

"To you, it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables."

- *Christ to His twelve disciples explaining the purpose of parables.*

Door of Dreams.

Looking into the vastness, his breathing was slow and calm. His benign smile aroused from thoughts of victories he had won. Victories over the ghosts of lingering hurt and demons that conducted the plays of pain that once ruled his heart. The sun's ray filtered through his bedroom window, kissing his face in the embrace of the conclusion of a good day. It had been some time since he had felt so peaceful.

The young man had been going through what most young men go through. The pressure of the need to attain success slowly smelting him into the diamond he is. The pains of past women hardening his heart with love and the appreciation of peace. Knocking on the door of a new journey, he realised that this door had been locked to him for many years. It was not the first time he was coming across the door. This door, with cracks that ran from the hinges and the doorknob, contained what it was said to him to be: Happiness. For the first time in a decade, he had the key to open the door.

Lost in his thoughts he fell into a deep sleep. The sun intensified warmly through the window. The potent warmth of the sun drifted him into a deep sleep. In his sleep, he was transported to a door with cracks from the hinges and the doorknob. He stood in front of the door. He tried looking through the cracks but beyond it was nothing but pure blackness. It was not a dark light but a black light. He could see what lay inside the door but failed to make sense of what he was seeing. He knelt to one knee to have a look through the keyhole. While steadying himself to have a clear look through the hole, a tiny man with tiny limbs jumped in the keyhole. He stood as a star, attempting to block the man from looking through.

The sight of the tiny man did not startle him. Instead only made him more curious and eager to open the door.

"Why do you do that?" The tiny man asked, "There is no need for you to look through the keyhole like a thief. This door is written Happiness. So inside, Happiness is what you will find."

The tiny man then leapt out the keyhole, kicking the young man's eye in doing so. The sting caused the young man to get back to his feet. Blinded by the hot sting in his eye, he raised his palm to his left eye and with his palm, rubbed the ball of his eye. The soothing effect rendered him momentarily motionless and forced him to close his other eye too. He shortly halted rubbing his eye, regaining the power of his sight. Shock suddenly struck him as the man in the tiny hole had taken the form of a full-grown man. The shock caused him to step back. He hit a rock behind him, causing him to fall flat on his back. The tiny man, now a full-sized man, looked at the young man with a benign smile.

"My name is Argo. Yes, I am not human. I have taken this form so that you can relate. Take my hand and please, take a seat on the same rock that led to your fall!" Argo said with a hearty laugh.

The young man, his brown-rich skin lighter in complexion due to the exciting fear that ran in his veins, steadily raised himself from the ground. He moved gingerly to the rock and like a sinking pebble, took a comfortable seat on the rock. Argo looked terribly handsome. Dangerously handsome. Indeed, he cannot be human with such extreme levels of handsomeness decorating his features. While marvelling at Argo's extraordinary features, Argo himself had taken a rock and positioned it next to the young man. Argo motioned to the young man to face the door. Now, both of them

were looking at the door. One knew what was inside, the other only but wondered what was.

“I know what you think. That I should spell it out for you. That perhaps I bear the magic code to open the door so you can see what’s inside. Because I see that you haven’t used the key that opens the door. My friend, this is not the case. He locks doors for a reason. He opens others for a reason too. You are so blinded by the mystery of the contents of this door that you failed to realise one key element about it.” Argo said facing the door.

The young man, puzzled, looked at Argo. He wanted to ask Argo what he meant with what he just said. But the fear infused with the excitement of the experience enslaved the functioning of his vocal cords. His mind was racing back and forth wondering what Argo meant that he has been “blinded”. Blinded from what?

“My friend, I know what you want to ask,” said Argo while throwing a pebble away from his feet. He rose from his rock and went around a corner nearby. The young man extended his head wanting to see what Argo was collecting. Argo came back with dry leaves, twigs and moderately large branches. He placed them in the centre of where they were sitting. He carefully placed the dry leaves first. He arranged the twigs carefully and unorthodoxly, placed the branches on top.

“Got a light?” Argo asked.

The young man looked at the arrangement and failed to see how a fire will come alive from it.

"Never mind," said Argo as he took two small rocks and rubbed them against each other. He rubbed them intensely until a spark landed on one of the dry leaves. To the man's surprise, a fire broke out fiercely. This man called Argo bewildered his mind. So much to learn from him. Who was he? Why is he so handsome? Why does he possess the attributes of the man he himself desired? Argo, where do you come from?

"I know what you thinking but we no longer have much time. This fire will die soon so we only have this moment and this moment only. My friend, look around. Take a careful look."

The young man stood up. His lungs forgot to exhale the air that circulated within them because of what the young man was seeing. All around him was his dreams. Pleasures and desires, all located in one space. He reached and touched the woman of his dreams and she felt real. He ran to the opposite side of the room and ran his fingers on the metal of his dream car. The car felt real. He spun around. He was looking for Argo with the joy and happiness of that of a child. He looked where Argo was but instead only saw a note. He walked over and bent over to pick it up. The note, written in sliver writing on a ruby crushed gold leaf read:

"All around you are your dreams and desires. Happiness, however, is not in the woman, the clothes or the car. Your dreams and desires are distractions from your true happiness. Understand this and you will realise you not looking from inside the door. But instead, you looking from the outside."

Not knowing what to make of the note, the young man tossed it aside. How could that be? There was the woman of his dreams, ready to be by his side. There was his dream car. The 850 horses

lurking within the engine bay ready to be released by the touch of a button. Clothes he dreamt of owning, begging to be worn. How could these, that brought him happiness instantaneously, be distractions from his own happiness?

A loud knock on his apartment door brought the young man back to reality. The dream felt so real that he lay for a moment wondering whether he was still asleep or whether he was now awake. The knock echoed a second time in his apartment and this time, he knew full well he was back in the real world. Still slaved by slumber, he dragged himself to the door. He slowly reached for the key and slowly unlocked the door. With a loud yawn, opened the door yet there was no one there. Not interested to know who it was, he retreated into his apartment and closed the door. The draft caused by the swinging of the door, lifted a letter from the floor to float to his belly. The letter fell back to the floor and like an old crane; he bent over to grab it.

The letter, written in silver writing on a ruby crushed gold leaf read . . .

He Spilt the Water in Two.

