

The Chronicles of the Mexican Horse Thief III

Chondre had found a place for us to live, we had a meeting with the landlady and were all good to go. At her house I saw Matthew for the first time, he was her son-in-law and had the cottage next to mine. We checked each other out, the way hard men do, he looked dangerous and said very little. The day it was time to move I packed all my kit and left Kempton Park. Chondre had all her stuff moved already, plus my stuff that was at Dougie's farm. The next morning I awoke to a strange sound, it was a horse running around outside. The space, the space. Gordon was our first visitor. I was unpacking my home theatre; it was still in the booby trapped shopping trolley. I had missed one of the blades and cut a piece of meat out of my finger. About 4mm square with some yellow fat attached. Taped up the wound and continued to set the system up. Then had to sit down for a bit, stupid little wound had made me all wonky! Finally fished up and we had sound. Pink Floyd, of course.

I was still working a few days a week at Gordart Gallery, the traffic was a nightmare, hated the fact that I had to go out there. One day, going into the gallery, with Kathy as a passenger. We stop at a major intersection in Auckland Park area. A person at the traffic light offers free samples, I don't even look what and say, "No!" Kathy stretches over me and takes the samples.... Free condoms, for fucks sake! The chap then demands money. I tell him I have none, which is perfectly true. He demands the samples back, Kathy won't give. Old lady, Kathy is a, born again Christian black lady. You figure. So the light changes and I start to pull away. The guy punches me a solid one in the face! I stall the car in the middle of the intersection, peak hour traffic, mind you. I get out the car, walk up to the guy who is now hurling abuse at me. I kick his ribs in with my right boot. He screams, staggers around a bit, clasping his side, then swears at me some more. As his arms are clutching his injured side I kick his ribs in with my left boot. More screams, then his hands drop to his belt line behind his back. I think, "weapon!" My left hand has my gun out and cocked in an instant, I am yelling at him, that if he moves his hands another inch I will fucking shoot him. By now the traffic is snarled up nicely and I have a very large and irate audience. A taxi driver gets out and I am worried this whole thing is going to end in a bloodbath. The taxi driver klaps the guy and tells him, "Say sorry to the Baas." I use this diversion to jump in my cars and wiggle my way out of there. Don't need any shit with the cops. I am so pissed off with Kathy, I cannot even look at her. Free fucking condoms. Shit.

The next couple of weeks were pretty mundane, met Matthew's wife Jennifer and his two daughters; one was the same age as Jared. I had a little office off the bedroom and Section Eight was doing okay. Chondre must have been happy as she was putting on weight.... Or am I confusing animal behaviour with women's behaviour? At the Gallery

in Melville some of the neighbours had being broken into so Gordon and I decided to scare the criminals off. I took the anaconda to work and strolled around Melville, this got a lot of attention and Gordon told all and sundry that the snake would be released in the Gallery at night. I met another Executive Outcomes chap one day at the Gallery, James. We were surprised to see each other, especially at an art show! He came back the next day with photos and we took a stroll down memory lane.

The problem was the Mexican was bored, money was tight and I do not do well living with another person for a long period of time. As I have said, Chondre shares many of my character traits, and this was one of them. She at least was still attending AA meetings, I got sick of the politics and did not go any more. I started trying to find a publisher for my Chronicles, I had some of my photographic art works hung in Museum Africa, sold more at gordart Gallery. Tim Z bought some sound equipment from me and that helped with my financial mess, and should have being happy with life.

Chondre decided to send Jared to his grandmother again and would meet her in Harrismith. I was not welcome to go with. Gordon has many friends. One, Johan Moolman the sculpture, lives in Groot Marico, we were off to visit him. The plan was Chondre and I would drive up together, stay for a couple of days, then she would leave for home, while Gordon and I would go to Potchefstroom. We were going to hand Gordon's "Record" show in the art gallery there. We did the tour of Groot Marico and got all the local history, a famous South African writer use to hang out in the area, Bosman? I know that Groot Marico is famous for its "mampoer", peach and other fruit brandy. Gordon and Johan drank lots of this, I was still on the wagon, as was Chondre. When I got home a few days after Chondre I do not believe either were happy to see the other. We were sort of just sharing space at this time. Our physical relationship was at an all time low. This changed for a while after the following incident. Gordon had a new show opening and Chondre that seldom dressed up, even for work now days, went out of her way to look sexy. She put on my favourite little sundress and took a lot of care with her make up and hair. I am a lucky man, I have lived with some very beautiful women. Heads turned when we walked into the Gallery. Gordon wanted me to do the photographer thing but I asked Chondre if she would like to instead. Chondre was keen and I left her to it and went to speak to some of the people I knew, outside on the patio. I went back inside to find, a chap that I don't really like, Johnny all over my girlfriend. Like you see guys "coaching" women on golf? Well he was doing it with the photo thing. As I taught the woman on the subject, I do not believe this idiot could tell her much of value. I told you I never liked him. He has a son, a photographer, his name is Rupert, sort of wishy washy chap I very seldom spoke to. At that time I believe that Shanti was living with them already. A few years later they would become involved in my life again.

I saw people watching for my reaction, especially people that have known me for a long time. They were disappointed. There was no reaction. I watched for a while and then went back to my friends outside. I do believe the woman is with you, or she isn't. A sort time later Chondre came to join me and was very affectionate, not normal for her and especially in public. Love psychology. That and the next few nights were rather entertaining.

Then Chondre's mother arrived with Jared. She sleep over and the next day I took her to a job interview, the woman is only a few years older than me and we got on alright. I

took Chondre's mom, who is another Charmaine, to the interview in the office complex where my ex-wife used to work. She still worked there as I saw her when driving in the gate. The only way one could see Charmaine and Chondre are related is the beautiful big brown eyes. Temperament and everything else is completely different, and mom drinks like a fish. The biggest problem was any progress Chondre had made with Jared was broken down by the mother. He was becoming a huge problem again. The kind of kid that you are afraid to take anywhere. From no kids to this?

Then Chondre and her mom get on even worse than Chondre and Jared. Chondre would Jared and the grannies "visitor rights" to get her own way with her mother. We had arguments about this. It is wrong, never mind her and her mom, but for the little boy. This mess was getting to me and even writing it now – it is fucking boring. Things just slowly went for a ball of shit. One night I decide fuck this sobriety thing I am going for a drink. I told Chondre and left. After nearly 7 years without a drink that first whiskey, words are inadequate. I love alcohol, after the second double the world was a much better place. I had one more and then went home. Chondre had run away.

