

*“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”*

- *Philippians 2:12-13*

# Isolation Is A Beautiful Thing.

Isolation is a beautiful thing. It is how Buddha found enlightenment, how Miyamoto Musashi mastered the art of the sword, and how Jesus knew He was the Son of God.

Going on long isolated periods gives one the ability to be outside oneself. You get the chance to somewhat escape your body and view yourself from the eyes of the third person. And for me, this is what I saw.

I saw how my friends have changed, but in the same breath, have not changed. One time, when we were hanging out, I realised that this one guy whom I called a friend was actually not a friend.

We were hanging out and under the influence, his true colours came out. In conversation, the words he used and the manner in which he used them, especially towards me, made me realise that this person was not a friend. Instead, he was a snake who was waiting for the moment to strike.

I do not deny the fact that I have been through a tough spell lately. Hence, I decided to enter this long period of isolation. And so, with my being at its lowest, the snake, disguised as a friend, found it as a perfect time to strike.

It is weird because if this were some years ago, one would have labelled it as “that’s the way he is”. But maturity and isolation made one realise that indeed that’s the way he is, someone who preys on the downfall of his “friends”.

In the same breath, I saw my real friends. Some haven’t changed. If having fun meant drinking alcohol when they were 14, even now at the age of 30, they still indulge in the same fun. On the surface, there is nothing wrong with this. They are living life the way they want. But on a deeper level, it reveals no growth in the person they have become.

It is not the growth of a river breaking through new lands. It is the growth of still water merely getting deeper. Still water is stagnant and continues to foster dead life. And this I saw in my friends.

Because of this stagnation, in some of my friends, it saddens me how they have lost the sparkle in their eyes. It saddens me that life has lost meaning for them. They seem to be trapped by the limitations of what they have characterised as life. And yes, some of my friends have experienced life-altering events that would knock anyone off life. With them, I truly sympathise.

Being isolated from everyone, friends included, made me realise how different our lives have become. I am one who still holds on to a life where I believe I must own and control my time.

Time is a currency that measures life. So, someone who controls your time controls your life. It is wild how I’d compromise this

belief becomes of my friends. Becomes of the need to belong. But now, I notice the rift that's beginning to develop. I do not find entertainment in sitting and talking about days in high school. There is no joy for me in such settings. I find them a waste of time. Being isolated gave me a deeper understanding of how deeply profound a waste of time this is for me.

I may love my friends. I may cherish them. But isolation gave me an understanding that right now in my life, in this phase that I am in, I do not need them. This may seem a bit harsh, but my closest friend when I came out of isolation was not surprised. He understood completely. I even missed his birthday, but he was absolutely cool with it. If you ask me, that's all the friend I need.

But regardless of the case, I am still human. A human who needs social interaction. I am still a man. A man who'll long for the warmth of a woman. But lately, I learnt a valuable lesson regarding a woman's love that I would have never learnt if I hadn't entered this state of isolation.

Most women lack the ability to handle a man when he is at his lowest. I have dated way more than enough women to come to this conclusion. I have dated women who would compromise their core values for a man who has more money than her. Values that I believed were embedded in their being. I have dated women who, when you are down, their dark, traitorous personalities seem to find power, and they lose all respect for you. And when that

happens, I know that it will be a matter of time before I get the “let’s break up” text.

And look, I am not going to paint myself as a saint. Some of the women I’ve dated, I look back and realise that I was the problem. Indeed, in some relationships, I marvel at how a woman was able to hold on for the duration in which they did. Indeed, for these women, I realise I am simply not the one for them.

However, isolation has taught me that women cannot be with a broke man. Financially or otherwise. They simply cannot. If you think about it, it is merely their biological wiring.

A woman wants to be with a man who’ll be able to protect and provide for her. That is why a big-looking man will be more attractive to most women than a skinny guy. And that is why men with money usually end up with the most beautiful women in the village.

Money in today’s world is the vehicle that provides and even protects women. There was only one woman I’ve dated who seemed not to be wired like this. But that in itself caused a conflict as she was trying to fulfil the role of both woman and man. Evidently treating me like a child. And, of course, that relationship did not last long.

Perhaps it is a woman thing, but I have met very few women who have a full understanding of their character flaws and who actively work on them. It is crazy. I first saw this on many street interviews

where women would give themselves an 8, 9 or even 10 out of 10 rating of how perfect they are. I saw this with the hundreds of interviews on podcasters like Kevin Samuels, where a woman can be 40 with 4 children and still believe she is still the hottest catch in the ocean.

