

Courage and Tenderness

JUAN GARAY

We are all the same energy
THANDABANTU

For my father

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I. The Beloki family feels life. Navarra, May, 1945

THE STEADY MARCH of the oxen plunged the plow into the entrails of the steep slopes of that remote valley of Navarre. Agustin Beloki worked his land, the land of as many generations of the Beloki family as he could remember.

The old farmhouse welcomed all the Belokis and offered a safe home to the whole family, but it did not escape the Basque rural tradition: the first-born son, who in the Beloki family, always named Agustin, inherited the land and the farmhouse.

The daughters would migrate to the farmhouse of those who'd marry them. By an old conflict between families, their husbands should never carry the Zubidi surname among the first five. The three sisters of Agustin; Flora, Aránzazu and Maite; had married farmers from neighbouring farmsteads.

The four younger brothers had followed different paths. Jon had already been working for twelve years as a sheep herder in the green mountains of Idaho, in North America. There he had married the daughter of a Biscayan emigrant and they had three children who spoke Basque with a strange accent. Josu had enlisted as a sailor on a merchant ship from Bilbo and spent long periods at sea, usually off the coast of West Africa. Angel had died in the civil war while fighting with the Republican side in the defense of Guernika. The youngest, Patxi, was studying to become a priest at the seminary in Pamplona.

For almost all of them, their lives had moved away from the Beloki farmhouse. But every May 14th they returned to celebrate grandfather Agustin's birthday.

Agustin Beloki had been furrowing the black soil for two hours with the old plow and the pair of oxen he had bought two years ago thanks to the money sent by Jon from America. In such a short time, he had prepared four *arrobas*¹ for planting corn and it was not yet dawn. As he left the stable where he supplied his precious animals with abundant *alfalfa* fodder, he felt the first rays of the sun already caressing the mountain behind the farmhouse. He washed himself with

¹ One arroba equals 3,622 square meters, over a third of a hectare

the fresh water from the well and headed towards the gate of the old farmhouse. His wife, Milagros, had already milked the two cows in the barn and was boiling the milk on the new wood stove that Josu had brought from Bilbo last May 14.

All exhaled peace. The exuberant spring in the valley oozed strength and purity. To the din of the barnyard where Patxi was now heading, and the trills of the morning's winged orchestra, joined the laughter and games of the two little ones of the house, Beatriz and Patxín. Their races, stumbling down the old wooden stairs, echoed throughout the house. They competed with joy but also with heartfelt sense of competition as to who would be the first to wallow in the well of the spring and catch the first "*sapaburu*" (tadpole) at the bottom. Their older brothers Agustin and Juan Mari would descend the same staircase a little later with an air of dignity, as if to show that they understood the meaning of the day: May 14, 1945.

All the brothers and sisters arrived with their families, except Patxi. Agustin seated next to his father, who watched every movement with an observant and solemn look. Grandfather Agustin had been in a wheelchair for fifteen years since high fevers rendered him paralyzed, barely speaking and apparently without memory. There was no doctor in the region and a specialist from Pamplona said it had been due to the Malta fevers. He said that he was brought too late and his spine was swathed in pus, or so they understood. Milagros had a nurse uncle in Cruces who alleged, "Malta fevers didn't leave anyone like that". Nevertheless, what all his children knew was that whatever the cause of the fevers was, their father had lost the will to live since a year before his wife, Angela, died after giving birth to their youngest son, Patxi, the one from the seminary.

Josu had planned his trips to be back home that very day. He had arrived with his girlfriend Fatima. The sisters called her "the Portuguese" and it offended Josu, although he never mentioned it. Josu met Fatima on a stopover in Madeira, when his merchant ship was carrying a cargo of zinc roof sheets to the newly created Republic of Liberia. Fatima was serving *ribeiro* in a bar in Madeira when they met, a year ago. Since then he had only seen her twice more but had decided to invite her to their *caserío* (farmhouse) and introduce her to the family since on his next trip to Africa he intended to marry her in Madeira.

Patxi was wearing a grey cassock that fit him very tightly. Rolled up sleeves, blissful he appeared. He greeted effusively those who were arriving. Everyone really loved him and felt comforted to see him so happy. His entering into the seminary had been rather by an agreement between the family and Don Armando, the town priest. There was no money to take him to school. Since Angel's death, he had developed a deep phobia of the army and had continuous nightmares about killing in the military service. Above all, his father still related him to his illness and the abysmal grief for the loss of his beloved wife Angela. Although no one argued as such, his grandfather could not stand his presence. Agustin Jr.'s heart shrank when he felt the pain and rage in the way his father often looked at his younger brother. Everyone knew it. And everyone remained silent about it.

The sisters were already busy helping Milagros in the kitchen and the brothers-in-law had joined a men gathering on the veranda. They were talking about the new world that was dawning after World War II. The Yalta agreement shared power between the Soviet bloc, which was already invading Eastern Europe with the complicity of the British, Americans, and their allies, who in turn imposed the division of Germany and the payment of twenty billion dollars for the damages of the war, three hundred for each war death. They also pressed on the Soviet Union to wipe out Japan, although the U.S. would wait months later with the most dreadful attack ever seen by humanity: the atomic bombs of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. In San Francisco, near where Jon lived, they were already preparing the conference for the proclamation of the United Nations, under the conditions of the war victors, and drafts of the universal declaration of human rights were circulating. The loathed Soviet Union demanded a blockade of Spain for its complacency with the Nazi regime, which Americans opposed. Each Empire measured dictatorships according to its interests. Josu, from his travels, and Patxi, from being in contact with grassroots communities committed to workers' rights, saw the world with more critical eyes than those shown by the media in Franco's Spain. It had been two weeks since the other European dictators, Hitler and Mussolini, had died, one committing suicide, the latter executed. A certain hope for democracy in Spain would soon be suppressed by the severity of a dictatorial regime, which knew how to astutely distance itself from the

other fascist losers in Europe. As in so many families in Spain in the post-war period, the different experiences in life and information about the world, confronted opposing ideas. However, all that was remote, and in the end the fondness and the feeling of being together in the adventure of life, were more important. In the same boat, the family.

A cloud of children scampered from the haystack to the fig tree. The older ones, Ángel, Juan Mari and Flora's eldest daughter, María, decided to take a walk to the oak tree. Angel had noticed that his brother got nervous when Maria came home or when they crossed each other in town. Even that day he noticed how she had changed his shirt three times. He had told her that the Holy Church forbade relations between cousins. Juan Mari replied angrily that he was not interested in Maria, but he remained worried about his brother's statement and was looking for a suitable moment to ask Uncle Patxi about it.

Yes, the Beloki's felt like a united family. Of course, there was also envy and resentment; but there was much more that kept them together and made each May 14th the most important date of the year. Against priest Don Armando's view, even more than Christmas.

They were twenty-three seated at the table on the porch. The ladies had brought a huge stew with *purrusalda* (Basque traditional leak porridge) while kinsmen had served themselves wine from La Rioja. The laughter of the children, who had placed a tadpole on Maria's chair, and the conversations of the adults about the situation in Germany, cooled down as everyone saw how Patxi had stood up and with his hands folded and with a penetrating gaze full of ineffable brotherly love, was about to bless the table. Grandfather Agustin felt a very special sensation. All the tormented memories of his wife seemed to find a welcoming place and grant him peace. All the unfair resentment that had been concealed for so many years towards his youngest son seemed to transform into a new feeling that disconcerted him and led him to concentrate all his weakened senses on that moment.

Patxi was detaching his tender gaze from the eyes of his family and letting himself be carried away by a soft and firm force, he looked in the direction of the mountains. Although his gaze reached much farther.

- Father and creator of everything, from our humble walk we want to make you feel another day our gratitude for the life you give us, our deep love as children. Today we especially want to show you our deep

joy for being together, to celebrate one more year of our father's life and to feel like a family. We know that Jon from distant lands and our mother Milagros and our brother Angel from your side are also sitting at our table today. All together we want to offer you our efforts, in the fields, in our studies, at sea; wherever you lead us, always give us the strength of the love of life that you give us and make that love be reflected in all our actions and thoughts towards our fellow beings".

There was a deep silence. Everyone felt more united. This was not a prayer like Don Armando's salves and rosaries. It did not even resemble the traditional graces for food recited by heart so many times. The sincerity with which Patxi had spoken had penetrated everyone. Even the little ones had remained attentive and silent. The sisters looked at him with their eyes wet with tears. His brothers looked down as if still feeling the force of those words. Agustin's eyes were still closed when he felt a coldness on his forehead that made him look at his father. Grandfather Agustin was soon the target of everyone's attention. His usual absent and sullen attitude had changed. Unable to express himself in words due to his illness, his eyes and arms turned towards his youngest son reflecting a huge cry from his soul that asked for an embrace, a union towards the one who had felt the most resentment and who had now made him feel a deep love and joy of being alive. His eyes filled with tears as Patxi put his arms around him and wished him a happy birthday. For the first time in forty years, Grandpa Agustin felt happy on May 14th.

No one noticed that among the little ones, Patxín had become as if hypnotized by his uncle's words and still had, without realizing it, his hands clasped like his. Something he still did not understand had filled him with a special joy; very different from the one he felt when he caught a tadpole in the pond or when he beat Beatriz in a race. That moment was to be engraved in his memory for life and although he did not remember what his uncle had said, he felt something very beautiful in the looks of his parents, his aunts and especially in that of his grandfather. He did not know then that he would still remember all his life one word from that prayer, which took him a long time to understand: "fellow beings".

II. Siphos springs from the sands of the Kalahari. Matabeleland, September, 1955

THE IMMENSITY OF the Matabeleland savannah.² The beautiful silhouettes of the African acacias. The incredible balance of the rock formations of Matopos.³ The intensity of the sunrise, which tinges everything with fire. Zulu huts on the horizon.

The Dube's⁴ *kraal*⁵ faced, perhaps surrendered to, another day to the world. Their world. But this dawn at the end of the dry season was unlike any other. Several women were carrying huge bundles of firewood tied to their backs. Others were waiting for men to draw water from the sandy bowels of the dry Sanzukwi riverbed. A while after, they were also carrying on their heads huge dry gourds filled with the precious and scarce liquid. Their outlines on the horizon harmonized with the beauty and elegance of the distant and magnificent flat top acacias. Their walk with their necks upright and their chins raised, their backs unwavering, the almost musical swaying of their arms, as if absent of the subtle poise of so much weight over such beautiful frailty?

From one of the huts of the *kraal* stemmed, like water from the sands of the Sanzukwi, a melody that seemed to follow the elegant walk of those women. Outside, around a bonfire, a group of men melted into the melody with their baritone and deep tones, the ineffable Zulu songs... mmm mmm... Soon after, a cry teared the wind. Siphos was arriving in the magical Ndebele world. The women helping her mother carried the placenta in a cloth to a large nearby anthill and walked rear on their steps without looking back, according to Ndebele tradition. Siphos's grandmother, *Dingolwasi* ("seek wisdom"), elatedly repeated "*Amhlope*" to her daughter *Thembinkosi* ("trust in God"), the Ndebele thanksgiving to the ancestors.

Five days later, her father, according to tradition, entered the hut and took her baby girl in his arms. His previous name, *Themba*, no longer mattered. From now on, everyone would know him as *Zaka-*

2 Matabeleland: region in south-western Zimbabwe, formerly Southern Rhodesia, where the Ndebele people, descendants of the Zulu people of South Africa, live.

3 Matopos: region east and south of Bulawayo, with granite formations and a national park with abundant African wildlife.

4 Dube: means zebra in Ndebele.

5 Kraal: family group of Zulu huts.

Sipho (Sipho's father). He looked solemnly at his wife, now *Naka-Sipho* (Sipho's mother), and went alone with the *Sipho* to the river. Once there he rubbed the rest of the now dried umbilical cord against a rock, always according to centenary ritual. The Ndebele so checked to see if the fish came to eat the sprinkle, as a sign of the spirits' welcome to the new member. Now Themba lived in the dry, sandy savannah of *Bulilila-Mangwe* and the dry river seemed to taunt at his fate. As he headed back home, he looked up and saw a black eagle flying over the *kraal*. He felt fear.

Zaka-Sipho remembered his father's stories and told them to her children on the warmer nights and at big celebrations. She remembered how his father told her about his grandfather, *Nguni* ("from the South"), how he had fought against the Zulus and later against the Boers, and had been an advisor to the "*Inkosi*" (Ndebele king) *Mzilikasi* on the great march to the north until they crossed the Limpopo and settled in what later became Matabeleland. *Nguni's* second son, *Mandhla* ("strength"), was forged as a Zulu warrior and fought under Lobengula in the first *Chimurenga* war against the white settlers of Rhodes. In addition to the humiliation of their defeat, he was soon after removed from the Ndebele nobility for marrying, contrary to tradition, a woman from the "inferior" tribes they conquered.

The young Masora girl belonged to the Kalanga tribe. She was made prisoner and slave of the Ndebele court. Not only her beauty, but also an inner strength that filled her with dignity in spite of her condition, amazed *Mandhla*. After taking her to his hut and nine months later beautiful captive Masora gave birth to Themba. The Ndebele nobility was ostracized *Mandhla* for the impurity of mixing with the inferior Kalanga. In addition, he confronted by his former comrades in struggle for the humiliating treatment they accepted from the "*amakiwa*" (whites) and how they helped oppress other tribes by accepting positions as "*Induna*" (traditional chiefs or mayors) under the English district officers.

Mandhla and his family drifted to "*Bulilila-mangwe*" ("where the leopards cry"), one of the arid areas called reserves and "granted" by the English to the natives, where Masora reunited with her family, near the Sanzukwi River.

Masora was the niece of a Kalanga *nyanga*. Her parents had died in the fight against the Ndebele invaders. From the age of eight, Masora had been chosen to inherit her aunt's healing powers, and had undergone intense traditional training for that.

Themba grew up strong in Matabeleland. He learned to respect the Kalanga and Ndebele cultures and languages alike, though often with the disregard of both because of their forbidden mix. His father forged him in the Ndebele warrior spirit to discern how to defend himself against those who had exiled his family, and in hunting Impala and Kudu. When Themba was twelve years old, his father died of an illness that kept him drowsy day and night and caused large, painful lumps on his neck. Despite Masora's attempts, his father passed away within weeks of entering that strange sleepy state. His mother taught him the Kalanga language and the world of the "*amakhozi*", sorghum and millet farming and how to find water in the dry Bulilila-mangwe savannahs. However, neither in Themba nor in any of the three sons and four daughters who followed him could Masora perceive the designs to be *nyanga*. Three died young and one suffered polio. Themba became a man, married the eldest daughter of a sister of Masora's late father and built his hut in the same *kraal* as his mother.

When Themba explained to her mother the vision of the black eagle at the time of her daughter's birth, Masora understood that at last her god "*Mkhulunkhulu*" (the grandfather of grandfathers), had sent her his heiress. When Themba felt her mother's joy, he named her "Sipho" (gift). She was born with the natural designs of being a *nyanga*, sacred healer, in Bulilila-mangwe.

It was, according to the white settlers who called this area of Africa "Rhodesia", the month of September 1955. Einstein had died a few months earlier leaving a legacy of knowledge that would prevail for generations, the Soviet bloc was consolidating in the Warsaw Pact and Churchill was handing power in the United Kingdom. The British Empire began to make concessions and they granted Sudan, more out of strategy against Egypt than out of respect for the sovereignty of its people, the first African independence. In America, Bell developed the first transistor for computing and Kroc inaugurated the first McDonald's, two symbols of the era that was dawning in the world.

Cajal described the shape of human genes and Salk discovered the polio vaccine.

Far from all that, the Kalanga and Ndebele struggled to survive each day in the arid lands of the Kalahari.

III. A mission in the African bush. Magbesseneh, Sierra Leone, 1963.

RICARDO WAS A PHYSICIAN in post-war Spain. He came from a bourgeois family of the booming Catalan textile industry, and attended the best schools until he entered medical college. During his studies at the *Hospital de San Pau* he excelled in his dedication to the sick as well as his clinical insight, and was integrated into the fight against tuberculosis, becoming one of its most renowned scientists and clinicians in Republican Spain. During the civil war, his libertarian ideas marginalized him from his post as lead physician and he emigrated to London, where he studied at the School of Hygiene and entered the mysterious and often epic world of Tropical Medicine.

By the third year, in 1961, he was already a renowned researcher of the pathogenesis of tuberculosis. In that very year, Pope John XXIII sanctioned, in his encyclical "*Mater et magistra*", private property as a natural right, and formally Catholicism allied with capitalism and distanced from communism. It was something Ricardo could not understand: the heirs of Jesus' teachings of humility and equality allied with the greed of hoarding and confronted with that of sharing. The world became more and more polarized between those two ideologies and its two world powers were delimiting their areas of control. The United States invaded the Bay of Pigs in Cuba while the Soviet Union built the Berlin Wall. Ricardo followed that year the first performances of an emerging band performing in "The Cavern" in Liverpool. It was April 1961. A remote country called Sierra Leone, which Ricardo had only heard about through Ross's expeditions and his description of the malaria cycle, was gaining independence from the United Kingdom.

Shortly thereafter, his father, imprisoned for his republican ideas, became seriously ill. Ricardo only learned of his illness when it was too late. His mother wanted to spare him the sadness, the rage and the danger of being arrested by Franco's secret services upon his return. When Ricardo heard about it from a Spanish colleague, he left everything in his small laboratory of *filarias* in London, and returned to try to free his father from prison where his life was vanishing. He visited a former head of the hospital of St Pau, who, although was close to the Franco regime, he respected Ricardo's true vocation of service.

He argued based on an article of the penitentiary law for seriously ill prisoners and was able to get him out of prison. It was December 1961. He left in time for them to hear together in the family home and through the radio station "*La Pirenáica*" Che Guevara's speech at the United Nations. They were thrilled to hear him say: "*this great humanity has said "Enough" and has started to walk. And its march, of giants, will not stop until it conquers true independence*".

Ricardo assisted his father in the family home, which suffered the rigors of the war and Franco's expropriation of the family's textile factory. Ricardo's father was dying of tuberculosis invading his whole body. The macabre jokes of destiny: perhaps the most knowledgeable doctors in the country, exiled, watched, with his fists clenched by the rage of impotence, the death of his father from the disease from which he had managed to save so many hundreds of patients before the war. He found streptomycin from a friend in the pharmacy of his former hospital, and with other medicines, he desperately tried to save his dying father. He died in his arms on Christmas Day. After his father's death, Ricardo felt hollow. What was the point of all his studies and struggles if he couldn't even save his own father? Desperate, he walked long hours in the mountains of *Mont Seny* and often spent nights laying over rocks and staring at the stars. Ricardo decided to bestow himself to the weakest, to those marginalized by the system, to the evicted prisoners. And so it was that he arrived at the *San Juan de Dios* homeless' shelter in *Las Ramblas* in Barcelona. There he volunteered to wash those destitute, feed them, and embrace them. He could hardly speak. The sadness and emptiness of his father's death and the rage of how his political exile prevented him from saving his life, gripped his tormented soul.

After a few months working as a volunteer at the shelter, Ricardo decided to become a novice of the Order of St John of God. He was already 43 years old and a well-known doctor, although marginalized by the Franco regime. This late vocation triggered scepticism by the Order's superior. Most of the novices entered the Order when they were still teenagers and came from working class or peasant families. However, Ricardo's dedication and generosity to the sick opened the doors of the Order to him. He spent two years as a novice studying, praying and washing the psychiatric patients in the "madhouse" of *Sant*

Boi. He also objected that only Andalusian immigrants, often marginalized as "*charnegos*", should clean the latrines of the hospital and he volunteered himself to do so. He became renowned for his stoic devotion. No one in the Order, except the Brother Superior, who inquired into his history, knew that he was a medical doctor. One day, one of the psychiatric patients choked in the dining room and Ricardo came to his aid. He squeezed his arms around his belly, hugging him from behind until he expelled the piece of ham that was blocking his breathing. He revived him by giving him a cardiac massage and pumping air into his lungs. The superior brother of Sant Boi called him to his office the next day.

When he entered the office, he saw Brother Pedro, Superior of Sant Boi, and Father Pascual, Superior General of the Order, based in Rome but visiting the Order's centres in Spain. Ricardo saw a deep tenderness in his eyes.

-Brother Ricardo, I have heard of your generosity, of your humility, and of your knowledge as a physician.

Father Pascual said.

-I do not deserve that reputation, Father.

-That only confirms your humility. Brother Ricardo, I need you for a mission. You are just finishing your novitiate period and will take vows next month, but I need you. The Order needs you.

-Father. I will do all I can for the relief of the sick, poor and marginalized.

-A month ago, I received a letter from the Superior of a sister religious order in Ireland. They have opened a hospital in a southern part of a former British colony in West Africa. She tells me that the situation in the north of the country is one of extreme poverty. It is an area of Muslim influence. He told me that the bishop, an Irishman whom I met in Rome this year, is offering some land and is looking for a religious order to accept the challenge of setting up a mission with a hospital and spread the faith of God in that area. You speak English, you are a good doctor and you demonstrate a service and dedication to others that clears any doubt in my mind about your place in this mission.

Ricardo felt then his faith weakened. His true vocation was to care for those destitute by the unfair system. As his father had been. And so he understood his mission as a Christian. However, he often had doubts about the existence of God, about the story of Jesus and especially about the supremacy of the Christian religion. His eagerness for philosophy made him contrast the logic of thought with Christian dogmas. The thoughts of a friend of his father's, the philosopher José Luis López Aranguren, were deeply rooted in his youth. He listened in quiet devotion to the talks of his father and anarchist friends with Aranguren. Ricardo took to England some of Aranguren's books that dared to criticize hierarchical Catholicism. He developed the sense that faith needs deeds and the religious attitude needs an ethical base. Deep down, he quietly detested the Vatican in its power and luxuries, and the hierarchical Church in Spain, an ally of the Franco regime that killed his father. But his dedication to the sick made him disregard these doubts and disenchantment with official Catholicism, and concentrate on his mission as a man, as a Christian, as a doctor. Sceptic of any hierarchy, his dedication was to his "fellow beings", and mainly, to those most in need.

Two months later, Ricardo and four other friars of the Order left on an English merchant ship that stopped in Barcelona and headed for Cape Town, bordering the western coast of Africa. It was December 1963; the wave of African independence had reached Kenya and almost covered the entire continent, except for the colonies of Angola, Mozambique chained to the Portuguese dictatorship, and South Africa and Southern Rhodesia subdued to racist regimes. It seemed that the tension between capitalism and communism was softening. The White House installed the "red telephone" and Martin Luther King gave his famous "I have a dream" speech.

Sierra Leone was one of the poorest countries in the world. The British called it "the white man's grave". Ricardo had met colonial doctors at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine who described all kinds of tropical plagues on those shores. He had read with passion Ross's writings, describing how mosquitoes transmitted malaria. It was precisely in Sierra Leone, perhaps with the highest malaria-transmission rates in the world, where Ross described how only female mosquitoes transferred the parasite. Malaria had, more

than any other disease, conditioned humankind, its evolution and natural selection, its settlements, migrations, wars and, mainly, the uncertain fate of Africa.

Bishop Kevin welcomed them upon arrival in Freetown. He was loquacious, heavy drinking, and, according to gossips, an incorrigible womanizer. Yet extremely affable and sincere. They arrived a few days later in wagons pulled by buffaloes domesticated by the *Fulani* tribes of the north, to the savannahs and jungles of the northern part of the country, the *Temne* lands. The British crushed the revolt led by their leader Bai Bureh *and* humiliated them since then. The colonial power favoured the *Mendes* through Presidents Milton and Albert Margai, who ostracized the *Temnes* of the North. *Divide et vincera*. They suffered perhaps the greatest natural selection of humankind, by the toughest pressure of tropical plagues. The De Beers mining monopoly, founded by Cecil Rhodes, the same who occupied and dominated the lands later known as Rhodesia, allied in abusing the tribes of Sierra Leone, who were treated in the mines in ways similar to the slavery of the Portuguese, Dutch and English until the XIXth century. Many considered them the most primitive and miserable people of all the British colonies. After independence, it was the poorest area of the poorest country in the world, though not in natural resources. Father Stephen, the superior of this group of founders, established the Church and the evangelism strategy. Brother Jaime, a hard-edged farmer from rural Catalunya, also a late vocation, devoted to organize the mission's vegetable gardens, corrals and workshops. Brother José María, from Spain's South East Murcia, barely 20 years old and with some knowledge of nursing, would help Ricardo in his medical mission. They began to build some pavilions for the consultation rooms, the operating theatre and a ward for in-patients. Ricardo befriended a young *Temne* man, son of a tribal chief, who spoke English because he had studied at a Jesuit mission in Freetown. His name was David. He taught Ricardo the local *Temne* language and the dominant Creole in the country's fledgling administration, choked by corruption and *Mende* tribal power mafias. He also taught him how to heal wounds, assist in operations, administer intravenous fluids, and how to monitor the vital signs of the sick.

Ricardo had brought in a trunk, an ether vaporizing gadget that had been discarded at the hospital of San Pau, some metal boxes with the essential surgical material, his stethoscope, a "McArthur" microscope that he acquired in London, a mercury sphygmomanometer, a German tonometer for ocular pressure, a colposcope for gynecological examinations, an ophthalmoscope and an otoscope. They got a few supplies from *Serabu's* Irish mission: ether, formalin, iodine, potassium permanganate, Giemsa stains, a few boxes of quinine and other medications that Ricardo only knew by name from his studies in London. These were antimonials and arsenic derivatives, no longer used even in veterinary medicine in Europe. They were the only medicines available to treat the local plagues of blood and gut parasites that infested virtually the entire population of that remote part of the world.

And so it was that Brother Ricardo founded the small hospital of Magbesseneh. Ricardo, Jose Mari and David attended a consulting room, a women's ward with four beds, a men's ward with other four beds, a room with six cribs for small children, an operating room and the pharmacy. He named it Saint Joseph's Hospital, in remembrance of his father Josep. It was September 1963, the season of thunderstorms.

Brother Ricardo worked from sunrise to sunset every day. Word spread throughout the *Temnes* region of his commitment and healing power. His fame reached the northern lands of the *Fula*, *Koranko* and *Mandingo* tribes of Sierra Leone and Guinea Conakry, and eastward to the *Limba* areas beyond the *Bumbuna Falls*. Every day more and more patients reached the mission hospital, almost all of them walking from long distances, sometimes on improvised bamboo stretchers. They camped out at night if they were not vital emergencies, or they woke up good old David who knew whether to prepare the operating room or wait until dawn.

Within two years, the Magbeseneh hospital had three men's and three additional women's wards and a large children's room. In all, it had 60 beds, but the inflow of patients was such that they slept laid two per bed and often two more in improvised blankets under the beds. The cribs could accommodate up to four small children. They operated under the light of kerosene lamps, anesthetized with the ether vaporizer and closed the incisions with the few sutures that the Order sent from

Barcelona. Ricardo received a magazine targeting doctors in remote situations with limited resources: *The Tropical Doctor*. A slightly younger Welshman he met in London, Eldryd sent them to Ricardo. Them two, from their Protestant and Catholic backgrounds, had passionate discussions on religion and ethics. Ricardo often referred to Gandhi and his book of experiments on truth, which hurt Eldryd's English pride and preferred to change the subject. Eldryd went to neighbouring Ghana and started a medical school. They exchanged the most fervent letters of experiences in Africa, of studies on those terrible and unknown diseases and the consecration to the service of the needy. Surprisingly, layman Eldryd was inspired above all by Jesus Christ, while Brother Ricardo saw in each patient, even if he did not say so, the face of his father Josep.

Ricardo discovered and described the local plagues of river blindness caused by a filaria invading the eyes. With a simple pinch with a sterile razor he would extract a sample of skin the size of a lentil, put it over a cristal slide, add a few drops of salt water and watch under his pocket size McArthur microscope, how thousands of filarias snaked out. Ricardo would go out on Sundays, after mass at the mission, to walk through the villages in the area. He carried his microscope and showed entire communities those parasites that invaded their bodies and caused itching, nodules and ended up causing blindness. Thus, he drew a map of villages and coloured proportions of infected and blind people.

Another Englishman, Dr. Blacklock, had identified in Sierra Leone in the 1920s a fly carrying the same filariae that they saw in those people with skin lesions, nodules and blindness. Ricardo had avidly read his manuscripts in the London school library. In his field notebook, he made drawings and diagrams of where the foci of infection were to try to attack those flies that clogged the future to entire villages where over half of the people were already blind at the age of thirty. In any case, the average life expectancy of the overall population was barely forty years. Ricardo also exchanged letters with Sir Denis Burkitt exchanging ideas about malaria and its relationship with terrible bone tumours that deformed the faces of hundreds of children in the neighbouring villages.

On Wednesday afternoons, Brother Jaime had to go to the regional capital, Port Loko, to get diesel for the truck and the generator sent by a society of farmers in his region of Lleida. Ricardo insisted that he did not need it, because of his stoicism and austerity. However, David and Jose Mari claimed it because they noticed that Ricardo was losing eyesight, perhaps already infested by those filarias that he taught relentlessly to the communities on Sundays. They needed the generator to better lighten the operations and thus avoid the risk of explosion due to the mixing of the kerosene flames with the ether vapour. It also allowed them to sterilize the medical instruments for treatment and operations in a steriliser sent by the friars of Sant Boi.

On the way to Port Loko, Ricardo stopped every Wednesday in a different village, with dressings, cans of quinine, penicillin, drugs against parasites, and his inseparable McArthur microscope. Towards the south, away from the streams flowing from Bumbuna, Ricardo could hardly find any cases of river blindness. What he did begin to see were hundreds of children and adults with large leg ulcers. Some of the ulcers left the entire leg raw. This, with poor hygiene and local herbal treatments that sometimes caused healing but often infected the tissues, led to many gangrene cases on which Ricardo had to perform amputations. He began to dress ulcers and every Wednesday dozens, and thereafter hundreds of people waited for him, sitting on tree trunks waiting for the care of the "*Opoto*" (white man). Ricardo observed how sugar stimulated healing and gave him time to make skin grafts with his *dermotome*, thus preventing hundreds of amputations. He also learned to improvise to close sutures when the catgut or silk ran out. Children of Magbesseneh hunted red ants for him and he kept them in a glass jar. When he needed to close a wound or an incision in the operating room, he would grab an ant with the forceps, expose its head to both edges of the incision, and the ant would squeeze its powerful jaws bringing the edges closer together and sealing them. At that point, Ricardo would pull the body with another pair of tweezers and left the head inert in that final act of both suicide and healing. He also learned to make intravenous fluids with rainwater and sterilize it with the autoclave that finally, with the generator, the brothers installed, hence overcoming Ricardo's radical austerity. Yes. Ricardo was ascetic in his life, sparing in his words, terse in his smiles, one could almost say that

he lived on the edge, not allowing himself to have more than the poorest he came across in that remote part of the world where humans lived the least. He ate the same rice given to his patients. He only two white cassocks and wore sandals that he himself made from the remains of old truck tires. But, was he happy?

IV. Nyanga spirit enters Siphon, Matabeleland, November, 1965.

IT WAS 1965, THE UNITED STATES, obsessed with demonizing communism, was shredding napalm over Vietnam and invading the Dominican Republic. Some lights of hope were also shining in the world: after Luther King's marches, the black vote was recognized in the United States, the Medicare and Medicaid health service for the poor began, and at the University of Berkeley the pacifist opposition to the Vietnam War began burning military primers. But in Sanzukwi, none of that seemed to disturb the day-to-day life or the magical union with the spirits of the ancestors.

Themba watched Siphon and felt how she had grown up in Bulililamangwe with the freedom of the eagles' flight, with the strength of the baobab roots, the beauty of the impala's movements and the serenity and caution of his clan's animal reference, the Dube (zebra).

Siphon was then ten years old and had already grown into a beautiful young girl. She helped, like all Kalanga girls, in all the *kraal's* chores. She had learned to fetch water from the Sanzukwi riverbed even on the driest days of the year, to fetch the twisted firewood from that Kalahari dry bush, to milk the few cows that had survived the last great drought, to look after the goats and bring them back to the corrals, to plant the crops, chase the birds from eating the seeds and harvest the land gifts, to cook sorghum and millet paste with different local vegetables and to look after her three younger brothers and sisters. She enjoyed the stories told by grandmother Masora by the fire at night, the singing during games, the traditions and family ceremonies, playing games with her brothers and neighbours, or stealthily follow the impalas and kudus when she recognized their tracks going to drink water from the river.

Siphon did not yet participate in some activities that seduced her with strength and curiosity: to go with his father to hunt impalas and kudus; to kill some leopard or baboon when some goats disappeared; or to chase away with the elders of the *kraal* the elephants that drew near the sown fields. Above all, she was fascinated with a mysterious and irresistible might to spy on her grandmother when a sick person came to seek her healing powers. She heard her songs to the spirits, she could smell the scent of the potions she prepared, she had furtively

followed her steps and knew some of the plants she gathered from the forest, she had observed between the cracks of her grandmother's hut how she cared for her patients and she had grasped how she used sets of small bones, how she invoked the spirits and how she, in some cases, made small cuts in the skin. She even learned some of the ceremonial verses during her cures.

Sipho had embraced from childhood the attitude to respect her "*vadzimu*" (ancestors), who protected the Dube clan. For her family, it was essential to preserve harmony with the ancestors, especially with the "*mhondoro*", in charge of maintaining the fertility of the fields and conveying the rains. Although her paternal grandfather, Mandhla, had been a Ndebele, his loyalty to the Masora and the Kalanga, and courage in confronting the cruel and corrupt Ndebele nobility after the *Chimurenga* wars, had earned him adoption as a son of the mhondoro spirit. Mandhla's memory was not only in Themba's stories, but also in every family ceremony and in his daily prayers to the spirits. Mandhla's soul was the "*mudzimu*", he kept peace in the clan and brought prosperity.

One day, Themba felt in her mother's gaze towards Sipho a deep anguish. That very night, Themba asked consent to enter her mother's hut. It had been more than thirty years since he had entered such sacred dwelling.

-Mother, I see you. The sun has set.

It was the Ndebele greeting, Themba spoke Ndebele with his family although the rest spoke Kalanga among themselves.

-Yes, son. How are you this evening?

-I have a life, mother.

-Come inside, it's getting cold.

His mother spread out a goatskin and sat on the ground, while offering her son a stool on a carved log. In Ndebele tradition, women always sat at a lower level. Themba never thought of it as humiliation for any other woman but it troubled him when it was his mother.

-We thank you, Mother.

Themba always spoke in the plural, as if to represent both the head of the family and the voice of his father's spirit.

-What has brought you to my humble hut, my good son?

-Mother, I am worried. I feel sadness and fear in your eyes. I want to help you.

-Do you think I have offended our ancestors, my son?

-Mother, you are always good and kind. The family loves you and you make us feel proud. All over Bulila-mangwe you are respected for your healing powers and how you help those who suffer. My father's spirit still loves you like the day he stood up against Lobengula and made you his wife. But there is something in your eyes that worries me and I need to know what saddens you, mother.

-Son, I need to speak to you deep from my heart. My aunt's spirit entered me when I was only eight years old. My destiny has been to take care of the sick among our people and to connect with the spirits to know how to be in better harmony with them. I am beginning to lose sight because your father's spirit wants to have me by his side. My mission now is to find out who in our family is to be chosen to become a *nyanga* and help her or him learn everything I learned from my mother's sister. I am afraid to see the time pass by and not find that moment.

-Perhaps, Mother, the spirits have decided to pass on your powers to another family.

-This saddens me, son. I fear the spirits may have decided not to let these powers pass on within our family because we have joined the Ndebele. I am proud of your father and I know that everyone respects him, but the world of darkness is sometimes cruel to those who do not keep up to the traditions.

-Mother, I will try to talk to my father, and seek his help.

-It will be whatever Mkhulunkhulu wants, my son.

That night, Themba was walking to his hut when he saw a chameleon burying itself in the ground. He remembered how this was a premonition among the Ndebele that death was near for a relative.

One moon later, Masora died. In her final expression, Themba felt again the anguish she conveyed to him before she died. The next day, the *kraal* filled with mourning adults. The women took turns standing by Masora, chanting and praying to the spirits. The men sat outside with a grave look on their faces. One group sacrificed a bull prepared the meat and dried the skin. When night fell, they lit a large bonfire in

front of Masora's hut and watched over her body all night. The chanting continued all night. Although Siphon and her brothers were not allowed to join the mourning, they heard the songs and felt the painful departure of their beloved grandmother. Siphon felt also something else.

The next day, a large number of people marched in a long line from the kraal to the cemetery. The chants accompanied the sadness all felt. They introduced the body of Masora surrounded by the bull's skin into the grave and each one threw a stone, a branch or a handful of soil while saying a few words of farewell. Themba repeated in Ndebele what he had said to his father a few years before:

-*LiHamba kuhle, usikhonzele* (rest in peace and remember us).

As Themba returned with the retinue to the *kraal*, he saw his sons running towards him calling for help. Siphon had lost consciousness and was moving strangely, speaking incomprehensible words. A fellow *nyanga to Masora*, who had come to the burial, entered with Themba the hut of the little ones. Siphon was on laying on the ground with her eyes closed and moving all her muscles spasmodically. Her mouth was tense, thick saliva was oozing from it and she was making efforts to articulate a word:

- "mum-bu--ri-we--dom---bo!"

Themba had never heard that word before. The *nyanga's* look became grave.

-What's wrong with Siphon? What does she say?

Themba implored.

The Nyanga replied:

-Siphon will be fine. Masora's spirit is entering her. She just spoke the name of a secret plant that will lead her to embrace her grandmother's powers.

V. Patxi pursues his life path. Garai, Basque Country, October 1968.

The winter of 1968 WAS APPROACHING. The Americans continued their terror in Vietnam, symbolized by the horrible massacre of peasants in My Lai while Martin Luther King was killed in his country. On the other side of the Iron Curtain, Soviet troops invaded Czechoslovakia and silenced the "Prague Spring". The new Pope, Paul VI, announced the encyclical "Humana Vitae", in which he condemned the use of contraceptives. The reactions of the Church in Latin America, such as the protests of "Iglesia Joven" in Chile during the papal visit, strewed the seeds of the Liberation Theology throughout the continent. In spite of everything, Humanity continued to progress. In San Francisco, Engerlbart developed the "hypertext" system, the basis of what would later become computer-mediated communication, the dawn of the new world to come.

In the Basque Country, the hardest years of the post-war period were over and they were even starting to teach Basque in schools. But ETA murdered its first victim, beginning a sad and dark era. Grandfather Agustin died of pneumonia. His youngest son Patxi stayed by his side during the last days and gave him the last rites. All relatives attended the funeral. Even Jon with his family came from America. He arrived by surprise in a *Seat 600* that he rented in San Sebastian. Josu came as well a month earlier when he heard of his father's serious illness. He lived with Fatima and his three children in Madeira where she had set up a restaurant while he sailed the western seas of Africa. There were already eighteen grandchildren and five great-grandchildren from old Agustin.

Angel had married and lived with his wife and two small children in the farmhouse where he helped his father in all the chores. Juan Mari studied law with the help of his uncle Jon from America and lived in an apartment in Bilbo for five years. His father Agustin no longer talked to him. They had not seen each other for five years until he came to the funeral riding on a *Vespa*. Everyone knew Juan Mari belonged to the ETA *polimilis* (separatists in arms) and that his trips to southern France were not due to work. His very presence in the farmhouse put the whole family at risk. In addition, since his affair with Maria; Flora and

Agustin and their respective families were not speaking to each other. Beatriz was twenty-one years old and helped out at home. The oldest son of a *Guardia Civil* sergeant was often with her, which was also a source of family tension. She had to pretend to be angry so that her fiancé would not come to the farmhouse during the mourning and confront Juan Mari's presence. Patxín had become a strong and cheerful lad. He was the best *pelotari* in the region and enjoyed his life in the farmhouse although he only knew too well that one day he would have to leave and let his older brother Agustin carry on with the Basque tradition.

After the funeral, concelebrated by Don Armando and Patxi in the village church, and the burial in the cemetery, the gathering continued in the farmhouse. A glistening sunset heralded a new moon night with a sparkling starry sky. Patxín went out to the porch troubled to witness the tension between his father and his brother Juan Mari. With his hands in the pockets of his Sunday suit and his gaze lost behind the mountains, he felt the cool night breeze on his face and painfully thought of the moment when he would have to leave that valley he loved so much. He heard footsteps on the cobblestone porch and felt his uncle Patxi's hand over his shoulder. There was something very special between the two of them. They felt very well together even if they only talked about pelota or cycling, Patxín's other passion. He felt he needed his uncle Patxi close to him at this time when he needed to make a decision about his future, perhaps the first important resolution of his life.

-What are you thinking about, Patxi?

He was the only one in the family who no longer called him by diminutive.

-I was just gazing at the stars, *Aita*.

-They are magnificent, don't you think so?

Patxín agreed in stillness. He merely enjoyed the sense of peace in the night and a unique feeling of haven with the presence of his uncle, who was also his godfather.

-The stars remind me of the immensity of the universe, the grandeur of Creation.

-Did you know, Patxi, that many of the stars you now see reflect in us now the brightness they really had millions of years ago. They

remind us of the immensity of time, of the Universe, of creation, of our smallness and at the same time our greatness, being part, surely matchless and essential, of such a wonderful Creation.

Patxín had heard something like that before but did not fully understand it.

-Do you also study about the stars in the seminary, *Aita*?

-In the seminary they encouraged me to be interested about everything that has to do with life, Patxi. But let's not talk about priests. Tell me, what are your plans?

The question fell on him like a slab. It hung in the air. Patxín had to think about his future. He had finished high school and had been working at the farm for the last three years. He was happy supporting his father and his brother Agustin, meeting with his "*cuadrilla*" from the nearby farmhouses, playing pelota on Saturdays, going to Tolosa when Tomas, Beatriz's suitor, who let him borrow his bike, feeling the freshness of the valley in the daybreaks and the mellow flow of the seasons. But he knew that such way of life was coming to an end and soon he would have to face a future of responsibilities that he could not yet clearly see. He pushed the idea out of his mind as it made him anxious. Many nights he had a nightmare in which he saw the farmhouse and his family leaving in a big boat with Josu at the helm while he was left behind in a darkness and silence he could not bear. He tried to shout to his family to wait for him but the words did not come out. He felt his whole body tightened and he woke up amid sweating and shudders.

-I don't know, *Aita*. I am blissful here.

-Your father told me that you enjoyed history, but he didn't know if you wanted to continue studying.

-*Aita*, you know that the roof needs fixing and it's going to cost a lot. Father will have to ask for a loan. Beatriz wants to study to become a teacher and maybe that will distance her from Tomas, you know how father worries. Besides, one doesn't make a living from history, it's a career for the rich children of the city.

-What about the girls, how about them, you rascal?

-Well, not bad, *Aita*. There are some very cute girls in the valley; it is not a sin to say that, is it?

-If it were a sin to sense the beauty of women, I would change my religion and my profession. But tell me, is any one of them more than "cute" to you?.

-You want to pull my tongue...

-Joking Patxi, I just like to talk to my nephew and know if you need any advice.

-Aita, are you happy?