I found this planet made of water. Water- the essential key to save back at home. The basis of my mentor's philosophy to life. You see, I found something submerged in the water. Vishka and I sat in the cabin of the Ship as the water engulfed us.

But I heard, or rather I saw, the sea become two and at the centre stood a man. A man who back home would have been called a mad man. There was something powerful about the splitting of the water and the man. I felt that as he split the water into two, he was splitting my heart into two too.

Vishka stood to see the walls of water hold back the great beasts of the sea. I stood to the reality that this man had parted the dying me and the living me. How the walls were made of ghosts of years past. Each looking at me with eyes to fuse again so to be one again. Cause in that way, I will not be able to tell the difference between them. Like their master, they learnt how to transform into angels of light.

“SILENCE! Listen to the whispers of your heart,” the man said in a deep, warm yet stern voice. “Your journey is focused on the destination. This is why you confuse your way in life. You find yourself here in the midst of the sea not because you lost, but because you seeking that you know. A lost man knows not where he is but you do. You understand the path yet you seeking a path you cannot see. The path you cannot see because you did not design it. The path is made of solid gold but you can only see it with eyes of Faith. You know the road but you not seeing it. Hence you believing you are lost. You not.”

With that, the monsters of the sea became one as the walls of water collapsed. As the walls of my heart began to collapse, I quickly went for the fishnet. As fast as I could, I lined it in the middle of the walls to prevent the demons from merging with my angels. They laughed at me and soon I found myself confused about who is on my side and who wasn't.

"My dear young boy, a fishnet? Really?" perplexed and with a face of disappointment asked the old man. I merely looked down not knowing what to say. "It is ok. The wise were once fools."

And he left- Walking in the moonlight like a samurai after battle.

A Night in the Forest.

It was a cold and chilly night. She stood by the veranda facing the wooden floor underneath her. A beam of light fading from the window that she couldn't look into. The light inside the house switched off and she coughed. Blood stained her hands.

Three weeks before, the house they called home was full of life. The house was vibrant with romantic laughter, orchestrated by the two lovebirds that lived inside. Alelo and Ando were living together for the past 7 years. Their love was one that brews from high school and survived all trials and tribulations until that one day.

One night as Ando was taking a walk around their log cabin, he saw a man from a distance. A bulky stout man holding a camera. This man seemed to be lost in the thick night fog. However, Ando knew that sometimes tourists got lost as their log cabin was about 10km from the local resort situated in the forest where they lived. Tonight was a beautiful night with the fog masking the illuminance of the full moon. Ando was not about to ruin it with small chatter with a rich lost tourist.

While Ando was out, Alelo was back home preparing supper. Alelo was rumoured that she bathed with the waters that sprang from the fountain of youth. One woman said that she once saw Alelo scrub herself with rare wild honey and that was the reason for her spotless, smooth, honey-hued skin. Alelo never paid much attention to these rumours about her but secretly loved them. While she was chopping the carrots for her lamb stew, her phone rung. 'Unknown' was written on the screen.

“Rather odd an ‘Unknown’ calls me at this hour,” she thought to herself. She stared at her phone for a while until curiosity got the better of her.

“Hello Alelo,” said Unknown. Unknown had a clear and soft tone of voice. The voice of a woman in her early twenties.

“Hello unknown voice who calls people late at night,” replied Alelo jokingly shrewd.

“How have you been? Or better let me ask you this instead: How are you?” Unknown asked.

“What are you getting at?” Alelo asked with annoyance slowing brewing in her vocal cords.

“I’ll see you soon.” Unknown hung up the phone.

Confused, Alelo held her phone in her palm. “Who was this woman who would call me at this hour and ask me how I’m doing? Why call me-“

“Hey, I’m back,” Ando interrupted her thoughts, “you look confused. What’s wrong?” Ando asked Alelo even though knowing what she’ll say.

“Nothing,” Alelo said and she continued with her stew.

The next day, Alelo was the first to wake up. She battled with sleep that night. The strange call from Unknown and the very specific yet ordinary question robbed her of sleep. The thought that Unknown also ended the call by saying that he or she will see her soon got Alelo's mind in a whirl of confusion.

She got out of their bed and went to make pancakes for herself. The morning dew had begun to evaporate slowly and the aroma it gave off was soothing to her. She reached to open a window in the kitchen, above the sink, and suddenly a man appeared. A dark, bulky stout man appeared in her vision. Startled, Alelo froze not knowing what to do. As sudden as the man appeared, the man raised his camera and took a picture of Alelo. The flash only made things worse and Alelo found herself stumbling over the kitchen floor. Ando came running down and found Alelo on the floor, surrounded by the scent of the morning dew.

They did not speak that much that morning. Ando went about reading his books but continuously checked on Alelo. Alelo went about sewing clothes for her clients but kept pricking herself with the needles. At the stroke of noon, there was a knock on the door. Ando got up to see who it was. He opened the door and there stood a man in uniform. A Fast and Furious uniform and the man had been sent to deliver a package to Alelo. Ando looked back and saw that Alelo was drifting in her own world so he received the package for her.

"Thanks," said Ando and the Fast and Furious man was gone.

"You have a package. I'll just place it here next to your things on the table." Ando said not sure whether she heard him.

"Oh, ok," Alelo responded half-aware what Ando said.

After an hour, Alelo got up to make herself coffee and saw the package. She had forgotten about it. She raised it from the table and went to the kitchen with it. She poured water into the kettle and switched it on. While the kettle whistled promises of sweet coffee, she sat down and placed the package in front of her. In clear bold, block letters her name was written. She took her time opening the package only to find that inside the box, there was an envelope inside. The envelope looked clean and clear white. There was no lettering on it and the opening unsealed. The kettle clicked to indicate that the water was ready to make her sweet coffee. However, she paid it no mind. She took the envelope out the box and opened it. She turned it upside and hurled the contains on the table. In grave shock, she closed her mouth with her hands.

The scream echoed in the cabin and Ando came running to the kitchen. Pictures of Alelo scattered on the table. In between them, pictures of a baby resting peacefully in a nursery somewhere. Confused Ando picked the pictures at random and was confused as to what he was seeing. Alelo had not moved a muscle. On the back of one photo, there was a date written: 12 January 2012. Ando took the box and searched for any missing information inside. There was a second, yellow envelope tucked inside. Ando took it out and in clear red lettering it was written: FOR ALELO. Ando ignored the instruction and ripped the envelop open.