I thought this was just internet entertainment. But I started seeing this in the women I dated, both in a serious setting and a casual one. Most of them are plain narcissists. And I mean the term in its traditional psychological context. In that context, everyone has a sense of narcissism about them. But women seem to have it in Super Saiyan mode.

Think about it. Most women will say things such as they need to look good for their man. They need to have their nails and hair done and have outfits that are fitting for their man. This is a subtle way of saying, I need to look good at your expense. Me looking good is the cost of you being with me, is what she is saying. In some cases, this cost might not be monetary. It might be at the cost of time or something else that is valuable.

When you, as a man, are at your lowest, you do not have that which the woman will find valuable. You do not have the money to take her out on dates or to honour her with gifts. If you are like me, and you are fully committed to making your dreams of financial freedom a reality, you do not have the abundance of time to award her with. Because to you, every second is attributed to the realisation of this dream.

Isolation has taught me that, as a man, when you have not attained your dreams, do not be with a woman. If you have nothing valuable, money or time or whatever, do not be with a woman.

You might find yourself a true gem. You might find yourself a truly good woman, an extremely rare commodity in today's world. But if you do not have money, time or anything valuable to exchange for her love, do not pursue her. She will leave you. Sometimes for another man, but most of the time because of that Super Saiyan narcissism that will tell her she deserves better.

Being isolated can be difficult. You'll be hit with deep loneliness and spells of dark depression. But isolation allows you to attain the highest need a human can attain: self-realisation. And with these self-realised eyes, when you step out of isolation, it is easier for you to discern between that which is for you and that which is not for you.

You'll be able to see pointless conversations. You'll be able to see pointless interactions. And in this, the factors of those pointless interactions will eliminate themselves from your life.

Like somewhat of a cleansing, going for long periods of isolation cuts off the many life-draining interactions we encounter in our lives. The interactions that remain after your periods of isolation are the ones that were true and intended for your soul.

For me? My love and appreciation for my family deepened after being isolated. The few friends that remain, my love and

appreciation for them deepened as well. Yes, I experienced the darkest, most surreal version of myself in this isolation, but it allowed me to see myself for who I am.

We are scared of being isolated because we find comfort in the social circles that identify our personalities. Our friends, our work or our relationships. But I implore you that when you can, step away from it all. Take that time to become friends with your true inner self. That inner self is the true being of who we are.

Like Jesus in the desert or Buddha under the tree, it is only when we are alone with ourselves that we can truly find ourselves.



# Perpetual Solitude.

He sits by the bench. It seems the universe can read his mind, as the weather is not the fun-filled sunlight of summer rays. Even though it is summer, today, the weather is filled with grey clouds, promising rain. His thoughts blend perfectly.

As he sits there by the bench, he thinks about his life. The late Robin Williams' quote visits his mind because he is experiencing it.

Robin Williams once said that the worst thing that can ever happen to a person is to be with people who make them feel alone. And this is true. He thinks about the various lovers he has had over the years.

In each relationship, his needs as a man were never catered for. It is expected that as a man, he has to stuff his feelings deep inside himself. Because he has learnt that women fail to truly understand how to care for men. Perhaps this was a curse for him. Perhaps there are others who can feel love from their partners. But not for him. He understands why Chris Rock said that a dog can be loved unconditionally and never a man.

But such is the rotation of life. There is nothing he can do to change it. As long as the world spins, men and their emotions will never be taken seriously. Perhaps that's why so many men become alcoholics. Perhaps that's why men cheat so much. Perhaps that's

why men are twice as likely to take their own lives as opposed to women. Because women are allowed to cry. In fact, it is encouraged and looked at with reverence.

Not for men. Even with his friends, he feels alone. Each time he is with them, he can feel the connection that ties him to them break away.

In the highway of life, he took the offramp while his friends continued living at 160 km per hour. He had known this for a long time. The writing had been written on the wall many moons ago.

But he believed in friendship. He believed that perhaps things would change. But they never did. The difference is that when they were children, playing PlayStation and doing homework were the ties that kept him and his friends close. He continues to do homework, and he continues to play PlayStation. His friends do not.

He does not enjoy the company of his friends anymore. He dreads having to spend time with them. However, nostalgia nudges him to try one more time with them. It nudges him to spend more time with them. Maybe they'll change. Maybe they'll find a deeper meaning in life. Maybe they, too, will take the offramp. But he knows they won't.