-The truth?

-Yes, the truth.

-With my heart, Patxi. I am very happy. Sometimes I worry about certain things, like the world in wars. Have you heard on the radio what is happening in Vietnam, in Biafra? I do not understand humanity. Sometimes I don't fully understand myself either. However, I learned to talk to God and He always helps me, gives me peace, makes me feel something very great, Patxi: the wonder of life, of nature and the enormous happiness that comes from truly loving others.

-But what do you feel about...? Sorry, it's silly...

-I would not like knowing that my dear nephew does not trust me and asks freely what he wants to know..

-I wanted to enquire if you are not attracted to women, Aita; and may God forgive me for asking you...

-God is happy that you don't hide your feelings, Patxi. And I'm not going to hide them either. I like women, of course. And I assure you that keeping the vow of chastity is not easy. More than once I've thought of breaking it, don't tell anyone; it's our secret, okay? But my commitment to God and to spread his message of love to all my brothers is stronger, much stronger. And the deeper that desire goes into me, the less I think about the craving for a companion or the wish to create my own family. I assure you that I have not met a single wise man in this world who does not have doubts, who does not have fears, who does not see contradictions in his life. Everyone chooses a path and do not think that such choice will make you happy or unhappy. Your attitude towards life will be the most important thing, not what surrounds you. But I did not come here to lecture you, sorry. That is priest stuff.

For a few minutes, they were silent. They were sitting at the hayloft door. The brightness of the stars cast magical shadows on the hay. They listened to the crickets and the occasional owl. A subtle breeze made the old chestnut whistle. The world was indeed beautiful, but for his Aita, life was exciting as for few others.

-Aita, could I come and help you for a while in your parish?

Two months later, Agustin's youngest son was saying goodbye to his mother at the farmhouse. He was carrying an old canvas bag with his clothes and a plastic bag with the day's food: a good cheese sandwich from the farmhouse with tuna, his favourite. Milagros felt something special for the little boy and her eyes reflected the pain of seeing him leave. Her maternal instinct told her that something profound was going to change in Patxi's life. His father accompanied him to the crossroad, where he would wait for the bus to Pamplona. There he would take another bus to Bilbo and get off in Durango. From Durango it was ten kilometres to Garai, the small Biscayan town where his uncle had been the parish priest for seven years. On the way, his father made him promise not to contact his brother Juan Mari. When they said goodbye, they hugged each other tightly. He was startled to see how his father shed a few tears. Not even at his grandfather's death had he seen him cry. He felt an enormous respect for his father and told him something that he felt very deeply and would never forget:

-Father, whatever I do, I will always try to make you proud of your youngest son.

He was arriving in Durango and felt bewitched by the beauty of the stately town of Elorrio and its stunning church, but above all by the grandeur of the Anboto Mountain. He arrived at the central square of Durango where his uncle Patxi was waiting for him. They walked together to the church of St. Mary under whose wide porches there were many farmers with fruit and vegetable stalls. Although many farmhouses of Garai supplied Patxi with vegetables, he wanted to buy pears and honey to prepare for his nephew his preferred dessert: pear compote.

They took the route to Garai, up a steep road. The meadows were greener than those of his valley in Navarra. On several stretches of the road, he saw plantations of fir trees, something new to him. His uncle explained that they were for the paper mill and he felt sorry although

he could not explain why. The farmhouses had steeper and lower roofs than the Navarrese ones he knew. The upper part was limited to a barn and corn dryer, but not intended for living quarters like his family's. Almost all of them had a porch at the entrance. The steep vegetable gardens, the cows, the ox carts, the lanky and robust figures of the farmhands, their greetings to Patxi saying "*Epa*" as they passed each other: everything made him feel at home. Such resemblance brought back the memory of the sad farewell to his parents.

They arrived at the small village, which entailed the church, the school, a fronton, a bar, the town hall, and four or five houses. Two Seat 600 stayed proudly in front of the town hall, one belonging to the Zubiaude brothers, two deaf-mute painters who lived in one of the village houses; the mayor owned the other. South to the square, there was a small esplanade and several benches. A simple wooden railing protected from the steep slope and invited to gaze the beautiful view of mountains, farmhouses, forests and meadows and , in the background, the Anboto peak and the mountain range that separated Vizcaya from Alaba. At its feet, the silhouette of Durango with the tower of the church of St. Mary. Something disturbed the peace Patxi was feeling surrounded by so much beauty: nailed to a trunk was a Guardia Civil poster that read: "Wanted". Underneath was a picture of a young man and his name, followed by "Dangerous terrorist belonging to ETA, author of several attacks against the Unity of the Fatherland". Suddenly the image of Juan Mari came to him, the promise to his father, her sister's suitor, the civil war his uncle told him about and the death of his uncle Angel. From his valley in Navarre he had barely experienced the violent side of the humans. He felt ashamed of it all and wanted to apologize to the stunning nature in that corner of the world he was beginning to discover.

VI. Struggling for life. Bombay, India, 1969

IT WAS July 21, 1969, although Aimsa did not know the date of the days she was surviving. She was hiding, trembling, behind some suitcases and sacks stacked between two wagons of the train from Bombay bound to Calcutta. She heard some folks saying that some men from a place called America had reached the moon, and she thought how many lies people could shamelessly say. In the midst of so much poverty, from garbage dump to garbage dump, and now anguished by the fear of being utterly alone in the world without her mother, that idea seemed impossible, almost cruel. She did not know that her own government was testing the atomic bomb somewhere in Siberia, while three quarters of its population lacked the basic food, water and shelter to survive.

She remembered how her mother, Kalindi Kamble, would tell her stories of her life in a small village north of Bombay. When her mother would talk to her about that time, her eyes would glitter, her face would sparkle and her smile of life, which usually seemed vague and absent, would glisten. She was always devoted to help her mother at home and in the fields. Her mother belonged to the *jati* (caste) of the untouchables. By the hoary caste system, Kalindi and Aimsa, and their entire family, would always be inferior existences. First were the priests - *Brahmins* -, then the warriors - *Kshatriyas*, the farmers and traders - *Vaisyas* - and the labourers - *Sudras* - and finally, them and their family, the untouchables - *Harijans*. They were the last link in the absurd yet rigid social ladder, as untouchable for centuries as her caste was. Their fate as *harijans*, imposed on them whom they could marry, what profession they could have, what destiny to expect in this life. They had the hope of *samsara* - reincarnation - through their karma and their actions in life, only if they had fulfilled their caste-limited purpose in life. Her mother was seven years old, like Aimsa was then in that train, hidden and fearful, when a small, slender, English-trained lawyer named Gandhi fought against the caste system, especially to abolish the curse of untouchables, destined for a life worse than that of slaves. Kalindi told Aimsa the story of that little man who, with soft and gifted words, with bountifully love relentlessly resilient to spite and through the principle of non-violence (*Aimsa*), revolutionized six hundred million Indians, freed them from the greatest empire in history and

made them feel their dignity in liberty and peace. When Kalindi began to hope for a different future, Gandhi was murdered and the country fell into fratricidal strife. Hatreds further entrenched the caste system. Despite living at the bottom of society, cleaning up the filth and working the land that no one wanted, Kalindi was, in her own way, a happy child. In that village surrounded by paddy fields in southern India, she could run with other children of her caste, splash in the river, climb the giant laurel trees, lose herself in adventures in the forest, and see the stars.

She was the third and younger child. Her two eldest brothers could look for their future but Kalindi-daughter of the sun-, being a girl, had to be betrothed with great effort for her parents because they had to pay a high dowry to whoever married her. Due to harsh living conditions, her parents aged very early and had little strength beyond scraping together enough rice for each day. Often not enough. Kalindi could hardly remember a caress or even a tender look from her parents. They were Hindus, of the *Vaishnava* religion, believers in the eternal supreme being: Brahman (God) Vishnu. Kalindi grew up listening to her mother's stories of how behind the visible universe (*Mâyâ*), there was another eternal and unchanging existence. Her mother was obsessed with getting out of that unworthy destiny of *harijans*, to reincarnate in other lives, or even to get out of that hell of *samsaras* -reincarnations- and dilute in the spiritual universe, transcending time, space and matter, all linked to a deep suffering in life as Kalindi's mother saw it. Kalindi's father, who had long since migrated to Bombay, came a few times a year with a few rupees and many stories of his tough life in Bombay. Over time, he came home less and less until he no longer came.

Shortly after Gandhi was killed, her mother died of intractable cough and her lungs bled until she died. Deep down, she hoped to escape her sad existence. Her older brother had already married a woman of the *Vaishnavite* caste, defying the design of the castes and the gods. Kalindi went to live with her brother's new family but her sister in law treated her with contempt. She married by force because of an unexpected pregnancy but hated the idea of her husband's lower caste in her household. While Kalindi's brother assimilated in manners, customs, clothing and work - in the paddy fields - as a *vaisiya*, she

remained clearly an untouchable, dirty, ragged, unmannerly and unsophisticated. She worked like a slave in that house.

At the age of 15, a group of young *Vaisiyas* chased her one night as she was returning from fetching water from the well. She ran through the paddy fields as fast as she could. Just when she believed she was safe, one of them pounced on her from behind. Kalindi, malnourished and fearful of any contact with other castes, felt the full force on her frail body and felt the violent contact to her insides, horrible, painful, as if a stick was piercing her body. She hallowed her untouchable life without any contact with that horror. She tried to resist and scream but a sharp blow to her head knocked her unconscious.

She returned to her brother's house that night bleeding between her weak and trembling legs, her body full of bruises, and her already ragged clothes in tatters. Her brother was away traveling. He was already detached from her, but Kalindi expected some compassion from someone. Her other brother had long since fled the village. She went to tell his brother's *Vaisiya* wife what had happened and she accused her of having provoked those boys with his unassuming dress. She said that her presence in that house was a disgrace. Kalindi huddled in a corner of the backyard all night. She looked at the stars and thought of the world of spirituality her mother told her about, where she might be. However, she was thrilled to live, to laugh, to feel the wonder of sunrises and sunsets. She knew the immense light that people conveyed when they smiled with clean generosity. In spite of everything, she still held trust in life.

She grabbed some food in a duffel bag and fled from that hell of hatred. She walked for five days through rice fields, roads and jungles, eating leftovers from households. Giving alms to the untouchables exalted the Karma of other castes. She arrived in Bombay without knowing why, or what for. In that anonymous sea, she could flee from hatred. Even if drowned in indifference. Always with the hope of love. That faint light that reminded her of the spiritual immensity where her mother would be. As she noticed she was pregnant from the violent rape, she spent the following months begging and cleaning the ditches surrounding a factory, for a few rupees that barely gave her enough for a bit of rice, vegetables and curry. She lived on a small mat on a sidewalk in Dharivi, a crowded suburb of Bombay. When she gave

birth, alone on her mat, a woman came to assist her. It was the only time she felt some sympathy since her mother died.

Thus was born a *harijan* girl - untouchable. On a December night in 1962 on a humble sidewalk in Dharivi. Her fate was not only cursed by her caste, but by her mother's single parent status. Kalindi, despite the pain and rejection she had always suffered, named her daughter "Aimsa", in honour of Gandhi and his principle of non-violence in his struggle.

The woman who delivered her baby knew the mafias who controlled Bombay's garbage dumps and helped her get accepted, even those lowest jobs had a "selection process", to work in one near Dharivi. Kalindi spent the next few years working in a giant dump with her little Aimsa on her back. As Aimsa grew older, she too began, as young as four years old, to pick up garbage. In those huge piles of garbage, she could dig around and get into nooks and crannies to find the treasures of that world: clothes, plastic bottles, cardboard. Once she found a book with drawings of gods, which she treasured.

When Aimsa was seven years old, her mother started coughing. Kalindi knew it was the same ailment that took her mother to another world. In the picture book they found of Hindu gods, her only treasure, her mother felt a calling, to wash in the Ganges and find a life of light to care for her little Aimsa. Kalindi could not well understand the intricate story of the punishment of Sagara and Ganga's rain on Shiva's hair. Neither how the river washed the tormented ashes into the sea. But something was strongly calling the weak Kalindi to go to those purifying waters.

They were more than two thousand kilometres and three hundred train stops away. It was a three-week journey. They could only ride on the roof, crammed with many other people, bundles, and animals. The one-year savings from collecting garbage paid the journey Kalindi had longed for. She was certain that it would offer her daughter a new life of light.

Two weeks into their journey, some men tried to molest Kalindi in the middle of the night and she fought back hard. In the struggle, Kalindi fell off the train in the middle of rice fields. Aimsa was sleeping some meters away, and did not wake up then. When she roused, she looked all over the train for her mother. She anxiously scoured every

carriage, every roof, under the seats, among the piled-up luggage. With tears in her eyes, she repeated: *Mâm, mâm, Âpa kahâm hai* (Mother, mother, where are you?). She stopped eating and drinking. She huddled between some lumps for two days, thought of her mother and remembered the stories of her life. Her deep gaze, her caresses, the only cuddles she hoped to have in this existence. What awaited her now? Where would she go?

Two days later, wanting to die with only seven years old in that corner between lumps, Aimsa had a dream. She saw her mother free herself bathed in the waters of the Ganges and diluted in the beauty of the stars. She could hear her mother say to her: *Jñâna kî úôdha. Jñâna kç li'ç. Khuúî pâ.* (Seek wisdom, seek wisdom. You will find happiness).

Aimsa arrived at the Calcutta train station at the age of seven, alone, with her picture book of the gods and the echo of her mother's dream as her only guide in life.

VII. Nolwasi's lookout tower. Matabeleland, December, 1970

IT WAS FEBRUARY 1970 and the white minority of Southern Rhodesia gained independence from the United Kingdom and proclaimed a racist constitution.

Sipho had been unconscious for three days. His father, Themba, did not leave his side. The words of her late mother's *nyanga* friend, Masora, could not soothe him. He could not understand how this trance, his daughter absent from the world, barely drinking and only when forced, and with her eyes blank, was considered a privilege, a gift from the spirits, the inheritance of an ancestral knowledge that infiltrated his daughter's fragile body. He was reluctant to give her that plant that she constantly murmured in her strange dream and that the old *nyanga* kept bringing from the forest. Although the *nyanga* said that they should give it to her in infusions and ointments for her head and hands, Themba was reluctant to do so. She began to associate those magical messages with pain and darkness, with that black eagle she saw flying overhead and seeming to descend to take her little daughter away to an unknown world of pain and darkness. Had it not been for the respect she had for her late mother, she would have thrown that *nyanga* out of the village.

Five nights after Masora's death and the trance into which Sipho had sunk, Themba had a dream. It was so real that even though he knew he was dreaming, he understood everything that was happening; he knew it was as true or truer as the other world that awaited him when he awoke. At some point, the dream seemed to fade away and he would sleepily clutch at his own clothing tightly to keep himself from returning to reality. He needed to understand. It was getting dark. The black eagle had descended, had landed on the hut of his mother, Masora, a few days before her death. He was sitting on a nearby rock, from where he could see part of the inside of the hut. The eagle was staring at him, although he felt he was an essential part of what was going on inside. He saw his mother, Masora, talking gesticulating. She was sitting on her knees, and gesturing with her arms. In her countenance and gestures, he could sense peace, security, wisdom. Themba could not hear the conversation, nor see to whom his mother was speaking. Stealthily she moved to another nearby rock from where

she could see through a crack in the mud of the hut, another part of the interior. The eagle kept watching him, though it seemed, despite its defiant stare, to be consenting to his presence and furtive eavesdropping. When he saw to whom his mother was speaking, his heart saw a flutter. It was her late father, Mandhla. He only saw him from behind, but he was sure of it. His strong back, his serene but firm attitude. He could not repress the curiosity, the need to feel his parents, already in another world, and he carefully approached the wall, leaning his ear against it, to feel the conversation. From that position, he could see the shadow of the eagle, motionless, vigilant. Thus, concentrating all his senses on the words coming out of the hut where he met again the people who had given him life, he began to listen to the conversation.

-Mandhla, you must understand. I must go to your side, I can now leave my *nyanga* spirit in Siphso, and she is destined to take care of our people.

-Masora, my dear wife, I want you by my side every day, and I come every night to embrace me in your dreams. But you must wait for Siphso to grow up, for you to pass on your knowledge to her, for the *nyangas* of Matabeleland to accept her.

-I have thought it a thousand times Mandhla, but look at me. I am almost blind, I feel that my heart needs your warmth, the stars no longer shine for me. Each one is a tear, and the wind asks me to leave this life with the softness of nightfall. Siphso will feel for my spirit the knowledge of the ills of our people, the plants to cure them, the advice to bring them peace. But I feel something even stronger in Siphso. It is so strong that my spirit cries out to enter his being and to free me from this life. Every time I think about it, I feel your embrace.

-I know well what you say, Masora. Here among the spirits of the afterlife, we have already talked about it. Siphso is not just a *nyanga*. Siphso will save our people from something terrible that is coming to the world of the living.

-I needed to hear it from you, Mandhla. Siphso has the designs of a *sangoma*. It happens very rarely and less so at this age, less so as a child and even less so having in her destiny the power of *nyanga*.

-I know Masora. But I am afraid of the responsibility that will flood our little granddaughter. I already feel the fear that will invade Themba.

And I am anxious to understand why the amakosi direct so much power to our little Siphon. I was trying to delay this moment, Masora, even though I love you so much.

-Everything is in the hands of *Mkhulunkhulu*.

At that moment, the eagle descended to the ground, and stood two meters away from Themba, staring at him, as if to say "listen now, this is the most transcendent moment of your life".

He approached a small crevice, without ceasing to feel every detail of those incredible beings in his life. He felt the breath of each one of them, the smell, even the warmth of their breath. He felt in a strange way and even within the magic of the dream that his father's heart was pounding.

-I was so worried, Masora, that I went to look for *Mkhulunkhulu*. I went to look for him at the end of the world, on a timeless journey.

At that moment, Themba doubted everything. *Mkhulunkhulu*, the grandfather of all grandfathers, the spirit that united all spirits in the force of life, together with his deceased parents, the eagle... He felt that the dream was taking him so far away that he might not be able to return. But he also felt very clearly that the dream was even more real than the life that awaited him when he woke up. He needed to listen, to understand.

Through the crack, he saw how his mother looked at his father with a mixture of terror and admiration, not daring to say a word, with her gaze fixed and all her senses open to hear the experience that no one had ever been able to tell.

-I cannot explain, even if I could, how I felt *Him*. It is a light different from everything else, radiating a heat different from that of the sun. I felt his thought by simply hearing a wind that clouded with the sand of the Kalahari that magical light in intervals that repeated something that I understood without knowing how. He was asking my spirit to return to Siphon and join with her in the deeper wisdom that our people would need to save themselves from an abyss they faced. For that union, Siphon should stay in limbo between the living and the spirits, for seven days and seven nights, taking some herbs that would inspire his wisdom.

-Mandhla, my *nyanga* spirit can stay with the living and allow me to free myself from the body. And you, how will you be able to return? I have spent all these long years waiting to join you and when I come to your side; do you return to this world that I must leave?

-I will live with your *nyanga* spirit in Siphon and we will communicate with you to unite the strength of the spirits with the knowledge of mother Earth.

Masora wept serenely and stared at Mandhla. Then he reached out his hand and stroked her face. Mandhla was also crying.

Those tears caught in Themba's eyes. He felt his vision blur, his parents' figures fade, words vanish, and he awoke with a vague memory of what he had dreamed, but convinced that he had been in a much more real world than the one he was returning to.

Without quite understanding why, he got up and went to help the old *nyanga* to gather the magic herb, to prepare it, to give the ointments to his beloved daughter. She, from her trance, smiled at him and held him tightly in her hand. From that day on, Themba would call her daughter, NoLwasi, the mother of knowledge.

NoLwasi woke up from that week between worlds. She was leaving her childhood and entering a somewhat solitary adolescence, although not at all hermit-like and even less sullen. She was friendly with everyone, participated in the music, the Zulu songs, the dances, and the ceremonies, the adventures with her friends in the arid savannahs of the Kalahari, or in going to hunt impala with her father. But when the sunset came, without saying anything to anyone, she would go to some rocks a few kilometres away along the dry riverbed of the Sansukwi. There, among some melaleucas he would watch the sunset with deep veneration. As if absent from the world. Her father Themba, intrigued, had once followed her without her noticing, and saw in her gaze and in the slight smile that floodlit her face, the same expression as in her week of trance. He saw in her eyes more clearly than ever both his parents and felt deep peace.

When the sunset, Siphon, now NoLwasi for all, burned some wood by rubbing flint and meditated absorbed in the light of the fire. Then, with the burnt wood stains, she would write on the bark of the melaleuca trees codes that she could not understand yet. They were

always drawings around a centre that resembled the shape of her viewpoint over the sunset, over the world.

Years passed and NoLwasi became a beautiful woman, a magical blend of the Ndebele nobility inherited from her grandfather Mandhla, the serene wisdom of her grandmother Masora, the tenderness of her mother Thembinkosi and the courage of her father Themba. NoLwasi had the shiny skin of ebony. Her gait and running through the savannahs mirrored the agility of the gazelles he began to revere and to refuse to hunt them with his father or eat their meat at celebrations. The expression in her black eyes was profound; she did not look away nervously, as most people did. The look of her stare, in itself, denoted immense serenity and conveyed a deep peace. Her nose was straight and soft, different from the flattened Kalanga, closer to the Shona and Bantu. Her mouth was thin and usually like the horizon of the Kalahari. A subtle expression at the ends conveyed her feelings, like the Ndebele clicks when others spoke. She learned them from his father, passed down from his grandfather. They allowed her to be in conversations and express subtly and respectfully her feelings. She hardly spoke. That was something that set NoLwasi apart from the rest. She listened attentively and one might even say with tenderness. Above all, she listened to nature, to the sounds of the wind, to the sounds of the animals, to sensations imperceptible to others, to the sunset, to the stars and to the scents brought by the wind.

NoLwasi was not interested in her adolescence in the furtive caresses between boys and girls in the corners of the dry riverbed. She did participate, more shyly as time went by, in the dances, and in playing the drums in the celebrations. But she did it in a very special way. Her feeling was so deep when expressing the sounds, when moving her body, that when she did it, the rest of the folks were mesmerized, listening to her magic rhythm with the drums and, watching her absorbed in her dances that seemed to express the knowledge and the feeling of hundreds of generations.

By the time she was twenty years old, almost all her friends in the village and the surrounding area were already married in the Kalanga rite. Many of their husbands were migrating to Soweto, some five hundred kilometres south in South Africa, "Egoli". It was named after the gold mines where young people from all over Southern Africa went,

in search of a future that their arid lands, which had been marginalized by the racist "Boers" of Rhodes and his successors, now led by Ian Smith, seemed to deny them. NoLwasi was afraid to see her friends married to shadows of men disappearing to those distant lands, bewitched by gold and money. In all the villages of Matabeleland, houses other than Ndebele huts began to spring up. The adobe gave way to concrete blocks and the thatched roofs to zinc plates. Inside those houses, built with the money of the emigrants to Soweto, pages of advertisements from South African newspapers were displayed like works of art. They showed electrical appliances, baby bottles, jugs of soft drinks, women with straightened hair like the Boers, or even shiny cars with smiling people inside dressed as the "*baas*", the owners of the fertile land estates from which they had been thrown out or where they worked as slaves.

NoLwasi felt that something dreadful was beginning to happen in her village, to her people, in her land, like a cloud obscuring everything. Meanwhile, she felt more and more strongly the call of the sunset, of the fire, and of writing diagrams that she he could not understand, and keeping them among the rocks of her sacred lookout.

VIII. The dreams of the white tigers. Calcutta, India, 1973

Aimsa sat on a mat in an ashram in a meditative stance. Her eyes closed and in deep peace, she thought of the magic of life that had brought her to an ashram in *Rishikesh* on the edge of the Himalayas in northern India.

Seven years earlier, she had arrived at the *Sealdah* train station in Calcutta. At the age of seven, she had lost her mother on the long journey from Bombay and was facing an unknown and hostile world alone. She only had the experience of collecting garbage in the trash dumps, the images of some Hindu gods and the memory of her mother, Kalindi, now diluted in the light of the stars. She had no doubt about that.

Arriving in that immense city, she wandered its streets for three days, begging passers-by and drivers for rice to eat, and looking for a place to sleep on the crowded sidewalks. On the third night, a girl approached her. She seemed a few years older than her. *Inaya* had been living on the streets for three years since her mother died of a fever. She stayed with a group of children in Rambagan, the large slum on the outskirts of Calcutta where more than a million people were crammed together, surviving among shacks, smelly ditches, muddy roads and rivers of people looking for the bare minimum to endure another day.

They were eight boys and girls between the ages of six and fifteen. They lived under a tarpaulin in a corner between two roads in Rambagan. Like them, there were thousands of children surviving, or slowly dying, in the crowded alleys of that slum. Sometimes the group had to fend off thieves, drunks and other groups of children who came to steal food or their few possessions. Some lucky ones were "rescued" by men with dark glasses who came by Rambagan and offered them to go to a school where they would study and become rich.

The leader of the group was a boy of about fourteen years old. His name was Anil (air). He was tall, very thin, had a scar from a badly healed wound on his cheek and always wore a silver chain around his neck. Inaya introduced him to Aimsa, telling him that she was new to Rambagan. It was late at night and the group was under the tent. Anil looked at her suspiciously:

-Where do you come from?

-I came from Bombay. I was going with my mother to purify ourselves in the Ganges, and she disappeared in the train.

-Your mother abandoned you.

-No. She had to go to the stars and from there light a path for me in life.

-And did she enlighten you to come here?

-Now we do.

-And what do you want to do in life?

-I want to fight for a better world and for the fading of so much sorrow.

All the children laughed at her. After a while, Anil stared at her. *Aimsa* did not blink at what she had just said. Anil felt a force in her gaze that made him shudder. He did not understand why.

-And how are you going to do that?

-My mother, from her light in the stars, will guide me.

-*Aimsa*, there are so many of us here already, we hardly have room to sleep ourselves. If you want to stay with us, you will have to get a cloth or hard plastic to enlarge the tent, and give us a rupee every week for your protection.

-I will.

The group consisted of five boys and three girls, now four, with *Aimsa*. Each had confusing stories about how they ended up on the street. Three had come there because of the death of their single mothers, two running away after beatings at home, two got lost on the roads as their families migrated from the countryside to the city, and one girl as young as seven was deaf and dumb and no one knew how she got there.

Anil worked separating stones from the sand at the construction sites. Some bought incense and sold it in the traffic, others cleaned the ground wherever they received a rupee or some rice, or searched through the garbage for stuff to sell around or take for recycling to a cardboard company on the outskirts of Rambagan.

Not everything was sorrow and harsh survival. The group had their codes of honour in respecting Anil, in protecting each other and their little corner, in going to bathe in the dirty ditches, or even in singing

and dancing, together to some song they heard on the radios in the nearby houses. They called themselves the white tigers. From a close home, an elderly man had connected a television and a video recorder to the streetlights, and hundreds of people gathered to watch Bollywood movies on Saturdays. They all dreamed of becoming famous singers or actors earning loads of money and buying big mansions. In one of the most famous movies, *The Train*, a police officer investigated crime mysteries on a train, and Aimsa thought of her mother and sometimes questioned her journey to the stars.

Aimsa looked for ways to survive by scavenging cardboard and paper scraps from the garbage and carrying them to a recycling depot about five kilometers away. She could so pay the weekly rupee to Anil and live quietly in that little corner with the white tigers.

Inaya offered her body to men who came looking for her more and more frequently, until one day, she disappeared and they never heard from her again. One day, two men with dark glasses came and took two of the children, they said, to study and become famous actors in Bollywood. They never heard from them again. Another brother, who walked with difficulty because of paralysis in one leg due to polio, was run over by a car that did not stop. The group took his body to a place near the large Rambagan landfill where he was cremated. That day Aimsa spoke of the gods and reincarnation, of the all-encompassing energy that transformed pain into light. Everyone began to feel a deep respect for her. Some left and others came. Aimsa welcomed everyone with great affection. She reassured them in their nightmares and told them the story of her mother:

"My mother was a goddess, daughter of Vishnu. She was very beautiful. Her eyes shone like stars. When they smiled they seemed to embrace you with their radiance and fill you with warmth. Her hair was soft and long. It waved in the wind like the wings of birds. Her mouth was fine and when she smiled, all sorrows vanished. My mother wore silk saris and when she walked, she seemed to float on air. Her hands moved with the delicacy of butterflies. Her caresses, together with her glances and the breeze of her smile, reflected the beauty of the gods and the immensity of what never ends. She left with the beauty of the stars. From there she lightens my walk in life. Gently she will tell me how to ease the suffering in the world".

One day, Aimsa, was telling this story as she imagined her mother's dealings with the gods from her only treasure: the book of images of the gods they found in the Bombay dump. She noticed that a man had sat down to listen as she told his story to the little ones. They all reacted with fear, but Aimsa noticed something in his gaze different from the ones of those who took the other children or those who were persuading *Inaya* into the world of prostitution.

Aimsa stood up and presented him the Hindu greeting of respect. The man asked her to continue telling her stories. He kept coming the following three nights to listen to her stories.

Aimsa was already fourteen years old and had been surviving in Rambagan for seven years. She had seen death, hunger, union, love, violence, fears. And most of all, she had seen her mother in the stars during hundreds of nights. She knew she would guide her to the light. She knew she was meant to alleviate suffering in the world.

On the third night, the man told Aimsa that he wanted to talk to her. He was an elder man, had a long white beard and a ponytail gathered his hair. He wore a white tunic and looked deep and tender. Something made Aimsa feel an overwhelming trust in him. Although she had seen Brahmins in temples, it was the first time she had seen a spiritual master, a Hindu guru.

-Good evening, Aimsa, My name is Sri.

-Good evening, Mr. Sri.

-Aimsa, I have been listening to your stories these nights. They are very beautiful. I also know that your mother is in the stars and shines upon you with her beauty and wisdom.

-Thank you.

It was the first time since she could remember her life that an adult other than her mother spoke to her with respect, even tenderness. She felt a great warmth invade her heart.

-You say you are destined to alleviate suffering in the world?

-We all are. I know we are.

The strength of Aimsa's spirit captivated Guru Sri.

Sri was a Hindu guru from northern India. He had drowned in spiritual thought and meditation for twenty years in the *ashram* on the edge of the Ganges near *Rishikesh*, in the state of *Uttarakhand*, near the

Himalayas, on the way to the holy city of *Haridwar*. Sri told Aimsa that he was a *sannayasi*, devoted to meditation and had been to many *ashrams*. Eventually Aimsa learned that he had spent some time with Mahatma Gandhi, of whom her mother had told her so much, in Sabarmati. Sri explained to Aimsa the life in the Ashram, the allegiance to meditation and how they welcomed people from all over the world seeking the truth (Satia). After a few days, Sri told her that she should join him and retire to meditate for some time.

A few days later, Aimsa already thought that the man had been a dream in her life and she would have gone to the stars with her mother. But he came back and asked her if she wanted to go with him to the Ashram. He said that in his meditation he had felt how she was destined to radiate a beautiful and healing light in the world.

Aimsa said farewell to the white tigers. Anil was already driving a rickshaw through the streets of Calcutta and another one of the boys from that brave group was running a small store. Aimsa loved them with all her heart and wished them well. She said she would never forget them and advised them to think that every one of them was the most beautiful thing in the universe and the stars looked into their eyes with the same allure as they stared at them.

It was thus that Aimsa arrived at that ashram. Thinking about how her life had led her to that sanctuary of peace and spiritual wisdom on the edge of the Himalayas. Where she sought, under the light of the stars, her path.

IX. The sea calls Jonay to the world. Gomera, September, 1975

JONAY FELT SOMETHING tingle in his heart. He was sitting in serene solitude on his favourite, almost secret rock on the beach of the San Sebastian cave. The sea was rough. The waves were crashing against the volcanic rock and splashing their suicidal waves around him. The sea used to awaken its bravery with the skies covered by the "donkey's belly", or by the northern winds of the Azores. This dawn, the sun was shining brightly from a deep blue sky. In strange alliance with the fury of the sea, the first intense rays of the sun also seemed to lunge fiercely on the lava shadows. Jonay felt hypnotized by such force. In the mirror of the sea, wrinkled by its ferocity, the sun drew thousands of whimsical figures of fire and snow. Jonay imagined in one of them stealthily approaching the Guanche princess Gara from the island of Teide, who according to legend hid in the stomach of an ox to cross the arm of the sea that separated her from the island of her forbidden lover who inspired Jonay's name. He felt that something inexplicable was speaking to him from those shadows. Something strong and pure, blessed by that clean and wild nature.

It was the fall of 1975. The United States had signed peace with Vietnam but supported bloodthirsty dictatorships in Latin America. Allen and Gates founded Microsoft while in Spain Franco, seriously ill and admitted to a hospital in Madrid, handed over to Prince Juan Carlos and the whole country, including these volcanic rocks born from the ocean more than two thousand kilometres away, was watching the agonizing heartbeat of an old dictator. Jonay was a dreamer teenager and felt an immense fondness for the island where several generations of his mother Umbela were born and raised. The island of Gomera. Caciques reigned there, ever since the Guanches had tumbled down its ravines before submitting to the rule of the Spanish military and settlers. But something untamed had grown in the Gomera plain people. The free spirit of the Guanches reincarnated in part of the people subdued by the caciques of Franco's regime. Curiously, blood descendant of the Goths colonists mutinied, like the waters of that Atlantic dawn, against the Spanish caciques and imperialism. Something was shining above the darkness of people shaken by history.

Every *Gomera* felt the God Teide watched his or her steps. That immense volcano was the heart of the neighbouring island of Tenerife and stood firm and lavish on the horizon. Jonay knew well that the first rays of the autumn sunrise came out from behind the figure of Teide when he sat on “his” volcanic rock. He felt haunted by the fury of the sea and the brightness and warmth of the sun. The silhouette of Teide on a background of fire, spoke to him. It called him to a distant world.

Umbela, his mother, was the youngest of a peasant family from the Hermigua valley. Her father Ramón, and her father's father and grandfather, had been farmers, “*magos*” (magicians). They cultured small terraces sculpted on the volcanic slopes of the valley's ravines. With noble effort, they transformed their sweat and little more than their hands into corn, wheat, potatoes, tomatoes and some vegetables with which to cook the daily pot. The goats gave the cheese and a donkey helped in the hard and arduous tasks of the “*magos*”, wizards of the slopes. The local mill grinded the *gofio* (maize flour)

and the beehives on the slopes provided the honey. It did take some magic to survive in those ravines. Magic and effort. Wands and whistles. Sweat and faith.

Umbela was born in that valley. Her mother Maria bled heavily after giving birth and was bedridden for almost a year. Her grandmother Dionisia raised Umbela with the help of donkey's milk. Perhaps it was the mixture of her mother, grandmother and donkey's milk that forged Umbela's character and beauty.

Umbela was the first young woman from the valley of Hermigua who attended the Institute of La Gomera. From a very young age, she had felt an almost mystical attraction for reading. The few books in the library of the town hall, the parish of Don José and the landowner Don Casimiro, had already bathed the leafy shores of her imagination when she had not yet entered adolescence. Her father always felt a fascination for Umbela's sweet and deep look, and he was devoted to help her in the pursuit of her dreams. Therefore, to the hard work of cultivating the terraces of the ravines, taking the goats to pasture or looking for watercress on the slopes for the stew, he now added working in the banana plantation of one of the haciendas in the valley.

He took care of the banana trees and carried the cargo in ox carts to the port of Hermigüa every first Tuesday of the month. A small cargo ship from Tenerife would arrive there and moor at the small dock. The sea was sometimes so rough that the ship could not dock and the harvest had to be carried in ox carts to San Sebastian. It was three days of steep roads crossing the three ravines.

With that job, Marcos earned ten *duros* (fifty pesetas) month, enough for books and tuition for high school and boarding in San Sebastian. Although there were only twenty kilometres away by road, the tough passage through the gorges meant that Umbela only saw her family at Christmas and Easter and the unforeseen visits from Marcos when he brought the bananas to San Sebastian in times of sea storms. Umbela often prayed to the gods of the rough skies and rough seas to shake the seas and bring her father.

Umbela mellowed at the San Sebastian high school and became the first woman from Hermigüa to complete her baccalaureate. The eldest son of the main landowner of Hermigüa, including the banana farm where her father worked, also attended this institute. From a young age, he had been attracted to the beautiful Umbela. He lived in a manor house in *La Lomada*, San Sebastian hills, and had a chauffeur drive him every morning to the institute in one of the four *Seat Seiscientos* of the island. Umbela felt disgusted by his arrogance but disguised her rejection so as not to jeopardize her father's job. Umbela remembered the struggle stories of her uncle Adrian who migrated to Cuba and joined the revolution. She used to correspond with him, now head of a section of the Cuban Ministry of Health. Young Juan Manuel could not understand how the handsome heir to the valley did not dazzle a daughter of ragged wizards.

When she finished high school, Umbela asked her parents to stay in San Sebastian to work assisting in the health centre of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Although her dream was to study nursing in Tenerife, she always kept it a secret because it was impossible for her condition and her father would have felt miserable if he could not make his beloved daughter's dreams come true. It was while assisting at the dispensary that she met John.

Umbela was helping Sister Catalina with the chores in the healing room when someone knocked at the door. It was odd, people usually

barged in without knocking. Through the blurred glass, Umbela glimpsed the silhouette of a man holding his arm and with his head bowed, probably in pain. Another man who was leaning on his other arm was helping him. She felt captivated for a few seconds and felt her heart pounding. She opened the door, helped the sick man in and sit on the stretcher in the treatment room. His shoulder showed signs of being dislocated and a gash of almost a foot long furrowed his bloody forehead. The man helping him was good old Tomas, a lone fisherman from El Cabrito valley. Tomas explained to Umbela that he found the man drifting in a small sailboat and towed him to the harbour. She told him to be back in two hours.

Umbela tried to ask him how it happened and if he had any other injuries, but John was English and did not understand Spanish. Umbela knew about a hundred words of English but could not string a sentence together and they rather communicated by gestures and eye contact. She cleaned the wound with alcohol and held the shoulder in a sling. Sister Catalina sent for Don Ezequias, the only doctor on the island. He was a "*chicharrero*" (native of Tenerife island) who lived in Gomera and shared his primary medical practice with his love for painting. Don Ezequias asked John to lay down on the floor and bite a handkerchief soaked in Cuban rum. He took off his shoes and adjusted his right foot to the armpit of John's dislocated shoulder. He pulled hard from the elbow and Umbela felt the snap of bones. The shoulder clicked back into place. As Ezequias showed him how to hold the shoulder, he explained to Umbela that that method of reducing shoulder dislocation had over two thousand years of history and was attributed to Hippocrates.

Meanwhile, Sister Catalina had prepared a basin with needle and thread and Don Ezequías supervised her careful sewing of the Englishman's forehead. The faint effect of the rum had barely mitigated the pain of the manipulation of his shoulder and of each stitch on his forehead. Umbela took his hand and squeezed it tightly as if to absorb some of his pain. She absorbed something else that accelerated her racing heart even more. After a while, Sister Catalina returned to her readings of St. Teresa and Don Ezequias to his brushes. Umbela stayed alone with that young stranger, still too weak to retrace his steps.

Through scarce words and gestures, John explained to Umbela how a strong gust of wind had violently twisted the boom striking him in the forehead and knocking him against the deck over his left shoulder. For a few seconds, John and Umbela stood looking at each other. They knew that some magic fate had crossed their paths and they could not explain why. Within an hour and without understanding each other's language or knowing each other's stories, hopes and fears, Umbela knew that John would be her partner in life. When Tomas came to fetch John, Umbela said goodbye with a smile that conveyed all her feelings. She noticed that her heart was still pounding.

John took his sailboat to the fishing grounds of El Cabrito valley and became inseparable friends with good old Tomas. He gradually learned Spanish and how to fish. He met Umbela from time to time and their stories began to unfold. John's family came from a small village on the Gower Peninsula on the south coast of Wales. His father became a miner and moved to live in Bridgend. John imbibed life in the Gower fields, the Welsh cliffs, the stories of the colliery, the union struggles and the loneliness with his harmonica. In his early twenties he decided to restore an old derelict sailboat, which he named *Hope*. A year later, he took the moorings of his life to the world, as he wanted to live outside a society that his dreamer's eyes saw vitiated by consumption and violence. His dog Satya, his harmonica and a very special book accompanied him in his journey: "The story of my experiments with truth", by Mahatma Gandhi.

Poems, prayers and promises followed the stories of mutual fascination. The conservative society of La Gomera gradually ostracized Umbela for her relationship with that jobless and "hippie". Umbela's family was marginalized and Ramón lost his job at the banana plantation. But her father always supported her because he saw in his daughter's eyes the bliss and hope for the future. They married in the Catholic rite to try to appease the social demons, with little success. Soon after, they went to live in the house that John rebuilt in El Cabrito. There they welcomed people from different corners of the world, in love with nature and searching peace. Sister Catalina attended Jonay's birth under the stars that filled the ravine with magical shadows rocked by the night echoes of the waves.

Jonay grew up in El Cabrito, learned to fish with Tomas, to sail with his father and to take care of the crops and goats with his mother. Until the age of seven, he lived in that valley with people coming from different corners of Europe. Satia was her devoted companion. When he turned seven, Umbela insisted on returning to San Sebastian and taking him to school. John worked at the port, taught English and took rides on his old sailboat. Umbela assisted Don Ezequías in his practice and took care of the home. Jonay grew up and studied at the town school.

His soul was divided between the call of the roots of his valleys of Hermigüa and El Cabrito, and that sea and the far world which twenty years ago brought his father to those shores.

X. A Cuban doctor in Africa. Magbesseneh, Sierra Leone, 1976.

ADRIAN, Umbela's Cuban UNCLE, had written to them from Havana asking her to welcome in Gomera a good friend on route from Africa to Cuba. He was, according to the Cuban way, an "internationalist". He had worked for four years in a rural hospital in a country called Sierra Leone, and was now returning to Cuba. His name was Fernando Gracia. He arrived when Jonay was studying high school with the vague idea of going to the call of the world, still mysterious to him. The family went to pick him up on the same ferry on which Jonay was now traveling back home and with an important decision to share with his parents.

Fernando was approaching forty years of age. He upheld a arresting childishness in his eyes and smile, sparkling and filled of dreams. He arrived with a modest rucksack and a soul bursting of strength. He also came full of experiences, wisdom and brilliant ideas for a fairer world. Fernando had rooted his thoughts and vision of the world from the Cuban revolution. He was convinced of its reasons and principles, but not of its methods. Already in the times of struggle, he opposed the use of violence in several revolutionary committees. From a very young age, he felt a deep esteem for Ghandi and Martin Luther King. As a teenager, he even presented during an event of the communist youth movement, his pacifist convictions to Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. He advocated non-violent resistance to dictatorship and non-collaboration with American imperialist and capitalist activities. However, his criticism of the restriction of freedom labelled him as a Yankee collaborator and the ruling communist system sidelined him. He had to wait four years to enter medical school. He kept being denied access because did not defend the revolution. Nevertheless, he demonstrated by his community work and his voluntary dedication to the neediest, his real commitment to others, beyond his non-party affiliation and was eventually allowed to study medicine.