What fell out changed their lives- forever.

Ms.

Calm and cool. Her demeanour that of a woman who knows her worth. While many above her age struggle finding their ground, she at the young age she was, already knew who she was.

I met her in my first year doing General Management. Rough and rugged I looked but with the confidence of a thousand horses marching in battle, I approached her. She honoured me with her time. Her voice was soft and smooth like fine, freshly woven silk. The melody of her vocal cords enough to make even the sweetest sounding angel jealous. Her mind as vast and endless as the seven seas. Her intelligence seduced me and I became a slave to it. It was the first time I saw that indeed beauty does come from the inside. Just with her, her beauty also radiated from the outside.

As time passed on, she no longer spent her time with me. I wondered what had I done wrong. I went to view myself in the mirror and I realised the root of her pulling away. While she carried herself like a Queen, it dawned on me that I was a village joker who just got lucky. Looking so rugged with baggy clothing and a face that was last steamed before the Matric dance, in no way was I worthy enough to be granted continually presence from such a fine woman. Visiting my journals, I realised my thought processes were that of an ignorant teenager. Above the two-decade age mark and my thinking still that of wokeness that birthed no real knowledge. My mind was as dull as paint drying. With a mind that of bread fungus and looking like a brother who harasses school children for R2 for a smoke, in no way was I worthy of such a pure female energy.

A year passed and no word was shared between us. However, within that year I, secretly, was working on myself. The way I

presented myself, the way I smelt and I even changed the way I spoke to a much slower and calmer way. All of this so that one day I may be granted the opportunity to be in her presence again. And by the heavens, it happened! Here I was once more in the presence of this perfection of a woman. Her intelligence made me feel I knew nothing about everything. The strength she carried was that I only saw in mothers who will share their very last cents on ice cream for their children. Her beauty, her beauty wished by the immortals. Yet here I was, trying to find myself as a man, granted an audience with a woman who knew her worth as a woman. She never wore make-up. Her nails carved naturally exposing her warm, love-filled hands. Her body the embodiment of organic beauty only seen in the villages of KZN. And again, here I was, a young boy from Harrismith with a woman who knew she wasn't just any woman. But a true Zulu Woman.

Moments like these, I wonder what you up to. Who you with and if he is man enough to worship you as the woman you are. Our time was short but within it, I grew so much. The glow of your perfectly hued skin shredded a lot of insecurities and falsehoods within me that I'll forever be grateful for. The time we spent was short but I believe it was short of a reason. Like dynamite or one's first kiss, that explosive moment lasts for a lifetime. That single moment becomes a mountain in our sands of time. It becomes unforgettable.

As I write this, I still wonder what did you see in me? You who can make goddesses jealous. You who can make kings sacrifice their kingdoms just to hear your laughter. You who can make even the prettiest sunset dull when you smile. What did you see in this young boy from Harrismith who finds gold chains and gold rings cool? This young boy who cannot see beyond the shadows of his skeletons that have locked him in despair, falling in a bottomless pit?

Whatever it is you saw, I continue to seek it. Whatever it is, it is what makes me unique. Whatever it is, it is what makes me royalty. Because whatever it is, it gave me the honour to be in the presence of a Queen.

Thank you for letting me see your beauty. It continues to be a lantern that guides my path in this dark world.

Love Story by the Lake.

“Father, why do we love?” His son asked while they waiting for the first fish to bite the bait. The Father knew that his answer, he could make or break his son. Before he could answer him, the Father first gathered his thoughts.

The Father looked deep into the lake beneath them. He was a man who had many stories to tell about love. As a man over half a centennial, his affair with love has been a long and adventurous one. Within the subtle ripples of the lake, he remembered his first taste of love. He was 16 and the young gal, The Gal of His Firsts he calls her, was 15. Indeed this was his first true love. He loved everything about her and through her explored all the pleasures love could provide- but also all the evils. He had a woman before The Gal of His Firsts but he never knew he was in love at the time. He was 13 at the time and she was also 13 but a grade lower. This gal he called The Lost One.

The Lost One gave him the perception of love. Even in his old age, he still cannot hold his wife confidently because of The Lost One. There was a moment in his time with The Lost One in which she never allowed him to touch her. And when he did, he remembers the cold expression on her face. A face that communicated clearly that he was breaching barriers. He never understood why. Why was she like this to him? Why was that she never allowed him to touch her yet, the male best-friend of hers was allowed that privilege? The same best-friend who would later replace his position in her life. This is a mystery that still haunts him to this day. He first felt affection when he was 13 years old. At the age of 13 and a half, he learnt that a woman who has fallen

for your spell could also fall for the spell of another- even while she's under yours.

For three years he led a campaign against women. Some thought he was homosexual the way he confidently spoke against women and their treacherous ways. He wanted nothing to do with women until he met The Gal of His Firsts. A tear rolled down his cheek while a smile cracked his aged face. He clearly remembers everything about her. Down to the details of what she smelt like the first time he kissed her. She was the bearer of his heart for more than half a decade. She was everything to him. She took him through the deepest hells yet she could take him to the heavens and back. She could be the gnashing of teeth that would devour his soul yet she could also be the milk and honey of the Promised Land. She was everything that love could ever be. Through her, he committed the same feat. He realised that he could love a person with all he is and also despise a person with all he is. Through her, he saw that he could hold the heart of a person in his hand and with a flick of the finger, destroy it.

There is one however, who he has loved and still loves. This was after The Gal of His Firsts. Unlike The Lost One, when he broke up with The Gal of His Firsts he realised he knew nothing about love and how he reacts to women when in love. He entered a stage where he courted different women in hopes to understand himself better. He was 21 at the time. A long time it has been but he remembers this period vividly. Through this period, he discovered what he liked and disliked in a woman. How he reacts to the women he liked and how he reacts to the women he didn't like. Unlike sowing wild oats, what he was doing was planting flowers that he grew in his own garden. His own garden that he hoped it will be a safe haven and paradise for when he met Ms Right. During this period, he did meet such a woman. A woman he calls Ms Prototype.