A big believer that birds of the same feather flock together, he knows he needs to accept reality. He needs to accept that those people he grew up with are no longer his friends. Yes, without

them, he will be nothing. But he'd rather be nothing than live life in the fast lane with no meaning to his existence.

And all of this pain, he experiences alone. He can't tell his mother or sister, or anyone. He knows that they love him. But the problem with this love is that it is love that judges. It is a love that aims to reprimand.

He recalls when he told his mother that he was courting a young lady who worked with her. His mother indirectly told him that the girl is upper class and he is not worthy of her. The pain that his mother sees him as a peasant hurt him.

And it is not that she sees him as a peasant per se. It is the fact that to his mother, he is and forever will be a nerd who plays PlayStation and enjoys binge-watching Jurassic Park and The Mummy.

Little does she know that he has been with models who were on billboards, girls who were daughters of Ministers, and women who embodied the strong, independent woman archetype.

He sits at the bench. All alone. Such is his life. Such has been his life. All his life, he has been alone, even when surrounded by people. Such is his existence: Perpetual solitude.

# All You Can Do Is Become Better.

“All you can do is become better.”

His mind kept telling him. The weight of the barbell pressed on his palms as he exerted all his strength to keep it above his chest.

“All you can do is become better.”

He told himself again as he released the last of his energy to rest the bar. The clunk of metal announced the end of his session. Sweat dripped from his forearms, the ends of his hairline and down the nape of his neck.

After a deep breath, he raised himself on the bench. His heart was racing faster than Michael Schumaker chasing down Mika Hakkinen. The feeling felt good, but in the same breath, he knew it was a drop in the ocean. The reflection in the mirror confirmed this.

“All you can do is become better.”

As he was walking towards the exit, from a distance, he saw his gym crush. She was refilling her water bottle at the fountain. Her exhaustion was evident. It was clear that she was not done. She was merely refuelling for a continued session.

He deliberately walked more slowly to admire her. She was wearing a two-piece coral-pink gym set. The sports bra wrapped her full bust tightly to her body. The shorts wrapped themselves around perfectly cylindrical thighs. Underneath the shorts, she wore black compression shorts that peeped slightly below her shorts.

For some reason, he knew that if he introduced himself to her, she would probably politely reject him. He has seen many men try their luck with her, and all of them have left disappointed.

Perhaps it was the setting, he thought to himself. But even if the setting changed, and he saw her at a grocery store or a fast-food outlet, he would still not be able to bring himself to introduce himself to her.

With this feeling of weakened self-esteem, he continued towards the exit of the gym.

“All you can do is become better.”

He told himself as he left the gym.

# How To Free Your Soul.

Lately, I have been searching for myself again. I realised how, over the past months, I had let myself go. There was no care or attention to how I presented myself. My mind was rotting slowly. I was letting life beat me down like the rock at the end of a gutter.

Man, I really let myself go. Slowly, I began to give up on everything. You know, love saved me from suicide. The love from my family pulled me from the pits of depression that were swallowing me like a black hole. That love saved me from death, but it did not save me from me.

I had totally given up on myself. I was accepting whatever life dished out to me. At the time, I had broken up with the love of my life, and instead of fighting, I accepted it.

The life of unemployment when you have bills to pay is extremely unforgiving. But even in that, I had let myself wallow in the misery. I was willing to let go of it all, even my car.

Life had lost flavour. Life was a dish of overcooked mashed potatoes with no butter or salt.

But even in darkness, the beauty of the stars continues to shine. In that time, the scripture that says that even Solomon was not dressed as beautiful as flowers hit me. The scripture in its entirety basically explains that man should not worry about a future that is

unknown to them. That instead, they need to focus on the now and today. I began to see the beauty in this scripture.

What I thought was a breakdown of my life was, in fact, a cleansing. It was a way that the Lord was removing that which was not me from my life. Because for most, it was internal.

The greed to become an overnight millionaire. The vanity to make money just cause. The lust to seduce as many women as I possibly could. All these attributes and virtues, whether dormant or active, had found a way to create a mould around me.

This mould was blinding me from me. This mould was creating a version of me that could not be processed into my core operating system.

Interestingly, I had a conversation with my mother about how one's home is where their foundations are. That if one finds himself or herself astray, one needs to go home to find oneself again. And indeed, that's what happened to me.