Interestingly, he was a companion of Aleida Guevara, Ché's daughter, with whom he had long discussions about revolution and non-violence. He finished his degree and specialized at the Pedro Kourí

Institute of Tropical Medicine, with the hope of enlisting in the internationalist brigades of aid to poor countries in Africa. Despite his critical views of hierarchical violence, he was committed to the ideology of the Cuban revolution and its international solidarity with the poorest nations in the world, most of them struggling for or after independence in Africa. He felt by then an enormous rage and ache in the face of the anti-Castro attack, probably with the participation of the American intelligence services, in which they shot down a Cuban airplane bound to Barbados, killing seventy-six civilians. Meanwhile, as if nothing had happened, the American people elected Carter as president and they celebrated the bicentennial of the United in all its glory.

In Spain, after 40 years of dictatorship, there was an atmosphere of hope for democracy. An ex-Franco ally, Adolfo Suárez, assumed the presidency. In spite of his Francoist past, he maintained great tolerance to lead all political parties, including the communist one, towards the constitution of a free country. Most Spaniards felt thrilled about their fate and sung to the rhythm of the freedom hymns of Jarcha and others. The world agreed to a Pact for social, economic and cultural rights, much more concrete and binding than the Declaration of Human Rights. Well, almost the whole world: the United States, for whom health was not a right but a privilege that demanded effort and responsibility, did not sign the pact.

Umbela, John and Jonay enjoyed for two weeks Fernando's stories of nonviolence in Cuba and his experiences as a doctor in a rural hospital among the savannahs and rice paddies of West Africa. They admired his simplicity of living and his enthusiasm for life. He believed and shared with others something that barely sprouted in their daily thoughts: the struggle for a better world. Jonay He shared his room with him and they both took long walks to El Cabrito valley to see the good Tomas and fish with him. One day they went to the gorge of Hermigüa to see Jonay's grandfather Ramón, now handicapped by a mysterious joint disease. Fernando took notes and then went to ask some farmers who milked goats. He said he would come back to talk to him. Grandfather Ramón prepared gofio balls and honey for them and they climbed up to the Garajonay, hiking between the waterfalls. Fernando could not believe that those silvery threads of water falling down the

chasms of more than fifty meters did not come from springs. Jonay made him see that they came from the dew exhumed by the heathers and laurels. They slept under the starry skies and when they awoke, the same mist that soaked the laurel forest with life and magic caressed them up to a new day.

Shortly after his arrival at Jonay and his parents' house, Fernando had already become someone very dear to the family and especially to Jonay. He was like a window to a world that had previously wanted to speak to him through the crashing waves and the silhouettes of the Teide. One day the four of them cruised on John's old sailboat to El Cabrito. Tomas had prepared dinner for them with the catch of the day and they had brought gofio, honey and potatoes from Hermigüa. Around a bonfire and under a simple thatched hut on the shore of the rocky cove of so many of Jonay's childhood memories, they began to serve themselves dinner. The stars were shining as never before and the murmur of the waves made everyone close their eyes and imagine themselves in the jungles and savannahs of Africa.

Fernando sat on a dry juniper log that John had polished with the sweat of his hands. Every time he came back from fishing with good old Tomas, he liked to transfer the salt of the sea, the sweat of his effort and the oils from the scales to a juniper log. The little house in El Cabrito where Jonay grew up was full of junipers of all shapes and forms. They all had a natural glow. They all had something to say. They all had life. Fernando sat on one of them, which always spoke to Jonay of courage. He did not understand why, but when he saw it, or felt it in his hands, he seemed to feel the strength to walk into the unknown. Strength to climb Roque Nublo and to swim from the Bay to the Port as he did with his father every New Year's first sunrise. Power to say what he felt, without fear of mockery or rejection, to the beautiful gaze of a girl from the market who also brought palm honey, from far, far away, where the sun set on the other side of the island. Well, not all the strength, for that, he never dare to do, yet.

Jonay and his parents, Tomas as well, were sitting on the ground. They could see Fernando with the sea in the background as if caressing his words, the stars crowning his soul, the breeze swaying a story that they would forever and would change their lives.

Fernando began his story:

-I arrived in Freetown four years ago, with the brigade of Cuban internationalists. I was assigned to a mission hospital in the north of the country, the "*temne*" zone. I arrived there with a backpack, three linen pants, three shirts, a few books, my stethoscope, my father's diary during the revolution, a few photos from the family and loved ones, and my toiletries. But those five kilos went along with an excess of weight: my luggage weighed tons of hope, desire to bring some relief to those who had nothing and were dying helpless of any health care. My bag carried the greatest imaginable smuggled light of revolution for a more humane world.

Fernando knew well the book that John kept in the little house in El Cabrito and with which he shipwrecked in the seas to end in his mother's arms, the one about the experiments with Gandhi's truth. Fernando also carried that same book in his backpack to the Africa of his dreams. Another journey, another shipwreck in love. Together they declaimed parts of that diary written in the prison by that squalid Indian who made the pride of the greatest Empire in history surrender to his humility.

-The mission hospital was in a remote northern town called Magbesseneh. Some Catalan missionaries of the religious Order of St. John of God built it ten years before my arrival. It was really the idea and the endeavour of one man: Brother Ricardo. I got to know his story through the gatherings of other brothers in the mission, but above all through the stories of the local *people*. He never talked about himself.

-I arrived in Freetown in January 1973. A freighter from the Canary Islands, which made stopovers in the ports of West Africa, had agreed with the Cuban consul to take a group of fifteen Cuban internationalists to the region: eight general practitioners, two dentists, three gynaecologists and two anaesthesiologists. They touched land in Dakar, in Banjul, in Conakry and my colleague Rodolfo and I landed in Freetown. Others continued on to Monrovia, Abidjan and Accra.

"The captain of the ship, Josu, was a very endearing Basque. He always liked to take the first watch of the night at the helm, and I, awake with excitement, would stay in the conning tower chatting with him. He told me about his family, his wife and two children in Madeira, and the people he knew in the trade between Europe and Africa. He told me that he had a brother who was a priest and a nephew who studied in the

seminary and only read and dreamed of going to Africa. Josu confessed to him that he could not believe in religion, that the stars he saw from his boat in the immensity of the sea and the universe, were much more mysterious and immense than the thoughts of a few men, and he preferred to just "rock" in that mystery. Like his boat in the waves of the sea. The illegal trafficking of diamonds that he knew existed from Sierra Leone, enriching just a few while impoverishing the majority, outraged Josu.

-Josu looked at the horizon with the serenity of one who does not fear his destiny. He had landed several times with missionaries, and visited some missions. He was overwhelmed by the poverty he had seen in Sierra Leone. For six years, he had felt the need to collaborate but did not know how. He simply did not charge anything to those who went to collaborate in missions. On one trip, a Dutch pineapple merchant and three Dutch aid workers, also from a mission hospital, met on his merchant ship. They belonged to an organization called "*Medicus Mundi*". During the discussions in the command tower, they discussed the idea of trying to exchange pineapples from Ghana to Holland for medicines from Holland to Ghana. That idea, which seemed like a utopia, came to fruition, and now, once a month, Josu carried a shipment of solidarity medicines from a company called "IDA" that arrived in Madeira on a ship on its way to America. They were transferred to his merchant ship and he would take them to Accra. There he was waiting for a shipment of pineapples on its way to Holland. A cooperative in the Western Region of Ghana collected pineapples from all the villages in the region. and distributed the exchange medicines to all the health centres. One of the Dutch volunteers ended up marrying a Ghanaian woman and lived in Accra, coordinating that magical barter that saved lives, cruising with Josu on some of his journeys.

Brother José María was waiting for them at the port of Freetown. His Cuban colleague Rudolph went to Serabu hospital in the South, with the Irish nuns.

I remember that first meeting:

-Welcome Fernando. I am Brother José María.

A *temne* named Abou, smiling but shy, carried my suitcase.

-Thank you, brother. How are you?

-Well, there is a lot of political tension with the *Mende* government, but we are fine. Two weeks ago, we got our container for the year and we have enough supplies for a while.

How was your trip?

-Well, the *Queen of Africa* has taken a week from Las Palmas to here, stopping at each port to drop off our comrades. In each one, we have celebrated with rum. The captain is a very interesting fellow who has told us all sorts of stories about the merchants on these routes.

-I know you well, Josu. One day he's going to get in trouble for unknowingly carrying mercenaries with smuggled diamonds.

In the old Land Rover, Abú drove along the red dirt roads heading north. I didn't understand why instead of dodging the potholes, he was picking them up by accelerating, making us all bounce violently. Jose Mari was drinking water non-stop. Between sips he explained to me that he suffered from renal colic and it was the best way to get the stones down. When the bumps allowed it, he told me about the political situation of the country, the struggles and tribal tensions, the customs of the bishop, the personalities of each brother in the mission, and above all, the way of life of the *Temne* people.

I asked him about the *Poro* and *Bundu* secret societies. I had read in the Pedro Kourí library in Havana that those societies ruled the beliefs, traditions and social structure in the *Temne* tribe of Sierra Leone. They were even less well known than the mysterious voodoo systems further south. When asked, Jose Mari's expression changed. He said, "Fernando, I'm only going to give you this advice: don't try to meddle in them. It is very dangerous.

-We arrived at the hospital. A red dirt esplanade separated two pavilions made of zinc roofing boards. I wondered if Josu also brought those zinc roofs to that country. On the right, the consultation pavilion, with a laboratory and a pharmacy. To the left, the wards and the operating room. I got out of the Land Rover and Abu told me that he would take my suitcase to the mission. I told Jose Mari that I wanted to stay a while feeling the vibrations that were beginning to invade me. Everything was intense. It was as if I had increased the volume of all my senses. The sound was of an intense bustle. A cloud of children surrounded me with smiles, shouts of "*Opoto, opoto*", and some were singing a song while rhythmically clapping their hands. From the

esplanade came the sounds of the coming and going of patients and families; the driver and assistant of an old van called for the last passengers to fill it up and leave. From the immense trees that surrounded the mission, thousands of sounds of birds that I could not see but imagined in exotic shapes and colours emerged.

Jonay looked at Fernando. He listened astonished to the epic stories of those distant worlds to which the sea called him. On that night of stars and waves, Fernando's story entered his soul with the softness and serene security with which the waves caress the shore.

Fernando continued, looking at the stars above the shadows of the rocks and ravines, as if reading from them the story of life:

-When it seemed that all my cells were busy scrutinizing each of those sounds of life, a roar of screaming and crying seemed to approach me. From the ward, a group of women emerged, expressing their grief and mourning in the most hysterical manner I had ever seen. In my work in Havana it was not uncommon to see mourners, but I had never witnessed anything like that. Between screams and cries, and a song torn by some of them, a woman threw herself to the ground and began to tear her cloths ending up half-naked and dusty from the red soil that seemed to paint the canvas of her skin with pain. A missionary came out to reprimand the group and ask the woman to get dressed and calm down. In front of them, a dozen men, sitting on a log and with grainy ulcers ready for grafting, watched the event. One of them, the oldest, looked at me with his tired eyes, which seemed to carry all the wisdom of a century of survival. His grave and sad gaze remained fixed on my retina.

-Before long, as I gazed amazed such vivid universe when out came a thin man, in a white robe, somewhat stooped, looking as absorbed in his thoughts as he was perceptive to the most subtleness of life. He glanced sideways at me as he carried a child in his arms toward the laboratory. His stilted gait made me notice his rudimentary sandals made of old tires.

-You must be Dr. Fernando?

-Yes, Brother Ricardo. I am looking forward to meeting you.

-That can wait. Can you help me with a lumbar puncture?

As he asked me for help, he looked slightly, as if justifying his need, at his fingers, on both hands, covered with bandages.

I knew that my coming was primarily necessary to help him, perhaps eventually to replace him. After years of diagnosing cases of tuberculosis with radiology, word had spread and almost everyone in the region with a chronic cough was coming to see him. His assistant in the lab, often drunk on palm wine, barely saw a couple of sputum tests an hour and even then, Ricardo had to supervise them. It was untenable to continue depending on that technique. His former boss at the San Pau hospital, who knew of Ricardo's quest in that remote corner of Africa, sent him a radiology machine. Ricardo used it continuously. He was able to diagnose more than twenty cases a day. He did not pay attention to the protection of the waves because he did not care about their sterility. What he did not consider was the effect that so much radiation would have on his fingers. They developed skin cancer and prevented him from using them in surgery and even in diagnostic techniques such as the lumbar puncture he asked me to perform.

-I followed them, and on a stretcher in the lab, I did the lumbar puncture, which showed a purulent fluid revealing that pus had swathed the meningeal membranes and kept that small child in a coma. In the following months, a terrible meningitis epidemic broke out, decimating in many villages most of the children under ten years of age. The cold climate of the *hamartan* gave way to a heavy air that seemed to settle in the jungle and give it a stillness. It was the tropical winter. Thus, the low pressures that it left in the heights, brought winds from the Sahara. Desert sands covered the landscapes with dryness. Bacteria in children's throats were usually innocuous in the humidity of their mucous membrane. Dryness made them aggressive, as if looking for the humid bed, and invaded the tissues, reaching the brain. The relation of our health with nature was so clear. I learned to prepare and to treat all dwellers of the affected villages with the only medicine we could use, chloramphenicol oils, already discarded in the rest of the world due to its high toxicity. That thin, quiet and ascetic man taught me more in a few months than six years of lectures during my medicine studies. He was truly a saint to the world, a martyr from his tormented soul.

Jonay turned around and saw his parents embracing each other, listening solemnly to Fernando's words. Tomas was also looking at him in absorbed attention as his hands knotted the tears in his fisherman's nets.

-A month after my arrival I was attending without difficulty the care of patients in the hospital wards, the consultations, operating on caesarean sections, ectopic pregnancies, strangulated hernias or amputations of gangrenous legs often due to the bites of black mambas. As Ricardo felt he could rely on my work, one evening he said during the community dinner that he was going back to Spain to have an operation. The cancer in all his fingers was progressing to his hands. We all looked at him and expected to see some concern for his own health but he was just upset that he could no longer take proper care of the poor. We all knew he would return without fingers. And we also knew that as long as he had any breath left, he would continue to care for those who needed him most.

-Within a few weeks, I noticed that most of the patients coming to the hospital were very poor. I estimated that two out of three came barefoot from long distances. There was also a small group of patients who came to the consultation by car, well shod and dressed and with rather "fictitious" or, at least, non-lethal diseases. Moreover, they managed to skip the queue to the consultation with a dismissive attitude towards the poor "rabble" that crowded the waiting aisles. Some of those "powerful" people came from neighbouring Guinea for a supposed medication for impotence caused by demanding polygamy, which in reality were simply vitamins. I charged them in order to pay for medicines, as tuberculosis drugs, for the poorest. Word had also spread among those few affluent patients, that Brother Ricardo's "machine" cured everything. I pretended to see them conscientiously by turning on a red light, and later checking them with my stethoscope. Between that, a prescription of abstinence for a month - which freed them from the pressure of their wives - and vitamins, they left satisfied. The problem was that the placebo effect gave them so much strength that soon all the nomadic buffalo herd owners from the North started to come. Well, that is how I went about playing "Robin Hood", transforming payments for whims into relief from need.

Fernando continued his story. They were listening as if submerged in those years of independence, of pioneers, of struggles, of discoveries. Everything was epic. Lives that discovered, risked, lived. Jonay saw above all the brightness in his father's eyes, the empathy with the struggle for ideals and living intensely every moment. It was like feeling with solemnity the passing of life: like each wave that no longer returns in the sea. They watched from that beach of El Cabrito the silhouette of Fernando and his thrilled speech, gesturing as if he were reliving every moment of the history of those pioneer missionaries. Shining stars crowned him. The same ones that covered another world, a few hundred kilometres to the southeast, following the silhouette of the Teide. Beyond. They could almost feel, smell, and hear that world that Fernando drew for them with the passion of his words.

One day, I treated one of those hundreds of tuberculosis patients that we saw in our office. Since we had hardly any medicine and there was still a month to go before the arrival of a medicine container on Josu's ship, I had to rush to get money from the rich and their whims to treat the many poor and sick people who came in every day. The man I saw that day had a chronic cough and just a few rags covering his tanned skin. He must have been about 60 years old, an extreme age in those parts of the world. He limped markedly on his right leg where I noticed a bone deformity. He had scars on his forehead, from some traditional rite. His face showed the wrinkles of time, his look as if lost because of his incipient cataracts, denoted respect, a kind and unspoken invitation to mutual complicity with life, something that surprised me and I could not explain. His name was Mr. Tomas Conteh, and he came from a village about twelve kilometres away through jungle and rice fields.

I could hear by auscultation that his lungs were overrun with infection and inflammation, and the little oxygen filtering into his body meant that he could barely stand or finish a sentence. I checked by fluoroscopy such invasion of his lungs, and saw in the laboratory that his sputum was full of the tuberculosis bacilli. He needed urgent treatment and at least a week in the hospital so as not to infect his family and to regain some strength. I convinced him to stay. I assured him that we would pay the cost, and we began the only treatment we could offer with thioacetazone tablets and streptomycin injections, drugs no longer

used outside Africa. There they continued, despite their toxicity, to save lives. Every day I visited at dawn the nearly two hundred patients in hospital, and said good night to them in the dim light of a kerosene lamp before going to bed. Within a month, Mr. Conteh was better. We had taught him how to inject himself the streptomycin, found that his cough was no longer infectious, and that he could walk. Like so many every day, he left with the best salary a doctor can receive, a smile of gratitude. A month later, it was Sunday, and as the bells were ringing for the mission mass and I returned to my room after passing the visits to the wards, I heard someone calling me from behind.

-*Odokotela?* "Dr. Fernando".

I turned around. There was Mr. Conteh, whom I barely remembered among the many, many patients we treated every day.

-Sheke

-Sheke you.

-How are you feeling, are you still on medication? -I asked in my poor *Temne*, clarifying it in Creole.

-Very well. I am much better, thank you. The medicine is very good.

-What about your family, the crops, the rains?

There is a whole ceremony of polite questions in the *Temne* culture, although he belonged to the Mende ethnic group.

-Well, thank God.

I saw in his expression - *Alahamdudulai* - that he was not a Catholic. He had not come to Mass. Walking twelve kilometres to the mission, on a Sunday, without consultation, should have a reason.

-Do you need anything? What can I do for you?

-I brought you this from my farm.

-He showed me a tattered plastic bag with a dozen bananas inside. I felt overwhelmed by the value of such a gift, such appreciation. This man, who would have survived a thousand challenges unimaginable to my comfortable life in Cuba, had walked for twelve kilometres to bring me that humble gift of immense value....

-Thank you very much, I said.

-He said goodbye politely, repeated "Sheke" about ten times as he walked away, turning around every four steps, as I went back to my work.

-Two weeks later, I heard myself called again. Mr. Conteh again. Again on a Sunday.

After the ceremonious Shekes and not knowing the reason for his long trip again to see me, I asked him if he needed anything. I noticed that he did not dare to ask me. I insisted. Shyly and somewhat embarrassed, as if ashamed, he told me:

-Did you like the bananas?

-Yes, yes, very much, thank you very much.

I could not believe that the long road had that question as its object. But its end was even more surprising:

-Could I have my bag back?

XI. Patxi keeps his promise in Urkiola. Basque Country, August, 1977

PATXÍN WAS WAITING IN the sitting room of the Jesuit Provincial Office of Loyola, in the San Ignacio residence in Bilbo. A bit more than a year before, he was ordained a priest with fifteen other companions on the esplanade of the Loyola Shrine.

Since he arrived nine years ago with his uncle in the parish of Garai, his life had been profoundly transformed. That tall, strong boy from the Beloki farmhouse, predestined to become a *pelotari* and farmer on his family's land, now wore a black cassock and awaited a destiny in a distant mission. He would know where in a few minutes.

As he waited, with curiosity but without any trepidation, for his destiny, he recalled his life of the past eight years. A friend of his uncle's, Father Josu, was a Jesuit and a teacher at the Ikastetxea College in Durango. He used to come to play *fronton* with his uncle and then they would chat about the meaning of the Church in the modern world. In this way, he got to know the Jesuits and felt how his vocation found an echo in the book of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. He now carried the same book under his arm. He reread it often when he had to travel. Thus began his novitiate and for two years he lived in the seminary of Durango. He gradually studied humanities, philosophy and theology, combining it with the so-called "apostolic practices" in Basque schools and social work. In pursuit of peace building, he made contact with young pro-independence youths and those close to the violent circles of ETA, in prisons, in the Basque nationalist parties, or in the *herriko-tabernas*. He also tried to talk about it to civil guards and politicians, who rejected him with disdain:

-You better speak to the violent ones, Father. We know well our duty.

To his Jesuit inspiration, he added the reading of a book brought to him by his uncle Josu, the sailor from Madeira. A Cuban doctor had given it to him when he went to work in a remote mission in Sierra Leone: *My Experiments with Truth*. It was Gandhi's diary during his time in prison. His message of truth-seeking (Satia) and non-violent revolution (Aimsa) inspired his conversations with those young people from violent groups, sceptical that democracy after Franco's death

would respect their freedom and desire for independence. He could not hide the fact that in his pacifist activity he harboured the desire to meet his brother Juan Mari of whom they had not heard anything for many years. At the end of the talks with those groups, or walks in the mountains, he used to ask someone with whom he felt more confident if they knew the whereabouts of Juan Mari Beloki. Nobody could ever tell him anything. He supposed he was using an alias within ETA. Once, the guy he asked, a big guy of almost two meters tall and looking like an *aizkolari*, reacted violently, telling him that if he was spying on them, he would get what he deserved. That same night when he was walking along the trails to Garai to see his uncle, he was badly beaten. He never complained or spoke about it. He always continued to speak of peace and love, even in the darkest holes of hatred and rancour.

As he waited, he knew that Father Provincial was talking to Father Arrupe, the Superior in Rome, whom he saw only once when he was ordained. His destiny lay in that conversation. He was overwhelmed that his humble contribution to the Church and the world was stealing the time of people of such high responsibility. He did not quite understand why Rome could be interested in a young Jesuit.

He saw news in the newspapers on the table. They focused on the first democratic elections in forty-two years in Spain, won by Adolfo Suarez. He also over read with interest that the last case of smallpox in Humanity had been diagnosed in Somalia, which, according to scientists, could mean the eradication of a disease as long as mankind. He randomly opened the spiritual exercises and tried to concentrate on the silence that should always accompany his reading and his subsequent reflection, which they called "*vespers*". A small column in the local paper caught his attention because it spoke of Manresa, the place where St. Ignatius had been living as a hermit and where he sensed the inspiration by the Exercises. The news reported the death of a brother of St. John of God, a medical missionary in Sierra Leone. Although the news was sad, there was deep tenderness in how they portrayed his life in the obituary:

Yesterday, August 16, at 9 p.m., Brother Ricardo Prats, a medical missionary of the Order of St. John of God in Sierra Leone, passed away. Brother Ricardo had been a renowned physician and professor,

also known in England for his studies of tropical diseases, who left a promising and lucrative professional career to take the habits of the Order of St. John of God. After his studies as a religious brother of the order, and showing astonishing selflessness and service to all his fellow brothers and patients, and especially to the mentally ill at the order's hospital in Manresa, Brother Ricardo founded a mission hospital in one of the poorest countries in the world, Sierra Leone. For the last 14 years, he devoted himself, body and soul, to the service of the poorest in that poorest country. The thousands of destitute sick people he treated will always remember his devotion and humbleness. He leaves, as his only inheritance, not even belonging to himself but to the order, two tunics, sandals that he himself made from old tires, and a manuscript: "Fifty tips for young doctors working in Africa".

He recalled the origin of Gandhi's book, the mission in Africa, the dedication to the poorest and the word "fellow men", which for so long resonated within him.

At that moment, the door opened. The provincial, Father Gabriel, invited him in. It was a humble office full of books, with a crucifix, a reproduction of St. Ignatius, another of St. Francis Xavier, and a photograph of Father Gabriel with Father Arrupe at the Vatican. Father Gabriel was short, stocky, with a somewhat bitter gesture in his expression, compensated by a deep and tender look, as if asking for affection to alleviate his bitter rictus.

Patxi greeted him by kneeling down, Jesuit style, and soon they were sitting across from each other in the Provincial's office.

Father Patxi, you are forty-four years old and it is now eight years since you entered the order and two years since you were ordained a priest. The order assigns you to a place of difficult challenges and responsibilities. It is not normal for someone with so limited experience to do so, but there are reasons for it.

-You know, Father Gabriel that I am at the service of the Order and ready to take on whatever God asks of me through your counsel.

-We need a strong, communicative person, who speaks English well, who can soon learn other languages and local customs, and, above all, with a deep commitment to peace. Your constant efforts to speak of

peace among the more radical Basque separatists have reached even the ears of Father Arrupe.

-I do nothing extraordinary, Father Gabriel. I convey Jesus' message of peace and love to young people who live in a world of violence. But many times I don't succeed in changing their attitudes.

-That is the point, Father Patxi: it is not a question of changing things directly and quickly, but of your model of life and the seed it leaves in so many people. It will grow in time, strong and solid. That is in the Lord's hands. We know that you have been threatened and even assaulted, and that you continue to deal generously with those who threaten you.

He did not know what to say. He was uncomfortable with such flattery. He was no saint. In fact, he often doubted his faith, his vow of chastity and even his pacifism at all costs. He noticed that Father Gabriel was about to tell him, almost with the gravity of a sentence, his fate.

-There is a country in southern Africa, Southern Rhodesia, which has been suffering a civil war against the colonial power for twelve years, and at the same time an emerging fratricidal struggle between its main ethnic groups. The country lives under a racist regime, and the local populations suffer from extreme marginalization and poverty. A few months ago, the guerrillas killed three religious brothers, one of them a Jesuit priest, in a place called Lupane. The Father I am talking about was running a secondary school in a very poor area in the southwest of the country called Matabeleland. We need someone strong and committed to persevere in the message of peace in that region, against apartheid, against war, against hatred, for love. In addition, Protestant missions are spreading to those areas, and our influence is beginning to fade away. Father Arrupe has spoken to the bishop in Bulawayo. They expect you as soon as possible.

-I am at your service, Father, and at God's," said Patxi, although he did not like the argument of competition between creeds....

-In two weeks' time you will receive your plane ticket. In the meantime, do your best to learn about the situation in that country, its culture and traditions, the current political state and the prevailing English system of education. You will find some books in our library and in that of the Episcopate. I have spoken with a missionary of an

order known as Marianhill, well established in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, who is passing through Madrid, so that he can meet you and talk in detail about what awaits you. The missionary's name is Daniel.

Patxi left St. Ignatius' residence with a profound feeling that his life was heading towards challenges he had always hoped for. The mixture of curiosity for a distant and unknown world, the challenge of God's message of love where violence spread, the confrontation with the horrors of apartheid and war, the desire to alleviate the poverty of the most destitute "fellow men", made his heart race.

However, he knew well that he could not leave without solving something important in his life. He went back to his small room, cell, in the school of *Ikastetxea*, took a backpack to walk in the bush for a few days and sleep under the stars for a few nights. He packed Gandhi's book. He set off up the slopes towards Garai. He found his uncle playing pelota with Josu, both in their seventies but still fit. They went together to the parish house and had *purrusalda* while Patxi told them about his meeting with Father Provincial and his impending destination. He told them that he had to go to meditate in nature and would be away for a few days, but that no one, if they asked for him, should look for him. His uncle looked at him gravely:

-Patxin, I know what you are up to, and I understand you. I only ask you to be very prudent.

At dawn, Patxi went out on the roads between the villages of the Durango district. That summer it had rained heavily and nature was exuberant. The day was cloudy and cool; Patxi was well prepared with wool pants, *chirucas* (mountain boots) for the march and a plaid shirt. He carried a jug of water, cheese from Garai and a bowl of green peppers prepared by his uncle, those small and tender peppers from the area that he liked so much. He walked for about four hours until he reached Mañaria. As he entered that majestic valley, he spent some time contemplating the mountains of Mugarra and Untzillaitz. In the background, the gorge of Atzarte, which communicated the Duranguesado and the plateau, awaited him defiantly. He asked in several farmhouses until he reached the Arrate farmhouse. The roof was badly damaged, almost collapsed, and the garden was in very bad condition. An *ikurriña* (Basque flag) was hanging from the haystack.

Patxi knocked at the door and a woman in her fifties opened it. She seemed bitter about life, unconcerned about her body, with no peace in her existence.

-Epa, I'm looking for Iñaki.

-Who is looking for him?

-I am Father Patxi, he knows.

He heard some shouting inside the house, and Iñaki, the guy who had beaten him up a few months ago for asking about his brother and insisting on peace, came out of the house in astonishment and irritation, and pushed him threateningly:

-What are you doing here? you fool! You traitor, you Spaniard! Do you want me to send you to your God quickly?

-I am here because I want to talk to you. And I don't want any violence or to hurt anyone.

-If you get me in trouble, you will remember! It is time for your Church to confront the fascist state. You have nothing to do with the revolutionary message of Christ. Do you agree with everything that happened during the week of mobilization for amnesty? Seven murders by the "Forces of Order". They kept kicking José Luis Cano even after he was shot in the head. All for asking that the political prisoners may have amnesty like the others released by your King, the successor of the dictator. And what does the Church say?

-You may be partly right. But don't be afraid, I'm not going to upset you in any way. I just need to talk to you. In two weeks, I will be gone for many years to the other side of the world and you will not hear from me for a long time.

Hesitantly and defiantly, he led him to the haystack where they sat down on some bundles of hay. Patxi spoke to him with a tenderness and peace that disconcerted Iñaki's tough and hostile attitude. He spoke of his childhood and of his esteem and love for his brother, whom he had not seen for more than ten years. He spoke of his respect for the desire for independence and for the social structures proposed by the nationalist left, some of them very close to the equality that Jesus always preached and that the Church, he acknowledged, had so often forgotten. He spoke of how the Jesuits had helped the peaceful revolts in Central America, of the lives of guerrilla priests like the Colombian

Camilo Torres Restrepo or the Asturian Gaspar García Laviana and their struggle against Somoza in Nicaragua. He spoke to him about the struggle of Martin Luther King against apartheid. Patxi told Iñaki how he would now try to fight against racist oppression in Southern Africa. But, above all, he spoke to him again about Gandhi and how his non-violent struggle, and that of Nelson Mandela, imprisoned in Rodhen Island, were the most powerful means for change while violence had never ceased to generate more violence. Iñaki looked at him with surprise and gradually paid attention to those stories, unknown to him. Patxi thought of the image of Father Gabriel's seeds.

An hour later, Iñaki had packed his backpack and the two of them entered the gorge of Atzarte. There was an unspoken silence between the two. Iñaki was thinking about the message of non-violence of that unwary priest. Patxi was thinking about the struggle for rights and freedom.

They walked for about eight hours through the pine and oak forests of Urkiola. They had to climb some steep mountain walls. Iñaki did it with ease, it was obvious that he walked that path often. Patxi preferred not to look down because he suffered from vertigo, but he followed him without fear. When they reached the peak, they entered some meadows that connected with other valleys, and there Iñaki told Patxi that he had to blindfold him and would guide him with a rope attached to his backpack. Patxi nodded. He knew they were approaching a hideout or jail of ETA. He walked blindfolded for about three hours. When he felt it was getting dark, with several scratches from falls, bumps from rocks and grazes from brambles, they arrived at their destination. He felt Iñaki greet others in Basque:

-Hey, I have a visitor, he is safe. He needs to see comrade Unai.

Patxi felt two people coming out of a camouflaged hut in the forest and arguing with Iñaki. They seemed to disagree. After a while one of them raised his voice:

-You take him back where you came from or we have to kill him. Things are very tense, Iñaki. No risk.

At that moment, Patxi drew strength from within and shouted: Juan Mari, Anaya!

Iñiqui turned to Patxi and punched him hard in the stomach, knocking him down and leaving him breathless. The other two guards in the hideout kicked him all over his body.

He was semi-conscious, but he could feel someone come out from inside and yell out

-Oraindik (quietly). He is my brother, leave me with him. I'll take responsibility.

Juan Mari helped him to get up and put him in the hole, while the rest watched from outside. Once inside, he helped him sit on an old mattress and with a basin of water, he cleaned his wounds from the beating he had just received. Only then did he slowly remove the eye bandage.

It had been more than ten years since he had seen or heard from his brother. He had a bushy beard and long hair, already very grey. In fact, he thought he saw the image of Jesus Christ. He was wearing a tattered white T-shirt and old jeans. He was barefoot. He was well into his fifties but looked strong and healthy. He had one eye half closed and noticed that a white spot covered part of his right cornea and that he had lost vision in that eye. A deep scar ran across half of his forehead.

They looked at each other for a while as if exploring, as if deciphering the different lives they had had since they left the family farmhouse. Patxi saw in Juan Mari, now known as comrade Unai, pain, rage, hatred and struggle. Juan Mari saw in his brother the recent evidence of his comrades' violence towards his younger brother, whom he had heard about through his talks on peace. He felt, for the first time, ashamed of the violence to which he belonged. But he did not apologize.

Their gazes were blurred with tears of emotion, and they embraced.

-Anaya, I needed to see you. I'm going to the other side of the world, for a long time. You have my word that no one will ever know I have seen you. Not even Amá (mother).

Iñaki sensed the worst. His father Agustin would now be eighty five years old.

-What about Aitá?

-Aita died last year. I gave him the last rites. You know that whether it was because of Mary, or because of your struggle, he never wanted us to see you or talk about you. When I left for the seminary nearby, he asked me never to look for you.

Juan Mari felt a stabbing pain of sadness. His face, hard from the violence, seemed to crack into a thousand pieces.

-The day he died, I spoke to him about life. He told me he was sorry for only one thing: that he had not told you how much he loved you, how much he prayed for you every day, the pain that burned him with the desire to embrace you and protect you from the dangers that surrounded you. I promised him I would tell you.

XII. The Doubts of Faith. Madrid, November, 1977

AFTER FULFILLING HIS promise, Patxi left for the south, with memories still throbbing in his heart. He was waiting for the bus at the Bilbo station, to go to Madrid where he would meet a missionary from Zimbabwe, and leave for distant and unknown lands. While he was waiting with his luggage, he looked at the suitcase where he had packed a few shirts, pants, a few books and a toiletry bag. He had in his hands a book on Ndebele culture. He chose to think with his eyes closed of his brother in his outlaw lair. He knew that in his embrace and his gaze lived a soul locked in hatred and fear, trapped in his own chains to his own ghosts. He prayed he could break them. But how?

At his farewell, he had told him that if he had not committed any blood crimes, the verdict for association with a terrorist group would not be long. Besides, if he repented, he could redeem it a few years, study, exercise, write and prepare for a new life. He simply replied that it wasn't that easy and looked at his comrades standing guard. He knew they would not let him give himself up so easily. He could say many things under the dreaded torture. And when he came out, no matter what, he could be the victim of his own fellow fighters. Patxi saw in him a terrified look in the background. Even if it could be disguised as toughness and determination, it hid a deep fear, a cry for help. He saw through that look the guise of his brother playing pranks, playing in the farmhouse, catching tadpoles, climbing the big oak tree of Garai and showing off in front of his cousin Maria. He saw the innocence of all Humanity now locked up in the cells of fears. He wept with rage. Was he only left to pray? Should he go so far away when he was needed so close?

He could not even talk to his uncle to try to help him because he had to promise Juan Mari that no one would ever know that he had seen him. In addition, his mother Milagros was approaching eighty. Although she had the company of her brother Agustin, at the head of the farmhouse, she looked frail and sad since the death of her father. She felt as if she was betraying her family by going so far away. At least migrants like his uncles Jon and Josu left out of necessity and returned with means to help their families. But him? He knew he was not going to "save his soul" as in the past. In fact, he was doubtful and

even ashamed of the proselytizing attitudes of the Church. He believed more in the social work and the example of Jesus with the poorest. But did he have to go that far? He realized that even these doubts were considered weaknesses before the vow of obedience. He then felt an irrepressible vertigo.

While he was thinking about the look in her brother's eyes, they called over the loudspeaker for the bus to Madrid. It was September 1977, the bus carried many kids going to college in Madrid, also some travellers returning from their summer vacations, and workers who spent long months away from their families. Sales clerks and traders used to go in their cars and businesspersons by sleeper train or by plane. Spain had held its first democratic elections in forty years three months earlier. Although led by a former disciple of Franco, people were looking forward to a new society and a new constitution. But in the Basque Country there was no such hope. Resentment towards an oppressive state during a long dictatorship still prevailed.

The bus was advancing and leaving the green mountains sown with farmhouses, orchards and forests, for a landscape that was becoming flatter and more yellow. They stopped in Burgos for a break and as it was not far from the cathedral, he could enter it for a moment, pray for his brother and his family, and overcome the doubts that made him advance towards the South without the delight he desired. The truth was that those massive cathedrals did not inspire him with a connection to God. He associated them with dark times of abuse of power, including that of the Church. In the art admired by others, he saw sculptors working under pressure, and in the gigantic columns or stained glass windows, he saw workers almost enslaved and some killed by the labour conditions. For the glory of God, the God of simplicity, of Bethlehem, of the Cross, of the first catechumenal Christians of the catapults against the power of the Roman emperors? What would he say if he saw that with time the same megalomaniac works of the Roman Empire were built in his name? Well, enough of doubts on the day of his departure! He had faith in his God, the friend of the poor. He would give all his energy for their peace and happiness. Somehow, he knew that the smiles he could bring to those children would brighten his mother's, his brother's, and the smiles of his beloved ones he was leaving behind.

With those thoughts, he arrived at the bus station in Madrid, and took the metro, for the first time in his life, to go to an association of missionary priests. He found Daniel, the missionary of the Marianhill order with whom he had arranged to meet to learn about Rhodesia and the mission of Empandeni, Patxi's destination.

Father Daniel had been a missionary in Africa for more than twenty years, the last ten in Rhodesia. He was a strong man, quite tall, with a full smile, the kind that shrouds you with a guise that shines. His complexion was tanned, probably from the African sun, and the wrinkles on his face seemed to reflect mostly expressions of joy. He was dressed very simply; jeans and a white shirt, and he noticed that he was wearing sandals he had seen on German tourists. He noted his bronzed feet, which surely had been on a thousand adventures. He was regaining the thrill that seemed to dilute in his journey of homesickness and doubts. He took him to a small room where he left his suitcase and they went into the pantry to prepare a modest dinner. There they greeted a seminarian and another missionary who were about to go to bed. The TV was on and the news dealt with the autonomy that was being granted to Catalonia. Father Daniel commented that in a peaceful way they were achieving more than the Basque Country. He reminded him of his brother and changed the conversation. Patxi listened attentively to some news about the creation of the first three communication nodes of a new system that could revolutionize the future of communication, called "internet".

-Father Daniel, how long have you been in Madrid?

-Call me Daniel, and I'll call you Patxi. Okay? I arrived a week ago. I've been arranging papers, sending projects here and there, talking to *Manos Unidas* (Spanish Caritas) and giving talks in some parishes and schools. I am leaving in two days for Huelva, where my mother lives. I will spend two weeks in the village with her and then come back here to be told my next destination.

-How long had you been in Rhodesia? Were you looking forward to finishing your mission there?

-I had been there for ten years, and it breaks my heart to leave. It is a country suffering a terrible war, against white racism and for its independence. Moreover, at the same time a fratricidal war is emerging. But you will love its people. They are noble, resilient and grateful. I

have learned a lot from them, I leave in them part of my soul, and I take with me the lights of their glances, the magic of their clicks and the depth of their Zulu songs.

-But it is hard not to be involved in their struggle. When you have seen the way the whites in Rhodesia treat them, you cannot remain silent. The bishop asks us for neutrality, but how can the Church of Jesus not take sides with the poor and the oppressed? I have accompanied the young people from Matabeleland who are joining the guerrillas for the struggle. They are in camps in Botswana. I will never stop advocating for peace, but I understand their anger and their struggle, Patxi.

Patxi began to feel very much in tune with Daniel's ideas. He was already imagining those looks, those songs, those landscapes and those discussions about freedom and peace.

Daniel continued:

-As I see things, Ian Smith's regime will not be able to withstand much of the boycott by everyone except the racists in South Africa, where I spent the previous ten years. He will be under pressure to sign an agreement with the Shona and Ndebele guerrillas. The Methodist church is trying to encourage such an agreement, for peace, and we support them, as long as they take into account the liberation movements. Muzorewa, the Methodist bishop, has spent most of his life in the United States and in recent years has been outside the revolutionary movement. He pretends to represent everyone and that causes tensions. We will see what happens, but there may still be several years of war. The mission is at the gateway for guerrillas taking refuge in Botswana. It is the target of attacks by the Rhodesian army. You have to know, Patxi, you are not going to an easy place. But if you go with an open heart, you will see that it is as difficult as it is magical.

-What about the mission, Daniel? Tell me about it.

-Well, you know it was founded a hundred years ago now, and centennial celebrations await you. Your Jesuit Order came from Cape Town, a thousand miles away, in ox carts. Many died on the way, and Lobengula, the Ndebele king then in Bulawayo, received them with violence. For better or worse, the British South Africa Society, led by Rhodes, subdued Lobengula and allowed the missions to settle. Since then we have been seen as allied with the English racists. But it must

also be said that Lobengula was a tyrant over the Matabeleland tribes, such as the Kalanga of Matabeleland South. That is where we are. We share the Jesuit mission with the Marianhill Brothers. You will see there are primary and secondary schools, a clinic, several vocational workshops, a seminary, farms, vegetable gardens and even a soap factory. Many villages in the region take their children to study to the mission.

-What about the local people? What can you tell me?

-The majority tribe is the Kalanga, but they are mixing with the Ndebele. It is the poorest region of the country. The land is dry and sandy; we are next to the Kalahari Desert. When it is not the droughts or the plagues of the cattle, the locust destroys the little that they can plant. They grow mostly millet, although maize has been introduced and is now more widely consumed. The daily food is like a corn paste, called *Sadza*. There are vegetables like *chomolia*, and other local vegetables that you will discover. We have a few cows and we make a yogurt to add to the *sadza*, increasing its protein. They are very quiet and very modest people. I advise you to learn a bit of Ndebele before you arrives, which is what most local people speaks. You should know their taboos and prejudices, what is not correct, what they are most grateful for and what they fear the most. They believe in God in their own way, for their most real world is that of the spirits of their ancestors. They talk to them. I truly believe they communicate with them. For them, their God is the *Mkulumkulu* and the world of nature and animals have magical meanings.

-Daniel, I guess if you come to deeply respect your beliefs, you wonder what we are doing there, don't you?

-Exactly Patxi. I think we will understand each other. There are still missionaries who despise those local beliefs, who impose the rite of the mass, the sacraments, and the prayers in their own way. I believe, Patxi, that religion is a language to talk to God. Just as we learn our mother tongue to speak with our fellow countrymen. Just as we learn musical languages to make or read music. Birds also have their codes. So do all animals. They are languages. They facilitate communication, whether of thoughts or feelings. We believe that only humans possess spirit and communicate thoughts and feelings. But I have doubts about

that too. Are we so special? Are we superior to other animals? And if so: do we deserve more?

