



TEARS FOR THE
SAND

S VAN ROOYEN

Table of Contents

Love is an Open Road.....	3
Tears for the Sand – Information.....	6
Acknowledgements.....	7
Dedication.....	8
Tears for the Sand.....	9
Chapter One.....	11
Chapter Two.....	17
Chapter Three.....	22
Chapter Four.....	31
Chapter Five.....	37
Chapter Six.....	43
Chapter Seven.....	49
Epilogue.....	53
Glossary.....	55
Author Bio.....	57

Love is an Open Road

An M/M Romance series

TEARS FOR THE SAND

By S van Rooyen

Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love is an Open Road* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a gift to you.

What Is Love is an Open Road?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what these authors do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the [Goodreads M/M Romance Group](#) and visit the discussion section: *Love is an Open Road*.

No matter if you are a long-time devotee to M/M Romance, just new to the genre or fall somewhere in between, you are in for a delicious treat.

Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

Each year, a dedicated group of Volunteers from the M/M Romance Group work hard behind the scenes to bring these stories to you. Our Editors, Formatters, Proofreaders, and those working on Quality Assurance, spend many long hours over a course of several months so that each Event is a success. As

each and every author also gives freely of their time and talent, it was decided that all edits suggested may be accepted or rejected by the author at any given time. For this reason, some stories will appear to be more tightly edited than others, depending on the choice of the author.

This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

All rights reserved worldwide.

This eBook may be distributed freely in its entirety courtesy of the Goodreads M/M Romance Group. This eBook may not be sold, manipulated or reproduced in any format without the express written permission of the author.

Tears for the Sand, Copyright © 2015 S van Rooyen

Cover Art by [Francu Godgluck](#)

This ebook is published by the *M/M Romance Group* and is not directly endorsed by or affiliated with Goodreads Inc.

TEARS FOR THE SAND

By S van Rooyen

Photo Description

Stormy grey eyes, looking straight at me with a contemplating look. Long red-dusted hair pulled back from a face that has seen life in its full technicolour glory. Full untamed beard with black, red, and silver. Lips silent, as the man leans against a monotone tree. Clothes of soft grey, blue, and brown stretched across his upper body as he leans back with his left hand resting behind his head.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

What do you see when you look at me? Am I even real to you? I just... UGH!!! Can you show me love without saying those three little words. I want to just close my eyes for moments at a time and laugh at how good it makes me feel to... yeah. Can you do that for me?

I'll keep things even more simple and say I want a story about grown men.

No to historical, paranormal, fantasy, sci-fi, or BDSM.

Thanks,

Taya

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

Tags: angst, bikers, businessmen, divorce, mental breakdown, Namibia, over age 40, road trip, stalking, South Africa

Content Warnings: profanity, feminine sexualisation of motorbikes

Word Count: 19,324

Acknowledgements

For TayaJay for giving me a face, emotions, and words.

This story is for you.

To Debbie, Julia, and Francu... you have shed tears for the sand with me. Love you all... and all that shit, yeah.

Dedication

This isn't just another story, it's personal.

In life there are always choices, but for some there are none. This story is dedicated to the gay men in my life. To the hardships they have faced and will face. To the men who have had to pretend to be someone else to have an acceptable normal life.

Finally it's dedicated to the men who have had to live life without acceptance, without unconditional love.

TEARS FOR THE SAND

By S van Rooyen

Like sand forever. No two grains the same. So were these souls.

Chapter One

So this is what they called a midlife fucking crisis. *Fucking. Perfect.*

For an early autumn day, Cape Town was warm enough for a leisurely stroll. He needed to clear his head; the ink barely dry on those papers that were to signify the end of one lifetime, and the start of a new adventure. Not just for him, but for Sophie and Anne too.

Anne had made short of the proceedings after Sophie moved to Europe. His little girl had barely left for her new life when Anne sent her wolves down to his office in the Foreshore with that awful and very public summons.

God only knows what he was thinking when he married her. *Wait... hold up.* He knew exactly what he was thinking. He needed to hide, his preference, his emotion. Hide the flaw that would have left his family broken, shamed, and him an outcast as had become society's norm those many years back. Now being gay was another part of life. His business partner, Jane, had a legal wife, and the much-beloved state president boasted a harem of five beautiful wives and was considering adding another.

Campbell only had one, well none at present. Wives were hard work, and hiding all he was had become a second career. Anne had jumped on the bandwagon, when those two little pink stripes had appeared on the tenth piss stick she had him collect from a pharmacy off campus, in the last semester of their final year of university. Both with so much to lose, yet so much to gain. And in the winter of 1991, little Sophie blessed his life, making it all worth it. She was never really his, but fate smiled on him. Perhaps this was penance for having to live a life that should never have been his.

Campbell found himself standing in front of the local Harley shop on Somerset Road in Greenpoint. Kinda made sense that his lawyer's office was on the same block.

A purring rumble drew his attention to the side-street entrance and from his reminiscing of the past. It was the lusty moan of a well-tuned lady, one that had the pleasure of an expert's hand touching her body in a way that would bring any man to his knees.

Campbell had found the entrance to the workshop, fascinated by the sound of an engine being tuned and the faint whistle of an old rock classic. The smell

of rich leather, engine oil, freshly brewed espresso, and working man assaulted his senses. He wanted to strip naked and roll in it, then lick the man attached to that scent. *Rub my scent on him.*

Damn, Campbell, get a grip. It had been too long, and the messy divorce had left him needy like a pup that couldn't lick his own balls. A little shiver raced down his spine. He was at the outer edge of his control. Soon he would need to head out to that club again. The thought was like a lead stone sinking to the bottom of his stomach—not sure how he felt about another anonymous hook-up. Over the years it had become ritual. Once, every other month, he would take a ride out to the gentlemen's club in the Winelands. A round of golf or squash, perhaps tennis followed by an early dinner and a single malt whiskey in the cigar lounge was shadowed by an evening with one of the willing boys available for clients. Or, if the mood took him, a fuck-fest in the baths attached to the gym. Before heading home he would work his body to the brink of exhaustion with one of the appointed trainers, have a deep tissue massage and a blowjob. Happy ending and shit like that, Claude's specialty. By the time he returned home his balls would be beyond empty and his cock raw.

This had been the ritual for over fifteen years. Always the same, just faces and names would change. At some point, even those faded into an endless stream of moist mouths, hard cocks, and willing bodies. It left him empty, unfulfilled, and bitter towards life itself.

A deep grunt pulled Campbell from his thoughts and internal pussy pity party. The man crouched by a brushed steel, vintage Liberator—smoke-filled grey eyes, cloudy like an autumn day, with a ring of molten sapphire met his. Frozen and completely captivated, he took in the man watching him, gaze sharp like that of an eagle; held captive with every breath and involuntary twitch.

Without thinking, Campbell took a measured step back, his next stride met by another grunt from the sexed-up god with his predatory eyes. As if on the hunt, the man stood with a slow slide from his hunkered down position. A fitted white wife-beater and well-worn vintage Levi's were moulded to his body. He was taller than the run-of-the-mill fuck, with a beautiful, not over-the-top build. Strong sculpted arms, solid shoulders, and nothing but a rock-hard chiselled chest—a physique, not from being a gym slut, but from hard manual labour. Long, curly, rust-brown hair—a bit of untamed wildness—was tied with a piece of electrical wire. The bright lime-coloured wire a telltale sign that the shoulder-length hair had irritated the owner to a point of random craziness and had paid the price for it.

A dirty oil smudge was all that marred his rugged face, adding to the already handsome man with the astonishingly full beard dusted with deep rusted red, black, and silver. Campbell held back from licking his lips... this was a well-honed hunter with a sexual swagger, James Dean boyish charm, and a playfulness about those full, sensual lips. Lips that were moving; lips that were saying something.

“Wait... excuse me?”

“Can I help you, old man?” *Seriously... do I actually look like a fucking old man?*

Fuck. What was up with that shit? Twice in less than two weeks. First that little punk of a trainer at the gym, practically expelling that huge plug from his bubble butt as he laughed at Campbell hanging from the pull up bars at the club. “*You all right there, old man, or should I call that fidgety twink of a medic to come help you out for a bit?*” It had left a fuck storm of crazy in his head, followed swiftly by anger, and then, soul deep sorrow. Its aftermath a cringeworthy ashen taste in his mouth, one that even the second bottle of sixty proof could not lessen. He had woken on his empty apartment balcony alone, soaked from the night’s drizzle, and covered in his own fucking piss and shit. It was the final big whore-fest for him. He’d been out the night before, brought home who knows who, with who knows what. A used condom—still sticky with spunk—hung cold from his used hole. It left him frozen, that deep chill now working its way up his spine again.

The predator was still speaking, his lips still moving as Campbell retreated. One step at a time, one breath, then another. As he reached the edge of the pavement, he fell backwards, ass first into the passing traffic.

Sleep eluded him, had left him numb to the crisp breeze that chilled him right through his favourite pair of jeans, simple white thermals, and riding jacket. His mistress was standing off to one side, illegally parked on the promenade, watching the sunrise over the calm ocean. Dawn had awoken. Its slow creep across the horizon signalled another day in the Mother City. On mornings like these, memories of the old *Outa*, his hand-painted leather, and mystical stories about the Namib sand gave peace to Dirkie’s mind, as it soothed a healing balm on his broken and shattered heart. The old Damara native who used to visit their farm on the Skeleton Coast always painted Mama Africa in colours of the sand—thornbush-red and dawn’s serene blue.

Dirkie had passed the border shortly before midnight and was now breathing in the morning's fresh ocean spray. Dust, sand, and sweat from the hard ride still clung to him. He found himself here, yet his apartment, a hot shower, and his big king-size bed were only a slurping spit away. Rear firmly planted on a children's swing, something left over from the revamp of the promenade in the late fifties, he looked around, snorting in disgust at the well-used and worn-out playground. Rust was an ever-present companion due to the salty mist it received when the Cape Doctor passed its graces.

This should feel like home... would never be home. Home... where the fuck was that now?

The week past had begun like any other, dragging his hungover ass into his office at the shop. *Office was an understatement.* He and his mistresses shared the whitewashed private workshop attached to the newly outfitted HDI showroom. When they moved in, old Jacky had made sure there would be more than enough room for him, the girls, and all the tech that their leading engineer could ever want. This and a hefty signing bonus of five hundred thousand sweetened the deal and bought him a two-year exclusive contract.

Walking into HDI brought back memories of his youth. What started out as a way to keep a young boy busy—out of trouble and all that, as his pa would say—became something more. Dirkie soon found his natural talent for fucking up all things mechanical had a positive side. Not that Ma shouting at him about taking her toaster apart, once again, was fun, but in the end it was the catalyst to something bigger.

Years of fiddling around with the dirt bike Pa said would never ride, guided his interest in vintage bikes, slowly morphing into a sweeping love affair with the only pussy he would ever love. One mistress followed another, and then with his feet firmly settled in the world, he took a leap of faith with Jacky and his runts.