Coming back home allowed me to recharge. Being home allowed me to reconnect with the memories that made me who I am. It is being home that the breakdown of this mould occurred, where now the true me can see again.

This renewed gift of sight has allowed me to see things as they are and not as I think they are. Emerging from this period of isolation and deconstruction of this mould that had me imprisoned, one of the first things that stood out was the need for a woman.

I am a man, after all. At the time, my girlfriend and I had broken up. And I had accepted it. At my age, dating or being with a woman has a different meaning than when I was younger.

When I was younger, for the majority of my youth, I pursued women as a sport. I had insecurities about masculinity that I felt I could solve by pursuing as many women as I could. But by the grace of God, those insecurities melted away, and one has a firm grip on who he is as a man.

So it is safe to say I know exactly the type of woman I desire. At this stage, it is difficult to allow myself to waste energy merely to satisfy lust. But even with that said, just because I may desire a particular type of woman, this does not mean they desire me too.

One of the first things I ever learnt in seduction is that one should know their type. My friend used to say that one should know their markets. The retail market is not the same as the real estate market. The transportation market is not the same as the social media market. And so are women. Not all women are the same, and it is important for one to understand the type of woman he desires.

And so, I sat down one day and revisited my type. I quickly realised that our age has transformed the market. You see, in university, my type would have given me a chance to date them. You see, before social media really took off, my type would have given me a chance to take them out and what have you.



Not now.

My type now, as we are older, know they are beautiful. Social media validates their beauty on levels tantamount to a gym rat on steroids. The man I was then could never seduce my type now. As painful as this was to me, it made me look deep into the mirror and critically judge myself.

A beautiful yet painful exercise. I noticed that I had actually given up. I no longer buffed my nails. My face no longer knew weekly facials and mask treatments. A hobo's hair looked fuller and glossier than mine. Scent? I no longer even had one anymore.

I looked at my car. From detailing it every Sunday, months would go by with it just accumulating dust. Indeed, I had thrown the towel, and life was not stopping in knocking me with haymakers. When I saw this defeated man in the mirror, I knew something had to be done.

Without wasting time, I took the first steps. I forced myself to wash my car the way I usually did. I forced myself to be in public, whether getting coffee at Mugg n Bean or simply walking in the mall (as much as I hate the mall). I forced myself to be in positions where first impressions mattered. And this slowly allowed me to reconnect with the core of who I am.

As my confidence in myself began to be restored, the love of family manifested itself again. My dad saw the fire in my eye beginning to be relit once more and allowed me to reign over the

family business. My mom saw the fire beginning to warm my heart once more, and she bought me a superior laptop to continue conducting my tutorial business.

I surrendered myself to the faith that things will turn out for the best, and as each day unfolds, this faith continues to propel me forward. The beautiful thing that I am learning now is that who you are can never change. Not at your core. Yes, certain beliefs about life or certain truths that you held in high regard may shift. But the true you who harbours your soul, this person never dies.

What happens is that they get blinded. Whether it is lust, fame or fortune, they get blinded by the false promises of this world. But with a simple act of going back home and reconnecting with what made you, the scales will fall, and you will see once more.

It is not easy. In fact, it can be addictive to be alone and rediscover yourself. However, these are merely distractions. Once the last scale of the mould breaks, it is important that at that time to throw yourself back into the world. You will feel it. There will be that “never again” feeling that will tell you that the last scale has dropped.

And from there, you will understand how the birds can live without having to worry about where they’ll lay their heads to rest or where they’ll find food to fill their belly. Your being will be fuelled by the faith that moves mountains. At that moment, you will be free.

# Hello Death.

He looked in the mirror. At 2:47 am, he could not sleep. The dim lighting emitting from this window reflected his image in the mirror. He dared not switch the light in his room. He felt ashamed.

His soul was wrestling with his spirit. He looked into his faintly reflecting pupils. He saw the remnants of a defeated warrior. He felt in his heart a weak pulse give him life. He knew he would never take his life. But he wouldn't mind if it was shortened.

The cold stare from the mirror began to wear him down. He looked away. He still did not want to switch the light in his room. He walked towards his window. His curtains were a fine filter for the outside world.

There is a charm about the dark. The darkness does not judge. People become who they truly are when masked by darkness. The shy girl during the day hides herself in books and in quiet corners of the library. Yet, under the veil of darkness, she becomes a goddess whom men worship and desire. Darkness is a mask that allows humans to be who they truly are – even the evil ones.

