprise on his face. "No I have a far strange story to tell you, one which I fear you might believe implicitly or you might reject and call me a mad man but never the less it is true."

"My Name is Samuel Ben Ezra. I was born in the hill country of Judea in the reign of Herod the great in the year 41 BC. I was the son of an innkeeper of the city of Bethlehem I was a good Jew religiously following the laws of Moses and the Prophets I had but one fault which in time was lead to my downfall; I was greedy and hard of heart. On a certain day in the reign of Caesar Augustus when the whole Roman world was under census I chanced to answer the door of the inn which I had by that time come to own. There before me stood a man with a pregnant wife seeking a room for the night. I in my greed and arrogance put them up in the stable and charged them for it. My handling of the situation was so bad that the

Lord God cursed me as his instrument; he used the pregnant woman who uttered the words which haunt me to this day word so terrible I fear to repeat them. I was told I would wander the earth been the servant of men never finding release from this life until I found my salvation..” Samuel stopped speaking for a moment to allow this to sink in to the South Africans mind.

"Sam, I have heard before of the legend of the wandering Jew but I never thought it was possible" said Chris, as he stood in awe of what he had just heard. As a Christian he knew what he had just heard was true, however the enormity of what he had just heard was overwhelming and it would take a few minutes before his mind could adjust to it. He realized there were many implications to what his friend Samuel had just said and this he would need to meditate on. For the next few minutes the two men sat discussing some minor points on the events so far related to what Samuel had just told him what was it like growing up in Judea at that time under the rule of Herod; the great clearing up a few historical misconceptions which Chris had in his mind.

Samuel began talking again he spoke of the many life times he had lived searching for the answer to his dilemma. He spoke of Egypt in a time long past, he spoke of the glories of Rome, he spoke of his escape from the destruction of Jerusalem on a fateful night in the first century AD, he told his friend of his travels in China in the time of the emperor Wu; "Never had China been so prosperous" he said. He told of a time on the coast of India living on the edge of a vast mangrove forest. These things took time in the telling, so it was already dark when he stopped talking; he had yet he had not yet come to the important part of his story. They took a break and went down to dinner in the restaurant.

Returning after dinner they took their seats over looking the city, the sounds of the streets below drifting up. Chris turned on the television the CNN news reader was talking about the possibility of the USA going to war with Afghanistan, "The implications of the war on terror are enormous" the man on

the television was saying. The two men watched the news broadcast the area around the World Trade Center, it had not been cleared and the only people been allowed in were the clean up crews. Samuel crossed the room and turned the TV off.

Turning to Chris he said "shall we continue?" "Yes I would like to hear more this, is a lot to take in but I am sure the sooner we get through it the better it will be for us" the South African said.

Samuel took up his story once more. He told of been burned at the stake in the early sixteenth century, he told how this had haunted him for; years after he was scared of fire. How ever the next part of his story dealt with his first meeting with William of Longmont in a Cornish fishing village round about the year 1534. He spoke of meeting this man who claimed to be the son of a German chieftain who had served in the Roman legion, he told Chris of the events that had lead to him been cursed in a fashion similar to those in which Samuel himself had been cursed. Since the days at Jerusalem William of Longmont claimed that he had wandered the earth fighting in many wars being killed and being reborn to fight in new wars. Through out the centuries Samuel would meet this strange man William of Longmont. At times they would meet on opposite sides of battlefields, at other times William would pop up like in 1901 when he had showed up at the hotel Samuel had been running in Boston. That year, by an amazing coincidence they had gone into one of those new photographic studios which were spring up all over the nation and had their photo taken. This was as it turned out fortunate as it was the only known image of William Longmont in existence, a copy of which Samuel now handed to Chris to study. Samuel ordered up some more coffee and more sandwiches as it was now approaching midnight for both of them. It was going to be a very long night.

After the coffee and food had arrived Samuel began to tell of the recent events in New York. He spoke of the meeting in the World Trade Center which he had attended, he told of the approach of the aircraft, of the final moments before the plane had flown into the side of the building. He spoke of how he had happened to see the face of William Longmont in the

cockpit moments before the building and the plane were enveloped in flames.

Now the full implications of what Samuel had been speaking about for the last twelve hours hit home. For a moment Chris Van Heerden sat contemplating the enormity of what he had just been told. Here on one hand you had an immortal trying to help stop the disaster that must follow and on the other you have another immortal that is at this time hell bent on destroying civilization as we know it. Chris was stunned

The room was silent for a few moments as both men sat listening to the sound of the city then Chris said "I assume you have some sort of plan?" "Yes I do but I need your expertise in carrying it out and of course your contacts." "I will help where ever I can" said Chris "The first thing we need to do is establish where William Longmont is and under what name he now goes, for he must have changed his name if he has converted to the radical arm of Islam."

"The photograph may help" said Samuel "if we can match it up to any of the intelligence data basis in the world we might be able to trace his current where about's" agreed Chris "I think I might be able to get some one at Langley and some one at Jerusalem to help us out with visual technology we might be able to trace him" he continued.

"That of course is the first step, the next thing we will need to do is get hold of him and extract him with out killing him because if we do the whole plan is finished." said Samuel.

"What then where do we keep him and what do we do with him? You are the only one with long term experience of the man, you will need to keep him clothed and fed with out the risk of him accidentally or purposely killing himself to escape" said Chris.

"I know a doctor in Sweden who specializes in memory lose, he has come up with a remarkable procedure to help war abused children and adults forget there past traumatic experiences." said Samuel "He will be here tomorrow to be briefed"

Meditations on the American revolutionary war

There was one thing that Samuel could not understand. In 1870 when he had once again met with William Longmont in Boston, a few short years after the American civil war, William had been a staunch defender of the freedoms for which he had fought in the American revolutionary war back in the late 1700's

Samuel remembered on evening early in 1871 when the two of them had settled down besides the fire place in the old inn which Samuel had worked so hard on to turn into some type of permanent home for himself. On the night in question when the a few bottles of brandy had mellowed, them like two old soldiers they had sat and spoke of their doings over the last hundred years or so. William had mentioned that he missed the small farm which he had spent a number of years building up just prior to the start of that famous war.

Samuel recalled the conversation like it was yesterday. William had sighed and looked into the fire. "Your thoughts William" said Samuel "I was just thinking about the revolutionary war and all I gave up for the price of the nation's freedom" said William "I was not aware that you had been in America at the time?" said Samuel. "Indeed those were helicon days. I owned a farm just before the war, spent ten years building it up to perfection then the war came" "Oh that sounds like the beginning of one of your war stories" said Samuel.

"Oh, I was just lamenting the fact that I gave up on one of the best farms in Virginia to fight for freedom. Ah but I would not have changed a thing, I have lived a long life and enjoyed every moment of it. The farm in Virginia was a safe place for me for a while when I had grown tired of all the wars of the 18th century" said William. "Ah yes the 18th century was a time of great troubles even I got involved in a few wars back then." said Samuel.

"Any way I figure it was worth it for, centuries I have fought on the side of the oppressor, it made a nice change to be on the side of a group of people who believed in what they wanted and went out against incredible odds and won a free nation"

said William "So you fought in the wars how many battles did you see?" asked Samuel

"Most of them I was at Bunker Hill. You know Valley Forge, what a winter that was, our bodies riddled with disease and exposure. It was most probably one of the worst winters I have ever known but we stayed I watched men die of the cold and there was nothing I could do to help. Yet all the while inside me a fire began to burn no matter how cold the night. The snow drifts, the fire burned, we had a just cause. Men died for that cause now America is a free nation, this last little affair between the north and the South darn near tore my heart out." Said William.

"All the long marches, the fighting, I remember there were days when our muskets grew tired of the repeated firing, we had to take wet rags to dampen them down. They grew red hot in our hands and the British, we killed them in their droves. They just never learned marching into ambush after ambush in their neat white and red uniforms why it was like shooting ducks in a barrel" William said.

"New York, well that was a fine piece of work. I joined the forces under general Washington; now I would follow a man like him any where. The battle of white plains, what a battle! we had our ups and downs I must admit but general Washington, he knew how to lead men he even had general Cornwallis following us far in too New Jersey"

"But the greatest day of all was when the British surrendered at Yorktown. Man I tell you Sam, the tears ran down my face. That day I knew we had achieved some thing great, no one, not one of the colonies, had ever beaten England before yet we did it and so a new nation was born with the dream of freedom at its heart."

"And what did German George have to say about it? Well I'll tell you, there were questions in the British parliament. Old King George was right angry at the loss of the colonies, I believe it gave him sleepless nights and eventually drove him mad. But what did we care we had our freedom"

As Samuel went over his most resent notes on William Longmont these memories came to his mind. What he could not understand was how some one who had fought so hard for the freedoms enshrined in the American constitution could turn so far against that very freedom, and now face America as a enemy. Some one who would stop at nothing to destroy America and every thing it stood for. Samuel knew how beguiling the message of Islam was, had he not himself once fallen under it but for a dream of the lost prophet would he now not have been on of the followers of the prophet?" Samuel's room mate Chris Van Heerden muttered some thing in his sleep and turned over it was three in the morning as Samuel switched of the bedside lamp and went to sleep.

The Frisian coast 800AD Samuel returns

Samuel rubbed his face. It was a windy morning and he had a splitting head ach, he had not slept well the previous night. In fact he had once more had the re-occurring dream that occasionally plagued him, this time he could see Ratsula waving to him beckoning to him to come closer. She stood next to the carpenter of Nazareth, the smile on the face of the carpenter was not unfriendly yet it still seemed distant. Now as he stood overlooking the bay he watched as the fishermen made their way towards the waters edge preparing to begin their days work. The little village from which they had all come lay a short distance from the coast just over the rise. It was in this small village that Samuel had established a small inn, giving room to any who visited although there was seldom call for a large gathering, he was prepared to give them room at the inn. This village on the headland served as a railing point for all the market produce from the surrounding farm lands and as a result the village was not so much a out of the way village, but a highbred village on its way to becoming a town. Of course there were all the things that pointed to the prosperity of the district and this was in fact why Samuel had chosen to live in this area. Samuel had known all the glory of ancient Rome, he had looked upon the Holy city of Jerusalem at a time when it was in its last days, he had fled the city as it had burned. Later still he had seen Rome burn, destroyed by the barbarians. Now he longed for a peaceful life and this district was ideal for his needs; the little dirty inn that he ran

was enough for the time being. For a season he had ceased to wonder at his predicament and had lived in the moment, enjoying the simple pleasures that life brought; a glass of wine besides the fire, a lump of cheese and a loaf of bread, things that one would not normally contemplate as one moved through ones life. Some times as he stood on the headland of this wind swept coast, he would contemplate the wonder of the sea birds as they rose and fell in the currents of the wind.

His attention was drawn to the three small children who were playing not to far away from where he stood, they were dressed very much as their parents and grand parents had dressed for hundreds of years. These simple folk, far away from the great cities of the seventh century since the advent of the new age, knew how to enjoy life but life was at the same time hard. If the fishing was bad then they starved, if the fields did not produce a good harvest then in all probability there would be deaths due to starvation Samuel did not like to dwell on these things but these were the simple facts of life in the village. There was a small church with a few priests who would try there best to elevate the suffering of the poor folks of the district but it was never enough and some years when sickness and pestilence would sweep through the district the grave yards would fill up. It saddened him to see the result of one bad seasons havoc and what suffering it brought upon the poor honest hard working folk of this district.

His thoughts turned once more to the dream of the previous evening, it always surprised Samuel because it was a reoccurring dream, one he had dreamt before. He wondered at it for eight centuries had passed since he had last seen his wife as she lay dying in the bed in the little inn at Bethlehem, yet he could still picture her face. Even when she had been a young woman, how the world had changed, how many people had lived their lives out believed in the carpenter from Nazareth. Yet he Samuel was still unchanged as the day he had been when he had been cursed for refusing the holy couple, some times he wondered if he had indeed given up his bed where would he now be...

CHAPTER FIVE Germany 1917

Private first class William Longmont stubbed out his cigarette and took a last sip of coffee from the cracked mug, then rising he joined the line of soldiers filling out to the edge of the parade ground. It was a fine summer morning in the year 1917. For a moment he stopped in front of the poster which showed a young soldier in a bright new uniform with the words underneath stating "Proud to be German." Turning once more he hobbled along on his crutches, one of the resent offences in France had cost him his leg. It was strange he reflected that he could be killed again and again and still he would rise reborn ready to fight another day but if he was injured seriously enough the wound would stay with him until his next death.

Today the Kaiser would be coming to speak to the war hero's who had been injured, to once again put steel into their blood before they went back to the front. "No front for me" thought William, what could a cripple do, a man with one leg? It was not that he was bitter about the lose of his leg it was that he was angry at the stupidity of the German army that had put him in a place which was clearly undefendable, the battle had been going on for some days when he arrived at the front. An officer had stopped the wagon in which he had been traveling with several new recruits "You men follow me" the officer had shouted. Not waiting for an answer the officer had strode off followed by the troops. In the imperial German army one did not question an officer, one obeyed.

The shell that had struck their exposed position had taken his leg and killed most of the other men that had been with him. Only one other survived and this man was now also in the military convalescent home.

Adolf joined William on the edge of the small parade ground, they found a place to rest and wait for the arrival of the Kaiser. "Waiting for the brass are we" said the slim man, who never seemed to gain weight no matter how many chocolates he ate. "Damned officer class think they own the world, care nothing for the fighting man, just so much cannon fodder" said the

little man angrily "You seem angrier than usual today Adolf, what has brought this on" inquired William.

"Ah it is nothing just if I had a chance I would have shown them how to win this war" said the shorter of the two men. "Well why don't you apply for officer training camp when you get out of the home, I am sure they will take just about any body as an officer now days that so many of them are been killed at the front." Said William

"Ah so you are trying to be sarcastic are you my one legged friend? Well let me tell you, in my army even the one legged soldier would be put to work, not left to sit around getting fat and lazy" said Adolf. "I look forward to the day when that happens" said William, half amused and half seriously. He had been listening to his little Austrian friend for a couple of weeks now and what he said made sense.

The whole idea of Germany for the Germans and that not just a loose confederation of Germanic states lorded over by a few old families was an interesting one. William had to admit the fact that the little Austrian had come up with this idea all on his own astonished William, he was continually surprised at the utterances of the man.

The men began to smarten themselves as the hour drew near. William and the corporal stood up and joined the group of less seriously injured men who stood at the edge of the parade ground, in the distance they could see a number of motor vehicles approaching. It had to be the Kaiser and the generals come to review the troops

William whispered to Adolf as they came to attention "I want to hear more on your theory of living room for Germans." "It will be my pleasure to enlighten you" said the little man smiling back at William.

The vehicle, a grand Mercedes six cylinder monster, came to a halt a short distance away. Hurriedly the band began to play the national anthem of imperial Germany, the rear door of the vehicle was opened by an officer; while the music played the Kaiser emerged from the vehicle and moved to the podium which had been set up in the front of the parade ground.

Later in the day the two soldiers sat eating black bread and coffee in the mess hall "So when you are the chancellor of German what will you do for the working man?" asked William. "First off there will be no more class distinctions and no favoritism in my Germany all men will work and receive a fair share for the labor" said Adolf.

"How do you plan to do this? Right now I don't see the monarchy giving way to a republic or do you want to set up a democracy like in America?" asked William. "My friend you are so negative, I do not have it all planned yet but one of these days Germany will wake up and I will be in charge and there will be no more of this privileged class looking down on us. I am as German as the Kaiser and I will have some thing to say about the way in which this country is run. I did not fight in the war to be relegated to the place of a second class citizen" said the Austrian.

"Germany, you must remember, is an Arian nation and it should not have its life's blood mixed with inferior races. Right now we have Jews and Slavs mixing with Germans and this is diluting our people's blood, making it impure" said Adolf. "These ideas are not new" thought William. His father who had been a strong Germanic leader would not even allow people from neighboring tribes to marry into his tribe. William was sure his father would have liked Adolf.

"So what would you do with the Jews and the Slavs?" asked William "Why there is only one thing, they must be resettled outside the Reich." said Adolf. "Far away from the pure blood of Arian Germany so the German people to be strong. We need to have pure blood, it is the only thing that makes us better then those nations around us who's blood has been so diluted by the presents of Jews, Slavs, Romi and the like" said Adolf.

"You certainly seem to have ideas which will make you popular with the man in the street, but what about work men need to work to earn a living" said William. "Of course the best way to solve the problem is to get business to subsidies the poor man. Call it a redistribution of wealth. Of course we could always take away the fortunes of the Nobel's and set up business which could pay the working class" said Adolf.

"Well you have given me much to think of my friend, I think I need to go and lay down a while, the events of today have been a little overwhelming for me" said William. "Ah my poor friend how my heart bleeds for you at the loss of your leg, it is a high price you have paid for Germany" said Adolf.

CHAPTER SIX
Extermination group D Southern Ukraine 1942

To say SS lieutenant William Longmont loved his work would be putting it mildly. Never since the time of Attila the Hun had William had such fun. His loyalty to the Fuehrer was unswerving. Since they had first met back in a hospital in 1917 William had followed the career of the little corporal from Austria with great interest. It made Williams Germanic heart beat proudly when the little man began to unite the various states which made up the German federation. Of course he had been there on that fateful day way back in 1923 when every thing looked for a moment if all was lost for the Nazi cause. But the little man knew how to pull the irons from the fire with a bit of skillful work he had righted the flagging Nazi party's interests and gone on to write a book which William viewed as sacred as the bible. In fact in his mind he would call it the German bible; to William the book Mine Kampf was one of the greatest peaces of political literature ever written.

Now as he set about his days work in the distant region of Ukraine his mind turned as it did every morning for a few moments; to Berlin. To wonder what the Fuehrer was doing, what important matter of state did his mind dwell on now William wondered. William sipped his coffee and drew in his breath, it was cold this morningThe ground would be hard he knew but the task had to be done, it was an order from the Fuehrer and no one disobeyed the Fuehrer and lived to tell about it, but on reflection the Fuehrer was doing it in the best interests of a greater Germany. The Fuehrer was Germany and if the Fuehrer wanted the people of Germany to have more living space then the obstacles in the way had to be removed, be they buildings, cities, villages or people. No one would stand in the way of the German Reich

The little town of Fyodor in the southern heartland of Ukraine was the target of Williams's group today, the instructions were clear: all politically active persons in the village from the mayor down to the school janitor who had some very strong communist views were to be exterminated along with all the Jews who resided in the town, matter of course. William could

even now feel the weight of the list in his breast pocket even now.

The fact that William enjoyed the work that the Fuehrer had instructed him to do was not for any deep sense of hatred for the people he was setting out to kill this day, it was a necessary task. As he well knew if you plucked the weeds from the ground in early spring you would not need to cut down a weed bush later in the summer.

The previous day William had overseen the digging of a large pit a few miles outside of the village before returning to the village hotel which had been taken over as the German army head quarters in the town. After good meal the evening before he had retired to bed early so that he would have a good nights rest before handling the important business of the day.

At 5 o'clock he had left the hotel and made his way to the town square which was not too far off. Arriving at a quarter after five he lit a cigarette and waited. At exactly half past five three large trucks had careened into the square one filled with troops from Extermination group D, the other two vehicles were empty. A member of the group set up a portable siren, it was not long before every one in the town was awakened by the wail of the instrument. The members of the group numbering about 30 began going from door to door rounding up their victims. Old Shumel the Rabbi who had been busy with preparing to read Torah to a group of fellow believers was hustled none too kindly along the street with the other Jews who had been reading Torah with him.

Mayor Livchenco was rudely awoken by the pounding on the door. Before the good mayor could answer this unseemly banging on the door he found himself confronted by three members of the task force forcing their way into his bed room. He was rudely plucked from his bed and hurriedly allowed to dress before being taken to the square.

On arriving at the square he confronted the German officer with the words "What is the meaning of this disruption? Have we not co-operated with you in every thing, why now are we hounded at this unseemly hour?"

"Comrade Mayor, I have been instructed that we are to take a drive in the country to discuss certain matters which have come to our attention. Those you see gathered here will be joining us for a picnic breakfast a little later" said William Longmont. Due to the mayor's helpfulness in being accommodating to the occupying forces of the German army, William Longmont a good Nazi officer, was going to go out of his way and personally see that the mayor received the treatment he deserved. For William himself planed to put the sleek black lugger to the base of the fat communists head and to pull the trigger. This of course as a lesson to those who arrived at the pit a short while later, the lesson although of a short duration would not be lost on those who would follow the good mayor into the pit.

Williams's driver a clear faced young blond headed man arrived shortly after in a shining black Mercedes, the six cylinder engine beating out its tattoo in the cold morning air. The dirty snow under foot was turning to sludge a slipper mess of earth and ice.

"Shall we be off on our country tour?" asked William of the Mayor, who now seemed for the first time to realize the enormity of what was happening. For more then 20 years he had lead the towns folk in been good communists, now he was powerless to help them, his eye was caught by a small family group. Mother, father and a small child standing next to his father while the mother held a baby in her arms, He wanted to scream run, flee but he felt even powerless to do this, as numbly he followed William to the car.

They drove for a few minutes with out saying any thing. Mayor Livchenko eventually plucked up some courage and asked "Herr lieutenant, does it have to be this way? Can you not at least spare the woman and children?" William now fully into the roll playing of the game said "But of course we can but then they will miss the picnic which my men have prepared for them and that would be a disappointment."

"I will tell you what I will do for you comrade mayor. I will personally take care of the details, this little journey in the country is good for you, it will give you time to clear your mind before the inevitable Herr Comrade Mayor. Please feel

free to pray to what ever god you serve for the next few minutes for our journey is near its end and you have a very important appointment which you cannot miss” said the German.

The big car rounded a bend in the road and turned of on a dirty path and drove for a hundred meters before stopping. “Ah we are here” said William Herr Comrade Mayor, my men have been busy excavating a ditch for some road works, please accompany me to see what they have found at the bottom of this ditch” he continued. The Mayor lifted his vast body and climbed from the car. He lingered a moment of the running board contemplating if he should run. He realized that the German would most probable shoot him in the back or worse yet set the dogs on him. The Mayor had a fear of dogs, he had seen what dogs could do when set upon a man.

The sweat now running freely down his face the big man walked with the German lieutenant round a vast mound of earth. On the other side of the mound they were confronted by a number of Germans waiting for this days grim work. Coming to attention the men waited for the officer to approach. A sergeant came forward "Hail Hitler the men are ready" Herr lieutenant said. The man smartly as he clicked his heels and raised his hand in the stiff Nazi salute.

“Carry on sergeant” said William. "Come see" said William to the Mayor, who now walked forward resigned to the fact that in a few moments his life must be over. The two men approached the vast ditch the big man hesitated a moment. “Come here Comrade Mayor come a little closer” said the officer standing on the edge of the pit. The man moved forward and stood looking down into the pit. For a moment the two men stood one contemplating what had brought him to this while the other quietly took from his holster the pistol.

"I suggest you kneel, it will be better for you Herr Comrade Mayor" said the German. The big man slowly removed his over coat and knelt at the edge of the pit. William cocked the gun and placed it at the base of the mans skull. "By order of the fuehrer I execute you" said William as he slowly squeezed

the trigger. The shot rang out and the body of the man slowly fell forward into the pit.

William Longmont lit another cigarette and waited. Soon the trucks would be coming with the rest of the victims earmarked for disposal this cold winters day. Of course William realized that it was a difficult task that the Fuehrer had set for the men of extermination group D, but it was in the interests of the Arian nation that these unpleasant tasks had to be completed, for according to the Fuehrer and the party bigwigs the third Reich was to last a thousand years.

In the distance William heard the sound of the approaching trucks. He walked over to the men who now stood ready with their rifles loaded making final checks before the days work began in earnest. "I want you men to know that what you do today is done in the interests of a Greater Germany. The Fuehrer will be well pleased when we report back that we have successfully completed this task" he said

The first group of people twenty in all were marched round the mound of gravel from the excavation. At the head of the group was the old rabbi Shemuel. The old man looked a weak specimen in his naked flesh, it must have been a long time since that body saw the sun reflected. William and the troopers lined up the naked men woman and children on the side of the pit. An old woman held on to a young mans arm to steady herself in fear of falling into the pit. "I am sorry Joachim that you should see an old grand mother like this" she said with quite dignity. "It is alright old mother we are about to enter Abrahams bosom, be of good cheer" said the young man, a distant look in his eyes

A moment later the sounds of rifles was heard. The bodies fell forward into the vast hole. The shooting continued through out the day. At the end of the day when the bull dozer was moving into fill the hole, William standing to one side with a clip board, began to fill in a set of figures stopping for a moment he contemplated. Another five thousand and they would have reached their target 40000 executions. This would make the commander very happy, there was a strong sense of competition with the other Extermination groups. And some

even bigger money on which group could exterminate the most number of people in a given period but some days were just hard work. He had a splitting headache. A few tablets, a bottle of brandy and a back rub by one of those brothel girls would not go a miss right now he reflected.

The escape of former Einsatzgruppen D major William Longmont

It was early morning in mid October 1946, the snow had already started falling and it was bitterly cold. The tall German officer, now disguised as a regular soldier of the German whermacht, stood with others like him in a long line in front of the American soup kitchen.

It had been tough going these last few months. Each new day brought the chance of been recognized and betrayed to the occupying forces. William was glad he had escaped from the Russian controlled sector of Germany. If he had been caught there was no telling how long they would have tortured him before ending his life.

It was not that he was afraid of death, he had faced death many times before, it was just that he did not enjoy the thought of falling into the hands of those whom he had formally tortured. There was no telling how much pain they might inflict on him if it became known that he was one of those responsible for thousands of deaths in the soviet region of Eastern Europe and the Ukraine. A small boy was selling news papers near by, the head line from the Süddeutsche Zeitung reading that the former Reichsmarschall, Hermann Göring had died the previous evening apparently by his own hand.

William sighed. It was the lie that what he expected the victorious conquerors to concoct about the former Reichsmarschall. He was a brave man who had served the Fuehrer loyally, now that Germany was defeated one could expect those who told lies to begin spreading them to the world.

When the end had come William had been but a few hundred meters from the Fuehrer bunker fighting the Russians as they made their advance. Seeing all was lost William had slipped quietly away exchanging his SS uniform for the uniform of a humble soldier.

He had as a matter of course surrendered to the Russians with a few remaining men who had withstood until the last moments of the war. The first few weeks inside the Russian controlled sector of Berlin had been very hard for all who had survived the war, the endless questioning. In the eyes of those who had lost the war how could things have gone so wrong, why had the Fuehrer killed himself when the people needed him the most to give them guidance? Most people did not believe that he was dead but the proof was irrefutable. Hitler was dead. Now Germany would have to rebuild itself but under what conditions wondered William.

Maybe it would be better for him if he moved to the Russian sector and found himself a nice cozy hiding place further to the east. Maybe he would not be recognized, most of those he was responsible for torturing were dead, maybe his mind was filled with questions.

The Americans tended to stop every German male and examine their papers. The Russian he noticed were not so strict but one could never tell. He pulled the thin army blanket tighter round his thin body as he shuffled forward towards the men handing out bowls of hot nourishing soup. In the distance he saw a face in the crowd that seemed somehow familiar a face from his past. He froze the blood in his veins running ice cold. Could it be? He asked himself! Yes it was for a moment he felt a rush of anger, damned Jew quickly he recovered. Any outward display of recognition might give him away, he could not leave the line now it would give him away. Samuel Ben Ezra in the uniform of a sergeant of the US army stood speaking to an officer at the rear of the soup tent. The problem now was how as he to avoid being recognized by the man?

It was his turn next. He accepted the bowl of food from a clear faced young man and moved on, the best thing to do he realized was play it by ear and hope that Samuel did not see

him. Taking a seat in the mess area he began to eat his soup keeping an eye on the man. Of all the bad luck to run into the eternal Jew he thought, one would have thought the recently ended war would have also brought to an end the mans life permanently but obviously other forces were at work.

Samuel in the mean time was having a heated discussion with the officer "Sure you can say that" said Samuel "But I say give them a chance to redeem themselves. A few bad apples don't make the tree bad" he said repeating a very old Jewish proverb which he had learned from his long dead father.

"I have to disagree with you Sergeant" said the officer. "The things that are coming out at the trials are so horrendous one cannot believe. They are of such a shocking nature that they turn your blood cold!" the officer said. Samuel, of course knew this to be true as he had also had first hand experience of the death camps but he had to believe in the good of the people, there had to be some good Germans. Not all of them could be bad, his life in the Berlin hotel back in the 1930's had taught him that much. And could a nation who had produced men like Bach Beethoven, and Mozart be all bad?

"I have an appointment shortly so I will have to be leaving soon" said the officer. "I will walk with you part of the way, I want to see if those supply's have arrived yet" said Samuel, putting on his beret and rising from the table at which they had been sitting.

William watched as the two men left the tent he gave a sigh of relief, it could have been problematical been discovered by the Jew he thought.

It also meant that for William the American zone was now vastly more unsafe. He would now have to return to the Russian zone. It would be better for him to disappear into the Russian heartland then to face Samuel he realized, as it would not be long before the man found out just how deeply involved in the events of the war William had been, and to tell the truth William did not want to face the man. It was not that he felt guilty about what he had done, it was just that he did not want to explain to the man that he had watched and taken

part in the violent murder of thousands of helpless people who which he felt in no way compelled to save.

Finishing his soup he rose from the table and made his way to the exit, his mind made up. He would return to the east, maybe to Russia make for himself a new life among the Russians. Judging from the accounts he had heard Uncle Joe Stalin was a leader whom he might follow and serve just as faithfully as he had served his old friend Adolf.

CHAPTER SEVEN
1966 AD Some where in Georgia part of the USSR

The man from Moscow scowled at the delay. He had been under the impression that this part of the USSR had advanced beyond the level it had been back in the days of the Second World War. He cursed this backward part of the great federation, they could have at least had someone meet him at the railway station, but even in this they had been lacks, some one was going to pay for this he thought to himself.

The grey prison building was cold even on the brightest summer day. The grey prison was cold it gave off a tomb like presence. Many people who happened in their daily life to walk past the huge building would invariably shiver as the coldness of the building touched them.

Gregor Ilianivich poured himself another glass of vodka. It was not the good vodka one could buy on the black market made in the west, no this was the kind that one queue's for on the market square of the regional capital. Not that Gregor had ever had to queue for any thing in his life. He was a member of polit bureau and if one was a member of this elite group things sort of came to you with out much difficulty. If you needed a cleaning woman one just needed to ask. Turkish cigarettes? Just ask comrade and the next day as if by some miracle of inner working of the huge organization the cigarettes would appear. So would the cleaning woman. One had but to ask.

Right now Gregor Ilianivitch was not very happy. The prisoner had been stubborn. The usual beatings and deprivations had not helped him see the error of his ways. As a last resort the comrade governor of the prison had asked for some one from Moscow to come and help make the prisoner talk.

It was not that Gregor was dissatisfied with his life but he did realize that there was so much more he could have do if only he had been a little bit more pro active.

He was married with three children the eldest of which showed great promise. She was currently at the gymnasium studying to become a doctor. How proud he felt a daughter of

the revolution, he himself a veteran of the war against Germany, had suffered greatly back in the war to give these his three treasures a good start in life. The dacha in the country which they enjoyed, well, that was just another perk of belonging to the party. He knew this could be taken away should he fail in his duty, thus the current set of events was not to his liking. If only the comrade governor would not stick his nose in business which did not concern him.

That was the official life of Gregor but there was another more mysterious one, the one which one did not bandy about in the party circle's. The fact that he had a mistress who lived in the relatively new apartment complex being build just after the war with shoddy materials, which was a problem because the apartments some times fell down. In this apartment lived his mistress of some thirteen years with the ten year old boy who she claimed was his son.

Now as Gregor stirred himself, poured himself another glass of the cheap vodka and waited for the man from Moscow. He realized that his current lifestyle could be at risk should the man from Moscow find that in any way Gregor's techniques of interrogation wanting, very soon a report against him could be finding its way onto the desk of one of those bureaucratic men in Moscow who did the annual reviews.

He could just imagine the first few lines of the report "subject performance of polit bureau member Gregor Ilianivich:

The above mentioned member has failed even in the minor task of interrogation techniques and as a result information has not been forth coming." Gregor shivered. Wether it was the tone of the imagined report against him or the coldness which seemed to envelope the building, he was not sure, but he felt cold and to top it all the man from Moscow was late by two hours already.

"Boris, Boris!" shouted Gregor down the telephone line "Have you been down to the railway station to pick up the Comrade from Moscow?" "No comrade colonel I have not, was I supposed too?" Asked Boris sleepily, as he removed his boots from his desk at the prisons vehicle park. "Idiot you should

have been down to the station three hours ago to meet him when his train arrived" shouted Gregor.

"Apologize comrade colonel! I will go now!" said Boris. "Get the car ready I will go with you." No time like the present to face the consequences thought Gregor.

At the station the commissioner of trains for the region had walked into the canteen. Seeing the man in the well made Russian coat he approached "Comrade, may I be of service to you?" He inquired "Yes you may" replied the man from Moscow "Do you have a vehicle available which I can use, and a driver?" he added after a moment. "Why yes comrade, but I am afraid it might not be to your liking. I have a cart and a horse available, are you going far?" "Far enough" replied the man from Moscow. The idea of riding a cart amused him it was not a warm day, the snow had fallen earlier and he found it quite comical that a senior party member on official business to this part of the USSR would arrive at his final destination a top a cart driven by a local yokel.

"A moment comrade, and I will arrange for the cart to be readied for your use" said the comrade commissioner of stations who had been alerted by a phone call from an underling that some one who appeared to be an important party member was making his presents felt in the station.

Just as the cart was being brought round a motor car came roaring to a halt in front of the station a fat middle aged man in the uniform of a colonel alighted his face sweat covered even in the cold of mid winter.

"A thousand pardons comrade I was unavoidably delayed" he said as he approached the man in the Russian great coat. "I am Colonel Gregor Ilianivich of the guards come to pick you up" he said. For a moment the man from Moscow looked icily at him then throwing his cigarette away he said "Better late then never, I am comrade brigadier William Longmont from Moscow KGB." As he said the words the little commissioner of the railways blood ran cold as he slowly backed off. "I thank you comrade for your offer of transport" said William Longmont turning to the little station master he continued "but it seems now a more suitable mode of transport is at hand"

thus he turned once more to Gregor Ilianivich "Shall we be on our way then he asked?"

Meet prisoner Ivan Chekhov

It had long been Gregor's belief that those who fought against the established order for the freedom of Georgia were members of the underground church in Georgia. It was not that he had any firm proof of this but a number of suspects that had been interrogated would at some time let slip that they were members of the church which was not recognized by the communist state and was virulently oppressed by the state. This was also the attitude taken by Gregor, thus invariably a prisoner who was interrogated by Gregor stood a good chance of being severely beaten if he did not confess, name names and give up any information of value. Gregor loved his job. At school he had been some what of a wimp who had suffered the agony of been beaten most days of the week. However when he joined the military he advanced quickly with the natural attributes which small minded men like he had. He was able to progress his advancement which was aided by the fact that he belonged to the party and was a fervent communist.

William on the other hand had found that when interrogating such prisoners it was better to take the soft line of reason and persuasion. Experience had taught him that reasoning with a stubborn person or one who earnestly believed in their cause because could be broken down with the soft voice of reason.

Thus when prisoner Chekhov was first interrogated by Gregor he had refused to say any thing. It was unfortunate that Ivan Chekhov, for he had been at the wrong place at the wrong time; a student demonstration for a free Georgia, which had been betrayed by one of the student body, had gathered in a small auditorium of the gymnasium. Gregor and his team of guards and police had surrounded the auditorium where the meeting was scheduled to take place but had been called of at the last moment due to a tip off. Thus as the members of a private prayer group who were themselves praying for the region were arrested, the group comprising of five men and three woman were hurriedly shoved into the waiting black Maria's (a type of van) favored by the special police unit which worked that part of the regional capital.

The other members had all been interrogated with the same brutality with which Ivan had been subject to. Very soon they had confessed to their part in political activities which, although not of a serious nature, were in fact serious enough to earn them a stint in the prison with the courts allotting sentences of up to five years for anti soviet activities. It was unfortunate that Ivan had come to a point in his life where he could no longer buckle under and accept the official state line confess and get a relatively light sentence. For Ivan Chekhov it was now a matter of principle and further more a matter of faith, a point on which he was to stand firm in the coming days, and weeks. A point in fact which was to cost him his life in the long run, for Ivan Chekhov was about to meet one of the worst bullies in the communist system, namely our friend Gregor Ilianvitch

The interrogation chamber was a stark room with the proverbial bare light bulb hanging from the ceiling. The sound of dripping water could be heard emanating from some where in the chamber just as it would in a bad b rate spy movie.

"Prisoner Chekhov, why are you been so stubborn?" asked William "Do you not think it would be better if you made a clean breast of all that you are involved in?" He continued "Comrade Brigadier, if I was to tell you all that I know of you would not believe me" said Chekhov. "Try me you might find that I am a reasonable man. I might even excuse your indiscretion and let you go free" said William

"Comrade Brigadier, the good colonel has already been over this ground before which I am sure you are aware of. If not well then the bruises on my face and body might convince you otherwise" said Chekhov.

"Are you saying that colonel Ilianvitch has treated you badly, is that a complaint I hear" asked William. "No comrade brigadier I am not complaining, I am saying I was careless and walked into the wall by accident" said Chekhov.

"I would be very upset if you were wishing to bring a complaint of brutality against the good comrade colonel" said

William lighting a cigarette. "But I can understand these are trying times we live in. If you accidentally walked into the wall it might have confused your memory." said William.

"So prisoner Chekhov, you are a member of the students organization which wishes for freedom for Georgia. An admiral sentiment but a miss placed one if you don't mind me saying so" said William Longmont.

"I am Ivan Chekhov student of economics at the gymnasium. I do not partake in political activities I am a simple man who wishes to find work in the Burro for economics" said Chekhov stubbornly.

"So you do not think a free Georgia is a good idea is that what you are telling me" said William angrily "are you trying to waste my valuable time?" "No Comrade brigadier I am not trying to waste your time, I am merely saying I have never been politically involved in these matters. As for freedom I am already free" said Chekhov.

"What do you mean by saying you are free? You are a prisoner of the state and your every move is watched and monitored, so where is your freedom?" shouted Longmont.

"You would not understand" said the prisoner "try me and see you might be pleasantly surprised" said Longmont in a very quite voice.

"I was made free by him who saved me" said Chekhov. "Ah so here we come to the truth of the matter, I want the name of your co-conspirator. When you have given me his name I will let you go" said William.

Hysterically the prisoner began to laugh. It was as if the flood gates had been opened and nothing now could contain it. He laughed and laughed unable to control himself. It was a sound that had not before been heard in the cold dark prison, it was a sound of some one starting to loose his mind yet retaining enough of it to find the situation enormously funny.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Interlude the background to the Leader 1985-1995

To understand the change in the beliefs of William Longmont one would have to consider the time he spent in Germany during the first half of the twentieth century and the later years spent working behind the iron curtain in the USSR. The Germany of Adolf Hitler had opened his eyes to a fact that had been largely overlooked by most people racial and spiritual. Purity was some thing which was at the heart of most nations. Men gloried in their superiority. Nations gloried in their people. This idea was further enhanced by the USSR who taught that all men were equal in the proletariat. All men no matter what their background, be they Georgian or Tarter, were equal under the Russian federation. At first he had been drawn to the strong principals of the teachings of Marx and Lenin, later when things had began falling apart he was once more faced with the awful reality that once again something which he had believed in had been destroyed. What was he to do?

As a soldier in Afghanistan he had on occasion visited with an older man who lived near the military base. Elbrihim Al Mar was a cleaner at the camp and it was this man who would eventually convince William, as he was then known to convert to Islam. It was this same Ebrihim who would at the time that William deserted offer him refuge in his home while he worked out his conversion to the prophet. It was this humble man, a follower of the prophet, who would one day present to Ali the means with which to live in Kabul. The father of twelve son's and several daughters, the husband of four wives, Ebrihim would one day adopt William Longmont, who would then change his name to honor the man who had brought him to enlightenment.