-In any case, religion, as a language, has different forms, just as there are different languages in the world. Is there one better than the other? No. Each one has adapted to the needs and context. For example, there are more than twenty words for garbage in English, do you know how many there are in Ndebele?

-No.

-None. It does not exist. Nothing is thrown away. Everything is good for something. Ndebele has thirteen types of guttural clicks, and each can be said with a different tone, meaning something different. They can be used in isolation so as not to interrupt the speaker but to make him feel our feeling for what he is saying. Is that wild? Inappropriate? Should it be replaced by correct Oxford English?

-Of course not.

-In the same way, religion has been adapting to local sentiments. In fact, the attachment to the ancestors is very strong. I am touched by how they remember them. We only remember them for a few months after their death. They worry more in their prayers about the rains or plagues and less about greed because there is no money or great abuses of power among them, or about sexuality, because they live it in a more natural way.

Patxi could not believe his amazement. He identified with Daniel's every word.

-So, tell me, Daniel, what are we doing there?

-What would Jesus have done, what do you think?

-I believe that Jesus would have simply lived with love, sharing, conveying peace and hope among all to live and die in peace and deep happiness.

-Well, that's what I believe. I have helped thousands of families in their jobs, in their studies, in paperwork in Bulawayo, in building wells or making ovens, in accompanying them in the sadness of funerals and the joy of baptisms, in trying to inspire serenity and peace when the oppression of the white racists makes them despair. In thousands of everyday details. My cross is for me a reference to love.

-But given your attitude, so sympathetic and different from what the Vatican asks, does the Superior, the Bishop in Bulawayo, approve of it?

-Why do you think I am leaving?

The next morning the phone rang while they were having breakfast and continuing their conversation. Daniel said, "Patxi, it is for you. Rob, a friend of his uncle Jon, from Idaho, called him. In Spanish but with an American accent, he told him that his uncle Jon was a friend of his father's, and had given him the phone number of the farmhouse where they advised him to trace him in that house. He brought a package for the family, and he wanted to deliver it to him. Although he would be leaving in a week for Rhodesia, he would try to mail it. Patxi was intrigued to meet that young American. He sensed that coincidences, such as chance in time and space, had a meaning. They arranged to meet at *Puerta del Sol* the next day.

During the day he alternated readings about Rhodesia, with talks with Daniel, more and more passionate about the deep meaning, and not liturgical and even less of power, of religion. He felt himself a traitor again in "taking away" the post of a noble rebel. But he had the same thoughts. Daniel had to leave. Life whispers the way. They embraced deeply. Daniel gave him three black stones, secret of the White Fathers to treat snake bites.

Too bad they are not good for the damage that two-legged snakes do. *Lihamba kuhle*, "go in peace", as the people that you will love soon, say.

Patxi stood in front of the Sol subway station. A tall, smiling, freckle-faced man with a straw hat approached them. He was wearing jeans and a T-shirt that spoke of the "*free speech movement*".

-Rob?

-Patxi?

They shook hands and went for a beer at a bar in the Plaza Mayor.

Rob was the son of a rancher from Idaho and a friend of his uncle Jon, who had migrated thirty years ago to the United States. Patxi had only seen Jon at one of Grandpa Agustin's birthdays. Jon had five children, three boys and two girls, all married with children. Rob was friends with their youngest, Josu, like his uncle. They had been

schoolmates, childhood, and teenage adventures in the Idaho town where they grew up together. Josu had stayed behind to continue farming and ranching. He had married in his twenties to a local girl. But Rob wanted to continue his education. He was in his fourth year of college, at Berkeley, a place near San Francisco.

Upon hearing that Patxi was going to Rhodesia, Rob was very interested, as he was studying international law, and was following developments in Africa closely. He told him that his sister was "Peace Corps" in a country called Sierra Leone and wrote him very exciting letters of her life. He felt as if she was really living and he was the spectator of life. She told him how women had no rights and were subjected to genital mutilation and forced child marriages.

-What do you do, Rob?

-Well, I study international relations, although I am very interested in philosophy and sociology, I think they are the foundations of politics. We often accuse politics, and rightly so. But many of their contradictions are rooted in society itself.

He had come to a student conference, to tell them about the "free speech" movement at Berkeley. He told him about free thought and expression, the hippie liberation movement and opposition to the Vietnam War. He apologized for how the American government had helped Franco and so many dictators, especially in Latin America. Patxi was dissembling, as he would have asked three questions per sentence, but he was delighted to hear someone with such free ideas.

He told him that in his country the strict ideas of the Old Testament were still deeply rooted and that sects that are even more radical were emerging with tremendously proselytizing charismatic leaders. He also spoke of, shocked, that most Americans believed in hell, and that there was still a lot of racism. Rob went on speaking of the beginning of the universe and its tiniest expression in quantum physics. He thought everything was a duality of matter and energy. That matter was ineffable and ephemeral, even in its expression of time and space and that energy was the deep essence to which they truly belonged in its infinite and eternal expression. He had been inspired by the ideas of Buddhism, like many young people in the hippie movement. Buddhism believed in the very unity of the universe and in a common energy to

which they belonged, of which we were unaware because of our hope in the immediate, and material.

Patxi interrupted him and said:

-Rob, what you say is very interesting, ideas inspired by Prince Siddhartha during his retreat, for the thought of someone in meditation or in our prayers in the convent. But what is the energy that a starving child in Africa has to identify with, what is there of illusory suffering in someone suffering from sickness and hunger?

Rob agreed. He was running away from the determinism of religion, and fighting against injustice. At that point, they started talking about the Tibetan independence movement and ended up talking about Gandhi. They talked about the principles of Satia and Aimsa. They reconnected with the feeling of union of Buddhism, between Humanity, with nature and with the Universe. Patxi thought of the Ndebele and their magical worlds of animals, ancestors and nature. He thought of the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius. He thought of liberation theology. He thought of his brother's sad eyes.

-Patxi, are you listening to me? You seem to be in other thoughts.

-Yes, sorry.

Rob had changed the subject. He was recounting the evolution of man, from the egalitarian communities of nomadic gatherers and sporadic hunters, to agriculture and the principle of property. And the differences imposed by the feudal lords, the origin of our nations, to the industrial revolution and the exploitation of the working class, to the capitalism of our century. Which was plunging man into greed and a society of fear and competition, consumption and destruction. He told him how in human evolution for about two million years, apes underwent mutations and divisions into different groups. While chimpanzees lived in hierarchies based on power and domination among themselves, another lineage of the split, the *bonobos* (pygmy chimpanzees) used collective pleasure in the face of danger. Some used power for pleasure and ownership, while the others used pleasure without a sense of ownership to face the fears and temptations of power. He said that we humans had a genetic similarity to these two evolutions and the duality of the social and supportive and the aggressive and dominant. Rob explained that the prevailing society was based on competitive individualism and we lived with the suffering of constant

alertness and class struggle, while within us we had the potential to live in peace and love, without material property. He claimed that was the message of peace and love that he brought to the student meetings in Madrid.

-Rob, you speak of the anarchism that inspired our republic. In my family there have been deaths because of it. I agree with a society of love, but in which there is respect for the privacy of each person, responsibility in parenthood, encouragement to effort and rewarded work without generating injustices. I don't think we are all "*bonobos*" to live without any rules.

-Patxi, Jesus believed it. And his message is that of love. He didn't understand nations or property. Nor religion as it is today. Do you know the song "Imagine".

-John Lennon's? Yes. It's beautiful.

-Look: no properties, no religions, no countries.

-Rob, I also believe in love. And my message is Jesus.

They gave each other a hug and left each other addresses to keep connected.

Patxi returned on the subway captivated in Daniel and Rob's ideas. They resonated with his own criticism of the Vatican, proselytizing and alliances with power. But he felt inspired by Jesus. There were suffering people waiting for his helping hand and his message of hope. He sensed that great emotions awaited him if he went with an open heart and merged with the universe as Buddhism inspired. Language was the least of it. The language of the heart had no rules.

XIII. The freedom plot. Arguamul, Gomera, July, 1978.

AFTER THE dialogs with Fernando, Jonay decided since his adolescence that he would become a doctor. But not a doctor like those in the island hospital, with high salaries and helicopters to transfer patients to Tenerife when they asked for them. He'd be a doctor for the poorest, as Fernando had been. He always remembered the story of Mr. Conteh's plastic bag. Fernando had given him a copy of Brother Ricardo's "50 tips for a young doctor in Africa".

In the meantime, Fernando had his Cuban medical degree validated in Spain, and had applied for residency. That brought him quite a few problems, including visits from Cuban diplomats, as Cuban internationalists had to return to the island. He had mixed feelings, because on the one hand, he was passionate about the Cuban communist revolution, but on the other hand, he could not understand how they restricted the freedom of those who did not think the same way. He could not stand that Cuba was executing convicts, some for political reasons. It broke his heart. He had some friends who were in prison.

A few weeks after coming, it so happened that Che Guevara's daughter, Aleida Guevara, came to give a lecture at the La Gomera town hall. Half the town went to listen to her, although the right wing landowners tried to discredit her and prevent her from doing so. The revolutionary speech was beautiful, and she told incredible stories about her father. She was a paediatrician and explained the many virtues of free medical for all in Cuba and their cooperation all over the world. She came from being part of the Cuban delegation that participated in a Health Conference in a city of the USSR, called Alma-Ata, and of which she said that they were, finally in the history of Humanity, recognizing the democratic bases of health and the right and responsibility of community participation.

At the end of the conference, Fernando asked the first question:

-Comrade Aleida, can a revolution stifle the freedom of a people in the name of their liberation?

Aleida noticed the Cuban accent, and the deep gaze of that defiant man without remembering that they had been classmates in Havana.

-Why do you say so? Cuba is a people's republic liberated from capitalism and imperialism. The only restriction in Cuba is that of taking property and getting rich at the expense of the poor.

Fernando only answered:

-I am afraid there are others that you do not know about.

They stared at each other and after she received a round of applause from the participants, Aleida approached Fernando. They exchanged a few words and she immediately identified who he was. They knew each other from the Pedro Kourí Tropical Medicine Institute. They agreed to have dinner together and to talk about health and freedom in Cuba. Fernando asked if Jonay and his parents, who were his dear family, could come. Aleida nodded. She was accompanied by a very quiet person, very stout. During dinner, Aleida and Fernando spoke with great solemnity and respect, as if they were rethinking the revolution. When she learned that he was due to return after his period as an internationalist, she told him that they were waiting for him, that the revolution accepted criticism, and that everyone was needed. Fernando said nothing. At that moment his mind, and one would say his heart, were at a great distance. The horizons of his soul were different.

There was another recent story about Fernando that Jonay and his family did not yet know. When he got his residency and registered as a doctor, he spent a year doing emergency duty at the hospital in San Sebastian, and helping Tomas fishing between shifts. He played the guitar and with John on the harmonica gave concerts in a bar in San Sebastian. Fernando shared the songs of Silvio Rodríguez, Pablo Milanés and the *Nueva Trova Cubana* with John. John taught him country songs, among which his favourite was John Denver. Inspired by the excitement of the democratic transition in Spain they also sang the songs of Jarcha and Aguaviva, encouraging towards the debates and voting for the referendum of the first Spanish constitution after Franco's dictatorship. The following year, he missed so much, what he called "real medicine", the one that combines less means and more needs that he went to spend three months again in the mission hospital in Sierra Leone. Since the death of Brother Ricardo, they had only doctors who stayed for a short time, and he was asked to fill the gap for a few months.

Upon his return, a month earlier, he was offered a job in Vallehermoso, the most distant and isolated village in the island. During that month, Fernando combined his work at the health center with rebuilding a house in an abandoned village. Arguamul was even further away, on the edge of the cliffs called Los Órganos, where he walked down a dangerous path to a lonely beach. There he collected barnacles where the sea was breaking hard, and recovered wood from shipwrecks that the strong tides brought to the beach, to “his beach”. With a system of pulleys at various points along the way to his house, he would haul two hundred meters up the wood and logs. With those and some cement and ropes that he brought from San Sebastian, he was recovering an abandoned house. He also built a small pier. His eagerness was so intense that one could say he was preparing something epic. He stopped going to San Sebastian, fishing with Tomas, sailing with John or chatting with Jonay about medicine.

As Jonay was in his last year of school, he wanted to go with Fernando during the summer to escort him in the consultations and visits to patients in their homes. Fernando had not visited them for several weeks, and it was very difficult to connect by phone. Therefore, one day Jonay took the bus to Vallehermoso and continued his way to Arguamul. He found Fernando lifting a very large log, from a shipwreck mast. As Fernando was tying it up with strong sea ropes, Jonay went down to the second pulley and, in the whistling language of La Gomera, asked him if he would start pulling. Fernando, who was dressed almost all day in just shorts and a ribbon holding back his long hair, said yes, also in the whistling language Jonay had taught him. An hour passed until they had mounted that heavy log up the rest of the two hundred meter cliff. As he pulled the last few meters on the last pulley, with Fernando pushing and directing him from below, they felt the red rays of the sunset. When he reached the top, Fernando gave Jonay a hug. They greeted each other with great joy, and with the finger-snapping greeting, customary in Sierra Leone, which Fernando had taught him.

- Thank you Jonay, without you I would have been up all night!
- You don't work nights, do you?
- When there is a full moon like today, of course I do.

-You're going to kill yourself, Fernando, you don't stop working. What's the hurry? You can rent a house or a room in Vallehermoso. Besides, we never see you anymore.

-You know I am very stubborn. Besides, I like it a lot, I feel free. My beach, my gorge, my house. The sunset. This is paradise.

-Yes, but what is a paradise worth if you are its only inhabitant? Can one be happy in such solitude?

Fernando did not answer. Jonay observed that something deep was invading his thoughts.

They dragged the log with ropes to the front of the small house Fernando was rebuilding.

-Leave it here. Tomorrow we will raise it up over the two pillars I have built with stones from the ravine. It will be the axis of the porch roof. You will see. Jonay, tell me, what's new in San Sebastian? What news from around the world? Here I live secluded and silent.

-Well, the Pope died, another one was elected, but he also died a few weeks later. China has lifted the censorship of Aristotle, Shakespeare and Dickens, and in Spain it is no longer a crime to commit adultery. The leader of that group that demands Canarian independence, while representing the Canary Islands at the African Union, someone has tried to assassinate him. The best news I have heard recently is that at the customs police stopped Franco's daughter trying to leave the country with a lot of jewels and gold coins. Knowing if only some powerful have their feet stopped fills me with hope.

-Yes, they are good signs. So tell me, what brings you here?

-I came to see you, I missed you. Besides, I have already taken my access exams and I have enrolled in the Faculty of Medicine in La Laguna, Tenerife, but until I go there, I have three months off, and I want to be with you during consultations and patient home visits. Would you let me do that?

-Of course, Comrade Jonay (he used to call him that when they were happy). I will be happy to share with you many experiences and ideas, and as we become professional colleagues.

Upon entering his house and lighting some candles, Jonay noticed a photo on a table next to the mattress where Fernando was resting. There was little else in that house, still in ruins. The photo was black

and white, and crumpled. The image was of a black woman's face in profile. She was beautiful. Her gaze was serene and steady, her neck erect and long. The faint curve of her lips inspired solemnity in the face of life. She wore a scarf on her head that let some hair fall down her forehead, sweaty. Noble sweat.

She turned around and saw that Fernando was also looking at her.

-Fernando, who is she?

-Her name is Kadiatu.

-Is she from Sierra Leone?

-Yes.

- You don't need to tell me more if you don't want to. Although I tell you all about Patricia, the girl I like from La Lomada.

-I know, Jonay.

At that moment, Jonay noticed that Fernando's vision was blurring. He decided not to insist, not to look at him. But he knew that there was something very important weighing on his soul.

Fernando went out under the full moon, sat down on a rock in front of the cliff. Jonay silently followed him. He sat down next to him. He put his hand on his shoulder.

Fernando was looking at the horizon of the immense Atlantic, bright from the full moon and serene from the magical night. Without looking away, clouded by the emotion he was about to unveil, Fernando shared his secret.

-Jonay, you are like a son to me. I owe all my trust to you and your parents. That's why I have to tell you something that I have not told anybody until now out of fear.

Jonay nodded, looking at him. Fernando kept looking at the horizon.

-During my last stay in the hospital in Sierra Leone, I met a woman, Kadiatu, the one you saw in the photo. It was on one of the trips to the villages. I asked Abu to stop the van, as I saw a group of children sitting on a log with large leg tropical ulcers. Brother Ricardo used to stop along the way to treat those wounds with his magical mixtures of African honey and antiseptics. Word had spread throughout the region and there were always groups waiting for cures in the most unexpected

places. I got out of the van, where we were also taking some seriously ill people to the hospital in the back. I took the box of tropical ulcers, and set about dressing and debriding the wounds one by one. When I got to the last case, I realized that the ulcer was very serious. It was deep, revealing tendons and muscles. It was infected. It occupied the whole leg. It was a girl of about ten years old. I asked her name and she answered "Lisy". She looked at me scared but very still. I focused on the wound and did not notice that she was sitting on the lap of a woman, who was stroking her curly hair to relieve her fear of the "*opoto*" - white man - and of the disease. When I looked up, I saw the most beautiful face I had ever seen. All looks speak. That one sang. She sang a melody of beauty and harmony. Her features were of the *Fulani* tribe, almost so dignified that they seemed proud. She was slender and delicate but at the same time her aura breathed serenity rooted in nobility.

-I assure you, Jonay, that it did not take me more than ten seconds to feel that she was the woman I had been waiting for all my life, although I had not yet heard her speak, I did not know her name, nor did I know her story. In my clumsy Creole I told her:

-We have to take Lisy to the hospital, she needs us to take good care of her leg. If not, she could lose it. Is she related to you?

-Yes, she is my sister.

-And where are your parents?

-In Serabu, far away.

-Well, we have to take her, are you coming with her?

-I have no money.

-Never mind, we will find a bed for her in the hospital and you can stay next to her. What is your name?

-Kadiatu.

-At the hospital, they settled in a corner of the paediatric ward. Lisy slept in a children's bed shared with another girl with malaria. Kadiatu made herself comfortable with some cloths on the floor. She looked for chores in nearby houses, fetched firewood, cooked, swept the porches of the houses and washed the clothes of patients and their families. She was given some rice in return which she cooked with some vegetables for her sister, and if there was any left over, for herself.

-She stayed in hospital for a week while I cleaned her wound, granulated it with Brother Ricardo's formula, and prepared areas of her back and the thigh of her healthy leg for grafting. A week later, she was ready for surgery. In the evening I visited her with the light of a kerosene lamp as I did every night, passing through all the wards and stopping at the most serious patients or those I would operate on the following day. I had noticed that every day Kadiatu looked at me with a depth that filled me with her beauty and dignity. I would return her gaze, although after a short time, she would disguise with some joke to distract her little sister, and I would catch a glimpse of her soft, almost imperceptible smile. A few days later I told her that I would have to explain her sister's care, as she was ready to go home.

Jonay was looking at Fernando with deep attention and respect. The night was stunning; the moon was shining on the immense sea, which stretched at their feet, under the cliff from where they lifted up the trunks of the shipwrecks. Fernando was telling his story looking at the horizon, looking towards the “*organs*”, towards the east, towards Africa. Jonay continued listening to his story looking at the same horizon, as if he wanted to imagine the images of his story, in that tragic, magical and distant world.

-I went out of the hospital with Kadiatu. It was a dark, magical night in September. It is the month of thunderstorms, where distant lightning flashes continually in the night, faintly and fleetingly illuminating everything. The humidity of the rainy season had impregnated the red earth with larvae, and now the night was filled with fireflies that increased even more the magical sense of everything. In the distance, chants of some celebration could be heard. Rhythmic, deep drums. Like the beating of my heart.

We talked about her sister's injury, and I told her about the operation, the care she had to take, the check-ups at the hospital and thereafter at the log where I met them first. I felt guilty, because I was telling her more details than to any patient or family member. I saw the furtive glance of her sister, who had managed to get out of bed and look at us from the window of the paediatric ward. At that very moment, the nurse on duty also came over to watch. It further heightened my sense of guilt to know that in the Fula culture, and in their deep sense of Islam, there was no room for relationships, or even encounters. Their

traditional rites linked to their family arrangements of agreed marriages from a very early age in women, their dowries and their unwavering adherence to Islam. However, something very strong had stuck in me from the first time our eyes had met.

-When I finished explaining the operation and care plans, I noticed that Kadiatu was crying. It is very rare to see any Fula cry, especially from pain. Something very serious should be going on.

-What's the matter, Kadiatu? Are you worried about Lisy's illness? Are you afraid we may have to amputate her leg?

I really thought the risk was high.

-Yes, I am concerned, but I know she is in the best place to save her leg. But there are other things that worry me more.

-Tell me. You can trust me. We do not know each other yet, but I somehow feel we are soul mates. I can't explain it. But I do.

-I feel the same way, and I do not know how to explain it either. I wait every day for your visit and good night to Lisy. My heart goes off like drums at dances.

At that moment, a Fula flute began to play in the distance.

-I must tell you my situation and that of Lisy. Tomorrow after the operation, we must leave. I don't think you will see us again. My parents have not come, nor have any other family members. They do not know we are here, but I think they have heard and will come soon. I need to run away.

-Why? What are you running away from?

-A year ago my father agreed with a very powerful man, a chief of Serabu, that I should marry him. That man already has five wives with whom everyone knows he is violent. He is very rich and powerful, and he had become infatuated with me when he saw me one day from his car. I have hardly seen the world, but I know that you can live with love and not with fear. I told my father that I did not want to get married, that I wanted to study and find a good man on my own, without anyone being forced on me. This may seem normal to you in your society, but in my world, it is a great insult to tradition, to religion, to family. At first, my father did not want to make a big deal out of my attitude. He thought I would give in. But I insisted. The arguments grew louder and

louder. My mother and my father's other wives and children took his side, and they all shouted at me and threatened me.

-My father used to say to me, "Daughter, that man will be good for you. He is a good Muslim. He is also rich and you will have everything you want. He has advanced us a very important dowry, with which we are going to fix the roof. It is the best thing for you. It is also your obligation. I am your father.

-I beg you, father. Do not take me to him. I would rather die.

-Tomorrow he will come do agree on the details of the wedding. It will be in two weeks. There is nothing more to talk about. It is God's will and what your father commands you.

-That night I went to my bunk, a mattress on the floor, in our humble house of dirt floor and thatched roof, with the timbers already rotten. I looked up at the starry sky, glimpsed through the gaps in the half-fallen roof. The stars were wonderful, more so than the tin roof my wedding would bring. That same roof would cover the stars as that wedding would drown my life in darkness. At that moment, I heard something on the side of my bed. It was the hissing of a cobra. Stealthily I got out of bed. It was the final sign, I should run away.

-I listened to her story, absorbed with emotion and feeling her pain in every word. We had sat on a log on the path to the forest. Without thinking, I had taken her hand. She, though shy, did not reject it and continued to tell me her terrible story.

-I could not do it alone. I could not leave my little sister Lisy behind. She knew of my sadness and feared I would leave home. One day she made me promise that if I left I would take her with me. She was also facing my parents and traditions. That year she would have to go through the rite of *poro* society, which included genital circumcision. Every woman in this country has gone through it, without even thinking about it. But she had heard from an American *Peace Corp* woman. At a meeting in town, she had heard about the dangers of that rite. When she was talking about it, some men came and violently chased her away. Since then Lisy had terrifying dreams of pain and mutilation. I had told my parents that she would not go through the rite. She would leave home first. At her tender age, barely ten. My father stared at her. And he stared at me.

-Besides, Lisy was sleeping next to me and had woken up. I did not need to say anything; she knew what was going to happen. I was surprised to see how she had a bag ready to run away, with clothes, some food, the sticks to brush her teeth, soap and an old copy of The Koran.

-We crept out and started walking. We did not know where to go. Lisy knew that the American volunteer she had heard about lived in a mission hospital in Sengema, about three hours' walk away. We walked without speaking, our eyes misty with sadness, but our steps steady toward a destination not yet known. We knew that we were leaving behind the most sacred and the only thing that makes us survive in Africa, the family, its traditions and beliefs. But we knew it was better to die with dignity than to live on our knees in fear.

At that moment I thought of Emiliano Zapata's words, later recalled by Ché: "I prefer to die standing up than to live kneeling down".

-When we arrived at the Sengema mission, we asked for the American woman, and they took us to her house. She welcomed us with surprise. We told her our stories, and asked if we could stay with her.

-Her name was Laura, from a place called Berkeley, California. She had long, light brown hair, blue eyes, a soft gaze, fragile gestures, and a smile of deep peace. Laura told us that sometimes it is good to be different and to fight for what you really believe in. She told us that her parents joined a movement in their town when they were young and now in her country people could express themselves freely. She told us that we were brave and that she would help us, but that we were not safe there. The man she intended to marry me was well known and would soon find them. He was one of the people who had threatened her to leave the country and leave their traditions alone. That same night he took us to the family he had lived with during his period of adaptation to the Sierra Leonean culture, according to the "peace corps" program. It was in the village of Masimera, near Lunsar. I had confidence with the family to tell them about the situation, and they welcomed us for household and farm work. It was time for the rice harvest and many people, including children and young people, moved to the rice fields in the north to work. It was there that Lisy's wound began to progress. And that's how we met you and we are here. But not

knowing where to go. I know from a friend that my father was in Masimera looking for us a few days ago.

-I felt fear and at the same time all the strength in the world to do something just for the person with whom, without knowing how to explain why, I wanted to spend the rest of my life.

-That same night I arranged with José María and Abú to go to Freetown before dawn to get some essential spare parts for the dermatome, which Josu had left at a Portuguese friend's house in Freetown. That was true. But the rush was because I needed to get Kadiatu and Lisy to Freetown, safely. I operated on Lisy that same night, explaining to the nurse on duty, who seemed to suspect something odd, that there was a risk of gangrene. Indeed there was. I operated with grafts from her back and the other thigh. I made the dressings. I prepared a bag with the materials for her dressings and with antibiotics and bandages. At five o'clock in the morning, we left for Freetown. While Abu went to the bishopric to get letters and orders, I went with Kadiatu and Lisy to Don Ramon's house. He was a stout man and not very talkative. He had also been a sailor and had sailed with Josu on the seas of West Africa, until a storm threw him against the mainmast and fractured his femur in three places. In Freetown no one cared for him, and on Josu's advice, they ended up in Saint Joseph, where Brother Ricardo treated him with iron bars that pierced the femur, pulleys and sandbag weights, and ointments of traditional secrets to ossify the battered bone. His fracture healed, but he could no longer walk well on the deck of ships. He married a *Temne* woman and they sold ginger beer to workers at the Lunghi port in Freetown. He also stored goods that Josu brought from Europe, such as containers for the mission hospitals. I explained the situation to Ramon. He told me that he would take them into his house, and that in return they could help him in the warehouse. But they could not stay long. I had heard about Serabu's chief and knew that he was a smuggler of diamonds, exchanging them for arms from Libya and selling them to Liberian mercenaries. A week later Josu arrived in his freighter, and I explained the situation to him. He told me that they could go to Conakry or Senegal, but that as single women they would suffer a lot and end up being subjugated by people even more perverse than Serabu's chief.

-Since then I have been thinking about how I can bring them. I recall them day and night for the last month. I do not know if they will still be safe. My plan is to call Josu to get them on his ship, and go in a smaller boat to meet them in the ocean and bring them here. I already have my papers in order, I need to help them, Jonay. That is why I am building this house, and, what I have not told you, building a boat on the beach.

Jonay had imagined all the pictures, even the sounds and smells, hearing Fernando and looking at the magical horizon.

-Now I understand your eagerness with the wharf, your silence, your commitment to the house. You should have told us about it.

-I do not want to compromise anyone with this story, Jonay. We can be accused of human trafficking. Besides, Serabu's chief may discover the plan and hurt Ramon and Josu.

Jonay gave Fernando a hug. He told him he could count on them. That he needed to go to San Sebastian to get some luggage and he would come back with him. Fernando asked him to promise not to say anything to his parents, Jonay nodded as he walked away towards Vallehermoso. He had crossed his fingers behind his back.

Jonay told Umbela and John the story of Fernando. Two days later, Jonay returned to Arguamul. But he did not take the bus to Vallehermoso. The three of them had gone with Tomas in John's old sailboat, which had been beached several months ago and repaired. They docked at Fernando's jetty on Arguamul beach. Fernando was seeing patients in Valle Hermoso. When he returned to his house, still half in ruins, with an old Renault-5 he had bought, he noticed a special smell. Umbela had prepared a Canarian stew with gofio, as Fernando liked it: "so thick that the spoon is left standing". She was preparing many balls of gofio and honey, like the ones she and her father used to make when they went on long walks through the mountains of La Gomera and the Garajonay Park, or when he came to see her at the institute from Hermigüa. They embraced in silence and sat at the table:

-What a surprise and what a joy to see you.

-We have missed you.

John said, on behalf of the four of them.

-And I missed you. I was thinking of coming to see you soon. I have a lot of work to do here.

-You do not need to come to see us anymore; we are going to spend several weeks together.

-Are you staying here for a while?

-No. Jonay has told us what is going on. This is the last time that as a friend you hide something important from me.

He said it with a smile and with his arm around Fernando's shoulders. Those two men were like from another world... a world *of courage and tenderness*.

Fernando looked reproachfully at Jonay, but at the same time, there was a deep gratitude in his gaze. He looked at the photograph of Kadiatu, now on a kitchen shelf. Everyone looked at it.

-But I must see what I can do.

-That is already prepared. Jonay wrote down Josu's phone number. We have called him. In three days, he arrives in Freetown. He has already informed Ramon. Kadiatu and Lisy are well but in great danger. We know Josu's route. We will meet him in two days a hundred miles south of Fuerteventura. We will go in our sailboat. The boat you have built would not even reach Tenerife. We have everything ready on board the *Hope*. She too has been waiting years for a real adventure and for a reason of the heart.

Umbela also had something to say:

-I have spoken to the Gara association, in defense of women's rights. They will help us, once we land, to ask for refugee status for Kadiatu and Lisy.

Fernando looked at them elatedly.

-You risk a lot, my friends.

-True friendship waits for moments in which to give everything, said John.

Without a word, John pulled out his harmonica and began the chords of "The Times They Are A-changing". Fernando joined in with his guitar. Everyone fused in a song that heralded new times.

XIV. Buddhism and physics. Himalayas, 1979

AIMSA HAD ALREADY BEEN in the *ashram* for three years. His master Sri came and left, following his eternal pilgrimage through India and sometimes bringing people with a very special light to the world.... So he said. Aimsa was learning the spirituality of Hinduism and Buddhism, mixed in the ashram in deep meditation, transcending the world of reality, which they called illusory. She became known and appreciated by all for her generosity and, reflecting her name, her deep serenity. She had become a very beautiful woman, with a healthy and strong yet delicate body, long hair that fell to her waist and swayed in the wind. She had a deep and serene gaze framed by the *kena* she used to protect her eyes and crowned by her third eye, *bindi*, attracting the magic of the universe. A beautiful and fragile line between her lips always offered the light of her clean smile as she greeted with respect those who crossed her path.

The *ashram* had a school for a special group of young people, and she was learning from teachers and gurus in different areas of spiritual knowledge as well as science, history, mathematics, eastern and western literature, biology and astronomy. When she was not studying or meditating, she helped in the ashram with the tasks in the garden, the clay workshop, the loom, the kitchen and the cleaning. Aimsa, after a life on the fringes, in the garbage dumps of Calcutta and Bombay, felt that, with her mother's light, she was walking towards her destiny of helping to alleviate suffering in the world. She felt it deeply, though she did not talk about it because she was embarrassed at the thought of appearing arrogant or different from others.

Aimsa had learned to read in Sanskrit the Vedas and the teachings of the Brahmins. She was also attracted to the *Upanishad*, as a kind of religion of the people of the artisans and traders of North India, with more flexible, egalitarian and participatory ways of life and governance. She was still well aware of her untouchable caste origin, totally diluted in a world of equals in the *ashram* although still the Brahmin priests exhaled superiority, something she detested. That is why she liked Siddhartha's rebellious origin and how he disassociated religion from being accepted as faith, nor from submission and fearful obedience to the authorities, nor to the scriptures or even the existence

of a God. Aimsa saw the influence of Sidharta's untrammelled spirituality in the *Gita* and the other holy books of Hinduism. She enjoyed seeing how Sidharta, two and a half thousand years ago, spoke of the true *Brahmin* - priest - by his ethics and not by the caste system and heredity.

She was advancing in knowledge - *Dharma* - towards his spiritual liberation and nirvana (enlightenment). Aimsa declaimed in deep union with the universe mantras and so increased her strength and drove away fears. She learned the Four Noble Truths to overcome desire and suffering by the Noble Path through wisdom in vision and thought, ethical conduct (in speech, action and life) and diligence, in awareness of the present, and meditation. One day she read in one of the sacred texts in the *ashram* library, the Buddha's dialogue with the Brahmin Subha about death and sorrow, the Vedic concept of *ahimsa*. It inspired her to teach nonviolence above all things: *ahimsa*. Her own name! Buddha opposed the value of pain and sacrifice. To come out of pain, out of dumps, and out of caste... To ally with nature and with the stars... To spread that light on the sufferings and the blindness of those who cause them and those who accept them.

Through it all, Aimsa found peace in the balance of meditation - *dhyana* - and ethics. She did not think much of the reincarnation of her soul and found it hard to believe how Buddhist monks were trying to find children who were heirs to the souls of great masters. Aimsa had a deep-rooted concept, in her ethics that all beings were equal and she found it hard to think, to accept that the masters were more enlightened than even her fellow white tigers in Calcutta...

She knew well that through ethics and meditation she had a mission to alleviate suffering... and knew that her mother would guide her.

In her studies, she progressed in sciences and humanities. He felt captivated by history, Greek mythology and the literature of the English classics that she found in the ashram library, nourished by volumes left by travellers. Aimsa delved into mathematics, biology and chemistry. She felt especially mesmerised in physics.

In the library she found a 1927 book in which a certain Bohr demonstrated how the innermost matter is both matter that responds to Newtonian physics and energy, escaping the latter. That concept

became even more complex when she continued reading Heisenberg, who in 1929 proved that even in their relative existence, the characteristics of matter such as position or velocity were undefined and only by observing them were they defined, so to say, existed. Aimsa thought: do we create reality, this often-absurd dream in which we live, or think we live, are we really dreaming a material world from our real world of energy? And if so, do the many possibilities of dreams create infinite parallel universes? What if we are trapped in one, victims of dreams of fear, power, stifled loves, imposed pains? How can we modify it, transform it or dilute it in the parallel universes of peace and love? What if we can create reality, can we, observing, acting, create goodness?

She then read Einstein. She was as fascinated as she was intrigued. She made diagrams and drawings of it all, which she hung in her humble room. She explained it to Sri so clearly that Sri decided to summon the gurus of several *ashram* to listen to young Aimsa explain the connections between Buddhist thought and the knowledge and questions of physics.

In the courtyard of the *ashram*, facing the Ganges and with the immense Himalayas on the horizon, the young Aimsa was about to explain to some forty Buddhist monks, Hindu gurus and travellers seeking wisdom, the evanescence of matter in its most minute state and the relativity of time and space when energy and speed reach certain limits. And how these physical realities connected with Buddhist concepts of universal energy and illusory reality.

A foreigner was listening to her attentively. He had red hair and a bushy beard, was tall and strong, barefoot, and wore a white collarless shirt and linen pants. His name was Rob. He came from a far-away place called Berkeley.

-From the Chinese scholars, through Aristotle and up to Galileo, the knowledge of mechanical physics, which studies movement, weight, velocity and forces, developed. They were united in Newton's theories.

At that moment Aimsa dropped an apple:

-How the apple fell is explained by the mass of the earth, its force of gravity and the weight of the apple.

-The other world of physics knowledge has studied magnetic and electrical effects. They were already thought since classical Greece and by other European scientists such as Faraday, until another Englishman, Maxwell, unified them in the theory of electromagnetism.

She pulled out a magnet she got from a store in town and showed how it attracted some nails.

-Although Newton's laws of physics and Maxwell's electromagnetics are fulfilled in any position, to measure any effect, the observer is the reference. For example if one of you gets up and walks towards the river, he is moving away from me. But if he is the reference, I am moving away from him. Everyone, all realities have a reference system. If someone were watching us now from the moon, they would see us rotating with the Earth, something we cannot measure because we are part of that reference system, the Earth in motion. Similarly, in our existence in this life, we cannot fully understand ourselves. For example, we do not understand ourselves with respect to infinity and eternity because we are part of a matter limited by time and space. Transcending our limited reality, we can, with meditation, see ourselves from outside. And thus understand ourselves in an immense, timeless, limitless energy, which from our physical senses we can neither see nor understand.

Most of the monks listened, uncomprehending but astonished by the confidence with which that beautiful young untouchable seemed to touch the heaven of knowledge. Rob could not even blink.

-And among all the systems, the one of us now here rotating with the Earth, the one in which we move inside trains, ships, or the one of birds carried by air currents or fish in water currents, there is none that is totally at rest and we can all compare with it. We always compare objects and systems in different motions. Everything is relative to others. Our truth is only valid for us and in the reality we live in, which we also know is ephemeral.

-However, it seems that there is something that moves at the same speed for all observers: light.

At that moment, the sun behind her, she made a shadow on the ground with her hands in a yoga position. By changing them, she could see how the shadows immediately changed on the ground.

-Scientists around the world have long been trying to find out how light moves and how it travels from one place to another. They tried to measure whether there was a difference when light travelled in the same direction as the Earth's rotation or the other way around. It was measured in a thousand ways and at a thousand distances: no difference could ever be seen: light always travelled at the same speed. It did not matter the reference of the observer.

-And then, a young German named Albert Einstein, bad student at school, opposed to the fascist and Nazi policies of the time, and employed in a patent office, thought during his spare time of the following: that light always moves at constant speed, which is equal to about a hundred times the distance from here to Bombay, in a single second.

There was a murmur among the monks. Some, especially the older ones, began to doubt whether this untouchable young woman was insane.

-If light did not always travel the same speed, when we were in a car or train and looked at ourselves in the mirror, we would see ourselves deformed. And at high speed, we would even not see ourselves, for the beam of light would bounce back to a space further back, where we were when our image was reflected and from where the speed had displaced us.

At that moment, several of the older gurus stood up and with defiant looks at Master Sri, began to leave. Other young men followed them. But Aimsa continued to speak to those who remained.

-The same has been proven by studying the motion of stars millions of light years away.

At that moment, the bearded redhead, asked a question:

-What if a ship passes by us at enormous speed with a light inside it from top to bottom? Wouldn't we see it tilted from our position?

This was already a dialogue of madmen, thought other gurus and monks. They left little by little. There remained only Sri, three young monks from the *ashram*, and that red-haired traveler.

-Einstein stated that since the speed of light is constant, what is not constant is time. In the ship moving relative to you, time slows down to keep the speed of light constant. In motion time is slower. And as we

are all in motion with respect to others, since there is no absolute immobility, our time is less than that of the one who observes us, and therefore the speed and the space travelled is less for us when we observe it.

The three remaining monks left, making gestures of displeasure.

-Einstein proposed that velocity transforms time and distance, and that at the speed of light, these cancel out and that at that speed matter transforms into energy. If we join this concept to quantum physics in which the smallest matter is evanescent and unpredictable, existing in duality with energy, what do we have? : A real world that is like evanescent, ephemeral bubbles. In a sea of energy that we are part of but cannot be aware of.

-And that is precisely Buddha's message. *We are all the same energy.* By diluting ourselves in it, we escape from the entrapment by matter, distance and time. We reach Nirvana.

Rob was both captivated and excited. He was already a professor of philosophical and political thought at Berkeley, and he knew that the strength of this beautiful, frail-looking Indian woman was capable of changing the world.

Sri approached Aimsa, gave her a salute of respect and said:

-They will understand, Aimsa. You have wisdom in your soul. The world is waiting for you.

The traveller approached.

-Congratulations on your presentation. My name is Rob Leton. I am a professor of philosophy and politics in the United States. I will be spending a month at the *ashram* seeking peace and harmony. Your vision of the physical and spiritual world, have shaken my mind and spirit.

-My name is Aimsa. We all tremble and vibrate when we observe with empathy. When we feel with the other.

XV. The fury of the sea triggers freedom. North Atlantic, August, 1978.

FERNANDO COULD NOT sleep. He spent the night looking at the stars, the brightness of the sea and staring at the east, as if he wanted to see and hear Kadiatu and Lisy. He imagined them escaping from dangers, facing traditions. He thought of the courage of people who risk their lives for what they truly believe in. He said to himself. "When you risk your life for an idea, a value, something you feel deeply, you live in harmony with courage and dignity. It reverberates the force of nature that lifts the winds, moves the tides and awakens the volcanoes. It is like when the strings of the guitar vibrate without touching them to the tune of a sound in the same vibration. He thought to tune his life with courage and with its purest expression, tenderness.

As he thought about it, he also felt shaky. After all, he had only seen Kadiatu for a few days, talked to her for a day, travelled to Freetown for another day, and had two other brief encounters before leaving. Yes, he felt magic in her eyes and her beauty. Her courage inspired confidence, hope. But a small breach in his image, of his fate, showed itself subtly defiant, perhaps to a life so far very free. It is true that as a rebel against the regime in Cuba, as an internationalist in a country as poor and dangerous as Sierra Leone, as a refugee in Spain, illegal for a time, he had not always had all the securities with him. But he knew what he was doing. Even intuitively, he could assess the risks and aim at the target. Now he only knew that he would find himself, if the adventure did not get complicated, in the middle of the ocean, with a woman whose gaze he was bewitched by, but about whom he knew little else. And with her sister. He was not afraid to face the patrols of the civil guard at sea, the papers for her refugee status, a shipwreck or even the wrath of the man from whom she was fleeing. All this was concrete and measurable. But what would their day-to-day relationship with her be like, what awaited them in Arguamul, how would she adapt to another culture, another language, another way of life, wouldn't she miss her family, her customs, her landscapes, in spite of everything?

He dispelled his doubts when he thought about how important it was, in life, to follow one's heart, even at the risk of being wrong, yes. Even at the risk of being wrong, yes, what is it to be wrong with one's

heart? It is not “losing”, is it “winning”? Because one loved, risked for it, and gave one's best: that is winning. Winning in alliance with the most beautiful energy in the universe. At that very moment, he began to see a small source of light on the horizon. The sun was coming from the destination that awaited them. The light made the silhouette of Teide clearer. The sea was calm, the sky vibrant, the morning cool, the shearwaters -Canary Island gulls- calling the new day and he saw some shadows undulating in the sea that he thought were grey dolphins. He noticed that Tomas was beginning to put his backpack in order. At that moment, he was overcome with a deep feeling of honor and gratitude for the friendship of those special beings that now inhabited his house, still in ruins.

Tomas, good old Tomas. He always got up at dawn. He never wore a watch. Of few words, Fernando thought it was as difficult for him not to be sincere and noble as it was for those dolphins to live out of the sea.

-Good morning Don!