While he stood by his window, a shadow slowly emerged. It was quite a distance away, but it was clear to his visible eye. At first, he thought it was one of his neighbours. After all, it was a Sunday morning. Clubs and taverns closed their doors at 2 am. He did not make much of it until the figure came closer to his window.

He did not feel afraid. However, he felt intimidated by the figure's stature. It was large yet elegant in shape. The figure wore a robe that looked like it was made from fine silver silk. The fabric danced with the light that reflected off it. The closer the figure came, the clearer it became. He realised that this was not a human. But he was still not afraid.

“Let me in, boy,” the figure told him. It stood about a stone’s throw away from the window. Its voice was clear. It was bold. It beamed with authority. The figure’s voice sounded like the growl of an angry dog, but it was as smooth as the silk robe it wore.

He was still not afraid. His soul felt like there was nothing to fear about the figure. His spirit knew that the figure was from Heaven but had not lived there in aeons. He was eager to know why the figure had paid him a visit. He let it in.

He walked to the front door. He switched on the lamp in the living room before unlocking the door. As he was turning the key to unlock the door –

“No need, come join me,” a voice behind him told him. He knew it was the figure.

A bead of sweat broke on his forehead.

“Don’t be afraid, boy. I mean you no harm,” the figure said.

He felt his heart beat three times faster than normal. It felt like a drunkard trying to play soccer. He felt weak at the knees. But

weirdly enough, the emotion he was feeling was not fear. It was something else. Nonetheless, he figured it would be in his best interest not to make the figure impatient. And so, he turned around and sat next to it.

Under the lamplight, the figure was beautiful. Its skin was smooth. It looked like burnt caramel. It had the skin of an individual who has seen and lived many lives. It looked like the skin of a beautiful girl who had lived in the nightlife longer than she should have. It looked like the skin of a handsome man who had seen one too many murders.

The figure was no longer in the silk robes it wore when it was outside. Instead, it wore a beautiful, dark, midnight purple three-piece suit. It had a pocket watch chain swinging from the left chest pocket to the right pocket of the pants of the suit. By the distinct features, he could tell that the figure was a male. The figure proceeded to light a cigar.

“Do you want one?” The figure asked.

“No, I don’t smoke,” He replied.

“Why?” The figure asked.

“It’s not good for you,” He replied.

“What? You want to live forever or something?”

“No, but I don’t want to live a bedridden old man’s life”

“But who said you’ll get old in the first place? What gives you the confidence to believe you can control time?” The figure said. As he said this, the chain of his pocket watch flashed a burst of quick, short, light hues of neon green beams.

“No, but smoking is not good for you,” He replied.

“So is the sugar you pour in your tea. Who told you smoking is not bad for you? Do you know that Native Americans see tobacco as a medium they use to communicate with the Heavens?”

“No, I didn’t know that.”

“Yet here you are, Mr. Health First, ready to tell me that smoking is bad for you. If smoking a cigar is bad for you, why do wealthy and powerful men smoke them daily? Some knocking on a 100 years of living?” The figure said.

“I don’t know,” he said.

“Now, I’ve given you something to think about. And understand that this is not about this beautifully wrapped cigar I am enjoying. Once you understand what we have talked about, you’ll no longer look into the eyes of a dying man in the mirror.” The figure said.

With a powerful puff of smoke, the figure disappeared.

# I am darkness.

You know, one thing that is not discussed when going through it emotionally is how unpleasant it is to feel this way. Like, no one wants to feel this way. No one wants to wake up feeling sorry for themselves. But the worst feeling is the feeling that you know you have no one around you.

Those who love you want nothing but happiness for you. They try their best to uplift your spirits. They try their best to make you realise that the crack of dawn is always after the darkest hour. Indeed, this love is the power that keeps one alive to look forward to that dawn.

But not every day does one feel this way. Some days, the demons that one is fighting come back to haunt a person. You become the doom and gloom. You become a black hole that absorbs all the light that comes your way. In this darkness, you shut out any reach of help or concern.

Then the next day, you wake feeling not consumed by the darkness. You wake up feeling like light itself. But you quickly remember how mean you were to your loved ones the day before. And so, the guilt begins to eat you inside.

Now you are different in the darkness. The light that you felt like you were you, you realise it was the faint reflection of the light of

loved ones you consumed when you were in the black hole. And evidently, the cycle then repeats itself.