Being the adopted son of Ebriham AL Mar had its advantages Ali soon found, for he was a boyhood friend of Omar Mohamed, the nominal leader of the Taliban movement. This friendship had blossomed and the two men had kept in contact over the years. On occasions when Omar Mohamed could find a chance to he would visit with Ebrihim. On these occasions they would talk of religious matters and occasionally partake of the Hashish Hubble bubbly which stood in a place of honor

in the lounge of the old mans home. It was at these times that the debate about the corruption of morals and the behavior of the young and especially the misbehavior of woman which would be foremost in the minds of these two men. "My esteemed friend, what is this world coming to when a man is not the master of his own home, when the young ones want to go to night clubs when they should be studying Koran" lamented Omar. "Ah yes what can one do but pray" said Ebrihim "When we are in control of the country, we will change things for the better." "Was wondering my dear Omar, how things are going as far as your designs on government and the war front?" Asked Ebrihim "So many factions but we are winning, soon we will take power from the weaklings and restore Shari law to this land which longs so for it." "I am glad for you my friend. I long for the day when you are in government and the law of Allah is once more being obeyed. No more interference from the West, I hope you will make it a law that all who live in this land will attend mosque?" Said Ebrihim

Of course in the time that Ali stayed with the household of Ebrihim Al Mar he had many occasions to view Omar Mohamed first hand. What he saw of the man was not very encouraging, however for a minor cleric to have risen so far in the Taliban he must have some inner strength from which the followers drew their strength.

The leader 1989-2001

The leader was a great admirer of Adolf Hitler, he had read many of the books on Hitler and he tried to emulate Hitler whom he considered to be a great man, who had been misrepresented by most of the authors who had written about him. William in turn admired the leader who seemed to him to be a great man.

William had converted to Islam shortly after the fall of communism when he had seen the writing on the wall. Communism an ideal that he had firmly believed in he realized had no future in Eastern Europe. He felt betrayed by the policies of Glasnost and perestroika and as a result he had cast about for a cause. He found that his extreme longevity was driving him to seek some thing to believe in. For centuries he had fought in wars for various causes but he had never

really believed in them, they were but passing fads as far as he was concerned.

Thus he had found himself at the end of the rule of Communism in Afghanistan. At that time he had heard of the leader and for a brief season he had fought against the forces under the command of the leader in that country. Later he had deserted the infantry battalion in which he had been serving his Russian masters and taken to living in Kabul which he found to be a fascinating city, it reminded him of a time long past when woman knew their place and a man was master of his own house.

In a few brief years he had become interested in the teachings of Islam which he studied with a passion, learning the Koran by heart, some thing which had taken great skill even for an immortal but he considered it a sacred duty, which brought him great pleasure. Some times he worried that the long ages which he had already lived might soon becoming to an end and he had an overwhelming desire to leave a legacy which would be remembered.

Thus he found himself increasingly drawn to the teachings of the leader. It was a strange time for the west had, for a time, aided the leader with funds and arms with which to fight the Russian aggressors. Now that the Russians had withdrawn, the leader began to put into place rules for daily living, things which were to bring honor to the prophet.

The leaders of the Taliban, of course, were overjoyed that such a strong leader had come among them to help re-establish religious laws which they had felt had fallen by the wayside due to foreign influences. The leaders of the Taliban often appeared on television condemning the influence of the decadent western civilization which had introduced such things as idolatry into Afghan society.

The leader in the mean time had established the base from which men loyal to the prophet would go forth to do the leaders, biding to sacrifice their lives in the hope of achieving paradise. It was after another helicopter bombing of one of the leaders of the PLO in Gaza that William made the conscious

decision to change his name to Ali Bin Ebrihim. He had been angered by the outrages high handed behavior of the Israeli security forces that he decided that he would offer his services to the leader.

The leader in the mean time had built up the base to an international organization with branches as far away as places like Spain Morocco and even for off Sudan. From the head quarters in the hill country of Afghanistan the leader would issue instructions and they would be followed to the letter, bombings taking place in many places were attributed to the leader's organization and for the most part the base was responsible for these bombings of the western infidels

Thus on a winters morning Ali Bin Ebrihim found himself being driven over a mountain road towards the base camp, an automatic rifle slung over his shoulder. He did not look like your average Afghan freedom fighter, he looked every bit like a western European, even after been sunburned from living in the region for a number of years. He looked like a Teutonic knight.

The truck grinded to a halt inside the camp, the buildings showed signs of much use as he and a few other new recruits climbed from the truck. A group of men in the flowing dress of the region existed a nearby building and moved towards the group of new recruits. The entrance into the organization was strict with various check points and traps to catch out spies sent by the CIA and MI5.

Immediately the leader was visible to the new recruits a ripple of excitement ran through them for they knew they were in the presents of the great man himself.

"I welcome you to the base men and tell you that your training will be hard" said the leader speaking slowly and emphasizing the words. Ali Bin Ebrihim was struck by how much the voice resembled that of another leader he had known more then fifty years earlier.

You will each be interviewed and we will decided which of you are suitable for immediate missions against the Israeli aggressors, others of you will be trained for more long term

projects but rest assured my fellow worshipers of the prophet, peace be upon him, that will all get your chance to die in his service” he continued.

“Remember we are facing races that have become lazy and stupid, these crusaders of their’s will not defeat us again” he shouted to the loud applause of the gathered men.

In the time that he had been speaking other men had emerged from various other buildings and now stood listening. There was bursts of automatic gun fire as his speech ended.

"Right you men follow me" said a heavy set man who was the leaders second in charge. The men gathered their possessions and followed as the man walked across to a row of bungalows.

The first few weeks of training were largely introduction into the organization, followed by more advanced courses in survival and then finally training for missions. Training on how to make and detonate explosive devices and how to disguise these devices to the untrained eye. It was in the eleventh week of this training that Ali Bin Ebrihim requested an interview with the leaders of the Base.

At first there had been some suspicion about his motives and the inelegance officers of the organization had done their best to find out as much as they could about him. Their searches had returned the results that he appeared to be exactly what he said he was, a former soldier in the Russian infantry who had deserted to follow the prophet and he had been well liked and known in Kabul, known to attended the house of worship regularly, an avid student of the Koran. A good Muslim.

They had even put a secret agent in the bungalow with him; the agent reported back that the European was a very religious man whose only wish was to serve Allah

The meeting took place at the big bungalow which overlooked the whole camp. The long porch had been set up with a table and chairs. Here the leader and a few senior men sat watching as Ali Bin Ebrihim made his way across the open ground which was covered by dirty snow which had fallen the

previous evening. A few of the men smoked cigarettes as they waited for the man who would play a large part in the organization in the following years.

On arriving he sat and was asked what it was he wished to speak of. He then began to tell a most amazing story, one which left many who listened astonished and wondering if the man was mad. When he had completed his story the leader who had listened his eyes half closed began to ask him a number of questions. When the leader of the base was satisfied he gave instructions that the man was to be kept separate from the general population of the camp while he meditated on the outcome of their meeting.

After a few hours in a separated bungalow Ali Bin Ebrihim was once more shown into the presents of the leader who began giving him instructions on his first mission. If he was successful and what he had said was true Ali would go to Tel Aviv and blow himself up in an up market hotel. On been resurrected he would return to the nearest base where he would make contact with the Base camp. If this was successful he would become one of the most dangerous weapons in the Base's arsenal.

Thus a week later Ali Bin Ebrihim, the tall German convert to Islam, found himself seated in the restaurant of a down town Hotel in Tel Aviv. The place was not full at this time of the day but that would change. He ordered himself some food from a clear faced young Israeli woman who was all smiles; she had just learned a few hours earlier that she was pregnant with her first child. She hoped it was a boy. Her husband a private in the Israeli army did not yet know she was planning on telling him that evening. But in the mean time she was happy. Leah Abrahamson had been born in the state of Israel and had done her national service in the army, a child of a strict orthodox home. There had been some resistance when she had chosen to marry a resent emigrant from England David Abrahamson. However been a strong willed young woman she had overcome her family's objections and married the young man. It was most probably the happiest day of her life and she wanted to share the joy. She served the big man at the table and went about her business. the restaurant was

filling up and she knew that it was going to be a busy night, lots of tips, she was glad for that.

As the evening progressed the big German lingered over his food. It was strange she thought that he did not order any alcohol, only Coke. Ah well to each his own she thought. But she could not wait to get home and tell David. She had bought a bottle of local wine to share with him when she broke the news.

Ali Bin Ebrihim sat watching the young woman, she seemed happy he thought. Well so was he; in a short while he would join the two wires together and this place, this happy place would be turned to a place of chaos and carnage blood. On the walls body parts spread far and wide. Well that was the cost of war. Better the young woman meet her end now then spend years growing old and ugly he reflected. There was the couple at the next table, a mother father and two small boys out for an evening meal. He had seen it all before. How did that old saying go? In the midst of life there is death.

An older couple sat a little further away, survivors of the death camps of Germany. He knew this, he heard them conversing in Yiddish. Well after a life well lived there was honor in death he reflected. Time to join the wires. He took his last sip of Coke before placing his hands beneath the table

The explosion, when it came, brought the roof down. A vast cloud of dust rose into the night air, fires burned every where. The young waitress had been serving the old couple tea when the explosion came, she never heard it the words died on her lips "and father I am P.... " For a few moments after the explosion there was an ear shattering silence in the darkness some one moaned, in the distance sirens began to wale

The leader was impressed, seldom had any one carried out a mission with the dedication which Ali Bin Ebrihim carried out the bombing of the Tel Aviv hotel. True it had been a test for the European who the leadership of the base distrusted. At worst he could have been a spy for the CIA, a mad man and at best a honest martyr for the cause of the prophet.

Ali Bin Ebrihim was true to his word turning up shortly after his mission at the Base camp as if nothing had happened. The Al Jazzier television network had made much of the news of the bombing in Tel Aviv. Western media had released the story of the young Leah Abrahamson who had been expecting her first child killed in the blast. Western media sources were calling it an unprovoked atrocity of the ordinary citizens of Israel.

The leader had expected to hear of the event second hand from an agent he had detailed to follow Ali, but never in his wildest dreams had he expected to hear first hand the account from the bomber. It was a very strange experience he had to admit to hear of the explosion from the bomber. Each fact the leader had verified by the agent who had followed a distance.

One of the things that the leader realized was the vast scope of implications which this man now presented for the organization. Untold possibilities. It was this in mind that the leader and a few selected lieutenants began to plan some of the most heinous crimes which were to occur at the end of the twentieth century.

It was planned that a number of American embassies would be bombed simultaneously in two neighboring African states. Ali was selected as the leader of the team that would bomb the American embassy in Kenya. For several months the teams were put through their paces. It was hard work but rewarding, at the end of each training session the teams would gather for debriefing, going over the sequence of events trying to iron out any thing which might give the team away to the CIA or any local African intelligence agency.

The day he arrived in Nairobi Kenya Ali set in motion certain rules which were to govern his life for the next few years. One of these rules was to always leave his passport and cash in a safe place before going on the mission, for he reasoned that should he need to get away quickly he would need these items and the chance of being resurrected close to where the bombing took place was quite good judging from his passed experience. Thus on a bright sunny morning he drove to the embassy in a hire truck loaded with explosives; he had fallen into the habit of chanting prayers to Allah while preparing himself for the

mission. Now that he and the others had begun the mission there was no turning back, he was a knight in the service of the most high and his prophet Mohammed "Peace be upon him" Ali reasoned.

As he drove the truck into the basement parking of the embassy Ali, his eyes filled with a type of ecstasy, began chanting louder and louder "There is no God but Allah" he stopped the vehicle beneath the central pillars of the parking area and pressed the detonator.

The explosion, when it came, ripped the building apart killing scores of people. The blast could be heard for many miles around the capital, a heavy cloud of dust rose over the city. In the aftermath of the disaster the hot African sunlight drowned out by falling debris and smoke from toxic materials used in the construction of the building

Ali found himself found himself in a street several blocks from the burning embassy. There was the sound of sirens as emergency personnel rushed to the scene of the bombing. Turning Ali began walking back to the hotel; later that day he would board a plane for Pakistan.

One returning to the base he was debriefed and once more sent out on a mission. Nothing major just another down town Tel Aviv bombing, there were to be many such missions over the next few years, invariably he would find himself returning to the Base via the Pakistan boarder. These were the times that he loved the most: hiking over the mountains back into Afghanistan he would stop at a Bedouin tent and be welcomed like royalty sharing the local sour goats milk beverage with the inhabitants of the tent. These people lived like their ancestors had for thousands of years, enjoying the freedom of living on the mountains with the sun shining down on them, no distractions sowing their seasonal crops of coco. Here to he found time to stop and pray to Allah in the quite of the hill country, he had never felt so close to Allah. It mattered not to him that he was returning from a mission in which innocent people had perished, the leader had told him that they were fighting against enemy crusaders and they where to be killed where ever they were to be found.

This was to be the pattern of his life for the next few years. the new millennium came and went with out much celebration, he had left that life when he became a follower of the prophet.

On a morning in early 2000 he was summoned to the leader's bungalow

“Ali you are here” said the leader “I want you to meet a young man who shows much promise. Mohammed meet Ali” said the leader to a slightly build young man of Middle Eastern origin. “I have a plan on which I want you to start work” said the leader “It will be the most daring yet but I believe we can put together a team which will make the organization a name to strike fear into the hearts of every American” said the leader.

CHAPTER NINE

Made in America

The mission that the Base now wanted to send Ali on was of such importance that they had assembled a team of experts. Ali was not to be the only one on the mission, there were to be a total of twenty or more who would deliver a mauling blow to the Americans.

The leader deemed this mission of such importance that half the lecture room in which the team gathered was usually filled with almost the same number of teachers as there were students.

The leader early on decided to give the mission the working title of "Made in America" an ironic title as it would be the Americans who provided the flight training and the weapons for the mission.

"Allah is great and this mission will strike fear into the hearts of the American crusaders" said the leader "Your rewards will be great in paradise! Fear not faithful brothers your names will go down in history as some of the greatest Jihadi that have ever walked the face of the aircraft"

"When we have won the war against the infidels your families will be well taken care of! You need not have any fear on that account your mothers will want for nothing, for you are about to embark on one of the greatest missions for Allah the world has ever seen! For generations our people will look back to the day when you marched across the pages of the chronicles of history! You will drive home to every American infidel the fact that we can reach out and touch them right in the heart of there greatest cities! For generations American children at there mother's knee will learn of your brave deed, of your sacrifice for the fight for justice! I predict that with in twenty years of the day you carry out your mission America will be humbled! I predict that the faithful will gather, rise up and take heart from your deeds on that day! What will make that day even more memorable is the fact that it will be carried out on a day which the Crusaders equate with there emergency services! The day in question I will now tell you is the 11th of

September which I am sure you realize is 9/11.” the leader said ending his speech.

“Now we will move onto the more mundane things that you will have to take care of to make this mission successful. It is imperative that you make sure that you are not caught by the intelligence agencies of the infidels before the missions, for if you are you will be placing the mission, this sacred mission in great jeopardy.” Said one of the senior instructors.

“You will maintain the lifestyle of one who has fallen away from the path of the righteous. Allah most merciful will forgive you this discretion for your cause is just. You are to adopt the lifestyle of those who no longer have the blessings of Allah. You are to find and enroll in civil air schools. You will learn that which is needed to complete your missions.” Mohammed Al Zecari a favored follower of the leader, in the mean time the leader smiled most benevolently on the faces of the gathered men. In these circumstances it was easy to understand why men flocked to the Base for training under this great man.

“It is important that all of you are aware that you need to be steadfast to the very end. I will ask if there is any among you who feels unable to do this to now leave the room. There will be no recrimination against any one who doesn’t feel equal to the task at hand” said the leader.

After a minutes silence and no one having moved from there seats he began to speak. “My brothers I am glad that you are so loyal to this sacred mission. Let it never be said that I did not give you the opportunity. Surely Allah will be with each one of you as you go about your preparation for the task”.

The next few weeks were devoted to the methods which the individual Jihadi were to use to enter the United States, at times Ali found it a little boring having slipped across many borders in his time but he suffered it gladly knowing that if it in any way helped to prepare his fellow jihadi’s then it was a lesson worth learning.

The lectures he found most interesting came about half way through the training and these concerned the timing of the actual attacks. A media specialist for the Base had set up a time chart one morning. Filling into the class room the men found their seats

"An important thing that you must realize my brothers" said the lecturer "is that on any given day there are tourists from all over the world at the target. Many of them are equipped with video cameras and this will aid us in the long term goal, for it will show the world that we can reach deep into their business sector and destroy it, for when the first aircraft smashes into the first target there will be no TV cameras there to record it. The recorders of the first attack will be Japanese tourists on a day trip to the target. These images will be played to the world the message will be clear."

"The leadership of the Base has kept the name and place of the attack on the infidel secret till this time but from this point on you will need to know" said the lecturer.

"Now as to the details on entering the United States, you have been instructed to seek to be enrolled in the civil air schools. To learn to fly this is important to the mission for without the brave men who are going to take over the cockpits of the aircrafts the plan will not succeed. You will specifically ask to be taught how to turn an aircraft. This and the ability to descend is important. Now I will hand you over to the revered leader so that he can explain more fully the mission". Said the lecturer.

"Allah is Great" said the leader as he stood up and began to speak "The targets are the World Trade Center in New York, The Pentagon and the White house. These are the targets which we have selected for this sacred mission. You are to purchase the following items, these tools although they do not in themselves constitute a threat in your skilled hands will become most dangerous." He continued.

"A box cutter with its sharp blade like the one I hold in my hand for you all to see. I will now pass it round, familiarize yourself with this weapon for it will be the weapon which this

sacred mission will bring much joy to all the faithful followers of Allah and the prophet. Peace be upon him."

"Now with the training you have received so far you will begin to understand you have all undergone karate and judo. These skills you will use to gain access to the cockpits of the various aircrafts which you will take over. Team one will take over the flight of an aircraft and fly it into the world trade center; The second team will then do the same. However their aircraft will have to give the television people time to get into place to view the second crash, so we need to time this carefully. On the desks in front of you are a list of flight schedules with the relevant flights marked. You will now be assigned to the various teams which will carry out this sacred duty. Allah is great!" shouted the leader to loud cheers from the gathered terrorists.

As Ali was leaving the leader called him over for a private word. "Ali my faithful friend you have served us so well in the past. I know this mission will be a success. I have made sure you are assigned to the first aircraft." Said the leader. "I thank you most esteemed leader, it is a great honor you give me" said Ali

"I know you will be back once the mission is completed, that is why I have given it to you. But there is another reason, for should our friend Mohammed for some reason loose his nerve I want you to take over the flying of the aircraft and make a success of it" said the leader.

I will do my best for the cause said Ali "it is a privilege to do this thing for Allah and with each mission that is completed by me I feel even more favor coming from Allah" he continued.

"Ali you are among the most faithful. You do this thing yet you do not seek rewards. I must tell you that when you first came among us we had our doubts. But you have so far exceeded our expectations. Maybe you should think of taking a wife and raising some children to carry on your name" said the leader with a chuckle.

"I have no need of a wife" said Ali "Woman no longer play a part in my life. The pleasures of this world cannot tempt me to

turn away from Allah and his prophet, Peace be upon him” continued the immortal.

“I see you are earnestly seeking the pleasures of paradise and the seventy virgins who will wait upon you my friend. It is a pity that one who is so zealous for the cause of righteousness is precluded the pleasures of paradise but do not be disheartened at the right time Allah will reward your faithfulness” said the leader.

Ali aboard American Airlines flight 11

He rose at mid night. He took a shower and began to shave all of his body hair. As he did this he began to pray to Allah.

“Allah most merciful hear the prayer of your servant Ali. Be merciful oh Allah, and grant me the means to carry out this mission successfully.”

When he had completed his ablutions he dressed, rolled out his prayer rug and turned it towards the holy city of Mecca.

Kneeling down he brought his face to the ground and began to pray once more to the deity he served “Allah most merciful, grant that this time I find peace. Grant, oh Allah most merciful, that this time I might enter paradises and be in your presence.

The last three months he had lived as the leader had instructed him like any other westerner he had drunk alcohol, he had gone whoring, he had put out the image of a man returning from the middle east disillusioned, so that if any one had been watching him they would have thought he did not find enlightenment.

Today would be the day that he would with his fellow believers stride across the pages of history, making a mark that would be remembered for all time. He waited until three am before waking Mohammed Atta “Brother wake, for today destiny awaits us” he said as the other man turned fitfully in

the bed. Upon hearing once more the words uttered Mohammed awoke and smiled "The day has finally come" said Mohammed now fully awake "What a memorable day it will be" said the slightly built Egyptian reaching for a packet of cigarettes.

Ali scowled. He had stopped smoking the previous week in preparation for the attack "Come brother we must pray" said Ali. "For soon we will enter the hallowed portals of paradises and we must not be found wanting." "Always so serious" said Mohammed, his mind on the blond prostitute he had visited the previous evening.

"Yes brother, today is a great day surely you want to enter paradise with a clear conscious?" Asked Ali "Indeed I know I will brother, for today all things that were past will not matter. For we will enter the presents of Allah the most merciful with loud praises ringing in our ears" said Mohammed as he pulled himself out of bed and made his way to the bathroom.

Once again Ali bowed down on the prayer rug and began to pray. Soon it would be light and they would make their way to the airport. The training which they had undergone at the various flight schools would then be put to the test. Ali was filled with pent up excitement. He had killed before but seldom on such a grand scale. He found this at times both frightening and delightful, he was a true follower of Allah and the prophet Peace be upon him.

At six am they had taken the taxi to the airport. The two men had decided to split up thus Mohammed had taken an later taxi. Ali planed to book himself in earlier. Ali arrived at the airport, paid the fare and walked into the building with a light step. Today was his day and nothing was going to spoil it. At a distance he spotted another member of the cell but ignored him they were not suppose to show recognition until the aircraft was in the air.

He bought a paper; the markets were volatile this morning, the weather outlook was clear. He browsed at the weather column in the news paper making sure the conditions for flying were conducive to his needs.

The airport was busy this morning “Ah America unsuspecting what is about to be visited upon you” He thought “Allah most merciful give me the strength to do my duty he whispered to himself.”

Awhile later the flight was called “Passengers for American Airlines flight 11 please make your way to gate 22 for boarding said the voice” Ali and the other passengers who had been seated around the lounge rose and walked to the gate. Now the others were near he could feel them, three people forward was another hijacker, he was doing okay even managed to crack a joke with one of the security people. That one had courage Ali thought where the hell is Mohammed? Maybe the leaders fears about the man had been well founded

Walk slowly, do not hurry Ali reminded. Himself you are dressed as a business man with a brief case, if you hurry you might arouse suspicion so just take your time and walk like you have the whole day at your disposal. It will happen quick enough once you are in the air he thought as he walked across the tarmac.

Up the gangway he climbed, his goal now insight. The last time Mohammed and the others would be feeling solid ground under their feet he reflected. The air hostess smiled at him, she was a pretty woman he thought but alas an enemy of Allah therefore destined to die in his cause of righteousness.

It had been a close call, the gates were already closing as Ali caught sight of Mohammed hurrying across the tarmac towards the plane. “Merciful Allah!” thought Ali “The idiot nearly missed the plane.”

The aircraft was taxing now down the run way. It had to wait a moment as another aircraft landed. Ali breathed easily now they were aboard, only a miracle could stop what was about to happen and he knew no such miracle was going to happen. The aircraft began to gather speed, thundering down the run way for a moment Ali was tempted to put his head between his legs; he wanted to pass out with joy. The feeling passed; now only a few minutes remained before the aircraft would be taken over.

Morning coffee had just been served and the light for seat belts had been switched off. Mohammed rose from his seat and moved forward Ali and the others did the same. "Sorry sir but the toilet is that way" said the air hostess. The words died on her lips as Ali drove the blade of the box cutter from one side of her throat to the other catching her body as it fell the blood now running freely. Mohammed moved fast, Ali was amazed at the speed with which he moved. Ali followed while the other hijackers began moving the passengers to the rear of the aircraft.

There was a lot of shouting as Mohammed reached the cockpit door, pulling one of the hostesses with him. He tried the door it was locked "Captain open the door" he shouted "Or I will begin killing your hostesses and when they are finished a passenger every five minutes!" The door inched slowly open, the face of the pilot grim. "What is the meaning of this?" said the big American in the captains uniform pushing the door wide open

Ali did not wait for the man to finish his sentence, he grabbed him from the side and dug the box cutter into the mans wind pipe. The man fell to his knees as Mohammed rushed past into the cockpit slashing the throat of the co-pilot before he had a chance to send a radio message. In the mean time Ali had cut the captains throat and let his body fall forward. For the first time he noticed that there was a lot of screaming going on, most of it by the hijacker's

Turning once more Ali entered the cockpit. Mohammed in the mean time had taken over the controls and was turning the aircraft in the direction of the World Trade Center New York.

In the distance the Towers could now be seen. Ali sitting in the co-pilots seat looked down at the ground far bellow, for a moment he thought back of a battle fought long ago on this same ground. But he dismissed it, what he was doing now was far, far more important he reasoned.

The engines were screaming. Mohammed had been unable to increase the speed of the jet aircraft. Ali had thrown his weight

behind that of his fellow hijacker and now the aircraft was speeding towards its destination. It was time Ali and Mohammed began to shout "There is no God but Allah, Allah is great!" In the final moments before the aircraft hit the tower Ali looked up at the windows of the building and was surprised to see a face he had last seen a hundred years earlier. Oh my God he thought .. Those were his last thoughts as the aircraft smashed into the side of the building. Flames enveloping the building as thousands of liters of jet fuel filled the air igniting.

Ali Bin Ebrihim Aka William Longmont

Ali Bin Ebrihim, as he now called himself, looked at his reflection in the mirror. The attack on the WTC had been a resounding success as far as he was concerned, not for many years had William Longmont felt so alive. He now considered what to do; it would be several weeks before it would be safe for him to leave the United States, in the mean time he would keep a low profile. It concerned him that in the moments before the jet had slammed into the side of the building he had seen looking down on him the face of that other immortal Samuel Ben Ezra. Why had he not considered the fact that Samuel might still be alive in the early 21st century was a puzzle to him. He had hoped that the man had found redemption in the concentration camps of Germany sixty years before but obviously this had not happened, now William or Ali as he now styled himself was faced with a problem. Should Samuel peruse the matter it could get ugly. Ali had no idea of where Samuel now might be as the occasional death which followed their life styles tended on occasion to place one on rising in the strangest of places and seldom near the place of the last death. This time Ali was worried and with reason: he had risen not far from the towers as they burned on that sunny morning leaving him with little option but to resort to one of the identities he had used shortly before converting to the prophet. The necessary bank account and safe house were all in place and he had taken full advantage of them to put as much space between himself and New York as possible. He rubbed lather to his face and lifted the razor to his chin. Boston was a lovely city, he had always been fond of Boston ever since he had spent a few weeks here back in the late 18th century during the war of independence. It was here that a

hundred and thirty years earlier he had once again met with Samuel by accident. William remembered those nights spent at the fire side talking of times long passed. William had continued to drop in on Samuel while he continued to run the inn. It was a sort of home for him back then. Being immortal of course had its draw backs and one of them was never been able to set up a permanent home, one was always on the move yet for a season the inn in the main street of Boston had been a refuge for him. In 1901 he had spent almost half a year there as Samuel's guest and how had William repaid him by killing him in the WTC bombing. Well how was he to know that Samuel would be in the building? Not that it mattered much now Ali Bin Ebrihim was a follower of Islam and no one would stop him from carrying out his religious obligations to the prophet and to achieve his salvation. Unfortunately his last death had not been enough to get him into paradise, he had a lot to account for. He considered that he would continue with jihad until such time as he reached paradise.

The doctor

Doctor Alfred Loeben the child of two holocaust survivors was a unique man. His parents, who had met on the day of the liberation of Auschwitz, had instilled in him as a young child the fear of God by making him promise to preserve the human spirit and the dignity of mankind. They had seen enough misery in their time in the death camps and wanted to bring up their child with a set of values that taught respect for human life and to value each human being as unique. From an early age he had been drawn to the study of the human condition so it was not surprising that when he left high school he wished to study medicine. He had first studied medicine at the University of Prague where he had graduated with honors in the field of neurosurgery and had gone on to teach at some of the major hospitals in Eastern Europe Of course this had been during the time when communism still held most of Eastern Europe in its steal grip.

He was fortunate as he came under the way of some of the top minds in the communist medical institutions and as a result of his excellent work he was given a grant to study advanced neurosurgery in Moscow. The grants he received from the polit bureau helped to further his studies in this field and by

the time communism was in effect suffering its death rattle. He had become one of the foremost experts on memory loss, having studied and helped patients who had returned from the war in Afghanistan retain their grip on their sanity. In an insane world he had performed hundreds of invasive surgical operations restoring the minds of men who had suffered the horror of war and lived. What he did was give them back their minds and their humanity.

After the fall of communism the good doctor had been invited to tour African universities giving lectures on the advanced procedures. It was during one of these tours that the doctor had been at a conference at one of Samuel's African hotels. Their meeting had been quite by accident: one night Samuel had popped into the particular hotel where the doctor was staying. Standing at the bar the doctor had ordered a whiskey and water. Samuel standing behind the bar had found that on occasion it was good to jump right in and serve the customer even if there was enough staff, it was not a good idea to keep a guest waiting. So Samuel had served the man, they had struck up a conversation and by the end of the evening Samuel had got to know the doctor quite well. Samuel not wanting to be left in the dark on any matter had learned enough from the doctor to know that there was a field of neurosurgery which was brand new to the world and he wanted to know a bit about it. Before leaving the following day the good doctor handed to Samuel a thesis on the surgery and his contact details should he ever be in Eastern Europe, the good doctor had asked Samuel to look him up.

Thus it came about that just after the bombing of the World Trade Center Samuel was in possession of enough information to make an informed decision. Thus while Samuel waited for Van Heerden to arrive from South Africa in the days following the disaster he formulated a plan in which the doctor would play a leading role. Samuel was sure that once the circumstances had been explained to the doctor he would consent to the surgery. Even though it would be going against medical ethics to conduct the surgery on William Longmont once they had managed to capture him and contain him in a secure location.

His hesitation at phoning the doctor came only on account of the doctors busy schedule but Samuel had need not have worried for when the operator had finally connected the call to the clinic high in the Swiss Alps the doctor was pleased to hear from the innkeeper.

“What can I do for you this afternoon?” asked the doctor. “I have friend who is in need of “your expert medical work” said Samuel “Ah I would be glad if you could bring him to my clinic for an interview “said the doctor. “I am afraid that is out of the question doctor. I need you to come to the United States to see the patient.” said Samuel. "A terrible tragedy" said the doctor the sound shock carrying over the transatlantic line. “Very well the earliest I can be there is in a week is that suitable?” asked the doctor. “Will the patient’s condition not deteriorate in the mean time?” asked the doctor.

“There are complication but I am sure that the mans condition is stable at this time” said Samuel

On the morning following the arrival of the South African Samuel and Van Heerden took a taxi to the airport to fetch the doctor. Samuel was a little concerned that the doctor would not consent to task at hand but he felt sure that once the circumstances had been explained to him he would willingly carry out the surgery. In the week that Samuel had been left kicking his heels in the New York hotel room he had found lots of time for reflection. Of one thing he was sure: the fact that any injury of a serious nature to himself or William Longmont would last until the next death had been established a long time ago. Thus he was hoping any surgery to the brain of William Longmont would fall into the same category.

Van Heerden bought a cup of coffee and a newspaper. The papers were still full of speculation as to what would happen next. There would be a war, of this the news papers were sure, then when the war was going to start, well that was another matter. The main suspect in the bombing of the World Trade Center was Osama Bin Ladin, charismatic leader of Al Qudia who currently found himself some where in Afghanistan if the latest reports were to be believed.

The plan comes together

Once the doctor had booked into his room Samuel suggested to him that he get a few hours of sleep as the Trans continental flight had been a long and tiring one for the doctor.

In the mean time Samuel and Chris would take a walk in the park to take a break from all the events of the resent week. This was to prove almost imposable for even in the park there were people handing out flyers with the pictures of loved ones who had disappeared on September 11.

They found a seat in the park and for a while they feed the birds Chris was in a reflective mood, after a while he said the events of that tragic day will no doubt be used by some to gain advantage over others." "How do you mean?" asked Samuel "I am sure some criminal minds have already put their minds to this situation in hopes of gaining from it. In the mean time my heart goes out to all those who have lost loved ones in this disaster." said Chris.

"Have you yet decided how you are going to convince the doctor of the need for this operation?" asked Chris. "I need to explain to him just how dangerous William is" said Samuel. "For centuries he has been killing and has never had to fear the consequences. I am sure this has made him lazy as regards his own safety and that is his fatal flaw" said Samuel

"I see you point" said Chris "I have a contact in the CIA who I have made an appointment to see later today in connection with this" he continued. "I trust that he is a man of discretion?" said Samuel. "Oh yes, Ben is an old friend and I am sure he will be able to turn up some sort of lead which might help" Said Chris.

"The longer we wait the greater the chance that he might once more be in position to do serious damage" said Samuel. "I realize this and the wheel will be set in motion to catch him shortly" said Van Heerden.

"Tell me a bit about this friend of yours in the CIA" said Samuel. "Well he is a top operative who has recently been promoted to a desk job. He was a field man for many years and has the ability to make snap decisions on his feet which is

one of the reasons he is so good at his job” said Chris.
“Where is his field of expertise” asked Samuel. “Ah I was waiting for that one. Well Ben was specifically trained for the Eastern European theater of the cold war. I ran into him a couple of times when I was still in the service and we struck up a working relationship about twelve years ago on a visit to Moscow” said Chris.

“How much are you going to tell him” asked Samuel?
“Enough to wetten his appetite, but not enough to make him dangerous” said Chris. “I will trust to your discretion. One thing I would not like to happen is for me to end up in some secure location been studied like a rat” said Samuel. That won’t happen said Chris “Now I think we need to get back to the hotel room. I need to phone South Africa and find out how things are going at home” said Chris.

The sound of the intercontinental phone line filled Chris’s ear as he rang home, and after a few seconds the phone was picked up by a sleepy Lena “Hello is that you Chris?” “Yes how are you?” he asked. “Fine, just sleepy. What time is it there?” she inquired “3pm sorry to wake you my love but I need to ask you, have you got the short list of deacons I asked you to put together for me?” He continued. “Yes” she replied “It is in your study do you want me to fetch it” she asked? “No not right now but I would like you to e mail it to me in the morning if you get a chance” he said. “Okay Chris how is every thing there?” she asked “Fine. Look my love I cannot talk about it now, but I promise that as soon as I get back I will fill you in” he said. “Good night my love” he said “Good night” dear she said, the line going dead.

“Well how are things in South Africa” asked Samuel? “Every thing is fine there” said Chris. “I was thinking that I might have to by some property round Southerland in the Cape” said Samuel. “That is a beautiful part of the country yet it is so out of the way no hotel is going to prosper there, the only thing that really attracts people there is the telescope” said Chris.

“Exactly, out of the way quite few visitors and those who do come are not looking to find people there, they want to see stars” said Samuel. “What did you have in mind for the place” asked Chris?” “A prison for William” said Samuel “A long term solution. I will pay for the jailors who will need to watch

him for successive generations until we have come to some definite answer on what to do with William in the long term” said Samuel.

“Samuel that is a brilliant plan. I think I could find a few people who could act as the first generation of jailors for William” said Chris “I knew you might. I know the members of your congregation are very loyal and hard working, the only thing that concerns me is the fact that they might at some stage want to talk and that could put us all in jeopardy” said Samuel.

“I think we will have to be very circumspect when it comes to choosing these jailors” said Samuel. “How is your lovely wife by the way? Was she waiting up for your call or did you wake” her asked Samuel “She was asleep but glad to hear from me” said Chris.

Preparation for the capture of Ali

Benjamin Gofirian sat at his desk. In front of him lay a photograph of William Longmont taken round about 1901. “Are you telling me this man is still alive?” He asked the South African, “As strange as it seems yes he is and he has not aged a day since the photo was taken” said Van Heerden.

“Excuse me but this is to strange for words” said the tall American; “I know it seems unlikely and it sounds like a prank but I can assure you of the truth of the matter” said Van Heerden. “So you would like me to run this mans photo through our database and see what we come up with” said the American biding his time until the South African would be more forthcoming with information.

“Exactly, the sooner the better. I have reason to believe that this man is a dangerous enemy operative and it will take extreme means to stop him from killing again” said Van Heerden. “Is this man in any way connected with the resent attacks in New York?” asked the American.

“I am unable to specify at this time for what reason we are interested in the man, but I can assure you that if he is we will

turn him over to you as soon as our interrogation is complete" said Van Heerden.

"Very well I will set in motion the wheels which will turn up any results we might find. If you will call again tomorrow at about noon I might have some thing for you." said Gofirian. "Thank you" said Van Heerden rising from the chair. "Please pass on my regards to your lovely lady wife, I was hoping to see you again under more pleasant circumstances but unfortunately time is against us in this case" said Van Heerden.

The following day Van Heerden arrived for the meeting with Gofirian. Once he had been shown into the large office and the secretary had left Gofirian began to speak. A rather thick file lay on the desk. "I don't know what the hell you are playing at here but I want you to know I want in on this said the American." "Agreed" said Van Heerden, knowing that Gofirian would not have reacted like this if there had been nothing in the search results.

"To begin with this man you call Longmont has a very long history. I have details here going back to the first world war when he was a private, or some one by that name was a private, in the Imperial German army. Later another William Longmont was arrested for mass murder after the second world war but he some how managed to escape the hangman even though he was sentenced to death for hundreds of thousands of murders in the Eastern European theater of that war. I have here a report on KGB operatives in the 1960's when this man should have been very old but yet he is working in the Georgia region of the USSR. Even more recently spy satellite photos of this man in Afghanistan, Kenya and even Israel. Now what the hell is going on?" said the American.

Van Heerden began to tell the story which he so recently had become the recipient of. The shadows of the afternoon crossed the room and when the story was finally finished the sun was kissing the horizon good night.

"This is incredible" said Benjamin "But it has a ring of truth about it. You do realize that a prisoner like Longmont cannot be held in any normal prison environment?" said Van Heerden. "I agree it would be almost impossible for someone like him not to find the means to do away with himself" said Gofirian.

"Fortunately our friend Samuel has an independent fortune which can pay for the operation and the means to imprison the man for an extended period, or at least until the current danger of Islamic terrorism has passed from the pages of history" Said Van Heerden.

"But to think that they could exist! It is still some thing that I have trouble believing! Think living for centuries, watching the passing of time. How many times did they intervene in history? How many times did they change the course of history?" Asked Gofirian

"I have asked myself this question a number of times since I was first made aware of it. I still find it difficult. Samuel says for the most part he was the innkeeper of history, always obliging, always serving. Occasionally been caught up with some event over which he felt compelled to act but Longmont, he was always a soldier fighting in the wars of history" said Van Heerden.

"Right the question now is where is Longmont now and how do we go about capturing him with out killing him" asked Gofirian. "I should think that the second question is easier to answer then the first. If tranquilizer darts were used we might be able to knock him out, but as to where he is we might have a long hard search ahead of us" said Van Heerden.

"Fortunately I have various operatives in key positions around the nation" said Gofriian "I will put out a directive that he is to be taken alive and subdued until we have time to get him back to your base. You do have a base here in the USA don't you?" asked Gofrian

"No I do not, Samuel has a place in mind where he can be held until it is time for the operation to take place but it is outside

the USA and that might just be a good thing” said Van Heerden.

“I would be interested to meet your friend Samuel at some stage. I know from what you tell me he is a reclusive wealthy business man with property all over the world, but I would still like to meet him” said Gofirian.

“I will ask him but you will understand of course if he declines, as yet the risks to himself are far greater than any of us can imagine” said Van Heerden

CHAPTER TEN
The doctor learns the truth

The doctor was up. He had woken refreshed from his long flight, he had some breakfast and put a call through to Samuel's room. "Good Afternoon Samuel, if you will give me a half an hour to shower I will join you soon" he said into the mouth piece. "No rush doctor we are about to have some coffee and English muffins" Samuel said. The doctor replaced the receiver got out of bed and made his way to the bath room.

The doctor arrived promptly half an hour later at room 912. Samuel showed him in to the room where he took a seat near the window. "Am I correct in assuming that the patient will be some what unwilling to have the procedure carried out" he asked. "Indeed the patient might prove to be very violent" said Samuel "Our main project currently is to lay our hands on the patient" he continued.

"I was wondering doctor, I know you have strong views on the sanctity of life and I respect them. However the question here goes towards the greater good of humanity and the procedure if possible might go against your medical ethics" said Chris Van Heerden.

"In general my ethics forbid me to carry out a procedure which might cause greater harm to the patient" said the doctor.

"Very well, I see we will have to explain more fully the problem we currently face." said Samuel "Please be patient and bear with me as I recount the story of my life, which I am sure you might at first find unbelievable but I have certain evidences which might convince you" he continued..