Mike phone twice, so gave him a call. What right did that bitch have to call him? Phoned Charmaine for love and understanding, just got that she is very disappointed. Fuck! Phoned Chondre and she said she is a friend – just told her that at least I had the manners to tell her where I was going. One thing that I had words with her about is how she does not like that poor little boy very much, but has no qualms of using him as a weapon. She just did it again Said she had left for Jared's safety. Shaw! Woke up at 2.30 am. Thirsty as hell! The alcohol only kept my brain quiet for a while, but I knew that. My first thought were anger towards Chondre, not because she made me drink, I did that, but because of her lying attitude. Now, should not concern me any longer. The rest and my actions followed in rapid succession..... Actually relief that don't have to carry anyone else's shit.

Two years that I have known this girl have been the worst in my life. No such thing as a coincidence. The Mexican was firmly in the saddle of the new horse he just stole. Needed more drink. Called Chondre and told her to collect her stuff now. I will go out. Looked everywhere for a pub, closed or closed down! Bought a beer. Went to Evonne's house but no one home. Slept for a few hour and woke up with shit mean headache, droebekkie, the works. Fuck this drinking is kak, but here I sit at 2am writing with a beer next to me. Chondre ditched the kid a day or so later and went to Cape Town, to her brother's place. Hoping today I will stop this drinking jol. Not to be, bottle store for quart of Reds. Oh shit will I pay the rent or go joling? Phoned Evonne, shit she is in Eastern Cape. Told her I am drinking, and she is actually unhappy to hear that. Said she always looked up to me. And while I know the bottom line it is my own fault that I am drinking, I also curse every single person that helped me get back here. Eventually got my ass to meeting. Eric phoned afterward and kaked on me. Phoned Chondre and she was extremely detached, asked her give me some sign that there is hope and she said she can't. Told her collect the stuff now and I will go out. Bought a more beer, got pissed quickly. Stupid bitch put rent money in my bank. So went and bought cheap wine at Spa. So too late to stop this mission. Bang, bang. Where will I find the money? Will I come off this jol?. .38 one inch closer. Tried not to, but ended up buying a bottle of vodka. I think apart from Chondre

not really caring for me, she is also making me depressed. I don't like living with a kid or a mother.

Phone call it is my aunty Pam. She feels bad cause she has not prayed for me. Got an order for radios from Lily Pond. Killed the vodka. A lovely warm evening and sitting here with no shirt on. Spoke to Jenny next door, and later Mathew came round and gave me a lecture on PRIDE.

Went to church and actually let the visiting minister, whom I met here on the property last night, his wife, Mathew, Jennifer and two strangers pray for me. Said "Abba Father" but could not cry out that I had found Jesus? Stopped drinking for a bit. Woke up thinking "Must go see Mike Fynn" so did. My father's friend and Jehovah's Witness Elder. I will do anything to get off this mission. Start Bible study with him. I received orders for more radios, now I had to collect them at Chondre's work place. She is in accounts now and I did not see her only the new receptionist, Trudy.

Woke up not feeling so sick, and the need for a wake up drink not there! Took all Chondre's stuff out of my study. Cleaned the whole room, looking good. Chatted to Mathew and got some insights on PRIDE. Later... Absolute fear of been alone and lonely hit me. Started to think "Try fix this thing with Chondre." Next day thought "Yesterday was just a momentary lapse of reason. Also thinking of the past is not good, things do not have to be the same. Must remember it was at this time last year I got my "Fuck you" attitude and started fighting with Dougie big time. Then reading Mike Fynn's booklet on how to get close to Jehovah. Took out old Bible as well. For a chap that was worried his life will be empty with out a girlfriend? Crazy, crazy.

I had an interview for a proper job, the one everyone said I should get. This was for an insurance salesman. I must do what I must do. On the way to the interview, in heavy traffic, On way to interview got call that Evan has to reschedule! Go home, don't drink. That afternoon got to appointment late and had to still wait for more than 15 minutes. I then wrecked the interview. Almost stopped at Buccleuch to by booze, didn't. Made it to Midrand, about 12km, just stopped at cash card, drew money and went to Bottle Store. Tried hard not to buy vodka, not six but a dozen Hunters. Fuck, like I say one must take one's victories where one finds them. Then sneaked in the booze as I am ashamed Jenny will see me. For the fucking peaceful easy feeling that the booze gives in the first while. Now listening to Eagles that MUST also drink. Awake at 6.30. Too much thinking by 7 opened a Hunters. Drank a bit, sent CV to jobs in the paper and then slept for an hour. Contemplated what I would buy to drink today. Why the jobs. Who knows, I was drunk. Saw missed call from Pertec, where I pick up radios then Chondre phoned. Just "Can I pick up clothes tomorrow." Bought gin and tonic. Got drunk.

Sobered up enough to go pick up Evonne at the airport. Evonne and I chatted at my place and Gordon came round for a few minutes. Then Evonne and I went out, she drove. This is the woman that wanted a cowboy and would like to see me drunk. Okay. We went into a bar, not 20 minutes and the height difference is an issue. Evonne has gone out with Wayne, never the Mexican. I check out my antagonists, 5 of them, not so big. I have 6 bullets and proved with the cat my sobriety, or lack of it does nothing to my ability to shoot very, very straight. I think fuck that, I am in a pissed off mood I want to box; so I give the standard speech that at least one of them will be dead before this is over, all at

once or one at the time, I don't care. Which one of them wants to die. They think I am crazy and leave. Evonne is upset. We drink a little more and she spends the night at my place. Women.

Got up early. Took Evonne home. Chondre came and we actually spoke. Don't know if I made any sense. Don't know what to do. Went to church. Feeling very ill. Saw bad accident on way home. Days pass. I go to a show at Gordart Gallery. My artbook is on display, It is a miniature book, with cover and photos, the title is The Chronicles of the Mexican Horse Thief. Ironic. No one buys it. Evonne and Angela arrived; Angela leaves so I take Evonne home. Mike picked up some more radios for me, business is going okay and when he was here dropping them off, Chondre phoned him to thank him for saving her stuff. Shit, I did not know it was in danger. Never mind have money and my mate is playing in the Blues Room in Sandton. I call Evonne and ask her to go with me. After the Blues room I spend the night at her place. Women do like the crazy guys better.