Ms Prototype was perfect. She was intelligent, loving, caring and gorgeous. Unlike the two women he loved before, Ms Prototype was loyal to him. Something he never experienced before. He could write a book about Ms Prototype. He sometimes fears that if Ms Prototype were to call him, he would leave his wife for her. She is the only woman he ever shed tears for when she left. He now looked under the heavens as to wonder what happened. He felt a rush in his heart. 'Why didn't I fight harder?' 'Why did I lose patience with her?' What if after what if led from a single tear breaking from the corners of his eye to his cheeks becoming the banks of a river of tears that followed. He wondered if being married and having a child was from love or from hoping Ms Prototype would get jealous and want him back. For after they broke up when he was 24, he set out to be the best man he could be. At 51, he had amassed great wealth and had many estates all over the land. Secretly he was building himself to get back with Ms Prototype. But this never happened. She moved to a different country and it became difficult to keep in touch with her. Ms Prototype, the one he always loved.

Having gathered his thoughts he looked at his son. Gazed deeply in his eyes and placed his hand on his shoulder. With the aged smile that cracked his face that was now glistening from dried tears on his cheeks, he answered and said:

“My Son, we love- so we become strong.”

Ends of the Tree.

The ends of the tree were stretching themselves to the heavens. Twigs carving holes into the clear blue sky. There was something that encaptured the young man and young woman to the tree. This tree that winter had robbed of its green leaves and signs of life. At that moment, however, the young man and young woman felt a swift change in the winds. The ends of the tree began orchestrating the rhythm of their hearts.

He stood looking at the grey slender tree and thought of it when it was full of life. He imagined the tree in the middle of summer when it stood proudly, beautifully dressed in forest green leaves. Leaves that could provide shade to all walks of life whether it be humans or ants. He likened the tree to the tree he first hugged back home. Unlike the tree back home, this one is merely going through the seasons. Unlike the reincarnation of the tree back home, this slender tree with its ends carving holes into the clear blue sky is merely going through a repeated cycle. He believes that God is in everything around us and if we only but listen, we will hear the messages that God is trying to tell us. However, with this tree, the voice of God was rendered silent. It was if the tree only got its messages in the summer when all is going well. For in the winter, like many humans, the harsh conditions of facing a cold reality left it alone and useless.

He looked at the young woman beside him. A smile slowly cracked his face. He could not help it. After all, it was she who pointed out the tree. He liked that. He enjoyed that at that moment, they were in unison with something. At the moment, the tree got meaning. That tree now had significance. He looked at the young woman with her full cheeks and teeth perfectly shaped that gave a

smile only rivalled by sunsets over open waters. Her short yet elegant self absorbing the calm presence of the tree. He wondered what she made of the tree. Were her sentiments the same as his? Was the tree just a passing fancy or something that meant something to her? Even though it felt that their heartbeats were in perfect unison at that moment, he wondered whether were they in unison too. This tree with its ends slowly carving the clear blue sky, began carving into his heart.

She stood looking at the tree and gestured they leave. Moments later, they saw another tree, which was smaller in comparison to the first. She once more stood for a moment to absorb the presence of the tree. To him, he enjoyed these moments. He enjoyed these moments for he understood moments defy the laws of time. Moments are the ones that remain eternal. That moment where they both felt something together, he knew that for him this was special. He felt courage suddenly overwhelming him. He felt words rushing from his heart to his tongue ready to burst out. Sweat slightly forming in the palms of his hands. He began losing grip of reality. Lost in the moment he was ready to let it out. How he felt and how those emotions have been keeping him up at night. She had to know. As he opened his mouth to let those words jump from his tongue into the unknown, she gestured they move on. The moment was over. The window of opportunity- closed.

The tree slowly retracted its ends from the clear blue skies and from his heart. They were walking now to a destination not clearly defined. The words that were dancing on his tongue slowly drifted back into his heart. Sweat dried in his palms and he took a firm grip of reality. Even though he had wished to extend his hand and merge it with her coco-buttered fingers, he knew this wasn't the moment. He walked with a feeling that had no definition. A feeling that made no sense but had the sensible reasoning to let things be. Like the tree, maybe the season for those words to

escape hasn't arrived. Maybe this was the season to see whether in bear nakedness of self, can he truly survive until life clothes him in his true and full glory. Or like the tree back home, this was the rebirth of something once forgotten. That rushing only results in instant death in the winter. He looked at her once more and watched her speak about matters that mattered to her. Her buoyancy and light radiance of femininity illuminating with a special kind of glow. A glow one sees at the break of the morning before the sun emerges from the horizon. The kind of glow one gets when you exit the exam hall knowing you will no longer be returning to it. The kind of glow that emerges after a mother saves her child from falling into the pits of despair.

How the tree with those dead ends was able to bring him closer to her. How that tree communicated a message from the heavens that could never be coded in human language. How that tree created an eternal memory for both them. How the ends of the tree created the one thing that all man needs: a moment with a beautiful woman.

The Herdsman.

Looking into the vastness of the night sky above, the young herdsman pondered. His thoughts went to and fro and seemingly, they went in circles seeking to find an answer to a question that he did not even ask. His mind went on and on seeking the answer to the unasked question until a bright beam from the heavens struck the Earth.

He ran as quickly as he could in his sandals. The desert sand weighing heavy with each step he took. Eager to find out what the beam was, he picked up his robe and picked up his pace. He arrived at the scene of the incident and looked with eyes of awe. In front of him lay a living being. The being shaped like a human, covered with a glow of a yellowness. The being lay unconscious for a few minutes before raising its hand. In the hand lay gems that shone like stars. Suddenly, shock slithering through his senses, the herdsman fell on his back as this being began to rise from the ground.

A huge and powerful figure. As the being lifted itself from the ground, the sand around it transformed into pebbles of precious stones. On the being itself, the sand crystallized into fine gold leaves and slowly this figure began taking the form of a full human. A bright illuminance radiated off the being that the herdsman could not look directly at. As the illuminance slowly began to fade away, the being began to display features of a full female human.

She was covered from head to toe with gold leaves. The sand that still trickled off her shoulders became diamonds when they

touched the ground. Her eyes strikingly brown with a look that could turn Medusa into stone. The contours that framed her face was those only sculpted by the gods. The full desert moon shone behind her, tracing a silhouette that swerved like the river Nile. Such beauty caused the herdsman to forget to breathe. For a moment, Death had to plunge him back to Life.