This cycle continues and continues. Even though your loved ones look at you with love and concern, you start to become scared that you'll become the doom and gloom to eradicate their joy. This closes you further in your hole. It makes you feel like there is nothing you could ever do to change it.

It is a vicious cycle. It is a cycle that knows no end. It is a cycle that isolates you from the world. No matter how high your head rises, the force of this vicious cycle will find a way to bring it back down.

And that is the worst part about feeling this way.



# It's Not Nice Being Sad All The Time.

I wouldn't say I like writing about my mental health and how it affects me. It is not an easy discussion or an easy conversation for me. But, you know, when I think of my favourite artists, they express their struggles and pain in their artworks. And these artworks stood the test of time. I'm thinking of Basquiat, Kurt Cobain, Roman Polanski and Tupac. And so I write.

It's not nice being sad all the time. It just depletes and drains your energy. In the same breath, it affects those who are close to you. You see, those who are close to you truly want nothing but the best for you. They want you to be happy. They want you to be happy about the possibilities of a new day and a new week. In that, we find the dichotomy of their love.

Especially for those who have or have had some authority over your life. They fall into the danger of wanting to dictate to you what to do and how to be happy. Not realising that only makes it worse.

My personality type is one that does not fully respect authority. Like, I'll listen to you but will probably ignore you. Just how I am. So, with individuals like my siblings and parents, the same pattern

unfolds. Sure, I will listen, but trust me, I will not follow through on what they said most of the time.

And the reason is that these authority figures know a you that they used to guide and tell you what to do. Think of it like this: When we were young, we had a curfew. Your mom or dad told you at what time you should be back home. And for the most part, we followed and respected this curfew.

Now that we are older, that curfew no longer applies. My friend and I were joking about this, that when we were young, we'd be home at 5:30 pm. But now that he is working, we can only meet at 5:30 pm. Time has a different meaning when you are older.

An older me, when he is out at night, my parents will freak out and try to control my time and continue to tell me what to do. Because they used to do so with a younger me through the mechanism of a curfew.

Their defence? They are merely trying to protect me. When my siblings preach about self-care and so forth, I know it's not with malicious intent. But it boils back to the notion that I am not the child who needs guidance. At this age, one can make their own decisions and stick by them, whether they are good ones or bad ones.

That creates a weird complex where one chooses to reserve himself. This creates the behaviour where we lock ourselves in our rooms and only come out to use the restroom and find something

in the kitchen. We know that any interactions with these individuals will lead to them advising us on what to do because they are trying to “protect us”.

At the age of 30, we don't need protection. We need understanding. So, because we are not getting it from those who have guided us in life, we end up looking for it with friends and peers.

That is also a weird space. Luckily for me, I can cut people off pretty easily. I won't attach myself to someone for sentimental reasons or such. Like, if a person comes to me thinking I'm still the Thando of 10 or 20 years ago, they quickly learn I'm not that guy anymore. And not in a bad way or anything, but we evolve as people. If you were not part of the evolution, it is wise to reintroduce yourself as you are now dealing with a new individual.

So I'm lucky in that regard that people I call friends are truly day ones. But the danger is that they are on the same level as you. I was having a conversation with a really close friend of mine. I told him that my focus is on being stable enough to be a father. Legit, that's my goal in life. Homie was shook. I told him we are not young anymore. Time is not marching backwards. And indeed, Homie took a young minute to reflect on the notion.

You see, I love my friends, but I've realised our goals are not the same. Nothing wrong with that. And again, true friends won't make you feel out of place or like an outcast for having different goals. But the difference in these goals is pretty clear in

conversation and lifestyle decisions. The relationship advice you get from friends is sometimes riddled with the differences in these goals.

Most of my friends still enjoy the wild nights and the luck to perhaps go home with a girl who has the same intentions. As a dude, I understand it, but that's not where my relationship goals are set.

I realised this the last time I was with my friends. We went out, and the entire time, I was annoyed. I was bored and just wanted to leave. But I'm with friends, so staying longer didn't feel bad. But trust me, I was annoyed to the brim.

There was a random girl who kept hovering around me. My friends were like I should shoot my shot. But in my mind, I really didn't care or want to. There was no motivation or energy in me to actually shoot my shot. It was only the following morning that it hit me that it was impossible for me to shoot that shot. Simply because I don't want those sorts of relationships, of meeting random women and forgetting them shortly after.

But lucky for me, these friends of mine know me. They were there during my evolution. So much so that one of my friends the next day even apologised for forcing me to come along. He said that he could tell I was just tolerating the situation, and the frustration was visible on my face. That's a good friend if you ask me.