The lady he tinkered with as a kid, and then again as a man, was gifted to Pa, who ended up calling the dirt bike Fiona. A man claiming his place before his mentor. That day had ended with a simple pat on the shoulder. More, not needed.

Back in the workshop, Ethiopian roasted coffee—not the cheap shit you normally found in a mechanic's domain—along with fresh oil, sweat, and leather, had him breathing a little bit easier. This was normal. Safe. But as with so many things in life... *never a choice...* shit hit the rat-race-cluster-fuck of

normality. It threw him sideways like the morning silent breeze picking up to gale-force splendour to sweep the city's slick away.

By midday he had the wind at his back, with nothing more than a short stack of required documents and his passport to enter his birth country, Namibia. Sunrise had greeted him, its colours muted over the desert; silent tears crusted with dirt streaked on his face. Dirkie had come home. To death.

The shifting sands had found a silent partner, even the wild horses running the valley seemed more subdued. He had taken his pa's lady up the pass to their lookout point, the one Mom loved so much. There he scattered the last of his father's ashes in the wind. Watched it follow the path of the old riverbed, the one the natives used to call the Sleeping Giant's Tear Tracts. As if in answer, the wind swept past his face in a bitter kiss.

"Time to go home, Pa, Ma is waiting with her homemade rusks and your favourite coffee can."

For the first time in what felt like forever, Dirkie was lost. *No, it's Dirkie now.* Dirkie was the boy Pa used to hug tight on their adventures in the desert, riding his dirt bike. With the sun high and the day's heat warming his journey, he left the place he once called home.

Seven days of mourning, seven days he would rather give back to Karma.

Now as dawn gave way to the morning light, a new day approaching, Dirkie considered his future. With less than six months left on his fixed contract, he could move on. Perhaps it was time for the open road, or the trip he had spent months planning with his pa when they had once been close. With quiet contemplation he pushed through the pain. He retreated to his apartment in surreal detachment. It was time for that warm shower he so desperately needed. He had a compulsion to start moving, needed to get his fucking ass in the correct lane of the road and kick-start his shit. He wanted to get back to work. *Work, it would keep me sane.* His mistresses called for his skilled hands, they expected nothing less.

It was there, crouched by his latest cougar slut, where Dirkie Schultz could finally breathe. Lush curves of brushed steel, butter-soft hand-stitched leather and a brand-new virgin pussy had his hand trembling as he fitted and tuned his lady to a purring all-encompassing orgasm. She was finally ready for the road. Unfortunately that road would be a very short one, most probably a single lane,

buffed handheld drive from here to some collector's pad, where her namesake would not be liberated but confined as an old man's trophy. With a shake of his head, he pulled himself out of his thoughts and was startled to see a *suit* standing just a few feet away. How he had missed such an intrusion was not at question here. It would take a delicate play to get rid of the intruder, a little game of cat and mouse. Fuck knew what the suit was doing here; perhaps this was luscious Libby's new owner.

He watched the Adonis-like demigod walk deeper into his workshop. Though shorter than Dirkie, the man in question was still a decent height. Strong features combined with a slimmer-than-most athletic build—perhaps that of a swimmer and ocean canoeist—held his interest for longer than he would have liked. *Stupid fucking dry spell.* He needed to pick up a new fuck-buddy and soon. *Like yesterday, soon.*

A deep needy grunt left his unguarded lips as he took in the mop of black-and-silver silken hair that looked almost unkempt. His eyes, soft brown, like pools of freshly brewed Turkish coffee met his. Behind those beautiful eyes he could see the shadows of past hurt, and like a predator seeking fresh kill, he could almost taste his sweet fucking victory. With another grunt and satisfying lick of his lips, he rose to his full height, flexing his already straining body in a show of primal dominance. One that could only be interpreted as such. *Better run, pretty baby, you're the fucking prey.*

Yes, his sweet looking prey now took a measured step back. He knew he had the man cornered. With an easy, sensual smile, he let his words drip with lustful intent.

“Can I help you, old man?” *I like my steak well matured.*

As if on cue, soft brown eyes that had held his interest froze and glazed as if in severe pain. “You're being such a *poes* today, Dirkie,” he whispered to himself, before asking the man directly in front of him if he was okay. This meeting was taking a turn for the worse, a retreating figure clearly at the edge of pure instinct, stumbling, falling backwards, ass first...

Fuck. Traffic.

Chapter Two

Raw pain seared through Campbell's head as bright light stung his eyes. The roaring in his ears started to subside when Jesus himself peered down at him from above. He must have died or something. Yeah, he was definitely feeling something, all kinds of fucked up, if you asked him. "Jesus?" It was an open-ended question, exclamation, and name. Why the hell was his tush hurting like he was fucked by one of those stallions little Sophie used to ride as a child?

"Nope, baby, that's what you would be calling my fat cock in your ass when you're riding me," the smiling man said down at him. Fuck, he was handsome; those little laugh lines on the side of his smoky eyes danced with boyish mischief.

A solid arm wrapped tightly around his shoulders, securing him to a chest that was vibrating with withheld laughter, and a heavy hand firmly gripped his hip, keeping him in place on muscular thighs. *What the fuck... am I sitting in his lap? How the hell did this happen?*

Campbell turned his head slowly, so as not to jostle his aching skull, and took in his surroundings. Whitewashed walls covered with heavy industrial shelves held clear plastic containers with what looked like mechanical innards. Rows upon rows of heavy stainless steel pipes and carcasses bracketed one side of the room. Classic black-and-white prints of cities, roads, and bridges, all with a single rider straddling a motorbike in full dress-leathers held his focus. "You like those, perhaps next time I'll take you with for a ride on my lady."

Campbell looked back at the man who was still cradling him on his lap. "What happened?" He grunted; he had no intention of getting off this man's lap yet. A bottle of water was uncapped and held to his mouth. With slightly parted lips, he took slow sips, taking in the man who was holding him like a lover. *I would love to be his.* No shit buddy, you and every other nonstraight guy in town, but yet he was the one sitting on the bad-boy biker's lap. Licking his lips, he repeated his question as Mr Fuckfest-in-leather, no Dirkie, explained that he had taken a little tumble off the pavement and had gone night-night when his thick skull hit the gravel. The man with his untamed wildness had been there to rescue *his* damsel in distress.

Campbell's ears started to heat at the thought. The memory was slowly surfacing, and he knew now why he had taken that little tumble. Dirkie with

those innocent eyes had gone full-tilt predator on him. It rocked his being in a way it seldom did. He needed to get out of there.

As he struggled to get up, the man in question held on tighter. *Fuck*, he was strong. In the end he just went lax, too tired to even think. Dirkie was having a whispered conversation with a guy who looked like a street beggar. Ripped jeans, dirt-smearred, black long-sleeved shirt, and oil-stained rag doubled like a bandana wrapped around a wild mane of pure-white hair. An equally long fluffy beard hung from a leathery face that had seen way too many African sunny days. The only thing that set him apart was a pair of shiny vintage riding boots that probably cost more than... *God, what was he thinking...* his mind was a rambling mess.

“Up you go, sweet, time to get you home... Tim has checked your wallet and you’re just down the block from me, so let’s get you settled and rested.”

Hold the fuck up, he was no fucking damsel that needed tending. Campbell pushed up from his own personal warm cocoon of hot-blooded man. He took one step towards his jacket that hung off a bike and nearly took a face plant over his own feet. Strong arms held him to a hard, warm chest now vibrating with a deep growl. “I’m taking you home, old man, even if I have to swing you over my damn shoulder to get you there.” Right, there was that ‘old man’ comment again. He really was losing his fucking shit today.

Dirkie was losing his shit today. *Every fucking one of them*. First he’d gone all apex predator on a man who was probably a tight-laced straight, frightened him to a point of pure fight-or-flight. He’d watched the suit stumble and fall into heavy oncoming traffic, barely missing the tyre of a heavy truck in the process. He had nearly screamed himself hoarse in shock. With a sprint of pure adrenaline, he had run out in the road to stop a stream of hooting cars. As he cradled a blacked-out man to his chest, lifting his limp body with a growl of anger and anguish, he walked the few steps back to the workshop. By the time he’d reached the common area, his shaking legs had given way and he unceremoniously dropped his heavy body to the cold hard floor, easing his almost brutal hold on the man whom he had met mere moments before.

Old Jacky had heard his cry for help, and him and the boys tussled through the single interior door between the main showroom and the workshop. Like a herd of impatient rhinos, each pushing and pulling for position. Fuck, that shit was funny, for a group of biker boys *well* rounded in the middle from beer and

too many fish-and-chip parcels. They moved with the speed of a freight train, would probably flatten whatever stood in their way, and boy, to get to his side within the blink of an eye... well eyes, considering Old Jacky had a limp.

“What the fuck, Dirkie... did you find another spider in the *kak huis*... Oh. Shit.”

Yeah, that was my thought too.

Jacky took in the limp suit in his arms. For once he was lost for words, his lips moving, but no sound escaping them. Looked like one of those guppy fishy things you always saw in the pet shops. *Blowing shit bubbles going nowhere... that was one way of looking at it.*

As the men crowded around, he held on a little bit tighter and growled at Tim reaching in slowly to feel for a pulse. *Mine.* Drawing his hand back, Tim looked at Dirkie with pleading eyes. He had recently lost his partner and the sight of the suit in his arms held double meaning for him. *This was him, holding Shell months before.*

“You’re acting like a fucking puppy, boy. Them boys not gonna take away your slice of steak, son.” Old Jacky had a huge fucking grin on his face as Dirkie growled at him to “Shut the fuck up”, as he had a physical stare down with each of the men checking out the man curled in his lap.

Lance knelt down beside him, the big black man trying to fold himself into a small nonaggressive posture, crooning with placating words of, “Easy... easy there, boy”, as Tim held out his hand, palm up. With a single short nod, Tim with shaking hands took Dirkie’s charge’s pulse, breathing a sigh of relief when he clearly found his target.

A flurry of clipped questions with him only grunting one-word answers had the suit—Mr Joshua Campbell’s as per his driver’s—jacket stripped, his tie removed, and the first few buttons of his pale-blue shirt opened. Tim searched Joshua’s wallet for an emergency contact number. The flurry of activity blurred into white noise as Dirkie stared down at the now no longer nameless suit and the sprinkling of dark chest hair escaping the opened shirt. *Fuck, he was beautiful.* The tight-fitting dress pants showed cords of gentle muscle on top of muscle. A well-worn leather belt hugged an almost-too-trim waist. A tailored shirt stretched over his well-defined chest, shoulders, and arms. When he reached for his face to draw the mop of hair that fell over his forehead away, soft brown eyes met his. Almost instinctively he barked for the boys to clear the room. This moment had become too personal, only Old Jacky remained but stepped away to give them some space.

“Jesus?” It was an open-ended question, exclamation, and name. The man was clearly confused.