Although Fernando had asked him many times not to call him Don (Mr), Tomas could not repress it. For him he was the doctor, and the treatment of Don corresponded to someone with that status in La Gomera. There was no envy, no submission. He simply assumed that everyone had a place. Like the birds that were now beginning to chirp.

Tomas listened attentively every morning to the birds, the parrots, turtledoves, linnets, blackbirds, and sparrows.

-Tomas, do you think birds talk to each other?

-More and better than humans.

-And do you understand anything they say?

-Look, Fernando, you know that here in La Gomera we whistle to talk to each other when afar. We can express almost any thought and feeling with whistles. Well, I tell you that birds say many more thoughts and feelings with their whistles. Shall I tell you a secret?

-Tell me, friend.

-When I am very calm, happy with life, they talk to me. They whistle expressions that we use here. There is one we use to say "I'm fine" and on those days when I feel very happy to be alive, I hear it from the birds. Don't tell anyone that, they'll say I'm crazy.

Jonay appeared at that moment, and soon after Umbela appeared with some gofio balls and honey, and a tea, perhaps the last hot thing they would drink for a week. Umbela said nothing, simply looked Fernando in the eye, and gave him a hug.

John came out with his backpack and a deep smile on his face. Fernando thought that John was returning to what had shipwrecked him twenty years ago in El Cabrito. John was a strong and healthy man, quiet but smiling, happy but introverted, dreamy but serene, idealistic but homely. But, although he was a very happy man at Umbela's side, although he wandered through the island ravines, guided Englishmen along the trails, modelled with his hands and natural wax wrinkled branches of junipers, played his harmonica, cultivated vegetables and corn on the terraces of El Cabrito... he often longed for the adventure of sailing the world as he planned to do when he rebuilt his wooden sailboat when he was only 20 years old. The first years he devoted himself to take care of Jonay while Umbela studied, to take care of the cabins in El Cabrito, to walk, to read, to think. He did not need to sail. His old sailboat remained stranded. Besides, his inseparable traveling companion, his little dog Satia, had died. He knew it was absurd, but setting sail without her would have been like betraying her. He was now 52 years old and still fit. His red hair and beard surrounded him like a primitive fire. He dressed very simply and often went barefoot through the streets of San Sebastian. He had been nicknamed "the castaway". He did not mind. He thought that the one who was really shipwrecked was the one who never set sail, the one who never risked. Once Jonay went to the university he thought of proposing to Umbela to sail around the world.

Before he knew about Fernando's plans, he had been preparing the boat. He wanted to take Jonay to Tenerife sailing together. No Norwegian millionaire ferries. His hands, his sweat, and his courage.

He worked for two months on getting it back in shape for sailing. He changed her name. She would now be called *Satia*, after her shipwreck companion. *Satia* meant the search for truth. And that was what this mission was all about. The truth of courageous love, whatever its risk.

He had found oak boards to repair some parts rotted by the saltpetre and the sun. From the hardware store in San Sebastian he could get

good steel nails and a saw, sandpaper and brushes for the wood. He prepared the keel for which he looked for a wood that was hard and solid, but more flexible than oak. He found a piece of canary pine from La Palma, without any knots. They brought it in Tomas' fishing boat from a freighter that anchored off the island, to the ravine of El Cabrito where John prepared his boat with care, one might say devotion. The keel was almost eight meters long and half a meter wide. He knew how important stability was. It was like the wings of the shearwaters when they glide. It had to withstand the violent blows of the waves, currents, sudden manoeuvres. When he had worked on her shape and treated her against the humidity, he knew that his boat would sail again.

He corrected the bow and stern casting angles. He then checked the stability of the ship's ribs, and had to change two of them, one on port and one on starboard. It took him a day's work on each, shaping the wet wood, drying it in the sun and fitting it tightly but gently. The mast, a stout oak log also eight meters long, and the boom -which he called Cupid and so wrote with carved letters into its length-, which dislocated his shoulder and took him to Umbela, were strong. He bought steel cable for the forestay, counter forestay and shrouds. He bought shackles, new lines, halyards and rigging. The tourists he guided through the valleys of La Gomera paid for those parts. He had more money for new sails, so he used the old ones that had been stored for some time, making several patches. He checked that the shortwave radio was working and Tomas repaired the engine he used to set sail and reach port. He preferred to treat all the wood with vegetable fat. He did not want chemicals. He felt they dirtied the purity of the sea. And he did it as if caressing every centimetre.

Satia was beautiful. Almost ten meters in length and a firm mast waiting to be dressed by her sails and to fly with the wind. She was like a princess who had been asleep for twenty years waiting for a feat worthy of her strength and beauty.

-Come on, fellows, this is going to be a difficult journey. I have to give instructions to each of you.

-Josu has given me the exact coordinates of where he will be in three days, at dawn, off Tarfaya, in southern Morocco.

-Tomas, you are in charge of the sails, lowering, hoisting, looking after, watching the battens, biting the lines, checking the goose leg of

the boom, it's a bit stiff, and you take over the helm for me during night shifts. Jonay will help you and every half hour go up to the mast spreaders in case you see whales. We must avoid them because they can break our keel in two. Umbela is in charge of food and water logistics. The forward cabin is prepared for Kadiatu and Lisy, even with a false bottom in case they need to hide if we are searched by the Civil Guard at sea. Fernando, you will be with me at the helm, helping me with the charts and the radio.

A feeling of serene gravity, as if knowing they were about to embark on an epic adventure that life had been holding in store for them, hung in the air. They spoke little. They made their way down the ravine. John had left the sails and rigging safely stowed in the cabin. Fernando's jetty was holding up well. His project to build his boat had barely begun, and barely without knowing anything. Fernando gave him an inquisitively tender look and John promised to help him when they returned. He said it so matter-of-factly that it inspired in Fernando much assurance of a safe return.

In less than half an hour, they were ready. Tomas made the sign of the cross, Umbela closed her eyes in fleeting meditation, Fernando stared fixedly to the east and Jonay looked attentively at his father's orders. As they cast off the lines and hoisted the mainsail and jib, John shouted:

-Satiaaaaaaaaa!

The wind was gently blowing from southwest. This meant that they could sail downwind or upwind. Trade winds could blow sharply in the channel between Gomera and Tenerife. Despite mixing in a northerly wind from the Azores, they preferred to go upwind, slower and harder, heeled over, but safer. Thus they headed towards the north of Tenerife and then towards the east.

The African Sirocco wind threatened in the afternoon, which would slow them down and give them heat and fine sand in the wind that they would need to remove from the sails with buckets of water. The strength of the tide was also intense to the east, adding two knots to their already 12 knots of speed.

They sailed for six hours, until noon. Then the wind began to die down and they took the opportunity to rest, eat some gofio balls and honey, and drink water. They had it rationed, two liters per person per

day, about a hundred litres in total. The wind later shifted to the southeast at some point very strongly, so John told Tomas to put reefs on the mainsail and reduce the sail. Jonay sighted a blue whale and John changed course so as not to risk a collision. At night, *Satia* sailed at eight knots. The night was starry and clear.

No one said a word. Everyone was enjoying the serenity of the night. John played a soft melody on his harmonica. "*Lord, Is It Mine?*" They took turns sleeping between Tomas and John, and between Fernando and Jonay, whom he taught to be attentive and operate the radio.

The next day, about two hundred kilometers north of Gran Canaria, a rough sea came in, causing waves of up to three meters. The wind tousled the crests into clouds of foam. John decided to go downwind and upwind, in a dangerous downwind leg, but less so than cutting them upwind or downwind, with the danger of capsizing or breaking the mast. For three hours the sailing was hard, with continuous back and forth and adjusting the poker with the spinnaker pole and the mainsail open to full sail. Although it was hard, they made rapid progress southward and John decided that they would enter the channel between Gran Canaria and Fuerteventura. That day they finished the cruise south of Fuerteventura and watched the sunset behind the Teide from astern. From La Gomera the sunrise illuminated it and gave it its magical relief.

On the second morning, they were already on the longitude of Lanzarote, about a hundred miles southeast of the point agreed with Josu, between Tafaya and Lanzarote. Mid-morning of the third day John observed to the north what looked like a squall line, and alerted them all to prepare for a gale. All sails were lowered and portholes and hatches were closed. An hour later the wind shifted to the north and *Satia* made headway. The northeast began to blow very hard, reaching seventy knots, force ten, with gusts above force twelve. They held on, inside the cockpit except for John firmly clinging to the helm in the cockpit half tossed by three and four meter waves.

By the time the sun set, the storm had subsided and the wind had shifted them seventy miles to the south. They had twelve hours to make one hundred and fifty-nine miles. They went upwind to the north

against the now milder trade winds. Thus, they endured the third night, with the excitement of getting to see Josu's freighter at dawn.

And so it was. When the dawn of the third day of navigation began to outline the African coast in the distance, they saw Josu's freighter coming from the southeast. Fernando recognized it from afar and communicated by radio. Josu told him, in code, as they were probably being listened to by marine patrols and that everything was all right. Fernando replied that they needed water.

As they approached, they saw several people on deck, and Fernando recognized Kadiatu and Lisy waving to him from the freighter named *Sozinho* (solitary). It was the beginning of a new life for them, and for him.

They approached the sailboat by lowering the sails and carefully manoeuvring the engine. The waves were two meters high. In spite of John's and Josu's care, it was very difficult to moor the two boats. The freighter captained by Josu was almost ten times larger in all its dimensions. Despite carefully approaching from leeward, a wave threw *Satia* against the steel hull of the freighter and broke some of the timbers of the gunwale and the railing on the deck. Jonay, who was holding the mooring lines against *Sozinho*'s deck, was thrown into the sea between the two vessels. In a split second he realized that he could be pinned and crushed between the two, or sucked in by the powerful propellers of the freighter. Accustomed since childhood to swimming in the rough Atlantic Ocean, and to his New Year's celebrations swimming with his father from El Cabrito to San Sebastian, he quickly submerged about five meters below *Satia* and dived to that depth away from both keels. On deck everyone feared the worst, seeing that he did not surface. It took about 30 seconds of anguish, until he came out to *Satia*'s starboard side. Umbela, with a wet look in her eyes, closed them, silently thanking God, whoever it was. John moved away and they went to Jonay, who went up to the deck pale with fright and cold.

John and Josu decided to change their approach maneuver. Josu would go down in a lifeboat with Kadiatu and Lisy and they would paddle about a hundred meters downwind until they reached *Satia*. They carefully lowered the raft. Josu, a sailor, Kadiatu and Lisy. As they approached, Fernando, excited to his core, jumped into the sea and swam to them. He climbed onto the raft with Josu's help. He gave him

a wordless hug out of emotion. He looked at Kadiatu, who was also crying with emotion, and they embraced. It was the first time Kadiatu hugged someone, a gesture not known in her culture. She then embraced Josu. She was really embracing freedom, love and dignity all at once. Even if she left his origins behind. Lisy looked at them with fear. Neither of them knew how to swim nor had they ever been on a boat. The waves grew higher and the raft danced beneath them. Fernando took Lisy in his arms and told her in Creole that everything was going to be all right.

-Choose, Lisy: do you want to be my older daughter or my younger sister?

They arrived in Satia and got on board. They embraced Umbela, Jonay, Tomas... Fernando said goodbye to Josu, who was already leaving for his ship *Soizinho*.

Fernando shouted:

-My friend, I will never forget your bravery.

Josu replied:

-John, can *Satia* get to Madeira?

John said forcefully:

-If it's for a good cause, she sails fearlessly anywhere!

Josu replied:

-When Kadiatu and Lisy get their papers, you are invited to our house. We have a freedom to celebrate!

-Agur, Gero arte. jangoiko naivadu!⁶

⁶ In Basque: Good bye, see you some time, if God allows.

XVI. Aimsa spreads its wings. Berkeley, California, 1981

AFTER HER BELITTLED presentation at the *ashram* on the links between relativity, quantum physics and Buddhism, Aimsa spent the next month sharing many conversations with that red-haired American named Rob.

Rob told her about his origins, from a rural town in the state of Idaho, and how he ended up at a university in the western United States called Berkeley. He was 42 years old and taught philosophy and its relations with politics. Rob had partaken in the "*free speech*" rebellion movements of the 1960s. He had marched with Martin Luther King in Washington and had demonstrated and mobilized against the war in Vietnam. He was married, had two children and lived in a log house in the Berkeley Hills. He found peace and meaning in Buddhist harmonious thinking, and sought harmony in the *ashram*, including amity from certain frustrations in his personal and family relationships. He was a good country singer, played the banjo and a great climber. He loved nature and detested the alienated consumption that clouded most minds in his country.

Aimsa's story of survival, her exceptional intelligence, her beauty and her serenity fascinated Rob.

Through Rob's stories, Aimsa discovered another world as free as it was selfish in its individualism, as creative in science, as it was destructive of nature, as intrigued to discover the world as it was arrogant in its colonization. She thought of Gandhi's struggle and what his mother Kalindi and his teacher Sri had told her of their fight against caste and the struggle for Indian independence from British colonial power. The United States was the new colonialist empire in the world, although India remained relatively free from its grip. Despite the tremendous contradictions of the Western world, it appealed to her strongly, for her greatest need was to rid herself of the prejudices in India. Despite the spirit of equality and freedom in the *ashram*, she felt her wings tied to fly in her thinking and her struggle for a fairer world. He feared that they would eventually become numb and paralyzed.

Rob had been finding peace in Buddhist meditation, mantra chanting and long walks in the foothills of the Himalayas. At some point, despite an age difference of twenty years, he felt an almost

irrepressible attraction to the beauty and purity of Aimsa. But that same feeling made him remember with deep nostalgia and tenderness his wife, Kathy, and his longing to return to his family came as his departure date approached. However, Rob felt that Aimsa's strength should be heritage of the world. Her voice should be heard in many places. He felt she was destined to influence the footsteps of Humanity, as few people he had ever heard in his life.

On the last night, with his backpack ready to leave the next day, he went to knock on Aimsa's door to say goodbye:

-Good evening, Aimsa.

-Good night, Rob.

Rob was surprised at how well Aimsa spoke English despite her harsh origins.

-I was bringing you a farewell gift.

Rob held out his hand and handed her a lotus flower.

-Thank you, my friend. I will miss you.

-And I love you, Aimsa. Very much.

-Go into your world and with peace and courage, fight for freedom and justice.

-Aimsa, I wanted to tell you something.

-Tell me, my friend.

-I confess that in spite of our age and cultural differences, I felt occasionally a strong attraction for you. As a person, and also as a woman.

Aimsa blushed. She was not used to such comments. In her life in the dumps and the streets, sex was enforced marriage, commerce or violence. She had always shunned it. And in the *ashram*, most were monks with a vow of chastity.

-I tell you this in the confidence of our friendship. But you must not feel any pressure. These have been moments of attraction that have made me think of my deep bond with my wife Kathy, and I return to her with great excitement to continue our union and our family.

-I'm glad, Rob. It's the best thing for everyone.

-But I also want to tell you something else.

-Tell me.

-Aimsa, I think you should leave the Ashram, you already have a deep connection with peace and the noble path to nirvana. Your strength of knowledge and your sensitivity to suffering cry out for you to mingle with the world, with knowledge, with politics, with thinking towards a better world.

-But my world is here, Rob. I will finish my studies and maybe I can go as a teacher in some small town.

-That would be wonderful, and you would open the eyes and hearts of the children you teach. But your voice must be heard by many more. I wanted to propose something to you.

-There are scholarships to study in my country. They are given to outstanding students from other countries. I assure you that where I work, you would find many exciting discussions and establish contacts with people from all over the world who are working for a better world. Ideas to alleviate the immense suffering in India but also around the world. What do you think?

-But I do not have any money, Rob.

-It does not matter. The scholarship helps you, and my family and I would welcome you home. Think about it.

-Thank you, Rob. I have thought about it. I do want to discover the world.

Two weeks later, Aimsa received a letter from Rob. It explained many more details about the education system in the United States and where he worked. Enclosed were documents to fill out to apply for a scholarship. Sri helped her fill in the data. He had written tests in the Indian system and her grades were great. They asked her to send an essay on the end of the Cold War. She informed herself as much as she could and sent her ideas written in a perfect essay with the strength and passion, with which she used to think, speak and act. Within two months, she had been awarded the scholarship. It was May 1980 and the course was starting in August. She had chosen undergraduate studies in science but it also included philosophy, politics and international law. Her thirst for knowledge and her desire to pursue her dream were unquenchable. Aimsa felt that her mother, Kalindi, was still shining down on her from a star. She wrote to Rob with the good news and received a reply inviting her to go first, staying with Rob and Kathy,

to get to know the culture, the city, the university and the new world that awaited her.

She arrived in mid-July 1981. She had a humble cloth bag with several books - among them Gandhi's diary from his prison - several saris, the book of drawings of the gods that she and her mother read so often, a box with stones and magic flowers collected by Sri for luck, sandalwood cream for her *bindi* and *kheena* for her eyes. In all, barely three kilos of weight with which she faced a new world of unknown places and times. But she carried excess baggage in hope and strength. She had never in her life ridden in a car and she took an *Indian Airlines* plane at the Calcutta airport. Eager to understand everything, she had read what she could find in other ashrams about the flight of birds and airplanes. She had doubts about how so much weight would be lifted, how they would find direction, what would happen if there were storms. But felt no fear. Up above, with the clouds, she would be closer than he had ever been physically to her mother.

Rob picked her up at the airport. "Imagine" was playing on the radio and Aimsa thought it should be like that, without religions, without countries, without property: how many people would be willing to burn their passports, give up their property, face life without the "guarantee" of a religion? When she told Rob about it, he told her that a few months ago the author of that song had been murdered. He told her that they were in the era of Reagan and Thatcher, of the Washington consensus, the farthest from collective solidarity. The most radical reaffirmation of capitalism and the existence of the State to protect private property. Inequalities were considered good and related to people's effort and worth, and necessary for the "progress" and "development" of societies.

They drove along the edge of San Francisco. She marveled at the city's skyscrapers, the immense Oakland Bridge, the views of the Golden Gate Bridge, the quiet streets, the manicured gardens, the painted houses and even the tidy trees. They passed Berkeley University and Aimsa was impressed by the slender figure of the Campanile and by the rivers of students entering and leaving the campus, sitting on the surrounding lawns and walking through its streets. She could imagine thousands of conversations sharpening knowledge or ideas. At that precise moment it was 12:10 and the clock

in the Campanile was playing its daily brass concert. She was hypnotized by an atmosphere of knowledge that she already sensed was almost magical. She thought of her mother and was sure that she would be smiling at her from her reincarnation.

Arriving at Rob's house on a steep road in Berkeley Hills, she greeted his wife. Kathy was a somewhat obese woman, with a very tender smile, but in whose gaze Aimsa noticed a vital weariness. She greeted her sons, Rob and James, twelve and fourteen, somewhat distant but correct. Kathy showed Aimsa her room on the first floor overlooking a garden with an apple tree and several maple trees. It was lovely. She would even have her own bathroom. Her life had always been very austere. She had never slept on a bed, but on mats on the floor. She had never known what a shower or a faucet was, for she had always washed herself with basins of water that she collected. And she had never used a bowl like the one in that bathroom for she had always used, and often cleaned, latrines outside the houses. She was perplexed and with a certain feeling of sadness to know that to drag the dirty water, she pulled a rope that wasted drinking water, clean and crystalline. So clean her white tiger friends would never see to drink. She asked if she could sleep on a mat on the floor and if they had a basin to wash. Kathy looked at her quizzically and somewhat giggly, embarrassing Rob.

Over the next few days, Rob showed her how to ride a bike. He told her it was important to be able to move freely around the university and the city. Although she had to struggle on the way back up those steep slopes. After falling a few times and exchanging her sari for pants (the first time she had ever tried them in her life), she kept learning and gradually daring to ride down the steep slopes and struggling up the climbs.

In her first days, she observed every corner with amazement, in silence, integrating sensations, and meditating at sunrise and sunset from her room to fit the immense contrast between worlds. Everything was different, the sounds, the smell, the people, the clothes, the houses, the trees, the way of greeting, looking and speaking.

She was fascinated discovering a new world and wondered how many different worlds existed on Earth. She strolled the streets and promenades of the university campus, sat in the meadows, learned to

walk carefully along the avenues of Shattuck and its stores, the public library, the train that crossed the bay below the sea, the tree-lined promenades and the people walking with so much space. How many families in India would have given all they had for a little piece of those clean sidewalks to sleep on!

She walked up and down Bancroft Avenue discovering nooks and crannies of the university at every turn. Aimsa strolled the famous Telegraph Street and the public park where she began to feel a slight similarity to Calcutta as she saw those homeless people sleeping in the park or carrying their belongings during the day and begging in the streets. She was amazed to see them so healthy and so strong, and did not understand how they were marginalized by that world of plenty. Aimsa marvelled as she entered the stores and saw hundreds of types of foods, cans, bottles and bags from different parts of the world. The Berkeley Bowl department store amazed her with its thousands and thousands of different products to eat. She wondered how difficult and distressing it could be to choose each day from so many different things.

Rob advanced her a hundred dollars a month, until she received her scholarship, and she bought clothes more adapted to the bike, the cold and the culture, at *Goodwill* second hand stores. She could not understand how some people could throw away such new clothes. When she learned that they gave the proceeds to people in need, she asked if she could help in that activity and began volunteering.

She would collect used clothes and prepare them by washing, ironing, fitting and sometimes charging for them at the cash register. She would then take the profits to places where they gave meals to needy people or housed homeless persons. She discovered that among the abundance there was also poverty. Perhaps even sadder than most poor people India who only sees opulence from afar. She could barely imagine it, like her white tigers, through furtive viewing of Bollywood movies.

Rob gave her a notebook that explained many college opportunities for studies of all kinds, music, sports and other activities. She signed up for flute lessons and began attending lectures and discussions on a variety of topics. Each day there were so many that she felt anguish at not being able to take advantage of them all. Aimsa

was passionate about each of them. She began to devour books at the public library and then at the university archives.

She felt astonished at the hundreds and hundreds of meters of shelves in those gigantic temples of knowledge. Of course, it was theoretical and intellectual knowledge. She couldn't find looks of deep serenity. Rob directed her to several Buddhist centers where she could meditate, and she began to frequent them. However, she preferred the quiet of her room and the sunset over the Golden Gate Bridge to connect with the beauty and vastness of the world. Aimsa would look up at the red sunset on the horizon where it came from. But mostly it was at dusk and with the stars, from where she felt caressed by her mother.

A friend of Rob's named Steve came over for dinner one day. Aimsa was fascinated by the assertiveness of that young man from San Francisco, full of new ideas about communication between Humanity. He was born in San Francisco, the son of a relationship between a student from Syria and an American student of German descent. He was given up for adoption to a middle-class family of Armenian origin. During the talk, Steve said that ever since he saw the first Hewlett computer at the age of twelve, he was fascinated and obsessed that every person should have access to that window of information. He said he never felt ashamed or embarrassed to talk to anyone, in any situation, about his ideas and dreams.

Steve attended a summer course where as a teenager he began to design ideas for personal computers. He went to university but formally dropped out because he could not afford to pay for his studies and did not have a scholarship, as Aimsa did. He continued to attend as a listener, without anyone recognizing his efforts, but convinced that it was knowledge, and not degrees, that would open doors in the world. At the age of nineteen, he met Rob during a spiritual retreat at an *ashram* in India. Upon his return, he began designing computer games and soon after joined a friend, also named Steve, to build a home computer in the garage of his Palo Alto home. He had just founded a company called Apple, and shared with Rob and Aimsa ideas about personal computers, immense information in every home, and ways to communicate. As he was eating dinner he turned the spoon over and wrapping his right hand around it, he said:

-Imagine the control of a single finger on something that fills the palm of your hand, and directs a whole world of information and communications on every personal computer.

She went to several activities related to what they called "the international year of the child", and read carefully the recently approved by the United Nations, "Convention on the rights of the child". She thought that none of those rights reached her "white tigers", and she felt unfairly privileged in that place of so much science, so much freedom, so much abundance, so much beauty. She thought she would live her privilege by sharing and fighting for the rights of the less privileged.

One day, Rob encouraged her to go and listen to a doctor who was coming to explain a new type of disease he was observing in San Francisco. His name was Dr. Gottlieb. In front of about a hundred people in the lecture hall of the School of Public Health, that young doctor explained his findings. It was about a dozen patients in whom he had seen that their defense system, the immune system, had collapsed and was allowing bacteria and parasites that usually lived together without harm to invade the bodies of his patients and cause very serious damage. He explained in particular an infection by a type of parasite and fungus mixture, called "*pneunocystis carinii*", in the lungs. One of his patients had died, and the rest were very ill. There was something in common in all those patients: they were all homosexuals, and most of them had used drugs. Although some physicians had initially proposed the name GRID (*gay-related immunodeficiency*), Dr. Gottlieb proposed the name acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) to avoid stigma and wait to know the true epidemiology of the disease. The discussion led to clinical questions about the type of loss of defenses, the nature of infections or the type of treatments he had tried. Aimsa raised her hand and asked a question:

-Dr. Gottlieb: Have you advised the gay community in San Francisco to cease sexual relations until you can find out how this disease is transmitted and prevented?

Dr. Gottlieb was astonished at the question from the young, exotic woman.

-No, we don't want to panic.

Aimsa thought that was a fear response. She was sure that something was being transmitted in that form of relationship and that fear would eventually spread that plague.

XVII. A strange disease in Matabeleland. Southern Rhodesia, 1981

JOSHUA, DINGOLWASI'S OLDER BROTHER, Siphos (now NoLwasi to everyone) great-uncle, was visiting the family. He came when he could make it, to commemorate the life of his father, Thomas, Matabeleland cattleman and preacher for the London Missionary Society. Joshua, like his brothers but unlike his sisters, was able to go to study at the Empandeni mission, founded by the Jesuits who had accompanied Lobengula to Bulawayo. Joshua studied carpentry. He had been one of the first Kalanga men to go to Egoli, South Africa. Through his father's contacts, he was able to continue his studies at the Jan Hofmeyer College in Johannesburg for social workers, the first in apartheid South Africa to accept blacks.

There he met leaders of the anti-apartheid struggle, among whom he was impressed by a young man named Nelson. Since his return in 1949, Joshua had been a very active trade unionist and eventually elected leader of the African National Congress in the, then, Southern Rhodesia. Shortly thereafter, Ian Smith's government arrested Joshua, along with other revolutionaries. Upon his release, he fled to Zambia, from where he led the ZAPU (Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army) movement and became known as "Father Zimbabwe", a myth for many Ndebele youth. Meanwhile, one of his fellow fighters, Robert, led the ZANU (Zimbabwe National Liberation Army) from exile in Mozambique.

NoLwasi's family sensed Joshua's struggle as moral. He was facing the tyranny of Rhodesia's racist regime. However, they could not accept the violence they used. A few years earlier Joshua had organized the shooting down of two Rhodesian planes carrying civilians traveling to Zambia. His sister, Dingolwasi, NoLwasi's grandmother, had heard on the only radio they had in the village that the ZAPU, led by Joshua, massacred the surviving passengers, including women and children. Since then she had not spoken to her brother Joshua nor his son, James, NoLwasi's uncle, also a ZAPU guerrilla fighter. On his last trip, three years ago, he had told the family how from Zambia he was able to ally with the British for the signing of Zimbabwe's independence, and of his trip to England for the signing of the agreements. After the first free

elections in the new country, Zimbabwe, ZAPU gained the power in Matabeleland. However, the Shona majority led by Robert, elected him as prime minister and controlled authority. Joshua and Robert were bitter enemies, both thirsty for power. The struggles between them affected the villages of Matabeleland, ravaged by both armed groups. Joshua came to the village because he was actually fleeing, threatened and persecuted by Robert Mugabe, to Botswana and then into exile in England.

The result of this ambition for power of the leaders who claimed to liberate their people from the yoke of racism, were tragic massacres in Matabeleland. The northern Shona called them *gukurahundi*: rain that cleans the fields. They pursued the groups, which Joshua encouraged, to rebellion. The so-called fifth brigade, made up of North Koreans, patrolled the villages of Matabeleland spreading terror. They had particularly targeted the Sanzukwi area where the enemy leader, Joshua, came from. In the last three years, they had come five times to NoLwasi's village. About forty soldiers would arrive in two military trucks. They would get out of the lorries and surround the village. They would then start shouting in Shona:

-Kalanga dogs, Ndebeles. You are going to die! Tell us, where is the traitor Joshua?

Hardly anyone knew anything about him. Those who did knew didn't talk. The first two times they took prisoner young men from the village who had not joined ZAPU and had not gone to work in Soweto, "Egoli". The villagers never heard from them again. In the last year, the few remaining men of fighting or working age had left. Some were leaving for fear of being abducted or killed by the 5th Brigade. The rest were leaving to seek other ways of life than herding goats or starving cows, or plucking a few sad crops of millet from the dry sandy lands of the Kalahari.

Before leaving, they would marry in haste and try to make their wives pregnant. They would walk at least a week south through the dry savannahs of that eastern edge of the Kalahari. They would then reach the Limpopo River and evade the customs controls of the racist South African police. They crossed the Limpopo in their clumsy swim or clinging to planks. Hippos or crocodiles had attacked many. On the other bank, they had to sneak through the Kruguer National Park, where

lions or packs of hyenas had attacked many others. No one left in the village knew very well what their lives were like in Soweto. Those who failed spoke little, and those who made progress in working and earning money had stories to hide. They returned, usually at Christmas, with money to buy cement and concrete blocks, and brought with them battery-powered radios, sunglasses and strange clothes. They expected to be greeted as heroes and to be able to prove that their wives had given birth to the offspring that would maintain the *kraal*, the land and the ever-diminishing bond with the ancestors.

The year before, two of those boys did not return from Egoli for Christmas. They came back earlier, inside wooden crates in rickety pick-up trucks. They had died of a disease that no one could explain. They had spent everything they had saved to be reburied in the *kraal* and thus enter the world of their ancestors, of the Kalanga spirits. Still, the South African drivers of those cars asked for more money from the family of the deceased, including bribes paid to the government police officers at the Beitbridge border, crossing back the Limpopo River, this time in a wooden box.

The town was plunged into a deep sadness.

Sipho, now NoLwasi for all, was 28 years old. Shee was very sad to see her people sinking in the pain of the dead, of the disappeared, of those who sold their souls to Egoli. The women were left alone to tend the fields, which were becoming drier and drier. The children grew up with no other hope than to go to Egoli. The girls knew that their future would be one of loneliness, work and caring for more children with no future. NoLwasi kept the union with the ancestors, she begged them for rain at the end of the dry season, and she asked them for the reasons for so much suffering. Often with angry pleas and even rage. A lot of anger. That of the one who does not understand. The one that tried in vain to alleviate the deepest suffering of the relatives during the rites of those, so premature, deaths.

Despite the sad reality, all respected NoLwasi's sensitivity, serenity and wisdom. Her combination of *nyanga* knowledge about natural remedies for illnesses, and *sangoma* healing powers through harmony with the spirits, made her key to the wisdom and harmony of many people in the region. Especially in those dark times. She accepted little payment for her dedication other than to live in the hut where her

grandmother Masora lived, full of healing magic, and to share a little *sadza* (maize porridge), vegetables, millet and mango. She hardly ate anything else. She did not eat animals because she cherished them, all of them, with veneration. Especially zebras, the symbol of his clan, the *Dube*.

NoLwasi spent most of her time tending to the sick. She had lived with wise *nyangas* from Matabeleland, but most of her wisdom came from within. Her intuition was powerful. She felt the spirits transmitting strength and knowledge to her, and they spoke to her about maintaining honesty, respect for the earth and nature, generosity to those in need, sincerity among individuals and families, faithfulness in families, gratitude to *Mkulumkulu* and the spirits that cared for the people. Although she had learned from watching her grandmother Masora, and from other *nyangas*, the secrets of healing herbs, she had an intuition more powerful than her visual or rational knowledge. NoLwasi prepared lotions, ointments, brews, enemas, inhalations, and sometimes made incisions, which had a healing effect on all kinds of ailments. She also knew how to talk to patients, to find out their tensions with other people or groups in the community, or the anger of the spirits for breaches of kalanga values. However, she sometimes felt that the spirits were unfair to the living, and she told them so, alone from her rock, in the evenings.

NoLwasi was so resolved on her healing calling and the harmony of her people, that she had no time for interest in men. The young men were just looking for sex and offspring. Almost all migrated to Soweto, Egoli, where they lived in a parallel world known only to them. She was very concerned about that breach. She felt her community as cracking. Older men who showed interest in her were already married and she did not approve of polygamy. It did not bother her. She was well alone and in her world, with her parents, with her siblings, with some friends with whom she walked to the dry riverbed, and with her sacred sunsets on her rock overlooking the world. There she felt, without knowing it, *Mandhla's* voice, his strength and her connection to the wisdom of many generations.

One of her childhood friends, *Tulani*, used to walk with her. Tulani was a tall and slender woman; she had a very cheerful attitude towards life. She tried to cheer up the village on some nights of gathering in

front of the fire with her magical rhythm and the *amahlayi*, anklets with dried seeds that sounded rhythmically with the Kalanga dances. Like almost all the girls in the village, she had married young to an “Egoli ousng man” and had a two-year-old son. It had been more than two Christmases since she had seen her son's father, *Jabulani* (“*Let us cheer*”).

Tulani used to approach the crossroads near *Mphoengs*, where everyone feared she was going to the taverns. At those saloons, hikers, travelers, truckers, workers from the northernmost lands of Rhodesia, soldiers on patrol, guerrillas, traffickers, poachers, and many others stopped by as they were heading to or returning from Egoli. She would return with money, clothes, powdered milk and some chickens. She said she was joining the *Amahimbi* collectors. *Amahimbi* were hairy worms that covered the Mopane trees shortly after the short rainy season. They were highly prized in Egoli. The collectors, who controlled the business, paid one Zimbabwe dollar (then equivalent to twenty US cents) per hard day's work. Squeezing worms and emptying their guts of the green paste of Mopane leaves left their hands with green-tinged wounds. Tulani's hands were clean.

NoLwasi began to notice special traits in Tulani. She began by seeing, she was very observant, that her eyelashes were lengthening. It gave her an even more fragile appearance, an even more delicate beauty. She was embarrassed that she always felt a fondness, a special tenderness for Tulani. NoLwasi sometimes felt like hugging her, but that was taboo in his Kalanga culture. Gradually she noticed that when Tulani returned from their walks to the dry riverbed, she could not bear the weight of her little son on her back. NoLwasi began to walk and climb with him on her back. A few weeks later, she began to notice that she could barely make it up the river on her own. She had to stop many times to catch her breath. NoLwasi noticed other changes: her skin was shinier, she had lost weight and her cheekbones were more pronounced, while her hair grew straighter.

One day, Tulani's mother, a very poor widow, called urgently for NoLwasi. She told her that her daughter was lying on the ground unable to get up. When she arrived at her hut, she saw that Tulani was alone, laying on the ground, dirty from her vomits and diarrhea, smeared her

clothes. The hut was full of flies. It smelled terrible. Tulani could barely open her eyes and was breathing heavily. She held out his hand.

-NoLwasi, *ungane wami* (my friend).

NoLwasi removed the dirty clothes and put them in a bucket of water. With another bucket, she washed her with great care and tenderness. NoLwasi felt a special urge to wash her, to caress her, to relieve her pain and to give her strength. When she had dried her and cleaned the rest of the hut, she brought her own white clothes and dressed her carefully. She explained to Tulani's mother that she had to take her to her hut and take care of her for a few days. She had never done this with any patient or even healthy person ever before. NoLwasi felt, besides tenderness, that the rage of the spirits was concentrated in Tulani, the punishment for Joshua's greed, the desertion of the young men, Tulani's infidelities and others. But why Tulani? She needed to free her from the rage of the spirits and she needed to understand the disease that had been infiltrating her dearest friend's body.

When she settled her on some blankets in her hut, she patiently gave her water with herbs and honey to drink in small sips for more than an hour. Then, more calmly, he began to carefully examine the whole of that emancipated body. She saw that in his mouth he had whitish spots like when babies need minerals from the earth. Then she saw pinkish to blackish spots her back. She remembered how, when embalming one of the boys who had died in Egoli, she saw that he had a similar spot on his neck. Her body was very thin. She carefully felt her chest, back, abdomen, legs, neck, head, shoulders and hips. She was looking for signs of the source of the disease. Then she noticed a very negative energy as she ran her hands over the right side of her abdomen and the front of her neck. Something was consuming Tulani. So NoLwasi cast her magical tabs on the ground asking the spirits for wisdom. She memorized how those elongated stones had fallen. The drawings made by the tabs remained engraved in his mind.

That afternoon, she left Tulani at her mother's care, telling her to give her an brew she had prepared.

She went to her Srine, to her rock above the world. There she read her maleleuca bark drawings. One exactly mirrored the figure of Tulani's tabs. She oriented the drawing to the shade of the tree at sunset. The drawing indicated an area to the southeast at seven points. She

advanced the seven steps and found an herb she had never used and no *nyanga* had ever told her about it. It was very thin, yellowish, with a yellow stem. Among those herbs, there were some reddish stones and the remains of the skin that a mamba snake had shed. She put it all in her cloth rag. Then spent two hours meditating with the setting sun and continued to do so until everything was dark and serene. NoLwasi felt how Mandhla spoke, and how through him other spirits like Masora, and some much older ones, revealed themselves. Amidst the murmuring, she continually noticed the click of grief mingled with that of anger. Then sensed that Mandhla referred to lives in Egoli that attracted the evils of pain and suffering. She needed to understand more and asked the spirits for wisdom to alleviate the pain, knowledge to prevent disease from engulfing the Kalanga people, and forgiveness and peace to return to the path of harmony.

When she returned, Tulani's mother was asleep next to her daughter, also holding the little boy, whom Tulani's husband said be named Nelson. NoLwasi told her she could go home with the child. She prepared potions and balms with the remains of sun-dried *sadza* and lit a mixture with natural waxes so that the hut filled with that medicine, *umuti*, conveyed by the spirits.

In her life, she had felt sorrow for the death of Masora and for the death of some of her neighbors and friends, anger for the violence of the war and fury for the haughty treatment of those returning from Egoli. But she did not remember feeling fear. Her father Themba, who had seen her daughter busy so late, and knew of Tulani's gravity, approached her.

-What is happening, my daughter? How are you? How is Tulani?

-Father. I am afraid. I feel a great dark shadow coming over Matabeleland.

XVIII. The march to Egoli. South Africa, August, 1982

TULANI IMPROVED WITH the brews NoLwasi prepared for her. Her diarrhea stopped. She gained weight and returned to her chores and to caring for her son and the fields, waiting for her husband to come back from Soweto. When he returned for Christmas, NoLwasi noticed that he had a similar reddish spot on her neck.

The following Christmas he did not return. His colleagues in Soweto said he was too busy working. They neither brought any money to help Tulani. A few months later, he arrived in a coffin aboard a South African pick-up truck. He was the third from the village in two years.

A few months later Tulani became ill again with diarrhea and great weakness. She had been in NoLwasi's hut for a week. Her constant diarrhea and vomiting had ceased as she drank the concoctions that NoLwasi prepared in his sacred rock. During that week, NoLwasi observed more than a hundred signs that the body was expressing from that strange illness.

She noted in drawings the features of the sparser and coarser hair, the shinier but thinner and more fragile skin, the longer and more profuse eyelashes, and the wetter and more fearful gaze. By the dim light of her kerosene lamp at night, she explored the inside of the eye through the pupil. She could see it as if clouded by spots that resembled the afternoon clouds in the rainy season. Similar were the white spots she observed inside the mouth and on the tongue. NoLwasi called them "Soweto spots" in her notes, as she had already noticed them on two other young boys who had returned from there as corpses. She also drew in her notebook the dark red spots, like the indigo of cacti that appeared on the neck and back. NoLwasi noticed an extreme thinness, which exposed the cheekbones like the rocks of the kopjes of Matopos. Her breathing was hasty and irregular.

NoLwasi had learned to listen to the air flowing through her lungs by pressing her ear against different parts of her chest. She heard noises like the wind in the leaves. The normal breathing was like the clean flow of the wind in the dry acacias while Tulani's was like the roar of the wind in the wet mopane trees. It was the same with the heartbeat, irregular and feeble. She noticed on the abdomen an enlarged area below the heart. That was an area that the *nyangas* knew well had to do

with the resentment of the spirits of purity. Thus, she continued to observe how the painful weakness progressed.

At dusk, she would go to her sacred altar. She would hear the roar of the wind in the leaves of the field. She knew how to identify the sounds that most resembled those she heard in Tulani's lung. From those trees and their leaves, she made ointments and brews. She gave them to her while imitating the rhythm she heard in her heart with her drum, transforming it gradually into a more constant, more regular and stronger rhythm. She knew well that those sounds, like lights, feelings and all forms of energy, combined towards harmony.

NoLwasi asked Tulani to speak out her fears and dreams, her conflicts with her partner, her family or with other people in town. She listened to the spirits. She always felt Mandhla's voice, sometimes in unintelligible whispers.

NoLwasi related sounds to trees, trees to ancestors, and their spirits to conflicts and to visions of the world. It all flowed through her mind without her controlling it. Her hands moved the *tabas* and often it all fit into an idea, a chain to the spirit that pulsed in each person or an idea that released the sadness of the spirit. An alliance with the healing power of herbs, bark and stone dust. Entering in solid form, liquid or in sacred fumes. Musing rhythms that she could neither understand nor control.

She did not understand why all the images of the *tabas*, the rhythms of the drums, the wind in the trees, the words of Tulani, the whispers of Mandhla, the voices of *amakhosis* and other spirits seemed to converge in a dark and threatening image. Everything seemed to explode in her head and she felt deep sadness. An immense dark cloud over her soul.

Although Tulani again improved somewhat and returned home with her then five-year-old child, she knew that a deadly plague was lurking *ubhubhane*.

NoLwasi went to see the most respected *nyanga* in the region, further south, near Beitbridge, on the border with South Africa. His name was Mkhulu Ndlovu. He told her that he had already seen five people with the disease similar to the one she described from Tulani. He called it *isifo esibulalayo nesingañangekiyo* (disease that kills and we cannot cure). He knew that further south it was worse. He had heard

of a disease that took many young people. The funerals and the passing of pick-up trucks back to Matabeleland with coffins were constant. So much so that the area near Soweto came to be called *KwaÑama-ayipheli*, "the place where the meat does not end", because traditionally funerals involved an animal sacrifice and the eating of its flesh; or *Akuyilubuyayo*, the place from which one does not return.

Mkhulu told NoLwasi that the disease threatened the harmony of all Kalanga, Ndebele, Xhosa and Zulu. She felt that the respect for the *Hlonipha* tradition was being broken and the spirits were punishing the people. The *Hlonipha* tradition required women not to use syllables from their husbands' names. Mkhulu thought that they should also not mention the disease that was beginning to terrify everyone. He said that the women in his *kraal* were dishonoring their husbands while working in Egoli. They were mentioning their names without respect for their *Hlonipha* tradition and even flirting with travellers and truck drivers at crossroads. The spirits had sent their fury to the *kraal*, villages and the entire nation.

-NoLwasi, this is *Yisijeziso sika Nkulunkulu*, a punishment from our God. *Iphelisa uthando*. It makes love die.