"I come to find the one that is looking for me," the female being said. Her voice as creamy as condensed milk. She stood firm with a pose only rivalled by a standing rose. She looked to her left. She looked to her right. She looked straight ahead. The herdsman began to crawl back and the female being saw him. She raised her hand once more and her nails were the gems that shone like stars. She looked straight at the herdsman.

"Come," she said.

The herdsman, frozen in both fear and appreciation of her immaculate beauty, did not know what to do. He thought maybe he could run for miles and miles. Run as far away from the female being as he possibly could. He thought maybe he could just run back to his village. The village elders always knew what to do. But then again, he was a lonely herdsman who did not possess the charm of the village merchant or the village protector. He was merely the herdsman of the village and was given that role because the village believed he lacked the virility for other important tasks in the village. No woman in the village ever dreamt or needed the companion of a herdsman.

Looking straight into the eyes of Beauty, Beauty delivered to him from the heavens, he reached for her hand.

Solid as a Stone.

The boulder stood strong and firm, cutting through the blue sky, solid and impenetrable by the forces of the world. Marked with years of beating from the weather, marked with age that had shaped and coloured its outer shell. A chip fell revealing that the boulder remained course and unchanged from within. The boulder faced him boldly. The overwhelming presence of it blocked him dead in his tracks.

He had been hiking the resort's mountain the whole day as a challenge to himself. Hiking was not his first love but he pinned himself to trying new things. This came from the desire that brewed inside of him to find meaning in his life. He had read once that at the point of death, only do we know life. His life was not one filled with many near-death experiences so he worked himself into trying the most daring of tasks. A friend was gossiping, enviously, about how their past school mates had gone to a certain resort and were doing 'white people stuff.' He was annoyed by this statement, as hiking was as black as scorns were to black funerals and weddings. He, however, liked the idea of hiking and found himself travelling to this resort deep in the mountains.

He arrived on Thursday and since then, tried every activity that was available at the resort. From swimming (where he nearly drowned only to be saved by a 12-year-old Indian) to what he was doing now: hiking. He chose the single and easiest pass to the summit of the mountain. The "Motivational Board" at the foot of the mountain claiming it takes at least 3 hours to mount the mountain. 4 hours later, he was still at the halfway "You can do IT!" board that stood next to a tuckshop that the resort had set up on the mountain. He was breathing heavily with a backpack that

weighed as heavy as an elephant. After all, the backpack had all the essentials he needed- so he thought. But, he was determined to reach the summit. Even if it meant sleeping with mountain goats and snakes.

As he was steadily walking, air rushing into his overheating lungs, legs aching from misshaped rocks; he could not deny but thank the Lord for all he was seeing. He ran his hands against the smooth, cool walls of the mountain boulders. He rubbed his skin against the leaves of probing branches. Each insect that walked on him, he embraced and let the insect get on with its business. He was submerged deeply in the wonderful creation of God's work. God's work that is complex but simple in design. Here he was in the heart of the mountain. A highly complex and complicated life form but a simple slip would mark his guaranteed demise. For the first time in an extremely long time, he felt alive.

30 minutes later, he saw the test that would prove whether he was truly living or being lost in the experience. He had come to learn, through stories told by others, most people are never alive. They 'live life' but they are not really living life. He understood this when a white friend of his complained about how her family had been in Lesotho and behaved like 'tourists.' He remarked that they were tourists in Lesotho. His white friend snapped and said that what she meant was her family were only in Lesotho because it was still very "African" and the only thing they were doing was collecting memories they would regale their friends with back home over braais and gatherings. Even the friend who gossiped him into visiting this resort, in the story the friend was sharing, he only heard about the resort and the beauty of it. Like a tourist in a foreign land, the experiences lived marked how different the land was. The experiences spoke from a third party, not from the point of self.

Thus, when faced by this boulder he decided he was going to take every moment in. He first hugged the portion of the boulder he could hug and thanked the Lord for placing it in his way. He asked for the Holy Ghost to guide him to overcome this boulder. He spent a considerably long time allowing the boulder to communicate with him in languages not heard by men. He felt that ever-sweet peaceful love of God rush into him and burst him into life. For a moment, he felt as if he was reborn back into existence. He felt as if he was dancing on the golden streets that paved Heaven. Unlike the earlier experience, now after communicating with Nature in a dialect not understood by human logic, this time he was alive.

With this newfound love for his Lord and Saviour and a renewed appreciation for life, he placed his first step in a crevice wide enough for him to lodge his foot. He's bare shin exposed, a mountain snake hidden within the boulder struck him. The strike so swift and sudden, he lost his footing and he slipped. Life plunged him back to Earth- only to be caught in the warm embrace of Death herself.

Finding the Lost, Lost in Finding It.

‘To find yourself is to lose yourself’ read the phrase attached to the notice post on campus. Why would someone place such a baffling phrase out in the open for all to read? Most importantly, what does it mean?

It made sense for the post to be on a campus post. Campus, the university haven where most are still trying to find their purpose in life. Most under the influence of desired outcomes from their friends and family. These desired outcomes are often the result of parent’s past failures and their fear of them making an encore in their children’s lives. It was once said to him that the curses of old continue generation to generation. These curses only continue because they are given life in the “I know you can do better” and the “when I was young” pieces of advice that elders bestow upon the young. A friend of his once told him a tragic story of how his aunt went bankrupt because of credit. His aunt who earned the upwards of fifty thousand per month filed for insolvency to her creditors. His friend told him that he hoped that he would never get to that point. Yet, when his friend was telling him this story, the friend was opening an account in a clothing store because in his words: “a man gots to stay fresh”. The other reason was that one of his brothers advised him that it is good to have a clothing account. The irony. His greatest fear was to file for insolvency yet here he was applying for credit to buy clothes.

To find yourself is to lose yourself. This time the phrase ran through his mind like a cheap movie. He sat at the back of the lecture hall observing the students in front of him. He looked at

how the different dynamics played. He saw the young focused man taking notes yet will probably write new ones when it's time to study. Thus, is that man truly absorbing the knowledge he is getting, or, like looking at the pointing finger, missing all the heavenly glory the finger is pointing to? He sees the young female who wants to be the "baddest gal" on the block. Her hair glowing green with a simple tattoo grazing her neck. Yet her skirt still resting over the knees and her eyes avoiding any eye contact with any individual who approaches her. He always felt sad for these girls. They want to be free. Free to be whoever they wish to be yet society, with its iron grip on the how tos and how not tos for females, she remains a slave to society's norms. She remains a slave to men who think a mini-skirt is a sexual invitation. She remains a slave to females who belittle other females for wearing a lace shirt. She remains a slave to the world in which she wants to be alive.