Days pass, Chondre came and we spoke for three hours. She still loves me and was jealous when she saw me talking to Jennifer, Matthew's wife. Why? I like Jennifer and do remember talking to her, vaguely. Chondre tells me that she wants me etc. but can't show it. What? The biggest surprise is that she said if I had asked her she would have married me. Is she bad for me or did I fuck up. The need to drink immediately is overwhelming. I do that. She must have left. I went to the bottle store and bought two bottles of vodka. Jennifer came over. Mickey's wife is visiting and I should come over. Mickey is a mercenary I know from Angola, he is some where on ops, as this is going down. Angola.....can't seem to get rid of the bloody place. I go meet Mickey's wife. Mickey is or was a plumber so he and Matthew know each other. One of the horses on the property belong to Mickey.

Days or hours go passed. Bad day. Went looking for booze first thing. On way to church, cops stopped me for no seatbelt. I get a warning, they seem not to smell the alcohol. Mickey's wife and friend were there..went to Evonne for a braai, drank like a fish, Will came to the braai, I must have phoned him, he gave me some money and left.....

I sobered up and Chondre came and we got back together again. She moved all her stuff back in.

I had -R164.00 in my bank at that stage. I had seen no positive results in the "finding a proper job" field and started concentrating on building a restaurant suppliers database, with the idea of selling advertising space in my Newsletter. To this end I did not go to ONE interview in Randburg with a "meat market" company - Personnel Agency. Did not know it at the time but Chondre was angry about this. Normally not a very affectionate type she seemed slightly less so in the next few days. Her Mother came around and having her there drunk did not help my disposition. When Will visited she was even more unfriendly than usual. I was hoping it would get better and went for two interviews at this time, while still working long hours to capture data. The bed was damned cold anyway so worked. Chondre showed very little interest in the interviews and offered no encouragement. I was resentful of the fact that by now it was just expected that supper would be cooked for her and Jared and the dishes would also just be left. Had an argument about how she treats me, and picked on her for putting Jared back on Asthma

medicine as I believed he just had a cold. Cortisone is bad stuff and she likes the doctors too much.

Then one morning I found a horrible, insulting letter from her on my desk. It pointed out that she was tired of been the only responsible one in the relationship, pointing out that I find my "stupid databases" more important than finding a job. My father and I are idiots because we distrust the medical profession and a few other things she disliked about me. She also complained that I do my own washing and have my own bath towel? Don't ask me! I do not clean the house often enough for her liking, forgetting it seems that the mess she and Jared made of the kitchen every evening and morning were cleaned up every day. She said she was better off alone.

My reaction was bad, I immediately e mailed her a letter pointing out how I had found her, alone, afraid and lonely in a back room flat that looked like a pigsty. Not nice, but true. Pointed out how she was used and abused when she did not have me around and a whole lot of other things that were true, but I did it in spite and anger. That night we tried to talk it out, to no avail, she did not bother to say goodnight.

Saturday started with Chondre totally ignoring me and obviously getting ready to go out. I tried to ignore the situation and remain calm, really did, but the Mexican Horse Thief and past experiences crowded in. Chondre walked away from me as I was trying to talk to her. I grabbed her shoulder and she screamed, "Don't touch me." She could not have thought up a better trigger. I lost it. Told her she was full of it and only used me to get a father figure for Jared, just as Dougie said. Threatened to throw her out the window and smash her pretty face in with a head-butt. More than six years of sobriety and all that entails out the window. I shook her by the shoulders and the Mexican wanted to kill. She just heaped more hurtful abuse on me. She eventually ran out the door.

This is the weird part, conflicting feelings accosted me, one was the shame of my actions but the other extremely strong feeling was of a sense of relief. Once I had calmed down I had a feeling of peace, for heavens sake! The intellect took over and I knew that this girl would want some payback, my first thought was the illegal rifle, one word to the cops and my ass would be grass. Quickly wrapped up my Lee Enfield and "stashed" it where it would not be found. If I had any idea of the lies she would tell the police I probably would have just disappeared! She did not return that night. Sunday morning I got a call from the police, they wanted me to come in and clear up a weapons charge against me. In my arrogance thought I could clear up what ever shit this was.

I arrived at Midrand police station and found the investigating officer. I immediately told him I was armed and would like to hand over the weapon. This was done, cops are very scary people and my respect for them and the way they handle firearms is... limited. The cop then informed me that Chondre had file a charge of not only assault and battery but added I had threatened her with a fire arm. Oh, my joke about a pretty woman been the most dangerous thing I have seen is so true. The cop asked if I would like to make a statement, but in a round about way suggested that it was a bad idea. I disagree, the truth has a way of coming out, so gave a minute by minute statement of where the firearm was during the argument. It had moved from the floor next to my bed, onto the bed, never once leaving the holster. That done he told me I was to be held until I went to court. Got

my one phone call but Gordon and Mike were not at home. Left a message on my neighbour, Matthew's phone.

Back in a holding cell, this time sober and not deserving of this nonsense. Two more chaps were brought in, both black guys, so when a very large policeman, came and asked who Wayne Bisset was, it was pretty dumb and leading somewhere else. Being ignorant of exactly what Chondre had said in her statement and to these policeman did not expect what followed. He just said "You do not look so tough." And stared for a couple of minutes before walking away. I know I do not look tough, I was the smallest person in the station, and that includes all the police women. Had more harassment for the rest of my stay. Why, because this girl that supposedly loved me and I was honest to about my past, wrote a few pages on how I had beaten policemen – more that 10 years ago – as if it were last week. Happy, happy times in that cell. Not as bad as I had seen but got a couple of slaps along side the head. A couple of different ending could have happened in that cell, most of them no good. I was feeling pretty desperate and when Matthew arrived I thought that was the answer to my prayers, perhaps it was but not the way I envisioned it.