“Nope, baby, that’s what you would be calling my fat cock in your ass when you’re riding me.” *Jesus, fuck was more correct.* Did he just say that? He heard the son of a bitch grunt from where he was standing, watching the sidewalk traffic pass by outside. Dirkie was so telling on him. Gladys, Old Jacky’s girl, was always telling him to mind his own shit; she referred to him as an old gossip woman with her panties in a fucking twist. She had even bought him a pair of huge pink grannies and promised she would make him wear them if he put his nose into the boys’ business again. The thought alone of the old bastard wearing nothing but those pink parachute panties had his raging erection flagging to half-mast.

Dirkie watched carefully as Joshua took in his surroundings. A man’s space, his workshop was fitted with only the best. His gaze finally settled on Dirkie’s photo collection, him on one of his road trips through the country. The person behind the camera, now long gone, taken by the wind, and resting with the sand. Time for reminiscing was over; he needed to break the silence that had settled in the now darkening space. “You like those, perhaps next time I’ll take you with for a ride on my lady.”

The man held in his lap, looked up, confusion clear on his face. “What happened?” His voice was a little more than a pained croak. Now that his charge was awake, he held the uncapped bottle of water to Joshua’s lips, watching as he took leisurely sips from its tilted rim. Fuck, he wanted those lips around his balls, sucking and slurping the day’s ride from his sweaty crotch. He had to swallow down the pure ecstasy of such a thought. He seriously needed a cold shower and a long silent ride on the road. And then, Mr Sweet-like-honey went and licked his fucking lips before repeating the question. He could barely make his brain work to answer the man. A flicker of several emotions, some unidentifiable, flashed over Joshua’s face. As they rocked back and forth, he held on a little tighter. The man was struggling now, and even if Dirkie could just hold him a second longer, he needed to make sure he was okay. When he finally settled in his arms, Dirkie breathed a sigh of relief.

The day’s light had started to fade, what felt like moments had been an hour, perhaps more. It was time. On cue Old Jacky stepped into view. Reciting the orders that needed to be placed for the next few days and the repairs that needed to be moved, Dirkie almost unknowingly cleared his schedule for the next several days. He needed to make sure Joshua was okay... *to fuck him out*

of my system... and if that meant sticking to the guy like a road rash after a fall, he was going to have to make it work.

Dirkie's gut twisted. This was fucking bullshit. He was not sure if the excuse justified the means. Something was there, a connection—an awareness, and it scared the living shit out of him. An instinct to hold on, to protect. *Not gonna happen. Never the fuck again.*

“Up you go, sweet, time to get you home... Tim has checked your wallet and you're just down the block from me, so let's get you settled and rested.” He let the now completely confused man push up from his lap, saw him stumble like a fucking drunk fool towards his lady before enfolding him in his arms once again. “I'm taking you home, old man, even if I have to swing you over my damn shoulder to get you there.” His voice nothing more than a growl.

Chapter Three

His lady bloomed under his ministrations, purring as he positioned first Joshua on the bitch seat and then himself on the driver's of her butter-soft leather, stroking her side. With one hand holding her bar, he had the other free to stroke up the solid expanse of his passenger's leg briefly with the illusion of keeping him safe and secured to his now throbbing body, before clipping her leash and taking her out on the road.

He took the same route through the side streets as he would to return home, but with one exception... he turned down Lee Street instead of Dyl Boulevard, their apartments less than two city blocks apart. Fate was clearly sending him a sign and of late he was giving her a wide berth. No one fucked around in his salad. His rules. His life. He had enough choices taken away, or made for him, to last a lifetime. He was his own king and his life a fucking island. *Thank you the fuck very much.*

As he pulled up to a retro-painted, upscale apartment block, he grunted to himself. The suit clearly had no taste. The plum-painted facade of the ocean-facing building screamed metro-fucked-up-sexual mind fuck. *Kinda made sense.* A real poes palace.

Dirkie palmed his keys, dropping the kickstand into place. He turned in his seat, slowly running his palm up Joshua's thigh, along the outline of his growing bulge and slowly into his pants pocket to fist his apartment fob, nothing more than a set of security buttons. Dismounting, he offered his hands in silent invitation. Trembling fingers met his, and when he gazed down into fully blown, dilated eyes, Dirkie knew he'd taken that nosedive off Chapman's Peak straight into Jesus-I'm-so-fucked territory; he might as well offer himself up as live bait for the fucking sharks.

So as not to frighten the already skittish man, he helped his charge from his girl, gently guiding him into the curve of his body, circling his waist with his arm, holding on just a little bit more tightly. As he steered the man up the steps, through the freakishly pink-painted entrance hall and to the door marked with a mosaic-encrusted three, Joshua rested his head on his chest—softly panting into his neck. The soft flutter of heated breath against his beard had him looking down into an upturned face, one that silently lifted in temptation. This was one invitation he should be ignoring but could not.

“Okay,” he whispered, the decision made as simple as that.

Campbell's body was riding a full-blown high. Nope, not a high, the freight train of mind-numbing acid laced with technicolour fairy dust and shit floating on the outside that had his vision blurring, body flaming, and cock and balls throbbing. This was the good shit. He just could not remember what the fuck he had actually taken. A mass of huge yummy male held him tightly, his body smelling of dirty man and sweaty leather. It made his mouth water. The need to lick, suck, and bite at all those soft spots that held the deepest scent. Running his cheek and nose up the scruffy beard, he inhaled deeply. *There*, just there. He opened his eyes and gazed straight into those deep pools of smoke. The city's noise had fallen away and the only sound making it through the haze was the soft click of a door and a whispered, "Okay".

Fate had a prearranged agenda. The man holding him in the circle of his arms bent down just a little bit more, the position of his lips now but a single breath away. Slowly, tentatively he took his first taste with the tip of his tongue. The world was still spinning, and with that small savour the floor beneath his feet gave way. Hands, arms, hard throbbing body, and heavysset thighs held him upright, all but those lips and eyes keeping him pinned in the here and now. He felt more than heard the heavy boot kick out and shut the door, the room itself now cast in the fading light of the day. Feet scuffling on the wooden floor, as he was dropped down on a leather-back day sleeper before a heavy form followed him down. Campbell tore his mouth away from the one tasting his tongue and teeth, biting his lips until they were raw and aching. He forcefully pulled on the lime wire holding the mass of hair on the growling figure, and pressed between his legs. He needed to touch that rusted halo spreading on broad shoulders, spilling down the face that was sneering like an animal in rut.

Teeth nipping at his bottom lip returned. A warm moist tongue licked at the droplets of spit as a heavy hand snaked around his shoulder, pulling and ripping his jacket off his body like a dirty oil rag. With the ease of a practiced hand, Dirkie undid his belt, pulling it from its loops and letting it fly, hitting the slim crystal vase holding the white roses he had picked that morning. The sound of glass falling and shattering had his possessor looking up and over his shoulder, nose flaring in question and then with a growl said, "I'll replace it," before returning to his mission. He stripping Campbell of his shirt, buttons and pieces of silk taking a little flight, landing all over the floor.

"Jesu—" His words were cut off again with a searing kiss, lips that had him arching up and grinding into the body above. A deep masculine laugh rocked his chest, the man above him lifting his head to look into his eyes.

“I’ve already told you, sweet. It’s Dirkie. You will be screaming, ‘Jesus’, until you’re hoarse when you ride my cock.” Strong hands lifted his hips before pulling him to the very edge of the seat and stripping his dress pants down and off, before spreading his legs at the same time. More growling and tugging had him completely naked but for his socks, legs spread like a fucking *Bo Kaap* whore. His body was throbbing with raw pleasure, his mind a barely there presence whispering that this had to stop.

He had to stop.

“Stop.”

There was a reason.

“Stop.”

Campbell was remembering the state he found himself that very morning. He knew he had to stop. However impossible that may seem, it was a pretty fucking good reason to break through his lustful stupor. Campbell clawed his way through the fog of lust, raw sensation, and need. He’d found the answer, and the realisation of it was like a bucket of water cold as ice, now dripping down his spine and making him whimper the words before it was too late for both of them.

“I’m not safe.”

Those words, like the icy breeze on the Skeleton Coast with its winter’s morning frost and dense heavy fog wrapped around his tortured heart. *God, not again.* But he could have misunderstood. Yes, misunderstood and before it all snowballed into one fucked-up mess, he needed to make sure. He wanted to believe. *Please, if there ever was a God... please.*

Slowly rising from his position over Joshua, he looked down into eyes no longer dilated and soft with desire.

“Joshua, baby, why are you not safe? You’re safe with me. I’ll take care of you.” As he searched the man’s face for answers, he realised he might not have understood at all. Could this be his... Oh, Fuck, this seemingly inexperienced man raised all kinds of protective instincts in him. As he touched Joshua’s face with a tenderness that took more strength than he knew he had, he continued, “I’ll take it slow. Whatever you want, sweet.”

Dirkie watched as emotion after emotion flickered across his soon to be lover’s face, before horror settled in, and then with a blink, the mask slipped

into place. Joshua pushed up on his arms, a sexy smile playing over his now almost-blank face. “Let’s have a shower first.”

Arm held out to steady the man, he watched a rigid body rise to slip past him, still grasping his hand and dragging him down the darkened hall into a room that seemed out of time and place with the naked men now standing in it. Nothing but a dark-blue silk sheet, simple white satin comforter and a few sleep-ruffled pillows adorned the unpretentious raised mattress. No cluttered night stand, no personal effects—just a single sleep platform. Dirkie scanned the room for something else... *there had to be more*. His eyes landed on a single photo placed on a bare windowsill. *For fuck’s sake*, there weren’t even blinds on the second-storey apartment window. A lone picture and its two occupants held a significant place in this room of nothing. He moved closer to it as he started to strip his own clothes, and murmured his question as a side order to his main course.

“Wife and daughter?”

“Yes.”

Dirkie’s hands froze on the buttons of his jeans. The air in the room went from sweet lusting warm to arctic freeze your cock and balls off. What the fuck. *Was this guy serious? Wife and daughter... this is some all-time low for you, Dirkie*. He wanted not only to bone a fucking closet queen, but... *oh. Jesus. Fuck*. “You’re married?” He took a deep, painful breath, his chest hurting in places he had locked away so long ago, and held it as he counted to ten... in Herero. That would settle his breathing. He fucking hoped.

“Yes.” There was a smirk on the fucker’s face. “Well, technically *was* since just a little after four today. I would think the papers have been filed by now.”

Campbell watched as Dirkie blinked again and again. Yeah, he had done the math; the guy was calculating the numbers. Or to simplify matters A plus B equals mind-fuck. He needed to settle the man, get him relaxed and then spill his shit. Let him make up his own mind, and not force his hand. Slowly as to not scare the restless wolf, he stepped closer, removing Dirkie’s hand from the front of his jeans and leisurely running his fingertips around his waist just under the loosened hip-hugging belt. Muscles twitched and danced for him as he drew the man a little closer, slipping them off his hips and finding nothing but bare, furry skin underneath. Warm flesh, smelling of hard-working man, brushed his.

