

## WELCOME HOME

Trepidation all but overwhelmed him yet again as he stepped over the cattle grid and started up the long drive. A hand gingerly lifted to a throbbing head. It was the morning after. His back hurt too. The night folded into the corner of the cab had been murder. He stretched to get the kinks out of his back and the exertion soon had him nursing his head again. The eighteen wheeler had pulled back onto the tarmac he'd been left standing all alone in the middle of nowhere like something the cat had dragged in. That had been an hour or so ago. His dishevelled clothing screamed Lexington Stale and mingled rather sickeningly with the foul breath and rancid body odour of a drunk coming off an all-nighter, which was pretty much what he was. A drunk deeply grateful to the compassionate trucker for picking him up on the outskirts of Jozi in the early hours and dropping him off where the D617 adjoins the main road. This kindness had left him with little more than an hour of walking the dusty district road to get to the cattle grid guarded drive leading up to the old homestead. Since then it had been a little more than a never-ending hour of walking that dusty road. Grubby. Thirsty. Nauseous. Ashamed. Walking and thinking. Only once had he paused briefly to retch into the tall grass on the side of the road. A long hour of walking and remembering. Walking, and continually grasping for illusive inadequate phrases soon to be needed.

His mind had been a shambles for a while now with his only respite from the tumult, an alcohol-induced stupor. Except for last night that is. Or at least for that one brief moment last night, that moment of clarity. A brief, clear, decisive moment deep in the recesses of the seedy watering hole in the seediest part of town. "I must go home!"

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