Matthew arrived and was not at all interested in getting me out! He wanted to know if I had head-butted Chondre. I asked if her bloody nose was broken and what did he think? Unfortunately it would seem that Matthew was quite taken in by Miss Muffit. He left and said he was going to check up on her and would be back. Okay, it was very cold and I shared a filthy, smelly blanket with and equally filthy, smelly chap. A few hours and a bit of harassment from the cops later Matthew arrived again. He was even more taken in by the performance Chondre had put up, but to give him his due, he did tell her that if I went to prison her life would not be worth much once I got out. This was probably true. He then proceeded to preach to me, telling me that this had all happened because I refused to accept his way of worshipping Jesus and was still friends with a Jehovah's Witness's. This was not done in his practiced quiet voice, but very loudly he was playing to an audience. I am sure that his intentions to bear witness were good, but never have I felt that the road to hell is paved with good intentions so strongly. He eventually stopped "kaking" on me and left. All I wanted was out of that place, I was in physical danger. Once he had gone and saw that I was on my own, the Mexican took stock of the situation. Only a holding cell with a cheap padlock, I had learned how to open those without a key in the army, by I am only four policemen in the building 3 dozing, – escape and evasion? Nope, just handle the shit as it comes. The floor got softer, the blanket and cell mate less smelly and my mind quiet, I went asleep.

Early the next morning I was taken to the holding cells at the Magistrates court in Midrand. Met a whole bunch of other criminals, again the only white boy. Some drug dealers were there but well organized with Take Away food and Cokes. Seems this is the way it is in our justice system. Long wait and finally in court, hard time hearing what was said but went for the free lawyer option. Back to the holding cell. Saw lawyer, a black lady. Told her "Not guilty." Second appearance – could not hear every thing but the doctors report was brought out and dismissed as there was no bloody head-butting. They spoke a bit, the prosecutor, lady magistrate and my lawyer. Back to the holding cell. Lawyer came back told me I HAD to plea guilty to something. Told her, okay verbal abuse is true as well as threatening to do physical harm.

Back to court. The weapons charge kicked out, Chondre had overplayed her hand and the magistrate saw her statement for what it was, she also heard that the cop beating story was ten years ago and kicked that out. A document saying I was fit to carry a firearm ordered by the magistrate. Prosecutor not happy. Back to the holding cell. My lawyer said if I want the rulings on the weapon and assault with intent to stay dropped, I had to plea to "lesser assault". I would have to write down and sign that I had punched Chondre in the head. No man! Argued and she convinced me this was the only way to end this thing here and now. Great, so I committed perjury, in the cause of justice, of course. Back to court. A long speech and a fine of R1500.00 payable in instalments of R250.00 a month, along with a suspended sentence for assault. I did mention that my computer, therefore my income was at my house and Chondre had a restraining order. Magistrate said if she gives me any problems to come right back to her. Okay. So much for mans justice. The Bible mention that one of the things God hates and is punishable is – "False witness." Not so here, the fact that a court of law had decided Chondre lied in a sworn statement, about a very serious weapons charge, so help her God and all that, was of no concern to anyone but me.

I was out! Now, although the police are quite good about getting you to the court, they don't care how you get back. Fortunately the policemen were not too diligent in their duties at the police holding cells the night before, I had removed my bootlaces as ordered but hid them in my boots. This was in case I took the escape and evasion course.

I had a long walk back to my car and unlaced boots would have been a problem. The wallet and cell phone were taken thought. Bummed a smoke and set off. A few hundred meters from the police station, and my car, Matthew pulled up. This is at about 4pm. He had some food and cold drink for me, for which I was grateful. I was not so grateful for the lecture on my pride and intellect been my downfall. He informed me that Chondre was now even more terrified as her attempts that morning to drop the charges came too late. Not impressed myself, if she was so terrified she could have done something the night before at the cop station. Like I say, Matthew seems to be taken in with that girl. Got my wallet and cell back, the gun and Swiss Army knife had to wait for the paperwork. Drove to my house, it was hired under Section Eight's name. New locks! Okay.

To Evonne's place. Told her my side of the story and my ex-girlfriend believed me. Going so far as to say that even when we broke up she NEVER had any fear of me been violent. The AA work had changed the person but Chondre had resurrected the Mexican. Man, I was doubting my own sanity at this point. Not one that normally uses profanity Evonne said, "F that bitch, get your stuff and move in here".

I called Matthew and asked him to speak to Chondre about me getting some basics out the house. This done I went to collect, who was at the door? Her drunken mother. Great. Chondre had her superior attitude mode on and started dictating how things would be done. I informed her of what the magistrate had said, and I could call her up right now, and how I had some orders to process and calls to make. She has always been intimidated by authority and bowed. I could come in during the day while she was at work until I had sorted out my business. Her and her mother left, all the time Jared was kept well away from me. Poor little boy, another man deserting him. At this stage I do not believe Chondre's version of what happened with his father. She had done this before and no

doubt will do it again. Once alone I had a bath, there is nothing quite like the smell of prison cells and I stank! Packed a few things and went to Evonne.

My disposition at this stage was not good, for the next few days I just collected my stuff that Chondre had packed and left on the patio, moved my computer into Evonne's office and stewed.

I wanted nothing to do with the Charismatic church after Matthew's tirade. Jennifer saw me collecting stuff and we spoke about the real casualty in this business, Jared. I went to see her quite often after that, Matthew continued his lectures about the usual things. My thoughts were about rafters. Mike and Liz my fathers JEHOVAH'S WITNESS friends were very neutral on the subject. Chondre had been to see them, must say she did not bad mouth me too much, but told them she needed space and cancelled the studies. Mike picked up that Matthew had gone from been a bully to "the most wonderful man". Okay, that came as no surprise. I attended a few meetings but was not very happy with any religion and had to rethink my path. I had been praying for some guidance and this was not what I had in mind.

Picking up the radio's was a hassle, Chondre had told her colleges, more accurately her male colleges her version of the story. I phoned and got Trudy, newly appointed in sales. She is a nervous person and had to clear up whether I could still buy radios or not. Chondre *graciously* informed her bosses she would allow it! I arrived and Peter and Lawrence were in the reception area, cold, if not hard stares. Both to soft and flabby to confront me with what they probably said while I was not physically present.

I had to wait for a cheque to be cleared this time, new rules. Trudy and Ruth were busting with curiosity. After the way those men looked at me I fell into a revengeful state, gave Ruth my version and backed it up with the courts findings. Ruth followed me out to the car and I found out Chondre, who runs Ruth down constantly, has been borrowing money from her. Ruth accused Chondre of just about everything that Chondre accused her of! Thank goodness I was out of that mess. Still bad boy that I am, I told Ruth everything Chondre had ever said about everyone in the company. I wonder if Peter and Lawrence were still so impressed with those soul big brown eyes and double D's when Ruth passed that on. I know, I know. I had to go and collect radios again and followed the same procedure, bending Trudy's ear a little bit. She is hurt because as a friend she had given Chondre a place to stay, the first time she left, and was repaid with a cold shoulder and worse, Chondre did her utmost to get the girl fired. I struggled with vengeful thought much worse than just telling those women what Chondre had said.