The flipside of this coin is that because of the different lifestyle decisions and somewhat vastly different life goals, even good friends will exclude you from their plans. And for an introvert like myself, who can count all his friends on one hand, it can hurt.

It can hurt when they tell you that they are out somewhere and didn't invite you because "they know you". It makes a person unwanted or feel like an accessory in their lives.

Again, like siblings and parents, you know that these friends have nothing but love for you. But with them, because the perspectives on life are so different, there tend to be misunderstandings.

They won't try to control you like your siblings and parents, but sometimes they just won't understand you, even if they might believe they do. So one continues searching.

And the last reasonable place to find some understanding is with your girlfriend. The hope that love will give you peace and safety in your vulnerabilities and insecurities.

You see, those who say that your man or woman is not a therapist or something like that, I can assure you that they are single or in a Will Smith–Jada–like relationship.

You are an idiot, an absolute moron to think you'll find a perfect man or woman who has no flaws, including mental struggles. You merely pick your battle and stick with it.

But those battles will probably remain between the two of you. And if you two love each other strongly, those battles will be dealt with accordingly. But they will be there.

Is your man or woman a cheater? Your love won't change them. Perhaps consider a poly-relationship of some sort. If your man or woman is a busy bee who is working consistently, your love won't change them. Perhaps sit down and draw a monthly or weekly timetable that will ensure that everyone in the equation will receive equal time.

Some situations are extreme. Personally, I've been with an abusive girlfriend. In all forms you can think of. I tried my best to fight it out. I simply could not, no matter how hard I tried.

Indeed, sometimes you are just incompatible with a person, regardless of the challenges they present. In such a situation, maturity will call on you to walk away. As a man, there are more women on this planet than there are men, so the chances are in your favour that you'll find someone for you. That someone will not be perfect. But she (or he, if you are a woman) will definitely offer you the love that provides you with that safe space.

And therein is the challenge in itself. You see, when you find that special person for you, she won't have to be anything else but herself for her to love you completely. Her very being is enough to make you calm and feel at peace.

But as a man, tormented by consistent loneliness and sadness, you don't want to bring doom and gloom into her life. You don't want to be the darkness that envelops her light. You feel bad for feeling the way you do. You begin to feel afraid that she'll leave you if you don't get your act together.

Maturity tells you that's impossible. It is that sort of thinking that leads men to end their lives. It is that sort of thinking that leads men to be alcoholics and drug addicts. And because we men are not good with words, it is that thinking that leads men to express their emotions through fists and kicks. And that's simply no good.

You want to see the love of your life always happy. But you are so sad all the time that you know your sadness will tarnish her happiness. Because she'll be worried about you.

Pride refuses any pity from anyone, and combine that with a crippling false belief you are not as "manly" as you should be, you begin to wear a mask when you are with her. I can tell you now that a good woman, a woman made for your soul, will see right through it.

It is a challenge in itself because you end up locking yourself away. Men do not drink merely to have a good time. Most do so to escape the realities of their mind. Not every man feels comfortable talking about this. Trust me, the blog has been inactive for close to two months because I knew that I wanted to write about this, but couldn't.

However, lucky are you if you have a supportive family. Yes, they might still exercise some authority over your life, but their love will always, without a shadow of a doubt, move mountains and calm rough seas for you.

Lucky are you if you have good friends. You guys might be living totally different lives, but through them, you'll understand how powerful the idiom that a friend in need is a friend indeed.

And indeed lucky are you if you have found the right woman. The right woman will make you understand why poets over the years say the right love completes them.

Indeed, as it rains, we know that the harvest will be great. As dreading, draining and defeating loneliness and depression are, we know we are here for a greater purpose than to wallow in pity and sadness.



# It is lonely here.

It is lonely here.

There are no friends.

Family is like still waters in caves.

Lovers cannot bear the pain in their lover's eyes and leave.

It is lonely here.

There is no soul to dance with.

There are no birds to hear singing.

This is no rose to behold its beauty.

It is lonely here.

This is the desert.

This is Jesus.

This is the 40 nights and 40 days He survived.

Indeed, it is lonely here.

# Loneliness.

Loneliness.

It is a hole in your heart.

It is a coffin.

It is a space where life should exist but no longer does.

Loneliness.

It is the slow piercing needle of the executioner.

It slowly enters the system with the intention of ending it.