He wanted to bury his face in all the places that scent was the strongest. *I hope he lets me taste him like this. What I would offer to tongue fuck him, after returning from the road?* He felt his rod pulse against the heavy thigh it was resting on. He was letting his hormones run the full fantasy byline. He was so shit out of luck here; he just needed to make it fucking work.

Campbell dropped a single kiss to the broad shoulder in front of him. With lips, little more than a breath away, he started trailing them down Dirkie's chest. Dark rusted fur met his mouth, skin the colour of smooth vanilla ice cream. Small caramel nips brushed along his cheek as he started crouching down, reaching for boots, sock, and a strangling pair of jeans. He kept the movement simple, his gaze the only lucky bastard he'd allow to wander. God, there was so muc—

A deep grunt from above had him slowly peeking up from where he had perched himself on his heels. There was a fucking grin on the man's face. "While you're down there, sweetheart." Oh the bastard was having way too much fun with this, slipping his own socks off before standing he let his gaze linger, just to take in the... Jesus. Fuck. Words had no place here. He needed to move this to the shower.

"Come on, Mr Big-Bad Biker, I need a shower after my fall, and you can wash my tush." Campbell let it all hang, not that some parts actually hung, more like bobbed with each step, leading the way to the pastel pink and lavender bathroom. He needed to get the boys in, to paint out the unit. All this pink, lavender, and that colour used in the kitchen that looked like raw liver, needed to go. Just the thought of the entrance hall and the glittered-up number on the door had him shuddering. When Campbell had purchased this small block of units and had them converted, updated, and secured for his daughter and her friends attending Cape Town University, he had never planned on moving in, so when the girls had picked the colours he left it to them. The memory stabbed at his heart. Now only one of the four units was occupied. He needed to finalise the sale on the house in Blouburg. Not that it was so much a sale than a legal transfer and getting his personal stuff moved.

With a deep sigh he started the walk-in shower and watched the man behind him stare at the pomegranate printed towels. Yeah, those were some fruity shit, but Sophie had left them for him to use... So here they were... pink and red and juicy and, oh, yeah, there was something juicier standing less than a foot away.

Campbell gripped the man by his cock, and using it as a leash, he led him into the shower. There was a flurry of curses, something about hanging his balls

out to dry in the fucking sun, before he drew that filthy mouth down to his for a searing kiss.

Oh, and was that mouth filled with filth and it needed a thorough scrubbing.

You must have died and gone to pussy queen hell, Dirkie. It was pink and shiny and... *What. The. Fuck...* looked like his *oumie's* homemade soap suffered from explosive shit syndrome and covered the walls and... *Jesus, pomegranates?* Okay, now that shit frightened him. *I'm not touching*—were his thoughts before a cold hand wrapped around his cock and dragged him into the walk-in shower. “*Jou ma se poes...* I’m gonna cut off your fucking balls and... fuck that’s cold... Jesus... gonna hang them out to dry in the fucking desert and...” His words were stolen by a raw possessive kiss that went on and on, the fucker in question eating out his mouth like a starving man. The only thought crossing his mind was he needed to have that mouth eating out other parts of him—and fucking soon.

Dirkie slipped his hand up Joshua’s back and pulled the fucker closer, his other hand venturing into wet tangled hair, gripping it tight and taking charge of the too hungry mouth, nipping at his already engorged lips and tongue. Ever so slowly he pulled back, lifting a snarling maw from his mouth, finding heavy-lidded lust filled eyes looking up at him. “Joshua, baby.” He wanted to say more but was once again floored at this man’s beauty.

“Campbell.”

“Sorry.”

“Only my dad used to call me Joshua, my friends and lovers use Campbell. Or baby...” He ran his hand down Dirkie’s abdomen and settled a strong grip on his cock again, giving him a single hard stroke. “I like that.”

Before Dirkie could reply, Campbell sank to his knees. The fucker buried his nose deep into his thatch of heavy, dark red pubes and sniffed, taking in the strong musk right from its source. With a little chuckle he let the man do as he pleased, running one hand down his wet chest along an aching nip and down to his rock-hard cock. It twitched at his touch, a drop of clear fluid running down his shaft. As Dirkie reached to stroke it into the tightened skin, Campbell snarled, swatting his hand away and slipping a delicate tongue along the precum trail all the way to the swollen head. Without a doubt, this was the old man’s show, and Dirkie was going to enjoy every fucking moment of it. And

seconds it would be, his body already tense and vibrating with the need to empty his heavy balls all over that hairy chest, marking the man with his scent, and then lick it off, one creamy drop at a time.

Campbell must have heard him growl, the man in question engulfing his meat with a single swallow, lifting Dirkie's heavy thigh onto Campbell's shoulder to open him up to that knowing mouth eating every bit of him. He steadied himself by gripping the shower bar to his left, his back pressed to the heated pink tiles and gripping the fucker's hair in his right fist. "Sweet fuck." His chest was heaving like he had run a damn marathon. His mind skipped the fucking building and went straight for the Wit blits coursing flaming hot through his balls and up his screaming cock. God, he was grunting like a fucking wild warthog, with no measure of any physical words forming on his tongue. He had to bite into his lip to hold back the scream as a warm mouth with nipping teeth went on expedition down his blazing balls right along the hairy red brick road to his clenching hole. Campbell sucked and slurped the day's sweat and running river of water from the shower away, like a man dying of thirst in the Karoo sun.

"Ple—ase." He was actually begging now. *That's another fucking first, Dirkie.* Campbell had him turned inside out. When this was done, he needed to get the fuck out, away... far fucking away. But first he was gonna make this fucker melt; teach him that playing with a desert hyena was not for the—"Oh, Jesus... Harder!" The strong hand gripping his now almost blue cock tightened its grip, brutally fisting him in fast, thorough strokes. *Fuck, yes. Fuck, yes.* Not even sure if he said those words aloud or if it banged around in his own head, Dirkie erupted in thick creamy ribbons onto a flushed, heaving chest. His hand yanked the head back, so he could see the face glowing with pleasure; witness the rapture first hand on Philips' face.

Not. Philips'.

Did he just shout that out loud? His ears were still ringing, not sure if from his mind shattering orgasm or the scream that left him swallowing air like a predator after a hunt. The bliss on his prey's face gave him the answer. Total, mind numbing, with a side of blazing lust that set the soft brown pools of his eyes alight with the colour of the desert sands Dirkie loved. Shattered crystal abundant in their depths that he had to look away. They were similar, but yet different.

Campbell could hardly see. His eyes still glazed over with a pleasure that sent his brain to fuck knows where, doing shit knows what. The hand gripping his hair made his eyes tear up—the rough handling leaving him a panting and whimpering mess. He touched his tongue to his aching lips; he hoped the man staring down at him would gift him with another searing kiss. He needed no more, nothing less. As his sight cleared he realised he'd overstepped—knew from the dark shadows crossing his lover's face. From the anger, confusion, and then disgust that now swept like a storm over eyes glacial in origin.

Fingers loosened in his hair, he finally stood, acquiescence clear in his attempt. With hands held ridged for fear of trembling, he reached for the liquid soap and natural sponge. His eyes drifted closed. Vulnerability too close to the surface, searing pain in full rapture in his heart and mind. He slowly started tracing the rushing paths of water down the body of his torturer, each movement slow, sensual, and full of apology. A caress of confession. No words spoken, all was silent except for slow steady breaths synchronised as one. Why Fate needed to be so cruel, he did not know, the only thought as he ended yet again on his knees before a man who could be his temple, was it that this would be his last dawn... his last dusk.

It is said that in a lifetime one heart is born for another. Campbell felt that the moment his eyes met his other half. A mate. In the wild those mates would bond on a level no two others could. Something primal, that many would find difficult to understand.

One last thing to tick off your to-do list, Campbell. He guided the man who now held the final part of him, naked and still dripping wet, back to his bed. He slowly lowered him and the lover that would never be his, to the cool silk, a simple touch to the face that held fire, smoke, and ice; he held that storm-filled gaze as he moved to tangle them into a mess of arms, legs, on wet moving flesh. A single living organism that held each other as the room finally darkened and the sound of the city drifted to nothing but a single breath shared.

Before dawn, he felt his world shatter one last time. A simple kiss to his shoulder, a final click of the door, and the fading purr of a man, running again.

The horizon with its slow creep of life pushed him to the present, the past, and some fucked-up middle that sent him on a quest, seeking the shadow. The grey of the road his soothing balm, the sand his ever-present companion, abrading his senses until there was nothing left but the gravel, rubber, and dust.

In that moment Dirkie felt clarity. The piece he had longed for his entire life. It was time to see *him*, say goodbye.

Chapter Four

His midlife fucking crisis just had fucking kittens. Shit just got serious and the fucking grandpa standing in front of him laughing his fanny off had stepped over that line. You know the one... the one that put shit on the map but fucked with your GPS and landed you somewhere in Mitchells Plain with a *tannie* that wanted to feed you *pap en kerrie tripe*, drinking Old Brown Sherry from a two-litre glass bottle.

Old Jacky was being a total dick. *Fuck you, Jacky and your fucking morals and Jesus fuck...* How many more times did he have to come down to this shop until he finally could meet up with Dirkie again?

The night they shared... yeah, so much could have been said about that. Just the thought of it left another breathless scar, for in those few moments before dawn, when he was held by him, touched by him, he felt forever. *But men that love men don't get forever, Campbell.* Yeah, he knew, but still he could dream. *All pretty dreams and fairy dust and unicorn bullshit.* Why was he still here? Because... because. Honestly, fuck knows. God, he could not even answer himself truthfully. It had all turned into one big cluster-fuck that rivalled the big Cape of Storms and made the pussy whimper.

Week one had him hiding across the road from the workshop on a daily basis looking out through the glass like that fucking puppy in the window—shit his little Sophie use to refer to. Him, all puppy brown eyes and sulky face and Jesus, did the girl at the counter just totally put him off coffee for a while. Each morning he would arrive shortly after seven, pick the seat that had the best view straight into the side street workshop, but one also with a direct line of sight into both the incoming roadway and cross lanes. Getting drunk and high on several espressos and glaring at another complex or housing development his firm was bidding for. Truthfully, such repetitive work held no significance anymore. Well, work really held no measure of interest, unless it involved measuring Dirkie's body in tongue strokes. On the fifth day he caught his sweet barista licking the rim of his used cup, said he was so sweet she just needed a taste of him. That ended his coffee binge with a nausea-induced 'get the fuck out of town'.

Campbell seriously had had enough. It had been more than six weeks. Six weeks of visiting the same spot, standing on this same little black oil stain. *Looking like a fucking idiot.* Six weeks of reliving a night that needed to be explained.

Campbell didn't want much. He wanted a fuck load, and nothing less. He wanted to explain, no, needed to explain. Make his peace and hopefully fix the mistake. No, mistakes he had made. Now that his *forever* was within his grasp, he would take it; hold on like the insanity that had gripped him. This shit was bananas, and bananas gave him the fucking runs.