After class, starving, the young man made his way to the dining hall to buy fries and a foot long Russian sausage. Even though he knew the fat was no good, at that moment, that fat was what the body craved. He walked past a group of freshmen and women hurdled in a circle. In the centre was a senior student who has been on campus for some time. Some saying he has over welcomed his stay. The man went on how there is no God for if there was a God, he would have saved the Blackman from his ill fate. He continued to proclaim he is an atheist and went to explain how those with power have always used the power of religion to control "the mind of the masses". The group of about eight slowing began to grow yet his stomach began to protest in roars. He decided this was not for him and continued to get his bowl of grease.

He's body satisfied with the deliciousness of the fries and sausage, he found it fit to go to the library to do some reading before going home. Lo' and behold, the atheist's group had expanded! Some

coming from the group spreading and discussing the man's teachings. The irony. "There is no God and I am his prophet!" The words of Alan Watts echoed in his mind. For here was a man. Telling people of a God of No God and giving the teachings to believe in the God of No God. He was no different from the man who preaches about the Risen King and the teachings He left with His followers. He was no different from the girl who believes in the flow of energy through chakras and the teachings and practices of yoga to tap into these energies.

In finding oneself, we tend to get lost. Lost in the sense one has lost the direction of where they are going but know where one's going. However, the man who has truly found himself has ultimately lost himself. Lost in the sense that he realised that the rabbit hole is deeper than that that meets the eye. In Him, we are made new. He realised that those who were touched by the teachings from the God of No God's priest's sermon left with a newness that twinkled in their eyes. Lost in new thoughts that opened a door to a journey of self-discovery.

He walked home with a podcast of Zen tales playing through his headsets. His favourite tale speaks of a young admiral who once visited an old Zen master with a puzzling problem he wished the master would solve. He told the Zen master that he heard a story of an old man who had a goose in a bottle. As the goose grew, the old man was afraid to shatter the bottle as the glass might hurt the animal. And so, the admiral asked the Zen master, how did the goose get out? The Zen master heard the admiral but, changed the topic and discussed matters irrelevant to the dilemma presented by the admiral. As the admiral made his way to the door, the Zen Master said, "oh admiral, it's out."

Harmony.

“To what extent is one’s purpose? Why is there a need to be alive?” The Young Student asked himself. The questions that gave birth to philosophy. The Young Student looked through his rained tinted window. Streams of rain trickled down the glass. His thoughts were swimming in a pool of wonder.

He looked further into the grey hue of the outside. He saw the clouds cover the sky that even the light from the sun could not penetrate. He saw the leaves of trees dance to the whistles of the wind that rushed through them. A perfect harmony of existence played out in front of him. He heard soft chirps of birds give rise in between the low and subtle thuds of raindrops landing on the ground. The Young Student looked closely at the march of ants racing quickly to their underground kingdom. The beauty and sublime order of nature gave him an insight into the answers he was seeking. But then, a disturbance so familiar struck him. A disturbance unique in nature- it perfectly disharmonized the beauty that he was experiencing.

The loud sounds of cars passing through destroyed the songs of the birds. Cusses of drunk men from the local pub down the street filling the air with tangible disgust. The chaos of this world was not from nature, but it came from the hands of Man. The disturbance of Man's existence can be seen even from his first footsteps. He stole the beauty of God and manipulated His Divinity for his own gain. Foolish is Man. Man then goes to create orders and systems that he becomes a slave to. The Young Student came to realize that even though we are made in His Image, the foolishness of Man makes him think he created the Image first.

The disturbance of Man has led Man to a disturbance of self. The way Man has disturbed the very order and pristine balance of Nature, it is the same way Man has disturbed his very own existence. The Young Student with this in mind walked over to his prized possession. A sword made for him by his Master. A sword that he was told represents himself and with it, he could carve out a piece of history. He looked at the sword and marvelled at the craftsmanship of its design. He wondered how long his Master took to create it. Did his Master already begin making it when he first began his journey with Master? Or did Master hire someone to create it and mask it as his creation? While staring at the incredibly sharp blade, an awakening sliced his mind.

The sole purpose of the sword was to embody his purpose. The Young Student looked outside and realized everything was there, in its perfect place because it had to be there. It was not forced. It was not bought. It was there. It was in the presence of itself thus its existence could be felt. Unlike Man who forgot his place, the birds and trees have not. The grey covered sky was there for the purpose of giving the Earth the water it needed. The sun still shines from behind. Everything exists as it is meant to be. Man over the years recreated his own existence, therefore, calibrating his original existence and purpose on this Earth. Instead of nurturing and living alongside Mother Nature, Man threw a brick at Father Time and abusively tortured Mother Nature. Man exploited her minerals and gems to enrich himself. Man took without giving back. Father Time, in spite, accelerated Man's demise. This is seen with global warming and the quick depletion of scarce resources that give Man energy and sources of life. Poor Mother Nature, she stands defenceless against the ruthless attack of her child- Man.

The Young Student saddened by this wished he had not asked himself these questions. He regretted having consulted the Holy

Ghost about them. A tear began to roll down his cheek as he felt he too was part of the destruction created by Man. His knees buckled and he fell to the ground, dragged even lower by a heavy heart. As his eyes began to be impaired by a sea of tears, he felt a soft finger touch his chin. The warmth of the finger felt like a cup of tea during a cold night, like the wrap of a warm blanket in the dead of winter. He dared to look up. But he did. What he saw was Love Himself.

Like the dancing leaves outside, Love wore clear white robes that flowed with the elegance of a woman's silhouette. Light beamed from his presence and the Young Student could not stare directly at Him. Love removed his finger from the Young Student's chin. Love walked over to the Young Student's sword and raised it. The sword's metal glistened from Love's radiance. The sword reflected Love's perfect wool-like hair and bronze skin. With the swiftness of a ballerina on her toes, Love thrust the sword into the Young Student's heart. The Young Student shocked, expected to see Death anytime soon. Instead, he saw himself. He saw himself through the eyes of his Master. He saw himself through the eyes of Father Time and Mother Nature. He saw himself through the eyes of Love Himself.