I stayed at Evonne's place and started drinking about a litre of vodka a day. This made everyone unhappy, so when my sister phoned and said, "Come down to the Cape." I left for a 4 year mission in the Western Province, it was not pretty. Unlike the romance of novels my new "New Life" did not start off with a clean slate: rather it started with me struggling to clean up mistakes from the past.

I was hurt, angry and confused, Evonne's "rule" of not been able to stay there if I was drinking was a catalyst. My thoughts at the time were – "That's not fair, when all the AA chaps ignored her because she was not clean, I stood by her!" That and the fact that Gauteng was really getting me down. Perhaps this opportunity to get away was one of the arrows I never seem to see! So when Karen called and said she would put R1000.00 in

my account for petrol and toll roads, the die was cast. Again not one to sit on my hands I packed up and put most of my stuff in Evonne's spare room. I had a full tank of petrol so could leave four hours before the banks opened and

Karen could deposit the money. That would bring me to Bloemfontein, capital of the Free State.

5am I packed my computer, CDs, Camera equipment, bedding and my cameras into the car. Since I had drank a 750ml bottle of vodka the night before I was still intoxicated. Never mind. Made a flask of strong coffee and added brandy and whiskey to keep me going. The Mexican Horse Thief was on the road again. Rushing into places where angels fear to tread. My alcohol addiction was well looked after and now my lust for adventure would be too. Four hours of uneventful driving got me to the outskirts of Bloemfontein, I was a bit worried as, the car licence had long since expired, my spare tyre was in use as one tyre was in shreds in the boot and the passenger side front tyre had a nail one could see sticking out of it. The latter just needed to be pumped up once a day, no problem. Got to an ATM and the money was in, filled up and on my way again. Karen was phoning every hour or so to check on my progress. I was fine, my flask was half full and a few sips and hour was keeping me on a nice pluck.

The landscape had changed dramatically and I was in the Karoo, beautiful semi-desert surrounded me, the road just went on and on. I was fortunate enough to be driving through huge storms, not very common in this area. Here I hit the flask a bit heavier, as I believed the cops would not be out in this weather and at this time of year. Made it through a couple of the small towns with no incident, I was very worried about cops, being drunk, having a unlicensed car and smooth tyres can do that. Then the inevitable happened, driven out of Gauteng, clear across the Free State and well into the Northern Cape when outside a small hick town I hit a road block. I was very polite and although the man looked at the tyres sceptically he just fined me R300.00 for the licence story – no question about drinking. Got out of there. Just after the incident I saw the most beautiful rainbow and sky I have ever seen in my life. I could see both ends touching the desert floor, with a golden sun shining through an azure opening of almost black clouds. My thoughts on this drive had not been pleasant ones, dwelling on all the bad things and what could have been etc. Seeing that reminded me that all this mess I was in was just human folly..

My second great beauty was the crossing of the Orange River. The sun was going down at this stage and shinning a golden orange which reflected off the river, I saw why the normally brown, muddy river got its name. I had reached the Western Cape. Here my booze was almost finished so I stopped in another small town and bought a half jack of vodka, trying to limit my intake with the smaller bottle. The journey got a little more tedious, road works and a lot of traffic up to and around a place called Tous River. I did not like been in the tunnel which seemed to go on for miles. On the other side Karen phoned and said to look out for water towers, considering I was back in the mountains and it was pitch black, I had to ask how was I going to see bloody water towers? Turns out they were many, many kilometres ahead in a build up area with lots of lights! The outskirts of Cape Town itself in fact. Found the right hi-way and finally reached the sea, moonlight shinning over the bay. Had a good few slugs of vodka to celebrate. From the town Muizenberg, I really had an itchy feeling about that place at the time, for no reason,

it would be clear later in the year. Even drunk and far off my path, I was given warnings, that I chose to ignore or explain away. I needed to get to Simon's Town, the last little village along the bay. A quaint little town that was founded and survived on the fact that it is the site of Navy HQ in South Africa. My directions and memory served me well and I found Disa road with ease. Another long pull at the vodka and I was ready.

Pulled up at number 13 Disa Road, one more slug of vodka for good measure and knocked at the door. A mad rush of people, Karen, the two girls, Shanel and Rochelle, and even Ben were all very excited about my arrival. Must say it felt good to be welcomed with such enthusiasm. My car was unpacked in record time, the two girls doing most of the work. We all sat in the lounge that contained very little furniture. Ben had removed some cupboards from the kitchen and build a work station in one corner of the lounge, washing was hanging from a line tied across the room and a small fish tank bubbled next to the fire place. There were three plastic garden chairs and that was it. I was given Ben's sons room, as Bennie had moved in with his girlfriend. The room had a bed, a basin and build in cupboard. I had brought some bedding. The girls and Karen each had a TV in the bedrooms and the kids went off to watch TV while Ben, Karen and I finished off most of the vodka. Long drive so off to bed relatively early, 11pm. I was awake at 5am and found a few drops of vodka in the bottle, so started my first day in the Western Cape.

Tried to get the computer linked up to the Internet but the ADSL line gave me a problem. Off to Simon's Town to buy vodka and do a recce of my new place. Found the local rough pub and had a drink, checking out the girl playing pool. Back at the house phoned my old man and told him I was in the Cape. Later on I went to the famous Boulders Beach to check out the Penguins, then home to drink some more. The next two days I just did the alky thing and sat in the pub drinking, went home and drank more, knew I had to stop this and found an AA meeting in Kalk Bay on a Friday night. Attended the meeting and Karen came with.

I had an order for radios so found the supplier here in Cape Town and Karen and I picked up the radios with no problems. Charmaine called and I met her in Simon's Town, posted the radios while still operational and then went to the pub. Charmaine who had seen this all before was very worried. I drank myself into oblivion for the next few days and somehow managed to set up Section Eight as well. Then the second Friday another AA meeting and drank the last vodka I had available. Next day pretty sick but saw a whale for the first time in my life. The next few days had those horrible withdrawal symptoms that I have already explained. The paranoia, and a terrible sense of what I had just lost, again.