Week two had him getting up at four in the morning to primp and gym and then run the fucking promenade and pass the workshop. Just in case. He was going out of his mind. Along with the running club, his training for the Boland IM Triathlon, and the ocean kayaking he did over the weekend, the extra training started to melt any fat he had left on his bones.

On Sunday morning, four weeks in, during his endurance training out in Blouburg, his body gave in and he had no other choice but to make time to rest. And rest he did, curled up in a little ball of snot and more snot, crying for the world to just end his misery. Everything ached, his head felt six sizes too large, and he could barely lift it from the pillow beneath. The constant sneezing, runny and stuffy nose, and awesome green oozing had him growling at his pillow that just didn't absorb enough. He was seriously done for, like he was gonna die done for. He literally clawed his way from the bathroom to the kitchen and back. Seriously, like holding up the wall with your shoulder and dragging yourself along for the ride.

By the time Wednesday arrived, he actually begged the pretty Jewish boy who delivered another box of tissues with his pizza, tasting like rotten fish instead of roast vegetables and cheese, to just end him. Promised him a shitload of money too, but couldn't find his fucking cheque book to broker the deal. The young man just giggled and called him old again, something about his granny... her being the only person he knew still using them. *What was up with that shit?* Shitty little brat calling him *Oom* and telling him he would be back to help him out after his shift. He couldn't even make it back to his bed, or the leather-back day sleeper for that fact. Just parked his behind on the floor by the door to empty his nose, yet again, and eat his fish and cardboard pizza. The stuff hurt going down and felt like lead in his already-tender belly.

He was giving up. Living was just not an option. Dropping the rest of his barely touched pizza on the floor, Campbell—*Oh awesome, I finally remembered my name*—just curled up in a ball, snot dripping from his raw nose into a little puddle that reflected the too-bright entrance-hall light. Right, he forgot to close the front door. Hopefully the postman would find his corpse and call the morgue to collect him. Not that it mattered much; they could just leave

him here for the rabbits. He was pretty sure he saw white rabbits having a tea party in the garden.

Those pretty white rabbits never did come for him, only a pretty boy with a face like an angel to help him up from the frozen floor and to the day bed, where he proceeded to cover him with the warmest, softest blanket, and spoon-feed him some kind of soup that was yellow and had bits in it. The memories that followed were a bit hazy... Somebody rubbing his chest with burning stinky stuff and... That was it.

The next morning found him dazed and confused. He was sleeping on the day bed covered with his pomegranate towels stinking of... "What was that smell?" He held up his stained shirt and sniffed, realising it was him. Memories faded in and out and, God, he was such a pussy, it had been only a cold, nothing more. He needed to get cleaned up, glancing around the apartment and clean up.

The shadows kept calling, the road never-ending. He's been here, there, to hell and back, and still the tyres turned, leaving an unseen trail. Sometimes, nothing more than a footprint in the sand, one that would be claimed soon enough.

Campbell shuffled the plans on his drawing board again, lines becoming nothing more than smudges of grey and black. The week had ended with him sipping warm wine from a plastic sports bottle at his desk. His skin itched and not in a good way. He needed to move, do something. Anything.

A trip to the club might be just the cure, but also the disease. His desire and need having a fuckfest, to give in, to let be. Not sure how to get there or if he really wanted that, he took one last look at twilight falling over the city and headed home. A cold shower and a glass of wine from his collection might just ease his tormented soul.

Dusk soon gave way to dawn, and then dusk again. His seclusion and torture his own design.

Hungover or perhaps still drunk from nights of no sleep and liquid nourishment, Campbell stood on that little oil stain again. *Here again, you fucker.* He'd had his secretary leave messages for Dirkie to phone him, even went as far as phoning himself, hanging up when the line was picked up. Not

once, but fuck knows, it must have been more than a dozen times. He felt numb, and angry, and confused and disappointed.

Disappointment in himself for doing this again, for being weak for wanting something he knew he didn't deserve, shouldn't want. But anger won the war and his fucking boots were now firmly planted in front of an old man who looked like he should be living out of a box and not telling him to calm the fuck down.

Campbell needed answers and he wanted them now. He was practically having a temper tantrum. Just needed to plant his behind on the floor and jerk around... Yeah, very mature. But who was this fucker Jacky to tell him Dirkie left, went on the road.

"He left, son, been on the road for weeks. No one's heard from him since that afternoon you turned up." That silenced his pleading.

"He left. Because of me, he left." He was repeating himself, sounded like the fucking idiot he was. Begging and pleading for information, for something, for someone to be human and give a fuck. But no one gave a fuck, just another fag getting his queen freak on and God that shit made him angry. Lashing with eyes drained of sight, he let his body take over, only settling when he was pinned by big strong arms, face down on the cold concrete floor, held down as his body heaved with sorrow and loss. Whimpering with untold stories, pain jolting through him. He went lax as all the fight left. There was no more, just nothing.

Lance looked down at the small slender man, well everyone looked tiny compared to him, fighting the already lost battle. Damn, he felt sorry for the bloke but fuck, the little thing had made a mess. The showroom looked like a hurricane on crack came through the front slider and took anything and everyone out with the shit storm following in its wake. Thank fuck they had been moving stock around these past few weeks. Everything from the reception desk, customer seating bar to the new—*How—How the fuck did he break that?*—glass showcases lay upturned and shattered. Taking in the rest of the damage, his gaze fell on Tim. The pro-rider turned consultant was bleeding from his upper lip and left cheek. A pretty swollen eye accompanied by a slow limp as he bent down to help Jacky up from the floor. Poor Jacky was recovering from bilateral hip surgery and still needed his cane to get around. The little shit under his fat ham was gonna pay... and oh, look... Dirkie's baby

girl, the Liberator he had just restored, was weeping oil and bits onto the floor. Yeah, Jacky was gonna make him pay. But first they were gonna help the sucker out with his love life.

He knew stuff even Jacky didn't, made a point of studying others, his *Dodo's* lessons always part of him. "*The world is changing, my sweet boy, but the past will always be part of our heritage. Never forget your roots but as the wind changes, so must you.*" He'd put his head down and studied by old paraffin light, and when his Dodo passed, she left him one more message of morality. A ticket for the train to Cape Town and a letter to Mama Gladys, Jacky's other half. "*Study the world, know the people. One day this will bring you the peace and love you yearn for.*" Mama G took him in at sixteen and here he stood, well, sat. A man his Dodo would be proud of.

Speaking of the old girls, Mama G came waltzing in. Drawling in that husky voice, from one too many *ciggies* during her younger days. She took in the crazy mess, from the fucker under his ham, to Tim growling at Spike to stop touching his fucking face. Something about the need for someone to kiss his boo-boos away. "No, shit. You boys better clean up this little party. I'm going to have my nails done." That shit was funny, but not as funny as Mama G stepping up to him, handing him a cold bottle of marshmallow-flavoured milk, telling him to drink up, because growing boys needed their milk, nudging the poor shit under him with a pointed boot and giggling. "Oh, he's a pretty one, play nice." Mama G sauntered off, stepped over several pieces of broken furniture and around the spilled guts of the Liberator. As she finally reached the outer slider she turned and blew a little kiss to Jacky and set off at a brisk pace, down the street to her favourite slutty stylist, Kevin. That boy had some serious issues but not as many as the man currently growling from under him.

A little bounce on the bony ass shut the fucker up. "You done with your bitch fit, white boy? I got my pink milk; I can sit here for a long fucking time." Slurping sounds drowned out several colourful curse words from the bastard. "You gonna calm that tiger down, or do I need to ask Spike to kiss your boo-boo's away too?" Oh, he was having way too much fun with this shit. Tim and Spike were both giving him the finger, but the little shit under him had calmed down.

Bouncing one more time, he finished off his milk and chucked the empty bottle at Jacky who was leaning against the customer's bar. "You okay there, gramps, should we bring you a rolly-walker?" That made the old fart grin. Yeah, things were gonna be just fine.

After what felt like years, the fat fucker got off his tired and hurting body. With a simple hand and a soft smile, he helped Campbell up and into a warm embrace. His body was lax against the bigger one, finally at rest after weeks of running on adrenaline. God, his tank was on empty. He needed a moment of just nothing. This big black bear gave it to him, hiding his shuddering frame behind the giant affectionate arms. Too soon it was time to step away from them, face the music as one would say. What he found when he looked around was a fucking orchestra in full crescendo, the director long gone past loony.

Campbell took a deep, mind-cleansing breath. He turned around in a half circle meeting stare upon stare. He needed to apologise, to explain. But first, he needed to see for himself that Dirkie was not here. He already knew the answer, but the words tumbled from his bleeding mouth as if their need to be spoken overtook everything.

“Dirkie, baby, I need to speak with you. I need to explain the situation with my ex-wife and daughter.” He heard the mouths behind the eyes gasp, but at this stage he just couldn’t care. “Please, I’m begging you. Sweetheart? Please give me the chance to talk to you. I’m not sure what you saw when you looked at me that night. But I saw a future, something I’ve longed for. Plea—” his words drowned off in a silent cry of a wounded animal. Before his feet, tearing into his sight was the lady Dirkie had been working on. Soft-brushed steel, now bent out of shape, a deep cut across her soft leather skin with little bits scattered around in the ever creeping oil patch below her. *What have I done?* The keening whimper leaving his lips brought him down to his knees in that wet sticky puddle. He had to fix this, fix her. God, he’d made a fool of himself and now the fool had shown its true nature.

Looking up, he found soft hazel eyes in an even softer round face. “Don’t be.” He wasn’t sure what the little pixie was talking about, her pitch-black cropped hair and dirty face looking down at him. “You’re sorry, we all know that, but I’ll fix the little bitch right up, yeah.” Her little nose crinkled and she rubbed at a rough patch now grease stained on her neck. “You go talk to J now and we’ll sort out this little spill, and I like cherry snappies, you better bring a bottle back for me, or I will hurt you.” The little bit crouched down, lifting the bike from the floor and started rolling her back to the workshop, shouting over her shoulder. “What you all standing around for, fuckers, we need to get this man on the road.”

As if a trained chorus, the men all groaned, “Yes, Spike.”

Chapter Five

Dark midnight-blue settled itself on the sand. The first little lights flickered in the sky above like fireflies doing a waltz on the savannah. It was time to head back. A man could only survive on protein bars and Wit blits for so long, and he was running low on both. His lady purring between his legs urged him on. *One more road. Perhaps this one, lover, might have the answer.*

Slowing down for a moment, he took the turn and then settled his gaze on the rising Blood Moon, a sign of pain, death, and love lost.

Dirkie settled in for the night, the dirt road taking him down a small ravine. He found shelter below a low overhang and watched the flaming ball of light drift across the horizon. The illumination bringing the sand to life. There was something to behold on nights like these, a beauty in something as simple as the wind lifting a weathered tumble bush, a lone feather from a bird long past in flight.