Samuel begun to tell the story which he had previously told Van Heerden. He spoke at length on the subject of the persecutions he had undergone as a Jew in the middle ages. When he came to the part of his life which covered the years 1938 too 1945 he noticed that the good doctor sat forward

occasionally taking notes in short hand. To Van Heerden, who had previously heard the story of this strange mans life, it seemed as if the doctor was examining Samuel as a possible patient for an institution. However when various photographs and documents were produced the doctor it seemed, began at first to doubt his own sanity but he quickly adjusted and continued to take notes. Occasionally he would finger a document from some distant period in the past which seemed relevant to the narrative which Samuel told. He paused as the doctor looked down at a leave pass from 1946 for sergeant Samuel Ferreira of the United States army, another document a draft of several thousand pounds for Mr Samuel Ferreira drawn on the bank of England back in 1896 a photo of Samuel taken in 1901 in Boston with a tall German at his side when the subject of the tall German was broached the reason for the meeting became apparent.

Samuel related the events of the resent weeks, the tragedy which had fallen on the World Trade Center he retold of his fleeting glance of William Longmont.

The discussion then turned to what the doctor would be called upon to do, the fact they at this time did not know where William was did not worry Samuel as he knew he would turn up like the proverbial bad penny. Ben Gofrian was hard at work tracing through various intelligence agencies the path followed by the man over the last few years

“Now doctor I need to ask you the following question” said Samuel at last as the evening sounds carried through the open window. “Is it at all possible to do a procedure to remove the mans long term memory so that in effect he is only able to live in the present moment or to make such changes to his brain that he has a memory of but a few minutes?”

The breeze ruffled the curtain as the room grew quite. The doctor tapped with his pen several times on the note pad before he said quietly “If what you say is true this man is a serious danger to the entire world. The operation although

delicate I am sure is quite possible, I do however have a question. Should it be carried out I have no guaranty of recovery. I in effect have no way of telling if his mind will restore itself to its previous condition, have you at all made any plans to keep this man a prisoner for any length of time?" Inquired the doctor.

"Speaking from personal experience the damage done to the body during one life time is permanent until death and is irreversible" said Samuel. "I would be interested to know" said the doctor "How medicine and the ravages of disease affect the body of this man?" "I would imagine that Williams body is subject to the same laws as mine" said Samuel. "I have thought about the changes in the human race over the ages and I believe that our dietary behavior has a lot to do with our DNA, and should you run tests on my DNA you would find that it is no different from that of those around me with a few variants from my origin" said Samuel.

"Did you ever suffer from illness in the middle ages or the renaissance?" asked the doctor trying to judge how different Samuels body was from normal humans. "On one occasion I contracted small pox, it marked me for that life time back in the 15th century. A most unpleasant illness it was, but I survived and until I was accidentally killed I bore in my body the marks of that scourge" the immortal said.

"Good thus we now know that the patient is subject to a number of conditions which will affect the out come. Tell me how you plan to capture this man, for I imagine he will resist any attempt to capture him most vigorously" said the doctor.

"There exists a strong sedative which is usually used on big game in Africa which can be loaded into normal tranquilizer guns, which we plan to use when we eventually trace the man. We in no way want to endanger his life as that would be defeating the aim of our project" said Van Heerden.

“Very well this is all I need to know” said the doctor closing his note pad. “I wonder if I may take a sample of your blood for analysis?” Said the doctor to Samuel.

“I have no objection if it helps to bring about the capture of William and the eventual outcome of a successful operation” said Samuel

The Capture of Ali

He knew the longer he stayed in one spot the greater the chances of been captured, yet he felt no compunction to move on. He felt as if he had out run all dangers for the time being and now he wanted to rest. The fact that he was now responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent people was not making him feel guilty, it was quite the opposite. In fact he felt proud of the fact that he had brought to the worlds attention in no uncertain terms the fact that Islam was at war with the decedent western establishment.

He contemplated wether he should order room service. He was hungry admittedly yet he wanted to expose himself to as little contact with any one for the next few days while he contemplated how he was going to get out of the United States. Of course security at all airports was at an all time high. He had ventured out only once in recent days to collect a number of passports and much needed cash. He had not wanted to but necessity had dictated that he collect the items needed. His plan was to lay low for a few weeks until things cooled down a bit.

The telephone rang in the office of Ben Gofirian. He picked up the receiver and listened. “You sure?” He said. He listened a moment longer then said “Maintain surveillance and wait for instructions” before replacing the receiver. He picked up the phone again after a moment and put a call through to Chris Van Heerden.

“Good day Chris I have some news for you about our client. We have traced him to a hotel in New Jersey. My next question is very important as it might effect the eventual out come of your operation. Do you want to take it from here or do you want my men to take him down?” He listened for a

moment then said "Very well I think we should meet, can you meet me at my office in an hour? All right" he said replacing the receiver.

He had done favors for trusted friends before, the criteria he used for these favors was always the same: at some stage the trusted friend would be expected to repay in some small way the favors in kind. Either by supplying information or doing some task, which helped protect the interests of the citizens of the United States. He reasoned far better to have a friend in a foreign part than to be faced with problems of going to the local authorities for help. Usually operatives in foreign parts were only too glad to repay the favors, and this seemed like another case of you scratch my back I scratch yours.

Samuel and Chris Van Heerden arrived at the office an hour later. In the mean time Ben had changed into clothing more fitting for an under cover operation, the three piece suit was gone and in its place was a man in jeans and flack jacket with a long haired blond wig.

On been shown into the office Chris said "Gosh Ben I hardly recognized you! It seems just like old times do you remember Moscow 1987" he asked. "As if it was yesterday where have the years gone" Ben said. Back then they had both been young men in their prime now they were fast approaching middle age.

The van in which they sat was a high tech version of the old surveillance vans, but this one was a step up. It had air conditioning and a bank of surveillance equipment filled the interior. "The man going under the name of Charles Van Longeden is on the third floor of the hotel just opposite. He has been out once in the last week and a half, he orders all his food in and it seems is a very private person," said Ben. "What makes this subject the center of our attention is the fact that he was caught on a mall camera a few hours ago purchasing some clothes from a store. One of our operatives happened to be in the area and recognized him from the photograph. Therefore, he trailed him here and has been watching ever since" said Ben flicking a switch the image of a strip mall filled the screen. For a few seconds before the image of a man that Samuel had seen a hundred years last. flickered across the

screen. Samuel sat forward and said, "My God it is him he hasn't changed a day"

"I think for the success of the operation you Mr Ferreira should stay in the van until we have effected a capture. If he should happen to look out of the window and see you he might become suspicious and do some thing drastic," said Ben "But" said Samuel. "I agree with Ben" said Chris Van Heerden "it is too risky. We know what we are doing you will just have to be a little patient a little long my friend" he continued.

"So what is the plan of action on this one?" Asked Chris "Soon he is going to need to order food with the help of the hotel manager we are going to serve him some food and at the same time capture him. My men are in position but he never opens the curtains, so we do not know what exactly he is up to. We have some sound equipment in the next room, he is alone and if I am not mistaken he is currently taking a shower" said Ben as he listened into an ear piece "we had better get in to position" he continued.

Chris and Ben Gofirian crossed the hotel lobby both now dressed in the fashion previously mentioned. As they crossed the lobby Chris noticed a squat man with a dark complexion sitting reading the morning papers. The man stirred, he looked vaguely familiar but Chris could not place him. It worried him that some of the skills he had learned as an operative were beginning to slip, there had been a time when he could place a face in an instant and it had ment the difference between life and death in some cases.

The phone rang in the kitchen; it was the guest from room 315 he wanted a steak and chips with a little salad on the side. "Coming right up sir" said Ben Gofirian replacing the receiver and handing the chat to the young kitchen supervisor. "Better get the food ready the man sounds hungry" said Ben as he began to open the special box which contained the tranquilizer gun.

Agent John Borchards enjoyed his work. In his three years with the firm he had traveled widely and had got to know quite a number of foreign ports quite well. Due to his youthful

appearance he was usually roped into playing the part of bellhop or waiter quite often.

This assignment only differed in one respect from all the others he had performed. It was his first operation on US soil and he desperately wanted to get it right. His boss Ben Gofirian was a hard one to please and John did not want to get on the wrong side of the boss.

Now as he pushed the dinning cart to the room he felt for the handle of the tranquilizer gun in his ear and the voice of Ben Gofirin was giving him last minute instructions. "Slowly when you get to the door we do not want the suspect to become overly suspicious. If he refuses to open the door tell him you have to have the bill signed for hotel accounting that should work." Silence. For a few moments as he reached the door gently, he knocked sliding the gun into position waiting now for an answer. From the other side of the door a voice "Yes? "Room service sir with your dinner" said John "leave it there I will get it later" came the reply" "All right sir but I need you to sign the bill for the billing office," said John.

The door opened an inch "give it to me" said the man from the darkened room. Removing a large bill file from the bottom of the dinning cart John played for time "Sure is tragic what happened in New York" he said. "Yes" said the man in the room inching the door open now impatient to be rid of the bellhop.

An inch more and John would be able to get a clear shot at the man "TV is full of reports. I wonder if they are going to attack Afghanistan, it must be the Taliban and that Osama fella who did it" said John. "You think?" Said William now opening the door wide. "Sure do sir" said John as he straightened up with the bill folder in one hand and the gun in the other. It was at that moment that he fired and William looked at him in surprise as he stumbled back into the room trying to close the door. John Borchards chose this moment to kick the door open and pounce on the resident of the room. William AKA Ali Bin Ebrihim was struggling to pull the dart from his chest. The effects of the drug already noticeable: for him the world had slowed. He could hear a voice in the distance, suddenly his legs gave way under him as he was trying to reach for the

window to jump but his body refused to obey. He had an overwhelming sense of weakness, never before had he felt like this his motor skills had deserted him and he now fell forward on to the rug...

Ben Gofirian stood in the room "Well done agent Borchers I am glad to say you did an excellent job in subduing the subject." Chris Van Heerden was bending over Ali taking a vial of blood as he had been previously instructed. The blood would be flown to Zurich and later delivered to the doctor's laboratory for analysis.

The body of William Longmont had been strapped to the gurney, two agents lifted the gurney and began to carry it towards the lift. The lift opened and four middle eastern men stepped out. They all had fire arms in their hands. A squat man held a ugly looking UZI machine gun in his hand. "I see you have captured our suspect, I trust this won't come as a shock" said the man "But you are going to hand him over to us. I am Major Mosheim Dean of Mossad he is our prisoner and is wanted for a crimes in the state of Israel."

"I am afraid I cannot do that" said Ben Gofirin "This man is a prisoner of the United States, if you want a piece of him you are going to have to wait" he continued. "I do not think so" said the Israeli major "I have the backing of your State department" as he produced a cell phone and began dialing a number.

"Hello yes I need to speak to the secretary of state" said the Major. "Hell Yes sir I have the man but one of your operatives won't hand him over." Yhe major listened for a moment then handed the phone to Gofirian.

"Hello" said Ben and the familiar voice of the secretary for defense said, "Gofirian hand over the prisoner to the major this instant. We have an arrangement they will provide us with any relevant information but they want this man so hand him over"

"Mr Secretary I believe that there are special circumstances of which you are not aware which I will discuss with you more fully as soon as I have a secure line." said Ben

This is a secure line. Go on tell me" said the voice on the other end of the line Ben turned and walked into the room closing the door behind him. He began to outline the details of the history of William Longmont. When he had finished there was a silence on the other end of the line for several seconds. Then the voice said, "I understand right put the major back on the line"

Ben opened the door. Stepping out he was surprised to see that Agent Borchards was laying on the floor in a large pool of blood Chris van Heerden lay unconscious further down the passage and the two agents who had been carrying the gurney lay sprawled by the lift also unconscious. Of the Israelis, there was no sign.

"Mr Sectary I will have to get back to you there has been some developments while we spoke. It is safe to assume that the major has taken the matter into his own hands and has kidnapped our subject" said Gofrian

The Mossad Major

The major sat at his desk. Before him lay a detailed analysis of the various blood and tissue samples which had been taken by Doctor Loeben. The information in the report was mind blowing and at the same time mind-boggling. He picked up the report and began once again to read the preliminary findings a brief description of the results before the report went into a detailed and extremely complex explanation.

Report on DNA of subjects A and B

Subject A

The following conclusions can be drawn from the DNA samples of subject A (Samuel Ferreira) samples taken by myself on 20 September 2001 in New York.

The analysis of the blood sample subject concludes that they are not the same as the general population of any population group alive today. The subjects DNA samples show signs of the origin being from the middle east which would have been prevalent 2500 to 1800 years ago. The only similar DNA, which could be remotely linked, is that of the Jewish

population. The DNA of subject A points to a primitive DNA sample of the Israeli population.

The subjects own DNA has been found to be present in a small number of Persons alive today and points to a remote ancestor who might have lived 2000 years ago.

Conclusion: the subject is of distance Middle Eastern origin of extreme longevity.

Subject B

The following conclusions can be drawn from the DNA samples of subject B (William Longmont) samples provided by Mossad date unknown.

The Analysis of blood and tissue samples of the subject point to a primitive connection with the Germanic races. There is no known instance of similar DNA been found in any living subject in Germany or Eastern Europe today.

The subject's tissue matter points to a remote relationship with the ancestors of the Italian population group but this is a rarity found only in 2% of the population.

If this was true then he had on his hands two of the oldest people in the world. If this was true then why had they not aged and what was keeping them alive he wondered? The two subjects had been captures in a small town a few miles from New York. The Major had prevailed on the good graces of his relationship with in the USA's security apparatus to abduct these two men following the report of the activities of Samuel Ferreira an alleged South African citizen.

The two subjects had been held under sedation while they had been put aboard a special plane bound for Israel. The major foresaw that there might be problems with the kidnapping of the two subjects in days to come and he had determined to get as much information out of them before handing them back to the Security forces of the USA for further interrogation.

It was crucial that he gain as much information from them before they passed their sell by date. The major believed that it was very important to the safety of Israel that he peruse this particular case with vigor.

Of the two subjects the one he believed would be the easiest to break would be Samuel Ferreira who was a well known Hotelier. It was also important that he broke him quickly and got all the information he needed from the man before his disappearance was noted. It would have been easy to make every one believe he had died in the world trade center bombings but unfortunately he had been in contact with various people since then and it would not be believable.

The other subject had been observed on various occasions entering Israel over the last two years only to disappear and then reappear once more entering the country with out any record of ever leaving. This had aroused the attention of the intelligence agency with in Mossad and this pointed to some very problematic issues for one subject B known as Ali Bin Ebrihim Aka William Longmont had been followed on one of these occasions to a cinema which shortly there after had been destroyed by a suicide bomber.

The major crossed the room and opened a fridge, he poured himself a glass of orange juice and lit a cigarette. It was going to be a long day, his first order of business would be to interview Samuel Ferreira and find out what he knew and why exactly had he attempted to kidnap subject B? This was a question which puzzled the major, for if there were two men who should have been on the same side it would be these two, for they both had very mysterious pasts and the major concluded that they would have wanted to hide it from the rest of the world.

The second subject William Longmont, well here was another story and a strange one indeed. The doctor in Switzerland had on occasion passed on interesting bits of information about suspected war criminals. The day he had been shown the photo of William Longmont in the hotel room he had immediately recognized the man as an SS officer. As the story had unfolded his suspicions had been confirmed and later he had put a call through to Jerusalem. Thereafter the wheels had been put in motion to capture both subjects. The major doubted if the second subject would ever be handed over to the intelligence services of the USA. for should he prove to be the notorious death squad Major responsible for hundreds of

thousands of murders of the victims of the second world war he would be put on trial and would receive the death sentence he so richly deserved.

The major stubbed out his cigarette and left the office on the second floor of the Beth-Chan private clinic. He took the elevator to the third floor. He was glad there was air conditioning in the building, which doubled as a private hospital for government ministers and as a base for the Mossad to operate in Telaviv. Today promised to be one of those hot days that the tourists spoke about when the sun warmed the waters of the dead sea, then later a wind would rise and sweep the hot air from the Galilee into the Judean hills. He entered one of the rooms set aside for patients of the Mossad and the man in the bed turned his head both of his arms were fastened to the bed by straps. "Morning Shumel and how are you this fine morning?" asked the Major Samuel looked up weakly wondering what to expect. "Morning Major" said Samuel trying to smile "Shall we begin where we left of yesterday?" asked the major taking a glass and filling it with water.

The angel Ureil is summoned be for the most High in Samuel returns

Entering now into the portals of the heavenly places where the streets shine like gold the leaves and the grass never wither the Lion lay down next to the sheep, the glory of eternal holiness abounded in the streets of this most sacred precinct where angels were to be found going about their daily duties, having neither a moment to rest or sleep for they have no need of these things, for they are eternal beings very different from men who have need of sustenance and rest. Most of the Angels spend their time in worship of the most High God ruler of the universe. To quote from the words of the twentieth century believer of my acquaintance "Heaven is another country which far surpasses our knowledge which we have not yet beheld. Should we behold it the words would fail us to describe the glorious light of God which permeates to ever region of the universe for the country of Heaven a wondrous place of beauty beyond the words and description of mere mortals."

Ureil, guardian angel over Israel was summoned to appear before the Lord of Hosts when the loyal servant of the great and awesome God appeared before the throne upon which the great God sat. The Lord looked for a moment with a kindness filling his eyes as he beheld the angel who had for centuries immemorial been the guardian angel of the people of Israel.

“Tell me Ureil how are things going with my people Israel?” The great God asked this not because he did not know, for the Lord of hosts omnipresent and omnipotent knows all things. The cherubim and the serubim who surround the throne of the great God continued in their worship of the great and wonderful God creator of the universe, with out nothing that was created nor lived or breathed could exist.

“My Lord and King great God of the universe blessed be your name for ever” replied the angel. “Things in the land of Israel and the people there in are going according to your eternal plan. Daily there are added to the number of those who were Sojourners in strange land return to make up the nation once more.” the heavenly being continued.

“I hear that in the land of the sons of Abraham, my faithful servant, there is at this time two sojourners who have been cursed to wander until they have worked out their salvation. Tell me oh Ureil why you have taken these two sons of Adam captive and to what end? “

“My Lord I deemed it good that when certain knowledge of evil deeds done by one of these souls to the people of Israel to take action to prevent further deeds which would have destroyed the peace of the people to a great extent thus I have had the people of Israel take captivity of these two souls.”

“Loyal and faithful Ureil no you not that I have these two very souls in my control at all times? Know you not what a wonderful work of salvation shall be done with these to sojourners?” Asked the Lord his expression changing to one of fearsomeness.

“I beg you pardon if I have erred on the side of caution. Oh Great Lord pray instruct me in what action should be taken” said Ureil.

“I want you to arrange as soon as possible the release of the captive Samuel Ben Ezra, there after allow to be released in to his power the other captive Longmont who recently styled himself Ali bin Ebrihim, for I have a great work a head of Samuel Ben Ezra which when complete will astonish the world” said the great God.

"I will arrange it with all possible speed my Lord" said the Angel, bowing low and making a move to withdraw from the presents of the Great Lord of hosts, “ A moment more of your time Ureil!” said the Lord " I am at your disposal" replied the angel.

“Now behold the work I plan" said the Lord "for it was Samuel who 2000 years ago denied Mary and Joseph a place for the night telling them to sleep in the stable. Now for his trouble Mary cursed him to wander until he found his salvation. Now as the time of man grows short on earth for the sons of Adam Samuel seeks still to find his salvation. For centuries he has served as the eternal innkeeper but now he has a mission to save the world. Oh poor foolish man, how would he save the world you might ask? Why but from Longmont who has gone over to Idolatry he never was a servant of mine but of late he has gone over to the most extreme form of radical idolatry following after the false prophet Mahomet, who now resides in hell with his father the devil" said the Lord God.

“But behold, the work I am about to perform in the lives of these two souls will be spoken of for many eons to come by those generations which are to follow, for it will be recorded that when all else had failed Samuel turned once more to the God of his youth and sought answers once again from a place he thought never more to find them. To embrace with his whole heart the teachings of my dear Son and to learn from them the spirit of peace and truth, after such a long wandering bringing once more the truth and light of my word to the world. To a world gone mad after its own devices and evils of the flesh”

Smiling once more the Great God looked down from his throne upon his servant Ureil. "Do you understand now my faithful messenger?" asked the Lord God.

"Thou art wise and great my Lord. Thou knowst all things!" replied the angel bowing low knowing as he always did that his creator is indeed the only one who knows all things and knows that all things work for the good of those who believe.

The release of Samuel

The brigadier general closed the file on his desk and picked up the telephone and dialed a number. A few seconds later the voice of the major could be heard "Yes sir" "David you are to release Samuel Ferreira and fly him to any part of the world he wants to go" said the brigadier general. He listened for a moment as the major made an attempt to stop this happening "No David you are to follow my orders and you are not to breath a word of this to any one, as far as you are concerned this matter is closed and as far as the other prisoner is concerned you are to stop questioning him and await my instructions. You are to keep him sedated and secure but do not engage him in any further interrogations, is that clear?" said the brigadier general. "Yes sir" replied the major "You are also to send me all documents in regards to this case as soon as possible is that clear?" Asked the brigadier general. He waited a moment to hear the answer. In the affirmative before continuing "You are a young man with your whole career before you. David I would strongly recommended to you that you forget about this whole matter if you want to advance in the army is this understood?" Asked the brigadier general "I understand" said the major "Shalom" said the senior officer putting down the receiver

Officer's mind turned once more to the telephone conversation he had received shortly before he had put through the call to the major. The Sectary of state of the United States had been very angry and very direct; it had not been a pleasant experience.

The major put his cell phone back in his pocket and turned to the bed on which Samuel lay "It would seem Sir that you have some powerful friends. I am to inform you that you are free to

go with in an hour. A car will take you and your luggage to the airport, where a plane will be waiting to take you where ever you might wish to go” he said as he begun to loosen the straps that bound Samuel’s arms to the bed.

It took Samuel all of forty five minutes to shower shave and dress and become reacquainted with his belongings. In the mean time the brigadier general had put through a call to the doctor who first brought the information which had brought Samuel into the spear of influence of the Israeli intelligence organization. “Shalom” said the Brigadier general when the doctor came on line “do you know who is speaking” he asked the doctor. "Yes sir I recognize your voice from the television and the sessions in the Knesset" said the doctor who was mildly surprised to hear the voice of such a senior officer phoning him.

“Good I am glad we are clear on that. Now I want you to listen clearly: Samuel Ferreira is being released. When he contacts you there are three things you will do. Firstly you will offer him every assistance with what he wants done. Secondly you are to report back to me on the completion of the task you do for him, and finally you are not to breath a word to any one about what you do for him. If you do by some chance forget the last thing I told you, please remember I have a very long arm and I can and will reach out and touch you in a way you do not want to be touched is this clear?” he asked the doctor. "Yes sir quite clear" said the doctor. "This conversation at an end" the officer replaced the receiver and smiled. Maybe he would be able to keep his lunch time appointment with the lovely Leah he thought.

In the mean time Samuel was been driven to the airport the major sitting next to him in the back seat of the Mercedes was quiet. Shortly before arriving at the airport the major turned to Samuel and said “Mr Ferreira I am instructed to tell you that the other guest of the Israeli government William Longmont will be released into your care. within the next week or so, please take my card and inform me where you want him to be brought when it is convenient for you” Samuel took the embossed card and put it in his pocket saying nothing, a silent fury beginning to build in his bosom. He wanted to say some thing to the major who had abducted him from the van in the

street of New Jersey but he could not, he was so furious he could not find the words and when the time came for him to board the jet it was too late. As he climbed the stairs, the major watched him, the look on his face betraying nothing of the feelings he had towards this strange man Samuel Ferreira. The story he had told under the administration of the truth drug was such a strange one that at times the major had begun to doubt if the man was sane. But only time would tell if he was indeed telling the truth. Any way he was no longer the major's problem, he had other cases to deal with but for future reference he would file away the information just in case....

CHAPTER ELEVEN
The flight back

The flight took off in a southerly direction after Samuel had told the pilot who met him at the door of the aircraft he wanted to go home to his little hotel on the coast of South Africa. As the jet climbed to fifteen thousand feet Samuel sat back in the chair and closed his eyes, he had a lot to think about. He needed to reestablish contact with Chris Van Heerden and find out what progress had been made. The last time he had seen the South African pastor was as he left the van to go and capture William Longmont who had been hiding out in the Jersey hotel room.. Little did he know that Chris Van Heerden and Ben Gofirin had moved heaven and earth to secure his release and that Gofirin in particular had used every ounce of influence he had in Washington to set things up for Samuel's release.

Samuel was glad to see the face of Chris Van Heerden on the other side of the security checkpoint. As he cleared customs Chris came over and shook his hand. "Glad to see you Sam, it has been one hell of a month trying to secure your release from the Israeli's" said Chris. "I am in your debt for your efforts," said Samuel "I am very glad to see you, what news on the other front?" asked Samuel

"The ranch at Sutherland is ready for the guest and I have employed a number of hands to keep the place in order. Then of course there are the guards who have been briefed on the situation. Robert you might remember is my eldest son, just out of university, is in charge you will meet him shortly," Chris said. As they crossed the vast concourse of Johannesburg airport they were joined by Lena Van Heerden. She did not say much but her motherly looks and loving attitude were immediately felt "Hello Mr Ferreira I am glad you finally made it home" she said. "Nice to see you again Mrs. Van Heerden. I believe I owe you an apology for keeping your husband occupied so long with my business" Samuel said.

"I have no reason to complain" said Lena "It is the Lords work and that always takes priority," she said.

Samuel looked at her astonished at what she had just said, turning to Chris with an inquiring look he asked "is your wife fully aware of the circumstances of this case?" "Yes of course I never hid any thing from her, she would have found out eventually and then we would have both been in hot water." Said Van Heerden.

As the big German BMW made its way on to the highway that would eventually take them to the house in the affluent northern suburbs of Johannesburg, Samuel began to relax. The last few hours had been like a dream for him. First a waking nightmare, for been a prisoner restraint as he had been under the drug sodium pentathalon had not been a pleasant experience. Then the dream had changed, the excitement as he realized that some thing had happened and he was been released; the flight to South Africa had been uneventful. Never the less Samuel wanted to feel the soil of Africa under his feet once more before he would believe that a miracle had occurred. Later he would learn that Ben Gofrin and Chris Van Heerden had moved heaven and earth to secure his release and the secretary of defense of the United States had been come involved. Questions had been asked in the capital how could a visiting guest of the United States be abducted by a friendly power from a New Jersey street? Further more how could a FBI operation be hijack by the agents of a friendly power? These questions had prompted quick action. A number of very highly placed officials in the Bush government had made phone calls and even a few flights to Israel before the release of the two men had been secured. The only reason William Longmont had not yet been released was on request of Chris Van Heerden who had asked for a few more weeks to ready the ranch on which the second immortal would be held after the operation which would rob him of part of his memory.

Now as the car speeded up to a hundred and twenty kilometers the talk in the car turned to more pleasant matters. In a few hours they would be attending an evening concert at the Mozartium Theater with an all Mozart program. The idea of the Mozartium Theater was the brain wave of a young South African businessman David De Villiers. This young man who had an honorable ancestry going back to the days of the first Dutch settlers at the Cape in 1652 had wanted to add a little culture to the African scene, for having grown up in a house

where classical music had always been played it seemed a great shame that the New South Africa did not have a theater where people could come and enjoy the music of the great composers in its original form. When Samuel heard of the planned evening entertainment he was delighted for it would give him a chance to relax and allow his mind to turn back to an age when honor was still some thing on which a mans word could be taken.

The car turned on to a dusty road a few miles from Santon and drove at the same speed it had done down the highway. Chris was an expert driver and handled the big car well. After a few minutes they turned of the gravel road and pulled into a driveway of the home of Pastor Chris Van Heerden. In the distance the stables could be seen, the house was a large structure after the design of a Tudor manor house with a lot of woodwork. The house had originally belonged to Lena's parents who had immigrated to the UK some years previously and left the house to their only daughter.

Robert Van Heerden came out of the house as he heard the car approaching, a tall youth of about twenty odd years with dark penetrating eyes. On his shoulders would rest a great responsibility of securing and keeping prisoner most probably one of the most dangerous men in the history of the world. It seemed fitting that when they entered the house the first thing that they heard was part of Naboko by Verdi. Later as they drank dark South African coffee they discussed the events of the last few weeks... The United States and a few other nations seemed to be getting ready to attack Afghanistan. It was expected, no one in the room doubted that it would happen. Now on a hot sunny South African afternoon this small circle of friends debated on how soon it would happen... The other question in their minds of course was would the leader of the organization Osama Bin laden be captured?

The elder Van Heerden's and Samuel left for their evening of classical music at a quarter to six as the sun was setting. While Robert and his younger sister June settled down to a typical Sunday evening at home watching TV reading and making some thing light for supper as was tradition in South Africa. A large dinner was eaten at mid day on a Sunday, the evening

meal been a light meal of a sandwich or a French salad for the more health conscious members of the family.

In the mean time Chris steered the large German car back onto the highway and headed for the city center. There was an air of expectance, the evenings proceedings promised to be one of the best that they would enjoy in quite a while. Reaching the city center Chris quickly navigated his way to the street in which the Theater stood. Formerly it had been a large warehouse build in the late 1800's, now totally renovated it was a shining example of late 19th century architecture. With a fresh coat of paint the interior been redone after the romantic style which was popular at the time of the Romantic composers. There were red velvet drapes and a lot of ornate wood work, fake Corinthian columns, having been set in place at the time of the renovations, gave the old building an air of grandeur which it had never possessed in its heyday as the Warehouse for Geo; Wood and Sons the former owners.

After dropping Lena and Samuel Chris spent about fifteen minutes looking for parking there were already quite a number of cars in the vicinity of the Mozartorium and this made parking difficult. While he was busy parking the car he took from the cubby hole a small portable radio which he slipped into his jacket pocket with the accompanying ear phones. In case he became board he would be able to listen to the news at 8 PM while in the theater, he was admittedly not a great fan of Classical music but over the years had come to appreciate it because Lena who had received training at the piano loved to listen to the music. He reckoned it was true what they said about opposites attracting. The reason he was not preaching this evening was that another senior pastor in his congregation had approached him and asked if he would allow him to preach on the occasion of his sons coming of age. To this Chris had agreed on condition that He (Chris) would be allowed to take the evening of and treat Lena to an evening of classical music.

Mean while on the steps of the Mozartorium Lena and Samuel waited. It took all of five minutes to find his way back to the entrance of the theater. Entering they were soon seated in the grand auditorium with about five hundred other guests; at interval there would be a light supper served and it was

evident that many of the people present would be looking forward to this. The auditorium filled up and after half an hour the lights dimmed, the stage lights came on and the orchestra which was tuning up were ready. The host for the evening was a young German pianist Oscar Von-Godslip, van Ordendal who came on stage to the sound of thunderous applause. He had previously performed in the same auditorium and had quite a number of fans. After a brief introduction to the first piece which was to be played he took his place at the grand piano and begun to play.

Samuel remembers Mozart

Samuel sat back in his seat and began to listen to the music, his mind was drawn back to an earlier age when the world was so much more a simple place. In particular he remembered a certain evening when he was attending a wedding in Salzburg. It was in 1770 if he recalled correctly and he had been returning from the eternal city via Austria and had occasion to call in on an old friend Fredrick Count Von Brundenburg who had been spending the summer months at his residence in Salzburg. He had arrived some hours earlier and was met by the old Count who had formally been a staunch supporter of the Jacobean cause and a major financial contributor to the rising of 1745. "Ah good friend Samuel, you never seem to age, how do you do it?" asked the count. In French "I believe it must be due to my healthy way of living" said Samuel.

"My son Augustus is getting married to day and the wedding feast will be this evening you must join us. I know you are very interested in music and I have employed for this evening one of the best young musicians here in Salzburg. A member of the ecclesiastical court no less, young master Mozart a genius I am told" said the count. "Indeed it will be a pleasure to see your son again. I remember when I bounced him upon my knee that must be all of thirty years ago if not more." said Samuel.

"As for the young master Mozart is he not the son of Leopold Mozart, the violinist and writer of the Thesis on the modern way of playing the violin?" asked Samuel "The very same" replied the count "I believe that this evenings musical interlude will be most pleasurable" he continued.

Later as Samuel wandered in to the large chamber in which the wedding supper was to be served he found that a number of musicians had already arrived and were making themselves feel welcome by enjoying some of the fine wines which the host of the wedding had provided for them. Nearby stood a young lad eating biscuits and cheese and occasionally taking a sip from a tankard of weak Austrian beer. This was young master Mozart preparing himself for the work that lay before him on this evening. The father of the lad stood close at hand speaking to one of the members of the group instructing him on how to proceed on a particular air which was to be played.

“Now Hans, wait for Wolfgang to begin the third section in D major before you strike out with your cello in a half tone lower.” Said Mozart senior “Yes Herr Mozart I will wait” said the ever dutiful Hans.

“Is that a new violin?” asked Samuel of the young Mozart as the lad picked up the instrument and strummed a few notes. “No sir it belonged to my father for many years before I began to train on it. Old instruments have such a beautiful tone, I doubt if ever I would be able to make a tone quite so beautifully if I had a new instrument.” said the young composer.

The other guests of the wedding part were beginning to arrive and so Samuel took his place at one of the tables. As others joined him the musicians began to play the tones so light welcoming the guests this evening Samuel would remember for many years and when Mozart had finally made a name for himself Samuel would look back in wonder, for compared to his own long life the great composer had seemed to live like a moth, for a brief moment coming into the light the disappearing. He would also stand in awe of the young man who had given so much to the world of music.

Samuel’s musings on the long gone evening were abruptly halted when Chris whispered to him “Sam the war has just started, they are bombing the Afghan cities, it has just been on the news.” Lena leaned forward and nudged her husband “shhh you are disturbing every one.” she said softly.

For the next half an hour Samuel could hardly contain his excitement. He could see out of the corner of his eye that Chris was listening to a concealed radio catching the latest news while Samuel had to be content with listening to the chamber music of Mozart.

When the intermission came the crowd began leaving the auditorium Samuel turned to Chris and said "For the love of God men don't keep me in suspense, tell me?"

"It appears as if the coalition forces have declared war on Afghanistan and the Taliban" said Chris, "Lena dear, do you mind if we leave early? I know it is an imposition but events are moving faster than we anticipated?" said Samuel. The headlights of the big German car reached out into the distance as it speeded down the darkened highway towards Santon. The LCD display of the expensive car stereo system cast a weird light in the interior of the car. The driver and passengers sat in silence listening to the voice of the announcer as he read the hourly news "Latest reports indicate that the first wave of bombings has hit a run way and a fuel dump near Jellalabad airport." Said the voice of the announcer turning to other news. "On the local news the Natal sharks delivered a stunning victory over the Mighty Elephants to an elated crowd at the Boet Erasmus Rugby stadium in Port Elizabeth earlier today. The final total was Sharks 32 points and the Elephants 24. The Sharks victory on the home ground of the Elephants did not dampen the crowd's enthusiasm for a game well played. Although Elephant supporters were in the majority there was an air of good fellowship as the crowds left the stadium after the match there was a profusion of Elephant and Shark flags waved by fans."

Chris Van Heerden reached out and switched the stereo off "Sounds like it was a good game, I hope that Robert taped that for me I would like to watch it later" he said. Chris spoke out of nervousness, he did not want to broach the subject of the start of the war on Terror. To him it seemed as if the world had lost some thing of great value when the Trade Towers had been attacked and now one would approach every subject related to it with caution. It was a coming of age for the world, for the world had lost its innocence on that fateful day when a

few evil men had put into motion a cycle of events which would bring the world to a point of almost global warfare.

"I guess we know now when the war started" said Samuel, who like the rest of the planet's population had been wondering when the USA and its partners would retaliate to the WTC strike. The population of the world at large had been kept waiting on tender hooks waiting for the moment when the news would come. It had been obvious for some time that Afghanistan would be attacked, but the date of first delivery had been kept a closely guarded secret. Now the secret was out and the news hungry world would sit before the TV screens until late at night in the hope of gaining the latest bit of information. While others could be seen listening to portable radio's waiting for the hourly news broadcasts.

When they entered the house they found the younger Van Heerden's sitting in front of the TV watching as the CNN announcer interviewing a political expert gave his opinion on the latest events. Occasionally the image on the screen would change and the grainy images of a spy plane's camera would show the flash of light as a missile exploded on the ground below striking home at another Taliban installation or at some poor unfortunate homestead of an Afghan rancher.

Crossing the room Chris picked up the remote and changed channels to the BBC overseas broadcast. He tended to trust the BBC more than the American broadcaster, as it seemed to him the American broadcaster was a little too close to the subject while the British broadcaster tended to give a more balanced view of events.

Yes there were the same grainy images of the missile strikes but the people interviewed on the BBC were from both sides of the spectrum. Here a highly respected British Imam gave his opinion on the events of the missile strikes. "Calling it an atrocity on the good citizens of the sovereign state of Afghanistan." While a right wing member of the British parliament called it just deserts. The only real tragic character in the show seemed to be the Moslem woman Alia who had fled Afghanistan several years before with her husband, a political dissenting voice who had later been killed by an

assassin. Alia's main worry was for her family who were in the Afghan cities which were being bombed.

After watching for a few minutes Chris turned down the volume and began talking. "I suppose this will take the focus off us and our little project" said Samuel "I hope so" said Chris "Robert and the first team will be leaving in a day or two for Sutherland." He continued... "I have been meaning to ask how things are progressing." said Samuel. "For one thing how have you managed to disguise the project, as a long term project of this type is bound to attract attention. By its very nature it seems suspicious?" "Oh I forgot to tell you we are breeding horses as a cover. So you are now the proud owner of Sutherlands biggest horse farm. We gave it the name of New Jerusalem Stud Farm, hope you like the name." said Chris

"My good fortune has always astonished me" said Samuel "although I have kept company with kings and queens and great and low people of history. I have never been privileged to own a horse farm, my wealth has never been geared to the amassing of property" he continued. Robert who was sitting on the floor realized that Samuel was in a playful mood and laughed. June looked up from her place where she was sitting on the floor a look of wonder in her eyes. She was aware that her father had been busy doing a lot of new things lately for this man and she believed that her father always did what was right but the words which had just passed from Samuel's lips were a surprise to her, for never in her short sixteen years had she ever met any one who had ever uttered words the likes of which Samuel had just uttered.

"I see you have not informed your daughter of the circumstances of my over long existence." said Samuel "Maybe it is time for you to do so."

As far as the authorities at the Johannesburg international airport were concerned the mercy flight which had just landed from Geneva had on board a close relative of the wealthy businessman Samuel Ferreira, the patient had undergone some major surgery and was still in an unconscious state. The world renowned doctor Lobeon had spent nearly twenty hours in the

theater delving, exploring, snipping and rerouting a vein or a tiny cell invisible to the naked eye.

The nursing attendants from the hospital in Switzerland seemed anxious to hand over the patient to the local nursing staff who were waiting on the runway to receive the man whose head was heavily bandaged. Near by stood a helicopter which belonged to the Ferreira group of hotels with its engine running. The reason the South African authorities were allowing this unusual procedure was they knew or rather guessed at the amount of capital the Ferreira group of hotels was bringing into the country and they were not anxious to lose it. Thus they allowed the aircraft carrying the ill person to take off for a small airstrip in Sutherland without being checked and this is how William Longmont AKA Ali Bin Ebrihim came to enter the Republic of South Africa illegally and as a prisoner of Samuel Ferreira. The helicopter flew for an hour and a half before it reached its destination the gentle hills of the Cape, rising to meet it as it approached its final destination the small helipad on the farm was close to the main house. Here they were met by Robert and Chris Van Heerden who had a few of the farm hands with them. They gently lifted the invalided Longmont to the ground and carried the stretcher into the farm house, up a flight of stairs and finally into a smallish room which had burglar bars over the window.

A nurse of matronly appearance was there to make the prisoner comfortable. When he was settled it remained only to see exactly how successful the operation had been, would William remember who he was and what he had done? Not knowing the exact extent of the loss of memory, all dangerous objects and items which might help the prisoner escape or do himself harm had been removed from the room.

About an hour after his arrival Samuel Ferreira entered the room and took a seat in a chair. Taking from the book shelf, a book on the history of the sport of Kings, he began to read waiting for the prisoner to awake.