At this stage I saw only the bad in myself and took all the blame for everything. Tenaciously continued with Section Eight, getting a lot of new data and sending Newsletter. After been sober a few days saw that the situation I was in was very bad, Karen had no money and they had no work lined up for Ben. Not exactly what I had been told on the phone up in Johannesburg. It was to get worse, first Telkom called and said the phone was about to be cut off for none payment, what is it about me and other peoples phones? Second surprise was the owner of the house lives overseas but her father lives up the road, he arrived and was complaining that the rent was a couple of months overdue. Another small thing that was not mentioned. Over the next few days found out

that about 3 furniture companies and the car finance people had similar problems. I was to become a very nervous chap over the next few weeks. While all this was playing out Section Eight managed to get some money in and we could get food and electricity, these two things became a focal point of my life over the next 9 months. Chondre decided at this point that she could not look after my Anaconda anymore and I must make a plan to get it here. Having only a bit of money for said food and electricity I had no way of bringing my snake down here.

Here are the good things that happened while in this chaos. Every morning I was able to witness the most gorgeous sunrises, majestic mountains a backdrop for the bay. Later on I could see snow on those peaks. I walked along some of the most beautiful beaches in the world. One day while sitting on a bench on the beachfront, a field mouse came and sat on my boot. We just eyed each other for a few moments and off he went, in the weeks to follow he visited me often, one time climbing right up my pants leg. On another occasion a whale was right up on the rocks, often we saw as many as 10 when driving along the bay.

The situation and family dynamics were not like anything I had encountered before. Everyone fought with every one else, more drink involved the more aggression and ugliness. As I was hitting the bottle very hard Section Eight was ignored and business dried up. My old friend "Blackout" was back along with the absolutely crazy behaviour. On one occasion I had made some money and did the logical thing, bought a shit load of booze. After drinking heavily the whole day, we decided to take some CD's and booze to Karen's friend, Anarika's house in Muizenberg and party there. Anarika is a New Age person and the house is decorated accordingly. I do remember arriving and sitting in the upstairs lounge. The girls and I were sitting there and Shanel tells me a feather blew off the shelf and I got a fright and instinctively pulled out my gun and shot it! The Mexican takes no shit from aggressive pink dyed feathers. The rest of the evening was lost in the blackout. The next morning I woke up in Simon's Town, covered in blood and minus a few teeth. That is another story on its own. For the next few days pain was my only friend. One tooth was septic so I got Ben to pull it out with a pliers, hurt like hell and made my vodka all bloody. Diluted alcohol is not my thing.

I was spending a lot of time in a little pub across the road from the Navy base, called the Two n' Six. Part of the reason was the owner was indeed a very pretty dark haired woman. She owned a super bike and had some interesting tattoos. Lot of bikers hang around in the place. The Navy Divers also hang out here. They have watched too many Navy Seals movies and have an attitude. Since I was new in town, my Froggo's reputation was no good here and Ben is useless for backup. Still, the Mexican feels shit for bad odds, and they irritated the hell out of him with their mucho swagger. Youngsters that were tanned and gym fit. One night when Ben and Karen were with me I said rather loudly, "The Navy are a bunch of pussies!", and ordered another double vodka, neat. A table of 5 Navy Divers gave me the eye. I downed the vodka and looked at them, asking, "What?" One mentioned that I should not say such things. To which I replied, "Why on earth not, it is true, infantry guys are much tougher." This had the required effect, they all stood up, Ben crawled in a corner and my sister was having a nervous breakdown. Got love it, adrenalin pumping. I then asked if they are so tough and fit can ANY of them do one hand push ups? This they all replied of course. I then told them before the fuck up

this old man, I challenge them on that and proceeded to drop down and do about ten with my left hand. All tried and failed. The Navy are a bunch of pussies. I never had to buy a drink in that pub when any of them were there after that.

I made a very interesting drinking buddy in the Two n' Six, his name was Stuart. He looks like Willie Nelson, the Country and Western singer. Once a successful businessman in JHB, he opted out and now lives, literally in the fynbos with the penguins. He is the most organized homeless person I have ever met. Clean Levi jeans, RayBan sunglasses and a leather cowboy hat. Latest cell phone and a new kit bag. He charged the phone at the pub, had his laundry done at Simons Town's only Laundromat and ate at the pub too. He was a weapons freak and we had a lot to talk about. He did odd jobs around the town and was a car guard at Boulders Beach occasionally. One night when I ran out of drinking money he gave me R100.00 Then when he saw what the conditions were like at my sisters house, he asked me to take him to Kalk Bay, where he proceeded to buy a huge yellowtail fish. He then came back to our place and made a braai with it. Ben just went to sleep, he is too good to socialize with hobos and so did his two daughters. When the fish was ready at about 2pm they did not mind eating, but just collected food and went back to their respective rooms. I point out that there was NO other food in the house at this time. Stewart and I ate and then hit the Two n' Six in order to drink further and watch the musician. He was not offended by my in-laws behaviour and sometimes brought food for the two girls, even when I was not there.

Now Ben had a few jobs in Cape Town, but the drive there was a problem because of petrol. This is where I learned a game I never should of. The Pawn Game. TV and other things are pawned for petrol and food money, on the bases that when Ben is paid he gets it back. He is too proud to go into the shops himself and my sister has to do it. A lot of the time the job was not costed out correctly and the items lost. Including my knife collection. Some of the blades were handmade and worth a fortune, got very little for them and my sister never bought them back. I was peeved but drunk, so left it. Some other dodgy things were being done but if I mentioned it Karen threw a wobbly. From my side, as long as I had a supply of vodka I went along with all this shit. Tense house, tense times. Violence brewing, and not from me. One night two debt collectors arrived to take Karen's car away. Ben hid away, this was/is his nature. My sister is good at manipulation, especially with men. She put on the first "performance" I had seen. Very good, they left without taking the car. I am a dumb motherfucker, I believed she would not use this ability on me.