Silence settled as morning broke and gave breath to a new day. Dirkie found himself in a place long forgotten by others, the ancient desert holding a small piece that brought old memories to life. The stone path leading down the ravine was barely visible. Sand and dust covering its presence as if inclined to hide it from those that had no right to be there.

The old farmhouse, weathered and long forgotten loomed in the distance, rusted barbed wire running in patches off its boundary. Dirkie turned away from the path heading away from the house that once held childlike laughter and bright potted sunflowers in its garden. A small whitewashed wall and grumbling wooden gate his destination.

Fate had brought him here, to a place in the past where he could now face the goodbye. Dirkie hesitated with his hand on the slightly parted gate and looked over his shoulder to the home he visited as a young boy. So many memories, many eclipsed by pain, but what he felt now was a simple peace, a calm that had long eluded him.

Dirkie crouched down at the single headstone. He removed his worn riding gloves and ran his fingers over the name etched into the stone.

Philips van Staden

1980 – 2011

“I’m here,” Dirkie started. “It took me a long time.” He lifted an old quill off the ground next to him and started drawing little lines into the sand before him. “I lost my way, baby. For a long time I’ve been running.” A little wisp of wind caressed his face. The skin turning cold from the moisture that pooled below his eyes. “When you got sick, when you left...” Dirkie took a deep breath and looked up to see a lone falcon gliding along the drifting breeze. “I was so angry, hated you for what felt like forever.” Dirkie looked down at the lines he drew in the sand. Words eternally etched in stone. *Forever loved.*

He stood, brushed the loose grains from his knees and smiled down at the little lizard darting across the sand. “It’s time to stop running.

“I’m not alone anymore.”

Jacky watched the boys shuffle the packs around one more time. His old girl had made sure that there was nothing left to chance. This road virgin needed everything he could carry including the new satellite phone Lance, his tech boy, was setting up.

“Oh for fuck sake, Tim, the boy has more than enough shit to shuffle around without you fussing about with his panties.” Tim was yet again repacking the thermals, checking the straps and sorting the medical pack. At this rate it would be noon before the boy could get on the road. He already had one major obstacle to face; he did not need to be arriving as dark settled its weary head.

A week had passed since Campbell had lost it, but now the man was focused. He was ready.

“Time’s up. Get his shit stored, check the tank levels again and get him on the road, Lance.” His boy did as asked. Not blood, but his family nonetheless. The small tracking chip Lance had installed on all his boys’ bikes started to ping the moment that little runaway crossed the border. A man on the run, lost to all but himself, needed a place to rest for the night before heading home, and Jacky was sending this seal pup straight into the desert hyena’s domain. Stan from the Den would set it up. Knew he could count on his old comrade to settle them both and send them to where nothing but sand would carry them. They had kept the man in the dark. No need to mess with Fate and all that.

“You’re going to be okay, son.”

Campbell shrugged off the comment. Nothing was ever going to be okay again, but he was done. “You know what, Jacky, there’s a shitload I can take, but I’m fresh out of give-a-fuck.”

With that, he left. *Probably won’t be back, fuckers.*

His fucking balls hurt, and not in a feel good ‘oh yeah, this shit’s gonna make me cum’ way. When he set off from the Mother City, he knew it would be a hard ride but this shit was ridiculous. The moment he straddled the little bitch, his cock went from sleep overdose to full-blown ecstasy-induced high. When he spoke to that fucker again, he was going to have to thank him for tuning the lady. Well, not that he was ever going to see Dirkie again. Piece of shit, upped and left his bed in the early hours of the morning, gave him no time to explain, and no time to put what happened into the right folder, file it away under shit-just-happened. He took the road and had not returned for many weeks.

As Campbell pulled up to the Den, he craned his neck to look at the little establishment in this godforsaken one-horse town. Well, not really a one-horse town, seeing that there were no horses about, but it came close. The little town of Springbok, so called for its... well fuck knows... was nestled between two little *koppies* if you could even call them that. The drive up town was a simple steep climb, with the lower parts still part of the level floor of the valley. There was a single road to the higher elevations, where a few shops, school, and municipal buildings were located. Directly in his line of sight stood the old church with its bell steeple and founding wall all part of the original settlement. The raw, pure-white limestone walls looked ghostly in the early evening light. The setting sun just touching its pillars. Without thought, he dismounted the bike, pulled his camera from his left leather satchel and started taking pictures. Jacky had been right, as he dropped the lens slightly to look upon the setting sun in the horizon. A man could find peace here. The calm of the desert just beyond his line of sight as the sphere of red, gold, and alabaster set inch by inch in the distance. Lifting his lens again, he drew the camera into a full panoramic circle, using a low shutter speed and taking multiple shots every few second. He slowly turned bit by bit, to take in the entire town in a full three-hundred-and-sixty shot, finally landing on the Den. The old farmhouse with its whitewashed walls, traditional thatch roof, and long flowing veranda looked welcoming, homey. Gladys had booked him a room for tonight, sort of a last stop in civilization, if you could call it that.

Campbell pulled down his backpack and walked up the steps, the smell of sweet Iceberg roses caught on the breeze. The solid oak door stood open and inviting. The old yellowwood floor, leading his way into a majestic family room, the limestone fireplace already lit and giving off a heated aroma of cherry and rum. An old grand piano stood in one corner, its red velvet seat well worn. Sun-bleached skulls of what he could only assume were springbok, the town's namesake buck, were mounted on the walls, along with a few framed, vintage photos of wild horses running free in the desert. They drew his eye to the large bay windows, overlooking the valley below, nothing but a few quiver trees and sand as far as the eye could see. He settled down on the window seat, looking out on the darkening vista, the moving sand drawing his eyes over the horizon and into the distance. Slowly, as if the sun was calling home its light, the landscape was now a shade of burnt gold, growing darker, spots of dusk-red creeping over its floor, and the breeze lifted and played along the dune itself. It brought back memories of sun-kissed skin, rust-coloured hair, and full sensual lips.

A light tap to his shoulder brought him back to reality. As he turned, he noticed that not only was he no longer alone in the room, but two more couples had joined him in his critique of the view, now fading with the evening light. Standing in the doorway he had entered was an older gent, all white, close-shaved hair, dark-grey flannel shirt, worn jeans, and barefoot. It was an odd combination but who the fucked cared in any case. He lifted his gaze to the guy's face, taking in his old leathery facade and huge knowing smile. He'd been around, done stuff, and lived his life hard. This was a man with many stories. Lifting his camera resting on his lap, he took a photo for posterity... for... well, he needed to remember this man, this moment. Silently their stare met. With a nod and a wink the man in question tossed him a set of keys and grunted, "You'll do nicely," before turning and leaving Campbell with even more questions than before.

As he looked down at the simple brass key and its hand-carved, bone, key number, Campbell realised the man must have been Stan—Jacky's military friend. The Den, his friend's guest house, bar, and home. Jacky had mentioned that Stan and his partner wanted to retire, did so, and hated every fucking minute of it. So, as a way to overcome boredom and to keep 'out of trouble' as Gladys pointed out, they opened their home to friends and travellers alike. With a sigh, Campbell went in search of his room; he needed a hot shower, a filling meal, and a mellow drink before he turned in for the night.

Walking into the Den's bar felt like a trip to the past. Retro blue vinyl, black marble and fairy lights. It hurt his eyes and sent a shudder down his spine. At least the music was a subdued jazz and the rest of the exterior bar took on a more African lodge feel with its solid wooden beams, leather seats, and railway sleeper tables. Large, heavy candles lit the outdoor seating area and gave a warm homely feel. A few locals were eagerly discussing the current World Cup Rugby games and sampling the local brew.

It was the perfect watering hole, and from his perch at the outdoor bar he could take in the people without socialising. He needed time to think, to bring his thoughts into focus and sort out the what-the-fuck from the shit-happens files. As the group he'd been observing became more rowdy, one of the waitresses slid the bottle of red towards him across the bar and pointed to an empty doorway. Campbell reached and took hold of the bottle and glass and slipped off his seat. He walked straight into the room he had been sitting in earlier with the beautiful vista of the desert. He settled into one of the plush leather armchairs next to the fire. Warmth filled him, both from the roaring blaze and the whisky-laced red wine that Stannie, as the waitress had called him, mixed for the travellers. Something about soothing the soul and awakening the mind. It sure had a kick, and would ease him into the deep dreamless slumber that he needed most of all at the moment—his dreams filled with leather, oil, and man.

Campbell filled his glass from the bottle on his table. Leather-clad legs obscured his view of the hypnotic fire and interrupted his musing. The person attached to those legs and rock-hard ass bent down to add another log to the fading fire.

“Thanks.”

“Pleasure, sweet.”

Dirkie gave Stan a single nod and followed the traveller into the large family room via the bar entrance, shutting and locking the door from the inside as he moved on silent feet towards the cooling fire. With his back turned to the man settled in one of the leather back chairs, he reached for another cherry log and added it to the fire before stoking it a bit.

A soft thank you had him replying and giving the game away. He had seen Joshua, no, Campbell he called himself, arrive that afternoon. He'd been mesmerised as the man pulled a long lens camera from his satchel on his

Liberator, and watched him take in first the church with its limestone walls, and then the valley and town. Dirkie had stood on that very spot countless times, taking in the same sight with a feeling of coming home, easing his heart. He stood in the shadows of the overhanging thatch and took it in again, as Campbell did, wondering what the man saw, how it made him feel. Dirkie pondered what it would feel like to have that focus on him, be seen through that lens, as an outsider looking in.

What would he see, when he looked at himself? Would he even be real?

He went searching for the answers, for himself. Weeks on the road, many spent in the shadows of the here and now and the past he could not touch anymore. Dawn bleeding into dusk and the always ever-present sand and tears. He still had no answers... even more questions, but for once looking at the blistering fire, he could almost see the man, within its spitting depths.

Chapter Six

As God was his witness, he was going to kill him. Smack that deliciously naughty smile and the ‘pleasure, sweet’ right off the fucker’s face, before pushing him to the leather seat opposite him and riding that growing bulge until both of them were too tired to move. *Fuck!* He was practically vibrating. Shit, he needed to get out of there and get away from this fucker who messed with not just his body but also his mind. He needed answers too and he wasn’t sure he wanted them. Didn’t know if his shattered heart could take another hit, or if it would ever be whole again.

Campbell gazed down at the glass he held, shards of crystal now held in his frozen hands, the remainder of his wine, dark red droplets, mixing with deep crimson as he just looked on. Not sure if he should even care. With a deep sigh, he moved the shattered crystal to the little wooden table next to him. A few drops of liquid spilling onto the grain of the solid yellowwood stump, sanded and polished to become a beautiful piece of furniture, still raw and honest. He drew a finger along a dark ring circling the core, slightly rough under his touch. A burn ring. Little baby survived a raging fire, stood strong for more than three centuries before ending up here. It was just another telltale sign of the owner, nurturing the beauty of Mama Africa, worshipping at her humble feet.