He did not have long to wait. A moan from the man on the bed alerted him to his awakening from a long drug induced sleep. Sitting up Longmont looked around in astonishment. "Where

am I?" he asked in a dry broken voice. "You are on my ranch in the Sutherland region" said Samuel "Oh may I ask what happened the last thing I remember was???? I cannot remember who am, I do you know who I am???" He said in a panic "Relax William you have had a rather bad fall from one of the horses, the doctor said this could possibly happen" said Samuel. "I feel very weak was this from the fall?" he asked Samuel "I fear it is" replied Samuel "It was a rather bad accident you should never have tried to jump the hurdle. I warned you but you have always been a stubborn person dear brother" he said. "If only I could remember," said William "I recognize your face but the rest is a mystery to me, and my head hurts so much when I try and think" said William. "You just relax and take it easy, it has been a very traumatizing ordeal for you and you need to regain your strength" said Samuel. "I will leave you now William to rest, could I send you a cold drink of water or a soft drink?" asked Samuel "That would be nice" said William lying back on the bed.

Leaving William in the care of the nurse Samuel made his way to the large downstairs study where Robert and Chris were waiting. "Well does he remember any thing?" Asked Chris "Not a single thing. Remember we are at all times to maintain the delusion that he is my brother who took a bad fall. Under no circumstances is he to engage in any activity which might result in harm coming to him is this understood?" said Samuel turning to Robert.

"Yes sir I have already briefed the guards and the hands as to their duties and they will continue to be on the alert for any activity which might point to the return of his memory or any dangerous activity." Said the younger man "In the mean time I think I might become aquatinted with this farm a little over the next few days. If I am to be an owner of a stud farm then I may as well immerse myself in the necessary knowledge which one needs to be a successful horse farmer." Said Samuel "An excellent idea Samuel, considering I had to almost threaten your accountant with the lose of life and limb before he released the funds for the purchase of the farm." Said Chris

They made their way to the stables which were not to far from the main house. As they walked the short distance they fell to

talking of the local obsession with star gazing. "They say this is the best place in the Southern Hemisphere to observe the stars." Said Robert who had studied astronomy as a hobby as a young child and had kept up an active interest in the subject.

"Ah young Robert if you had seen the stars over Egypt one thousand five hundred years ago you would not think it such a wonder. Back then the skies at night were indeed an unspeakable beautiful wonder. Alas what we see today with so much light pollution is but a sad reminder of what we have lost.

"I am very sorry to have missed that, it must have been wonderful to have lived back then before the pyramids had been robbed of their limestone," said Robert. "Indeed it was young Robert indeed it was" said Samuel "And the great temple of Herod that must have been some thing to wonder at in all its glory" continued the young man

"Ah yes it a wonderful building" said Samuel "But the people who lived in the direction in which the wind blew would not have agreed with you. The smell of all the slaughtered animals for sacrifice was not pleasant," said Samuel. "Guess there is always some draw back no matter what ever age you live in." said Robert.

"Indeed young man there always is, life is seldom a bed of roses with out thorns." Said Samuel "So next time a comet passes by you will be in the best place to view it here at Sutherland" said Samuel. "I have been checking on the Internet and there is not one for a few years yet but in the mean time I am sure I will be kept fully occupied with tending to our guest" said Robert. In the mean time William had fallen into a fitful sleep and was having a nightmare in which his body was been consumed by flames. The nurse noticing the heavy sweat upon his brow wiped it with a damp cloth. She took her job extremely seriously and she had the best interests of the patient at heart. Brenda Mac Masters had been employed as a full time nurse for many years.

Seldom had the remuneration been as good as the current job and she wanted every thing to go smoothly. After all working for the wealthy Samuel Ferrari had many advantages, which

were not available in the government hospitals. She was saving up for a visit to Israel, a pilgrimage to the holy land some thing she had always wanted to do even as a young girl. Over the years she had bought many books on the subject and she most probably knew more then most of the Arab guides who took on round the ancient city.

CHAPTER TWELVE
THE MAC MASTERS FAMILY

Brenda was the younger daughter of a strict Catholic family and she knew what her duty was. That was until she had come under the influence of pastor Van Heerden and his church, now every thing she did she did for the love of her Lord. Although she tended to hold romantic hopes, she rather liked young Mr Robert, he was precisely the type of man she would be proud to present to her parents.

With the passing of time it became evident that William's memory was not returning. In fact quite to the contrary he was forgetful and slightly off balance. It was about three months after his arrival when Samuel happened to visit for a few days to check on his condition, and to see for himself how a young filly which they had been training had been coming along.

Robert had been doing a splendid job of running the ranch, which was already beginning to show a profit after the sale of a blue blood stallion to a Free State farmer who wanted the stallion for breeding purposes. When the farm had been first purchased from a family which was emigrating to the UK it had been on the condition that all livestock be purchased at the same time. The result was a few old breeding stallions had been part of the purchase price. It was one of these stallions that had sired a number of winners, which Robert had sold off after two months for a purchase price of nearly a million rand

"Well how are you feeling?" William asked Samuel "As well as can be expected Sam, I wish I could remember. But my memory is as bad as it has ever been since the accident." Said William. They were sitting in the large down stairs study, the lie that they were closely related was still been maintained. William was none the wiser, he had accepted at face value the fact that the accident had robbed him of his memory. As a result he had at first spent his days walking around on the farm getting to know the place. An attending guard never far from him, always some one keeping a watchful eye on him.

“So you have been keeping yourself busy I hear” said Samuel. Probing for any hint that Williams memory might in fact be better than he was actually letting on, “Yes I have been around the old place having a look at various things. I have worked out that we could be more efficient if we used the spring water to feed the animals then if we used the water piped in from the dam”. He said. “That is good, has Robert implemented it yet?” asked Samuel

“Yes Robert is quite a good farm manager. I am glad he is here he has been most helpful. He knows how to treat horses as well, he would make an excellent vet. When I asked him why he never studied to be a vet he told me he would prefer to work with people.” Said William “Yes I have got to admit he knows how to work with people to, he made quite an impression on the stud farmer from the Free State.” Said Samuel “And that made quite an impression on our bank balance” said William.

“Shall we go and have a look at that young filly they are training for the New Market race next month?” asked Samuel. “That is exactly what I had in mind” said William rising from his chair. In a paddock a few hundred meters from the house the jockey and a few farm hands were putting the young horse through its paces.

“See how she strides” said William after a few minutes of observing the horse “Yes she is young, four years old but she has the making of a great race horse” said Samuel. “She would make an excellent charger for a Roman general.” said William thoughtfully. Samuel glanced at him and wondered, was this man’s memory returning? Was this dangerous man playing a game which would make Samuel the laughing stock of the world or was it just a passing comment. Samuel felt compelled to probe deeper to get to the root of this comment

“How do you figure that out?” asked Samuel “I was watching a BBC historical program the other night and they had some thing about Roman soldiers and their generals on, it is nothing,

just a bit of pure romanticism." Said William "Will you be staying long?" asked William. "I have a few ideas I want to run past you, we could save so much money if we converted to solar energy and it seems such a waste to by power which is not eco-friendly." Samuel relaxed. It seemed as if the comment about the Roman general was nothing, now William had come up with some thing else which would keep him busy. Samuel would listen and if the idea proved worth he would allow it to be implemented. He found William after the operation more enigmatic then the William of before the operation, who was always board and always judging mankind with a slide rule which did not value human life to much.

One thing Samuel realized, he would have to be very weary of William, he would have to be kept busy with various projects, which would keep his mind off things which might cause him to remember those things which would inevitably lead to the restoration of his memory.

It was approaching lunch time and Samuel's stomach was grumbling "Shall we go in and have some thing to eat?" he asked William. "I want a light salad with lots of olive oil and balsamic vinegar" said William "Strange I have a taste for salads of late." Said William They made their way towards the house, the sun beating down on their heads, the wind had begun to grow over the gentle fervent green hills off the Cape, the fyn bos the local natural undergrowth been burned out occasionally by raging bush fires only to spring up again more beautiful then ever. Looking down the road from the front porch Samuel saw that Robert had returned from the nearest town with a truck load of groceries.

Robert had not been having a good day. The truck had broken down and it had taken three hours for the AA vehicle to reach him and make repairs to the truck.

It was early in the evening and William had retired to bed, followed by the ever watchful Brenda Mac Masters. He had said he had a headache and wanted to get an early night. Miss Brenda had stood at the door waiting to follow him to make

sure he was comfortable. As she left she cast a longing loving eye in the direction of Robert who did not seem to notice the puppy love eyes with which she looked at him.

Samuel was seated in a comfortable chair reading a book. Robert sitting near the large bay window turned to Samuel and said "Sir may I ask your opinion on some thing which I have been thinking of for some time. I know it might sound like a crackpot's theory but you of all people might be able to give me an answer which might be closest to the truth."

"I will certainly try" said Samuel "What is it that is troubling you? He continued. "Well to begin with I was reading some where that John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough who served the Royal family back in the beginning of the 18th century tried to get one of his children married to the heir of the throne of Royal house of Britain. Later still another Spencer descendent served as the war time prime Minster of Britain. And now prince William, he is also descended from the Spencer family and he will one day be King of England so it seems to me that it has taken the Spencer's a long time but they have eventually managed to get one of their family members on to the throne" said Robert.

"That is quite a deduction. I am not fully aware of the history of the family. although I know old Edmund Spencer back in the 1500's did happen to say one day that one of the children of his line would rule England. He was viewed as a bit of a prophet so maybe the family tried through the ages to bring it about. I am not sure" said Samuel

"You have got to remember that at the time that the Duke of Marlborough was busy making a name for himself. I was most of the time in the employ of the house of Stuart and was on the opposite shore in France with James II and later his son." Said Samuel

"Is it true that you met Bonny prince Charles?" asked Robert warming to the subject of the Stuarts. "Yes indeed I was with

him when he came over from France and set up the standard. I was with him on the day the Stuart hopes for restoration died on the battle field of Culloden, of course the Scots called the 45 Bliadhna Theàrlaich which I believe means Charles' Year" said Samuel "That must have been some thing to see some thing wonderful to live through" said Robert "Young man I have lived through many centuries of history and while admittedly it was fun, there is a more serious side of life which one tends to forget when one thinks of the glorious acts and deeds of the people who have gone before." Said Samuel

"May I ask how you came to be on the side of the Stuarts?" asked Robert "Certainly you may. It was through the friendship I had for Samuel Pepys that I first came into the influence of James Duke of York who later became King James II" said Samuel "Mr Ferreira, you are a mind of information. I have read the famous diaries of Samuel Pepys but never in my wildest day dreams did I expect to meet some one who knew the man. You must tell me what sort of man was he, history books some times never tell the full story, they always seem to tell you what they want you to believe" said Robert.

"You have pretty much summed up the truth of the matter there. The history books only reflect the side of the victor of all battles. Lose the battle and you will never have your side of the story told." Said Samuel "This is why our work here at Sutherland is so important".

"I wonder what happened to the Bonny prince after 1745 turned into a mess?" asked Robert thoughtfully. "I know what happened, I was there, I will tell you but I want your word that you will not judge me on it, for the end of the line of Stuart was a sad pathetic affair, one brother going into the church and another turning to the bottle, living out their days as poor relatives of the crowned heads of Europe. I was there when the Bonny Prince breathed his last in a borrowed bed chamber in the Palazzo Muti in Rome in 1788. I quite liked the younger brother. Cardinal Stuart had about him a quite grace and an acceptance of things which one cannot change. I think of all

the Stuarts he was my favorite. He asked nothing of the world other than they accept him for who he was, a Prince of the Catholic church and a good one at that.. It was he who attended the last rites of the Bonny prince and he who finally stood by as the only surviving child of the Bonny Prince. Charlotte Duchess of Albany was laid to rest twenty two months after her father had departed this life. Although he was a Catholic I had a great respect for the Cardinal. He unlike his father and brother did not live in the glories of the past but lived in the moment and enjoyed it. I remember well how we spent some time together after the Prince had died, he was a simple man and enjoyed the simplest of things. I remember one day we were sitting outside a café on the great piazza watching the fountains and of course the woman of Rome go by. The cardinal had an eye for beauty, he would point out a pretty seniorita and say. "Now that is a vision of loveliness, who can believe that there is so much horror in the world when such loveliness exists" I then pointed out to him that the two existed side by side in this world.

Rome Italy 1788 AD

It was the evening of the 31st of January 1788 and Samuel sat in the bed chamber in the palazzo Muti nursing a glass of warmed Brandy. The evening was chilly, it was approaching the hour of midnight and the old man in the bed was weakening fast. When he had received the message that the old man had been calling for him he had set out across France riding for three days and nights. The letter from the Duchess of Albany had not come as a surprise he had been expecting it for some time. The old man frail and pale turned his head "Do ye hear me Sam, it was a great time we had back in 45, no one can rob me of the feeling of having a Claymore in the hand and ten thousand clansmen at my back" the old man said, his voice rising and falling with excitement as he remembered the days of his youth, for in the bed lay Charles Edward Stuart styled by his followers His majesty Charles III of England and, by his enemies as the young pretender. The once Bonny Prince was now fast approaching the end of his life. He would have lived longer except he had a fondness for drink which was hastening his end.

"Sire you must not excite yourself" said Samuel moving closer, lifting the glass to the lips of the dying man. The Cardinal standing by the bedside was becoming increasingly worried for the last rights had not yet been administered. Charles had called for a drink and then promised his brother that he could then take care of the last office he would be doing for his beloved elder brother. "Ye would have me in the grave before sunrise would you dear Cardinal" the dying man had muttered half in jest and half seriously looking with affection at his brother.

"Charlotte my dear would you once more wipe my brow dear child" said the old man. Charlotte Duchess of Albany drew closer and wiped the forehead of her father, as she looked down on the face of her father she was struck by how his skin had taken on a yellow tint in the last few months, a sure sign that his liver had been damaged and this was the ultimate cause of his current unhappy condition.

Charlotte Duchess of Albany had only recently come under the influence of her father, for from a young age her mother and she had been estranged from the Bonny Prince. It was only after the death of the former Duchess of Albany that Charles had begun to take an interest in his daughter, who for many years had lived in various convents in France. Now as the old prince's death approached she was more than ever aware that she would receive all his worldly fortune. This did not however make up for the longing in her heart that she missed her children whom she had left in France under the care of an Scottish banker while she was reconciled with her father. Of the wee children the Bonny prince knew nothing for in all her doings Charlotte had been at great pains to hide from the old man their existence, for they were illegitimate as was Charlotte, and she had no wish to incur the wrath of her father who in later life had a fearsome and uncontrollable temper.

"Samuel I have called ye here to ask of you a special favorer." said the prince weakly "Any thing Your Majesty you have but to name it." Said Samuel "I know you have served my family well and this is why I want to entrust to you this task. If ever there is a way of restoring my family to the throne of England I would ask that you assist us once more old battle field companion" said the prince. "Ay Sire I will do it if there is

even the remotest chance” said Samuel “Remember you words to me on the night before we took Edinburgh Sam?” asked the prince “Ay Sire I swore that I would fight for your just cause until the end of time if needs be” replied Samuel.

"Here is Charlotte my beloved daughter. If she should have issue one day see that a true Stuart sits once more on the throne of England” said the prince as he fell back on the pillow racked by a fit of coughing. The Duchess moved forward and began to clean spittle from his mouth which was now stained with blood.

Some where in the great building priests where singing, chanting a late evening mass for the dying prince. The sound drifted up and reached the ears of those gathered round the bed. Cardinal Stuart began to administer the last rights.

Charlotte began weeping softly as her father lapsed into unconsciousness Samuel was aware that there was no chance of restoring a Stuart to the throne of England but he was of the opinion that it was better to bring some sort of comfort to the last hour of a brave yet foolish mans life then to totally destroy the mans last hopes, thus he gave his word knowing full well there was no chance of delivering upon it. What’s more the Duchess knew the awful truth of the matter and would not peruse the matter, thus as the last minutes of January 1788 slipped away the Bonny prince expired and went to meet his maker.

As Samuel left the room he was struck by the ironic fact that it had been 139 years and one day since the illustrious ancestor of the Bonny prince had lost his head on a block outside Whitehall place. They, Charles I of England and Charles the Bonny prince had a lot in common. Both had lost their lives after losing the battle against the English. Samuel reflected for a moment, then dismissed the thought from his head. It had been a very long time since he had slept and now more then ever that is what he wanted to do.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
A sacred oath

Abdullah Bin Suleiman, servant of Allah, scratched his beard. In normal times now would have been the hour at which the followers of the Allah gathered for morning prayers but these were not normal times. The coalition forces of the west were attacking the forces of evil in Afghanistan. What was more the forces of the west were winning, it ripped Abdullah's heart in two to see his beloved followers dying in bombing after bombing. What Abdullah could not understand was what had gone wrong? Had he not commanded his followers to greater deeds of valor to die in the name of Allah, but in the long run all the dying the forces of Allah were supposed to start winning, had not the imams promised that the west would be defeated??

But in all the battles victory had been snatched from the hands of the servants of Allah. The puzzling thing about this whole mess was that previously when the forces of Allah had fought against the forces of Russia they had more often than not been victorious, had the poor peasant farmers who had taken up arms driven the vastly superior forces of the mighty Soviet Union from small Afghanistan. It had been three months since the forces of the west had first begun to bomb Afghanistan and from the start it had been a losing battle. Now it had become a guerrilla war with the Taliban and Al Qaeda forces attacking and running and hiding. Abdullah preferred to sit by the steps to the Mosque and discuss the Koran but even that pleasure had been taken from him.

There was one thing that worried Abdullah a lot now days, and that was the disappearance of the German known as Ali bin Ebrihim, the adopted son of a holy clerk who had died before the crusade had begun, as the leader liked to put it when speaking of the current situation.

The fact that the European had done good work for the cause had not made Abdullah trust Ali with every mission from which he returned. Abdullah's misgivings had grown when the

leader had first suggested that Ali be used on the all important attack on the infidels of America, he had voiced his disapproval but all his concerns had been brushed aside. "Look what good work he has done, he is an important weapon in our arsenal against the crusaders" the leader had said and that is where the matter had rested. Now as the various units of fighting men hid in the holes in the ground or in the caves in the mountains of Afghanistan Abdullah's thoughts turned more and more frequently to the tall German. Had he betrayed the organizations secrets to the west? It was highly likely that he was a spy to begin with thought Abdullah.

The war on Afghanistan had now been going on for some two months and things were going badly for the leader and his men. The current hide out was a disgusting little grotto high in the mountainous regions close to the boarder with Pakistan. Abdullah hated the fact that despite all the promises of success the war was going badly. Daily he prayed and longed for the advent of a person inspired by Allah who would lead them to victory. For many years Abdullah had been under the influence of the most ridged religious leaders who taught that it was every man's duty to live as pure a life as possible. This would as a matter of course herald in the golden age of Islam once more, the crescent moon symbol of Islam would once more stride victoriously across the world stage and the pages of history bringing in a thousand year rule of peace under the rule of wise and holy Muslem leaders. The filth of the west would be swept aside and righteous teachings of the Mardi would lead the world to salvation under Islam's benevolent rule. Of course there would be those who would not accept the true and faithful teachings of the Prophet ,peace be upon him, but they would pay the price for their folly and their deaths would be an example to those who followed that Islam was fair but firm.

The thing that Abdullah missed the most other then the call to prayer was the fact that he was separated from his family. Admittedly things had not always been peaceful in his home. The fact that his three wives constantly competed for his affection and loved to gossip was a sore point but he found

himself missing even the daily moments when one of the woman would come to him and tell him of what the younger wife had done, burned the good pot and pots were expensive. The seventeen children he had by these wives of various ages were a great delight to him, for they had been brought into the world to be faithful followers of the prophet "peace be upon him". It had been three days since he had buried his second son Ishmael who had been killed in a bombing attack. For a moment his heart was wracked with grief, a pain so primitive yet even in the modern day and age felt by every one who has ever lost a loved one, he drew consolation from the fact that Ishmael was now with Allah enjoying the fruits of the martyrs.

One thing Abdullah now promised himself, that if he ever got out of the current mess he would hunt down and permanently destroy Ali Bin Ebrihim, for the more he thought about it the more convinced he became that Ali had betrayed the cause and was responsible for the current state of the war. He took a moment to make a vow "Allah favor me in finding this man, that I might do your bidding and destroy that which is evil and dangerous to your cause. I shall not rest until I have killed this man for good or else I will not rest with my fathers." He said under his breath.

He respected the leader but he was sure that like all men even he could make a mistake and as far as Abdullah was concerned the mistake had been trusting Ali Bin Ebrihim. After all, what proof did they have of whom and what he was, all they had was his word. As Abdullah rose and moved to the entrance of the cave his long robe disturbing the dust. In the distance a younger man observed an American air craft approaching, maybe they would get lucky this time and be able to bring it down with the portable rocket launcher.

In far away South Africa William Longmont had risen early to view the setting stars with Robert Van Heerden, unaware of the vow that a man half a world away had sworn.

Abdullah's sacred mission

Abdullah bin Hakid was a very angry man. He had just buried his eldest son and was now crossing the boarder in to Pakistan. It was a cold and wintry morning in the highland mountains on the Pakistani and Afghanistan boarder.

"I swear by the blood of my children, I am going to find that man and put an end to all his evil" the middle aged man muttered under his breath as he thought of a certain convert to Islam who Abdullah blamed for the lose of his sons and the destruction of a way of life which until very recently had been an Idyllic Islamic state. "Ali Bin Ebrihim I curse you, may you never enter paradise" the man muttered as he beat the donkey he was riding to even greater speed.

The donkey needed no urging. The bombings of the landscape over the last few days had made the donkey one of the fastest in the whole region, it usually did not stick around after bombs started falling and Abdullah had been lucky to come across the animal as it was feeding. Had Abdullah known that this particular animal had such a dislike of bombs he would have thought twice about mounting the beast and setting of to cross the border, for both of them Pakistan was a place where they would find freedom from fear and the bombs which fell daily and on a regular basis.

Abdullah had a plan. He was going to get across the border and seek out a cell where members of the base were hiding out. From there he would find a way of finding Ali Bin Ebrihim AKA William Longmont. For Abdullah hated Ali with a passion. Abdullah had watched helplessly as city after city had fallen to the forces of the western Infidels who had invaded the Islamic state of Afghanistan. Had not the Taliban made Afghanistan a country to be proud of ,a country where the worship of Allah had been possible with out the interference of outsiders?

Had they not enforced the law as instructed in the Koran? He was confused how Allah could allow this to happen? It was

not that he doubted the power or the wisdom of Allah but he did wonder why the forces of the Taliban had been defeated.

Abdullah was a man with a sacred duty, he had a vow to fulfill, for had he not sworn that he would avenge himself on the German who had brought about the destruction of the country? What Abdullah failed to see was the fact that it was the actions of the base and its leader who had brought upon itself the swift vengeance of the western coalition forces.

The fact that the forces of the Taliban had held in captivity a number of westerners as prisoners for spreading the lie that the savior of the world was the prophet Jesus "Peace be upon him" did not come into the equation as far as he was concerned. There was only one person who was responsible for the destruction of the country, had he not seen the ruins of cities, had he not seen the woman digging through the rubble to find the bodies of their loved ones so they could give them a proper burial?

As he rode along the path high in the windswept mountains his mind went back to the last meeting he had with the leader "Abdullah I charge you with this sacred mission find the man and bring him to me" "Yes my leader" replied the older man "Our brothers in many lands will aide you in the search for him when you tell them they will help" said the leader "When you bring him to me I will cut his head off and this will show the world not to cross us ever again" said the leader..

"You will start your search in America, for I am sure he would have made contact with his contacts in the CIA" said the leader. "If you need money you know where to go to and to whom you must speak and the funds will be released" said the leader.

"Allah will be with you, and lead you in the way to go and never despair, for we have a sacred mission and Allah will not disappoint" said the leader.

He knew what he had to do. He did not intend to follow the plan of the leader to the letter, for he had his own plan. He would hunt down Ali and when he had found him he would have his revenge. For a moment his thoughts turned to his eldest son now dead, buried high in the Afghanistan mountains. He had always been a good son, it was a great pity that he would never have any children, for the boy was only nineteen when he had been killed by a stray bullet which had buried itself deep in the head of the young man. A good son and a good Muslim. For a moment Abdullah felt as if the breath was being sucked from his breast, the pain of grief promised to overwhelm him but he pulled himself together and rode on

As the sun rose higher the snow having fallen in the night now covered the high peaks, the light reflected from the snow almost blinding Abdullah. He put on a pair of sun glasses which the leader had pressed on him shortly before he had left the cave. High over head a spy plane picked up the movements of people below sending back to the western forces the information that a lone man was making his way across the mountains towards the boarder.

Senior officer at one of the American bases was informed "Better get a border patrol to intercept the man" he said to a sergeant, who got on the radio to a group stationed high in the mountains. High in the mountains a staff officer of the Pakistani boarder patrol was having his second cup of coffee and the forth cigarette of the day.

Brenda was sitting at the desk. In front of her lay a copy of the book "The clansman: a detailed history of Scottish nobility." "Of course I have some very old roots in Scotland" she said to Robert who had stopped to look over her shoulder at what she was reading

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A Scottish interlude

When James Hepburn 4th earl of Boswell first cast his eyes lustfully on the sovereign lady Mary he had but one thing in mind and that was to make her his. The fact that she was married to Lord Darnley and was about to give birth to the future King of Scotland did not matter at all to him.

Darnley he viewed as just another problem to be put out of the way at the correct time. Thus James Earl of Boswell cast around among his servants for two men who would more than likely do some work for which they would be well rewarded and keep their mouths firmly shut on completion of the tasks that he would set for them. It was not that he was an evil man, it was just a matter of always getting what he wanted but time enough for when the occasion arose. In the mean time he sort out one James Mac Masters a groom and a soldier of fortune one William Longmont.

Summoning the two men secretly to a meeting at a Edinburgh public house, he put to them certain questions and was not disappointed in their answers. Once he had over come the grooms initial misgivings, William Longmont was another matter for the man fell in easily with the plans which Hepburn proposed.

For the first few months of their employment at the tasks that the Earl of Boswell set them they were to do no more, then attend him when the need arose.

Now Mary Queen of Scots had a sectary one David Rizzio an accomplished musician, of who Lord Darnley was insanely jealous. Darnley hatched a plan to do a way with the sectary whose Italian origins made him worry, for it was through this agency that Mary exchanged letters with the papal court in Rome. Thus on the evening of the 9th of March 1566 while the Queen was at supper in a small anti chamber with a lady in waiting and master Rizzio at Holyrood Palace Darnley and a number of nobles burst into the room and stabbed Rizzio to death. Later when the wounds were counted it was found that

the young Italian had been stabbed 57 times. Within a few hours of his murder his body had been buried; it was a particularly shocking murder having taken place in the presence of the pregnant Queen who would shortly give birth to James VI.

For a season the Queen would not allow her young husband into her presence for she was extremely angry at him for this murder. The fact that their marriage had been a rocky one with many stormy arguments between them was known to all at court and to just about every body else in Scotland. In the mean time James VI Scotland and later James I of England uttered his first cry on the 19th of June the year of our Lord 1566. His father Lord Darnley in the mean time had taken up residence in the house of the Hamilton's Kirk o' Field, Edinburgh for shortly after the birth of James there was held a great celebration with representatives of the crowned heads of Europe attending.

Among the guests was a contingent from Mary's most royal cousin of England Elizabeth. Now as part of the celebration there was a pantomime performed by a certain French group of actors, now it came about that a boat which sailed into the great hall was propelled by hidden wires. However to withdraw the boat a number of these actors dressed as the muses came on stage to pull it off, while dancing around the boat the acting company paused in front of the English nobles turned and displayed their backsides to which was attached tails. The company wagged their backsides at the English. This calculated insult was enough to make English blood boil, for it was widely rumored abroad in the Middle Ages that the English were in league with the devil and as a result all Englishmen were born with tails. Daggers were drawn and blood would have flowed if it had not been for the quick intervention of Mary and the head of the English party.

All the while James Hepburn Earl of Boswell played the part of a loyal servant of the crown while Lord Darnley cooled his heel at Kirk o' Field. Now after a few months it seemed as if the Queen and Lord Darnley would begin to make peace and to this end the Queen began to occasionally visit Kirk o' Field. It was at this time that Boswell once more had occasion to summon the two men previously spoken of.

“Jemmy ye ken the house of Hamilton Kirk o' Field?” Asked the Earl “Ay master I do ken the place” replied the Scot. “I want you to keep an eye on it and when the occasion arises you are to make yourself familiar with it. Try to get a position where ye are trusted to work in the house” said the Earl. “Ay I will do it” said James Mac Masters. “William of you I need the following, four barrels of gun powder. If you can't get it in Scotland then go south or even to France. I will want then with in a few months, are you able to do this?” The Earl asked “It should not be a problem, I know a certain maker of black powder in London who will not ask to many questions.” said William “All that is required is some gold to ease his feelings of guilt at what the powder will be used for” he continued. “Good” said the Earl handing over a bag of coins “There you are fresh from the mint and the hand of master Aitcheson” said the Earl. Thus at the end of 1566 William of Longmont found himself one cold snowy morning on the road to London town to purchase the makings of a bomb which when exploded would shake all of Edinburgh.

James Mac Masters was not slow in his task and had soon found a position working as a groom in the said house. As the Earl had warned him to keep his eyes and ears open he watched with interest the comings and goings of the Queen on her visits to the house and the activities of Henry Lord Darnley. Darnley's quarrel with the Queen had originally been because of the fact that he wanted the title king but Mary was unable to provide this as the nobles of Scotland would not permit such a title to a Catholic. Thus after a fashion the quarrel was patched up. On occasion the Queen would meet behind closed doors with James Earl of Boswell and it would later be said that they hatched the plan together to ride her of Darnley as a husband.

By early January William Longmont had returned and began to visit the house to see his good friend James Mac Masters. The Earl of Boswell one day gave the order that the gun powder was to be moved into the cellar of the house. Thus William brought the gun powder round in a few short trips in the early evening with the help of James Mac Masters who knew the house well by now. They managed to deposited the explosives in the cellar of the large house with out been disturbed; it

meant that on occasion Mac Masters had to use all his charm to seduce the scullery maid to keep her from discovering the plot as she happened to come across him one morning in the cellar checking on the five casks. She would later make him a good wife.

On the morning of the 9th of February 1567 James and William were once more summoned into the presents of the Earl, "Tonight I will have need of your services William" said the Earl "James I thank you here is your reward" he said handing the man a large bag of coins. "You can take your scullery maid and leave as soon as possible for your home" said the Earl. "Thank you your grace" said the man as he left.

On the same evening at about ten o'clock the Earl and William made their way to Kirk o' Field. Entering the yard by a side entrance they made their way to the kitchen which had previously been arranged to be deserted. Climbing the stairs to the upper floors to see where Lord Darnley was they made the mistake of lighting a lamp which betrayed their presence. Darnley's man servant came to investigate, there after followed a shouting match, warning Darnley who had already retired to bed to beware as robbers were in the house.

William and the Earl ran down stairs to the cellar and ignited the fuse. Returning to the kitchen they happened to run into Lord Darnley and the man servant who had made their way down stairs to investigate and possibly raise the alarm. Fleeing to the garden Darnley followed by his man servant knew their final hour had come, for when cornered Darnley had cried out "Damned you to Hell Boswell, you think you will be King but she will never allow it" "Indeed" said Boswell who now approached, a silk rope now in his hands. Wrapping it round the struggling Darnley's neck he began to choke the life out of him. In the mean while William had hold of the man servant who was sobbing, pleading for his life. William drew out a dirk and cut the man's throat. "My lord we must be a way soon" said William, as Darnley's body slumped to the ground "For the explosion will wake the whole town."

The Duke de Bourbon

Samuel sat in the office on the top floor of his Johannesburg Hotel. The Ferreira Arms had been built ten years previously shortly after the release of Nelson Mandela from prison. It had been revamped in the last year and was the flag ship of his South African operations.

Before him lay a lengthy report on one of his guests who had failed to pay his previous months bill.

The man who styled himself Louis Duke de Bourbon and alternatively Louis XX ,exiled King of France, had always had money to throw around but the last few months had not been kind to the Belgian born Duke de Bourbon. The story he told of his history was intriguing, for it lead one to believe that he was the last surviving relative of the unfortunate Louis XVII, for according to the Duke a few months before he had lost his head to Madam Guillotine the good King had found time to seduce a minor noble lady into his bed and the result of this short illicit union was the child who would one day become the ancestor of the current Duke de Bourbon.

Of course the Duc had his own website which he regularly updated and preached his particular brand of beliefs The Duc was a good Catholic, however he was willing to ally himself with any one who would or could help him to regain the throne of France. The current French government as a matter of course laughed in his face when he presented his case before the French courts of law. "Monsieur, the French republic has no need of monarchs, the monarchy ended over two hundred years ago and there is no possible way the people of France would accept or accede to the demands of a man, no matter how noble his lineage to a new monarchy." Thus the Duke de Bourbon had begun to accept from a certain number of organizations with in France and the Middle East, which at that time had not asked much other then one day the strict laws which the French government had begun to legislate and carry out in respect of limiting religious freedoms of the Muslim community in France. The good Duke was willing to accede to this request and in fact had given his word that such would be the case should the various organizations be of help to him in regaining the throne of France.

However, as the United states and its allies began closing the gaps when it came to the funds of suspected terrorist organizations bank accounts, the funds which had once flowed

so freely begun to dry up. The last bank draft from his benevolent supporters he said had not been enough to keep one in good French Chardonnay, caviar and Cuban cigars for a week.

Now as much as Samuel would have liked to accommodate the Duke, as a matter of business the Duke was costing Samuel a great deal of money and some thing would have to be done. To this end Samuel arranged a meeting with the Duke to find a way out of the financial mess the self styled Duke and King found himself in. The knock at the door roused Samuel from his contemplation. He crossed the room the feel of the deep thick carpet under his feet giving a feeling of luxurious lushness'. He opened the door, and the Duke dressed in a tuxedo swept into the room followed by one of his devout followers who acted as his man servant.

“Sir de Bourbon, I must insist that we discuss this matter alone as it might prove to be some what of an embarrassment” said Samuel. “Would you be so kind as to dismiss your man servant” said Samuel, “Indeed” said the slightly build brown haired man. Samuel thought he had seen the Kings of France at various times, and they in no way resembled in any way other then the supreme arrogance the man before him. When the man servant had gone the Duke seated himself on the couch which stood near the window “Now this suit is one which becomes my status” said the Duke “Indeed fit for a king” he continued.

“Sir there is a certain matter of an outstanding bill which I am afraid needs to be paid with in the next few days” said Samuel, speaking in French “You know I have tried to be accommodating but it has come to a point that I can no longer extend to you a line of credit. The last few items from the jeweler Messiahs leave me astonished, I do not keep that kind of cash on the premises and it meant that I had to call in a number of favors. Sir I am afraid I can no longer continue if your bill is not paid by the close of business tomorrow. Failing which I am afraid that I will have to take other action do we understand each other Sir?” Asked Samuel.

"Mr Ferreira, as always you are to the point. I will endeavor to pay the bill, but I need more time. I have funds coming in from France at the end of the week???" said the Duke airily "It is bit a trifle, my supporters of course are a little slow in paying their dues, I will attend to the matter as soon as I can. May I interest you in a noble title once I regain my throne and then what say you we forget this little debit, call it payment for services rendered" said the Duke "Sir La Duke, I must ask you not to joke about much matters, as I have always endeavored to pay my bills on time. However until tomorrow afternoon my hotel is at your disposal" said Samuel.

The Duke's face lightened at these last words "Ah always the gentleman sir. I thank you for your hospitality" rising the Duke extended his hand to Samuel so that he might kiss it. Samuel deliberately chose to ignore it.

Later when the Duke had left the room Samuel had the feeling that he would end up paying the bills and writing off the bill for his hotel, for he had the distinct feeling the Duke would absconding shortly.

The day had been long and tiring. Robert felt content for once every thing was going well, the latest race meeting had netted a nice amount of cash which delighted Samuel. Of course it was not really like Samuel to worry about a few thousand rand, the fact of the matter was that Samuel was for ever getting in to hot water with his accountant. So a few thousand rand would make the little grey man smile.

The resent incident when Samuel was forced to turn out the self styled Duke de Bourbon was just another case of Samuel's generosity. He always seemed to fall for the oldest trick in the book. Subsequent to having the man removed from his Johannesburg hotel a few interesting facts had come to light about the man who styled himself Louis Duke de Bourbon Aka Louis XX by the grace of God his most Catholic majesty of France and Navarre. For one thing it had come to light that the man was a blatant imposter claiming the title of Frances King for one, for there existed in Spain one Luis Alfonso Gonzalo Victor Emanuel Marco de Bourbon y Martínez-Bordiú, Duke of Anjou who if France ever wanted to return to the rule of Monarchy would find this man's claim far stronger to the title of Louis XX.

The self styled Duc de Bourbon had left in his wake a pile of unpaid debits and creditors, that had found their way to the front desk of the Ferreira Arms Johannesburg, seeking redress from some one. If it was not to be the Duke then at least the manager of the hotel should pay some thing towards the cost of the man's bills, as the hotel had put him up for some considerable time. Samuel had smiled and confessed that he to had been a victim of the con man. As to his current whereabouts, they were totally unknown to Samuel.

Now as Robert drove the powerful land-rover down the country road, the lights of the stereo system illuminating the inside of the cab he found himself content, for the horse Jamaican Rum which had run had brought a sense of prestige to the Ferreira stud farm name which had previously not existed. It had also been a chance to spend some time with his father who he had last seen nearly three months earlier. The fact that William had been taken along for the trip in no way hindered the meeting with his father and Samuel, for when it was time for Robert to speak to Chris Van Heerden Samuel had suggested to William that they go down to the owners enclosure and have a look at some of the best horse flesh available in Africa. William had agreed, he had become some thing of a fanatic on the treatment of horses who were ill and under performing in the last few months. "Well son how are things going down in Sutherland?" asked Chris "Well, William is adjusting well to life on the farm and is doing a lot of reading. We have had a number of conversations on historical characters and they have been rather insightful" replied Robert.

"Look son you had better give me as much information as possible so we can check if he is recovering his memory, we have to be very careful with this man. He is not your normal run of the mill terrorist that we have previously dealt with, he could be a dangerous weapon in the wrong hands" said Chris.

"Dad I submit a report every week by e mail to Mr Ferreira and as far as I can see the only matter that he is interested in are the horses and helping Brenda with her family tree research." Said the young man. "If you feel it is safe I am

happy. I will however have a word with Samuel and see what he thinks” said Chris.

Later after the races Robert had stopped at the home of Brenda Mac Masters parents for a meal before setting out back to the Cape. The Mac Masters were very clannish and wanted to know if their daughter and sister was being well taken care of at the ranch. John Mac Masters Senior had sat at the head of the table and asked Robert if he enjoyed working with the horses. ‘Certainly sir they are loyal and strong and I learn something new every day’ he replied to the older man’s question. Later over dinner Robert became aware of Brenda’s secretive glances in his direction. John Junior was more plain spoken and took the opportunity after dinner of asking Robert directly if he planned on making an honest woman of his sister.

“Why John, I have hardly had a chance to speak to her other than on matters of work” replied Robert who at that moment began to entertain ideas of romance with the lovely Brenda Mac Masters. “Be sure to let her down gently if you have no desire for her company said” John.

Later after William had taken his medication he had fallen asleep in the back of the Land-Rover, Robert and Brenda began to discuss their growing feelings for each other. It was not that he was uncaring for the girl’s feelings, but he had just not thought about it as the past few months had been very busy for both of them. As he drove and Brenda listened she began to find hope in his words for he said that now maybe that the hard work had been done there would be a chance for them to enjoy each other’s company. That there might spring up between them mutual feelings of love but that was a matter for the future. In reply she said that she had tender feelings for him and that she could not help it, she was a warm blooded woman of Scottish descent and she loved him unconditionally. She continued to speak for a while after which Robert agreed that they might be able to make things work out between them.

In the meantime events began unfolding which would eventually have an impact on their lives for during the day a certain waiter at the race course one Abu Serkeden had been

called upon to serve the table of the Ferreira party. Now Abu had previously spent six months in Afghanistan training at one of the base camps before returning to South Africa to take up his life until called upon to become a martyr, for Abu was a devoted follower of the prophet. He noticed William and recognized William as one of his fellow brothers, and the recognition had not come at once but over a period of hours Abu filled this information away for future reference and action.