So from that night on we hid the car in empty holiday homes driveways. How the fuck did I get into this mess? It just got worse and worse. One day the owner of the house we were in came around. He arrived while I was wrapping radios for postage, Section Eight business. He demanded to know who I was as I opened the door. I had no idea who the hell he was so just walked back inside before I could get pissed off. I do try stay out of trouble. He followed me inside and demanded to know when "we" were going to pay and how much. Karen came from the bedroom and explained that one of Ben's jobs was complete and they were waiting for the customer to pay. I had no reason to doubt her at this stage. He then turned on me again and asked how much money I could make in two days. Ben was playing games on the computer and ignoring this whole thing. He was asked what he had to say about this by the old man. He just mumbled incoherently.

Second time I saw this trait, leaving Karen to deal with any shit. By the time the old man left my nerves were shot to shit, so drank some more, got sick and then had a bit more. I decided to stop with the drinking, again. All the normal, for me that is, rigmarole of vomiting, sweating and shaking. I cannot believe that after nearly 7 years I was back here again. That .38 was close to my head, more times than I care to remember.

We had some money come in and it got us some supplies for a while. That Saturday we had a braai and everything went well, like normal people. I was able to eat and not drinking again, still body was tired so slept early. I woke up on what could have being a lovely Sunday, to find Karen and Ben in bed, but drinking wine at 7am in the morning. Karen gets argumentative when pissed, so I avoided speaking for too long and sat in the lounge with Rochelle. The younger of Ben's daughters, a quiet nice young lady. Shantal, the older one is much more verbal and volatile, she and Karen do not like each other. I have heard Karen verbally abuse her on many occasions. There was some shouting from Karen's room, Rochelle and I just raised our eyebrows. Karen was in a full ME and I mode. The fighting got worse and I went outside, too much wind so decided to go to my room. I hate this type of shit. I was cooking a gammon so had to go check on that,

Ben was in the lounge ironing. He said he was sick of this as well and was leaving. He did not, instead he went into the room and joined in the shouting. He then threatened to hit her, he has not done this for a few years, hit her I mean. The argument moved to the passage, next minute Ben held Karen's arms and Shantal climbed into her with her fists. Fuck, fuck, fuck. I have now got a suspended sentence for assault, if I touch either of the Viljoen's I can get into deep shit. Took the lesser of two evils and pulled Ben off Karen, threw him into the room. Shantal, fled up the passage. Karen stumbled bleeding into the room. Now this is weird, Ben started dancing around like a demented chimpanzee, shouting, "A 17 year old fucked you up, a 17 year old fucked you up!" Over and over again. Karen then hit him with a hairdryer, he retaliated by hitting her. I yanked him off again, he never once tried to hit me. Then he demanded his bank card which was in Karen's bag. She was screaming like a banshee and hanging onto it for dear life.

So, now I have mad chimpanzees and wild banshees to deal with, ain't life fun. I took the handbag and threw it on the bed in my room, telling them when everyone has calmed down I would think of what to do. God, I would rather be caught in a fire fight with 100 enemy soldiers than this type of shit. Karen made a dash for the front door, and out, got in her car and gone. Don't women keep keys in their handbags? Ben says she is going to the cops, fuck. I have the gun, what shit is that going to cause this time. Ben just started ironing his clothes again? Shantal in her room. I grabbed the handbag, the gun and my boots and left. I decided to go to the police station in Simons Town, sure enough there was Karen's car. I took the bull by the horns and walked in, I hate police stations. Spoke to the duty officer and found out Karen was with the station commander, a woman, Karen has this ability, even with women, no desk sergeant for her.

I was escorted to her office and somewhere in my brain it was duly noted that one can get to the commanding officer in a police station..armed. The captain was very good at commanding, she already had a HUGE constable ready to go and more constables were on their way. I gave her my gun and the license, saying I want no shit about this. I was keen to get back to the house, because men like Ben are capable of trashing my computer. Eventually the Captain and 1 female constable plus 4 male constables in 2 vehicles

moved out. Karen was totally out of control at this time and did not endear herself to the Captain. Her advantage was lost, the Captain was now only concerned with the minors involved in this... fucking mess. The convoy reached the house, Ben was still ironing, the Captain went straight to the girls room, the female constable kept a beady eye on Karen in the yard, who was ranting and raving again. One young policeman came to get Ben's bank card from Karen, I had given Karen her bag at the police station. Karen proceeded to bend and mutilate the card, the constable was pissed off and snatched it from her. She then dodged the female constable and ran into the house, swearing and shouting. Ben started shouting as well, this caused the male constables to deploy, all in the house now. Just for more confusion, Byron, Shantal's boyfriend arrived. Much to Ben's disgust, he happens to be a coloured chap. I like him and found him to be a true gentleman.

Ben was by now in the yard outside the large sliding door, but becoming more and more aggressive with the police. I heard him tell them that if his brother were here the brother would have , "fucked them all up." I found out later this brother had being dead many years, he was shot dead, by the police in the act of committing a robbery. From the sublime to the ridiculous, no wonder I need vodka at times. Then he got on about how soldiers are so much better than policemen, which we all know is true but right then, not a good time to go into it. Anyway Ben was an Artilleryman? Long ago. The very big policeman was not taking this so well, I worked out in this mess that there, were actually two soldiers in the room, he was the other one. The police captain came out the girls room, Ben climbed into her. A racist, police hating chap, he is very sexist as well. A lot of this was going down in Afrikaans and Ben proceeded to first lie about his oldest daughters age and then called the good Captain a "Poppie." Very insulting in English, a Barbie Doll in Afrikaans it is worse. Very dumb and the Captain, being no "Poppie" had Shantal's ID book in her hand.

The Captain maintained her composure with difficulty. Karen then pissed on her battery further by slipping into the bedroom and returning drinking wine from a glass. Am I the only Bisset with survival skills? The Captain took the glass and went into the room, collected the wine box and drained it into the kitchen sink. The big constable said to me he would advise me, one soldier to another, he saw my cammo jacket etc in my room, to forget these people and go back to JHB. Ben had being told to pack a few things and was in the main bedroom at this time. The whole time Ben was biting the Captain shit, she had had enough, made a call on her cell, to clear up a detail, and then said, "Vat hom!" Take him. All the constables were so "lus" that they charged the bedroom in great haste. The ex-soldier got there first. I heard Ben's head bounce off the floor. He had huge carpet burns on his face and head as they cuffed him and lead him away, moaning the whole time that this was not right, this was not right. He gave me a murderous look as he passed. Like I say, running around Angola with a price on my head was better than this shit. At least I was not in cuffs for a change.