But never does.

Loneliness.

Like eyes that cry dry tears, like desserts that carry the salts of the oceans, loneliness is the remnant of what was life.

Loneliness.

My only friend.

# Finding Meaning In Living.

It's been roughly 7 months since I've been unemployed. It has been quite the journey.

I still recall how I instantly said enough is enough and right there and then decided to quit my job. It was over something trivial, as the matter was resolved merely hours later. But you can say that it was too late at that point. The window had already been cracked, and so, the matter was the pebble that shattered it.

About a week later, I journeyed back home. Funny that it wasn't the first time that happened. It wasn't the first time I left my job. This time, however, it felt different. It felt right. It did not feel like I was perhaps short-changing myself. It felt like I was finally doing something that was for me.

I arrived home with ambition. I arrived home feeling alive. I arrived home ready for the new chapter. But I was not ready for the challenges that I was going to experience. Besides the obvious challenges, such as how to make money and such, the biggest challenge was the employee mindset that still dominated my mindset.

In this case, the mindset was used to having a paycheck every month's end. Like, at the end of each month, it would allow one to reset.

It's like playing a video game. You might lose, but you'll also have the opportunity to try again. That's how it felt. And with this thinking still ingrained in my mind, I entered a new stage of my life.

Until about the 3rd month of being home, that reality set in. In the 3rd month, the money was no longer giving me a new leg to stand on. But the grip of the employee's mindset.

I still continued living like I did when I was employed. And mind you, I was not wasting money. I wasn't spending money like a blesser. I was merely living the way I did when I was employed.

The interesting thing about that is that I realised that employment had created a certain lifestyle that I was accustomed to. That lifestyle was a good lifestyle. It provided me with a car, money to buy things I liked and money to take my girl out now and then. But you see, this was not the lifestyle that I desired.

It was a lifestyle that employment had created for me. It wasn't the lifestyle that I created for myself. I'll try to explain this in detail.

When you are employed, there are certain standards or certain "requirements" that come with it. For instance, since you are working now, it is expected that you should have a car. It is

expected that you should buy new clothes quarterly or monthly. Basically, there's now an image that you have fulfilled under the guise of employment. And mind you, most of this is happening on a deeper subconscious level.

It stems from the subconscious lessons that you learnt growing up. You perhaps noticed the young men buy the Polo with the paychecks, and so, you buy one too.

You perhaps noticed the young men get married and live in a Midrand apartment, and so, you aspire to get married and live in a Midrand apartment too. All of this is happening on a subconscious level that is invisible to the conscious mind.

Yes, you might have a certain say in the Polo. Instead of the red one, you'd get a blue one. You might believe you have some control over the decisions you make with your paychecks, but the truth is that the decisions that you make are dictated by deep-seated seeds from your childhood.

And that's exactly what was happening to me. I did not notice these things at first. But my soul was fighting against it. But my employee mindset was fighting harder.

I still remember one day I sat outside of campus, shaking. My whole body was shaking. My heart was racing like I drank a six-pack of Redbull in one shot. I was totally losing it. Because my soul, the true me, was screaming at me, telling me that this was not the life for me.

So, fast forward to now, I am home. I have never had an episode like that since coming home. Instead, my soul is at peace. But this peace did not come easily. Not at all.

There were moments when I experienced the worst cases of depression. There were moments when I felt like ending it. There were moments when life lost meaning. Because the meaning of my life was created by the job I was working.

My identity was a lecturer. The meaning of my life was that of being a lecturer. That was what my life had become. So when I decided that I was no longer a lecturer, my entire being lost its identity.

In conversations, I could no longer say that I lecture for a living. That was not what I was doing for a living anymore. Instead, I was just living.

It took a while before I could just live freely. It took a while before I could find peace in the life I was living. But it was and is totally worth it. Indeed, there is a great feeling of relief when you begin taking charge of your own destiny.

What most of us forget is that destinies are created by the Creator. It is God who placed us on Earth. The moment we believe that we are here for a reason, the soul and mind begin to work to make us realise what our destiny might be.

It might be that you are an explorer. And so, your destiny is to explore the world and share your discoveries with the world. It

might be that your destiny is to be a chef, and so, you can create meals that can fully nourish the vessels that carry our souls.

It is at this moment when we escape the cage of the fabricated life that we can find who we are and why we are here in the first place.

Leaving my job has been the greatest decision I have made to date. And I would not change it for anything.