Half a world away Abdullah, follower of the prophet, now clean shaven and dressed in a cheap business suit was boarding a late evening flight to Mexico City and what had become of the Duke de Bourbon? Well at that moment he was meeting with a number of senior Muslim business people in the hope of getting more funds so that he could leave South Africa and continue his quest to regain the throne of France. In so doing he was making even more concessions to the most radical elements of the Muslim community. As events unfolded the two young people were not aware but these events would change their lives forever and not for the better

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
A romantic interlude

They had been riding for an hour now as they approached the stream, Robert allowed the horses to ease their pace a few more meters and drew to a halt. Dismounting they left the horses to graze while they made their way down to the pool for their picnic. The last week had been a discovery for both of them, as they had become better acquainted Robert had found that Brenda had a mind which contained a vast amount of information. Brenda had found that Robert had a soft spot for all living creatures which surprised her for she had seen him working with the horses and had assumed that he only had an interest in them in as much as they were a source of income for the ranch.

Reaching the spot next to the pool Robert pulled off his t shirt and began to soak in the sun as Brenda prepared the goodies in the bag for their picnic. "Shall I start a fire to boil water for coffee he asked her?" "If you want to" she said smiling. This was the first time that they were alone away from the house since they had returned from the race meeting and she did not really know what to expect from the preacher's son. She did not know if he would be restrained by his upbringing or if he would loosen up a little and enjoy her company in a more relaxed atmosphere.

She viewed it as a good sign that he had removed his shirt, he was a well built young man with good looks to boot. After fetching some wood he settled down to make the fire. Brenda poured some water in to the tin kettle which had seen much usage and allowed him to set it on the fire. Sitting back they took in the beauty of the spot, all around them wild flowers grew in a vast profusion of color. The sun had now reached its zenith and it was quite a hot day even for late summer. They spoke for a while then removing her skirt and blouse she and Robert entered the pool for a swim. Diving deep to the bottom of the clear pool she looked up to see Robert following after her, and like two water nymphs they swam playing tag for a while. Like any young couple any where in the world they were enjoying the pleasures of a summer day and the rewards of a day off from work.

Returning to the picnic spot they took the kettle from the fire which had been boiling away merrily, and Brenda offered the cups to Robert to fill with water. They sat silently enjoying each others company like an old couple who had grown comfortable with each other over the course of time. "Guess we had better get started on those goodies in the basket" she said "Ya a nice piece of Chicken and some bread will hit the spot" he said as she handed him a paper plate with a selection of cold meats, salads and a bread bun.

When they had finished their meal, they washed it down with a glass of coke, Brenda said "I wish we could stay here forever" "I know what you mean" he said as he reflected that he wished that the day would never end. Reaching out to her he took her in his arms and kissed her passionately. She responded awkwardly but following his lead she relaxed and began to enjoy the kiss.

As they separated she said breathlessly her face flushed with joy and pleasure at the depth of emotion he seemed to have for her "Why Mr Van Heerden what would your father say about his son kissing the girls with out permission"

"My father would say well done son give her stick" he replied laughing. "Shall we walk a little and see what this lovely spot holds for us?" she asked him as she pulled on her blouse

Rising from the blanket on the ground he took her hand and they began to walk, stopping here and there to pick a flower of bright color which was added to the growing bunch in her free hand. Stopping in the shade of an ancient Yellow wood tree she turned to him and asked. "Will it always be like this for us or will we one day leave the farm for the city?" Robert considered this for a moment his dark eyes looking into her deep blue eyes then he said "My love I have no idea how long this will continue it might last our whole lives and beyond, or it might come to an end tomorrow. It depends on when and how William regains his memory."

"But do not be so serious, we will have ample time to sort things out, we have our whole lives ahead of us. Tomorrow is another day, let it take care of itself. I live for the moment doing every thing that is asked of me and expecting nothing

but that others should respect and love me and take me as I am.” He said. “Oh Robert I wish I could do that but I do worry, it is natural after all life is so short. Yet here we are confronted by not one but two people of extraordinary old age. Yet they seem not to be as old as they claim it is a wonder to me. When I spoke with your father when he first offered me the job. I thought it was a joke of some sort but now I know he was serious and Samuel Ferreira, he is just such a wonderful man, think of all the things he has done, all the sights his eyes have seen.”

“My love I want you to always remember that William is a very dangerous man. You should never let your guard down around him, he has killed thousands of people with out a moments hesitation and I am sure if he ever regained his memory he would not think twice of killing those around him. After all he is been held here against his will even though he doesn’t know it” he said

Returning to the spot near the pool they once again sat and chatted, as the shadows grew longer the love for each other growing deeper.

Some where along the USA and Mexican boarder a group of people smugglers was leading a number of people across the boarder, the illegal immigrants had paid a lot for there passage and put there hopes on arriving in some American city where they could start a fresh. Among this group a man of Middle Eastern origin moved his mission not to start a fresh, but to seek out the man known as Ali Bin Ebrihim. In the mean time the two young lovers were blissfully unaware of what the future held for them.

It was Christmas Eve 2001 and Brenda and Robert sat cuddled up on the couch in the large down stairs lounge. Lena, Chris and Samuel had come down from Johannesburg for the Christmas break. From the kitchen the sound of woman preparing the evenings feast could be heard. The regular cook and Lena had come up with the idea of cooking up a feast for the evening the day before when Lena had arrived with a cooler bag full of Christmas goodies.

The usual Christmas Eve dinner would be a table of cold meats and snacks with soft drinks and other beverages. Due to the hot weather in South Africa the only hot dinner eaten over Christmas would be the mid day lunch the following day.

Samuel, Chris and William were in the study having an early evening drink discussing the running of the farm which over the last few months things had gone well. The horses that had been sent to the races had performed well and the birth of a new foal had been a happy occasion for all of the staff who worked on the farm. In the morning they would be attending the Christmas Morning Church service in the chapel on the farm. Chris had been working on his sermon for most of the day and had only joined Samuel and William a short while before. In the study the walls were lined with books on every conservative subject. The study was one of Brenda's favorite places when she was not tending to William or out with Robert, and she could usually be found reading from some ancient tomb or volume of work by some or other 19th century author.

Samuel lifted his glass of Brandy to the light, inspected it for a moment then said "Here is to another successful year and your recovery from the operation William" William lifted his glass of cold drink and acknowledged the toast "Cheers and may the next year bring us all those things which are close to our heart" said Chris lifting his glass to his lips and taking a sip. "Tell me William how are you getting along now is your memory returning" asked Samuel "I still have no recollection of any thing before waking up in my room" said William. "Yet certain when I do certain tasks with the horses it seems like I did not lose the knowledge" he continued. "I see" said Samuel "tell me" he continued "what of the nightmares you told me of are they still plaguing you?"

"I fear so" said William "I seem to dream a lot of great battles, slaughter of a great many people of all ages and times. I must tell you it is all very frightening" said William "As far as your recollections prior to your fall, do you have any memory?" asked Samuel "No it is if a Grey barrier of forgetfulness has fallen across my past, reliving me of all memories of the good and the bad I have ever done" replied William. Samuel and

Chris exchanged knowing glances knowing that if the man before them was telling the truth they had nothing to fear, however if he was ever to regain his memory he would as a matter of course seek vengeance on them for what they had done to him.

In the lounge Robert lay on the couch with his head on Brenda's lap, it was the first time she was spending Christmas away from her large family and she was glad she had some one in her life whom she could love and care for. Robert was a rugged young man who like all men also enjoyed the comforts of home and the last few weeks had been some of the happiest in his life, for she took extra care to be there for him when he returned to the house in the evening. Even on occasion cooking the evening meal for the residents of the house. Though this was strictly not in her work contract she enjoyed doing it for gained immense pleasure from watching him dig into her latest creation. Robert in turn ate every thing she placed before him, for he believed that if a woman took the time to cook for you then you should complement her by cleaning your plate at the very least and if there were second helping so much the better.

Earlier that day she had begged a few hours off from watching William and had gone into town. Driving the Land-Rover had been fun for her it was not her usual mode of transport but she figured that she would need a large vehicle, so there would be enough space for the large amount of presents she was going to buy for her friends on the farm.

She had saved all her earnings over the period she was on the farm, her earnings which were substantial would serve to buy a special gift for Robert, who went about his work blissfully unaware of her doings. The previous week he had gone into town and spent a couple of hundred rand on a dress for her which he would give to her on Christmas morning.

Brenda parked the large vehicle and walked into the small shopping center. The shop she was looking for occupied an unassuming corner near the book shop, a sign informed all who were around that this was the Computer shop for the Sutherland region, Entering she noticed that it was well

stocked for living in the region where the Stars shone brightly at night, which had promoted the South African government to set up a planetarium a few decades earlier. As a result when computer parts were needed it was much more convenient to buy them locally then wait a week for a part to come from Cape Town or Johannesburg. Thus the little shopping centers computer shop held a great variety of items from which the planetarium would replace broken parts. This had also caused the local community to become computer literate far more quickly then was usual for a small country town.

“May I help you?” inquired a young man from behind a counter taking in Brenda’s shapely figure “Yes I would like to buy a computer and an operating system” she said “I can show you a number of computers” said the young man “the latest is this HP PC comes with a pre-installed operating system and Microsoft office 2000” he said “How much will it cost?” she inquired “Oh about 6000 rand” he said “My that is quite a lot of money” she said “I suppose I might be able to knock of a couple of hundred rand for you” he said smiling. “Gee that would really help” she said Tell you what” he said “I will include a modem for you and a years worth of internet contract to seal the deal” That is great Ill take it she said how much ?” she asked “Okay with terms it will be about 400 rand a month” ‘Excuse me but I want a cash price I want to pay for it now and take it now” she said surprising the young man who was used to people taking items on terms. Okay then I guess I can give it to you for 5300 rand” he said she took out her purse and removed her bank card handed it to him and watched as he carried out the transaction on the pay points system. Once the sale was completed the young man helped her move the various boxes which made up the computer system to the Land-Rover. She smiled at him, wished him a merry Christmas before walking of to the near by Book shop. She had other gifts to buy and she also wanted to have a cup of coffee in the nice coffee shop which stood close to the entrance of the center the smell of freshly percolated coffee was some thing she could not resist.

It was a little after one o’clock in the morning when Brenda felt it was safe to open the door for the house boy to carry in the various boxes which comprised the Christmas presents for the residents of the house. She had roped Lena in to helping

her assemble the computer for Robert, which had pride of place in the book lined Study. Once the house boy had brought the last box in to the house he was given a present himself before being sent off to bed. He would have a long day tomorrow and he needed his sleep.

"Right let's get started" said Brenda as she bent over a box and opened it with a box cutting knife. Together the two woman lifted to the table a 17 inch monitor. While Lena began unwrapping the various items of packaging, Brenda went on to open other boxes and placing the parts of the computer on the desk. Lena while busy watched the young woman she smiled thinking to herself what it had been like when she had first been courted by Chris back then times had been hard and money scares. She was worried that times had changed so much and seemed to be running away the advances of the last ten years were a little bit overwhelming for her. Now here before her was a young woman who seemed to know what she wanted and was determined to get it further more the young woman had set her cap on her son.

Lena reflected for a moment on when Robert was very young and had no playmates, his maternal grand mother had bought a doll of about 4 foot in height. This doll which Robert played with had been named Jillian and she was a beauty with blond hair and blue eyes. Robert would have play parties with the doll pushing some blocks in front of the doll he would say build Jilly build. Now her son was all grown up with a real doll taking an interest in him

The two woman worked quickly occasionally exchanging words and soon the computer was set up. Brenda plugged it in and switched it on waiting expectantly for it to come to life. Once they were satisfied the woman turned to the arranging of the other presents, a set of books on horse breeding for William and a cigar case for Samuel, a new bible for Chris with a companion dictionary thesaurus combination. Then a present already wrapped for Lena. When the work was completed the two women covered the computer with a sheet and switched off the lights before returning to the kitchen for a mug of Coco before retiring to bed. The men had driven off to the planetarium just after midnight and were not expected back for at least an hour. There was some spectacular star

gazing over the Christmas period and the men wanted to make the most of it. The only male in the house was William who was sleeping soundly.

The night was clear the stars shining brightly in a little cave near the edge of the farm two men sat round a fire enjoying the warmth of the fire Jonathan Solomon and Peter Smith were part of a special squad sent out earlier that year by the Mossad to keep an eye on events as they unfolded on the farm. However for the two men on duty that night it was not a happy night although they did not celebrate Christmas they did miss their families and would have liked to be with them There presents on the farm was in agreement with the terms on which Samuel and William had been released the twelve man team put together by Mossad were made up of eleven ex South African Israeli's and one ex American Israeli operatives their task to monitor and preserve the peace. For as much as Samuel and his team wanted to rehabilitate William the two governments also had a vested interest in the man and would have liked to have imprisoned him for the rest of his life but they had by mutual agreement decided to give Samuel a chance to rehabilitate the man.

Further away in the cafeteria of the planetarium Samuel, Chris and Robert sat around a table drinking coffee discussing the past few months they had enjoyed their visit to the planetarium and were having a last cup of coffee before returning to the farm. "I have not thought what to do in the long term with the farm Samuel said "I originally planned to set it up as a long term prison with successive generations of jailors guarding William. However the thought has crossed my mind that he might recover his memory a lot sooner than I expected" "I have to agree" said Chris "should William recover his memory in the short term there is no telling what type of reaction he will have what danger he will be to himself and to those around him." Robert considered this for a moment before replying "Brenda tells me his dreams happen frequently and that he wakes very disturbed after each one. I simply do not know perhaps we need to get a mental health specialist to interview him and see what conclusions they can draw. I tend to think the dreams are flashes of memory which although at the time they occurred did not disturb him as much as they do now are having a marked impact on his behavior.

He cannot even watch an episode of Law & Order without becoming violently ill in fact we have stopped watching anything that might disturb him” “That is a very astute observation Robert” said Samuel “your suggestion is very good and I will take care of it” he continued. “Any way gentlemen the observatory is in the process of closing and it is time we got some beauty sleep” suggested Chris. Raising from the table the other men followed suit and walked to the lift which would carry them to the ground floor and out to the parking lot. while in the lift Chris turned to his son and said the young lady is quite taken with you I hope you are behaving yourself accordingly son I don’t want any complaints of misconduct reaching me” he said this smiling and winking at Samuel “Oh dad stop joking about it” said Robert who’s feelings for Brenda had deepened quite significantly over the last month.

In New York it was the afternoon before Christmas there was a great hustle and bustle as people rushed about doing their last minute shopping a keen observer of human nature would have observed a man of middle eastern origin moving determinedly among the vast throng of humanity with one goal in mind to meet his latest contact in tracing the whereabouts of Ali

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

An Italian interlude

Brenda was a hopeless romantic one of her favorite pastimes was reading history book. She could be found curled up in a comfortable chair reading the latest offering by Mills & Boons or some thing by Victoria Holt. Her favorite romantic reading would place her heroin in the past some two or three hundred years the usual scenario would leave the heroin in need of rescuing by the proverbial hero who would usually come galloping to the rescue on a great white charger.

This prompted a conversation one afternoon shortly after Christmas on the fact that many of the novels written by the ladies of the twentieth century to overlook what life was like in the real 17th and 18th century.

The conversation had come about because Robert had teased her about the novel she was reading “Lady Elizabeth’s lover one of the latest offering’s by the worth company of Mills & Boons

“You cannot be serious” said Robert when he had asked her what she was reading “and what is the heroin of the story doing now he asked?” “She is in Florence doing the grand tour” replied Brenda crossly. Samuel smiled and thought back to a time when he had done the grand tour it was the summer of 1675 when he reached Rome he had spent weeks in the Tuscan region moving from one site to the next enjoying the food and the company of the beautiful Tuscan woman.

He had visited Florence and had seen the great statues of Michelangelo he had seen some of the great works of Leonardo now on a fine summer morning he found himself awake and on the streets of the eternal city.

He loved the Italian mornings the air was still fresh they had not yet thrown out the pots of night soil and thus he was enjoying the cool crisp mountain air he stopped a moment in front of the grand fountains to admire the view of some woman passing by they were not the grand ladies of the salons and the palazzo’s these were the simple woman who from time in memorial had crossed the great squares and plazas of Rome on there way to the market or returning home after

making their purchases these were the type of people that Samuel felt at home with of course in his time he had met with some very rich and famous people but none could compare with these simple women who were the salt of the earth.

He found a public house sitting outside he ordered a bottle of wine and some cheese he loved Italian wine it was not the greatest in the world but it had an earthiness which brought home a feeling of belonging and a feeling of contentment. Watching the people cross the great square he considered what he would do that day he had planned to visit the great basilica and view the ceiling upon which Michelangelo had labored so long and lovingly. Images of the great God who ruled the universe displayed for the entire world to see there for any one to view who lifted his or her head heavenward.

However, here he found himself enjoying the sunshine and watching the people of the city as they went about their daily life. From across the plaza a man who seemed half familiar moved towards him "Greetings fellow traveler" said the man seating himself at the table and pouring himself a mug of wine "Why William Longmont as I live and breathe it must be a hundred years if not more since I first laid my motley eyes on you how have you been?" asked Samuel

"I am as you see me" said William in that dry board way of his "I see you have taken to watching the Romans at work and play" said William. "Indeed they are a happy group who find pleasure in the simple things not ales like us who wander the world seeking answers" said Samuel.

"Yes they do have that about them I have seen them over a prolonged period of time they always start the day of happy to be alive as the sun rises they become more passionate by mid day they will be shouting at each other and who knows maybe later a dagger will flash they are so typical of Well Romans" replied William.

"Tell me William have you yet had chance to see the ceiling of the great basilica" asked Samuel "No but I get the idea that we will see it today I hear Michelangelo had the devil of the time getting his money out of the pope for the work" replied William "I suppose if they had left it to Leonardo the ceiling

would still be left half finished” said Samuel “Yes I heard that Da Vinci had a bit of a temper about him but that comes with greatness” continued William. “Well shall we adjourn to the basilica?” asked William as he finished the last of the wine rising Samuel and William walked the rest of the way to the great basilica in the distance the sound of a bell ringing the hour could be heard as they entered the basilica the voices of priests and nuns singing the morning devotionals could be heard for a moment William stood still crossing himself before continuing into the body of the great church. Stopping halfway down the body of the church Samuel looked up there above him hung the Lord God in all his majesty displayed extending his hand to Adam in a scene from the creation of the world the smell of incense on every breath he took Samuel gazed up at the vast painting astonished at the creative mind that had designed this vast masterpiece of art As a Jew he knew it was forbidden to worship any man made image but now looking up at this ceiling he was struck by the great power of his God a God who ruled the universe yet had time for the simple folks a God who took an interest in every living human.

True the followers of God did not always act as they should but this was the fault of original sin not the great God who had created man.

“There it is in all its glory as beautiful as the day that the maestro applied the plaster and the paint” said William “I gather you were around when it was being painted” said Samuel. “Yes and it was a grand day when the maestro finally permitted the covers to be taken down for the first time” said William

“How was it received by the pope who commissioned it?” asked Samuel “Old Julius he was as happy as a pig in a truffle bucket” said William “How did it come about that you were here when all of this was taking place?” asked Samuel waving his arm vaguely round the great basilica on which the cream of renaissance artists had worked.

I was originally part of the guard which looked after old Julius one day he called me in and said to me “Son I have a task for you of the utter most importance” I kissed his hand and went

through the usual formalities of thanking him for choosing me thinking it was maybe a mission to France or some thing like that. Nevertheless, no he tells me he has some plans for more paintings in the basilica and then he went on to describe the work a large work he said with the figures of the twelve apostles. Well of course we know the maestro changed all of that. Any way he tells me I was to be in charge of finding g the clay's needed for the mixing of the plaster for the maestro" said William. I can tell you that I was not happy I had heard of the maestro's temperament and I was not looking forward to working with him but it turned out alright" he continued.

"Was the pope slow on paying for the work I believe you mentioned that a while ago?" asked Samuel. "It wasn't that he was slow on paying old Julius always seemed to have to many irons in the fire and he did tend to forget about things when he really got busy with planning some new venture" replied William

"Yes I seem to remember that was quite a busy time back then with all those wars going on it is a wonder any thing actually got done "said Samuel who was thinking that round about that time 1508 or there about's gun powder had recently been discovered and most men of a technical nature were rushing to construct great guns of several tons.

"I can tell old Julius kept the maestro very busy and he had to account for every penny I remember one day overhearing one of the maestro's servants complaining that there was no bread for the midday meal and you know what the maestro says? "Don't worry Benvenuto we will say a prayer and then send for the pope to share our midday meal we will soon have a fat duck on the table and a few bottles of wine" replied William" true to his word he sent a priest off to ask old Julius if he would like to share the midday meal and have a sneak preview of the latest part of the fresco old Julius was the only one who was allowed an occasional look behind the scenes but even he was surprised when the covered came of I don't think he quite realized what a major work Michelangelo had carried out until the full painting was revealed. Said William "Any way old Julius and his company of adoring fans comes rushing down to the basilica to have a look well it was not exactly what the maestro intended but he waited until every one had filled in

then took the pope behind one of the screens I don't know what he said to him but they come back old Julius has tears in his eyes kept on saying beautiful he sends for his secretary and orders him to pay the maestro a two hundred florins out of which the maestro sends Benvenuto to the market to get some food and they have a grand old feast under the canvases in the basilica." William ended all the while Samuel had been listening in rapture to the tale which had taken place nearly 200 years earlier. Now he pulled himself together and looked to the North wall on which the scene of the last judgment was painted. "I gather that one took quite some time I even see the artist included himself in that part of the painting symbolic that he should choose that character to represent him" said Samuel

"Shall we leave the monks to their prayers and make a Roman holiday of it?" asked William as they moved towards the exit of the great building "I think that might be a good idea I hear they have a little house in the lower quarters which we might find some interesting company to while away the afternoon and the evening" said Samuel Thus saying the two wandered through time left the great basilica and wandered into the bright sunshine of an Italian summer.

Inside the basilica those who worshipped God went about their business the smoke from incenses which had been burned daily for many years was only just beginning to have an impact on the great paintings which hung high overhead. It would be a few more centuries before any one looked to cleaning the maestro's works properly but that is a story for another time and another place... In the mean time the two men stopped at a public house to have something to eat they drank some wine and enjoyed the afternoon as the sun made its way across the heavens as it has always done. The men's thought turned to other things and they made their way to the brothel of which they had earlier spoken... It would be a very long time before they met each other again and when they did it would not be as friends

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The accursed halls of hell

Deep in the accursed halls of hell the devil had called a meeting molten rock dripping from the walls sliding to the floor in great blobs. Sulphur rising the atmosphere thick with smoke and brimstone "My lord you called me" said the demon Albuis "Indeed and you have kept me overlong with your delay in coming" roared the devil "Apologies master I had an urgent matter that pertained unto my province" lied the demon. "Think you that I am your fool to be lied to?" said the devil "Don't you know I am the father of all lies?" asked the devil

"Pardon majesty" said the demon trembling in fear "Enough" said the devil "Now do you know the one called Abdullah? Poor misguided fool who seeks even now for the one styled Ali?" asked the devil "I have heard of him majesty he seeks to do a great evil to the one styled Ali." "Yes the very one I speak of find him and render unto him every assistance in finding the one styled Ali for I have an interest in this cause for to do a great evil to the one styled Ali will bring about problems in the courts of heaven and the hearts of man" replied the devil.

"Pardon majesty but how may I be of service to Abdullah shall I invade his dreams and cause him to doubt his sanity till such time that he goes mad and kills?" asked the demon gleefully

"No fool roared the devil there is a certain one who works for the state department who is even now collecting information which he would pass on to aid the cause of evil arrange a meeting between these two men then leave it to Abdullah to find a way to find the one styled Ali." Said the devil I leave to do your bidding said the demon who began to fade into the smoke the sulphur rising the devil turned to a minion and signaled for a cup handing the cup to the devil the minion on hands and knees looked up the face of a former world dictator now in agony of immeasurable torment displayed the sulphurous liquid at ten thousand degrees hot the devil drank. Bah this is cold...

Abdullah had crossed the Mexican united states boarder with out much problem he was used to the hard life the desert held

nothing which he feared making his way northwards he would occasionally come in contact with one or another extremist group now forced to tow the line lest there activates attract attention finally after a three month journey he reached New York finding accommodation in a small rundown Bronx hotel he begun to make inquiry of the local imam if they had seen any one who matched the description of Ali bin Ebrihim there were a few falls starts for there where a number of Europeans in the city of New York who worshiped Allah who closely matched the description of Ali but to no avail.

It came to pass that many months had passed before any thing of interest appeared for working in the offices of the FBI was a cleaner of Middle Eastern origin who was a follower of the prophet. Now this follower had ever since the attacks on the World Trade Center been suruptsiously collecting information. The point of this was to one day pass it on to those who followed the prophet and where ready to die a martyrs death should the need arise. Thus the man collected the information and stored it all away neatly in the back of his mind. Now on a certain day Abdullah chanced to visit the Mosque which this man attended Mohamed Mohammed for such was the name of the man noticed with interest the arrival of the strange man who was introduced as a member of the faithful from Pakistan. Late rafter the faithful had attended to prayers Mohammed Mohammed approached the Abdullah after the traditional greetings the two men fell into conversation on the state of the world and the current events which had put the Moslems in America in to such a state of heightened anxiety for true to the times there was now a feeling of distrust of any thing or any one of Muslim faith across the world.

I fear that all the good that has been done by generation soft h faithful Moslems in America will fall by the wayside” said Mohammed “To which Abdullah had to agree “Indeed I fear it is so” replied Abdullah “But tell me brother what brings you to these American shores ?” asked Mohammed “It is a sad tale one that I have told many times before but I despair of find the one who is lost” replied Abdullah “Please tell me” said Mohammed for he was always interested in hearing the stories of other peoples lives

I am in search of one who has a gift who was one of those who were faithful to the prophet he was sent here on a holy mission but has not returned. Which is a worry for us for he showed great promise he was know as Ali Bin Ebrihim he was counted among the faithful who served as a brother in arms in Afghanistan but now all trace of him is lost I fear” said Abdullah taking from his jacket pocket a photo of Ali and passing it to Mohamed.

“But be of good cheer brother replied Mohammed for I have seen this man in images before a certain South African came looking for a favor at the place at which I work and he left this image behind I know for they certainly did trace this man but were unable to effect a capture for others had already captured him the last I heard was he had been taken to Palestine by the Israelis “said Mohamed excitedly.

Oh joy and peace be upon the prophet can this be true that my search is nearly over asked Abdullah a strange light of ecstasy coming into his eyes the look one will see in the eyes of those who are on the edge of madness.

Later much later Abdullah now in possession of all the facts he needed bought a cell phone from a small shop in the box the purpose was but to make one call then to abandon the phone he dialed the number in Afghanistan and waited the voice on the other end answered “Yes brother?”

“I have bought some books for mother and will bring them home soon” this was the pre arranged message which told the leader and those members of the base who still existed in remote areas of Afghanistan that Abdullah had found the next lead that he was leaving the USA and that he was traveling to Israel to find Ali “I am glad I will tell her is your brother well?” asked the voice from the other end of the line “Yes but he has a fever” replied Abdullah specifying how good the lead was. “Thank you God bye” came the reply Abdullah turned and dropped the phone into a dustbin before walking of to hail a cab he was heading for an airport the trail was getting hot.

The demon smiled gleefully thinking of the rewards his master would give him for a job well done.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The proposal

It was that time of year when the leaves on the trees are turning a golden brown and falling to the floor of the forests and woods. It was April 2002 Robert had packed a picnic basket and had asked Brenda if she would like to go for a ride. They had ridden at a genteel pace across the farm in the direction of the pond which was overlooked by the small waterfall where they had had their first date half a year earlier. The sun was high in the sky before they reached their destination.

Here they unpacked their basket and ate a light lunch before going for a swim the cool water refreshing after their ride across the African savanna with the sun beating down on their backs and heads they had worn hats, now as they swam to the bottom of the pool they looked in wonder at the handy work of God's creation for small fresh water fish swam in small groups near the bottom of the pool under the watchful eye of their mother. The colors of their tiny bodies reflecting the light as it filtered through from the surface.

After a while they left the pool and returned to the place where the blanket lay sitting together talking and laughing as young lovers do at each other's attempts at humor these two felt like they were embarking on a journey. A journey which would last their whole lives long.

For a while they sat in silence enjoying the company of each other not feeling the necessity of words. Robert with a smile on his lips rose and with drew from the picnic basket a small box covered in red velvet kneeling in front of Brenda he said "My love we have known each other now for some time and I want to ask you if you would do me the honor of becoming my wife?" "You would make me the happiest man in the world if you said yes" he continued. Brenda with tears in her eyes threw her arms around his neck and weeping said "Yes, yes, yes you silly man of course I will marry you." Sitting back down he slipped the ring from the box and placed it on her finger smiling Brenda looked into his dark eyes and leaning forward kissed him upon the lips the kiss was a long lingering kiss of true affection.

Robert took from the basket a bottle of Champagne and two glasses handing the glasses to Brenda he popped the cork and poured the champagne into the glasses the rich bubbles reflecting the color of the season. "Of course you will have to ask my parents for their consent Robert. You know they are very old world and this has to have their blessing I just would not feel right if you did not" she said. "I intend to do exactly that" said Robert been very aware of the traditions by which most South African are brought up demanding certain obedience's to family.

Returning to the house they found that Samuel and Chris had arrived from the Transvaal only minutes before they had returned. The two men were sitting in the large downstairs lounge enjoying a cold drink. "Hello son what have you been up to asked Chris with a knowing smile." "Wouldn't you like to know dad" "Brenda you look like the cat who got the cream" said Samuel "Oh Mr Ferreira you knew all about it didn't you" she said with a look of absolute contentment in her eyes. "Actually pastor Chris informed me on the way down here you are going to be very careful round these Van Heerden men may dear they have a nasty streak for surprising one" said Samuel "Come show me the ring my dear" he continued. Brenda moved forward and displayed the ring on her hand Samuel inspected it with great care before saying it is quite beautiful my dear to match your own beauty. I have in mind the ideal gift for a wedding present have you set a date yet?" he asked

"No we have not thought that far" said Robert I still have to speak to Brenda's parents and ask for their permission to marry their daughter" he continued. "Yes indeed that is very important" said Samuel "I would be very happy if you decided to have the wedding here at the ranch" said Samuel. "Mr Ferreira thank you that is a most generous offer" said Robert.

"I wonder has any one thought of what William will say about this" said Chris "Oh I am sure he will be very happy for us" said Brenda. "Does it change any thing in regard to how William's treatment will progress is what I am trying to get at in my round about way" said Chris. "Oh I don't think it will have any marked affect besides I don't think Robert and

Brenda have any plans to leave the farm just yet” said Samuel “Do you?” he asked the two young people” “No I am quite happy to continue on here as we originally planed “said Robert “What about you Brenda” asked Samuel “Are you content to continue on here as the nurse to poor William?” “God Lord Mr Ferreira the thought of leaving the farm is the furthers thing from my mind right now she smiled and slipped her arm into Robert’s “Then it is settled the wedding will be held here and in the mean time young lady. I suggest you get on the phone and invite your parents down for the weekend so Robert can do right by them and officially ask for your hand in marriage.” Said Samuel

“Thank you Mr Ferreira I will phone them in a few minutes time I have to discuss some thing with Robert before I do though so if you will excuse us we have to go and have or little fireside chat” replied Brenda leading Robert from the room.

“I believe congratulations are in order and a bottle of champagne should set the mood” said Samuel “I very much feel like I am beginning to get old said Chris.

The men made there way on to the golf course the early morning Karoo air filled with the fragrance of nature filling there lungs. The idea of a round of golf had been Chris’s he had always played golf and had yet to play the course at Sutherland now with the woman planning the wedding he had suggested a round of golf Samuel William ,Robert and John Mac Masters had jumped at the idea. A chance to get away from the woman as they sat around the dinning room table discussing fabrics and various other items for the wedding which still did not have a date.

Lena and Brenda’s mother has started planning the wedding almost as soon as Robert had asked there permission to marry there daughter John Mac Masters had said to his wife “Jane why are you in such a hurry to plan the weeding the boy has only asked our permission last night?” “Men they will never understand the amount of work that goes into planning a wedding. No time like the present to get started now help me move these books of the table we need place to work” she said as she pushed her husband affectionately towards the dinning

room table where the previous evening the men had pulled out a large number of books while they had discussed politics and church history.

Now on this fine Saturday morning as the men played golf the conversation turned once more to the war in Afghanistan and the possible implications of a war in Iraq lead by the USA. "I don't think that NATO will give sanction to a war against Iraq very easily" said Chris. "Historical evidence points against such a move" he continued "I don't know the American government once it has made up its mind always follows up on its decisions" said Samuel. "I don't understand why they would want to start another war when they have not finished the war in Afghanistan. They have not captured Ben Laden and this is becoming an embarrassment to the US government. President Bush promised that they would go after him and capture him yet even with Afghanistan in ruins they are still not able to produce Ben Laden it is a mess" said Robert.

"Politics, politics you guys sure know how to boar a man" said William as he once more teed off. "It is important that we never forget what happened last year in New York" said Samuel "The Moslem extremists have got to be stopped they are the greatest threat to world peace today" he continued

"I tend to agree with William said John Mac Masters here we have before us one of the most pristine landscapes in the world a beautiful golf course and all you guys can do is talk politics I mean really lets have a drink and play a good game of golf"

"It is rather nice" I must admit said Samuel looking around he enjoyed a game of golf having first played about five centuries earlier on the Royal Saint Andrew course in Scotland, golf and golfing equipment had come a long way since he had first played.

"Let's make it interesting" said John Mac Masters the first one to get a hole in one I will give a thousand rand. Any takers? He asked I for one am going to enjoy a nice cold beer said Robert as he popped open the cooler which Brenda had so thoughtfully packed for them before they left the house.

The men played on in the mean time in Israel Abdullah had taken up a position close to the hospital at which a certain Israeli major worked it had come to his attention that this man had been very closely involved with the abduction of Ali and all that Abdullah was waiting for was a chance to interview the major to this end he had made contact with a cell which operated secretly in the city of Tela Viv who were able and willing for a certain price to abduct the said Israeli officer and deliver him to an appointed place on the west bank where further interrogation could take place. The things one did in the service of Allah the most merciful knew no bounds and this was just another example of what members of the faithful would do to bring about a world under the control of the righteous hand of Islam.

Back at the farm the three woman were leaning over the table looking at various magazines with images of wedding dresses and other wedding apparel “Of course the wedding will have to take place here Mr Ferreira has kindly offered us the use of the farm for the wedding. There is enough sleeping accommodation here to sleep an army” said Brenda “What about the catering there is no caterer for hundreds of miles” said Jane Mac Masters with dismay.

“That has never stopped us before” said Lena with a smile “do you think we Boer women have not prepared for wedding s before? How many guests do you think will be at the wedding?” she asked of the Mac Masters woman

“I think there should be about 300 in total” said Jane “Well then it wont be a problem me and the ladies for m the church have prepared and cooked meals for a thousand with out any problems so all we have to do is make sure that we have every thing that we need so we don’t have to run out and buy locally

On the golf course Robert hit a birdie and William landed a hole in one winning the bet which John Mac Masters had made earlier. “Darn I should have kept my big mouth shut and let you guys continue with your talk of wars and rumors of wars he said lightheartedly handing over the money to William. Chris was enjoying himself immensely on the course his score was on par with the rest of the men so he was not to

worried while Samuel seemed a bit distracted occasionally casting glances in the direction of William Longmont .

“The passion and death of St Stephen.”

The residence of the farm had gathered in the lounge to watch a DVD which Chris had brought with him on his last trip to the farm a few weeks before it was a low budget DVD made in Turkey with English subtitles the title of this work produced by the Turkish government was titled “The passion and death of St Stephen.”

“Every body happy every body got there popcorn and cool drinks to throw at the flat screen TV” asked Robert as he switched the DVD player from pause mode to play. To the loud cheers of the young people gathered in the lounge the people on the farm for the most part were young people who had volunteered their time to the church run by Chris Van Heerden and all devoted born again bible believing Christians unlike their contemporaries in the United States and Britain these young people knew the difference between a totalitarian society and a free one having for the most part been born under apartheid these young people truly knew the value of freedom for in the group were some talented writers and musicians there were even a few technical junkie types who tended to hang around with this group all had grown up in an age when talking one's mind had been prohibited now since the bonds which had held them had been let loose they wasted no time in expressing themselves in various creative ways. These were the workers and guardians of William Longmont an immortal cursed to live out his days seeking his salvation.

One thing that all of these people on the farm had in common was they had voluntarily decided that they wanted to become active ministers of the gospel of Christ and had joined the small bible school which Chris Van Heerden had set up a few years earlier. Their time at the farm and the way they interacted would be evaluated in the long term to see if they had the right temperament to be effective ministers of the gospel by the three senior teachers who were part of the staff complement on the farm.

Chris had set up the bible school after visiting a school run by an American preacher Arthur J Arthur who had phenomenal

success in teaching young people. Chris had gone further and had visited seminaries in Turkey and learned that students there were been exposed to teachings from all parts of the world. After meditation on this for a time Chris had come up with the model on which his churches bible school would be run the students would be exposed to various different belief systems and from this they would draw there conclusions and find themselves in the middle of the road after been completely educated in every aspect of Christianity through out the world. Chris knew that the greatest enemy was ignorance he had time and again seen how people had reacted because of ignorance and he believed that he would be failing in his duty if he did not use every possible tool at his disposal to educate these young people to the best of his ability.

The movie opened with the usual advertising from the Turkish film authority warning that this film was copy write and the individual property of the seminary schools of Northern Turkey.

Thereafter the story was flashed across the screen briefly the baptism of fire was replayed across the screen Peter portrayed by a famous Turkish actor Boris Ebenis gave a splendid performance of the apostle. A younger man played saint Stephen was to be seen in the crowd on Pentecost day talking with the multitude convincing them of the error of there ways and urging them to turn from there sins to the true Lord Jesus urging them to repent and be baptized.

the film moved on to a period in which Stephen was called before the great Sanhedrin and admonished not to preach any new gospel the days of the book of Acts replayed across the screen in the lounge occasionally one could hear the voice of one of the young people praying in agreement with a statement made by one of the actors. The DVD played on now came the arrest and trial of Saint Stephen there in a man of some forty years played the lead prosecutor of the young Christian. Saul of Tarsus played very well by an unknown Turkish actor seen here cross questioning and ridiculing the young Christian.

The film move don later there was a scene where Saul and others stoned the young Christian tied to a post and stripped to

the waist the young Christian stood exposed. Saul lifted a heavy stone and threw striking the young man a glaring blow against the head. Now the voices of those watching the DVD could be heard praying as they watched the stoning of the first Christian saint to die after the day of Pentecost the graphics of the film brutally displaying the pain of this inglorious torture which the faithful servant of Christ endured. The movie ended with the spirit of Saint Stephen soaring heavenward on his way to meet the master and the lights were once more turned up. There was a quite mood in the large room as if every one was waiting not wishing break the spell of the epic of the movie.

Charles De Bruin the senior teacher at the farm eventually said 'Time for a discussion on the film I am throwing the floor open. Any one who has any thoughts on the matter can say what they want to? How did this portrayal of the death of a saint affect them and that which happened afterwards?'

"If I might say some thing" said William with tears in his eyes I am astonished that a person like Saul of Tarsus who was so brutal in the persecution of Stephen could ever be redeemed. It is simply too much to absorb in on sitting he was most probably the most violent man I have ever seen portrayed in the movie. Yet as the Church claim he wrote most of the books in the New Testament, a violent man filled with hate and a passion for evil"

"Yes William that is the miracle of Christ's love" said Charles

CHAPTER NINETEEN

How Samuel came by the name of Ferreira

Samuel you told me that you were born and named Samuel Ben Ezra of the house of David yet you have the name of Ferreira? Said Chris Van Heerden “Yes that is true I suppose that I had better tell you otherwise you will not give me any rest hey old friend” said Samuel.

You know these things interest me and with your first hand knowledge of first century Israel you are a mind of untapped information. I figured I better get as much of it from you before some thing happens and I miss the opportunity” said Chris.

Very well I will tell you but I want you to know that it is not a pretty story and you might not like what I am about to tell you of the Christian faith” said Samuel.

Of course life in the kingdom of Portugal was very good to us Jews under the Moors” said Don Pedro De Ferreira y Andalusia. “Indeed Sir” asked Samuel curious to hear what the great courtier would say next. “Yes when the Moors conquered this part of Portugal they set up a very fair system under which Moors, Jews and Christians lived as equals never had Portugal known such a golden age. They set up there kingdom of Al- Andalusia there builders build great buildings some of which still stand to day look over there on the horizon for example that great edifice was the center palace of the whole Andalusia region. People lived a good life under the Moors in this part of the world I remember when I was a child hearing from my father that a certain ancestor of ours was even allowed to practice as a lawyer and a law giver under the Moors” continued Don Pedro De Ferreira y Andalusia “That must have been a wonderful age to live in” said Samuel.