NoLwasi noticed a deep sadness in that *nyanga*. And a deep resignation. It was as if he wanted to die with this terrible plague that NoLwasi feared would devastate her people.

She had to know what was happening in Egoli. She felt she had to travel south and find out what the lives of the young Kalanga were like and what had happened to those who returned lifeless to rest with their ancestors.

Only women prostituting themselves on the South African border traveled alone and crossed the Limpopo. She sent a message through a relative traveling to her village to inform her father that she would be absent for a moon. She had to seek answers from the spirits.

NoLwasi knew that the week before, four young Shona had drowned while attempting to swim across the rain-swollen Limpopo. The *nyanga* Ndhlovu had directed NoLwasi to hire a guide, one Takani. He was asking for a hundred Zimbabwean dollars, money she had never seen together. NoLwasi told her she could only give him health assistance. Takani looked at her skeptically, but upon learning that she came from the notorious Nana Ndlovu, he took her home where his

daughter had a fever. NoLwasi saw the signs of illness from the heat of the first rains, went into the field, prepared some potions and nursed her in the afternoon. She slept outside under a tree. By morning, the girl had improved and Takani agreed to guide her through the Limpopo.

They entered the illegal crossing point known as Maria. The river flow was intense and Takani had prepared a long rope between the two banks, but he did not cross with NoLwasi. She held tightly to the rope. She had never entered a river before; never had water surrounded her slender figure. The dry riverbed of the Sanzukwi barely carried a thin trickle after the rains. She moved forward clinging to the rope, with no more luggage than a ragbag tied to her Zulu cloth garment and her white turban. On several occasions, the current almost tore her from the rope and she was left dangling from a single hand that gripped tightly. She swallowed water and lost her breath for a few seconds. She had to make it. NoLwasi knew that the challenge of saving her people awaited her. She saw lower down the river some crocodiles stationed on the shore, as if waiting for the outcome of such daring. Takani watched it up an acacia tree in case he saw the South African border police approaching, in which case he would warn her, and return to the north bank. It took ten minutes of tremendous effort and overcoming fear. She arrived at the other shore weak and faint. She lay down exhausted. Takani shouted to her:

-Lihambe kuhle (Go well).

The traditional plural in the Ndebele farewell made NoLwasi feel that, in a way, she was traveling with all her people.

NoLwasi walked through the Marelani reserve, twice dodging South African Customs patrols. She spotted a few herds of buffalo and hid behind some acacia trees, motionless so as not to be discovered and rammed. An hour later, she arrived in Messina. She had gathered some herbs on the way, which would give her serene courage and quench her hunger. She had also found water in some streams. NoLwasi knew she was almost six hundred kilometers from Soweto. There were about ten young men from her village living a mysterious life over there. She knew those lives styles had something to do with the disease that threatened them all. She asked a group of Ndebele where she could work a few days to pay for the bus to Soweto. They hinted at money for intimate favors and she glared at them. NoLwasi began to feel what

migration away from family, ancestors, values, did to some men. She saw their backs and continued walking through the countryside towards the Baobab reserve. She marveled at those trees. Somehow, they were like those lost young men: uprooted from their land and planted with their roots upwards, in dry, inhospitable lands. Two kilometers down the road, she noticed someone calling behind him:

-*Udade wami* (sister)!

She looked back and saw one of the men in the group who messed with her. He was tall and very thin. She noticed Tulani's cheekbones. He seemed to be coming peacefully. However, NoLwasi picked up a rock and squeezed it tightly in case he approached with bad intentions.

-Yes? Are you like your friend? -Don't come near me!

-No, I apologize. He is stupid.

-Stupid people say stupid things, hypocrites consent to them.

-You are right. In a group, we are like hyenas, cowards. Tell me, where are you going? We do not see single women walking around here. Many prostitute themselves in Messina and Beitbridge.

-I am going to Soweto.

-Let me help you, my name is Benson.

-My name is NoLwasi. How can you help me?

-I see that you have hardly any luggage; you probably do not even have *rands* or a place to sleep. Am I wrong?

-I know how to survive in nature.

-Don't be so proud, it is good to help each other.

-Okay, thanks, Benson. Do you think I could work for a few days to earn a little money and be on my way?

-There are few farms here. Where there is work is in the coalmines. But it's no work for women. They will not give you work. If I were you, I would not go into a mine with two hundred men, some of them on the run from the law.

-I am not afraid. I can do the job. I just need a week, a few *rands* and I will be on my way.

-Okay, you are brave NoLwasi. We are ten kilometers away; the mines are on the other side of the Baobab reserve.

They walked for an hour and a half through the dry baobab-studded savannah, and saw a few zebras and a few herds of impala looking for some moisture and grass. Benson was a young man from near *Hwangue*, who like so many thousands of young Zimbabweans, was looking for a better future in South Africa. He had worked in the mines of Johannesburg, living in Soweto as a guard in a white men's house in Pretoria, and now in the coalmines of Messina. He wanted to return home, but he would not with the shame of doing so without success, savings and respect. He explained to her that in that year of 1983, President Botha, was trying for the first time to give some democratic voice to blacks and Indians, in congresses other than the dominant white one, but that the African National Congress rejected him out of dignity.

Arriving at some concrete and tin-roofed houses, she saw pasted on some walls banners that read "Rhodesia voted yes, Vote no." The racist white parties opposed any recognition of the rights of non-whites, whom they considered inferior. NoLwasi recalled how two years earlier, her mother's uncle, Joshua Nkomo, had signed with his bitter enemy, Robert Mugabe, for white independence for Rhodesia. Power was in the hands of the Africans, the vast majority, but envy and resentment had further triggered the violence of the fifth Brigade all over Matabeleland. War, disease, drought - where was the hope?

As she was reading the racist pamphlet, a tall, obese, white man with a blond beard and a defiant look came out from inside:

-What are you reading, you rascals? You cannot vote. And you will never do”.

-“I know *baas*,” replied Benson, as he made a gesture of submissive obedience by bending his knees and clasping his hands in front of his chest.

NoLwasi felt disgust. At the tyranny of the white man and even more at the submission of the black man. She stared serenely but fixedly into the boer's eyes. When the boer saw that NoLwasi did not react with submission, he raised a leather rod threateningly.

-What are you looking at? You black whore!

She did not answer him, she simply turned away with such dignity that she left the *boer* unable to react. Benson followed her and whispered:

-Are you crazy? They can whip you, or call the customs police, or the police directly, accusing you of looking a white man in the eye, of contempt for their authority, inventing any theft. You do not know what prisons are like here.

-Benson. I will never work for beings like that. I would rather starve to death.

It was getting dark, and they went to sleep around a fire with miners and some families. They offered them hot tea. NoLwasi had not drunk for some time and had not eaten for two days. She excused herself and walked away from the group for a moment. She saw through the window of the boer's office that they were also preparing tea. She took some herbs she knew well, with a diarrheal effect and others with a strong hypnotic power. From the window, in a moment of distraction of the whites, she was able to put the herbs in the tea they were preparing. She cut them so finely that the different herbs were not noticeable. Besides, it was already dark at night and the kerosene lamps shed a very dim light.

She crept back to the group. When an hour had passed, they heard shouts from the whites, then grunts, then silence. No one knew what was happening. Except NoLwasi. She began to mumble.

-Nkosi sikelele Africa...Maluphakamis'upondo lwayo... (God bless Africa. May his horn sound loudly).

They were the first words of the anthem of the African National Congress, the one that resisted apartheid in South Africa, the one that had already wrested power from the racist whites in Zimbabwe.

Everyone looked at her with astonishment. Singing that hymn was punishable by jail and whipping. When the whites did not come, a few joined in, then more, then all. Xhosa, Zulu and other tribal groups also joined singing the Ndebele hymn.

NoLwasi did feel hope at that moment.

Benson stayed in the mine, and NoLwasi left early at dawn. She assisted some miners with back pain, infected wounds and fevers and received food and a few *rands* in return.

When she had been walking for about three hours on the road south, a truck passed by and stopped next to her: there were three Xhosa men in the front seat:

-What are you doing? Don't you know you cannot walk alone on this road? Where are you going?

-I am on my way to Soweto.

-Get in the back; we will take you to Mokopane.

The truck was carrying sacks of corn. On them sat several women, one with a baby, a very thin older man and several chickens, bags and boxes. She waved and settled in a corner. With concealment, she looked at the man: he was extremely thin, his African hair was white, and his forehead showed the wrinkles of time, his gaze was lost, as if he had given up looking for beauty.

His eyes showed the white shadow that heralded blindness, and had an expression of deep sadness. He was dressed in a ragged suit and huddled around a wooden stick. NoLwasi thought that the man was a reflection of a lifetime of humiliation and racism. She then felt deep sorrow. Nolwasi approached him and gave him some of the little food she had in her bag.

Arriving in Mokopane, she was able to ask for another truck and, this time paying with the rands she had been given in Messina mining camp, she climbed up to continue on to Soweto.

It was already dark when they passed in front of Pretoria. NoLwasi had never seen so many lights, so many tall buildings and so many cars. Never before had she seen traffic lights, or so many people together, or lamps lighting the dirt on the road. She could not understand. There were also huge billboards advertising food, strange baby feeding bottles (she thought maybe white women did not have breasts), dark drinks, strange clothes or cars with scantily clad women. NoLwasi did not comprehend anything she saw in the city. Everything was noisy and people did not seem happy. She thought something strange was invading the world and the incurable disease was emerging like a snake from a pit of black mud.

Shortly after, they passed in front of the Johannesburg skyscrapers. She was stunned. So much height, so much light. She couldn't understand why they were doing it. Were they looking for

Mukhulunkhulu like that? Did they want to be closer to the clouds to ask for rain? Maybe they were looking too far away in case enemies were coming. None of it fit. It was all strange.

They arrived in Soweto. She saw an immense expanse of small concrete houses, arranged in perfect grids. The city was set to house the black workers of Johannesburg. People from South Africa and neighboring countries kept coming. In many houses, as many as twenty people lived crowded. It was night but there were people walking the streets, on many corners there were fires and meetings. She saw several posters of a certain priest Desmond Tutu calling for decent living conditions in Soweto. A few years earlier, more than five hundred Africans had died in those streets, massacred by the apartheid police for protesting against the imposition of the Afrikaans language of the Boers in schools.

Since then there was an even stronger hatred for the dominant whites, although still camouflaged in the surface. It was noticeable that in some of those houses there were meetings where they were plotting something. Flags of the African National Congress hung on some of the posts along the road. She mumbled Nkosi Sikelela again. At that moment she saw a person with prominent cheekbones, reddish spots and very thin, sitting in front of a house. She got out of the truck, and approached the house.

She asked in Ndebele, very similar to the local Zulu, if he knew of any *nyanga* in the neighborhood.

XIX. The frontiers of religion. Matabeleland, November, 1982

-FATHER *PATXI*, FATHER *Patxi*... they're coming!

With these cries, Patxi woke up one morning in November 1982. He had been at St. Joseph's Mission, Matabeleland South, in the newly independent country of Zimbabwe, formerly Southern Rhodesia, near the border with Botswana, for three years. The shouts of his friend Sibindi (brave) alerted him that a patrol of the fifth Brigade was approaching. It took him a few seconds to change into a white T-shirt, shorts and his sandals. He walked out of his room to the common room of the Jesuit house. Sibindi was a young Kalanga with a vocation for the priesthood. Patxi was his advisor and friend. They hurried out to the mission boundaries.

There were members of Nkomo's ZAPU who were from the area, and when they came, they ate and shared with everyone, although in recent months people from the villages and the mission had asked them not to come because they put everyone at risk, and to lay down their arms. Patxi had spoken with several of them, dissidents from Mugabe's army, and civilians enlisted in the struggle. Before talking to them, he meditated on the Aimsa principle, rereading Gandhi's book *Experiments with Truth*. One of them had listened to him and was working in the Egoli mines (Johannesburg). The others insisted on fighting:

-Father Patxi: how can we keep quiet after liberating ourselves from the whites and returning to being under the yoke, now of the dictator Mugabe?

Patxi heard the dry buffalo horns blowing. They came from boys stationed on the rocks of Matopos, near Kezi. Every three kilometers there was a signalman. It would take about twenty minutes. He had to do something fast, as he knew that the fifth Brigade killed indiscriminately in villages where they suspected links with dissidents. A week earlier, the police arrested one of the dissidents near St Joseph. It was a matter of days before he would tell, under horrible torture, who had fed him.

Not only was the government massacring villages where it suspected were harboring dissidents, but besides the curfew imposed from dusk to dawn there was a blockade on food transport, even more

critical in the midst of a severe drought. Patxi was smuggling sacks of maize meal, covered in sheets and carrying on top of them sick people to the hospital in Bulawayo. In his three years in Zimbabwe, he had taught theology at the seminary in Bulawayo, but asked the bishop to transfer him to the drier and poorer area, rehabilitating St. Joseph's Mission, ravaged by flames in the mid-1970s.

He had built a health center, a ward for patients needing admission and a small operating room. He himself did a one-year basic nursing course and supported several young people in the area to study nursing. A doctor only came once a month. The rest of the time Patxi himself attended births, gave cures, medicated common ailments and infections in the area. Malaria in the rainy season, meningitis in the dry season, sleeping sickness, tuberculosis, enteritis, rabies, botonous fever, cobra, mamba and scorpion bites, and fractures of all kinds were common. Many of these were due to falls from the "scotch cars", primitive donkey carts. They had built a well and a bread oven. Together as a community, they had rebuilt the elementary school, built a carpentry, electrical and mechanical workshops, and erected the church. A church that he drew, round and full of light. Where everyone sat in a circle, meditated, felt the love of God and all were encouraged to spread it to the universe. He saw no more secrets in religion. The bishop had called his attention to him because his "baptismal book" was empty and he discovered he was handing out condoms. Patxi paid no attention. He knew that "God" or life was on his side. He knew it in the smiles of the children and elders who gathered to sing his songs and listen to Patxi's stories in Kalanga and Ndebele. He had already mastered the "click" sounds of the Zulu language and told animal stories with the moral of love,

In all Bulililamangwe Patxi became "Sindisabantu", the one who saves people.

He ran to the church and rang the bell loudly. Everyone knew the meaning of such ringing. They explained it at the last Sunday masses. It called on everyone to take refuge in the church. Hundreds of people from the surrounding area came running to the mission. Patxi asked them to sit down and not to make any noise, while praying in silence. He told them to organize themselves in pairs to take care of each other in case of need. During the last weeks, they had been setting aside

water, oranges, *biltong* (dried meat in strips), peanut paste and bananas. Before long, they heard the engines of the fifth Brigade's Toyotas, and listened with fright to some threatening shots.

Patxi asked them to remain seated on the floor in stillness. He approached the door and opened it naturally. There were about ten jeeps and two off-road trucks, out of which about a hundred soldiers with the dreaded red berets had emerged. He noticed about four Koreans giving orders.

In a few seconds, they had surrounded the church and the closest ones, about ten, were pointing their rifles at him. Patxi noticed Sibindi approaching from behind. One wearing a commander's star said to him in Shona:

-My name is Jeremy Nalunga, I am the commander of this company of the sovereign army of Zimbabwe. We know that there are terrorist dissidents in this town. Hand them over and no one will get hurt.

-There are no terrorists here. In this mission there are only families who work hard every day to survive, and we all want peace.

Patxi spoke in Ndebele, to the irritation of the commander and his company, mostly Shona. They hated the Ndebele and considered all those villages as nests of terrorists.

-You have five minutes to deliver them, or we will go in and shoot them all.

-I need those five minutes to talk to you, Commander.

While the soldiers surrounded the church and aimed at Sibindi, Commander Nalunga and Patxi went to talk, under a mango tree next to the church. Patxi thought of his brother Juan Mari and his comrades in struggle, he thought of Jesus' words of peace and love, he thought of Gandhi's experiences with non-violence "Aimsa" and he thought of all the people inside the Church, about three hundred. Patxi knew almost all of them in their daily work, their sorrows and hopes, their spiritual world, their devotion to the Jesus of love, in their own way, their traditions, songs, celebrations and funerals. He had cried hundreds of times with them in their hard times, had sung in their low ndebele tones, mmm... mmmm, the joys and griefs, the rages and longings of that people whom he already loved deeply.

-Commander Nalunga. I know that your work is hard, risky and for the noble purpose of the security and peace of all people of Zimbabwe, who fought united for their independence.

-That is why I tell you to hand over the terrorists, Father, you know they are there, they are hiding, menacing people, and attacking the national army and the Shona peasants.

-There are no such young people here. They are all people of peace. If there were people from ZAPU, they would have all laid down their arms a long time ago. They only want peace.

-We will check it out for ourselves. I am going into the church, Father.

-You cannot enter with weapons. It is God's house!

Nalunga turned his back and called his lieutenants. Meanwhile, Patxi went to the door of the church. He had to think fast in a few seconds. A massacre could be imminent. He could not face them alone, nor offer himself as a hostage, nor rebuke them as murderers. He asked Sibindi and other strong boys to take down the cross that hung in front of the altar. It was about two meters high. They needed it quickly at the entrance.

Nalunga and his lieutenants were giving orders to the company to violently enter the Church. Patxi asked Sibindi and his friends to leave the cross outside, stay inside and sing *Nkosi Sikelele* at the top of their lungs.

Patxi hurried and placed the heavy cross fitting its long axis between the metal handles of the church door.

-*Nalunga*, if you enter that church, it will be by breaking the cross of God. Think about it. Inside there are only hard-working, honest people singing the anthem of free and peaceful Zimbabwe.

He approached him:

-I give you my word, if time passes and you tell me a single man who works, sleeps and eats with us, uses arms against the government, you can take me prisoner.

At that moment, *Nkosi Sikelele* became *Ishekomborera Africa Ngaisimudzirwe zita rayo*, the anthem in Shona. They had been rehearsing it over the past few Sundays. Patxi had to convince many to

put their pride aside, and sing in the country's other major language, the same meaning of liberation.

Nalunga was moved by Patxi's courage, by the cross in front of the guns, by the Shona chants with those low Zulu tones.

-Father: this only time I trust you. Pray with your people for peace. If I happen to know there is a single dissident near here, I will come for them and for you!

-You will not have to come. Peace will soon reign in this beautiful country. We have to work together to survive the drought and to progress in a better life for our parents and our children.

Nalunga called the troops back to the vehicles, while the Koreans shouted angrily at him for what they interpreted as weakness. One of them even shouted at him in a threatening manner, raising his fist in front of his face. At that moment, Nalunga punched him hard and lifted him off the ground, grabbing him in his strong fist by the collar of his uniform shirt:

-This is my country. These are my people. We need peace now. Do not ever yell at me again!

Two weeks had passed since the fifth Brigade incident. It was Sunday afternoon. Patxi had said mass in the round thatched church they had rebuilt as a community at St. Joseph's mission, and in the dry riverbed, asking the spirits for rain. Thereafter he went to see a family whose son had died in Soweto, and soon after his wife, leaving the grandparents in charge of three small children when they barely had the strength to fetch firewood and water and their eyes, punished by years of the Kalahari sun, could barely see.

At sunset, Patxi went for a walk along the rocks of Matopos. He used to sit on a large flat rock from which he could see another tall rock, shaped like a mother with her baby in her arms. He thought of Mary's love.

He had spent five years among the Kalanga and Ndebele of South Matabeleland, the last four rebuilding St. Joseph's mission, away from the rest of the world. With the sole idea of life loving others and our existence as an immense gift, he had managed to convey hope in Ndebele to a community that worked together on projects, that prayed and sang together to love, that searched for harmony with the mystery

of the eternity of time and the infinite immensity of space. With the community he looked for better water wells, how to bring electricity to the mission through thirty kilometers of poles, organized handicraft workshops, spoke with his greatest warmth with groups of young people, mothers, elderly people, farmers. He cared for the sick in the dispensary, delivered babies and gave cures, even pulled teeth or reduced fractures. Every month he waited for the visit of the doctor from the mission of Brunapeg, about a hundred kilometers to the north. He also kept in touch with several young Kalangas who migrated to Soweto. He was blissful. Almost wholly.

He stopped talking about the Old Testament, in which his logic and his ethic of love did not allow him to believe. He no longer followed the liturgy strictly and gave up insisting on baptisms and other sacraments. Patxi felt as much truth in the testimony of Jesus as in that of the union to the *amakhosi* of the Ndebele. He was convinced that the Father of Jesus was the Mukhulumkhulu of the Kalanga. Or even the voice of our Kharma as Rob, with whom he maintained a very warm correspondence, said. He was the one Father or Creator of all. And lived in every human soul. Possibly every living creature. He was convinced all were the same energy in an hope of isolated forms, of time and space that evanesced when our energy, through love, was released.

Such was his way of interpreting religion, without liturgies or hierarchies, without jealousy or hell, his political commitment to the poorest, his fight against government violence. All that caused him problems with the bishop, an old German man who kept counting the success of evangelization by the number of baptized and saying half the mass in Latin.

In the following days, Patxi followed the news on the radio on Pope John Paul II's visit to Spain. He felt saddened by the enormous cost of the visit and the lack of humility as was the true message from Jesus.

On the other hand, although he was happy with the thrills of each day, he could never be a real Kalanga or an Ndebele. He was still a white man from distant lands, lost in a remote village and land where he felt loved. All respected Sindisabantu. However, every evening he felt the chill of loneliness. Sibindi and two other young men were now

living in his house sharing chores with him as they waited for a place in the seminary in Bulawayo. But deep down, he did not know if he was right to encourage them on that path.

He thought to himself:

Does love need a form? A formula? Judges? Liturgy? Words repeated by heart? A fear of being punished by the Creator? Do we need a world of "believers" and "non-believers"? He had seen the most wonderful people, brave, strong, generous, and passionate about life, live and die with other beliefs. How could anyone talk about heaven and hell? He had seen people who, from their fear and anger, or from their confusion with the chimeras of luxury or power, acted selfishly and dishonestly. In most of them, he could delved into their souls: they lacked love, they cried out for love without knowing how. Like when a baby cries for food or in pain. He had discovered the brightest souls who returned to love by shedding their fears. Maybe there was a hell. But he was sure it was empty.

There was another idea that tormented him. He felt alone in his privacy. When night came, he withdrew to his room alone. He longed for the embrace of a woman, the caresses on his body and he needed even more to embrace, to give himself entirely not only to the community, but to a person, to dilute his existence in the beauty of another being. He caressed and pleased himself at times when he felt extremely, almost painfully lonely. He had consulted this desire with his superiors in Bilbo and in Bulawayo, and the answer was penance of prayers and nightly cold-water showers. But he could see nothing wrong with love coupled with sexual passion. It was human and natural. Patxi had not met anyone on whom to pour that desire, that strength, but he knew she was somewhere, and one day would come.

Looking at the rock of motherhood, he asked God, or *Mkulumkulu*, to guide him on the path of love with courage and its deepest expression, tenderness.

XX. Discovering the magic of medicine. La Laguna, Tenerife, 1983

JONAY WAS already in his fifth year of medical school at the University of La Laguna, in the island of Tenerife. He had finished his mid-term exams in December and, as customary, he had climbed Mount Teide to see "his" Gomera on one side and Africa on the other. He evoked when, as a teenager, he used to look at Teide from La Gomera and think about what awaited him on the other side of the sea.

Shortly after rescuing Kadiatu and Lisy in the Atlantic, Jonay traveled with his parents, aboard *Satia*, to Tenerife, where he started a new life, studying medicine.

One year after, Fernando and Kadiatu finished the house in Arguamul, Lisy started school and not only spoke Spanish perfectly, but even the language of the Gomeran whistles and fully integrated in the island. She was already a beautiful teenager and used to play the flute while watching the sunrise. Kadiatu obtained her residence permit as a refugee with the help of the women's defense association, Gara, in San Sebastian, where two days a week she helped with documents in English and helped other refugees. It took her a little longer to learn Spanish, but she already spoke it quite well. She even gave several conferences in Spanish on women's rights in Africa and the challenge of female genital mutilation. With Fernando's help, she had studied to be a clinical assistant and sometimes worked as a substitute at the Vallehermoso outpatient clinic. She was friendly with everyone, but something in herself did not shine. Fernando relentlessly tried to cheer her up. However, sometimes she seemed to sink into a deep melancholy from which she did not know how to get out. She could not return to Sierra Leone because she would face the powerful man she had escaped from. It was as if she had left a part of her soul in her country, which, in spite of everything, she loved. Fernando was still in love with her, he had finished his boat with John's help, played the guitar and John the harmonica in the San Sebastian square and had started a vegetable garden of medicinal plants in front of the ravine of "his" beach in Arguamul.

After leaving Jonay well settled in La Laguna, Umbela and John left in *Satia* to sail around the world. They sent postcards and letters to

Jonay and Fernando and Umbela's parents from beautiful places, recounting adventures of their cruise. They felt deeply free and deepened an almost symbiotic love. After they had stopped in Madeira to see Josu and his family, they crossed to Cuba, where they met Fernando's family, and then continued on to the rest of the Caribbean, Brazil, Mar del Plata, Tierra del Fuego, Hawaii, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Mombassa, Dar es Salam, Cape Town, Namibia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. They then met again with Josu, and spent two weeks touring the country, the mission where Fernando worked and the village of Kadiatu. After one year round the world, they returned to La Gomera. A year of countless adventures that John reflected in a diary.

Meanwhile, Jonay advanced in his studies. He lived in a shared apartment with four other students, Felix, from Tenerife; Jaime, from Gran Canaria; and two from the "Peni" (Iberian Peninsula), a Galician named Antonio and Juan, from Madrid. Except Juan, they were studying other careers and had a great camaraderie among them. Jonay worked washing dishes two afternoons a week in a restaurant so he could contribute to the apartment rent and costs. Sometimes he unloaded trucks in Santa Cruz, to save some extra money. And on vacations he helped Tomas fishing, his father guiding tourists through the island valleys and Garajonay, and his mother selling honey and gofio in San Sebastian. Jonay went everywhere on his bike, his hair had grown long and wore a red cloth to hold it back. He was slim but strong and tanned by the breezes on the beach of El Cabrito and by the swims and the marches through the Garajonay. Above all, he dwelled in dreams. He knew well he was on the road to other worlds where he hoped to be able to fight for the poor, for those whom the world in its cruel dynamics was pushing towards a desert of need and pain blocked by dams of selfishness.

Jonay had read a lot about the Russian revolution of 1917. In the Cold War that was gripping the world, he sympathized with communism. He detested predatory and imperialist capitalism. He explored the pre-Marxist roots, fascinated by anarcho-communism and the works of Kropotkin and Huxley, the idealism of Tolstoy, and although Marx inspired him, he detested Lenin and even more so Stalin and their violent authoritarianisms. He felt captivated by the stories of

the non-revolutionary communisms he called "human-sized" such as the Scottish Kilda Islanders, the hippy communes and the Israeli kibbutz. He went on to spend a few weeks in the north of La Palma with hippy communes.

Jonay voted for the first time the year before, for González's socialists, believing in their promises of social justice. Although he sometimes shared the rite of marijuana, he usually rejected it and preferred to feel the strength of his body when running through the mountains, taking refuge in nature, swimming in the rough sea or watching the sunrises. In fact, he shied away from groups of more than five or ten people, and tried, as Fernando recommended, "not to be an ism of any ism, to be himself". This did not prevent him from feeling outraged by injustices such as the one provoked by Israel's cruelty in the Sabra and Chatila camps at that time. He encouraged, with some students from Gaza who were studying in La Laguna, demonstrations to condemn Israel in its genocide of the Palestinian people. Ever since, he often wore the Palestinian kuffiya around his neck. He was also in solidarity with the Saharawi people, dispossessed of their land with the Spanish passivity and joined in meetings of sympathizers of the Polisario Front in Tenerife. Above all, from Fernando's stories, he felt deeply distressed by the poverty, disease and death in Africa. He read what he could find about that reality: Conrad, Schweitzer and the stories of some young doctors who wanted to help the famine in Biafra, Nigeria, despite the opposition of the government.

He learned from his Galician roommate to play the bagpipes a little and then the Celtic fiddle. He read all of Noah Gordon's books, *The Doctor*, *Shaman* and *Dr. Cole*; Crichton's *Five Patients* and his later science fiction novels; Michael Gordon's medical stories, and Wilbur Smith's adventures in southern Africa. He also loved to read Machado, Hernandez, Wiltman and Neruda. He felt enchanted by Tagore. And kept his father's gift as the main reference of ideas and attitudes towards life: Gandhi's experiments in truth, the copy that shipwrecked with his ship and led him to Umbella. Its pages were swollen and deformed by the water, as if speaking of authentic truths and the courage it took to follow the adventures in going in search of them (Aimsa). Without ever finding them, though.

He loved Celtic music, also the rock music of the 60's that his father taught him and the Spanish freedom singers Serrat, Aute, Humet, Llach and Victor Manuel among others. Fernando introduced him to the Cuban Nueva Trova. He also felt deep tenderness when he listened to John Denver and the peace and love singers of the 60's Woodstock and Berkeley rebellions, a symbolic place of freedom for him. Taylor, Croce, Dylan, Baez, Young, Simon, McLean, Lightfoot. Jonay also had a weakness for French music, although his favorite was a Belgian who gave his soul in every song, Jacques Brel. He still felt pained by the murder the year before of John Lennon, and thought that the verses of "Imagine" reflected the ideal of the world he wanted to fight for, without countries, without property, without religions. Why surround religions and politics with sophistication without really going boldly into a world as simple and human as that message?

Like his parents, he did not believe in a specific only God. He could not imagine a Creator of so much wonder, unfairly granting only light, reason or paradise to a few believers who came across a certain story of a certain man in a certain time. He could neither understand nor accept the impossible and cruel history of the Old Testament. He even thought that some of Jesus' attitudes seemed somewhat arrogant. He loathed the hypocrisy of Vatican luxury, the violence of the Inquisition and the Crusades, and their alliance with empires, dictatorships and capitalism. He preferred, simply, to feel the beauty of nature and feel part of it. To her he would return and in his temporary passage with his imperfect assembly of human body molecules. He intended to vibrate with the beauty of nature and love.

Love. He kept falling in love with classmates, with nurses at the hospital in La Candelaria where he did his internship, but especially with a tender at the bakery on the corner of his street. He had gone for walks and came warmly close with some of them, but did not end up diluting his whole existence, as Erich Fromm said, in the soul mate he knew was waiting for him. Like the faithful complicity of his parents or the epic courage of Fernando and Kadiatu.

Above all, he was passionate about medicine. He had been passing every year, yet without very good grades. He abhorred the system of competition and grades that he interpreted it as an ally of competitive capitalism. He had seen colleagues with high marks and with hardly

any sensitivity for patients, for the pain of others or for the suffering in the world. And the other way around. However, he moved on the career year after year.

When in first grade, he was spellbound by biology and organic chemistry. He filled his room with Lehninger's diagrams, with all the metabolic pathways that maintained life in its constant exchange of carbon, and its life allies, hydrogen and oxygen. He did not stop there. He delved into infra-atomic physics, rereading Einstein without being able to conceive the relativity of time with speed. He then came across some books on quantum physics that absorbed him. The duality of energy and matter that life was made of in its innermost nature. He knew in some inexplicable way, that energy was love and united all beings, as explained by Eastern philosophies that transcended Christian and Western anthropocentrism.

In those early years, he studies anatomy in the laboratories with corpses and bones. He always kept a deep respect for those remains, to the point that he almost did not speak during those classes and practices. It seemed irreverent to him. However, he learned with precision from the texts of Feneis and Ruvier and the atlas of Sobota, the human anatomy to the smallest detail. The studies of physiology and the functioning of the body in all its functions followed. He was passionate about reading Guyton and again filling his room with diagrams, linked to those of Roit's immunology.

The body's defenses. He imagined the body as a universe: inside another, which perhaps is again inside us? In all bodies the government was in the brain, energy in the heart, communications in the circulatory system, garbage in the intestine, sewage in the kidneys, cars circulated as red blood cells, and ended up in scrapyards in the spleen. The marrow was the factory of all means of transportation, and the liver helped to import the goods and to filter, as customs, the toxics. The main control was in the defense system, in the immunity. It was the army. It reacted to aggressions of fury, although if it remained inactive for too long, it turned against its own body. Auto-immune diseases, such as coups d'état of idle armies. When weakened, it allowed lethal body invasions. He gave each type of immune cell a rank, each antibody, each key substance in that complex defense system in fragile balance with its environment, a military function.

Thus, he better understood a disease that a San Francisco doctor, Gottlieb, had described the year before: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Within a year, the number of cases had multiplied and was no longer limited to promiscuous homosexuals in San Francisco. The first cases had been diagnosed in Spain among drug addicts in Madrid.

He was an avowed pacifist, and even less inclined to join an army that had just joined NATO, despite socialist electoral promises. He thought of objecting doing the compulsory military service, but that would prevent him from registering as a doctor at the end of his studies and from working as such. He decided to seek all alternatives. A pacifist group in La Laguna met several times with army objectors released from prison, and encouraged strikes and even active resistance. However, Jonay found another way: substitute social service. He had read about it in some newspaper and looked all over Tenerife for organizations that could stamp his "la blanca" (the military service card) in return of social work, which he considered a generous and solidary activity that everyone, men and women, could do. Fernando had wrote to the hospital in Magbesseneh in case he could volunteer there in exchange of the abhorred military service. He went to see them at the hospital the order had in Tenerife. Brother Ramón, to whom he showed him as a treasure and guide, Brother Ricardo's fifty pieces of advice, welcomed him. Jonay told him about his passion for solidarity with Africa and his friendship with the Cuban doctor who worked in Magbesseneh. Ramon gave him the address of the mission office in Madrid and Jonay wrote to them. He had some misgivings about the missions because he did not approve of religious evangelizing, but he knew the good they did for the poor from Fernando's stories. He had no reply. In the meantime, Fernando mentioned it one day to Josu, as he had heard about a nephew of his who was a missionary in Zimbabwe. That was how Jonay wrote to Father Patxi. With that hope, he continued studying hard.

In the fourth year of medical school, he started the internship at the university hospital in Tenerife. He remembered with excitement the first day he put on the white coat and when he started talking to patients, auscultating them, holding their hands, studying their medical records, investigating their complaints and signs on inspection. He could spend

hours examining them, speaking with them, making diagrams of his findings, going to the university library to consult the *Harrison's* volumes, the *Oxford Textbook of Medicine* or *Farreras'* texts, the diseases, their mechanisms, the treatments. One day, a Chief of Internal Medicine called him to his office:

Dr. Delgado was in his sixties. He was already somewhat bald and there was a bitter rictus in his expression, an accusing look over his glasses, an incipient belly of unhealthy life but impeccably gelled and elegant in his suit, tie and cufflinks. Like many senior consultants, he had his private practice that he combined with his public activity. He had accrued several houses on the island and was part of a construction company that was sowing states, hotels and golf courses all over the island, accused by ecologists of damaging the environment. He had the ABC newspaper on his desk and a hanging picture proudly showing him greeting the dictator Franco.

-Come in, Dr. Jonay. Harris?

-Yes, that is my name, Dr. Delgado.

-I see that you are passionate about medicine.

-Yes sir, I feel a great vocation.

-That is why I wanted to see you. I want to give you some advice to help you progress in your medical profession.

-Thank you very much for your interest.

Said Jonay, although he knew he could not expect anything very good.

-Look Dr. Harris. The noble medical profession is based on knowledge and how we exercise our intellectual authority with diligence, education and propriety.

-With all due respect, Dr. Delgado, I do not believe that medicine has anything to do with authority and power, but rather with empathy and humility.

At that moment, Dr. Delgado changed his attitude. His bitter rictus transformed into a look of contempt and threat.

-I have learned from the nurses that you spend many hours in the patients' rooms talking to them. I am aware that you brought music headphones to a patient with cerebral thrombosis and aphasia. That you gave chest massages to another patient with respiratory failure. And

that you took a diabetic woman with gangrenous leg ulcers out into the garden in her wheelchair. You even organized a birthday party for a patient with heart failure and played the violin in his room.

-I did all of that on my own time, with the wishes of the patients mentioned and in consultation with the nurses on duty.

-You should consult me. I am the highest authority in this service, and in any case Miss Angeles, the nursing supervisor.

And according to many rumors that he never commented on, his lover, Jonay thought.

-On the other hand, I forbid you from now on to come to the hospital with that "look": on sandals, long hair and wearing those subversive scarves.

-Dr. Delgado, the sandals are handicrafts from our Gomeran community in El Cabrito and when you buy them, you help artisan communities that live in an exemplary harmony with nature. They are also very healthy for the anatomy and ventilation of your feet. I can get some for you. I keep my hair clean and I don't understand how it can bother anyone. Does Miss Angeles' hair bother you? (Jonay noticed that Dr. Delgado was blushing; that was a low blow). As for the "scarf" you refer to, it is a *kuffiya*, has been worn for centuries to protect from the heat, and represents solidarity with a people slaughtered in the face of international indifference. Would you like me to remind you of details of the Chavra and Chatila massacres last year?

-Dr. Harris, we do not come here to play politics, and your "look" discredits this honorable hospital!

Dr. Delgado had raised the tone of his voice and was threatening him by pointing a finger at him while his face was furious.

-If politics is to contribute to a better world, we all are and must be politicians, with respect for the ideas of others. I respect your ideas even if I do not share them. I do not preach mine, like you who try to impose your concept of medicine or your way of dressing. Nor do I like your mustache, your hair gel, your suit or your shoes, but I would never dare to tell you so, only now in response to your affront. I would never prevent you from expressing yourself as you wish as long as it is not offensive or disrespectful to others, which mine is not. Dr. Delgado,

you are a very intelligent and wise person in medicine, let me learn from you but remain myself.

-This conversation is over. If you refuse order and my authority, you will see the results in your final grades.

-I hope they reflect my knowledge and not your blackmail of power. In this country there is already democracy. Good morning, Dr. Delgado.

Jonay left Dr. Delgado's office knowing he was putting his career at risk, but he felt very happy to be himself. There were some times in life when one cannot be afraid to be him or herself. He thought that was one.

To give himself a gift for his bravery, he rode his bike to the neighborhood bakery. He did not even know the baker's beautiful tender's name, but they always smiled at each other. He loved her look and her smile. They moved him so much. He did not need any more. She was beautiful, had curly, black, long hair, honey-brown eyes, a shy and deep look, a clean and inconspicuous smile, a proud and dignified neck, he guessed a beautiful and healthy body and she moved with the softness of the breeze.

-Hello, do you have a loaf of bread?

-Yes, of course, it is late, but we still have some left.

-Well, I do not really need bread.

-If you do not want bread, why come to the bakery?

-I want to invite you for a walk. I have something to tell you.

-We don't know each other, how do I know what your intentions are?

-You cannot know that. You can only sense my respect and honesty. I feel yours, and for some time now, you have seemed to me the most beautiful woman I have seen in my life.

He did not care that there were two other ladies waiting, who were beginning to prick up their ears and become shocked by the conversation.

-I leave at five o'clock, but no promises.

-That already makes me very happy. By the way, my name is Jonay.

-See you later, Jonay. My name is Yolanda.

At five o'clock, he was there, at the bakery's door, with his bike and with a flower. Yolanda told him she was sorry, that she was busy, and said goodbye politely. Jonay continued to go every day at five o'clock, with a flower. He received the same response. On the sixth day, he brought two flowers. When Yolanda left, he did not ask her anything. Jonay just looked at her with a smile. Yolanda smiled. They went for a walk in La Laguna. Then he invited her to dinner at a vegetarian restaurant and to the movies, to see *Gandhi*, just released. When they left, they continued talking and telling each other about their lives. Yolanda was twenty years old and a single mother. Her son's father was a drug addict and she had not heard from him for several years. She was from Lanzarote but her parents had stopped talking to her when she became pregnant and she decided to go to Tenerife to look for work and live in freedom. She had to quit her high school studies and work in the bakery, the only job she could find. The pay was barely enough to pay for childcare, a room in a shared apartment, and food for the two of them. She liked classical music and swimming in the sea, but she had little time or means to do so. She also dreamed of discovering other worlds beyond the seas that surrounded them.

They ended the night with the warmest embrace either of them had ever felt.

XXI. The traps of shame. Soweto, South Africa, 1983

NoLwasi had been in Soweto for one year, talking with Zulu and Ndebele *nyangas* and *sangomas*, with the young people from Matabeleland who had gone to that vast Johannesburg slum, with herbalists, with wise people she met, and above all, with the spirits of her ancestors. She did not have her Matopos rock altar but she had brought her notes on the malaleuca bark.

The first night she arrived in Soweto, NoLwasi met a traditional doctor named James Moyo. James was in his seventies. He spent a good share of his life in the prisons of the apartheid regime. He limped on his right leg from a beating by the police. He had a wise and serene guise. When she arrived, it was late at night and James thought the police were calling for one of their raids. The doctors at the white hospital in Johannesburg often reported James as some whites patients came, to his house to get traditional remedies for various ailments. His practice challenged the conventional medical business and private doctors tried to discredit him and even accuse him for illegal practices. He opened very cautiously. He saw a slim woman with a white headscarf, like many northern Zulu *nyangas*. Despite the dim light of the kerosene lamp that illuminated the only room in the house, he could sense strength and wisdom in her gaze. He invited her in. NoLwasi explained the reason for her concern and her journey from Matabeleland to Soweto. James invited her to sleep there that night, and to talk about it calmly with other healers and community leaders, and with inspiration from the spirits, the following evening. NoLwasi exhausted, agreed.

She had been on long marches for two weeks, had crossed the Limpopo, dangerous wilderness areas, villages where she felt the hostility against blacks, incidents with the Boers from the mines and clandestine transports. She had not felt fear, but she was tired and sad to see so much violence and despair. She needed some hope in her mission. As she lay down, she felt a caress on her forehead, from an unreal hand, soft but firm, from a noble and big-hearted warrior from another time.

The next day she met with five traditional Xhosa and Zulu doctors and two leaders of the African National Congress. It was September

1984. NoLwasi paid singular attention to the one who was the natural leader of the meeting, someone they all listened to with distinct respect when he spoke: his name was Chris. James told her that Chris had allied himself with the African National Congress at a very young age and was one of the staunchest fighters against the Bantu Education Act, whose protests led to the Soweto massacre seven years earlier. The South African police killed two of his sons shooting at their back. He joined the *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, the armed wing of the African National Congress.

Since then he had been in jail, exiled in Lesotho and fighting for the liberation of Zimbabwe. He was illegal in South Africa and was responsible for some of the attacks on police, judges and mines. Although his base was in Lusaka two thousand kilometers to the north. NoLwasi introduced herself as the granddaughter of Joseph Nkomo's sister, whom Chris knew well from his time in South Africa and during the liberation war of Zimbabwe.

James explained to the group that NoLwasi was a *nyanga* from Matabeleland who came to try to understand what was going on with what everyone was already beginning to know as *Ubhubhane*, the plague that kills and *isifo esibulalalayo nesingañangekiyo*, the disease that has no cure. One of the *nyangas*, the one who looked the oldest of them all and could barely see, started the discussion:

-*Udade* (sister) NoLwasi, this disease is permeating our people like the night ends the day. In *Kwazulu Natal* there are funerals every day of young people who gradually lose their strength, their breath and their spirit. There are so many funerals, and in the tradition we must offer food to all, that the region is already known as *KwaÑama-ayipheli*, the place where the meat does not end, or *Akuyilubuyayo*, the place where one does not return from.