A silent smile spread along his lips, as the anger he once held fled. He’d been like that little tree, scorched, scarred, and raw. But with time, they would heal, leaving an imprint of a life well lived. After the weeks of anguish, this seemed too easy. He could make that happen. He was making that happen. Didn’t need the fucker in the room to make things come to pass. Campbell moved his tired body off the warmed leather and stepped past the chair he occupied, heading towards the door when a solid grip tightened on his arm.

“You got nothing to say to me?”

No.

Shrugging it off, he left, his room only a few doors down. Dirkie didn’t follow, probably didn’t give a shit either.

He was done.

Game over.

Dirkie watched the man retreat to his room. Not fighting, not running... just, fuck he wasn't even sure anymore. Resigned perhaps, just done. He turned back to the Springbok room Stan used for game nights and special functions. The one Stan and De Wet got married in when gay marriage in South Africa was legalised four years ago. Winter frost had clung to the Iceberg roses outside, the crisp evening air warmed by cherry log lit fires, warming the soul in more ways than one. De Wet had gone off the wire, dusting the garden and everything he could get his hands on with fairy dust and shit... looked like Tinker Bell had a fuck-fest and left the building. Little tulip lights were hung from the solid ironwood beams, giving off soft ambient light that transformed the house into something warm and truly magical. The boys had been dressed in matching pale pink shirts and worn-in jeans, their wedding bands replaced by permanent matching tattoos that held each other's name amongst the simple Celtic bands. He'd shivered, not from cold, but from the raw unconditional love between the two men, as they held each other after the ceremony.

As the memory faded, Dirkie found himself looking around the room again, the heat from the fireplace slowly cooling as its embers unhurriedly started to die out. It was time for bed, tomorrow would be a new day, and perhaps Campbell would be settled enough to approach once again. The half-drunk bottle of whisky-laced red wine still sitting on the yellowwood log next to the leather back chair Campbell had been seated in, drew Dirkie's attention. The glass he'd been drinking from, half-shattered and seeping wine into the surface of the yellow-and-black rings. The man must have been startled, but his exterior emotions held nothing but acceptance and finality. With a deep sigh he picked up the bottle and headed to his own room. A long soak with the kiss of Stan's tittle would keep him until morning.

The sand under his feet shifted again, the ridge of Dune Seven moving left and right. Dirkie and his pa making the ascent as Ma watched from down below. He'd wanted to climb the dune from its foot straight up, but his pa had shared the secrets of the monster made of sand with him, and with a happy little sprint he made his way to the peak and waved down to the onlookers below. The walk along its slithering crest seemed as if it would take longer, but ascending from the base meant one step forwards and three steps back in the ever-shifting sand.

Taking in the view from the top of the world, well when you're six, Dune Seven felt like the top of the world, Dirkie looked out first over the sleepy town

of Walvis Bay. He slowly turned to take in the rest of the desert, the horizon nothing but rolling dunes covered with fool's gold, the stuff clinging to his skin and making him glitter. Ma would make him take a bath again tonight. As if on cue, she started to call his name. Not ready to head down just yet, he planted his behind in the sand and started sliding down like a dung beetle, dragging his butt as he started down at his own pace.

"Dirkie," Ma called again.

"Dirkie, get your fucking, hungover ass out of bed and open this door."

Not his ma.

Dirkie jumped up from the bed, a glass bottle dropping from his hand and clattered on the floor. Jesus, it was like a fucking bomb went off in his head, promptly dropping his ass to the cold, hard floor before realising that said ass was fucking naked, his balls complaining of the feeling, trying to edge up into his body. Someone was making one hell of a racket outside his door. Lifting his frozen behind from the floor, Dirkie opened his door to a red-faced De Wet.

"He left."

Dirkie rubbed his eyes and then scratched his balls. It was too early for this shit. Stan and De Wet always playing fucking pranks on him. The fucker just stood there, staring at him like he'd grown a gorilla cock and yeah, he was sporting a morning stiffy, fucking boy spewing little piss drops all over his hairy belly and dribbling down into his crotch. "So what you on about, De Wet. Stan having a little bitch fit this morning?" The man was glaring now, all kinds of fucked over and pissed. Yeah, he'd fucked up on that one. He turned where he stood and walked over to his jeans, pulling them up, naked rump and balls, giving the fucker growling at him a mooner.

Once dressed, he followed De Wet out through the kitchen and into their private back garden. Sitting on one of the white weathered chairs taking in the morning's winter sun, Stan grumbled something about having to babysit kids and that the limping prick owed him big time. Must be referring to Old Jacky... the kids... yeah, he was referring to them. *Fucking drama queen*. Dirkie helped himself to some freshly brewed coffee and snuck a slice of farm toast off Stan's plate, before sitting down for the grilling he knew he was about to get.

Stan just sighed, pouring him another cup of Turkish Roast. Now that he was awake, he was able to taste what he'd been putting in his mouth—might have been a big cup of pig fat for all he knew. Silence fell as he looked out onto

the dried riverbed, the horizon dusky pink, the rising sun just settling in for a day of play.

“So he left.”

Dirkie had already put two and two together, knew with finality that Campbell had left not for himself but for him. Perhaps deep down in the fucking pit of his soul he'd already known last night, seen the decision flicker in the man's eyes before he turned and left. Heard the silent *no* in the unspoken words, the whisper of his body. Stan didn't need to answer him, but grunted nonetheless. Not quite a reply, but Dirkie knew the man had several retorts brewing, most including him hanging by his balls.

“So, I guess I'll be staying a few days then. You okay with me taking up a room for a bit?”

De Wet answered with a little kiss to his cheek and a “Sure, babyboy”, the man hiding a smile behind his words. “Normal rate as usual, the girls are parked in the double garage.” Oh, he'd enjoy getting his hands on them. Beautiful matching pinup sluts, the kind you never brought home to mama, but fucked raw out by the lookout point. He remembered driving them up here for Stan, a special sixtieth birthday present for De Wet, well not just for him as Stan made sure of buying identical twins, even had Tim paint their lush curves with sapphire and angelic blue. Dirkie could spend a few days, keep them company, and take a ride down to the caves, before heading back. But first he'd check in with Old Jacky, let him know he'd be home by the end of the week. Alone.

Campbell felt like a naughty schoolboy, sneaking out and into the night. The pale moonlight caressing his skin as he pushed his girl up and around the bend, out of earshot, before kick-starting her and heading out of town. He'd been unable to get all his gear from his room, the large backpack broken up into smaller sections, easing its storage on the bike. The hours passed with a blur, sand, road, and pebbled highlands becoming one continuous visage, the sound of his girl purring all that centred him.

By the time Campbell turned into the dry river bed, the start of the Fish River, that would take him all the way up through the ever-expanding gorge to Ais Ais and higher into the Fish River Canyon, late afternoon had given way to early evening. The last light of the day lit the rifts of exposed rose quartz, pink and gold, giving a wistful feel to the gully he settled into for the night.

Campbell's hand stung when he started removing his black leather riding gloves. The small scrapes and cuts from the crystal glass chattering in his hands, now slightly swollen and dark red. He'd not taken the time to tend and clean them the night before, only washing them along with his body in a brief shower. Campbell had repacked his bags and dressed in his riding leathers. He waited for the Den to settle as dawn approached before unlocking his rented room, leaving his keys on the still-made bed with the night's accommodation fee and a little bit extra before leaving. He knew that Stan or his partner would store the leftover gear for him. He'd soon return, another layover night booked for two weeks' time.

He looked down at his hands again; in the light that remained he could clearly see a few slivers still imbedded in his skin, swollen over from using his hand and the rub of the leather where he'd gripped the bars. He would need to take care of them before the last light dissipated over the valley floor and sunk to a deep night's slumber.

Campbell unrolled his insulated sleeping bag, snapped a self-heating pad, and slipped it into the opening. He wouldn't have time to gather wood for a fire, and if the crisp air already filling his lungs was any indication of what the night would hold, he would need the extra heat to stay warm. Once set aside, he lifted the biker's tent canopy into place over his lady, dragging his gear and sleeping bag into the zipped opening. The tent itself was like a half igloo, one side rising up, and open on both sides hugging his girl and keeping her from the unknown elements. The other half, just large enough for a man to curl up with his gear, safe from shadows now fast approaching his position. A quick piss on a bush around the corner would do as his nightly routine before settling in. But first, he would need to tend to his hands.

Forty minutes later, gear bags now unpacked and repacked, a penlight held between his teeth, Campbell growled at his stupidity. No medical pack. No satellite phone. *You fucking idiot.* Both left behind, probably still strapped within the second insulated sleeping bag that Tim had insisted he take along with the riding thermals and... thank fuck... he kept the canisters with the water and Wit blits. *Well, old man, not much you can do about that right.* He figured he could go with either Plan B or Plans X, Y, and Z seeing that Plan A was totally and royally fucked over when Dirkie stepped into the damn room. It was like the fucker was haunting him. Yeah, he just fucked himself over by leaving the desert guru behind, going all half-cocked with balls hanging out.

Plan B had him spending the night, taking in the experience of the desert, and heading back in the morning with his tail tucked between his legs, begging Dirkie to take notice and help a man out, even if it was only for a night or two. Plans X, Y, and Z rang every fucking warning bell in his head. Positively decadent and wrong in so many ways that his choice was really made up before he even concocted the thing. He would head out in the morning, come hell or high water and if need be take refuge at Ais Ais if it all went pear shaped. The road less than a normal day's drive, by bike, taking the riverbed and the walking trail two day minimum, three days max.

Campbell cleaned his hands once again with what he had, running a bit of Wit blits over the raw, swollen spots and digging out slivers of crystal from his palms. When at last, night fell, and he could barely see a few feet ahead of him he headed to his piss spot, did his business, and returned to take in the growing cluster of stars. Dark midnight-blue filled with heaven's light, the world falling silent at its feet.

He'd settled in for the night as the valley grew cold, the touch of frost in the air pushing him inside to the safety of his warmed sleeping bag. The taste of compressed protein and bottled water still lingered on his lips. Sleep finally found him sometime before midnight, his last thoughts, that of rust and smoke.

Chapter Seven

Dirkie was slowly losing his mind; a few days with Stan, De Wet, and their girls, the ever-present stream of travellers to the Den kept him wired. The need to take the road and just ride growing in his belly like a fiery hot stone consuming him from within, one painful inch at a time.

He thought that taking a break, cutting ties with the crew: Old Jacky, Tim, Lance, and Spike would give him time to think, time to make sense of it all. But being around the old boys, here in Springbok, seeing how content the two fuckers were with life and each other, left him grasping at threads he no longer felt. The emptiness grew by the day, sometimes taking over and leaving him with a hunger, not even the synthetic high of Stan's special mix could satisfy. He spent his mornings walking the footpaths, down the rocky escarpments, and into the valley floor just behind the moving sand. His thoughts drifting to Mama Africa in all her splendour, sand as soft as silk, air scented with rain on the horizon and the unforgiving hard burned earth; dry cracked riverbeds, clay splayed open and whispering for the silent touch of rainwater.