“It was a great time to live and Jews from all over the world flocked here to live under there benevolent rule I do not know where else they ruled and how they treated people of other

faiths in those lands but here every one was given a fair chance to make some thing of himself” said Don Pedro

“It was a time when my ancestors made great headway and a fortune awaited any one who took the time and the opportunity to enrich themselves” said Don Pedro but alas all good things must end in the 12th century the Kings of Portugal decided that the moors had lived in peace far to long and they began the reconquesta . One by one the cities and towns which had prospered under the Moors for centuries fell before the advancing armies of the Portuguese. However that to was a good time for us Jews because we acted as agents for the Kings of Portugal as they advanced we spied out the land reporting to the king on every thing we Jews saw was reported back and Alfonso VI, and El cid acted accordingly acted but now things have changed so much the law that forced the Jews to convert to Christianity well what a joke that was “Don’t worry you will be allowed to leave Portugal come to the port city and the Kings men will help you well we gathered together and journeyed to the Port city hoping that we could make a new start many of us had heard that there was a moor kingdom further south well we hoped and prayed but what happened ??? Ill tell you what happened they fell upon us in the port city forcing us to convert a whole army of Priests calling us filthy Jews killers of the Lord Christ convert and be saved or burn they cried well what did we do like any good Jew we converted but we still practice secretly we were allowed a grace period of thirty years to convert and that period is almost half way through now and I doubt if many have converted I know many have fled” said Don Pedro.

“But did you not protest at been forced to convert to Christianity” asked Samuel “My friend I am a nobleman a grand night of Portugal and even I feared for the safety of my family and what do you do when a sword is at the throat of your only daughter you do what any reasonable man would do you swallow your pride and convert to what ever faith is stronger” said Don Pedro with a sad shrug of the shoulders.

“Now the king has decided that we cannot serve in his service if we do not conform with the problems of the new Christians” said Don Pedro the two men now approached the squire of the city in the center of the city stood the large market square which had for centuries been the home of those who would come to buy and sell their produce it was also on this square where criminals and other miscreants met there and in the shadow of the large cathedral the residence of the city lived there cathedral it was here where the new born infants were brought to be baptized to be received into the arms of holy church and here where the remains of most of the city's vast population was brought to be blessed with a mass before being taken to a place of burial. Now on this day Manuel Mendoza and a few of his friends had gathered to have some sport with the ladies to show off their manhood in the fashion of hot bloods.

It so happened that Don Pedro had upon his head a fine looking hat of silken texture and it was of the brightest red that one could imagine it was this that first arrested the attention of Manuel Mendoza. The son of Don Phillip master of the horse Manuel was the product of his age any thing he did not understand meant that it was to be ridiculed and feared secondly if it could not be ridiculed to the point where the person or object of his cruel action fled in fear of him then only was it to be feared. Thus with cruel intent Manuel winked at a cory and took up a stone which he flung at the hat but due to a certain spot being poorly paved Don Pedro's head rose to be struck by the stone causing blood to flow freely to the deranged laughter of Manuel and his friends. Don Pedro stopped the blood flowing with a hanky but anger showed on his brow for he was also hot blooded being of Latin blood “Ignorant fools he muttered a little to himself while Samuel tried to stop the blood.

“Good people hear you this a Jew” for Don Pedro wore on his sleeve the star which condemned Jews of that age to be recognized like a badge of shame on most but on Don Pedro it was worn with pride. “He dares to call the son of a noble an ignorant fool I say we put him to rights” shouted Manuel.

“Indeed we shall’ shouted back the crowd that had gathered interested in the sports of the day amidst the ducks chickens and goats on sale. Now Manuel approached the noble Don Pedro and said Sir you will apologize for insulting a noble house.” Indeed I shall not replied Don Pedro his temper now rising in his own defense.” “Well then you shall pay in blood shouted Manuel who drew from his doublet a small dagger and plunged it into the chest of the noble.

Don Pedro sunk to the ground his whiter shirt now rapidly turning red “I am mortally wounded” he said softly, the onlookers now realizing that some thing terrible had happened bethought themselves first to disappear but there were to many witnesses a quick thinking Monk coming out of the cathedral who had seen the whole event knew that things would go badly for Manuel cried out “it was the Jews fault he insulted the lad” “Yes he is right” shouted Manuel yes said a few of Manuel’s friends” The Jews are always causing problems lets get rid of some more of them shouted another r hot head in the crowd the cry was taken up HEP, HEP and the proqram was on for it was a hot summer of 1504 and the people of Andalusia bethought themselves to kill for they were a hot blooded people and in one day died 2000 people of the Jewish faith among them perished not for the first or the last time Samuel Ben Ezra who when he was resurrected to continue his life under the eternal curse which he was placed bethought himself to take to himself the name of that most noble gentleman of Portugal Don Pedro De Ferreira Y Andalusia thus Samuel Ben Ezra became known as Samuel Ferreira.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Wedding day

In October of 2003 Robert Shaun Van Heerden took in marriage Brenda Mary Mac masters, the ceremony was the highlight of the social season in the small town of Southerland. Because the chapel was unable to hold the thousands of guests who attended the service two great marquee tents were erected. The influential businessman Samuel Ferreira was among the guests it was largely due to his wealth that the wedding could take place as a reward for the couple's good work in looking after William Longmont over the previous two years he arranged for staff to be flown in from a number of his hotels to do the catering. The wedding as first planed was to be a small affair but as time progressed Lena Van Heerden and Mary Mac Masters came to accept that they would need a lot of help for as the guest list grew so did the cost finally Lena approached Samuel and explained her worries. Samuel was quick to put her mind at rest with a promise of financial aid and the help of his international staff of world famous caterers who took care of the day to day running of his various international hotels.

In addition, present at the wedding was a whole host of members of the extended family of the Clan Mac masters who had flown in from places as far a field as Los Angelis California and back of the moon Western Australia. The members of Robert Van Heerden's family who numbered in the several hundred were virtually awed by the shear number of cousin's uncles and aunts of the bride.

Also in attendance where members of the church which pastor Chris Van Heerden who had come down from Johannesburg to wish young Robert well as he took his first steps along the marital path.

The service was jointly presided over by Pastor Chris Van Heerden of the Abundant life church with officers in Johannesburg South Africa and Hamish Mac Clean moderator of the church of the ancient rites of Scotland for the diocese of Southern Africa. The bride wore a traditional white wedding dress with a long flowing train and a lightweight vale in keeping with the prevailing conditions in the country the

groom wore the traditional black suit with white cama band. This was a strange contrast for the clan Mac Masters had gone all out and had arrived in there traditional Scottish kilts. The yield around the farm house was also dotted with various tents and caravans in which the wedding guests would spend the night. For almost a week before the wedding the guests had been arriving. So it was not uncommon to hear the voices of the clan Mac master raised in joy as old acquaintances and family members met once again for the great gathering. It was also a common denominator of the gathering to hear an Australian member of the clan saying in a loud voice “Good day Bruce how you been” to a relative who hew hardly knew from the North American continent whom he only knew by sight.

On the day of the wedding which turned out to be a typical bright sunny spring day the bride made her way down the long row of chairs as a two pipers played the wedding march with a number of her young female relatives carrying the train of her wedding garment. The groom in his suit stood erect tall and proud like the cat that got the cream at his side his younger brother Charles stood acting as the best man the bride moved forward on the arm of her father John Sinclair Mac Masters patriarch of the family in his best kilt a proud moment for him as his eldest daughter made her way towards a marriage which he had at times never thought she would reach. The marquee was adorned with a vast amount of flowers the prevalent flower been pink carnations with a liberal sprinkling of white roses.

The most reverend gentlemen began the matrimonial service pointing out to the young couple there respective duties to each other further more also pointing gout to them the very great responsibility of bringing children into the world there was also a season with in the service taken over by good humored jesting when certain events of there childhood were recounted much to the mirth of the congregation and some what to the embarrassment of Robert Van Heerden. When it came time to sign the great wedding book both of the fathers of the groom and bride stood by taking the pen in hand

witnessing that their respective child was entering into the holy bonds of matrimony...

After the service the wedding celebrations began in earnest with music being provided by a band which Samuel Ferreira had flown in from London England for the occasion. The bride and groom took the floor for the first dance to the loud applause of the gathered clan.

Later as the party progressed the waiters moved through the tables handing out plates of fresh South African oysters which the guests enjoyed with Tabasco sauce thereafter a whole variety of dishes was presented.

The bar was one of the busiest places at the party as the clan Mac Masters quenched their thirst with fine single malt whiskeys and water while the clan Van Heerden quenched there with brandy and coke a typical South African favorite while stories were told and retold of the doings of the young groom who was quite a favorite of the families even Lena's aged father was inspired to tell a story of his youth during the first world war he had met and married Lena's mother while on leave in Cape Town a tear filled the old man's eye as he finished telling the story for he missed his wife who had recently gone to her eternal resting place.

It was nearing six in the evening when John Mac Master junior called Robert aside and asked him to accompany him a short distance to a place a little removed from the wedding crowd good naturedly Robert agreed as he also wanted to catch a breath of fresh air just over the rise in the garden they came across three senior members of the clan Mac Masters who had before them on a stone table a number of items also present was Samuel Ferreira and Chris Van Heerden and the most reverend gentleman of the church of the ancient rites of Scotland for the diocese of Southern Africa Scotland.

Robert you have married our daughter today began John Mac Masters senior began, "It is our solemn privilege to welcome

you into our clan here present are witnesses and I want to at this time present you with a kilt of the clan which you are to wear at times of celebration and when summoned by the clan to war repeated the old man following the ritual laid down by previous generations. So saying he laid upon the arm of the young man the said garment. John Mac Masters junior then stepped up to the stone table and lifted a small dagger in a former age it would have been called a dirk. Brother Robert I present you with the arms of the clan bear them with pride and for protection” the young man said as he laid upon the palm of the groom the aforementioned item.

Now the esteemed gentleman of the cloth said Young man do you swear to protect and hold sacred all trusts and persons of the clan Mac Masters to serve only God and his people as long as you might live? I do replied Robert

The reverend gentleman then said I call on those here present to witness your oath and to remind you of it should you forget. Thus saying the little ceremony in the garden was at an end the men returned to the tent to enjoy the feast as the warm African sun set.

In the months leading up to the wedding Samuel had come to the conclusion that Brenda would most probably within a short space of time have her hands full with raising a family. He was not upset by this however he did realize that she would need help with the daily care which William Longmont required. Her job of late had included not only giving William his daily dose of drugs but also monitoring his reactions and his overall progress as far as regaining his memory.

To this end Samuel began to search for a woman similar in age to William who had made nursing her profession. Some one stable and dependable who could be relied on to be loyal to both Samuel and to the necessary level of care that William required. After a few days search he came across an application for work buried in a pile of others which showed promise.

Joanna Grey had worked previously for a number of hospitals in the United States and had come highly recommended. Samuel discovered that she had lost her husband on the 11th of September 2001 and had taken a leave of absents after his death to reorganize her life. She had done some traveling and had considered going to work for the World Health organization, however Samuel had caught her just in time and had arranged an interview when she arrived Samuel was suitably impressed by the way in which this woman carried herself she was neither haughty nor meek she spoke in a clear concise voice of her past and her hopes for her future. After the death of her husband she had for a season grieved and gone into seclusion now recovered from the initial shock of grief she was back to her place in the world it emerged that she was planning and had even started writing a book a novel of Victorian fiction similar she said to those written by Victoria Holt. Samuel smiled as he listened to this as he knew the truth of life in Victorian life in England and how far removed it really was from the writings of the previously mentioned lady author in who's stories the gallant gentleman on his white charger would come gallantly to the rescue of the young Damsel in distress.

However in view of the young lady's impeccable credentials Samuel offered her the job at quite a substantial rate which she gladly accepted, the time away from the big cities she believed would give her time to complete the writing of her first novel.

Thus on the day of the wedding a section of the front row of seats was taken up by Samuel William next to William sat Joanna then next to them sat the grooms family Joanna had been at the farm some weeks and had been doing her job well taking over most of the responsibilities which were previously handled by Brenda for as the great day drew near Brenda found that a vast amount of time was been taken up by the planning of the event. It was also fortuitous as after the wedding the happy couple would be taking a few weeks leave of absents from the farm to enjoy a honeymoon on the island state of Madagascar which was been paid for by the father of the groom. Chris Van Heerden knew exactly how hard these

two young people had been working over the last year and wished to reward them for this.

In the evening after the wedding when most of the guests had gone to bed and a last few still sat around catching up Robert and Brenda had retired to their new bedroom while Joanna settled William for the night. Chris, Lena and Samuel found themselves in the big downstairs lounge of the farmhouse enjoying a night cap. There was a fire burning at the hearth as they sat they spoke of the events of the day.

Good friends enjoying the company of each other, Samuel was speaking of his first impressions of Robert as a young man when he first met him back in 2001. "I knew he was worth his weight in gold and he has proved to be a very good manager for the farm. The racing and breeding had proved to be very lucrative and the returns of the quarterly reports had even put a smile on the face of Samuel's auditor."

"Robert has always been quite good at what ever he applies his mind too" said Lena beaming. The proud mother the Macmasters had retired early. John having become quite inebriated and had need a little help finding his way to bed, this could be forgiven as he was celebrating the marriage of his eldest daughter. The reverend gentleman from the church of the ancient and honorable church of Scotland was able however to hold his liquor much better than the father of the bride and had shook hands with every one who gathered round the helipad as he departed for his home far to the north.

Now late on the wedding night the two young people lay in each others arms content with the world and very tired. "Are you happy my love?" asked Robert of his bride. "Yes very much so" said Brenda with a tired sigh. It had been an emotionally charged day and they were both in reflective moods thinking back to the moments in the day which had brought them great joy. The moment at which they had first repeated their marriage vows to each other still clear as a bell in their memory. Brenda would carry that moment with her for

the rest of her life and many years later when she herself was a very old woman she would be fond of retelling the third and fourth generation of her children of the day when her beloved Robert had first told her of his deep love for her on their wedding day and of his vows to love her all the days of their lives.

Nevertheless, for now they were content to hold each other on a fine spring night falling into a deep restful sleep tomorrow held enough problems of its own let the young couple rest easy for a season.

Samuel clicked on the mouse and closed the window of the internet explorer he had just been reading the front page of a new blogging website which had just started, he could not imagine any one had been interested in the stories of a person's personal life being published on the internet. He was a little irritated he had not slept well the previous night he had a bad dream which had woken him early at four in the morning he had woken in a cold sweat and had called for coffee and whiskey crossing to the window over looking the Johannesburg skyline he lit a cigarette and drew long and hard on it the light of the match casting a strange light across his face.

In the streets below the city was beginning to come to life it was a cool morning the false dawn already casting a pre dawn light across the sky line he waited while a female staff member who was on the nightshift brought up the order of coffee and the tumbler of whiskey. He did not usually drink so early in the day but having woken from a restless sleep he had decided he wanted something strong to soothe his nerves.

The reason he was so upset was because he had gone to bed quite late having been working on some figures for the hotel group which had troubled him someone was stealing from him and he wanted to figure out who falling into a restless sleep he began to dream an angel had stood by his bed side Samuel Ben Ezra you must come with me the angel had said

rising from his bed in the dream the angel had taken his hand there had been a sound of a rushing wind as the surrounding room disappeared and was filled by a swirling mist gripping the hand of the angel Samuel had begun to sweat he turned over onto his side as he slept his mind far away.

The mist began to clear the angel now let go of his hand as he found himself standing in a vast throne room before him stood a large throne but he could not bring himself to lift his eyes towards the throne for he became aware that he now stood in the presents of the almighty slowly he sunk to his knees prayerfully.

High above him to the sides of the North he heard the voice of God “Samuel Ben Ezra you have been seeking for many long ages peace Hear now what I have to say and pay close attention for the future of the world and my people depend on your doing what I command”

“Yes Lord “ Samuel stuttered as the full implication of who was speaking hit home, for before him on the throne sat the Great Lord God the creator, the carpenter of Nazareth whom he had seen die, Samuel was on uncertain ground as how to proceed and he determined to listen and only ask questions when some thing was unclear.

“William will soon recover his memory for a moment Samuel became alarmed he struggled with the blanket on his bed in agitation “Fear not Samuel for this is a good thing for he is falling in love with Joanna and will not want to return to the evil he has done in the past” continued the Almighty “However there are other things which will occur for which you must be ready”

“Know this Samuel Ben Ezra your time on earth is almost done but the important work lays now before you take heed of the words of my servant Chris for they will eventually unlock

for you the secret for that which thou hast sort these many long centuries.”

“Be aware that there are certain things and persons who would do you great harm and those who would do a disservice to my faithful children you who has been appointed a guarding through the ages need to prepare to do every thing in thy power to help them”

“Now to the first order of things which is to come allow as much time to young Robert to spend with his wife and family. For his time is not long and there is still much he needs to complete.” Said the Lord God

“Thereafter you need to make thyself a fortress for my people that they might find comfort in that place that is already been set aside for the long captivity of William. For it is to this place that tragedy will come and once more the flower of my peace will return so when the darkest hour comes stand tall and allow them to come to find some peace for there troubled spirits.”

Samuel became aware that in the mists of cloud that surrounded him there were other begins of great size who seemed to be worshipping in the presence of the Almighty creatures whose dimensions he could scars but imagine but still be remained with his knee bowed and in a prayerful attitude.

Then said the Almighty ‘Go now to thy rest for shortly there will be much work to do I will send you a sign when you need to go to the farm at Sutherland to do my work depart now Samuel” said the Lord God

Thus said the angel a creature of over seven foot now once more appeared next to Samuel and took his hand raising him up the mists began to swirl and the raiment of Heaven now

removed he found himself fighting free from the blanket a cold sweat upon his brow.

Later as he sat at his desk he was uncomfortable the dream was worrying for he knew that things had moved to a new level for this was the first time that he had been taken to the throne room of heaven and the first time the great Lord had spoken with him and he a simple man feared for it was said no man could look upon the face of God and lived

In the weeks leading up to the birth of their first child Robert and Brenda had flown to Johannesburg it had long been the tradition of the Mac Masters clan that any daughter who was about to give birth would spend their confinement in the home of John Mac Masters in Houghton an old upmarket suburb in northern Johannesburg. All four of Brenda's sisters had spent their confinement there with a trip to the Garden City clinic for the actual birth of the child.

The home of John Mac Masters was a large rambling Victorian monstrosity with many rooms passages and alcoves, it stood as a legacy to the wealth of the first James Mac Masters who had come to the Witwatersrand at the beginning of the gold rush in the late 1800's. Having made his fortune James Mac Masters had invested heavily in the future prospects of the gold mines and as a result he and several generations of his family after him were able to live in the lap of luxury.

Arriving at Jan Smuts airport Brenda and Robert were met by one of her many brothers Albert who had driven them to the house. On the way Brenda took the opportunity of catching up with what was going on in the life of her younger brother Albert who was studying at the University of the Witwatersrand to become a lawyer. Albert had recently discovered love having recently met a young girl at varsity who from the sounds of it was quite beautiful of Cape Dutch extraction she had come to the reef against the wishes of her family but never the less her dear father was prepared to pay

for her studies which he duly did expecting as Albert called it a profitable return.

Arriving at the house they were greeted by numerous members of the Mac Masters clan who streamed from the house as if they had come to greet a long lost relative whom they had not seen in years, even though they had in the past year visited the farm on the occasion of their wedding.

Robert found it a little overwhelming it was not that he was not used to the ways of a large family indeed he had a number of siblings what concerned him was the in your face type of attitude Brenda's family seemed to have with each other every one knew each others business. In his family there was a lot of love and some display of affection but never to the extent that it became embarrassing for he felt decidedly uncomfortable with some of the displays of affection which his wife's family tended to show towards each other.

Once they had settled in John Mac Masters told Robert to come into his study here the older man poured two glasses of Brandy from a decanter handing one to Robert they took their seats round the large ornate Victorian desk.

"Hope you don't mind if I smoke?" said John rhetorically lighting a cigar which he took from a box which bore the initials of the original Mac Masters. Picking up a remote he hit a button and the strains of some piece of chamber music began to play softly. "Well my boy I hope you are prepared for fatherhood? have you and Brenda decided on the name for the child?" he asked "Yes dad we decided on the name Robert James" replied Robert the old man smiled pleased that his son in law had allowed Brenda to twist his arm into giving the name James to the expected baby. Robert's scans had pointed to the fact the Brenda was expecting a boy which pleased the old man for he had many grand daughters but only one grand son thus far.

I have in mind a plan to open a trust fund of round about 250 thousand rand for his education I hope it will be enough Lord knows the price of a university education is quite steep” said the old man puffing heavily on the cigar. The smoke had a pleasant odor of cherry normally Robert did not like the smell of cigar or cigarette smoke but this was pleasing he did not smoke his father having taught him from an early age that smoking was bad for one. “Thank you dad that is most generous of you it will be a great help and I am sure Brenda will thank you to when I tell her, tell me sir have you played any golf lately?” asked Robert

“No more then usual been very busy on the stock market latterly so the golf has taken a bit of a back seat for the time been but I hope to get out to the course next week” said the old man. “We have planed a little bit of entertainment for tomorrow night I have hired a actor to read from the works of Charles Dickens tomorrow night a few friends will come over and I have invited your parents and of course your employer Mr Ferreira” said John.

There was a knock at the door before Mary one of Brenda’s sisters looked in Dad could you and Robert come to the dinning room lunch is ready and mom is waiting to serve” she said

“His master’s voice” said John rising from the desk and putting out the cigar and switching off the CD player. “Any more news of how the war is going in Iraq?” Robert “Ah yes that poor country been bombed back into the Stone Age I believe it will be a few more days before the coalition forces reach Baghdad” said John who had been following the news of the war over the local news networks. “ What is the news from Baghdad I believe that Hussein is still defiant but I do not see how he expects to win this war when most of his forces have been destroyed on the ground the people are not resisting the advances of the Americans as much as I expected” asked Robert. “Yes I am afraid he is commanding forces that no longer exist” said John. “However it is of great concern to me that the South African broadcasting corporation

seems to have sources with in the city and there reports are biased in favor of the Iraqi's" said John as they came into the dinning room "That is a dangerous position to take don't they realize that when this is over the coalition will be looking very closely at those who supported the Hussein regime?" asked Robert

Taking there seats at the table they continued to talk of the war and politics for a short while before been admonished by Mary Mac Masters "You men enough of politics we will soon have a new addition to the family and here you are talking politics aren't you excited that you will be a new father Robert" asked Mary. "Oh yes mom he said as he handed a plate to his mother in law to be filled with broth, broth been the staple which started every meal in the Mac Masters home except breakfast. Broth was the placebo which was called for on every occasion if one had a chill or a sniff then out would come the pot of broth. Mary Mac Masters having been brought up in a strict Scottish highland home held great faith in broth.

"Are you alright dear?" asked Mary of her daughter as Brenda sighed heavily " Just a little tired the heat is not helping" said Brenda as she rubbed her belly which was large she sat back from the table and held her soup plate in her hand. "Poor dear I should have some thing to say about this to that husband of yours" said Mary jokingly. " I hear we are to get some rain later this afternoon" said John "That should cool it down a little bit" said Robert the Witwatersrand afternoon thunderstorms been well known for there sudden onset.

"Pass me the chutney please Dad said one of the many numerous sons at the table the old man handed the item to his son turning his attention once more to his eldest daughter he said "Well my girl have you settle din I hope that you have every thing you need if you don't ask Mom she will take care of it for you" "Thanks dad I think every has already been taken care of" she said

"Now Robert when you go to the hospital remember to take the bag which has been packed it has every thing you will

need to bring home the new baby' said Mary remembering an incident not to many years before when one of her son in laws had rushed off to the hospital to fetch one of her daughter leaving the bag behind the poor child had come home in the hospital gown and blanket much to the amusement of the rest of the family and very much to Mary's embarrassment. "Ah lass give the lad a break" said John remembering the same incident and still finding it quite funny, it was one of those stories which would be told and retold for a very long time.

After lunch the family moved into the lounge and took there places on various large couches setting down to read or to watch TV by the following evening the lounge would look very different from what it now looked for it was in this large room that the Dickens performance would take place.

The following day the house servants began to move furniture round quite early in the day under the watchful eye of Mary who wanted the evening to go well she was in awe of Samuel of whom she had hear much although she had never spoken to him she was aware of his mysterious past the fact that he was the employer of her son in law and daughter only seemed to add to her awe of the ma. She was not in love with the man however she was fascinated by the rumors she had hear of his past.

With in a few hours the lounge resembled a salon of the year 1880 the electrician came to set up the lighting for the performance. The lighting was to be of a special nature that the room would be in darkness except for the area surrounding the actor who would play all the parts of the Dickens characters.

In the afternoon fresh flowers arrived Mary with Brenda in tow began to place the flowers in vases around the room. in the corner stood the baby grand piano after a few minutes Brenda feeling slightly tied sat upon the piano stool "You know mom I will always be thankful to the Lord for bringing Robert into my life" she said "I know what you mean I have

the same feeling about your father if he had not been so keen on returning to his roots we might never have met” she said in her broad Scottish dialect which betrayed her Highland birth.

From the kitchen drifted the aroma of some wonderful dishes been prepared for the coming evening, for it was a Mac Masters custom to entertain their guests most regally with a verity of dishes the emphasis been on keeping the event they were celebrating as true to the original as possible thus dishes which would have been served in the best restaurants in London of 1880 were being prepared returning to the kitchen Mary began her inspection of the proceedings. To say she was pleased with the progress would be an understatement.

“Well time to start getting ready she said to her daughter as she returned to the lounge, rising Brenda made her way to the room set aside for her and Robert the sounds of various people showering and bathing filled the house as the family got ready for at six PM the first guests and friends were expected. The Mac Masters belonged to a set of society who were intellectuals and had a hankering for certain types of pleasures they knew how to entertain well and how to be entertained.

At six the large Mercedes which belonged to the Van Heerden's arrived father and son greeted each other with a hug and continued to talk as they walked into the study where John had cigars and brandy ready a small tray of soft drinks for those who did not wish to partake of the brandy.

In the mean time Brenda and her mother were busy speaking to various female guests who had arrived it was not long before Samuel Ferreira arrived accompanied by a young lady of a most remarkable appearance for she was a striking beauty with dark lashes which was further enhanced by her Middle Eastern appearance.

At seven pm once every one had been served their first round of drinks they were shown into the dining room which had

also gone a remarkable change in the last twelve hours. Here displayed was a dining room at the height of Victorian fashion a small group of musicians sat to one side as the guests began to eat the sound of music befitting that era began to play the guests talked among themselves as they ate with waiters moving up and down the row of chairs serving each guests what ever he or she desired from the personalized menus which each waiter had. Wine stewards moved among the guests refilling glasses with champagne, for here was a Victorian social gathering in every sense of the word at the end of dinner each guest was treated to the special deserts hot steaming puddings with custard or old fashioned bread and butter pudding some settled for Ice cream.

Moving into the lounge the men in there black suits looked quite dashing while many of the ladies in long evening grounds was a view to take away ones breath they settled themselves around the large room waiting expectantly on a small stage no higher then a foot stood a chair and a small table with a jug and glass ready for the actor who would present this evenings entertainment as the lights as the room settled the actor dressed in typical Dickensian style entered the room from a side door and made his way to the stage there was applause as he took up his position. The lights dimmed and the actor began his narration.

Near the end of the performance Brenda nudged Robert in the ribs he had been sitting comfortably next to his wife half listening half asleep. Softly she whispered “Robert I think I need to go to bed I am not feeling well” she said. Rising he accompanied her to there room trying not to disturb the other guests.

Once in the room Brenda had started undressing when she said suddenly “I think I need to go to the hospital now Love my water has broke” quickly Robert ran back to the lounge and called for his mother in law and his own mother Lena Van Heerden always a stunning woman looked particularly ravishing tonight. Explaining quickly to the two women the

current situation he then went to start the car while the woman went to attend to Brenda

After getting Brenda dressed and in to the car he took off driving with his emergency lights on he headed for the hospital along the highway he was in a state of agitation and tended to drive a little faster than the law permitted and as a result it was not long before a heavy traffic cruiser pulled up behind him and ordered him to the side of the highway. "Evening sir you going some where in a hurry?" asked the traffic officer as he adjusted his belt with one hand and reached for the fine book with the other. "Sorry yes my wife is in labor and I need to get her to the Garden city clinic" said Robert. The cop wary of trickery leaned forward and looked into the car on the back seat Brenda lay with her head on Mary's lap groaning Heimmel why did you not say so" said the cop switching to Afrikaans follow me I will clear the road for you he said as he ran back to the cruiser.

The flashing blue lights reflected across the highway as the cars pulled away the sirens blaring, "Hurry Robert hurry" said Mary as the car headed down the highway a path now cleared by the cruiser. Arriving at the clinic the expert help of the staff took over the care of Brenda while Robert went to fill in the forms. While he was filling in the forms John Chris and Samuel came hurrying through the door "What news son" asked Chris. I have just filled in the forms and they have taken Brenda into the labor ward" he said before leaving to be with her.

In the labor ward Brenda was having a tough time of it "This is the last time I will be doing this she cried as a contraction came "Oh God it hurts she cried out squeezing his hand then slapping it away she said get away from me you man this is your fault. Robert perplexed stood for a few moments before his natural instincts stepped in "Remember to breathe like the book told you" he said as he once more took her hand.

Robert James Van Heerden was eventually born at 3AM the following morning a big baby of three kilograms with a shocking mop of red hair, now we know why Brenda had so much heartburn said Mary when she saw her grand son Lena was standing next to her looking down at the baby in the incubator a look of such love the feelings from deep with in her heart welling up for the small individual only a few minutes old.

The baby's grandfather John was handing out cigars to everyone and telling every one about the new addition to his family

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

Of an Evening a Samuel entry

The salon was crowded with men and woman dressed in the height of fashion the red velvet curtains hiding the piano were drawn as the guests found there places the sound of voices which had previously filled the room became muted as the lights were dimmed and the curtains drawn back to reveal at the piano a young man sitting his hands resting gently on the ivory keys of the instrument, beside the piano stood a young woman in a Prussian blue evening gown her low cut dress exposing magnificent cleavage. In one hand she held a violin and in the other the bow. Lifting the instrument to her chin she began to play the first strains of music filling the salon. The man at the piano began to play softly.

The musicians played the music filled the room the guests listening in rapture the sweet sounds of a popular melody making them tap time to the tune. Seldom had they been treated to music of such rare quality as the two young people now played of course it was quite easy to get invited to one of the numerous performances in the salons of the homes of the wealthy to hear second rate musicians but seldom would one hear the son and daughter of the wealthy Jacob Mendel play it was a rare that they would play for a gathered audience from there home town of Berlin. Jacob Mendel had made his fortune in textiles and had risen in the world for a Jew in the 1850's it had been very difficult to rise but despite the odds he had done it his son Joseph and daughter Rachel were the joy of his life from an early age they had been taught by some of the best music teachers to be found in Europe now after a number of successful tours throughout Europe and one very successful tour to America they had returned to there home in Berlin. Now they performed really preferring to take a sabbatical from playing to audiences for at least a year the only reason they good father had been imposed on to allow them to play was because a certain nobleman with whom he had a long standing relationship had insisted that he and a number of friends be allowed to have the privilege of hearing the young people play as it was rumored that they had great talent and a wonderful career ahead of them as musicians.

Now on a fine summer evening in 1895 they played as the nobleman and his invited friends listened in rapture as the

music changed from a lighthearted waltz to a more somber piece by Richard Wagner. The elder Mendel had always insisted that his children never taken engagement in Germany as he was one of those who as a young child had witnessed a massacre in the ghetto's of Lantz in which he had seen his parents grandparents and extended family massacred in a treble fashion there after he had made it his policy to keep as low a profile as possible his parents and grand parents had been quite well known for there talented acting which had brought the unwelcome attention of the authorities who in the year 1835 had unleashed on the unsuspecting Jews of the city of Lantz the most fearsome massacre after the body of a young Christian child had been found murdered at the entrance to the Ghetto. The fact that it later transpired that it was the mother and her common-law husband who had murdered the child meant little in the bigger skim of things. The fact that the young Jacob had survived through the oversight of an official of the town was a miracle in itself there after he had lived as a fugitive fashion with in the confines of Germany slowly building his textile business.

It was during this early stage that he had met the nobleman Adolphus Ardendorf Walter Von Bremen who had become a firm friend over the years they had done a great deal of business which had made them both very wealthy.

Now on this evening the children of Jacob Mendel played to the gathered guests of the nobleman in a corner sat Samuel reflecting on the music that these young people played he was of course aware of the history of the Mendel family which the Count of Bremen had instructed him in.

Samuel had for a season reflected on the lot of the Jewish people over the 18 hundred odd years which they had been wanderers in strange lands and the various fortunes which befell them as a race one conclusion he was drawn to was the fact that no matter what a Jew did he would normally end up been the one on whom the nations around him would end up blaming for the wrongs in society the result of this was the frequent murders of hundreds and some times thousands of Jews.

This he reflect was the lot of the Jew to be continually killed by the followers of Christ for the one murder they had committed so long ago there race still suffered retribution by the descendents and children of the cross.

All of this he found chance to relate to Chris one evening as they sat around a barbeque at the farm. It had been some weeks since the birth of Chris's grand son R.J and they were both in a reflective mood. The young people and the staff had retired to bed leaving the two men alone round the fire talking and looking into the flames of the fire which burned clear on a cold night the men enjoying the last moments of a day which had been productively spent on the business of going over the books which Robert kept so meticulously...

R J's first birthday

It was R.J'S first birthday a bright October sun shone threw the large bay windows Robert sat holding his son on his lap, there was nothing that he enjoyed more then helping Brenda by taking his turn and caring for the child. Robert was in a reflective mood he was thinking back to a few days after the child had been born he had reached out his finger to the tiny infant who in turn grabbed hold of the finger and grasped it tightly Robert remembered that at the time he had been very excited to find that the child had such a strong grasp he now looked down into his sons eyes they were no longer blue like they had been at first they were a dark brown. Taking a bottle of milk he began feeding the child the youngster had gone threw many of the rubber tiites. He had an incredible sucking power always hungry always biting on the rubber

Robert was a little tired having been woken at three in the morning to help with a birthing of a new foal the mare had been trying for hours to deliver the foal with little success, the person who normally helped with birthing had taken a few days of thus Robert and William had both taken turns to reach into the belly of the mare and turn the foal which had been laying breached to allow the mare a better chance her strength almost gone she had tried one more time and with a little help from the two men had brought into the world a beautiful well formed and healthy chestnut foal.. When they had finished in the stables the two men stepped out into the light of

day a little after seven o'clock in the morning surprised at how long the task had taken them.

"I think we could do with a nice breakfast of eggs and bacon" said Robert, "You were reading my thoughts exactly" replied William "They should be alright now?" said Robert looking back towards the stable "I think so nothing that a little hay and oats won't cure" said William as they started walking towards the farm house.

In the kitchen the staff sat around the big table eating their breakfast before going out to do their daily chores, recently Robert had bought six Jersey cows which had brought the welcome addition of farm fresh milk and cream to the table of the residents of the farm the 30 odd people who inhabited the farm, had shown their appreciation of this act of kindness on Robert's part by offering up some of their time to make sure that the cows were milked early in the morning and they had set up a roster by which each of the young people would take it in turn to rise at the crack of dawn and milk the cows. This morning's bounty was one of the best for they had about twenty liters of milk and cream which one of the young women was busy bottling. Near the kitchen door the duties in the kitchen had also been delegated and thus everybody got a turn to cook and prepare the meals for the inhabitants of the farm.

This morning the smell of bacon and frying eggs filled the air there was also the hint of pancakes which pleased William immensely as he was rather fond of pancakes and honey in the morning.

"Morning all" said Robert to the crowded room he was greeted by the usual good-natured ribbing which was common of life at the farm there after there were a number of inquiries as to the health of the mare and foal to which both he and William were glad to reply in the affirmative that the pair were doing well and that they (Robert and William) were now in need of a nice breakfast and lots of coffee.

After breakfast William had gone out to do his daily rounds while Robert settled down to spend an hour tending to his young son. Brenda entered the lounge standing at the door

with a mug of steaming coffee in her hand she listened as her husband talked to their son he was not aware of her presence but that would not have stopped him for he spoke to the child of the events of the day thus far it mattered not to the father that the child was only one year old he was of the opinion that you never insult the intelligence of the child by speaking baby talk "if you speak, speak sense to the child" he had previously admonished Brenda she to had gotten into the habit of speaking to the child like a grown up. The child's natural intelligence was already plainly visible for at the age of nine months he had begun to walk since then it had been a full time job for both of them to keep an eye on the child and to make sure he did not wander into any danger.

Now a slight noise warned Robert that someone was in the room he looked up and saw his wife coming towards him with the mug in her hands I thought you might want this she said placing the mug on the small table near him and taking her son into her arms a big child he still clung to the baby bottle but it was expected that later today the bottle would be replaced with a zippy cup.

Chris and Lena were expected later in the day as there was a little bit of a celebration planned for the afternoon. "Have your coffee and go and take a shower you smell like the stables" Brenda said. Your wish is my command said Robert as he lifted the cup of steaming hot coffee to his lips.

Brenda checked to see that the child's nappy was dry before setting him down in a play pen the child gurgled some thing unintelligible but which Brenda had learned meant he wanted some toys to play with she placed a teddy bear and a soft ball in the play pen and the child seemed content.

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

The murder of Robert

William woke up he had been dreaming of a time long past he lay for a few moment thinking of the dream it was more a memory then a dream of the day many centuries earlier when he had stood before the tribune of Rome swearing his oath as did thousands of other to protect and defend the empire. For a number of years now his memory had slowly been returning. The time at the farm he considered well spent he would forever be thankful to Samuel Ferreira and his actions for William considered what had happened in the previous hundred years as a time in which he had descended into madness. He recalled a day back in 1905 when he had come to bid adieu to Samuel at the inn in Boston "I am going back to Germany for a spell he had told Samuel. The first time in all these long years I plan to visit all the places I knew in my youth" "Do you consider it wise to go at this time the Kaiser of Germany is not very popular now days" asked Samuel. "Oh I don't think it will be that bad every country has its bad rulers you know that it has never effected us before replied William

True to form it had been bad and considering every thing he had lived through it was little wonder he had descended into the depths of madness, when he considered the death and destruction he had been party to for a hundred years he truly began to feel a tinge of regret for the world was a much more civilized place then it had been in the former centuries.

He gently moved his arm from under the shoulder of Johanna and got out of bed moving quietly towards the window of his room opening them he stepped out onto the balcony. It was just before sunrise he liked to rise early and greet the sun part of his heritage for in his youth he had often greeted the return of the sun after the long winter months. There was a nip in the air this morning for a moment the looked up towards the hills on the far side of the farm he wondered if there was some one at the outpost who was awake he had become aware of the constant observation of the team of Israelis but had never commented on it his military background had made him cautious.

He imagined he saw the glint of a pair of night goggles but then again he could have been mistaken.

With the return of his memory came pangs of guilt and dreams which he had to fight against he hated sleeping for he knew he would dream and in these dreams he would be busy interrogation or killing some one. Of course the worst dream was the flames the memory of the attack on the world trade center had a deep and lasting affect on him. However as he slowly recovered his memory he watched and learned that contrary to what would have been expected from those who had captured him they did not intend him harm the more he watched the more he began to question the teachings of Islam which he had been a staunch supporter of when he watched the Van Heerden family and the other members of the work part on the farm he grew to understand that here truly was a group of people living as there master had intended them to for they did not bicker or fight as other groups did they discussed and reasoned together and came to a reasonable compromise there was also very little alcohol on the farm the only supply seemed to be fore Samuel who drank quite a bit while Pastor Chris as every body called the elder Van Heerden did not partake at all Robert very seldom drank a beer.