At this point, a Sotho tribal healer took the floor.

-This disease is a form of *kwatsi* - the name given to anthrax, with black spots and ulcers, related to cattle infections. Sick cattle have transmitted it and that is why these red spots appear on the body. It is necessary to take the cattle to be purified by the spirits.

At that moment, a venerable old woman with a warm but long-suffering smile spoke:

-This disease is a punishment from our ancestors. In this city, we have forgotten respect and traditions. You see, Udade NoLwasi, your countrymen offend their women with others here with whom they live or with whom they have sex for the money they do not send to their wives and children in Zimbabwe. Almost all of them have diseases from dishonoring their wives. To cure themselves, they are abusing our virgin girls, who get infected, rejected by their families and end up prostituting themselves and further spreading the disease. On every corner, we see them waiting at night. The spirits want to put an end to them people who destroy our people.

-But then, why do the spirits also send pain and sickness to honest women and those poor girls? The disease in my village is affecting women who work and take care of their children and respect traditions.

-The spirits need any life of this foul origin to end.

At that moment Chris spoke.

-The spirits know that we need all their strength to liberate our people, *Amandhla!*

Everyone responded, "*Amandhla!* The cry of struggle against apartheid. Chris continued:

-This disease is affecting many of our young people. Who wants to kill our strength? The white oppressor. They are infecting us to weaken us. It could be the water they put in the wells, or the corn flour. Maybe even the beer bottles they sell us blacks. We have to find out, prevent it and use the same medicine against them.

They all raised their fists. NoLwasi looked at the ground.

After that meeting, NoLwasi continued to converse with each of those leaders and others who were introduced to her. Although she acted quiet and even shy, her serene tenderness and determination to unveil the mysteries of the terrible disease earned their respect.

It took her several weeks, staying at James' house, to find for her fellow countrymen from Sanzukwi. Chris introduced her to the Zimbabwean leaders, but she did not dare to contact them as they might receive her with animosity if they were opponents of her great-uncle Joseph's ZAPU. In the meantime, she was making a name for herself as a *nyanga* and each day she received several sick people, gave them herbalist cures and invoked their ancestors for the harmony of their

spirits. She knew that she could not have the connections and direct energy for their healing if she was so alien to her clans, but with her good will, she was able to alleviate many ailments. She earned some money or food and was able to help with James' expenses for the humble room where she lived. For several days, she had to hide in a secret cave in the backyard when the South African police were raiding to identify and deport illegal immigrants, mostly from Zimbabwe. Eventually she went to see *Bastirai* (we helped ourselves), a Shona leader in Soweto. Chris had put them in touch and she had received a note of when she could go to see him. The meeting was carefully planned by security measures as both Chris and Bastirai were targets of the South African police.

-Bastirai, *Mhoro, Wakadini zvako* (hello, how are you?)

By greeting in Shona, NoLwasi was demonstrating that she was neither a ZANU radical nor an Ndebele dissident, and easing the tribal tension and mistrust between the two ethnic groups.

-Fighting *Udade wami* (My sister, in Ndebele).

-I am very happy to meet you, Bastirai. I know of your struggle for freedom in Zimbabwe and now for our South African brothers here. Chris told me that it was important for me to share my concern with you, and to know your advice.

-I am listening.

-A disease we do not know about has killed three young men from my village in Matabeleland. The wife of one of them has also fallen ill. We have heard from other *nyangas* in Matabeleland and here in Soweto that this disease is taking the lives of many young men. Many of them have been in the mines or in Soweto. Their wives get sick some time later. I have come to find out what is happening to our young men in Egoli. I have not been able to see them yet.

-NoLwasi, thank you for your effort to get here, for having risked your life. It is not easy for a man, let alone a woman. You are right, there is a plague that is taking many men. It is even worse in Kwazulu, where every week the towns fill with funerals. Here in Soweto too: this very afternoon I am going to a funeral of a colleague from Masvingo (in central Zimbabwe), if you want to come with me.

-*Siyalibonga* (we thank you).

She spoke in plural, for she felt her spirits with her.

-We have to be careful, NoLwasi. In South Africa most of the whites hate us immigrants, and even more if we come from Zimbabwe, because we are a bad example of liberation for their oppressed people. I have seen the police going up to the water tanks and I fear they have poured some poison. I have a friend inside the Johannesburg water department who is going to see the tests.

-I do not think so, Bastirai. That would affect all people, not just young men, let alone their wives a thousand miles away.

- White racists hate our young people and their free expression.

-I know, Bastirai. However, there are no ways to just affect them by water or by food.

-I am concerned that the lives they lead here are dishonest with their families in Zimbabwe. They spread the evil of dishonest relationships, which angers our spirits.

At that moment, a child's cry sounded from a next room. A woman called out in the Xhosa language to Bastirai.

-*Bastirai*, be brave enough to tell me the truth: does your family in Zimbabwe know about your life here?

He was already getting up to go to the next room. The question made him uncomfortable and he reacted aggressively by pointing his finger at her:

-Comrade NoLwasi, liberation demands sacrifices from everyone.

-Even the deepest sacrifices, and precisely for the noblest causes, deserve to be allied with the truth.

-The only truth is that we are a people in struggle and we have to survive.

-I will tell you something, Bastirai: in my communication with the spirits, I have learned that there is nothing that breaks more the harmony of humans with the unknown world from which we come and to which we go, than the lie. It always turns against us.

Bastirai did not know what to answer, he simply said:

-*Amandhla!* (strength!)

-*Lisale kuhle equiniseni* (Be at peace with the truth).

NoLwasi knew she could not really trust Bastirai, as she had put him on the spot, and his ideas, like those of other "*freedom fighters*", seemed obsessed with the origin of the disease in white racism.

Many *nyangas* had cautioned her against looking for "causes" of illness, for it was like questioning the spirits' doing. "They know well what they are doing." NoLwasi refused to watch her people die slowly in pain without understanding why. Somehow, it was the spirits, too, who were sending her to find out what made them angry. What was disturbing the harmony of her people?

She sought out the young people of Matabeleland. It was not difficult. A group in the street spoke Ndebele and she went over to ask them. She told them their names of the five young men from her village, she was looking for. In a slum of almost a million people, it was difficult to find specific persons, but after enquiring in seven different houses, each one directing her to the next, she found the house of a young man named Teya (trapped).

Teya was a young man about five years older than NoLwasi. They had played together in the village during their childhood. He was a good drummer, very fast at running and always very cheerful. Teya married four years before to a girl who lived near the village, at St. Joseph's mission. Eventually Teya moved to his wife's *kraal* where they were building their mud and thatch house. Following the trend of many of the young men of his age, he left one day for Soweto. He already had two children with his wife when he went south. He had been back twice-in four years, for Christmas. On his last visit back home, he met his third son, aged one year and three months. Teya sent occasionally some money to Bulawayo from where, as with the other youngsters, a person - after keeping a share - would take it to the families. He started writing a letter every month, but he had not written for the last two years.

NoLwasi knocked on the door. She noticed that someone pried her from behind some curtains of the only window. They opened stealthily:

-Who is it?

-I am NoLwasi, Siphon Dube, Masora's granddaughter, from Sanzukwi.

The door opened wide. Teya was in her thirties. He had grown out her *dreadlocked* hair, wore only rather dirty black pants and nothing from the waist up. His face was pale, his gaze lost, and NoLwasi noticed how his cheekbones were beginning to show prominent. His body had been strong, but the spaces between his ribs were beginning to sink in. In the brief seconds of the initial greeting, she noticed the warning red spot on the side of his neck. Behind him was a room about ten by ten feet, communicating with another, separated by a red curtain. A light bulb hung from the ceiling and its dim glow gave more shadows than light. A sofa full of broken pieces from where the foam was sticking out, occupied half of the space. In front of it, a table with unwashed plates and glasses. A child was crawling around the house and a woman's presence was noticeable on the other side of the curtain. He noticed several posters on the walls of magazine advertisements with pictures of luxury cars, gold watches and large music chains.

NoLwasi noticed a smoke with a smell and even a taste like sweet and sour, and Teya's reddened eyes. There were also empty beer bottles in the corners.

-*Sipho! Singani! Abanye banyani?* (How are you? How are our people?)

- I am fine, Teya. But our people are worried. That is why I have come all this way.

-What are you worried about? Here we are working hard in the mines to help our families. In our dry Matabeleland, we can't do anything.

NoLwasi watched the crawling child and looked into his eyes. Then she looked at his emaciated body, at the smoke rising from a bowl on the table, at his reddened and telltale eyes, at the state of the room. Teya knew well what that look meant. And she knew well that Sipho had powers.

-Sipho, this child is a friend's son, and I know I need a little tidying up. The smoke is to cure an illness. I am getting weak from working so hard.

-Call me NoLwasi, Teya. That is how everyone calls me now. I will tell you something: many things I do not understand. There are many times that I cannot listen to the advice of our *amakhosi* to assist those

who ask me. There are times when I hesitate between which plants to use and how to prepare them. However, there is one thing I know how to see very clearly and very soon: the lie. It seems that here in Soweto it is even more common than alcohol and drugs.

At that moment, a rather obese woman came out, her hair hidden with a plastic bag filled with Vaseline. She wore only a bra and a cloth around her waist that encircled her shapely figure. Her eyes were painted and the skin on her face showed light areas from the arsenic products they sold to lighten the skin. NoLwasi detested those ways of infringing on nature, while trying to hide it. The woman looked at her defiantly and hugged Teya from behind.

NoLwasi looked at Teya in the eye again.

-Nancy. This is NoLwasi, from my village in Matabeleland.

Nancy spoke to her :

-Have you already found someone to take you in? There are men who prefer slim bodies like yours and you will have a lot of work soon.

It was clear what the woman was referring to, who winked and gave a knowing smile. NoLwasi hated everything in that place: the image, the smell, the lies, the prostitution, the drugs, and the filth.

-Nancy, I have to go with NoLwasi to look for a place. I will be back late.

-If you cannot find me, do not be surprised.

They left the place. NoLwasi felt nauseous.

-NoLwasi, where are you staying? I can find a place for you.

-I have somewhere to stay. From what I have seen, the last thing I would do would be to take your advice. Have you seen what your life has become?

-I am a man, NoLwasi. That does not change even if I travel a thousand miles.

-Does being a man mean lying?

-All our women in Matabeleland know that we are not alone in Soweto. But they don't ask.

-Of course, because you beat them for doubting you, and at the very least, you lie to them.

-Well, whatever. Here we spend most of our time working very hard in the mines. Have you ever been down a mine?

-No.

-Every morning trucks leave here with thousands of workers at five o'clock in the morning. At half past five, we already have to be in line to get into the elevators that take us down to hell. They only call us by number: I am Bantu number 1346. If you lose your number, you lose your job. If you are late, the guards hit with sticks in front of everyone to make their power clear so that you do not come late again. We enter hell. The elevators, iron boxes without any protection, go down about three hundred meters. The air is thick, full of sulfur, it seems to suffocate you. It is more than fifty degrees. The lamps that we carry in the helmet barely illuminate two meters around. Even in that hell, the sticks and the screams continue. We work without rest for four hours. You do not know what is worse, whether it is the shift of chopping the walls, dragging the wagons full of dirt and rocks, or cleaning the tunnels and the tracks with the shovels. You ask yourself a thousand times every day why you are here. You remember your children, your wife, your parents, the clean Matabeleland sunsets, the rhythms of the drums and dances, the warmth of your parents' gaze, the races chasing the impalas. My memory of "*ekaya*". (the house, the root), is of light.

-And why are you still here?

-When we came we did so against the wishes of our families, and assured them that we would succeed, we would bring money to build houses without the dust of adobe, roofs without the leaks of thatch, deep wells that do not run dry, even clothes and appliances with batteries or generators. We dreamed of going back in a car and taking our parents to Bulawayo, putting them to rest after a tough life ploughing a handful of maize or millet from the dry sands of the Kalahari.

-How could I return with nothing in my hands? I would be the laughingstock of the whole town, and a disgrace to the family.

-It is better to return like this than not to return at all, or to return in a wooden box like Lizwelicha Mabhoko, Mjayelwa, Sifiye and Vusimzi.

At that moment, Teya let his poised appearance melt away. He became quiet and his eyes moistened. NoLwasi had great respect for

those moments when a person's soul comes out with its greatest sincerity, swathed in the water of truth held back so long.

-They were my friends, Siphos.

-And mine, Teya.

They stopped and looked at each other face to face. Teya felt, as he had not felt for a long time. Someone was shining with the truth, in that city of pain, sacrifice, fear, lies, despair.

-You have to tell me what is going on. I need to understand. I need our ancestors' alliance with the truth. They are listening to you.

Teya remembered at that moment the deep gaze of the Ndebele warrior *Mandhla*, NoLwasi's grandfather. He felt a shiver. He noticed that he was looking at him.

-*Sifiye* was the first. When we came, he was joining bad company. He went from bar to bar and brothel to brothel. He would quench his longing for *ekaya* or his anger or fears with alcohol and women. I spoke to him several times. I advised him not to go with that group, warned him he would end up in jail, sick or worse. After a year, he started coughing and losing weight. We looked for *umuti* (medicines) but nothing helped. He used to say that Masora would have taken care of him. I took him to my house. He lost his job, everything. He was going down to his bones. He could no longer get up from the ground even to relieve himself, laying down on his own dirt and covered by flies. I tried to wash him but here they ration our water, very scarce. I tried to feed him with spoons. But he was getting weaker and weaker. He threw up everything. On his last night he asked me to hold his hand. I still remember his words:

-Teya, *ungane wami* (my friend). I have been unfaithful to my wife, my parents and my ancestors. I vented my fears of the mine in alcohol, my loneliness as a man in dirty sex, my responsibility as a father and husband in oblivion. I ended up not being me. No longer knowing who I was. The disease comes from women who sell their bodies. I have seen it in some of them who stay behind the curtains. Teya, alert our people. And I ask you a favor before I leave this world: During the first months I was keeping money under a brick, under the kitchen of the house where I lived. I ask you to take it and bring my body back to the *kraal* so that I can be reunited with our *amakhosi* and plead

compassion. I will explain to them what is happening. They need to come to our aid, to remove the blindfold from our eyes.

At that moment, NoLwasi saw that Teya had a white spot on his tongue.

-Teya, you must return with me to the village. I assure you that if you don't, you will end up like Sifiye and the others. I still don't know if I can help you.

-I would not know how to look my family in the eye, NoLwasi.

-Better to look with sincerity and humility, than to never see the clean smiles of your children again. We must also look for *Jabulani*.

-Jabulani died last week. He had nothing under any bricks.

-We will leave at dawn.

Returning to James' house, NoLwasi noticed in a small wooden house with a dim light from a kerosene lamp, girls talking Ndebele. She was touched to hear it. Perhaps the Matabeleland youths with double lives in Soweto were at least keeping the language alive in their bastard children. The smile faded from her face as she walked toward James's house.

She would soon know why.

XXII. An Empire of Contrasts. Berkeley, California, 1984

AIMSA WAS ALREADY in her fourth year of college at Berkeley. She got gradually involved in social action with those marginalized, the homeless and the growing number of drug addicts. President Reagan had imposed a law limiting government shelter and support for the homeless. In the most powerful country in the world, behind its clean streets and facades, there was a whole world of need, those who did not succeed in the society of "opportunities".

Aimsa was also dismayed the many people who lacked health insurance and even the unemployed, poor or pensioners who had access to public insurance (*medicaid* and *medicare*) but with very partial and inadequate services. Of course, the poor in Calcutta, the life of "the white tigers", had nothing to do with the homeless in *People's Park*. But while physical need was lower in the realm of plenty, loneliness was a heavy slab on half the population of the supposed Californian dream. She felt pity, anger, but above all, deep compassion for the elderly who wandered the streets to the indifference of most. She befriended in particular a woman named Sally.

Sally was in her seventies, but looked over ninety. She had long, unkempt white hair, but she was never without her green plastic headband. Her eyes were framed by the deep wrinkles that a lifetime of pain had furrowed across her face. Her toothless mouth rarely opened to speak or smile. Nor many times to eat.

She carried a *Walmart* cart filled with plastic bags of clothes, bottles, discarded books, and utensils, toys, and miscellaneous gadgets she found on the streets. Aimsa would bring her soup every night that she would heat up in the kitchen of the science building where she attended classes in the evenings. It took her four days to deserve Sally's gaze and for her to even look at the soup. On the fifth day, Sally gave her a sideways glance and walked over to the soup. She made as if she despised it but as Aimsa rode away on her bike, she glanced back sidelong and watched Sally put the spoon in her mouth. That night Aimsa winked at the stars from where her mother watched her. She continued to go every day. Over time Sally told Aimsa her story. She was born in a small town in Oregon. Her parents had gone broke by

spending all their savings on her father's bowel cancer. Even so, her father died, and her mother was left with nothing, on the street.

Sally was ten years old when the Great Depression hit. The few temporary jobs her mother held disappeared, and with no family nearby, they found themselves homeless. Her mother died soon after of fevers that no one treated. At the age of fourteen Sally began serving in bars and restaurants. She had several unkind boyfriends and became pregnant by one she never saw again.

Jobless and cursed in a town full of religious prejudice, she ended up on the streets of San Francisco begging with her baby, and occasionally getting jobs cleaning doorways and scrubbing floors in some houses. She managed to get her son into a daycare center and eventually into school. She told him stories of a better past and dreams of an even better future. In this way, she lived devoted to her little boy, without trusting men and hardly anyone in a hostile society. Only seldom, she saved up and went to see Hollywood movies with which she dreamed of other worlds. It happened that her son, already in high school, entered the world of drugs and the harmony of his body, mind and soul collapsed. His mother tried everything, even locking him up to isolate him from the damned drug dealers who lived sucking the blood and life out of her poor James who became a wandering skeleton with a lost look in his eyes. She tried drug withdrawal clinics with some parishes and spending her little money in some private center. Nothing worked. James even started stealing from her and even assaulted her on occasion. One day she found him lifeless from an overdose on the couch in the room where they lived. Since then, Sally hardly spoke; she could find no reason to live and no strength to stop living. She had grown inured to see the years go by, dragging a cart where perhaps she kept symbols of a better past. Or amulets for a better future.

Aimsa started going to lectures and reading in the library as she watched hundreds of families, or at least parents with children about to enter the university, stroll through the huge campus stopping at each building, consulting its history, its successes or contributions to humanity, venerating the strength of knowledge of that place, unique in the world. Those families had saved a lifetime to be able to bring those young people who walked with their parents venerating every corner of what would be their life for the next four years and would soak them

with knowledge and questions with which to challenge the great questions of Humanity. More than forty Nobel Prize winners had originated in those buildings their contributions to human knowledge and progress.

One of the first lectures Aimsa attended, after the one on the mysterious illness of San Francisco, was that of the recent Nobel laureate Czeslaw Milosz, a Lithuanian professor of Slavic languages at Berkeley, who spoke of the dark fate of Eastern Europe between the wars and the period of Soviet communism. His descriptions, full of the deepest feeling and with the rhyme and gentle soaring of poems touched Aimsa to the depths of her heart. He then spoke of the oppositions of life and death, truth and falsehood and reality and hope. It was then that Milosz drew the connection between reality and hope. He related it to the nostalgia of his land, Lithuania, invaded by Soviet rule. Certainly, communism had oppressed part of the world and Gorbachev was meeting with Reagan to prepare for *perestroika*, the humanization of communism. But wasn't the capitalism that let Sally sleep in the park just as savage?

She was eager to understand the mysteries of physics and astonished by the lessons and lectures of professors with fascinating ideas that challenged the frontiers of understanding. She saw the cyclotron that Lawrence had invented, a contemporary of her admired geniuses of quantum physics, a true telescope of the most essential matter. She felt amazed by Segre's lectures and his discoveries on anti-matter, listened to Glaser talk about his methods to know the path of subatomic particles and to Townes describe how he came to invent laser beams and their applications in science and medicine. She fell fascinated by chemistry. She attended classes and read the books of Melvin Calvin who used Lawrence's cyclotron to study carbon-14 and thereby follow the cycle of photosynthesis: the transformation of the sun's energy into life.

Another old professor, Seaborg, explained how he applied Lawrence's cyclotron techniques to discover radioactive atoms and up to fourteen chemical elements, which would later be called "rare earths", destined to free mankind from its dirty dependence on fossil fuel combustion. But it was not all theoretical knowledge. Lasers were already being used in medicine and Seaborg explained how his

discovery of radioactive iodine saved his mother's life. Aimsa was studying in the shadow of those knowledge giants, who often acted humbly and, like most students, rode their bicycles around the magical campus. From the world of physics and chemistry, she moved on to biology and the sciences of the human body with equal passion and captivation. A young man named Andrew Fire was studying his thesis, which later led the world to understand the connection between genes and proteins. Aimsa submerged herself in the mysteries of the human genome and shared classes with a young woman named Carol Greider who would later discover the life of genes and the enzymes that clean up their decaying ends, the telomerases, which would later challenge human aging. She advanced in understanding the behavior of cells, thus embracing the immense mystery of the human body and thus came to better understand what years before, when she arrived at Berkeley, that young doctor from San Francisco had described about the disease now known to all as AIDS, which was already affecting thousands of people, not only homosexuals. She wrote and made diagrams that she hung in her room, which she now rented to Rob and Kathy, with whom she had developed a close friendship.

In the last year, she had been concentrating on the study of philosophical, social, political and economic thought. She applied her scientific wit and unusual clairvoyance in relating reality, energy and the destinies of actions. She often remained deep in thought, calculating links between those theories and drawing in her mind the relationships of the concepts. In philosophy, she was unraveling Western thought and comparing it with what she had been absorbing from her Buddhist training in the ashram. She studied with passion the life of the aristocratic Plato and his dialogues with the worldly, almost vagabond Socrates and how he opposed the political forms of the time and proposed a new order.

All this resonated strongly in Aimsa's soul, so long yearning to understand in order to act, to alleviate the suffering of a world full of darkness and injustice. She thought of the image of the soul according to Plato, like a chariot of black and white horses, man's tendencies of goodness and evil, dominated by reason. She studied in his work, *The Republic*, the concept of justice and the proposed structure of society and the state. Although she saw the wisdom of Plato as it was already

more than two thousand years since his proposal of the state and the relationships between people, their activities and the public square. She was disappointed, though, to see how Plato defended the concept of war and armies. Aimsa then read Descartes and Hobbes trying to fit religious beliefs into philosophical frameworks. Impossible. She came to read George Berkeley, whose name inspired the place where he now lived and studied the world.

Despite detesting Berkeley's Catholic aristocracy, his life as a bishop and his tolerance of slavery, she was astonished to see how, two hundred years ago, that Irish religious man had already predicted that reality only exists when we observe it. She went on to study Voltaire and his courageous confrontation of intolerant Catholicism with concepts of social justice, and Rousseau in his political concept of the social contract. Then she discovered Kant and his limits of reason, and how Nietzsche saw in the denial of God the European precipice towards nihilism. Above all, she favored the thoughts of Russell, Sartre and Chomsky, whom she listened to at a conference and dared to exchange some ideas on the harmony between his anarcho-socialist ideas and Buddhism in its social essence.

She led a vegan life in alliance with nature, against pain and the dominance of species among and within each other. She would ride her bike up the slopes of Berkeley Hills arriving drenched in sweat. She bathed with basins of fresh water as she felt hot water made her feel drowsy, numbed her soul and attuned her to life, much like the alcohol she once tasted. Aimsa read Tagore with a candle, meditated in yoga position and talked to her mother in the stars.

She spent her senior year of *college* at Berkeley delving into political thought and writing an essay on the divergent synchronicity of American independence and the French Revolution.

Aimsa had already lived four years devouring the opportunities of knowledge that had spared her life in the streets and dumps, and learning in the country of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". Such declaration of independence legitimized that when the rights of the people were not respected, "the people have the right to reform the form of government and to institute a new government founded upon such principles, and to organize their powers in such form as in their

judgment shall offer the greatest probability of attaining their safety and happiness."

Aimsa felt that the most powerful country in the world did not respected life. Much less in the many countries that fell within its marginal sphere of political and economic power.

With it all, she read Marx and so many others and began to believe in a world without borders, without religions and without property.

At that time, she was involved in several alternative movements to the dominant capitalist system, although she avoided being abducted by any political party. She followed in detail the events of the Reagan-Thatcher talks and the birth of the Washington Consensus: The Real Law of the Jungle of Capitalism. So she wrote a college essay exposing how the freedom of the flow of capital (so-called "liberal" ideology), over and above the rights of individuals and the common good, actually shackled human beings to unfair abundance or undeserving poverty. She thought of mathematical models that she called "the ethical zone of equity" and what departures from it at either extreme could do to the world, as Plato already alerted over two thousand years ago.

At that time, she was exploring a consequence of that "liberal" movement, really liberating for the clutches of the market, chaining for human freedom and dignity. She felt a strange vertigo as she saw the world rushing towards a voracious, alienating capitalism, with nests and nubs of greed that attracted with inexhaustible ambition, all the Earth's resources and people's energy.

With Rob's help, she read classified documents in which a certain Edmund Pratt, the powerful president of the pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, proposed shielding "intellectual property" in international negotiations on trade and customs, known as the *General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade* (GATT). Aimsa felt that this idea could sow even wider gaps in the world, already cracked at its core by abysmal differences between its white tigers and American millionaires. She was able to read a speech by Pratt at the National Foreign Trade Council in which he astutely linked trade with intellectual property and investment. Shortly thereafter, he became chairman of the council.

The following months saw Reagan assign other top Pfizer officials to White House positions related to competitiveness and trade. Other top executives of powerful American companies, such as Opel and

IBM, were influencing William Brock, then trade representative for the U.S. government. Brock, in turn, influenced, with the financial power of the American contributions, the directors, always American, of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Aimsa was able to obtain documents in which she saw the same pressure exerted by American cooperation in "developing countries". Several "Bilateral Investment Treaties" between the United States and developing countries already included intellectual property protection clauses.

It all became very clear when Aimsa watched Reagan's speech to Congress on television on February 6, 1986. During his speech, called "America's Agenda for the Future," he proposed as a high priority for America the protection of American intellectual property abroad. Aimsa felt a chill at the new times. If knowledge about vital solutions or drugs would be tied to monopolies of the powerful, the consequences could be devastating.

Over the next six months, Aimsa followed the footsteps of American companies, led by Pfizer and IBM, fiercely lobbying private companies in Europe, Japan and Canada to press on their governments to bring the proposal to link intellectual property to trade to the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations. To that end, Prat and Opel created the Intellectual Property Committee. Aimsa followed the development of that committee in detail. The members were economic giants: Pfizer, Bristol-Myers, Johnson&Johnson and Merck, dominating the pharmaceutical sector, DuPont the chemical sector, Monsanto the agricultural production sector, General Motors, FMC Corporation and Rockwell International in armaments machinery, General Electric in electricity generation, Hewlett-Packard and IBM the computer industry and Warner in the entertainment industry. Together, these companies dominated one third of the American economy, and with the automobile and oil industries, two thirds.

During those months, thousands of meetings in the United States, Europe and Japan, in hotels and luxury yachts managed to unite the empire of greed and influence the wealthy governments of the planet. Aimsa watched with sadness and fear of the new world into which humanity was entering as the Ministerial Declaration of the meeting in Uruguay that September 1986 included a mandate to negotiate the link between world trade and intellectual property.

At that time Aimsa was also involved in protest groups against American support for the Contras in Nicaragua and the fascist military and oligarchic regimes in Guatemala, El Salvador, Argentina, Chile and most of the rest of Latin America on a constant or intermittent basis. She investigated the South American plans and Operation Charlie in Central America and discovered, with contacts in Washington and within the CIA, the worst atrocities, kidnappings and disappearances, torture, mass executions and clandestine burials. Aimsa wept with rage as she read these brutalities before the mesmerizing abundance and mass media of the most powerful people in the world. She then came across a group of like-minded freedom fighters in El Salvador, a small but densely populated country where six families owned ninety percent of the land. They were in contact with rebels of the Farabundo Marti Front and were able to connect with "Radio Venceremos", the resistance to the powerful "*Voice of America*" that was invading the entire continent with capitalist and anti-communist propaganda.

One day they received a letter from a comrade in one of the villages controlled by the front:

My dear friends,

Let's hope you are doing well with chamba and feria (work and money). We are being harassed by the fascist army. They have already come three times in the last month to our town. They arrive at night, usually after reconnaissance flights. About ten military vehicles come with a company of about 50 soldiers. They all wear dark glasses and are armed to the teeth by the American government. They raze whoever they find, accusing us of being communists and terrorists. No matter, old women, children, old people are beaten. Girls (young women) are raped and shoot some of them to sow panic. Others are macheted and others are taken to their headquarters, from where, as we know, they never return. We have established a warning system between villages and we hide in the forest when they arrive. But the last few times they have followed us into the forest and the cipotes (children), cold, hungry and afraid, cry and so they may find us. We wanted to ask you if you can send us something to stop the cipotes from crying so we can hide safely.

Until victory, we will continue to fight comrades.

They could only respond to such anguish by sending boxes of sleeping pills that they collected from supportive friends around the university. She thought of the same concept applied to so many solidarity projects that do not change the roots of the problem: sleeping pills that alleviate the consciousness of reality for a while.

In those months, the news of the famine in Ethiopia was devastating. There was already talk of a million dead, and the images of thousands of skeletal adults and children with nothing to eat broke her heart and kept her awake at night. She cried many nights of rage hugging newspaper clippings saying, "I will help you, I will help you".

The year ended with the Bhopal disaster in which the industry of unlimited production, consumption and profit exploited workers in her country, India, and exposed them to the risks of lethal toxins. Eight thousand people died of horrific burns and ten times as many were left with lifelong consequences. No one responsible was ever convicted. The company continued to do business worth millions.

Such was the anguish. Such were the dramas in a world that smiled on its façade but harassed in the backyard those who dared to think that the market should not dominate. Or stifled any rebellion of the poor. A country full of sharp minds, great hearts devoted to charity, open and affectionate people, fascinating music, movies and literature, immense nature and yet so stagnant and self-sequestered in abundance or the desire to have it. She could not understand how a country that claimed to follow Christianity in an almost fanatical way, was a staunch enemy of communism, the greatest expression of solidarity, of renouncing personal property, of working not for oneself, but for the common good. If the East was full of mysteries and cruel traditions - for example concerning women in India - the West waved the flag of freedom, democracy and solidarity with enormous and sometimes consciously hypocritical contradictions. It was a question of *satia*: to seek the truth and to make it spread in the world, choked by fears, powers and selfishness that destroyed humanity and nature.

Aimsa received his graduation with honors, and thought, for the first time in her life to get away from both her mind and her spirit. Both with a self-demand to the limit. She needed to simply enjoy her senses. She took off with her bike and a backpack, climbed Vollmer Peak to

see the horizon of the Pacific Ocean, imagining the shores of her Bombay and the mountain range that protected her ashram.

She saw the sunset hiding behind the immense ocean, she played her flute in the wind, she saw the first stars and in them her mother, she bathed naked in Lake Tilden with only the presence of some deer and raccoons. She went swiftly down with her mane in the wind to the city where she met Sally in the Park and together they sang "Imagine". Sally went to the park every night but now lived with a group connected with Goodwill, where Aimsa was still helping out.

Aimsa met a guy from the politics lessons and went with him to listen to David Gilmour and they sang the protest of "Another brick on the wall" in anger.

In a strange way, Aimsa felt a weight of injustice to have had those years so much privilege and time for knowledge while millions of white tigers and Sallys had barely enough strength and opportunity to survive.

Their destiny was not in privilege. It was against it. The world claimed her.

Where would she start from?

XXIII. Love at life limits. Matabeleland, Zimbabwe, 1984

PATXI HAD GONE for an early run through the dry Kalahari countryside. He liked to do it at dawn and greet those who were already on their way or working in their *kraal*. When he returned, as it was Thursday, the truck would have come with sacks of maize meal and the previous day's mail, which the driver, Alois, would pick up at the diocese. He hardly received any letters, since his family was not in the habit of writing, except for his namesake uncle, who continued with his devotion to the parish of Garai. He did keep up a pleasant correspondence with Rob, who was already a professor at Berkeley. He lived in such a different world that he sometimes found it difficult to explain it and be understood, or to relate it to life back home. However, he always looked forward to Thursday's potential letters, without quite knowing why.

When he returned, he would take a good shower with basins of water from the well. He had devised a system outside the house, near the wood and straw porch, and covered by a plank, to bring the water up and let it fall bit by bit with a chain.

Refreshed, he went into the house and found the week's mail on the table. There was a newsletter from the diocese (he was bored by many of the bishop's conservative missives), an issue of the magazine of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, very interesting, the local newspaper *The Bulawayo Sun*, very much subjugated to the government, a magazine from Caritas-Misereor in Germany and its organization Medeor (from where they bought the medicines for the health center), letters from the Ministry of Health, from the College of Medical Professionals (he had been asking for a nurse for Saint Joseph for two years already) and from the Ministry of Education (about the mission's elementary school, for which they sent him minimal contributions in materials). There were also two envelopes addressed to him, whose senders immediately piqued his curiosity: one was from Juan Mari Beloki, his brother, with no mailing address; another, from a name he had not seen before: Jonay Harris Arteaga, El Cabrito, La Gomera, Canary Islands.

He had little time to have some tea and bread, leave for a funeral and then visit various projects, teach a class in the carpentry shop,

another in the school (he taught English and mathematics), meet with a catechumenal group and spend the afternoon seeing patients in the health center. He was concerned about three girls who had been admitted with diarrhea to the small admissions ward. He could barely give them more than serums and antidiarrheal drugs, and rule out if they had malaria or dysentery. They were extremely thin.

He decided to open Juan Mari's letter, and leave Jonay's for the end of the day. While he was having tea on the porch, he opened the envelope with excitement. He had not heard from his brother in seven years, since he had seen him outlawed in the Urkiola Mountains. He always remembered him; in his prayers at salves and vespers, at mass and at dawn. He feared that he was in jail, or that he had been involved in blood crimes, or that something serious had happened to him. The letter was in Basque:

Anaya Patxi

I ask you to burn this letter as soon as you have read it. Write to me at Uncle Patxi's parish, but without putting my name on the envelope.

It has been seven years since we met and you left for Africa. During this time I have continued as a gudari in the struggle for the freedom of our people. I know that you and the family do not understand me, but my democratic and freedom ethics demand it. Despite my commitment to the liberation of the Basque people from the oppressive and capitalist Spanish state, I have always refused to commit blood crimes. Since the transition in the Spanish state and the statute of Guernica, I identify myself more with the Basque National Liberation Movement and some of its organizations. You will be able to see me writing under the pseudonym of Chistu in Gara, I send you in this envelope a copy of my last article.

During the five years after we met, I have been in a commando and often hidden in hideouts in the bush. As the police have never registered me, I have been a "legal" member, and the organization has been pressing on me more and more to commit assassinations. I have limited myself to the extortion of capitalists in the Basque country and to give part of that money to shelters and Basque organizations of resistance to the state.

During this time, I have seen how the organization has become deaf to the people's rejection of violence and blind to the democratic paths to independence and freedom for our people. I have been following Yoyes' footsteps since she left the organization in 1980. Through a friend, I maintain a secret correspondence (if it is possible to do anything secret in my already secret life) with her, now in Mexico. She represents the committed and courageous, but non-violent struggle at this moment in the history of the Basque people. In her last letter, she told me about the injustices of the organization threatening dissidents and obsessed by the violence of innocents. All because of a network of some guilty of this injustice, others impotent before it and many in complicit silence. Fear of our own freedom. She told me how the myth of ETA is now a bloody hydra that grips us.

At a meeting last year, a comrade, Miguel, and I, opposed an attack on a Civil Guard barracks in Hernani. Miguel had fought as a gudari for many years during the Franco regime. He was the mastermind of the escape of political prisoners from Basauri prison in 1968, he had been in jail and was released last year. He wanted to participate in clandestine meetings to discourage blood crimes, and that is how I met him. He supported me in my positions within the gang. A few months ago, ETA killed Miguel in a cafeteria in Algorta in the presence of his wife and two daughters.

I feel threatened, and I believe that the next time I refuse an attack, I may be executed.

I do not deny the struggle for liberation. There are 800 prisoners in jail, many without blood crimes and who simply want the freedom of the Basque people to choose their destiny. The Spanish state is torturing and the GAL is killing our comrades with impunity. But I can't go on, Anaya.

Since I saw you, I have thought a lot about you. In your words of peace. But if I leave the band and go back to the hamlet or look for a job and a normal life, I run the risk of death.

That is why I am writing to you, Anaya. While this crazed armed struggle is over, I would like to come and live with you for a while and help you in your mission. I confess that I do not believe in God, but I admire your work for those who are marginalized in the world and oppressed in their most basic rights by cruel capitalism.

If you'd rather I didn't come, I'll understand that too.
I'm looking forward to hearing a lot about your life.
Have my fraternal embrace,
Juan Mari

Patxi remained meditative for a while, with the letter in his hands, looking at the infinite, he noticed that his eyes were blurring with sentiment. For years it had been his main pain, knowing that his brother was trapped in the worst of human traps, that of violence. This letter showed his brother's good heart, his courage and the opportunity that life was giving him to help him. He would reply that very night.

Patxi then drove his pick-up truck to the Katonga's *kraal*. It was a family of two elderly parents, almost blind and very weak, with four children. The two eldest had gone to Egoli. The eldest was killed in the 1976 Soweto protests. After those happenings, the second allied himself with Nkomo's ZANU and was a refugee in Botswana. The third worked in a factory in Bulawayo. The youngest, Awande ("may love grow"), had died the day before.

Awande was 25 years old. Patxi met her when he arrived in Saint Joseph. She helped him some days at the clinic. Patxi had a weakness for Awande. Many nights he needed the cold shower to stop his desires for her as a man. She was cheerful, simple and very sweet. She had beautiful eyes and a very tender gaze, a very fine nose and a smile that illuminated everything. When she was twenty years old, she married a young man from about fifty kilometers to the north, from Sanzukwi, whose name was Teya. They settled in the Katonga *kraal*. She became pregnant soon after. Even before his son's birth, Teya left for Egoli, following Awande's brothers and other young men from her village. He returned at the first Christmas with some money and gifts for Awande and little Joseph: Awande had insisted on the name, to honor Patxi's mission.

They had not heard from him for the following three years. Life had been very hard for the Katonga clan. They had suffered the droughts, the cattle plagues, the violence of the fifth brigade, the death of their eldest son, the disquiet about their second son, the absence of news from Teya, and now Awande's illness and agony.

Awande began a year earlier to have a cough and difficult breathing. Patxi saw her at the dispensary. He identified signs of tuberculosis. A doctor from the Cuban internationalists in the Brunapeg mission, Dr. Manuel Casado, who came once a month, had taught him some of those signs. Patxi perceived the sound of "treading on snow" when auscultating her chest. He could notice her extreme thinness. She also had painful lumps in her neck on palpation and a somewhat enlarged spleen. He also noticed how the fingers were slightly deformed, widening at the ends, like what Dr. Casado called "drumsticks".

Her body was full of small rough pimples. The skin became like fine sandpaper, which was also unbearably itchy. They could not wait for the next visit of the Brunapeg's doctor, so Patxi started treating her for tuberculosis. All he had were streptomycin injections and a few isoniazid and thioacetazone tablets, which were no longer used in Europe because of their toxicity. He kept her for several days in the bed ward next to the dispensary. Patxi asked one of the aspirant seminarians to monitor her temperature and breathings per minute, three times a day. Her family took turns to be by her side, wash her and feed her with high protein, mainly wheat and millet bran, and *sadza* with "*amacimbi*".

She got better and better, and the family administered the rest of the injections in the *kraal*. She gained weight and her breathing improved. But a few months later she came to see Patxi at the clinic. She was again thin, sweaty and weak. She was admitted again in the ward. She had continuous diarrhea, and Patxi discovered white spots in her mouth. In the medical book that Rob had sent him from Berkeley, there were pages of pictures of diseases and he thought that it was a yeast infection of the mucous membranes. She found gentian violet, made mixtures and applied lotions twice a day.

Patxi also saw that Awande had some ulcers on her legs and treated them with potassium permanganate, the same one he used more diluted to clean the vegetables in the garden. He did not see or read anything like that sandpappy skin and unbearable itching in the medicine books they had in the mission. It looked like the tropical filarial lesion, which produced the dreaded "river blindness". But that filaria was only transmitted in fast water areas. Something unthinkable in two hundred

kilometers around. He could only apply vaseline creams to keep the skin moisturized, or wash it with glycerin soaps. He tried to bring down the fever with wet cloths, and tried to give her rice serums, chomolia well mixed with *sadza*, papaya and mango juices. With all this care, Awande improved somewhat, although she did not regain his weight.

By then, word had already spread of a cursed and incurable disease. *Ubhubhane*, the plague that kills, *isifo esibulalayo nesingañangekiyo*, the disease without cure. Some thought it was a curse from the spirits to dark souls, others thought it was from waters contaminated by the whites, and there were men who linked it to the dishonest lives of women. In any case, everyone was afraid of the disease, of being infected in some way, and they tried to stay away from anyone with signs of it.

The next time she fell ill was in the last month. Her diarrhea was so profuse and she was so thin that they did not even dare to put her on the cart pulled by the famished donkey to take her to the mission. Patxi went to see her twice or three times a week. She had been left alone in a hut. No one dared to come near her. They barely left her food next to her. Her mother did want to go near her, but she was very weak and could hardly help her eat. Patxi would tenderly clean her, keep her warm, give her a drink and tell her stories of his country, which Awande always asked to hear. Little Joseph watched frightened from a corner. Patxi felt deep tenderness for that woman. Always beautiful even now in her fragility, with the pronounced cheekbones, the strangely long eyelashes and the gentle gaze. He felt a very powerful force of wanting to embrace her and give her all his tenderness. Was he falling in love? He really wanted to spend all day caring for her, talking to her, listening to her and holding her hand. How could a man leave his wife and child and not come back?

The last afternoon that Patxi came to care for her, Awande was so weak that she did not want to drink, nor could she move her head. Her emaciated body was filled with sores, there were no more itchy lesions and the skin was smooth, thin and fragile. It would seem that her body did not even have the strength to defend itself through inflammation.

Patxi had assisted many persons on their deathbed, granting them spiritual relief. He declined to give them last rites. He considered that he had no supremacy to pardon sins or to prepare them to meet the

Creator in the other form of existence He had ready for them. He was an odd missionary without a baptismal or last rites booklet. The bishop and the old ecclesial hierarchy criticized him for that. But he knew how to take by the hand, to give his love, to light up with his gaze of hope towards a repose and a rebirth in another life, to remain united in the same energy that unified them all. So said Rob, who had become, in addition to a renowned professor of international relations, a scholar of quantum physics. He remembered each of the more than three hundred people he had accompanied to die in and around the mission, and the places where he had escorted the family to bury them, usually under the earth of the goat pen, close to their spirits and ancestors. Patxi had gone from skepticism to curiosity, intrigue and near belief that there was a world of spirits and ways to communicate with them.