Love pulled the sword out of the Young Student's chest. Not a single drop of blood stained the sword. Love placed the sword in its rightful place and He disappeared. The Young Student looked again outside. He saw the streams of rain trickle down his window. He heard birds chirp and sing harmoniously with the chimes of falling rain. He saw the dance of wind and tree leaves. He heard the cries of drunkards making their way home so was the ants below. He realized that everything was at its place. Everything was fulfilling its purpose within its existence.

Everything was in harmony.

A Journey Once Travelled.

“A road you have walked before will always take you to the same destination. No matter how the Universe may shape the path afresh or add new lanes, the destination will remain the same,” said the Master as he and his student were walking along their morning prayer route.

Troubled for weeks, the student had been perplexed by a journey he once undertook. A journey he once travelled when he was a young man. He ran away from home. The Universe led him to a particular road and he found himself following his heart along this road. At the time, the road seemed endless with beautiful bends and long stretches of paving. The scenery was beautiful with lush trees and bushes decorating the landscape. Intoxicated by it all, the young man enjoyed his journey and forgot that he was on the road because he had ran away from home. He thanked the Lord for the beautiful road for it was making his burden of running away lighter. Then suddenly, as instant as the flash of lightning, the road he was walking on ended. The long stretches of paving of the road ended. The beautiful lush trees and bushes ended. The beautiful bends ended. He had not realised that he had reached the destination. Or so he thought. He arrived to a destitute and dreary destination. He felt weak around the knees. He fell to the hard ground below him and wept.

The student soon realised that crying for a dead road was not worth it. He thanked the Lord for the lesson in enjoying the journey and not the destination. He felt strength course through his body and his knees got the stability they needed to raise him from the dust below. He got up. His bag swung freely under his right arm and he caught it mid-air. In doing so, he did not realise

he caught the underside of his bag and that the zipper was half-opened. A picture fell through the zipper and he gingerly bent over to pick it up. A picture of his home. A beautiful picture of his home that made him miss the intimate spaces within its walls. However, having walked this road that he had just walked, he thanked the Lord for a second time for the lessons that he learnt. Lessons that equipped him with newfound strength. He threw the picture to the ground and continued on.

As he was walking the wilderness, he came across an open field. A clear field that was strapped bear of any sense of life. The waves of heat dancing in his vision. In the middle of it, there was a rock. A fairly large rock. Because he was on this journey to find that which he himself did not know, he went over to the rock. As he approached the rock, he realised that the rock appeared the same as he had seen it within the waves of heat. He placed his bag down and knelt before the rock. For some strange reason, the rock communicated with him in languages not understood by men. He felt the rock communicate directly to his heart addressing the issues that led him to his search of that which he did not know. He spent so much time with the rock that by the time he got to his feet, he did not realise that he was in a deep trance. So deep in a trace, he lost track of time- and his bag. He thanked the Lord that his life was spared and the blessing that the attachments to his home were now all gone. He thanked the Lord for placing the rock in his path and thanked the Lord for the cosmic energy that allowed him to communicate with it. Having ran away from home, walked a beautiful yet strange path and now finding himself in the middle of a hot open field to communicate with a rock, he found a refreshed purpose.

The student continued his path. So profound his experience was with the rock he had communicated with, that he stopped for a moment. He had gained some distance from the rock and was

approaching the horizon that he saw earlier. The horizon that promised vegetation and a well for he was starting to get hungry. Before exiting the open field, he decided to look back and see if he could see the rock. He did. Now it stood like a tiny pebble and he bid his farewell to it. He looked forward and he continued walking. Moments later, he reached the end of the horizon. He was surrounded by vegetation of all kinds and tree branches that hung with all sorts of fruits. Overwhelmed with joy, he praised the Lord for the food that was in front of him. A short praise it was for his stomach could no longer contain its excitement. And so, he went in and devoured. Long endless rows of trees stood before him. Each possessing a different fruit for him to try. The beautiful hills swerved and bent elegantly, shaping the sky above him in an exoticism that had him enchanted. He realised that he was walking a road that was paved with elegant petals and leaves that had fallen from the surrounding trees and flowers. He enjoyed every moment of his journey. The breeze carried notes of lavender and ancient scents no longer used in the modern world. Scents that froze time and led one into the greater dimensions of the universe. Enchanted and having eaten so much food, he suddenly fell to the ground. The overwhelming pleasure he was experiencing had exhausted him. He decided that on those beautiful and soft petals and leaves he was laying on, to sleep.

A long and meaningful sleep it was. He woke up still dazed. In his heart, he still had the excitement of the day before still racing his veins. However, what he saw left him lost for words. The trees, the curving hills, the beautiful colours of the sky, the petals and leaves below were all gone. Instead, he found himself in a wilderness that promised no life. A wilderness that was bear. A dry wilderness with waves of heat dancing on a beige, sandstone ground. Perplexed he sat in a lotus position, to open the channel to communicate with the universe in order to understand what had happened. Silence. The universe could not answer him. There was too much noise in his heart and mind for him to listen to the

universe. He got up from the ground and felt the heat bake on his skin. He was dumbstruck. Not only had the beautiful land with the fruitful trees, beautiful hills, and colourful skies scented with lavender and ancient smells vanished, his clothes had too. For the first time, he prayed with anger to the Lord.

With so much rage and anger, he complained and yelled to the Lord. He blamed Him for planting the seed for him to run away from home. He was blaming Him for letting the universe lead him to walk on a beautiful road with great bends. He was resenting the fact he lost his bag because of the rock that stole his attention. He was even close to cursing the Lord of creation for letting him lose sense of time in a land that had now vanished into thin air. Perhaps the heat got to him and he collapsed to the ground still filled with anger. Anger that had fuelled bitter tears to run down his cheeks. Sobbing in the dust below him, he ended his ranting with the hope that Death will find him and that his worries will forever end. Under the weight of his emotions, he had no strength to get to his feet. He lay on the hard hot ground. He wept himself to sleep.

A cold breeze brushed through his toes. This woke him up and to his surprise; he was covered with new clothing. A black robe that covered his entire body. Inside there was a note:

“Death only comes for those who have no Life. Raise and walk.”