Now of course with the arrival of Johanna William had once again found love true there had been many women in his life through out the ages but none quite like Johanna who loved him unconditionally. He returned to the bed room Johanna stirred in the bed he sat on the foot of the bed watching her a feeling intense love for her filled his heart. Never before in his long life had he loved like he loved now, none of the woman who had shared his life had her passion the closest he had come to knowing true love had been back in the first century AD when a little Jewish girl Lea who had lived in the old city of Jerusalem had taken up his offer to share his bed. Poor Lea long dead her bones long turned to dust. Now he would rebuild his life he realized at some stage he would have to confront Samuel and tell him of the return of his memory. Of course Samuel might be very alarmed at this but he had a feeling that they would be able to work things out after all he had reformed himself he now for the first time was free of the

cynical view he had taken over the long centuries he had viewed the human race as mere puppets with which he an immortal could toy watch observe human nature was fascinating When at first his memory had started to return he had been surprised at the deep emotions which had wracked his mind and body out of necessity he had hidden what was happening to him for he realized that certain members of the household and the farm crew were always watching him. Later he began reading philosophy and a vast number of religious books of which the study seemed to have an unending supply all thanks to the good pastor. Johanna stirred and opened her eyes “Morning my love he said softly” “How long have you been watching me she asked?” Not long I could not sleep and woke it is going to be a glorious day” He continued. “Brrr she said pulling the covers closer close that door it is freezing in her” she said I am sorry I keep forgetting that people from this part of the world are not used to the extreme cold of the northern hemisphere” he said

“Have you decided when you are going to tell Samuel that you have got your memory back she?” asked “Not just yet I still need to figure out who is in those hills watching us” he replied he had become concerned when it first came to his notice that there was some type of military observation going on in the hills as far as he could tell there was a group of six men who regularly got relieved then of course there was the lone individual who occasionally watched from the high ground to the south. This individual did not seem to be connected to the group in the hills.

“Time to go down to breakfast he” said as the sounds of people moving in the house carried up to the room

High on the hill to the south Abdullah took a sip of coffee from the flask that Islam Mohammed had brought him, it seemed that to day would have to be the day he descried he had watched the farm now for over a month waiting for an opportunity to kidnap Ali but the security measures in place were of such a nature that the man was never left alone and the

fact that they seemed to have an extra guard in the hills to the north worried him.

Abdullah sighed well if I cannot kidnap him then there is only one thing to do he thought today will be the day on which Ali would die he shifted the automatic rifle into a more comfortable position. The last conversation he had with the leader the previous week had been one which he had long been expecting to be troublesome. "Abdullah you have hunted many months for this man do not destroy all your hard work be patient wait for an opportunity." The leader had said but Abdullah was filled with rage daily before him he saw the faces of his dead sons those who had died because Ali had betrayed the cause of the righteous. No he was convinced that he had no other option today Ali must die he thought to himself as he finished the coffee and lit a cigarette of cannabis and tobacco.

The family had just finished lunch little Robert was playing with a ball getting on Brenda's nerves he was not usually a naughty child but the last few days had proved that even his temper could be as bad as any other three year old with Brenda been heavily pregnant in her last trimester Robert had tried to be accommodating.

"I think I will take him out for a ride on the horses it might calm him down" Robert said "I hope that it tames him out I don't know what I will do if he keeps this up" replied Brenda her first pregnancy had been much easier of course back then there had been no child under foot every time she turned around the little lad seemed to be there getting into mischief if he was not jumping on the couch he was breaking one of the vases or some thing not to talk about his habit of terrorizing the tabby cat he loved doing that giving the old grey cat a fright of course the two dogs loved him to bits the older German Shepard which had been Roberts dog and which he had brought with him to the farm was a placid animal allowing little RJ as the child was commonly referred to to ride on her back her pup Bravo was not so obliging and it worried Brenda that one day the younger dog might in a moment of irritation at her sons antics bite the child.

Now as she dried her hands on the dish cloth she turned to Robert and said I don't want you coming back to late I have some thing special in mind for dinner" "Ah one of my dear old Mama in laws favorite home made dishes I d bet" said Robert "Wait and see Mr Van Heerden you might be surprised" she replied with a smile taking her in his arms Robert looked down into the face of the woman he loved and said I bet that one day you will remember this as one of the happiest days of our lives I am content we have every thing we need and there is nothing to fear but what makes me the happiest of all men is the fact that you came into my life" they stood silent for a moment before he bent down and kissed her some where in the background the dog Bravo gave a yelp of agony as RJ tried for the umpteenth time to climb on his back. "You had better take care of your son" said Brenda. I will in a moment I was just thinking what more could we ask for a health son and now as the doctor said last week a beautiful lassie who will be the envy of all her friends." "Oh Rob talking about that I need you to sign a few cheques which I need to mail" she said crossing the room to hang up a pan in its rightful place.

"See ever the practical one I would have forgotten all about that and waited for a final reminder in the post can we do it later I think that William needs my help by the way don't you think it is just grand that he and Johanna have found love and happiness?" he asked.

"I do believe that it might be the one redeeming thing about the man" said Brenda, "Bearing in mind why we are here and what has brought us together" she continued

"Eh yes of course I can never forget that if it wasn't for that man we would never have met" replied Robert "It is strange when he works with the horses he is loving compassionate and above all he has empathy for there suffering it is very difficult to believe that he is one of those responsible for the bombing of the World Trade center.

High in the hills to the south Abdullah waited the sun had risen to its zenith as he watched waiting he was going to kill the man with the maximum effect he would wait until the man who seemed to be his chief guard was standing right next to him before he released the bullet which would end the life of Ali

The rifle he held in his hands had been provided by the ever faithful Islam Mohamed who had been a good friend to him Abdullah remembered the first few weeks he had spent in Durban . South Africa was a strange place he had to admit a young democracy open to new and fresh ideas the fact that there was a large Moslem school in Durban operating as a front for the training of the faithful followers of the leader was a good thing he found it strange though for democracies do not usually allow extremists to operate with in there territories and the fact that it existed was quite a welcome surprise to Abdullah who had been running and hiding every where he went since he had killed the Israeli major not that it had helped much the man had refused to talk. It had been the purest luck and blessings of Allah that he had stumbled on the fact that Ali was now held prisoner by a extreme Christian group here I the middle of no where South Africa.

He turned and looked towards the farm house and the stables threw the sights of the heavy weapon he noticed that Ali was with the woman who seemed to hang on every word he spoke they were leading a pair of horses from the stables in the stable yard there were a few workmen about the moment was approaching he knew the routine of the people on the farm they had taken there mid day meal and were now returning.

Johanna turned to William and said “what ever you do I will support you, you know that I love you and want the best for you” William smiled at her and thought even though she knows what I have done she forgives me what a woman. He had first taken her into his confidence about a year ago when there relationship first began to blossom he had been very worried by his past and had found himself unable to sleep one night wondering into the study he had picked up a book on the

life of the Welsh revivalist of the early 20th century Smith Wigglesworth and had begun to read it. He had become engrossed by the words on the pages and did not notice the passing of the time at about three Am the door of the study had opened and Johanna in her long flowing night dress poked her head round the door she was surprised to see William sitting with the book in his lap crying. There had followed a time of confession and sorrow as he related his great sorrow at what he had done in his life the moving story of the works done by the Almighty in the life and by the evangelist had softened his heart and finally after many centuries he had at last allowed the savior whom he had so cruelly treated into his heart. Now after much soul searching he had decided that he would have to tell Samuel of the state of his mind he also wanted the good pastor present when he did it as he tended to look upon Chris as a father figure of the farm community although he was not there as often as he would have liked to be.

Robert and RJ were coming down the steps of the house and walking towards William and Johanna, "I had better go and help Brenda she is preparing some thing special for tonight's dinner" said Johanna. Leaning forward William planted a gently kiss on the cheek "Uncle William, daddy says we are going horse riding" the little boy cried excitedly "Oh you are going to have great time look I have brought the pony for you" said William as he turned towards Robert he said "Ah the joys of fatherhood hey lad" "Yes nothing quite like it replied Robert. In the hills Abdullah adjusted the sights of the rifle and took aim at William he was standing in front of his chief guard now was the time whispering a prayer to Allah he began to squeeze the trigger it was a good rifle had practiced with it before on the rifle range in Durban and knew that the bullet would fly straight and true. As he squeezed the trigger something happened it could have been the heat of the day or it could have been that Jonathan Bedford one of the guards from the north camp had decided to investigate the glint that kept on catching his eye but what ever it was it was enough to upset the plans of Abdullah as he was about to fire a bullet hit the ground just above his head fired by Jonathan Bedford who a few moments before had become aware of the marksman in the hills to the south and put into operation a plan long rehearsed that any one who threatened the peace of the farm

were to be eliminated with exceptional prodigious. The result was Abdullah had become unsettled and fired missing his target.

Robert had just turned and was in the process of lifting his son on to the pony when his legs buckled under him it felt as if he had been hit by a buss he collapsed to the ground dropping the child the smile dying on his lips. William in that instant realizing that they were under fire grabbed at the child and ran for the house the ground behind him rising as three more bullets bit into the hard South African ground. Reaching the door he flung himself and the child threw landing hard inside the lounge rising he checked to see if the child was alright he could hear the horses running off into the distance panicked by gunshots and the smell and sight of a bloodied man laying at there feet.

Rushing to the kitchen William shouted “down girls we are under fire” passing RJ to his mother he told them to keep down, where is Robert Brenda said in a panic all thoughts of the evening dinner now replaced with concern for her husband.

In the seconds it took William to size up the fact that Robert Van Heerden had been hit twice by bullets from a high powered rile Jonathan Bedford had once more taken aim and was now shooting at Abdullah who was trying as fast as he could to take cover after firing a magazine of bullets in the direction of the farm yard. He knew he had missed Ali and that he had hit the man who was Ali’s chief prison guard, but what he could not understand was who were the people were who were now shooting at him as fear gripped his heart the blood lust of battle fled and his only thought now was to reach safety a bullet hit the pack which was on his back he felt a hot flush creeping down his back for a moment he thought he had been hit was this the end was to enter paradise now? No he smelt coffee the bullet had breached the flask and had most probable saved his life he scrambled down the rocky incline as bullets hit the rocky ground above him he had learned to move quickly and carefully in the battle fields of Afghanistan now this experience came into play.

when he finally reached level ground he began to run with a easy grate towards the small Toyota which stood a few hundred meters down the road where Islam Mohammed stood smoking a cigarette he had heard the shots and had climbed out of the vehicle to investigate. Now the ground behind Abdullah began to show the tell tale signs of bullets hitting home Jonathan Bedford adjusted his sights and fired once more a bullet narrowly missing Abdullah continued on its way to enter the forehead of Islam Mohamed existing in a profusion of blood and brain mass the look of surprise still on Islam Mohammed's face as he fell to the ground Abdullah reached the car and flung the rifle on the back seat throwing himself into the drivers seat he grated the gears as he put the car in gear which the thoughtful Islam Mohammed had left running when the shooting first started. The back windscreen shattered as a bullet crashed through it hitting Abdullah in the neck the car lunged forward crazily as he headed off down the road the blood now flowing freely down his neck and chest and down his flowing shirt.

He drove for half a mile before the loss of blood made him lose consciousness the vehicle lunged crazily and left the road crashing in to a donga throwing the body of Abdullah into the African bush flames licked round the car as petrol began to leak from the petrol tank before igniting and exploding.

In the mean time the Israeli team had gathered there equipment and hurriedly evacuated the camp before the South African police arrived to investigate the murder of Robert Van Heerden. It was a strange setup which allowed extremist groups to operate openly in South Africa at the time but agents of a legally recognized state of Israel had to operate in secret for fear of capture and even death. Thus as the land rover of Ex South African Israelis made there way down the dusty road they happened to pass the one and only police van belonging to the municipality of Sutherland heading to the farm of Samuel Ferreira to investigate the shooting death of the farm manager Robert Van Heerden.

Now as the farms inhabitants began to emerge from hiding hastily seeking they were met by the sight of the farm manager laying dead near the main paddock the winters sun filled the area with a strange light as Brenda Van Heerden burst from the house followed by William and Johanna seeing the man she loved laying there Brenda burst into an uncontrollable fit of weeping broken only by her screams of agony as Johanna tried to pull the grief stricken woman away from the body of her dead husband his arms and clothes covered with the blood of the man she loved bright in the afternoon sun William in the mean time was busy speaking on a cell phone summoning the police and then he put a call through to Samuel who was currently flying some where over the great Karoo on his way to the farm for a meeting. "Brenda come away let William handle this you will harm the baby come you must think of your children now" said Johanna as she gently loosened the grief stricken woman's hands from the body of her husband leading her back to the house RJ stood on the steps leading to the kitchen "Mommy what's wrong with daddy he asked in a small voice" not understanding that his father had died.

STEPING INTO THE SPIRITUAL RELAM

If one had been able to see into the spiritual realms that afternoon one would have seen the angel Gabriel descending from heaven with a number of other angels and setting down near the body of Robert Van Heerden rising from the ground where the body lay the spirit of Robert Van Heerden turned as if to walk towards the house in an attempt to comfort his grieving wife. He was prohibited from doing this when one of the angels stepped in front of him and shook his head as if to say no turning now Robert Van Heerden's spirit faced Gabriel in the spiritual darkness which surrounded the farm the sounds of daemons gathering as if to take an advantage of the moment and to snatch by illegal means the soul of Robert but in this they were prevented for the host of angels which had accompanied Gabriel drew forth their swords of spiritual light and stood guard round Robert and Gabriel. "Robert I have been instructed to gather you home to the most high" said Gabriel "But why I don't understand am I dead he asked?" This question had been asked by millions before who had met sudden death in the service of their Lord not knowing that their time on earth had come to a sudden end. "Indeed Robert

you have done all you were supposed to do and the Lord has summoned you home in your appointed time” replied Angel Gabriel “Can I go and comfort my wife?” Robert asked hopefully “No Robert the Lord as we speak has already dispatched ministering angels to comfort your wife and child look turning towards the house once more Robert observed that already Angels were descending on the house. “I am glad for that now I believe we must leave for I am anxious to meet with our Lord” said Robert “Indeed he will be waiting for you” said the angel as he took Robert’s hand and began to lead Robert heavenward. The warrior angels slowly with drawing in the spiritual darkness the sound of demons crying in rage and agony at the loss of a soul been taken home to the Lord.

The picture was far different where the bodies of Islam Mohammed and Abdullah lay for here the demons were quick to arrive as the spirit of Islam Mohammed rose from the ground he became aware of a fast approaching darkness and the sound of whispering which grew to a frenzy rising he tried to rise towards the east calling on the prophet and Allah to save him, but no reply came for there was no one to hear his plea for divine help. Then the demons and the darkness were upon him screaming in delight and joy at the capture of a soul who had thought to escape now burdened by the awful knowledge that he was to spend eternity in the companionship of these evil beings he screamed in agony as he was dragged down by the truth that he was lost and under the burden of unforgiving and unpardonable sin.

The spirit of Abdullah rose from the ground where his earthly suit lay he inspected it for a moment and reflected that he was quite a handsome man and that the virgins which Mohammed had promised would indeed please to do him service for he was fully convinced that he was headed for paradise. Turning now to the east he fully expected to appear the prophet and the faith full to come to meet him for had he not died the death of a martyr? But he too discovered the growing spiritual darkness. “Could it be that I was mistaken? He asked himself as the darkness overtook him the last that he knew of this world was the fact that instead of rising to the east to meet the prophet and Allah he was being dragged down the unpardonable sin of

rejecting the Christ heavy on his mind for as a young child he had heard of the gospel of Christ but because of his family's tradition of serving the prophet he had rejected the Christ.

Now as the spirits of the two followers of Islam were dragged of to hell one would observe that the spirit of Robert Van Heerden had entered in to the Holy of holies with his head bowed in due reverence to his Lord who sat upon the throne "Then said the Lord of Hosts "Well done my true and Loyal servant enter into thy rest.

~~~~~

## **CHAPTER TWENTY THREE**

### **THE FUNERAL**

Sergeant Jakobus Van Der Westhuizen of the South African police District Sutherland had a problem, he could not figure out who exactly the people were who had shot the two men found at the second and third crime scene the bodies were those of two men of middle eastern origin. One he knew was Islam Mohamed a petty criminal from Durban a copy of the man's criminal record lay now in front of him he studied it with interest for in recent months paid informers had brought to light that he had been seen in the company of a second man who was not known to the South African police.

Islam Mohammed was also the father of five young children he for all his sins attended the main Mosque in Durban quite regularly the report said it was believed that it was here that he met with various other members of the criminal gangs which distributed drugs to the youth of the central Durban as yet the informant had not yet gain the full trust of the gang thus information was sketchy.

The first crime scene was easy to figure out on the farm Oaklands the farm manager Robert Christopher Van Heerden had been shot to death by the unknown dead man who had been found at the third crime scene. The motive was as yet unknown. Although the good sergeant suspected that it was somehow connected to a certain aspect of horse racing some of the recent races at the Durban race track had featured prominently in the history of the Oaklands farm. The good sergeant not the brightest penny in the purse decided to put through to one of his superior officers at Cape Town. Picking up the phone he dialed the number and waited for a reply,

"Hello yes is that captain Botha?" he asked "Morning sir it is Sergeant Van Der Westhuizen Sutherland district here. I was wondering if I might pick your brains over a case I have here" he said once receiving assurances from Cape Town the sergeant began to tell the officer of his dilemma. The voice of the captain occasionally interrupting to clarify a point listened when the sergeant had finished speaking the Captain said All right there is what you do listen carefully because I am only going to say it once.

The captain began to outline a plan which would satisfy even the most diligent scrutiny regarding the various crime scenes. When he had finished the sergeant thanked the captain and put down the phone turning to the computer he began to type. As regards the first crime scene the farm manager had been shot by the unknown man who it was believed was a foreign national the reason for this was that the manager had been very active in promoting the horses of the farm Oaklands in the Durban area lately this had interfered with the organized crime scene in the Durban and middle lands area Islam Mohamed a member of one of these gangs had taken it upon himself to hire the foreign nation to execute the farm manager. Which he had duly done, thereafter he had returned to the meeting place on the road where Islam Mohammed waited with a vehicle It appeared that the foreign national and Islam Mohammed had become engaged in an argument over payment for the assassination the argument had turned violent Islam Mohammed had shot the foreign national in the neck with a hand gun in turn the foreign national had killed Islam Mohammed with the rifle before leaving the second crime scene in Islam Mohammed's Toyota however due to loss of blood he had passed out and causing the vehicle to crash into a donga where he had been thrown clear of the vehicle and later died of blood loss, while the vehicle burnt out. When the good sergeant finished typing the report

“Ag Treasure will you make me a cup of coffee please he called out to his wife who was busy in the kitchen, Report writing made him tired and he needed a pick me up he had been up most of the previous night sorting out the post mortem's and storage of the bodies of the crime victims his cousin Charles was the local undertaker and butcher of the town his garage which he had converted into a cold storage area for his butchery also doubled as the freezer for the mortuary. Even though it was not an ideal situation it was the best he could do and none of his guests were complaining.

Later today he would put through a call to the relatives of the late Islam Mohammed and tell them to make arrangement for burial of the corpse; he had earlier spoken with William Longmount and arranged for the handing over of the body of

Robert Van Heerden to the family for burial. His cousin would be a busy man over the next few days with all the burials the only problem now was what to do with the unclaimed body of the foreign national he had duly taken finger prints of the corpse and had forwarded them to the relevant authorities for possible identification in the mean time he would make the call which would bring the family of the late Islam Mohammed great and lasting grief.

Strange how things turned out he reflected there he had been only the week earlier speaking to Robert Van Heerden in the local grocery shop about the weather the man had seemed friendly and relaxed he had brought his son to town for an outing the little fellow had seemed well behaved unusual for this day and age as most kids that age were unholy terrors. Now the farm manager was dead every one in town was already talking about it Jakobus could just imagine the stories doing the rounds the old ladies looking out of there windows as the widow Van Heerden made here way down main street the towns one and only tarred road

The funeral of the late Robert Christopher Van Heerden took place the following Saturday in the intervening days a mortician from Durban had come to collect the body of Islam Mohammed while the Van Heerden's had been happy enough to leave the funeral arrangements in the capable hands of Charles Van Der Westhuzen. The funeral was almost as well attended as the wedding a few years earlier with people starting to arrive on the Friday morning already.

On Saturday morning Brenda had dressed RJ in his best clothes and taken him down stairs where they found Samuel William and Chris waiting "Grand pa grand pa I love you said the little boy running to the old warrior of the word hugging the old man not that he was really old the fifty five years which he had lived had been good to him but this morning he was feeling those years with a smile he lifted the boy on to his lap and straitened his little tie which had become disarrayed in the hugging. Lena Van Heerden entered from the kitchen a tray of coffee cups and pot in hand placing it on the table she begun to pour for the men they sat in silence drinking there coffee the young child content to sit on his grand fathers lap. The last few days had been a nightmare for him first he had

seen his father fall covered in blood then they had come and taken him away in an ambulance, he had still not returned every one seemed to be giving him a lot of love and attention. He did not mind but he missed his dad he was his best friend.

Lena and Brenda sat a little apart from the men as they spoke softly among themselves, "My dear how are you feeling?" asked Lena her concern for her daughter in law was touching for she bore the grief of a mother at the loss of her first born son. "I am okay mom just a little worried about RJ he doesn't seem to realize that Robert is dead he keeps on asking can we go and see him" "Oh dear" said Lena "Maybe I should speak with Pa about this he can explain to him what has happened and make the little fellow understand" she continued.

At mid day they left for the Chapel where the friends and relatives of the family had gathered the eulogy was delivered by James Van Heerden Chris's younger brother it was a good farewell to Robert for in the service people found time to reflect on the life of a friend, brother son and husband there was weeping as is normal at all funerals for we as humans long for the person who has gone before in to the hereafter. But also it was a service filled with the joy which the young man had brought in to the world his legacy a young son who would grow up strong and bear proud witness to the good manners and breeding of his forefathers. In addition, the widow was pregnant with their second child she was expected to give birth any day now.

The most moving part of the eulogy was when Brenda got up to speak and there she told of first coming to the farm of her first meeting with her future husband how when she related he had first proposed to her they laughed. No the service grew somber as pastor James began to read from the bible. Leaving the chapel the brothers brother in laws and Chris Van Heerden carried the coffin to the resting place prepared for it the sun drenched red soil of Africa ready to receive the remains of one of God's faithful servants now gone home the congregants filled from the church talking softly and weeping as they made their way to the farm's small grave yard neat the hole a bouquet of roses lay ready to be deposited on the grave a green mat and chairs provided by the ever thoughtful Charles Van Der Westhuizen. Now as they gathered round the pall

bearers placed the coffin on the contraption provided for the lowering of the coffin into the grave.

“Let us pray” said the pastor there after he begun to pray thanking the Lord for the life of Robert for all the joy he had brought into the world also thanking the Lord for saving the soul of Robert who is even now present with the Lord Amen

As the coffin was lowered in to the ground he intoned these words In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to Almighty God our brother Robert, and we commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. The Lord bless him and keep him, the Lord make his face to shine upon him and be gracious to him, the Lord lift up his countenance upon him and give him peace. Amen. The sound of weeping was heard through out the crowd but no immodest displays or cries of I will join you soon son where heard for the children of the Lord had gathered to bid farewell to one of there own who had gone before to that place reserved for the faithful of the Lord.

If you would join with is now said the pastor the people began to file forward to cast handfuls of flower petals and letters of peace upon the coffin before moving off to a respectable distance before speaking to one another. Thereafter it came about that the male relatives of the departed took it upon themselves to fill in the grave giving closure to the matter at hand finally.

Then James Van Heerden turned and said thank you all for coming to bid Robert Farewell if you feel like joining us for a cup of tea please feel free to go on up to the house where the and cake will be served.

~~~~~

The late winter after afternoon sun shone in through the bay windows as they returned from the funeral little Robert holding the hand of his grand father tightly. His still could not understand exactly what had happened to his father the memory of his father covered with blood laying on the dry African soil was a mystery to him he had been standing near his father when William had turned and moved away from the

wooden fence. The next thing he had seen was his father clutch at his throat and sink to his knees blood gushing from a terrible wound.

William in that moment had realized some thing was wrong as a shot from the hills had alerted him he had grabbed the child and ran for the house, his instincts telling him that he must get the child to safety.

Now as they entered the room Brenda took off her coat and sank into one of the comfortable chairs her eyes still wet from weeping for the man she had loved. "Mommy when daddy comes back from the hospital can we go ride the horses?" The child asked Chris taking the child up in his arms said "Rest Brenda I will try and explain to him" "Thanks dad" she said with an air of exhaustion in her voice leading the child away to the study.

As Chris crossed the room with the child in his arms it seemed as if he had aged a lot in the last few days, the child in his arms seemed very heavy, the hair around his temples had started to turn grey. Looking down into the face of his grand son Chris smiled the boy reminded him so much of Robert for a moment there was a pain in his chest at the memory of his son as a small boy now nothing but a cold corpse in the ground, for a moment there welled up in his heart an incredible sadness it felt as if his heart would burst with sorrow this was followed by a feeling of an overwhelming peace as the Holy Spirit the comforter set about comforting this old warrior of the faith Robert Johannes Van Heerden might be dead but his spirit live on in the presence of Almighty God who had seen fit to gather the young man home to himself at the appointed time. Now as a feeling of peace flowed over him he found the words with which to explain and comfort the small child words which would stay with the young boy as he grew to manhood words which he would himself one day use to comfort his own children and grandchildren when the time came.

At first as the old warrior spoke the child had been fidgety looking around expecting his father to come through the door and pick him up and hug him there had been a special bond between the child and his father. Now as the old man spoke

the awful truth dawn on little Robert his father was not coming back ever he began to sob great sobs of grief racked his body the old man took the child in his arms and comforted him with words of one day in the hereafter seeing his father surrounded by the angels and friends who had gone home to the Lord.

The sobs subsided as the truth of a wonderful salvation which lay ahead became clear to him, although Robert Junior had not reached the age of accountability he was becoming aware of a few facts which would one day make him one of the leading ministers of the gospel of Salvation a strong righteous man who would lead many to the truth of God's wonderful salvation.

In the lounge Brenda, Johanna Samuel and William were drinking tea "I should have spoken sooner maybe things would have turned out differently" said William. "I doubt if any one would have known about or been able to change what happened to poor Robert" said Samuel "I will always remember what he said just before he left the house" said Brenda with a small sigh it was if he knew he held me in his arms and said one day when I am long gone you will remember this sunny afternoon as one of the happiest we ever shared of course he was joking I had just told him that he needed to hurry up and get back to work because the light was fading and I wanted him home early I had made his favorite baked tuna pie. Now I wish I had told him to take his time over that last cup of coffee little Robert was playing in the lounge and looked up as we came through from the kitchen. "Want to go for a ride on one of the horses Robert had asked Yes please Daddy our boy said as he ran towards Robert who picked him up as if he was as light as a feather. Well we had better get out of your mother hair then Robert said turning to me and giving me a kiss" said Brenda

"I had just checked on the pie I did not want it to burn when I heard the sound of the first shot I thought it was a car that had backfired then there was another and another William came through the door holding junior in his arms white as a sheet shouting get down Brenda I did not for a moment realize what was going on then I saw the look of terror in the child's eyes I knew some thing had changed some thing bad had happened." She continued

“Brenda if it could have been any other way then I would have gladly died in his place” said William “I am cut up about it I know that if there was that I could have prevented it I would have” William said. “William you know that it was meant to be I know it sounds a terrible thing to say but it is the truth how many times have we seen good men die and known there was nothing we could do about it” said Samuel.

“True” replied William but it upsets me greatly that here was a young man who had his whole life before him cut down by a fanatic a man who had only one thing on his mind and that was revenge and Robert an innocent had to die for my past actions” said William.

The door of the study opened and Chris came into the lounge Joanna stood up crossed to the coffee table and poured the old man a cup of tea handing it to him she noticed that there was a strange peace about the man which disturbed her she remembered when her husband had died she had been wracked by grief for months yet here was a family who seemed not to be aware of the terrible loss which had befallen them all because the man she loved had been the intended victim of the assassins bullet even Brenda Mac Masters Van Heerden seemed strangely at peace, maybe it was a good thing for she was heavily pregnant with her second child a child who would come into this world who would never know his or her father.

One of the groups which was most affected by the passing of Robert were the African and colored farm hands. These people had lived on the farm for generations before Samuel had bought it. These people had lived through the dark days of apartheid their daily lives filled with toil and little reward. Simple people with a good heartedness which would put many to shame for they harbored not feelings of ill content against those who had oppressed them. They took a view that it was better to help ones fellow man then to actively seek to harm.

When Robert had first arrived at the farm he had taken the time to get to know these people and to find out how he could make their lives better of the five families which lived on the farm most had been there for more than a hundred years there

original ancestors having been servants to the farmer who had settled there shortly before the Boer war of 1888.

Robert had observed there living conditions and found them to be in a shockingly primitive state. Being a child of the apartheid area he carried a certain amount of guilt and as a result he began to make improvements to there living quarters even going so far as to go against Samuel's strict rule of maintaining the budget for the farm. He had electricity laid on and improved on the sanitation by laying on running water to there humble homes. When one of the younger men got married he even went as far as helping to build a new brick house the first ever build on the farm for a farm hand. All others been build little for little over the years resembled a small shanty town

After the first house had been build it was not long before the wives of other farm hands began appearing at the farm house with requests for brick build houses. To all of these requests he gave answers and practical help soon the shanty village had been replaced by a small group of well ordered house.

The farm hands had shown there appreciation in many ways for example instead of getting blind drunk and fighting with there woman folk on there off days because they lived in squalor and did not know how to better there lives they now returned to well build houses in the evening and spent time with there families enjoying the small comforts of a descent home in which to live. The effect of the worry of living in poor conditions removed there was less of a need for them to drink to forget there situation. Thus the work that needed to be done on a daily basis on the farm by these laborers was done in a more professional and ship shape fashion

These laborers were for the most part members of the established church having been born baptized and buried in the established church for generations they knew no other until the advent of Robert and company.

For them there church or should I rather say there religion consisted of doing as the good Lord bid them in the ten commandments the confirmation into the church was of a

strict nature following all the rules of the ridged system of Calvinism. Thus many of the old traditions were still clung to by these people.

When Robert and company arrived they observed for the first time the free flowing worship of another type of Christian for these new people at the farm rejoiced and gave thanks for every thing they did at first Koos Williams one of the chief laborers was daily frightened out of his wits when Robert or one of the others who were new to the farm would stop what ever they were doing and address the Almighty in the most forthright form for it seemed to Koos that these new people at the farm knew the deity on a far deeper and more personal level then any thing he had ever experienced with in the established church.

Now over the period of time that the farm had been run by Robert various Christians from his fathers congregation had visited and had begun a work among these laborers these young Christians with there clear cut faces and a spirit of love had begun to show the laborers on the farm the benefits of worshipping God in a true and wonderful way once they had committed there lives to the Lord and received the promise of salvation much I might add to the discontent of the local Domineer who considered the new arrivals at the farm nothing but trouble for he thought of them as sheep stealers it further aggravated him that he would have to once again teach these wayward children of mother church the truth that only membership in the established church could bring you into heaven.

Now on the day of the funeral after the service these humble people had gathered to one side they had stood in the back of the chapel and listened as the friends and family of Bass Robert had extol his virtues and given thanks for his life, they had dug the hole in the common graveyard in which all the former owners of the farm lay buried with there own ancestors they had dug the hole for there friend Bass Robert who had been shot for what reason they did not know but they dug the hole to be of some service to there departed friend.

Now in the gathering dusk the cook Mavis went up to the house to speak to the Bass William and the widow of Bass

Robert. "Mynheer William" said Mavis as she came through the door of the kitchen could you please ask if the madam and the ou Bass could come to the stoop(long extended front porch of the house) "I will do this for you but what is the reason?" asked William "It is our traditions to greet the departed and bid them a good journey and we want the madam the Bass Robert's wife and his mother and father to be present" she replied "I begin to see what you men said William alright I will tell them to come to the stoop replied William "It is a small thing but we would like to say thank you to him for the last time" said Mavis leaving the kitchen and returning to the crowd of gathered work people and there families.

It was not long before the front door opened and the family filed out in front of them on the grass stood the assembled members of there farm work force then they begun to sing a haunting melody retelling the adventures of the life of Robert as they saw it they swayed in time to the music the sound of African voices carrying to the high peaks of the hills around the farm as the sun began to set for it was in there nature to sing and to bring tribute to those whom the loved. When the first song of storytelling had finished the woman in the work force began to yellet as only African woman can as they mourned the passing of some one they viewed as a great and good person the voices of the men then joined in singing songs of joy for the life of there Bass Robert when the song had finished they stood for a moment before beginning to sing now to the little child who had fallen asleep in his grand mothers arms it had been a long and tiring day for little RJ "Sleep now little one for the sun is gone little one sleep now little love for the day was long they sang on, and on as they moved off towards home the sun setting on them as they walked the short distance to the homes which Robert had provided.

Turning once more the small group of individuals on the stoop entered the house Lena carried the small boy up to his room while the rest of the members of the group made themselves comfortable Samuel crossed to the stereo system and begun sorting through the CD's finding the one he wanted he placed it in the CD tray and stepped back the fist notes of the Bach Mass in B filled the room. Brenda crossed to the small table on which cards of sympathy and flowers stood she noticed

among the profusion of flowers and cards the embossed envelope of the director of the Sutherland observatory picking it up she walked back to the couch and sat down and began to read the words on the fine brown paper.

Dear Mrs. Van Heerden,

It is with regret that we learned of your husband's death earlier this week; I personally would like to offer my condolences and those of the staff at the observatory. Your husband was a frequent visitor here and was well liked and well know,

His knowledge and interest in our work was well known as a result we would like to inform you that a recently discovered star in a galaxy 1, 5 light years from earth has provisionally been named RCVH103 in his honor. We will confirm this once it has been documented by the world body of planetary observers

Sincerely

William J Blyth

Director Sutherland Observatory South Africa

It seemed strange to Brenda that they were already referring to the man she loved in past tense for to her the reality had not settled in she was still coming to terms with the fact tat never more would she hear that laugh feel the touch of his hand or see the smile as he woke in the morning. Her heart was strangely numb she knew Robert was gone but her heart was still refusing to believe it in time she would come to accept it she would grieve she would weep but now she must be strong for her son and for her parent in law Chris she noticed was strangely silent a mist seemed have come over his eyes occasionally he would remove his glasses and wipe his eyes. Nevertheless, he was saying nothing later when she retired to there room which seemed so empty with out his presents she wept herself to sleep the child growing with in her belly seemed more active tonight maybe it was in response to her weeping. Soon the little one would come into the world and what would life hold for the only daughter of Robert Van Heerden she wondered never knowing the man who was her father. Brenda wondered at it all for she did not understand

who these people were who had killed her husband and why these questions plagued her mind.

Downstairs Samuel and William had gone into the study “Well?” asked Samuel “Firstly Samuel I owe you the greatest debit that one can owe to another man” said William “I have over the last year regained my memory and I can only say I am truly sorry for all the pain and grief I have caused” he continued “Indeed and how does that help that family out there for you do know that bullet was meant for you and not for young Robert” remarked Samuel. “Alas I know this and it brings me great pain if I could have taken the bullet instead of Robert I would have but things have been decided otherwise” said William “What do you plan to do now?” asked Samuel “I plan to stay on here as long as you will let me and take care of the animals and the people” said William. “William we have known each other now almost six hundred years and I have seen little in you which makes me believe you are capable of redeeming yourself” said Samuel angrily. “If you will give me a chance I will explain this last century was a time of madness for me I am only now beginning to see the light and to find my way back to where I should have been had I not gone to Germany all those years ago.

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

A trip to Johannesburg

Three days after the funeral Brenda and little RJ flew to Johannesburg for Brenda's confinement, this event was to be far different from the birth of RJ out of respect to Robert John and Mary Mac Masters had cancelled all social events on their calendar while their daughter was in Johannesburg. They were met at the airport by Chris and Lena who had returned from the farm only the day before on the drive up to the old mansion in Houghton Lena suggested that RJ spend a few days at their home Brenda agreed without much enthusiasm. It was not that she did not want her son to spend time with his grandparents she was feeling a little tired and just wanted to hold on to the child as he was the only real piece of Robert that she could hold on to.

The welcome at the old house was a little somber with her parents coming to greet her the house boy taking her luggage up to her room while the family went in to the parlor for tea "You are looking a little tired dear" said Mary to her daughter as she handed her a cup of tea don't you want to go and lay down for a while after you have had your tea? She continued. "That would be nice" said Brenda Chris and RJ were deeply engrossed in a conversation about some birds which they could see bathing themselves in the bird bath in the garden.

"Look Opie look how the little one is washing himself" said the boy his face around his mouth covered with cream and jam from a scone which he held in his hand. The old man smiled down at his grandson and thought of all the years he had spent both as a minister and a pastor one thing had always been in the forefront of his mind to spend time with his family now a feeling of intense love overwhelmed him for this small child who was so alive to the beauty of nature. He had loved Robert but not in the same way he loved his grandson. He guessed it was true what they said about "loving the lice but loving the nits even more"

"Well young man are you ready to spend some time with your Opie and Nana" asked John as he came and sat down besides Chris on the couch which faced the window "Oh yes Grandpa I am going to ride the horses and swim and Nana is going to make some cake for me" the little boy said looking up at his

grand father with look of excitement in his eyes. John looked down at the small child and noticed that already there was an air of the master of the house about him for he knew that his dad was not coming back and some one would have to take care of his mommy. Of course there was uncle William but that was different Uncle William was almost as old as Opie and he could not be considered Mommy's guardian according to RJ. On the night following the funeral the little boy had been unable to sleep and he had crept into the room where his mother lay climbed up beside her pulled the covers over himself and fallen asleep. During the night Brenda had woken reaching out with her hand to where Robert used to lay in her half awake state she imagined the events of the last few days had been just a bad dream then touching the small body she realized that they had not lifting the small body in to her arms as he slept she lay back and began to sob her body wracked by the pain of loss of the man she loved her tears hot and salty had fallen upon the face of the small child he had woken hearing the sobs he had placed his little hands around his mother shoulders and tried to comfort her. From this sprang the idea in his mind that he would now have to be the protector and guardian of his mother and unborn sister, it was not that he used these words it was the concept of these words that he understood and began to apply in his life. When the tea was finished Brenda gave her son a kiss and told him to behave himself while at his grandparents home before retiring to her room exhausted throwing herself down on the bed which she had last slept in with Robert a few months earlier she was asleep with in seconds of her head touching the pillow.

While she slept her son made his departure with his grand parents, and her own parents turned to the various other things old married couples do in times of stress and strain they found a comfortable place in the big house sat and talked of the future. While Brenda slept she began to dream. In the dream Robert came to her and was smiling holding out his hand he took hers and lead her to the side of the stream on the farm where they had first realized that they were in love with each other the sunlight now surrounding them as they sat listening to the soft running water and the gentle breeze blowing of the mountains it seemed to be an early summer morning gin the

dream for she imagined she heard the sounds of the first spring sparrows chicks in a nest overhead.

“I hope that you have a good life my dear “he said smiling
“Oh Robert how I have missed you “she said to him “Can you stay a while” she asked “No my dear I have just come to say good bye and wish you well” he said a look of unspeakable love showing from his eyes around them the spring blossoms were in full bloom the scent of jasmine strong on the morning air. “Robert I love you” she said “And I you” he replied The sound of the waterfall began to grow louder as the dream continued she could see that he was saying some thing but she could not hear because of the waterfall. She awoke suddenly the sound of a car revving its engine
Rising she crossed the room to the window looking out into the drive way she saw her brother James working on the engine of his car this had been the sound of the waterfall the revving of the engine.

Philemon Magadi swung the big German car into the car par of the Abundant life church Mid rand, pulling into the parking spot reserved for VIP’s he switched the engine off and climbed out of the car making his way to the back door he wondered how long he would have to wait this afternoon for his boss. He reached for the door handle and opened it Samuel Ferreira internationally renowned hotelier stepped from the car taking a bag containing a lap top computer with him
“Philemon you can take the afternoon off I will get a lift back with pastor Van Heerden” he said. “Thanks boss” said the black man grateful for the chance to get home early and spend some time with his wife Marie.

Philemon Magaid was the son of a Kowie fisherman and a domestic worker he was typical of the last generation born before the end of apartheid having been born to late to take part in the events of 1976 he had grown up hearing of the deeds of those who had joined the struggle before him in the mid 1980’s he had joined the crowds of youths who had thrown stones at the police van’s as they made there rounds in the Port Alfred locations it was fun to do and very daring to do this the risk had been what had first attracted him to this dangerous pastime. His father a fisherman who worked on various boats which setout from the Kowie river for the deep

ocean to catch fish for the local tables of the hotels restraints and the tables of the white residents of the town was a simple man who had left school in the 1960's to support his widowed mother and large group of siblings like his father before him he was a fisherman it was from the bounty of the seas that the Magadi family gained there daily bread for one of the bounties of the sea round South Africa was a fish known as the barbell a cat fish deemed to poor for the tables of the European residents of the town. This ugly fish was plenteous and served as the daily meat of all the African and colored families along the South African coast. Another item which was more often then not cast aside by the white residence was the row of a big silver fish known by the name of Cob in any European country this delicacy would have been snapped up as it was a form of caviar however the mostly conservative tastes of the European residents of the coastal cities and towns did not go as far as eating this therefore generations of the disadvantaged would collect the eggs of the fish in beer carton and take this home to there families for an added treat this commodity was also sold to those who were not in the fishing trade. The beer cartons which were used came from the factory produced African beer known as shake; shake a thick mixture of soured milk and alcohol.