My now new friend, the Captain, told me to sober my sister up and take her to the hospital. Easier said than done, she had some booze stashed. I fought with her about her actions in the whole business, she pointed it out that I was not been fair, she was drunk and I was sober. When the positions were reversed she had NEVER put me in a similar position. OK. We finally got to the Fishhoek hospital.

Karen had left Ben a few times before, but they always get back, she spun me a story.....

With Ben and the kids gone, Karen and I needed a place to stay. We had about R150.00 between the two of us. So we sold everything we could in the house, TV's, stove, fridge, the lot. Ended up with about R6 000.00 operating money. Now Karen was pulling the terrified abused woman move. This sounds absolutely callus, but bear with me, it is not only justified, it is sad. Dumb little brother fell for this hook line and sinker. I was told Ben would hunt her down and destroy everything she had, clothes, car etc. He did rip out all the internet connections while we were at the police station so I believed this too. Okay, Karen said she wanted to hide. She always lives close to the sea, so while we worked out what we were going to do, we must find a place inland. Ben knows Karen well, so I planned, not to do the exact opposite but change the pattern.

Somerset West was first choice but could find nothing. My surviving family live there. Most have seen or heard from and about me a maximum of two or three times in the past twenty years. The exception was my father and my aunt Pat. My father and sister had not spoken since she was 18, he would not help us anyway, his religion made us undesirable and if he was, which he was not, inclined to help us, his status as chief Elder in the area would be shot. I asked Karen about Pam, she is married to my father's cousin Eddie. Karen had stayed with them one of the times she had run away from Ben. Karen said that was a none starter, and was very vague about why. She had behaved like an angel when staying there but they now do not let her stay because she went back to Ben. Okay, my family is more fucked up than me, on a whole, so I accepted this. We have three cousins, from Pam and Eddie. The two in South Africa Karen told me would not help either. One a solo mission I am okay, but now I have my sister. I tried Stellenbosch, no one would look for us there. Karen then said she wanted to visit a friend in Paarl, our time was short, the eviction notice was in a few days time, we have not got much capital and she wants to visit someone in Paarl. We argued about wasting a whole day on this side mission. Karen preformed and said I am just like Ben and won't let her see her friends. I gave in and we drove to Paarl, the dodgy side of Paarl. Her friend ran a Voda shop which her husband owned. Karen's friend was NOT overjoyed to see her and barely civil. I asked Karen about this on the drive back. Got what I realise now is the stock answer, "It is because of Ben".

I also got a call from Chondre, the cops had called her about the domestic violence at Disa street. Fuck it, there I was minding my own business. I did not think they would check my file. She has now decided to give my Anaconda away too. The "wow" factor had worn off. I was in a pickle and had no way of getting my pet down here, and no where to keep it anyway. Had to accept that and try sort out the present problems as best as a few weeks sober alcoholic can. Shit, in the AA they advise one not to make any major decisions in the first year of sobriety. Fine on paper, real life, yeah right. Chondre would donate my snakes to a local zoo. I knew the herpetologist there and he would take good care of them.

We finally found a place in Stellenbosch, very expensive. We moved our two beds and two cars from Simons Town. I had my computer and set that up in the empty lounge. We went to the town and Karen worked her magic with the Telkom people. A phone was installed and working within 12 hours. Ask any South African, this is nothing short of a

miracle. I got onto Section Eight work immediately. I also joined the library which was housed in a magnificent old building.

I was marketing a beautiful coffee table book at this stage, African Zulu Tribal Art. It was the only way we were going to be able to pay the rent. Unfortunately Karen thought the phone was to re-connect with all her friends that she said Ben would not allow her to keep in contact with. We got into arguments about this. My sister has phoned me and spoken my cell phone battery dead on many occasions, I could not afford a huge telephone bill at this stage. We had enough money for one meal a day. Karen phoned Ben as money was in a joint account and apparently the cops had said they both had to be in the bank managers office to sort this out. We went to the Branch in Tokai. Karen telling me how terrified she was and all. I waited in the bank while her and Ben, who arrived shortly after this were in with the manager. Karen came out looking a total mess, makeup smeared from crying, visibly shaking. Ben stormed off. We were just outside the bank when Karen started laughing and opened her bag to show me a large wad of money. She bragged how she could turn on the tears at will and how the "poor bank manager" bent over backwards to get her more than her fair share of the cash, while giving Ben filthy looks. She added that she could only pull this trick when Ben was around, never in front of me. I do not believe this and file it for future reference. She cleaned herself up and immediately started spending the money, a hairdryer was the most important thing on earth right then, and a cheap one would just not do.

We went back to Stellenbosch, I had orders for books so Karen said she would go to Cape Town to get the stock while I worked on getting more orders and posting the stock we had. She arrived home in the early hours of the morning. She thought she would just stop at her friend's house in Muizenberg. Again, this is not the action of a terrified woman, Ben was in Muizenberg and knew Anarika well. Okay, left it at that. The wad of money was gone and food was scarce again, but every time I walked out the door she was on the phone. I needed more books and we had a repeat performance. This time she could not stop speaking about Anarika's new boyfriend Pat. She spoke a lot about Pat and then started not coming back with the books, sometimes for days. Food was getting worse than scarce, the phone bill was astronomical and I paid that and rent first. Karen had phoned Ben, she could not hide it as we needed food and she said she had money in the bank. "Oh Ben realises that the money he had coming in was from jobs I organized for him, so he is putting some in my account." So my sister was joling with another man on Ben's money. She was meeting him sometimes as well. My sister talks a lot, when one talks a lot one should not have secrets. Then the bomb. I should work with Ben on installation stuff. Practiced Boundaries and my RIGHT to say no. That book is right, she was pissed off for a while but rest of day she was fine.

Vaguely heard Karen talking on the phone one morning but didn't even really wake up. Got up at 11am bit groggy. It had been Euvrard on the phone, Karen's ex-boss that we were doing the Zulu Book with. He had called with new deal on books. Flat spin, this is good. Could make R63 000! We worked for two days setting this mission up. Then Karen was up to her shit with Philip, her and Ben's contractor, wanted to buy her out. Delivered books and had a meeting at 5.30pm with Philip? Knew something up so asked what time she would be back. "8.30pm the latest", she does not lie too well and not surprised when she did not return. I was stressed about the rent and worked on making some money.

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