Dirkie's body was like that sunbaked earth, thirst unquenched and whimpering for the touch of a man who was now lost to him. He doubted he would ever get to see those soft brown eyes again. Pools of fine Turkish coffee with swirls of gold. A gaze that took in more than it should and left a deep ache behind in Dirkie's chest when he thought about them.

He was waiting for something. *Someone, you fucker.* He knew from Tim's route that Campbell would be heading home by now, but the piece of shit had stopped checking in the night Dirkie fucked him over, upped and left, simply leaving as easy as that. He left gear behind that De Wet had stored. A few packs of extras would likely slow him down as he took the lazy trip down the gorge of the dried-up Fish River, driving the valley floor up to Ais Ais and the Fish River canyon. Dirkie had driven the route a few years back, nothing but layered rock and crystal, sand and hard earth, a few Koker trees standing at attention. Their bodies seeming to move across the desert, looking for a drink that might elude them for decades.

The morning started out much the same as the others, Dirkie dragging his hungover ass out of the bed in the guest room, scratching his itchy beard and too full, heavy balls, and taking a satisfying piss in the lavish outhouse, now

part of the in-house. Still, there was nothing like the sound of water hitting tin, the pitter-patter of hundreds of little droplets, piss poor music, but gratifying nonetheless.

Cold seeped into Campbell's skin. He knew morning would soon follow, but not soon enough. Curling tightly into a ball, he huddled behind his girl's back. The soft leather soaked with dew, but warmer than his black riding leathers. His skin felt stretched, scorching hot to the touch but frozen with the feel of a million little cuts over his entire body. He had managed to keep the water down today, but not much. In the morning he'd try again, if he could muster up the strength.

Dirkie found De Wet outside, all sprawled out on the hanging swing below the thatched roof's beam. The heavy rain from the morning had given way to a light mist that started clearing with the day's heat. The smell of wet soil and soft rose filling his nose as he planted his behind on one of the steps leading to the front door.

"About time you got your butt out of bed and joined the land of the living." The fucker looked up at him from behind his reading glasses, a book resting on his chest, taking a tentative sniff. "God, you stink."

Dirkie took in the smell from his own pit. He was kinda ripe, but he liked it. No need to pretty himself up with a bit of soap if he wasn't getting any but his own hand. He looked over the wakening town, the few loners walking the wet road. He growled at himself. If he was going to head home today, he needed to get packed. Last thing he wanted was to try and sort his gear for the road. Another nap sounded just about right.

"Before I forget, you had a call from Lance. Told him you were getting your beauty sleep. Better give the boy a ring, he was kind of frantic, something about blip pinging. Not sure what he was going on about. Sounded urgent."

A chill settled over Dirkie. His hands shook as he reached for his cell. Piece of shit was turned off. He wanted to be left alone, didn't need the crew to check up on him when he needed his space. There was no time for regret, he needed to speak to Lance, trace the blip, gear up and get moving, the sun already too high on the horizon, seconds ticking away like a time bomb. One that could be deadly in the desert.

He'd made good time, the sun settling at his back, the road stretching ahead of him, the sand nothing but a blur, but not good enough. With the sky darkening he entered the ravine, rose quartz lighting up stark blushed pink as if calling to him. The riverbed, once dry, cracked, and brittle, now had a slow trickle of water running down from the canyon beyond his view. Always treacherous even in dry desert weather, the slippery path, often taken by hikers and dirt bike travellers, loomed sticky ahead. It would be deadly to travel at dusk, minimal light halting his ascent up the valley for the night. Bedding down waiting until morning light was his only option at this stage. The search for Campbell held back for at least twelve hours.

Dirkie pulled down his heavy gear bag, stripped down the full arctic sleeping bag, and curled into a previously dug night-ditch. The trench mined slightly below ground level would protect him if the frost-like desert wind picked up. He settled for the night, he begged with a silent whisper that Campbell had just gone into seclusion that the man wanted to be lost to the world.

He was perched on a steep ledge, watching as a mechanical skeleton was crumbled, ripped to pieces by the drifting rock fall. His gear spewed along the embankment, nothing but discarded trash, useless to him.

Light shadowed over the valley, morning had come later than usual. Dark, heavy-laden rain clouds hung low with incandescent light, drifting down; the eerie silence draped Campbell in an icy embrace. The days had drifted into what seemed to be one long silhouette. What felt like morning dawning, and eventide, with times of wakefulness, was closer to six, perhaps seven days.

The last water bottle and protein bar was clutched to his chest, his hands swollen and wrapped in two soiled shirtsleeves he'd managed to rip from his own thermal shirt. It was better than getting more dirt and grit into the oozing cuts, ones he had dug into his red and inflamed palms to remove small slivers of crystal still embedded there.

Pain, acute and sharp, sent him tumbling to his knees again as he descended to lower safer ground. For what felt like hours, he lay curled on the bank of the growing river, his eyes closed tightly to keep out the whispering sand blowing along the valley floor. His sweat soaked cheek resting in the cool damp earth, hands forcefully clutched to his chest. A warm palm brushed along his skin, combing back sticky hair, lifting his face in a possessive hold. Soft, warm lips

met his, a trickle of cold water running from a searing mouth, the taste, that of raw hunger, the predator finally claiming his prey. Breath that whispered, sobs of murmurs and soft words, lulled him back to the black pit that had clutched him.

“I have you, baby.”

Dirkie had his fat ass firmly planted on Stan’s old, out of tune piano. All the lazing around while Campbell recovered and De Wet’s home cooking added a layer of hibernation lard. He smiled down at his lover as he recalled having to feed him spoon for spoon those first few days. The only way he could get the man to eat was by sharing a meal with him in bed.

Campbell had been severely dehydrated, his already thin frame taking a heavy knock as his body tried to fight off the settling infection from his hands. Those born from Namibian sand knew that as little as twenty-four hours out in the desert could be... no, he really didn’t want to think about it anymore.

He slipped off the piano, his riding boots adding a heavy thud to Stan and De Wet’s weird duet, something about bullfrogs and joy. God, they were drunk, all pissed from Spike’s pink passion milkshakes made with an adult kick, the main ingredient, Cherry snappies, her drink of choice. He made his way across the room and settled down on the armrest of Campbell’s chair, sneaking a kiss before he helped lift the pale, frosted pink drink to his man’s lips. Hands still wrapped in a light dressing lifted to his, still unable to curl and entwine, but holding on as best he could.

They would rest for another week, before taking to the road home.

Epilogue

No words were needed, they had all been said.

Little more than a year ago, Dirkie had held Campbell to him. The smell of sand, dust, and tears—not Campbell’s but his—fresh in his mind. Now he sat with his back to an old Koker tree, the morning light mixed with soft ripples of sand swirling on the horizon, the farmhouse Campbell fell in love with in the distance.

Tears for second chances or *Trane vir Tweede Kanse* as Dirkie’s Ma used to call it was now home, soon to be filled with the warmth of unconditional acceptance and forgiven grace.

The sound of a camera shutter drawing close pulled him from his contemplation of the future. Dirkie looked directly at the man shifting around on the dried, crusted mud, his feet moving as silently as possible in the jagged earth. His hair longer and silkier, hanging over the edge of his light leather jacket, silver more prominent now, the bristle of his jaw reflecting beauty unlike that of the ancient rocks scattered along the dried riverbed.

Dirkie smiled as Campbell gently placed his beloved baby girl back in the satchel and moved with slow, sensual pace towards him. He’d had it retrieved, its loss a painful memory that Dirkie could save Campbell from.

Light fingers brushed over his heated skin, fingers sliding and tugging, lips taking in small tastes of him as Campbell removed piece after piece of worn leather, soft cotton, and cashmere. Dirkie closed his eyes, laughter playing over his lips a moment drawn in an eternity. This would be his, was his. Every movement like a silent shift in the sand, the dune walking over the desert, never resting in one place for long.

Warm, moist heat enveloped him, the rocking motion driving him to sink his teeth into the flesh above Campbell’s heart. Hands, fingers, and nails like sharp animal talons dragging down sweaty flesh, clawing at the man seated in his lap as fever swept through him.

A final moment of exquisite pain, the swirling depth met his frozen gaze as time ended and birthed eternity in a single salty drop running from a pool of soft brown.

It is said, that when you have lived the desert, you shed tears for the sand, not once but twice. First, for the emptiness, the death, the sorrow. And then for the life that against all odds have survived.

Like we have survived.

The End

Glossary

Bo Kaap – The Afrikaans translation of a district in upper Cape Town, it is so named for its location, an area rich in Cape Malay history.

Cape Doctor – The local/slang name for the strong, persistent and dry southeasterly [wind](#) that blows on the [South African](#) coast from spring to late summer (September to March in the southern hemisphere). It is known as the Cape Doctor because it has long been held to clear [Cape Town](#) of pollution and ‘pestilence’.

Dodo – The slang translation for grandmother in several African dialects.

Jou ma se poes – The slang Afrikaans translation for, your mother’s cunt, locally used as a profanity like ‘motherfucker’.

Kak huis – The slang Afrikaans translation for shit house or outdoor toilet.

Kerrie tripe – The Afrikaans translation for curry tripe, it’s normally prepared with traditional sweet Malay spices, also known as Cape Malay.

Koppies – The Afrikaans translation for cups, also known as small hills dotting the horizon in South Africa’s arid areas, so named for their resemblance of upside down teacups.

Koker tree – The Afrikaans translation of quiver tree, found sparsely in arid areas of Namibia.

Ma – The Afrikaans translation for mother.

Mitchells Plain – A rundown residential area (Township) rich with local ‘coloured’ tradition, a community built in the early 1970s after forced removals due to apartheid segregation.

Oom – The Afrikaans translation for uncle, typically used as an address to a man older than they are, as a sign of respect.

Outa – The slang translation for grandfather in several African dialects.

Oumie – The slang translation for grandmother in several African dialects.

Pa – The Afrikaans translation for father.

Pap – The Afrikaans translation for porridge. In this story it is served as a traditional savoury dish made from ground maize meal.

Poes – The slang Afrikaans translation for cunt, locally used as a profanity like ‘fuck’.

Tannie – The Afrikaans translation for aunt, typically used as an address to a woman older than they are, as a sign of respect.

Wit blits – The Afrikaans translation of white lightning. It is a clear, high alcohol spirit made from selected fruit, vegetables, and even medicinal plants like aloe.

Author Bio

I use way too many F-Yous... and can out swear most sailors. Vodka is my drink of choice and yeah... that comes with the territory of being my father's daughter as well.

I dream in my mother tongue—as the real Dirk once said, “It's always vivid with the colours of my homeland.”

I believe in something more... I could elaborate... but then you would be here all day.

Some call me angel... others not so much. They don't know me though.

Life is like... yeah, I could get all warm and fuzzy here... but Fate... and all that... She's a bitch that can't get Karma to love her... so she ends up messing with us.

Contact & Media Info

[Email](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Goodreads](#)