Thus in his youth Philemon had attended school on days when rioting had not taken place and on the dark days at the end of the apartheid are rioting took up most of his time it was not that he was politically active he was a go with the flow type of guy and if he ended up in the local jail well then he would serve some time at the governments expense. It came about that shortly before the release of Nelson Mandela from prison he was arrested for public violence in one of the last incidents of rioting in the district. He had spent his time in jail awaiting trial not uncomfortably for he was not beaten or otherwise distressed in his time in prison for things were changing and the apartheid police had run out of steam and no longer felt free to beat and kill as they had previously done for they did not wish for angry former prisoners to seek them out in order to get revenge. Thus after a three month term in jail he was released and returned to his previous habits, now it became difficult for the family to survive and he began to look for work he had first tried to follow the life of a fisherman but this life was not to his taste thus he tried working as a gardener he

enjoyed this work and began to put money away for he had a dream to succeed and to this end he had spent many hours in jail speaking with an older man who had first given him the idea of becoming a driver for a wealthy businessman for six months he saved all his money while Marie argued and complained that he never had any money to spend on her he one day took her into his confidence and explained his goal thereafter she stood by him not complaining for she knew he was working for a better future for both of them.

Maria and Philemon had been married for just over a year it had been a long standing arrangement that they would marry however when Philemon had first come to the Rand it was with the understanding that she would wait for him in the Kowie on condition that within five years he would earn enough money to buy the traditional Labola (bride money) to her father this usually took the form of cattle and in some cases even a large cash settlement also a number of gifts for the bride's mother and father. It was an old custom which had kept them apart from each other for the full five years for the price of cattle was not something which could easily be earned in a few months many thousands of hard earned rands of his salary had gone into an old coffee tin under his bed while he worked towards their future happiness.

If had not been for the intervention in Philemon's financial affairs close to the end of the fifth year it would have taken at least another two years for Philemon to gather enough cash to buy his bride it had come about one day that Samuel who was in a reflective mood happened to ask Philemon when he planned to marry "Boss when I have collected some thousand rand to pay for the labola" the driver had said "How much do you need?" Samuel had asked bearing in mind that one of the first things that Samuel had asked his driver when he had come to work for him what his plans were he was a bit surprised at the reply that Philemon still needed more money he had assumed that the labolla was a mere token to traditionalism. "Oh about forty thousand the father of Maria is a wealthy man and he loves his daughter very much so I must work to give him back some value for what he is giving away to me" said Philemon "I see was all Samuel had said and had continued with other things however, Samuel had made sure

that the following payday there was an amount similar to that which Philemon had needed in his bank account.

When Philemon had discovered that there had been a overpayment into his bank account he had gone to Samuel and told him about it expecting that the amount would be taken from him in future salary, Samuel had replied when told of it that it was a gift and Philemon was due a few weeks leave why not take it and sort out some personal business which was long over due. After he returned from the Eastern Cape Philemon and Marie had gone to live in a small house in Soweto on his first day back at work Philemon arranged for Marie to be at the hotel to thank Samuel for his benevolence when they returned from a meeting. When he had seen his wife waiting in the foyer of the hotel he lead Samuel in her direction Marie was a girl with a clean open face full of smile when Philemon introduced her as his wife she had clapped her hands together and said “Bass Ferreira thank you from the bottom of my heart for what you have done my husband has told me it was you who made it possible for us to be together I thank you for I know it would have taken many years for Philemon to get all the labola together so I thank you for the extra time you give us together.” She said this with tears in her eyes this simple woman’s gratitude touched his heart deeply from that time he had always inquired after her and on occasion asked if there was any sign of a child for the couple. When the first child was born Samuel had stood as god father for the boy

Noticing the brief smile which crossed face at the thought of Samuel reached into his pocket and produced a bundle of notes :”Take the car and take Marie out to dinner my treat but don’t tell her” said Samuel “give that son of yours a huge from his god father” he continued

Turning Samuel entered the office of the church “Good afternoon Mr Ferreira this is a nice surprise” said the bright young lady who was the reverend Van Heerden’s sectary “Eh hello Linda is the pastor in?” he asked “Yes he is and I am sure he will be glad for the company every one has been staying away for the last few days since he got back” she said “I will show you in and get some coffee “ she said as she lifted the phone which connected her to Chris’s office.

Once in the office he had taken a seat on the couch while Chris took a seat in a easy chair “Well my friend how are you today?” asked Samuel expecting the usual sad answer from a man who had just lost a son “In him I live and breath” replied Chris “I see said Samuel this was not the answer he was expecting and it left him feeling he had missed some important fact.

“I have a question for you Samuel “said Chris “Ask away and I will answer if I can “ said Samuel “You knew and saw the master how is it that such a mixture of unbelief and distrust can be held in one man’s heart ?” asked Chris.

“I don’t understand your question” said Samuel thinking that Chris had finally lost his mind “What I mean is the fact that for most of your very long life the truth has been right in front of you and you have not seen it or not wanted to believe it” said Chris “I suppose that you mean that I should believe in Jesus as the messiah?” ask Samuel “exactly” said Chris “Actually I have to believe in it I have stood in the presents of the Almighty, angels and diamond and I am convinced of the deity of Jesus” replied Samuel “If you know this why don’t you commit to Christ?” asked Chris “I think you are forgetting the singular predicament I live in” said Samuel “I have not forgotten I was thinking of William who has found so much peace in his new found salvation his love for the Lord is strong and the Lord has blessed him with a companion who loves him” said Chris “Indeed the fair Johanna she is a good woman a person of rare quality I knew she would be the right person for the job I employed her for” said Samuel “Ah yes I had forgot it was you who brought us all together, even Robert and Brenda there love would never have grown had it not been for you” said Chris “I hope you are not going to hold the death of your son against me” said Samuel

“If my natural passion was for revenge I would have taken it out on you and William very soon after I heard that Robert had been killed” said Chris. “Fortunately I do not operate in the realm of revenge” he continued, “Indeed that is good news to me” said Samuel “I am very, very sorry that some one

killed Robert he was a good man and lived life to the fullest he continued.

“Sam I would like to ask you a question on the day that you were first cursed did you make no attempt to change the course which was laid before you, did you try any thing to appease the angry woman who you had just offended?” Chris asked “Ah there was my mistake it had been a long and tiring day and I just wanted to get to bed you have got to remember that at that time it was common practice to curse people one did not like. “I have heard that” said Chris
The real question I would like to ask though is have you ever seriously tried to redeem yourself from the curse?” asked Chris.

I tried for many years to find a way that would set me free from the curse so I could live a happy life end my life an old man full of years and of course with many children and grand children. You have no idea how blessed you are to live out your life experiencing the joys of parent hood and the love of your grand children” said Samuel. “I think I begin to see your dilemma” said Chris “however I believe you have not fully investigated the question I asked you earlier” said Chris.

What question was that you have asked me a great many questions in this last half hour” said Samuel. “If you remember I asked you what type of belief you had in Jesus if indeed you had a personal relationship with him” said Chris “I hardly knew him when he was here on earth so I can say with a certainty I had no real relationship with Jesus. I knew of him and yes I have followed the history of the church as it unfolded. If you are asking me if I am a practicing Jew well that is another question and the answer to that is no I stopped been a believing Jew many centuries ago. I tried hard I kept the Sabbath, feasts and fasts but it never brought me any lasting joy or showed me a way to redeem myself from the curse under which I live. At one time I even studied under a learned rabbi in Jerusalem after that my interest in Judaism waned a few centuries later I tried again but to no avail the Judaism that existed in the years of the 10th century did not really appeal to me. I even tried the ancient deities of Egypt, Rome and Greece but in each case I was disappointed I tried the way of Buddha but that did not redeem me it is a strange

belief foreign to the heart and mind of an old Jew like me, as for the religion of Islam I am convinced that it is one of the most dangerous religions. You see I once followed the way of Mohammed I was an ardent follower I live in Ariby did I ever tell you I had a dream one night before one of the major celebrations to Allah in which the ghost of the prophet appeared to me I saw for myself that the place of those who follow the way of Islam is the road to destruction.” He ended

“We can sit here and analyze Christianity all day and still not reach a conclusion” said Samuel I have in my long life seen the church of Jesus in its many forms and guises, it was some times expedient for me to belong to the church Catholicism holds a great interest for me I remember at a certain time in fact for a number of centuries I was a faithful member of the church of Rome. He continued

“Samuel you of all people should know not to judge Christ on the actions of Catholicism” said Chris Catholicism did civilization a great service when the barbarian multitudes were overrunning the few remaining bastions of learning and the civilized world” he finished.

“Indeed it was a sorry time when the scourge of God and his armies swept away all before it and when the followers of the prophet came they swept away all that would not follow the ways of Allah. However the worst atrocities were conducted not by the barbarians or the followers of Mohammed rather the very church of Rome showed me that it was the worst enemy that the followers of Christ ever had.” Said Samuel

“I watched in horror as faithful followers of Jesus were butchered by the ignorant masses that flocked to the banner of the cross not once but several times coming to Eretz Israel invading villages, towns and cities killing their arms covered in blood of the faithful they killed until their arms were so tired that they could barely swing a sword” said Samuel

“I tell you Chris as I stand here today I have never seen in all my life an organization which proclaimed the gospel of peace which at the same time kills and tortures like the church of Christ. Did I ever tell you I was once burnt at the stake in

Spain for been the friend of a secret Jew? No I should warn you it is not one of those pretty stories one hears of martyrs you read of in Foxes book of martyrs. The truth is I shat myself I burned and as I burned every fiber of my body screamed for death to relieve me of the pain. Now you tell me how one can acquaint that with a merciful God No my friend the church is was not the true bride of Christ steeped in superstitions clinging to relics and its pieces of the true cross of Christ in the hope of salvation. Henry the eighth did a good job when he dismantled the monasteries and kicked the Pope out of England” said Samuel taking a sip of water from the glass in front of him allowed Chris to take this in before he continued

“If you thought the torture and death ended there you are wrong the followers of Luther Knox and Calvin were no better at first Luther tried to embrace the Jews to make them one with his new found truth but after a few years seeing that none responded to his plea to convert he became just as bad as any of the former popes calling for the death of any Jew who dared to defy his new order.

“Talking about brotherly love that Christians share let me tell you I once stood on the great squire of Constantinople watching how Christians from the west were sold into slavery by the sailors and there so called brothers from the grand city it was a pitiful sight watching how those poor people who had come so far to free Jerusalem were sold of to a life of misery and death not that they were in a very good shape to start with diseased and ill the few remaining elements of a great army which had been lead by a monk on a donkey. Killed of by battles and internals strife even before it reached the holy land. But I digress let me tell you about those grand puritan Christians of the 17th century a wonderful bunch of men one thing they all had in common they had a lust for blood that would have made the Romans blush. What of the wars fought in the name of the new protestant religion against the church of Rome I saw thousands upon thousands of good men die for believing gin a principal and don’t tell me death in the name of religion is a noble and glorious thing death is an ugly thing no matter if you are a faithful Jew Catholic or protestant. All this killing in the name of God” said Samuel

'Sam I know you have seen great suffering in your life but surely there must be some thing maybe a small thing which is a redeeming factor in all of this, maybe some act of kindness that has shown you that Christianity as a way of life can be a joyous occasion" said Chris.

"There is one thing in the resent past which I think falls into that category and that is you and your family" said Samuel I have noticed that even with the loss of your son you take life in your stride you are a faithful husband father and grand father you still express joy even after such a terrible thing has befallen you I must confess that I do not understand it seems strange to me that you can continue so soon after your sons death with the mundane things which make up your life. I have known other men who have proclaimed themselves Christian yet when the first sign of adversity approaches they flea as if the devil is chasing them. He ended.

'Samuel you must remember that we believe in the resurrection to eternal life and although we miss Robert every day we know with a fair amount of certainty that one day we will be with the Lord and Robert will be there to I am not a young man any more but I know the Lord I serve is strong to deliver and true to his word he has promised us eternal life and we must believe for with out this belief we are lost and with out hope like the animals of the fields a mere beast and this I cannot believe it is to terrible to contemplate" said Chris

"What do I as a Jew think of death and salvation?" Said Samuel that is complex as a young man before I was cursed I believed in the Law that if I lived my life to the best of my ability obeying the laws of JHWH then I would go to the place reserved for the righteous. I was a good Jew I attended synagogue regularly and tried to live a good life however as the years passed I became cynical. I hardened my heart and this would eventually lead to my own downfall" he continued

"I am surprised then that it would eventually be chosen by the Almighty to be given the chance to redeem myself by offering a place to the chosen one, but what did I do I messed it up and ended up becoming the eternal Jew" he said

“Has the Lord not given you the opportunity since then to redeem yourself?” Asked Chris Many times I have come close but some thing has always come up which has changed the course I set myself. Case in point was my dalliance with the house of Stuart I served them well for many years and it brought me great sorry to watch them die losing there cause was one of the most heart wrenching things I have ever done.” Said Samuel

“was there when Benedict Stuart the last grand son of James II died it was pitiful he had of course given up the hope many years earlier of regaining the throne of all of the Stuarts he seemed to be the most realistic of them but alas he chosen path was the church of Rome and he died childless.

“After that little episode I sort of lost interest returned to serve England in the capacity of a spy during the French revolution and then later during the reign of Napoleon that is how I first began to gather a fortune from which the hotel empire I now own came” said Samuel

“I was there the day the lopped of the head of Marie Antoinette poor pitiful creature she was at the end but the crowd cheered and hooted at the poor woman’s final predicament. It was then that I once more began to search for a means to find my salvation. It was not an easy time for me and I think I was also much in avoidance of the new enlightenment but that is how history is. Thus I set out to some how find a way to redeem myself.”

“So you have seen the church in all its forms up to the present age and you still avoid returning or rather should I say joining the Church of Christ because of what you have witnessed through the ages? Asked Chris

“I have seen many things in the course of history however the happiest time for me was back at the end of the third century AD when I lived in Greece I had gone there totally disillusioned and wanted nothing to do with God or religions but I had a friend Demetrious a wine merchant of sorts who in later life converted to Christianity he had been a great worshiper of the Greek gods but events of the time lead him to

turn to Christianity and he became one of the elders of the church I remember a few days before he died he came to visited me and he implored me to turn to Jesus Christ but I was having to much fun enjoying the young body of a Greek slave girl and I was not over much interested but now I regret it I saw the sad look in his eyes as he left me that sunny afternoon in 397 AD his last words to me were "My friend I hope you will soon find Christ for he is the joy of my life" thus Demetrious the Greek wine merchant departed from my life and this life a few days later." Said Samuel

"How did you first become aware that the curse placed on you had taken affect?" asked Chris "When I was alive for about fifty years I began to notice that I had stopped aging my wife was already an old woman with white hair while I was still a robust health 35 year old man. It put the fear of God in me I must tell you I feared they would discover me and try and kill me. My friends were aging and I was not soon after Ratsula that was my wife's name died I left Bethlehem for Jerusalem and a new chapter in my life at that time there was a wise old sage who knew the laws of God better then any man alive he taught many of the younger generation. I met with him one night and spoke for hours but all we could agree on was that I was cursed and he knew no answer other then to keep the Sabbath and follow the precepts of the Lord God.

For many years I wandered seeking an answer eventually after been rejected even by those strange deities of Egypt I gave up and began to live life day by day. However there has always been a reoccurring dream where I see Ratsula standing at the side of Jesus beckoning at first they were but distant indistinct figures in the distance but as the centuries have passed they have come clearer and closer with each reoccurrence of the dream.

"Do you not think that it might be better if you accept Christ and bring your long journey to an end?" asked Chris "Indeed I do but the method of this salvation what puzzles me for I have been a member of the Christian church before and membership has not brought my predicament to an end" said Samuel

“I don’t speak of church membership Samuel I speak of a giving of your self to the will and commands of Jesus a complete handing over of your life to Christ I am sure this is the truth so simple which has alluded you for these many long years” said Chris.

“And what of the method?” asked Samuel “for surely there must be some thing which is different in this surrender which has caused me to live for so long?” he continued

“We will have to think about that and pray’ said Chris...

“you I am sure know more about Jesus then any man alive today having witnessed some of the greatest events in the history of the church did he not appear a gentle man did he not seem to love all who came to him?” asked Chris

Philemon Magadi put the plastic packets on the table “Complements of Bass Samuel dinner has arrived” he said to Marie who was setting plates on the table from the dinning room the sound of the children watching the television could be heard. “Ah bass Sam is a good man” said Marie she remembered that on the few occasions when she had met the white man he had always been kind and always asked after her health. When she was pregnant with Simon there first son he had made sure to send home with Philemon a bit of fruit every day. She had never quite met a man like Samuel the whites she knew from her life in the Eastern Cape were not the most generous manly because they also battled against the poor economy of the region. Every day she thanked God that her husband had been bright enough to figure out a way to escape the extreme poverty of the Eastern Cape. She remembered that it had taken him six months to get together the money needed to take the driving course which was offered by the town’s only traffic cop who in his spare time ran the Kowie driving school. Philemon had been a bright student and had learned the driving book required to pass the official driving test until he could repeat the book word for word.

Once he had passed the test he had not wasted time he had worked for a few weeks to gather the money needed to pay for his train fare to the Transvaal and had set out on the train from

Grahamstown one rainy Saturday afternoon a small wrapped lunch which she had lovingly prepared for him tucked into his bag. She had returned to the location overlooking the river and the town and waited in the mean time she had found work as a domestic worker in the town's new Marine hotel doing laundry. How the town had changed in her life time when she was a child she would go with her mother to the wharf where they would sit and sell fruit which to passers by later in the day they would buy from the fishermen who would be cleaning fish on the wharf even the new hotel in the middle of the marine had changed the landscape the old lagoon where every one used to swim with the old café which stood on the bank was but a distant memory. Now when one walked down to town the first thing one noticed was the disappearance of the old Victorian bridge which had stood for well over a hundred years next to the bridge built in the 1930's the fact that the town now had robots was another novelty which took some getting used to the main street was now populated with at least three where a few years previously there had not been one the towns worthies deciding at that time not to was the budget on frivolities such as robots. Now as she laid the plates on the table her mind was drawn back to the present and the nice dinner provided by her husband's boss

In the mean time across the city in the old mansion in Houghton Brenda was feeling the first strains of the approaching birth of her daughter she was busy arranging flowers in the garden with her mother when the child kicked violently moments before Brenda's water broke

The phone on the desk in Chris Van Heerden's office rang picking it up he listened for a moment then said I will pick you up on the way" he said before replacing the phone in its cradle. "Samuel would you excuse me this has been an interesting conversation but I need to get to the hospital Brenda has gone into labor." He said "Indeed I will find a ride and find my way home yes this was interesting and we must talk more " he said as he flipped open his cellphone and began dialing for some one to come and pick him up.

Taking his laptop he left the office speaking to one of his trusted employees to come and fetch him in the mean time

Chris had hurried from the building to the large dark blue German which he loved. The car was not the latest model but it was still relatively luxurious to cause people to stop and look as it drove by. He usually drove at a reasonably safe speed however today he was distracted by the phone call he had received from Lena she had been notified by Mary shortly before as the Mac Masters family had driven to the hospital. As a result the car began to gather speed as he drove first to the homestead at Brynston to pick up Lena he did not notice that as he gunned the engine along the highway a traffic camera flashed catching the car going at a hundred and fifty kilometers per hour, even if he did he would no doubt not have slowed down as today was turning out to be quite an unusual day for him the conversation with Samuel Ferreira had also been a surprise to him. He had never realized the vast implications accepting Christ might make in the life of Samuel, although he had not advanced to the point of accepting Christ as his savior.

June 1st 2007 was a typical winter's morning on the highveild when Brenda Jane Mac Masters Van Heerden uttered her first cry as she entered this world. Her mother Brenda had been in intense labor since the late afternoon of the previous day. Her grand father John Mac Masters and his wife Mary where the only ones in attendance at the hospital when the child was born Lena and Chris Van Heerden opting to take the later part of the previous evening and the late morning as there preferred shifts waiting for the blessed arrival of this the birth of there recently departed son Robert.

At ten past five in the morning John Mac Masters phoned the home of the Van Heerden's to inform them of the arrival the phoning ringing woke Chris who picket up the phone knowing that the only people who would be phoning could be from the hospital. never the less force of habit told him to answer the phone in the usually way "Pastor Van Heerden speaking how may I help you?" he said sleepily Chris it is John here good news the child is a grand girl of 3, 2 kilograms with a bonny frill of red hair" "That is wonderful wait while I wake Lena he said turning in the bed to find Lena already awake looking at him anxiously. "A girl 3, 2 kilograms with red hair" said Chris to his wife a smile breaking over his face.

“Can you come to the hospital now or are you going to come later?” asked John “I think we can come in about an hour need to dress and come right away said Chris as he sat up putting on his slippers as he spoke crossing to the window Lena opened the curtains outside it was still dark but the rooster could be heard crowing she was never a late riser so this was normal for her in her younger days she had risen early to take care of the animals on her fathers farm due to this all her life long she would waken long before break of day get up and set about the daily tasks unlike her husband who usually rose every morning at six to begin the day with prayer.

Replacing the receiver he made his way to the on suite bathroom “the baby is quite big for a new born” said Lena “Is it?” he asked surprised babies to him did not come in sizes like that they were either small newborn of children under five who still needed a lot of attention it had been some time since he had, had first hand experience with his own children the only resent child in there life was young RJ who now awoke and sat up in his cot in the corner of the room

“Hello Opie is it morning yet the child asked rubbing the sleep from his eyes?” Morning son yes it is a little early but it is morning” Chris said crossing the room to lift the small child from the cot. “RJ I want to tell you the best news ever” said the old man “I like the best news ever said the child a little perplexed at his grand fathers words but glad that the news made him happy. “You have a little sister son a little girl with red hair” said the old man RJ looked at his grand father puzzled for a long time now people had been telling him that he was going to have a sister but the event had seemed so far away now he had a little sister he would be the big brother the man in the house, he would now have to woman to look after he reasoned because as far as he knew babies could do nothing but lay in there cots and sleep or eat they couldn’t speak or play but he would shoulder the responsibility he was after all his mothers young man. As his late dad always used to say.

CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

Come in side it is cold out here on the stoep said Marie to Philemon they were standing on the veranda of the old homestead which belonged to Simon Magadi overlooking the bend in the Kowie river inside the old house members of the extended family sat around watching TV and playing games. Simon now an old man who did not go to sea any more sat bouncing young Sempewe on his knee he loved his grand children and was proud of his sons Siphon sat at the dinner table with an accounting book in front of him the last few weeks he had let the accounting slip he had been very busy using the last few weeks of good fishing weather before the cold of winter set in. he was glad that Philemon had come home for a break he wanted to talk some things over with him, it was not that Siphon was jealous of his elder brother quite the opposite he loved and respected Philemon if it had not been for Philemon sending home money every month he would not now be in the fortunate position which he occupied

For without Philemon's contribution to the family's collective fund they would never have been able to buy the fishing boat with which Siphon set out on every good day to the deep Salmon banks to earn a living.

However there was a certain feeling within Siphon's heart that Philemon could have done so much better, for if the truth be known Siphon believed that Philemon could have been a leader of men yet he preferred to spend his life as a driver to a hotelier in Egoli city of gold. This troubled Siphon and he planned to speak to his brother and ask him if he would like to take a course study to lift himself to a better position no one in the Magadi family had ever sat back and allowed others to take an opportunity they helped each other and each man was responsible for lifting himself up by his bootstraps to a better place in life

Siphon was very fond of his father

In another incident back in 1957 Siphon had narrowly missed been killed when he had jumped from the boat Vampire onto the bar despite the fact that he could not swim moments before it struck the west pier a resounding blow killing all the other occupants of the boat the Vampire had been the town's one and

only experiment with an iron mono hulled boat. Which had gone horribly wrong on a fine afternoon back in 1957 the tied had taken the boat with skipper Piet Botha his brother in law Martian Van Der Merwe and two other colored crewmen to the bottom the bodies had washed up ten days later far to the east of the Kowie black and eaten away by creatures of the deep.

Now the old man did not go to sea any more his body ruined by the cold currents which had prematurely aged him he preferred to spend time sitting and talking with other old men like Ronny Samuels a white man who was held in great respect by the entire colored location for he had been the first white man to take a black wife many years before it had been an acceptable thing shunned by the towns white folks Ronny Samuels spent his days talking with the old black folks his large fishing vessel Lady Marinada had for years plied the seas in search of good catches. Now he preferred to spend his time sitting in the sun while his many sons went to sea in his place. The difference in the two families' boats was remarkable for the Samuels vessel could take upward of 15 people while the Magadi vessel could take only six at maximum.

However it had been the Magadi family which had first put to sea as crewmen for the white folks who were the first black folk to own and manage there own fishing boat when Cedric Guthrie there old boss had seen Siphon at the helm of there new Bob cat he had spat in the water and uttered a curse thinking to himself this wont last they will be back once they have lost there boat and killed a few fishermen, surprisingly Siphon it seemed had been born to the sea and did unexpectedly well so much so that when he now left the river one could be sure a number of boats would follow in his general direction in search of the elusive fish.

Simon Magadi was highly regarded in the community of Port Alfred been the only surviving member of the team of Kowie fishermen to take on the great mantel ray which had entered the river in 1956. it had been a cold and windy Sunday morning back in 1956 when he become aware of a problem developing in the Kowie river for shortly after five AM the

fishing fleet and a number of other pleasure vessels seemed to be dragging against the out going tide inland side. The legendary local Pixie John was calling on volunteers to help him get to the bottom of the problem. Simon a lad of some seventeen years at the time had volunteered with a number of old hands other more notable worthies of the town been to timorous to step up to the plate to do the job.

Braving the cold and choppy waters they set out in Pixie Johns old boat following the trail of destruction for it soon became obvious that some huge creature of the deep had lost its way and was now plowing its way upriver in the hope of finding an escape to deeper waters dragging with it the vessels which had been anchored above there anchor ropes been fastened to old engine blocks which were left on the floor of the river these been fouled by the huge creature the boats marking the trail had now been drawn some five miles upriver. Approaching the first bend in the river below the Settlers reserve the great demission of the deep changed its mind and turned round it was at this time that the great beast lifted both of its wings which extended almost too both banks of the river.

The former timorous worthies of the town who had followed the activities with professional interest shouted words of encouragement to the brave men in the boat to capture the creature as its tail would make a grand trophy for the bar of the Kowie sports club. As the creature turned and moved down river it loosened a number of the formerly fouled vessels which began to drift with the tide thus Pixie John was now left not only with a great mantel ray to contented but a number of vessels masteries and uncontrolled which occasionally drifted across his path as he and his brave crew setout to capture the great beast. Lesley Mould the local one of the two local postmen took it as a personal affront for any creature man or beast to foul his river for he viewed the river as his personal domain since he had fished it man and boy for twenty three years now stood on the prow of the boat with a harpoon seeking for the moment in which to send the sharpened steel into the depths of the river into the foul heart of the great beast while young Simon Magadi stood ready to tie down the rope end which the harpoon was attached. The moment came, Lesley plunged the spear into the depths. Moments later the rope begun to run out Simon waited but a few moments before

fastening the rope fast as instructed by the high pitched voice of Lesley Mould "Quick boy tie the rope moments later the rope tautened the slack taken up by the great beast.

The boat gave a great jolt and began to move down stream at a greater speed then before Lesley lost his footing and fell backwards nearly knocking Simon into the water which would have been a pity for Simon had not yet in his seventeen years mastered the art of swimming. Pixie John at the helm put the boat in to reverse gear and pushed up the revs the engine screamed in protest as the vessel was pulled further down stream the great ray not having at this time lost any of its strength, there was still plenty of fight in the old warrior it had not after all become so big by been a weakling. Slowly it began to weaken as it approached the sea it seemed to sense the deeper water before it but still it had the burden of the boat holding it back

For a few minutes it rested now two miles from the mouth of the river regaining its strength for the final push out to sea and freedom. Setting out once more it sensed that while it rested the tiny creatures above had been busy for Pixie had not slackened the motor but had kept the engines running at high speed in reverse taking the boat and the ray just over half a mile up river. Now as the great beast setout once more it felt its strength diminishing but at the same time sensing freedom in front of it pulled the boat. One thing that the great beast could not have known and this was what Pixie had been placing a lot of hope in was the bar which extended across the mouth of the river at low tide been shallow enough block the passage of the great beast for he knew if the beast ever made open water it would spell the end of his hopes of gaining the great trophy of course the flesh of the great beast would fetch a nice price on the fish market but the prestige which went with capturing the beast would settle his fame for life and every one would point to the men who captured the great ray. Now the beast had entered the river at high tide when the water at the bar had been over 20 feet deep now at an hour before the tide turned the water at the bar was no more then two feet deep. A mile to the mouth of the river the old river mill came into view the pull of both the tide and the beast now greatly diminished.

Along the banks of the river the town worthies now ran and drove their cars stopping to watch as the vessel approached the mouth. William and Harry Mould stood on the bank watching the old veterans of the great war smoking their pipes. "Recon your Les has done a good job Harry" said William as he puffed on his pipe. "I am glad that harpoon is holding it was one of the best I have ever made Billy" said the slightly younger man puffing just as furiously on his pipe. For it was Harry who had made the harpoon which his son Lesley had plunged into the depths of the water.

Simon Magadi in the mean time had begun to pray for he was scared and did not want to die he had never been to sea before and this looked like it was going to be the one and only time the last time if the great beast of the deep had any thing to do with it. Reaching the bar the great ray flopped lazily against the sides of the bar trying to gain its freedom it was at this moment that help arrived in the form of two there boats the fishermen having recovered their vessels wanted in on the kill quickly the heavy Kowie queen an old steamer came along side with a second harpoon which was plunged into the beast the water round the bar changing to a deep red as the harpoon found its mark Piet Botha of the Vampire P36 arrived with a crew of hastily assembled town worthies to help pull the breast back to the Warf. Later as Simon Magadi reflected as he sat on the Warf eating a well earned breakfast he began to notice the respect with which the other Kowie fishermen held him his bravery was to become well-known in the following months and years of course Lesley Mould would always be a braggart and would never let any one forget that it was he who had plunged the great spear into the beast. While Simon was content to continue his life and become a simple fisherman.

Samuel and Chris had been in conversation one afternoon in early winter of 2007 the conversation turned to matters of mans condition and what Chris believed for a while they spoke in general terms after a while the conversation turned to more personal matters of the spirit it was at this point that Chris uttered the words which were to change Samuel's life forever. "The fact of the matter is Samuel that no matter what you might believe about Jesus he came to earth to die for the sins of every man including you and he loves you but hates the sin in your life." "This is some thing I have not heard before

or should I say it is the first time I have words spoken with such conviction” said Samuel. “I will tell you another thing the only acceptable atonement for the sins of mankind would have to be a blameless and spotless sacrifice which Jesus was Calvary road was foreseen long before the universe was created.” Said Chris they continued speaking for some time.

It had come to this point Samuel after considering what Chris had told him felt tied to a heavy burden from which he felt there was no escape this burden had been growing heavier as each long century passed by bit the truth that Chris had just told him was eternal and it was one which held the secret for which he had so long been seeking.

“Can we pray now?” he asked fervently as if every moment longer was a whole eternity in it self “Yes we can kneel down here and do it right away” said Chris Samuel got down on his knees and Chris got down beside him. “As I say the words to the prayer I want you to repeat them after me” said Chris together they begun to pray the sinner’s prayer

“And now Father God I ask that you relieve the load of sin and guilt which has bound this child of yours prisoner for so, so long” said Chris Father I ask now that you open his eyes that he might see you as you truly are that you fill his heart and mind with the peace which passes all understanding that you ease the mind of this your servant that he might find rest for his weary soul and Father I ask that you bless him in abundance in Love and understanding that you be with him all the days of his life that he may come to know you truly as his savior and God In Jesus name Amen”
He ended the prayer

Samuel rose from his knees it felt as if a great weight had been lifted from his shoulders for the first time in many long years he felt free of the burden which had held him shackled to guilt and sin. It was as if the load had been lifted from his heart and mind a tear filled the corner of his eye he felt a deep sense of peace flooding over him for the first time he saw clearly what he needed to do the presence of Him who had died for his sins was overwhelming tangibly present a feeling of love for his fellow man over came him looking at the old preacher man next to him he realized for the first time that Chris throughout

the resent troubles his family had faced had never lost faith the man smiled back at Samuel expectantly the love clearly visible in his eyes for a moment the two men savored the flavor of the tangible presence of God in the room without speaking.

Finally Samuel said “Chris I wan to thank you for everything you have done you have truly been a witness for Christ and found for me that which I have so long been seeking I have wandered the ages in search of that which has always been in front of me and it took you only a short time to bring me to my senses to see it clearly”

“Oh no Samuel it was not I it was the Lord who has always been working with you to bring you to your salvation it is Jesus you should be thanking I am just the vessel which he chose to do this part of the work in your life” said Chris

“What you need to do now is study the word and wait on the Lord so that he can reveal to you what he wants you to do for every life has a purpose and I am sure that the Lord has a special ministry in mind for you. You have to be obedient to the calling of the Lord and the urging of the Holy Spirit” said Chris

“I will do that” said Samuel enthusiastically I will buy a bible is there any particular version that I should read or will any one do?” He continued I recommend that you get a version of the bible with which you feel most comfortable for you there is such a wide variety as you speak so many languages for me of course there can be no other English version then the King James Version” said Chris.

“Really I have read some of it back in the seventeenth century the language I think is quite archaic now” said Samuel “Sorry Samuel I should have mentioned there is a 1779 revision of the King James which most people today call the original King James but that is the one for me I have a spare copy if you want I can give it to you.” Said Chris.

“That would be wonderful is there a Greek version available I am sure I can get so much from a Greek version I believe the

New Testament was written in Greek originally?" Asked Samuel

"Yes there is I will give you the name of a good book store where you can buy a Greek version" said Chris
"I am so happy for you" Chris continued "I know the Lord will lead you in the right path and if you should have any questions please feel free to ask I will be happy to answer if I can" Chris said "Although you might know more about the history of the early church than I will ever know" he continued.
"You know I understand now how such a great change came over William when he accepted the Lord the burden that bound him fell away relieving him of all the sin that burdened him just as it has fallen away for me as we prayed" said Samuel.
"Yes the Lord takes all that sin and casts it into the sea of forgetfulness" said Chris

It had been a week since Samuel's conversion to Christ and he had taken some time off, he had taken the large Mercedes which was kept in the Johannesburg Hotel basement and had driven through the night to the farm at Sutherland his arrival was not expected but William and Johanna were delighted to see him. The news of his recent conversion had been passed on to them by an excited Lena a few hours after the joyous event.

Arriving early on a Wednesday morning he pulled into the drive way of the main house turned off the car and sat for a moment rubbing his eyes the sound of gospel music continued to emanate from the car's stereo system. The last few miles that he had driven to the farm had been in the half light of dawn now the sun began climbing towards the heavens. Getting out of the car he walked across to the front door of the farm house. The sounds of voices reached him from the interior of the house as he opened the door.

Every one must be at breakfast he thought to himself as he walked down the passage to the kitchen. The sight that greeted him was one of busy domestic bliss for the thirty odd volunteers and bible students were indeed busy with breakfast.

Brenda Mac Masters Van Heerden was the first to notice the arrival of the unexpected guest setting the new born infant aside in a pram she rose and came towards him her hands outstretched. "Samuel welcome I am so glad for you she said as she embraced him with a hug. William who was busy working at the oven turned and saw his long time nemesis and smiled "Hello Samuel pull up a chair and I will have an omelet on the table for you in about five minutes" he said turning back to his labor at the oven. The voices of the volunteers softened as in expectation of Samuel saying some thing "Morning all he said hope you are going to have a great day" he said as he took a seat next to Brenda.

"You must tell me all about it when and how it happened" said Brenda as she once more lifted the tiny body of her daughter onto her lap the child gurgled happily she had been alive almost two months and had proven to be a delightful child who seldom became demanding unlike R.J who was always looking for attention from the adults.

Since the death of his father the child had turned more and more to William as a father figure spending many happy hours with the man talking persistently asking questions which at times William found difficult to answer having never excelled at the roll of father.

After breakfast most of the volunteers went out to do there daily chores William and Johanna also had work to do but because of Samuel's unannounced visit put aside there plans and joined him and Brenda in the lounge.

"Right I want to hear all about it" said Brenda "Well not much to tell I had become despondent after the death of Robert and did not know what I was going to do about a farm manager. any way I have been spending time with your father in law. One thing I noticed was the way you all handled the grief which is natural after such a traumatic event any way I was surprised at how well you were all doing... I was sure that you all felt the lose of Robert deeply but there you all were going on with your lives happy not like any thing I have ever seen before. When I questioned Chris about it he explained to me that it is a part of your belief system that you rejoice when one is called home to be with the Lord. This was quite different

from what I had previously seen any where in the world for a long, long time the last time I saw such behavior was back in Jerusalem before the destruction of the temple and shortly after the founding of the church. Any way Chris explained to me it is better to be with the Lord then to suffer here. I then began to question every thing I had ever believed about the Lord and found myself more and more drawn to Chris. I visited with him often I think he would have become angry but no he continued to instruct me and pointed out various things which according to scripture made sense “he stopped talking for a moment as they took in what he had said

“I see the Lord was working with you in a way similar to the way in which he worked with me” said William smiling “Yes I think so for I became burdened by how lost and alone I felt in the world I had all the money and I could have any thing I wanted but I still could not find that which I had been seeking for, for so long” said Samuel

“That is exactly how I felt before I became involved with Islam” said William “Yes I know what you mean said Samuel I was a follower of Islam for a while but I became disillusioned with it You know how they say Jesus was great prophet but not the way to God well I thought about this and I looked for some sort of reference in the scriptures and all I found was that each time Jesus referred to himself he would say things like “I am the way the truth the Light” and in other places “No man comes to the Father but through me” well this was a direct contradiction to what they said and taught” said Samuel “ exactly said William “ If you say a man is a great prophet yet you disobey and do not follow his words you are fooling yourself because you do then obviously not believe in what you have said about him been great prophet.” He continued

“Oh you men just like you to get into a theological debate about some thing like Islam’ said Brenda “Sorry my dear we were just voicing our opinions any way last week I was feeling particularly sad when I went to see your father in law and he brought some hard hitting spiritual truths home to me the result is I prayed the sinners prayer and was redeemed after so many centuries of looking for a mythical way to redeem myself it was in front of me the whole time I can kick myself

when I think about it” said Samuel “since then I have been studying the bible and I see many things differently for the first time it is like the scales have fallen from my eyes” he continued

“Well Samuel I am very happy to call you a brother in Christ” said Brenda as she gave him a hug

“There remains the matter of the job of farm manager to be settled I still do not have an answer if any of you have any suggestions I would love to hear them” Samuel said “I think that William might be the right man for the job” said Brenda “Yes so do I replied Samuel but that is up to him he might want to go some where else I don’t know, what do you think William?” asked Samuel

“I for the foreseeable future would be content to live out my days here on the farm doing what ever you had in mind Samuel as it is I wanted to wait until tonight to announce it but Johanna has agreed to become my wife.” Said William “Oh that is wonderful news” said Brenda as she crossed the room to take the hand of the taller woman and give a great big hug. Samuel noticed that Brenda loved hugging people he personally was not a big fan of hugging but from the services he had attended at the Church in Randburg begun to get the feeling that he would be doing a lot of hugging in the future. “This calls for a drink said Samuel “break out the sparkling grape juice” normally he would have opened a bottle of champagne and handed out cigars all round but of late he had felt little compunction to do so it was if the Holy Spirit was leading him away from these things to a more pure and holy life.

“A capital thought” said William as he crossed the lounge to the small bar fridge which held the chilled beverages. “We must start designing your wedding gown at once” said Brenda “I don’t know if it will be such a big wedding we don’t really know that many people” said Johanna. “Nonsense you are going to have a grand wedding” said Samuel it is the least I can do for you” he continued.

Dedicated to my father the greatest of story tellers