Astonished and speechless he rose from the dust. He brushed the particles that rose with him and saw in a distance a large spring. The steam of the water visible in his sight. He realised then that he last bathed while he was still living at his home. A smile slowly formed on his face and ran to the spring. He took off his robe and

saw that he was also wearing sandals. He took them off and they too had a note:

“Walk in peace and the Lord will never forsake you.”

He took that moment to apologise to the Lord. He knelt to his knees and prayed a deep heartfelt prayer to the Lord of his creation. He felt peace restored in his heart. He thanked the Lord for His forgiveness. Afterwards, he dived into the spring.

He felt the miracle of the spring cleaning not only his body but his heart too. He thanked the Lord for the spring. He lay in the spring and soaked. He did not want to leave. But, he knew that he should. And so, reluctantly, he slowly got out; savouring each drop of water that ran on his body. He stood naked and let the air dry him. He heard sweet messages carried in the wind in the air and decided that he will walk with the wind. Wind is like a broken rudder, at any point in time, Wind might change its direction. He quickly dressed his robe and sandals and walked with the wind. Wind today was a calming companion. Wind did not blow so much to kick up the dust below him. The wind blew its messages with just enough cosmic energy to communicate softly in his ear. Today Wind was happy and its happiness filled the young man.

The wind bid its farewell and left the young student standing in front of a beautiful oasis. He heard the wind's final message telling him to be cautious. Through the cosmic energy, he replied that he will and thanked the wind for its companionship. The oasis looked familiar. The path carved on the ground was long and bent elegantly with the live vegetation surrounding it. The ends of the tree branches cut through the sky with such precision, it made the oasis look heavenly. The young man, however, entered the oasis

with great caution. It was difficult because once again, he was hungry and the vegetation around him looked beautiful. He asked the Lord if he might eat. But, the confusion in his heart and protests from his stomach blocked the channels to his Lord. Weakened by temptation, he ate. Delicious. He ate more. The juices of each fruit trickling along the sides of his mouth. He was close to losing himself once more to the pleasures of the flesh. Death appeared. Death, to him, was beautiful. She looked into his eyes and told him that he once wished for Her. She gave him a deep kiss with the fruit juices still flowing in his mouth. She left him. The sweetness of Her kiss overpowered that of the fruit. Her kiss trickled down his nerves. He knew that this was a road once travelled.

He threw the unfinished fruit he had in his hand and thanked the Lord for sending Death to save him.

Sword of Faith.

It demanded attention. It carried so much power that he was captivated by it. His master taught him that the sword was to be used carefully. His sword was his light, his master told him. With light, he must be careful. Too much of it can easily blind him, causing him too crash on the shores. Too little of it, he can lose sight and be lost forever. He had to understand its power before he could wield his sword.

He spent the last six months up the Mountain of the Brave seeking his sword. His master had told him that somewhere up the mountain, he will find it. The key thing that he had to understand is that it will not come in the shape that he thought. To him, he believed that his sword was made of gold, sheathed in a leather scabbard. The cross-guard was made of pure copper and the hilt wrapped with the finest of leather. He believed that his sword was a thing of beauty and as such, he would easily find it in the vastness of the mountain. He disregarded the wisdom of his master.

As he was walking up to the mountain, his tradition commanded him to speak with the rocks. His tradition commanded that he speaks with the tree leaves that wiped his sweat. In this communication with nature, he would be led to his sword. However, not paying attention, the mosquito that landed on his shin warned him that in the next crevice lived a wild and impatient mountain snake. Lost in his fantasies of his sword, he brushed the mosquito away that protested to take its warning seriously. He kept brushing the mosquito until he felt a sharp pain in his shin. Two holes leaked with blood that was red and green. A tail vanished within the rocks.

He felt weary. He felt his head become light on his shoulders. The mountain knew that the snake hated visitors. To help those the snake attacked, the mountain had a cave nearby with leaves of a plant that if eaten quickly, could save one from death. The student knew this and fought against the venom to reach the cave. He wasted no time and ate as much of the plant as possible. It had a bitter taste, the same taste as soap that a teacher rubs on a child's tongue after they cuss. He understood his mistake and spent the night in the cave. He spent the whole night, under the watchful eye of the night star, praying for forgiveness.

The following morning he woke up feeling better. The two holes in his shin had stopped leaking. The venom seemed to have stopped to spread just under his right knee. He thanked the mountain for the shelter and thanked the plant for the medicine. He marvelled at how much of the plant was left, considering he ate so much it until he couldn't hold any of it in his stomach. A bird flew by with a loud cry. A cry that indicated that his journey was not over. However, this time he must pay attention.

He left the cave with a renewed respect for his journey. The image of his sword remained glorious but lost most of its glimmer. It no longer looked gold. Its hilt no longer looked to be wrapped with the finest leather. His mind began to form a shapeless sword. As he drifted deeper into his mind searching for the shape of his sword, a wind blew so violently, that he was held by the trunk of the tree that he had just passed. He thanked the tree for catching him from his inevitable death if he had fallen. He thanked the wind for reminding him why he was up the mountain.

At this point, the student no longer held an image of his sword. His sword became something of an enigma that made him more curious about the world around him. Suddenly, he felt a strong

presence overwhelm him. A stronger presence than Death just moments ago. A strong presence that yelled at him. So loud the presence was, he could not ignore it. He felt the presence was a few steps ahead of him. He walked towards it.

As he walked towards the presence, he remembered the wise words of his master about light. He was being blinded by this presence and so, he stopped to control himself. In doing so, he realized that if he had walked one step further, he would have fallen into a fissure that split the mountain into two. Realising that the presence was Death once again, he took three steps back and prayed wholeheartedly to the Lord for saving him. He found that spot to be a holy spot because that is where he discovered his power to conquer death. He decided to spend the night at that very spot.

The night was calm and provided him with peaceful sleep. He was woken by the soft kisses of the first ray of sunlight. The sun gleaming with colours of red and orange over the horizon. Dancing in the light he saw a silhouette. A still silhouette that stood like a tree. The sun continued to rise and the silhouette remained still. He prayed to the heavens to open a path that will lead him to the silhouette. Something about it called him to it. He felt moved to it. He realized that the silhouette was the sword he was searching for. The sun finally rose to provide enough light for the student to see a way over the fissure. The only way over the fissure was to take a leap of faith.

Gathering all his will in his body, he jumped.

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