He had once seen *nyangas* from other areas cure unexplained illnesses, or understand family and personal conflicts, in surprising ways. The local *nyanga*, however, was an old drunkard whom few trusted anymore. He was very intrigued to meet a *nyanga* from the Sanzukwi area, where the defector husband, Teya, came from, who was said to be in connection with the ancestral wisdom of the Kalanga people and their spirits, and who had treated several people with the strange disease. He asked people, but was told she was in South Africa. He also asked Awande if she would call her or take her to the hospital in *Brunapeg* with the Cuban doctor and she said no. She wanted to say goodbye to this world ... by his hand.

Thus passed the last afternoon. Patxi holding Awande's dying hand, with her relatives a few feet away, frightened by the strange illness, chanting Zulu chants and at times shouting to the ancestors. Awande asked Patxi to look after little Joseph when her parents would be too weak to do so. He promised. There were no words to explain that union. They simply looked at each other for more than an hour, with the greatest tenderness human beings can express. Their souls were more united in that hour than many others could have been in a lifetime together. During that time they felt a profound and unconfessable love. Patxi had never sensed anything like it before. How mysterious life could be that he came to feel it when Awande was about to leave that form of existence. His eyes became moist with tears of sadness and fear that he could not repress.

Awande encouraged him with a look of tenderness and by wiping the tears from his eyes with her weak hand and bringing them to her lips. It was the only physical relief in a bed of extreme weakness. So much so that she felt no strength even to question a fate so cruel, a departure so early, a love so beautiful and so broken by her departure. For the last few minutes she could not keep her eyes open. But she did not stop squeezing Patxi's hand until her last weak breath. Patxi made the sign of Christ with his own tears on her forehead and covered her with a sheet. Awande's parents were outside, already praying to the spirits. Her mother, upon hearing of her only daughter's death, went away to a corner of the *kraal* where she shouted angrily at the spirits. She berated them for the pain they sent her, for allowing so much suffering. The Ndebele and Kalanga often spoke that way to the spirits and to *Mkulumkulu*: with rage, with anger, reproving them for their idleness in allowing such pain or even their cruelty in causing it.

Patxi also felt an enormous rage. He walked away towards a kopje and looked out into the sunset. As the sun went down he felt the loss of that beautiful human being who had touched the deepest part of his soul. And he also rebuked, in the Zulu way and in a manner not allowed in his submissive Catholic religion, Jesus, God and whoever might be listening to him:

-Why so much suffering? Why? Don't you have enough sending us droughts, or plagues, or bloodthirsty brigades? Why do you take away innocent children with pain? Or women like Awande, honest and good to others? Why do you make them suffer like this? What is the point? Is it true that you love us? You will have a lot of explaining to do when we come to you! Or will you not even allow us to ask you this because we are disenchanted? Do you really exist?

At that moment the sun went down. And Patxi heard a breeze that was making the leaves of acacias and mopanes and sorghum fields vibrate, and in a strange way it enveloped him. He was sure that someone heard him. But he did not understand the answer.

With those memories, he arrived at the funeral. There would be some two hundred people. The family killed one of their three remaining goats, to give just a little meat broth with *sadza* to all those who came to honor Awande's departure. Teya's brother came, who had neither heard from his brother in the last three years. The family asked

Patxi to say a few words. These words came from his soul, in Ndebele, and looking at the same horizon where he saw Awande's life vanish the previous evening:

"Mukulunkulu, from our humble walk we want to make you feel another day our gratitude for the life you give us, our deep love as children. But today we especially want to show you our deep joy for having shared part of that walk with Awande, whose love will always be in our hearts. We know that those who already went with you will be listening to us today. We want to offer you our efforts in the fields, at work, in the schools and on the roads. Wherever you lead us, even if we do not understand the purpose and destiny of our lives. Give us always the strength of the love of life that you entrust us with and let that love be reflected in all our actions and thoughts towards our fellow beings".

Those words had been stuck in his soul for 40 years since, as a child, he heard his uncle.

After the funeral, Patxi spoke with Awanda's parents:

-Umkulu *wami*, *Ugogo wami*... (My grandfather, my grandmother; an expression of respect for age). I suffer with you...

Mmmmm. In a state almost absorbed by the pain, they could barely mumble expressions. Just some click Ndebele of pain.

-Awande will always be in my heart.

-She loved you more than anyone, Patxi," said the mother.

-Awande asked me to help you and Joseph's care. I will try to do everything I can for him.

-Patxi, we thought Joseph should go to Egoli to study.

-Why?

Several days ago a person came dressed as a Boer and in a very new car. He was from Egoli. He told us that his organization offered children from Matabeleland to study in a school in Egoli and would give them food, clothes and everything they needed. We no longer have the strength to take care of him.

-But won't you miss him? Won't he miss you? Look what happened to your eldest son. We don't know where they are taking him or what kind of studies or future awaits him.

-Patxi: look around you: three huts whose thatched roofs are falling off. A poor, half-empty goat pen, some half-dried sorghum fields and a small vegetable garden with scrawny *chomolias*. And two old persons who can hardly see or walk. Is there any future for Joseph worse than this?

-What about your son in Bulawayo? Doesn't he help you?

-He hardly ever comes to see us. He is good in his own way. He sends us some flour and money. But we barely have enough for the mission school fees.

-Don't worry, we have a fund for those who can't contribute anything. Joseph will have everything in the mission. And if you want, he can come with me. I will take care of him like a father.

-The person who came, besides offering Joseph a future, paid us five hundred Zimbabwean dollars (then about fifty US dollars). We took it, we had a lot of expenses with the funeral.

-My God, you have sold Joseph, without knowing where he is going! At least let me say goodbye to him. When will they come for him?

-Within two weeks.

-Lisale *kuhle* (Stay in peace).

He had at least hoped to keep the link with Awande through Joseph. But now he was leaving for an unknown future. At the same time he had promised Awande that he would take care of Joseph and protect him. There was something strange about the generosity of those South Africans for children from Matabeleland.

When he arrived at the mission, he asked one of the aspirant seminarians, Thembile, to enquire the women's group, the mission tent, and the school teachers if they had received visits from people claiming to help orphans. If they had visited other *kraal* or taken children already.

He still had to do the rest of the day's chores. He finished with the night, visiting the four patients admitted to the dispensary, two with ulcers that required treatment, a woman about to give birth and a child with diarrhea and fever.

Exhausted by his emotions, he took out on the porch a cup of tea and the envelope of that Jonay from the Canary Islands. In the dim, tinkling light of the kerosene lamp, he began to read:

Dear Father Patxi:

I hope that in your day-to-day work you will find the strength to help all the people who benefit from your work in the mission.

My name is Jonay Harris Arteaga. I am 23 years old. I was born in La Gomera and I am finishing my medical studies in Tenerife. A friend of my parents, your uncle Josu Beloki, recommended me to write to you. Josu helped us with his boat to rescue a woman and a girl from danger in Sierra Leone and now they live safely in La Gomera.

The reason for writing to you is the following: I have always been against violence and I want to object to doing military service. There is a possibility to do a substitute social service, if the organization hosting me justifies its social character and if activities are included in my social service (of one year duration) that contribute something to the objectives of your association.

I am passionate about my profession. I will become a physician next summer. I wish to contribute, as far as I can, to your mission in Zimbabwe. It is true that we finish our degree here without much practice, but I will try to do my best. For years I have been passionate about the idea of serving as a doctor to the most destitute dwellings in Africa. The person who took in the women that Josu rescued is a Cuban internationalist doctor, like a second father to me. He worked in Sierra Leone and has told me for many years about the life, the challenges, the means and the humanity of working in remote missions for the most needy.

Although I am a young doctor, I assure you that I will put my whole mind and heart into the care of the sick and the mission tasks in which I can help.

I have to tell you that my faith is not exactly Christian. I believe in a sense of love of life, but I do not believe that there is only one creed of salvation. I hope this is not an impediment to giving my best to your mission.

Thank you in advance for your attention and I look forward to hearing from you in the way that suits you best,

Sincerely yours,

Jonay

A day of emotions. Awande, Joseph, Juan Mari, Jonay... and immense daily challenges to love without fear. That same night he set out, by candlelight, to respond to Juan Mari and Jonay. He would welcome them with open arms. He already had many ideas to fill them with tasks and opportunities to express love to those most in need. Patxi's last moments before his nightly prayer were for Awande. He would always hold a unique place for her in his hurting heart.

XXIV. The dilemma of love and destiny. Teide, Tenerife, 1985

JONAY CLIMBED THE Teide volcano with Yolanda. They had been united for two years. They had been living together and with Yolanda's son, Martín, in a rented apartment that they paid by pooling their incomes. During that time, Jonay advanced in his studies, graduated, took some courses in tropical medicine and worked as a substitute in the emergency room of La Gomera hospital and in the health center of Hermigua. Between the two of them there was much tenderness but also an invisible, unspeakable barrier that parted them over and over. It broke their hearts to see that they could not be as happy as they had been in the innocence and oblivion of the alienation of passionate love.

As they climbed Mount Teide, Jonay thought about those two years discovering love in so many dimensions, and taking his first steps as a doctor. He carried a letter in his pocket that steered his destiny. He had to disclose it to Yolanda. He knew it would be the last impulse that would distance them as life partners. Yolanda also sensed the end. The two of them climbed to the summit in silence. Their eyes glazed over with pent-up emotion. Sometimes timidly and fearfully holding hands. They had taken a bus along the Orotava road to La Pizarra. It was a clear but very cold day, the frost was noticeable in the sparse vegetation. The sun was warming up imperceptibly, and the cold and the ice were melting, but not the coldness in their hearts. Jonay noticed the different colors of the rocks, coming from the different eruptions.

In their mutual silence, each one took refuge in their own thoughts, trying to overcome the feeling of sadness, loss and impending emptiness.

Jonay remembered how after that tense conversation with Dr. Delgado, he worked hard in his clinical exams and went on to his final year. He had written to Josu's missionary nephew, and got a reply within two weeks. Father Patxi told him that he was welcome and explained what the mission consisted of, the health needs of the region, the consultation room, wards and small operating room at the mission, the relationship with the hospital in Brunapeg, and the medical registration requirements in Zimbabwe. He reconciled himself to wait to finish his degree and arrive as a doctor, registered in the country and with a

clearer responsibility. He knew of non-governmental organizations that sent aid workers for rather short periods of time to cooperation projects, but he preferred to be a doctor in a health center such as the one at the St. Joseph's mission and receive his salary, even if it was local and very low at the exchange rate, from the Zimbabwean Ministry of Health. He also volunteered in the care of immigrants in Tenerife, through a local NGO. It was often more important to accompany them to look for homes and work, than to treat their ailments, which for fear of being deported as undocumented, they did not consult through the formal health system.

He advanced passionately in his studies, fascinated by every subject. In the clinic, he was enthusiastic about discerning possible diagnoses, exploring the patient and talking for a long time with them, thinking about their family, their history and their environment. Also about their needs and their perception of the disease. Dr. Delgado and his mistress could no longer prevent him from spending long hours in his white coat in the hospital, operating, treatment, emergency or delivery rooms. Many of the nurses loved his devotion to patients awaited his visits to the wards and told him which patients felt more lonely. He had once taken Yolanda to talk to patients. Although she was sweet at the beginning, after a while she disengaged and Jonay noticed her weariness when he had been talking to the patients, encouraging them, exploring them, massaging them or reading them poems. He spent the summer with Fernando. He did not leave his side during the consultations or during his shifts in the emergency room of the hospital in San Sebastian. They made a history of each case, of the living conditions that led to the disease, of the possible diagnoses, of how to avoid chemistry through traditional medicine and healthy lifestyles, of the treatments when they were necessary. Fernando also explained the complexity of the pharmaceutical industry and its interests, the benefits of private medicine and the corporatism of the medical hierarchies. They came to the conclusion that more than half of the sick in La Gomera were due to what they called the "loneliness syndrome". They had pleasant get-togethers in the house in front of the ravine and the beach of Arguamul, already finished and beautiful, but in the middle of a ghost town. Kadiatu spent long periods in San Sebastian working for the organization Gara, in defense of women's rights. She had finally

decided to live there and for Lisy to attend school in town, as she was already in high school. They saw each other on weekends but Fernando kept noticing a kind of melancholy that darkened Kadiatu's smile and hindered her happiness, no matter how much he tried to cheer her up. She began to go less and less to Arguamul. She always had some excuse not to go to. Kadiatu preferred fashionable clothes and dinners in restaurants to the hermit life in that viewpoint over the ocean, as wonderful as lonely.

-Jonay, let's think about the poor Mrs. Herminia we visited today at her house. Tell me, what do you remember about her?

Herminia was born eighty-two years ago in Valle Hermoso. She was the fourth of seven siblings. Her father was a farmer and goatherd. Her mother sewed and made cheese. She was never able to go to school. She married at the age of nineteen to a local boy who worked in the banana plantations of Agulo, had five children and two miscarriages. She widowed ten years ago. One of her children died, apparently of pneumonia. Three live in Tenerife and one is in the Peninsula. She has six grandchildren.

-What do you remember about her health?

-She had Malta fevers when she was young. In the two miscarriages and in two of the pregnancies at term, she had very important bleeds, which rid her in bed for several months. Otherwise, she had led a healthy and active life in the countryside, a diet of stews and vegetables and fruits, and a good relationship with her family and neighbors in the village.

-And do you remember what his life is like now?

-Her husband lost his job at the banana plantation and took to drinking. He showed more and more distance from her. You didn't think it wise to ask her about her sex life, so we don't know, but I sense that for a long time she had no intimate relations or even physical contact. Her children and grandchildren hardly ever came to see her anymore. Hardly at Christmas, and not always. The other women she used to chat with came out less and less and she hardly sees them now. The town was filled with cars. And the houses were full of televisions. She watched soap operas and reality shows. Eventually even the commercials. And without going for walks, without talking at home, losing contact with her family and friends, she stayed increasingly at

home, in front of the television and ate more and worse. She no longer bought beans and watercress at the market, but in the supermarket, frozen and canned. She began to eat fried food, cold cuts and, gradually, prepared food and French fries, which she ate every now and then in front of the TV.

-What consequences did this way of life have on her?

-She gained weight. She didn't groom himself anymore because he hardly ever went out. With the increasing weight she was moving less and less, even at home. And her knees started to hurt. You had already seen her high blood pressure some time ago and recommended her to walk and change her diet. But the pain in her knees prevented her from doing so. You talked to her children about going for walks and exercising at home. But they were all "too busy." She ended up taking anti-inflammatory drugs. And because they affected her stomach, she added antacids and blood pressure pills. Eventually you discovered that she had high blood sugar and cholesterol, and because she wouldn't change her diet, she ended up taking pills for that too.

-And how did she feel about it?

-With sadness. She was aware of her condition, she avoided looking at herself in the mirror. Lack of activity and television distressed her sleep, and in her wakeful nights, she had negative thoughts, of loneliness, of nostalgia for other times, of feeling forgotten and rejected by her children, of being fat, ugly, with no future. She also started taking antidepressants.

-Poor Herminia.

-Yes, Fernando, another syndrome of loneliness. Loneliness in the midst of noise and progress. Even in this out-of-the-way town.

-Lack of company, of affection, of creating and sharing their thoughts, their feelings, their ideas of the world and of life. Lack of caresses, Jonay, of hugs and kisses. Why are we so shy to talk about it, a need as human as eating?

-The taboos of religion, I suppose.

-You know, there is something that, besides the influence of religions, makes us avoid showing the weakness of needing a hug, and especially giving it, almost more than receiving it. We are a hierarchical animal species that resolves its needs through dominance. In front of

children we do express, and not always, that tenderness. But with time we hide it, we dose it, it becomes encysted in our soul, and we end up not knowing where to find it inside us. We think we are hard and strong hiding it. When in reality the most authentic sign of courage is to express tenderness. In the face of social taboos and our modesty, to be apparently weak is to be brave. Courage and tenderness: those are the keys, Jonay.

-Well, Jonay, you are like a son to me. Do you remember when right here, looking at the ocean and the stars, I told you about Kadiatu? When we then planned her rescue in the ocean? I think I'm losing her, Jonay. We were allies by the challenge of escape. But we are different. She seeks to break out of her oppressed status and for that she needs to triumph. She identifies triumph with fleeing property. I flee from that chimera. I love her. And Lisy. With all my soul. But I feel her rejection of my passion for nature and social thinking. She goes with her friends from San Sebastian to parties and bars. I prefer stars and guitars. She looks for fashionable clothes and jewelry. I have two pairs of pants and spend half the day in loincloths on the beach, the boat and looking for barnacles. She reads *Hello*. I read Tagore's poems and Tolstoy's life. We are so different. We didn't know it. Or maybe she is lost, alienated by the consumption she could never have. I don't know, Jonay. But we have only a fragile thread of union left. And I know that perhaps I will never find a soul as pure, a beauty as clean, a bravery as epic as the Kadiatu I knew, or thought I knew in the jungles of Sierra Leone.

Jonay did not know what to say. In fact, he sensed similar distances with Yolanda, and that was why he excused himself by spending the summer practicing as a doctor instead of taking a trip with her and Martín. He had gone some weekends, one of them on the boat with Fernando. She had come once. But she noticed a distancing on his part as well. That's why Fernando's words echoed in his soul.

-I assume that the recipe of courage and tenderness also applies to heart break?

-Yes, but it hardly relieves the pain.

During his senior year, Jonay spent most of his time at the university hospital. His future at St. Joseph's Mission was on his mind, and he corresponded often with Patxi. He had bought all of Maurice King's books on medicine, surgery, traumatology and anesthesia in the

rural hospital and with little means. He met a young attending physician, Julian, with whom he did more and more internships. He began by asking the nurses to let him give injections, serums, do electrocardiograms, take care of dressings and catheterizations. They left him, at first with supervision and then with confidence. Then he asked Julian to accompany him and gradually he did the ultrasounds, endoscopies, spirometries and lumbar punctures on his own. He gained slowly confidence and in the intensive care unit he began to place chest tubes to decompress the pleura of empyema or pneumothorax, and to take central lines in the jugular and subclavian veins when the severity of the patient required it. Thus he knew how to measure central venous pressure by simple methods. He always thought of St. Joseph's limited means and avoided using much sophistication. Nor did he spend much on gloves, paper or as many disposables as the hospital used.

Then Julian introduced her to a fellow gynecologist and spent two months sleeping on empty hospital gurneys and accompanying, then helping and then assisting deliveries. He knew how to use suction cups and forceps, and to resuscitate babies, to see on the ultrasound everything necessary to follow the pregnancy or to detect and care for complications. Patxi told him that performing cesarean sections was essential in remote places. So after assisting in about twenty interventions, he was allowed to assist as first assistant and on one occasion he played the role of first surgeon. He opened the peritoneum, the uterus, extending his fingers between the hard musculature that protected life, clamping the ends of the feared bleeding uterine arteries, carefully removing the child while his heart, Jonay's, soared almost as much as the child's before abruptly entering this world; and then carefully and firmly sewing up the uterus and all the layers. The day he did his first caesarean section, he could now go to the mission. Soon he would finish his studies and send his degree for registration in Zimbabwe. He dreamed about it every day.

Jonay then went to pediatrics where he resuscitated neonates and attended the emergency and pediatric wards, which he enjoyed the most because he was so tender with the children. He remembered Fernando's reflection on our waste of tenderness with them and our fear of doing it among adults. He continued in general surgery where he also with perseverance and interest ended up operating a hernia and helping to

resect an intestine and to know how to sew it back together. He tested sutures at home, and got pig intestines from the neighborhood butcher's shop to test anastomoses: the sutures of the cut ends of the intestine.

He then did the same in traumatology, reducing and setting fractures and dislocations. He remembered his parents when he reduced their first shoulder dislocation. They were already back from their world tour and he met with them every month at El Cabrito. God, how he loved them! They encouraged him in his calling and in his excitement to leave for Africa, although Umbela said it with a shadow of sadness as she hugged him tightly.

Thus came graduation. All his colleagues had already spent a year in academies memorizing strange names and numbers of constants for the MIR exam - medical interns and residents - the only door in Spain to specialize, and almost the only way to get a job afterwards, at over thirty years of age and in a narrow path of medicine called "specialty". He wanted freedom. He wanted the ocean and not a rift.

He later took courses in tropical medicine in Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

Cooperating physicians came from many corners of the world and showed their slides of other worlds, the exoticism of those diseases, so intricate with the nature that surrounded them. Some spoke passionately about community medicine and Alma-Ata. Something they barely discussed in the faculty. Something Dr. Delgado openly laughed about. It seemed to Jonay to be the principle of peoples' dignity in the face of their health. Their health. He read many books about it, *Where there is no Doctor*, by David Werner, from California and about his experiences in Mexico. And others that he was also passionate about from the Hesperian Foundation, in a place called Berkeley.

Jonay was deeply intrigued by those parasitic diseases flooding Africa. How could so survival intelligence evolve so much? Parasites barely a millimeter in size that knew the time of day to infect the mosquito or other vector, to reproduce in it (Jonay called it the honeymoon), to enter the human body, to travel like explorers through the lymph and blood streams, to pass through the lungs, to infiltrate the liver, to lay eggs like the biliarzias so that they would go back out into the wild to complete the cycle, or to do so in the blood cells like malaria or filariae.

The complexity of ancestral intelligence thrilled him. Thousands of instincts braided in a chain of survival. Perhaps many of them dormant in the human species because of our sophistication and social protection. Had we diverted our mind and strength in dominance and competitiveness and had we been forgetting our nature?

He then went to make his first locums in Hermigüa. He managed to convince a colleague and the nurse and they made a community diagnosis by visiting each house, making surveys, taking blood pressure, taking blood samples, water samples, writing down diets, talking about their concepts of health and illness, about their resources to heal themselves. Identifying more keys to the widespread "loneliness syndrome" as Fernando called

In time, Patxi told him that the papers for registration as a doctor had already been sent. He could go if he wanted to, and wait to help him, while the Zimbabwean government assigned him the vacant position in that remote mission that awaited him.

He carried that letter in his pocket. Jonay and Yolanda had been walking for half an hour, without talking, submerged in their thoughts.

They arrived at a large esplanade, in the so-called Huevos del Teide and Montaña Blanca. The road became steeper and within an hour they reached the Altavista refuge where they stopped to eat something. They looked deeply into each other's eyes. After lunch they advanced towards the Rambleta and then along the Telesforo Bravo trail and reached the summit. They sat next to a fumarole that burned the air, as they felt their wounded hearts.

-Yolanda, I have something to tell you.

-Jonay, I know. For a long time. You are leaving. In fact, you've been gone for a long time.

-I love you.

-Me too. But we can't live together. My life is here, taking care of Martin. And yours is far away, saving the remote world. I respect that. But I can't follow you.

Jonay looked to the southeast. The thin line of the coast of Africa could be seen in the distance. Yolanda looked much closer.

-They were silent for a while. The tears could no longer be held back.

-They embraced each other tightly. It was love without possession, but without the future of physical union.

After dawn they arrived back at the Altavista shelter and stayed in a room. They made love as if it were the last and only time of their lives. Without speaking, without letting their gazes lock, matching every breath, almost every heartbeat.

Embracing each other as if they wanted to avoid the fate they had already accepted.

Courage and tenderness, Jonay thought. Sometimes it hurt. So much...

XXV. Fury against the spirits. Matabeleland South, 1985

NOLWASI LOOKED DOWN FROM her *kopje*, her altar of connection with the spirits and ancestral knowledge of her people, whom she loved so much. Her vantage point over the world. She had just come from mourning the death of her friend Tulani. After four years of fighting with her against the disease, the force of the other world, tearing her with immense pain, had finally taken Tulani away. She had promised to take care of her daughter, Thandiwe, then five years old. Her parents had died shortly before, more from grief than age, seeing Tulani wasting away, having seen one of their sons come in a wooden box from Egoli, and not having heard from the other for nearly ten years. When they left, Tulani lost all reason to fight against that terrible disease.

She was the first person NoLwasi had accompanied with this cursed plague, although she had already seen the signs in six of the young men who had returned dead from Soweto. Three other women and Teya, the young man she convinced to leave the hell of Soweto, had also died, consumed by the curse.

The first was Teya. After that night in Soweto, NoLwasi had heard some children talking Ndebele. At first it stirred tenderness in her, but as she walked through the night towards the house of *Nyanga* James, she felt fear. She turned around and walked back to where the sweet voices in Ndebele were coming from. She crept around the house and peeked through a window at the back. NoLwasi saw a very obese woman, her hair soaked in Vaseline and covered with plastic wrap, her lips and eyes painted provocatively, wearing only a very tight bra and a brightly colored cloth under her voluptuous belly. The children were eating on the floor from brass plates with *sadza* and *chomolia*. There were six children. They were raggedly dressed, and although some of them spoke, their eyes were lost in sadness. One of them had his back in the air and NoLwasi saw marks of blows. At that moment she noticed the sharp blow of a stick cracking on her temple and the intense pain that followed. She fell backwards into a ditch of dirty water and heard, half confused, the children screaming. *Mama, Mama... Baba* (Mother, Father). She could barely open her eyes, and felt herself being dragged by her feet. They left her at the side of the house. She could

hear the voices of two men speaking Zulu. She felt the blood soaking her face. She preferred to remain still and focus all her senses on listening to what her assailants were saying.

-This is the *nyanga* Kalanga that has been hanging around here for months. She's pretty. Shall we take her to the room, wash her and teach her how to enjoy?

-You've had too much to drink, you animal. Better if we leave her in front of the health center without being seen.

-Are you crazy? She'll report us. She's seen the children and I'm sure she's suspicious.

-So, what do you want to do?

-We have to get rid of her. If the boss finds out we let her go, we won't last two days. Besides, you've already hit her too hard. She's dying.

-I can't do that. I'd rather tie her up and gag her and let the boss decide tomorrow. Maybe we can convince her to change her life and earn good money. With that body she will be very successful.

-Well. But I'm sure she'll have to be disposed of tomorrow. Go inside for ropes and a cloth to gag her.

She was lying face down on the red earth. In an area somewhat lower than the street, from where she could not be seen by the few passers-by at that dangerous time of night. She half-opened one eye and saw the man watching her cross the road to talk to a woman passing in front. She knew she had only about five seconds to disappear from that death sentence. She summoned all her strength and dispelled the pain from her mind. In a leap of incredible agility she got up and in two stealthy jumps hid behind the house. At that moment the man with the ropes was coming out and the other was returning from flirting with the woman on the road.

-Where is she? Haven't you been watching her? She was half dead!

NoLwasi took off her canvas and rubber slippers to make less noise and ran out and across the yards of two houses and out onto a road to see if she could call someone for help. There was no one on the road. She noticed the two men running after her. They had just turned the corner and were about twenty yards away from her. They were burly and running fast. She knew that in a long distance they would not be

able to catch her, but in about one hundred meters they could catch her. She ran as fast as she could and kept her distance. At the next corner she made as if to turn and take the street to the right, but hid in the yard of one of the houses. He found in her hiding place a stone and with incredible skill threw it some thirty meters away to land at another crossroads. The men continued to run after the sound. She saw something moving at the window of the house next to which she was hiding. The back door was ajar.

-Enter, *udade wami* (my sister).

She could not but trust that voice, which from the darkness, inspired her with confidence.

As she entered, NoLwasi saw a middle-aged woman in the shadows. She was beautiful, but there was a legacy of pain on her face. One of her eyes was clouded with a white spot.

-Sit down here. I'll get you some water to clean you up and some hot tea to drink.

She felt safe, collapsed into an old armchair and was aware of the danger she had run. She was still bleeding from her temple and all the pain she had ignored in her flight seemed to come rushing back in the form of a frightening throbbing in her brain. The woman returned and began to gently clean her wound while warning her:

-These men are very dangerous. They are involved in everything: weapons, drugs and trafficking of women. They are the gang of a certain Ron, a bloodthirsty man.

-And I think something even worse. Trafficking children.

-I don't think so. I think they are the children of prostitutes and the women take turns taking care of them, while they attend to their clients.

-Then why did they want to kill me when I saw the children?

-*Udade wami*.

-NoLwasi.

-Mary.

-In Johannesburg and Soweto there are more than ten murders every day. Life is worthless. They would think you wanted to steal, or that you are a police spy, anything. What I can tell you is that they will be looking for you everywhere.

Mary had already placed a white bandage-like cloth tightly around the cleaned wound and around the head.

-I must get my things, I must return to my country tomorrow.

-Where are you from, what were you doing in this hell?

-I am from Mat (Matabeleland) South. I came to try to find out what is going on with a disease that is killing many of our brothers and sisters.

-I've heard about you. The *nyanga*. Friend of old James. They say you have powers. I'm sure those men will be looking for you at James' house. You can't go back there.

-But I have my things there.

She thought that really the only thing of value she had were the maleleuca bark on which she had her magic diagrams written down. She always carried them on her, in a small bag with a string around her waist. She noticed all was in. None of the rest of her few belongings, including the money she had earned from treating patients the months she had been there, mattered to her. It would make a nice gift for old James. She would write to him. NoLwasi had to get out of there.

-You can stay here tonight and tomorrow we'll see what to do.

-No, if they find me here they will hurt you. And they will kill me. I will leave now. I will leave you a note for a person from my village. His name is Teya. He was going to come with me tomorrow. He lives at the corner of Mhiga and Dinga.

She wrote a few lines on a small piece of paper:

Teya, I have to flee, my life is in danger. I hope to see you in the village. Be brave. Get out of here. NID.

-But how will you be able to walk now and how will you go?

-Don't worry, I can take care of myself.

Mary went to the kitchen and came in with a bag of oranges and peanuts, and some paracetamol tablets.

-You saved my life Mary. I won't forget it.

-Take care of yourself, NoLwasi. I sense that you have a very important mission that the spirits are asking you to do. *Amandhla*.

She walked for two days. During the night she moved westward and reached Mohlakeng. There she found a cargo truck in a garage and

heard that it was heading for Pretoria. She hid among the sacks of corn, slurping oranges through a small hole to get every last drop. The pain was very strong but decided not to take those pills. She had never taken anything that was not natural. She would look for herbs for the pain on the way. When they closed the cargo van, NoLwasi relaxed and looked through a crack to the outside. About twenty minutes into the march, they passed Krugersdorp, where mankind was said to have originated. She wondered; "Will this be where it will also end?"

When she arrived in Pretoria, she preferred to walk through the fields for three days. She needed to get away from such a corrupt humanity, feel the wind, her friends the grasses, the leaves, the flowers. She came across some gazelles, and slept looking at the starry sky.

NoLwasi thought to herself, "What makes men want to live crowded and surrounded by garbage, dust, and noise?"

She arrived in Mokopane after walking more than a hundred kilometers barefoot. Her head ache was better, although she vomited several times a day. She found herbs to treat herself, and went on resilient with the strength of her spirits. She felt Mandhla's breath at every step and Masora's tender gaze guiding her northward. In Mokopane she hid again in a truck with barrels of beer, but this time an older man saw her enter.

When she went to the cargo van, she looked at him and told him she had no money and needed to go to Beitbridge. Something lit up in that man, and he told her that he was going there, and he would take her. That she could sit up front with him. She doubted his intentions, but she had no choice. He was a good man. He spent the four-hour drive talking about the Bible and Jesus. But she fell exhausted into a deep sleep. She then crossed the border at the place she already knew. The river was less swollen and she didn't need the rope. She preferred not to go to see Takani in case he was in league with Ron's gang. There were still loose ends in that story that, for the moment, she had to run away from.

Once in Zimbabwe, she found ways to visit *nyangas* and to have transportation and food in exchange for treatments. She arrived in Sanzukwi, two years after she left south.

NoLwasi arrived in the evening and knocked on the door of her parent's house.

-Yebo? (Who is there?)

Shee preferred not to answer. Themba opened.

-My daughter! -he said, while his eyes clouded with emotion.

He was joined in the joyous embrace by her mother, Thembinkosi, whom she noticed was walking with difficulty.

-I'm sorry I was away for so long, my dear parents. I had important things to do.

They noticed her head wound and the bandage with dried blood.

-What happened to you, daughter? Tell us everything. Stay and let us take care of you.

She was touched by that feeling, when she was the one who should be taking care of them. Although they were only about sixty years old, the tough and arid life on that shore of the Kalahari had over aged them. And perhaps the pain of the absence of her beloved daughter. She felt guilty that she had left her cherished family and her treasured village for so long to seek wisdom far away.

She told them something of her life during that time, of her travels, of how she crossed the Limpopo, of the confrontation at the mine, of her life in Soweto, of her discussions with *nyangas* and leaders, of how she came to see the Kalanga brothers there, of their dark lives, of Teya. She preferred not to tell them about how they had tried to kill her just ten days before. She suspected that the story was not over and she needed to think calmly and strongly.

By this time word had spread as some little boys had seen her arrive and the whole village was outside the Dube's hut. They were singing a song that she liked... with its low mmmmmmmmm zulu....

When the sun rises, it invites to live, to feel, to share.

When He shows us our shadows, He teaches us that we are unique.

The shadows, like life, lengthen with the day...

To infinity...

Just as the sun goes down.

And it invites us to another mysterious, magical life, from which we come...

Amakhosi...lizafuna mphilo (Spirits... We love life).

Amakhosi... liya thaba (Spirits... we are happy).

NoLwasi went out to meet the community, they brought kerosene lamps and torches. Some girls danced to the rhythm of the drums. NoLwasi greeted each one of them. She conveyed with her eyes the message of her strength to save her people, even with her bloody bandage and her ragged clothes from the long march.

During the two years of her absence, NoLwasi had arranged with a nearby *nyanga* to come once a week to her hut where they would have the inspiration of her knowledge. But her people missed her. They needed her. Tulani with little Thandiwe was waiting to hear from her man in Soweto, her illness and fate. She had missed them every day too, even though she knew she had a mission. And even though she had come back to stay, she knew her mission was unfinished.

In the two years after her return, she tried to learn more about the disease. Tulani appeared to be stable, though very thin, and the mysterious, beautiful, but ominous presence of the long eyelashes gave NoLwasi a sense of foreboding.

Within a month of her arrival Teya showed up in town. He told her about his return journey and what he knew of Ron's dangerous gang. He told her that when he arrived at his family's *kraal*, near the Saint Josephmission, he was told that his wife had passed away. He knew that in some way he did not yet understand, it was him who killed her. Either by forgetfulness or by having passed the evil through her body. He lived taking care of his son Joseph, and told her about a white priest, Father Patxi, who was helping all the people of the mission with a lot of courage, in another way, but like her in Sanzukwi. He also told her about a doctor at the Saint Josephmission who was seeing him for his cough. He was a white doctor who cared about the people and seemed to know something about the strange disease.

Teya came back every few months to see NoLwasi. She relieved some of his symptoms, but also watched him wasting away, his parents' hearts breaking and finally passing away. Thus the victims of the plague were leaving more orphans, who began to fill Matabeleland and to burden the already exhausted strength of the elders.

She looked to the sky, to the same one to whom they asked for rain through their ancestors. She cried out to them:

You don't see what we are suffering!

Why don't you do something?

The plague is killing us and you seem to sleep watching our pain!

And so the cursed disease took Tulani and other women. After leaving them in the bones. Young men kept arriving from Egoli in wooden crates.

XXVI. Hierarchy stifles love. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, 1985

AFTER Awande's death, Patxi felt a vast void. With no one ever in his life, despite the brief, tragic moments, had he bonded his soul in that depth.

Patxi had discovered how a so-called orphan aid organization had taken six children to South Africa. He was trying to track their whereabouts. They were handing out some money to weak grandparents overwhelmed by the care of their orphaned grandchildren.

With her soul mortally wounded by the death of her children from the strange disease, she managed to keep Awande's son from being handed over, returning the money out of her own pocket to those people who claimed to represent the organization.

A few months later Teya, Joseph's father, appeared after three years without news. He was very worried about his in-laws and his son, and confessed to Patxi all his dark life in Eboli, until a Sanzukwi *nyanga*, named NoLwasi, opened his eyes and he returned "ekaya" (home). It was the second time Patxi heard of that *nyanga*, who was becoming a legend for her courage and intelligence. Within a year Teya also died, with symptoms very similar to Awande's. He preferred to die in the dispensary beds. It was another slow agony. But Teya was obsessed with going to Awande and apologizing to her wherever she was. Little Joseph watched his parents leave with the same terrible symptoms. Patxi talked to the grandparents and little Joseph stayed to live with him. He went to school and then helped with chores in the garden, the workshops, the farm and the house where he shared the home with Patxi and the two aspiring seminarians.

He was encouraged by the fact that in two months his brother Juan Mari would arrive, fleeing from a world of darkness, and that soon after he would have the longed-for help of young Jonay.

On the eve of fetching her brother from the airport in Bulawayo, he received one of the monthly visits from the Brunapeg mission doctor. He was a very kind man, Dr. Ndlovu. After the consultation of selected cases, they went for tea on the porch of Patxi's house:

-Dr. Ndlovu, I have already told you about the deaths of Awanda and Teya, and two other women in the surrounding villages. It is like rampant tuberculosis. I already told you that Awande got better with

treatment for tuberculosis but then relapsed. And you know all the symptoms and signs from the scan I told you about. Are you seeing cases like this in the hospital?

-Father Patxi, we are facing a tremendous epidemic. The government recognized the first case of a disease that in the United States and Europe they call "AIDS". They say there are only a few cases and that they affect prostitutes. But something must worry them when they don't let us do blood transfusions in rural hospitals and apply a test for the cause of AIDS to all transfusions in city hospitals. Look what this newspaper says:

He put on the table an article from *The Financial Gazette* magazine where a person said how impossible it was to know how many infected and how many sick people there were in the country, due to government censorship.

-I have already seen the note from the Bulawayo Directorate about the blood transfusions. It is all very strange. And what is this disease like? What is known about it?

-I have a cousin who emigrated to San Francisco and works there as a nurse. He has been sending me a lot of information that the government here censors. In 1981 a Dr. Gottlieb started seeing a very strange disease in homosexuals in San Francisco. In a few years it has affected many people in the homosexual communities, but it has also been seen in other people.

Patxi remembered his friend Rob, next to San Francisco. He had never met any homosexuals. Both the Church and the Zimbabwean government considered them persons in sin and crime respectively. A thought blocked his mind for a few seconds. He could not understand it.

-Tell me, Dr. Ndlovu, what did those patients have in San Francisco?

-They had a very significant drop in their defenses. Their immune system had collapsed. They had infections typical of patients whose bone marrow function had been suppressed by leukemia or transplants. One of the most frequent was a very intense lung infection with very acute difficulty in breathing and X-rays with infiltrations between the alveoli, like a spider's web, invading the whole lung.

-And have you seen those kinds of problems in Brunapeg?

No, the X-rays that I have been able to do in those young patients who get sick and are wasting away are typical of tuberculosis.

-So there is no AIDS in Zimbabwe?

-I'm sure it is, Patxi. Even if the government tries to hide it. I have asked in Bulawayo to be allowed to take the AIDS tests they now use for transfusions in the city and they refuse. They say it is not very specific, that is, I could test positive and not have the disease. But I have been receiving information from my cousin: It is already known that it is due to a very peculiar virus, which invades the cells to use its genes and then its protein factory (RNA) to assemble its capsule and continue infecting cells. They have already discovered a way to demonstrate the antibodies against this virus that detect infected people.

-Do you believe, Dr. Ndlovu, that it is this disease that is killing our young people?

-I am sure: my cousin has sent me articles of studies that have been done in Africa and where they have shown many people infected with antibodies. The most somber fact is that it is transmitted sexually. As long as the government hides it, thousands of people will continue to be infected without knowing it. They can remain healthy for a long time until they finally develop the symptoms you have been seeing.

-So, what can we do?

-On treatments, almost nothing. We will comment on each case and how to alleviate their pain and their slow agony. The only thing we can do is to treat their tuberculosis almost always associated at some point in the disease. I hope that the government will soon open its eyes and implement a national plan to prevent this disaster. For the time being, young people should be advised to use condoms. And we have to fight for them to let us do the test here in the district. There is a meeting of all the hospitals in the region next week. Will you come with me?

-Yes, I want to understand what's going on and see what we can do.

-Okay, I will pick you up at 5:00 a.m. The meeting is at the Sun Hotel in Bulawayo at 8:00. I am going to ask very clear questions and propose very concrete actions to the provincial management. Maybe

the minister will attend. By the way, when is that young doctor arriving to help you?

-The registration procedures at the medical association have been delayed. He has been asked five times for the same document. But I hope it will arrive in two months. He seems very committed and with a deep vocation.

Well, Father, see you next week. *Lisale kuhle* (be at peace)

Lihambe kuhle, odokotela, siyakubonga (Go in peace, doctor. Thank you very much).

Patxi remained thoughtful. For the time being, he had to promote the use of condoms. He had to go to the city to get them, discuss the emergency with the bishop, and set a plan in motion. He would call a special meeting at the church.

The next morning he left at five in the morning for Bulawayo. He wanted to speak to the bishop at eight o'clock and then arrive at the airport at ten o'clock. His brother was arriving.

The bishop of all Matabeleland was a rather cold and methodical German. When Patxi arrived in the diocese, he greeted him with an affectionate welcome but with a cold stare. Patxi was the rebel of the diocese, void of promoting the sacraments and following the liturgy of Rome.

-Good morning, Father Patxi, how is the mission going?

-We are working, but we are very anxious about a disease that is killing many young people.

-Yes? -What is it about?

-I'm pretty sure it's AIDS, that disease they started seeing in San Francisco in homosexuals.

-Yes, I have read something. But you have nothing to fear, there is no homosexuality here.

Patxi thought to himself, what would that bishop know from his office and his cathedral about what was going on in the world?

-The disease does not only affect homosexuals, it has been seen in heroin addicts who share syringes and in hemophiliacs who receive transfusions.

-We don't have any of that around here, Father Patxi.

-It is also transmitted by sexual intercourse between men and women.

-Now I remember, yes, the government declared the first case a couple of years ago, and I think this year there were about three dozen, but only in prostitutes, right?

-We can't know, they hide the information, they won't let us do the tests.

-And what do you propose we do, Father Patxi?

-Next week there is a meeting here in Bulawayo with the ministry. Together with Dr. Ndlovu, from the Brunapeg mission, we are going to ask for tests to study who may have this disease among our patients.

-That's fine with me. You have my support. I will write to the provincial director, he is a good Catholic.

"Good Catholic" Patxi thought. It would mean going to mass at the cathedral in his Mercedes, because he was never interested in people, didn't go to hospitals, and was involved in a lot of sketchy businesses.

-But there is something very important that I need your help with, Your Honor.

He hated to use those terms. He wondered, "Didn't Jesus say that we are all equal:

-I need us to campaign for young people to use condoms. That's the only way to stop it from spreading and thus infecting more and more young people.

At that moment, the bishop changed his expression from cold cordiality to open aggressiveness.

-Have you lost your mind, Father Patxi? Let it be that you interpret the Gospel and the commandments of the Church in your own way and that in your mission there are no baptisms, marriages or extreme unctions. I hope that God welcomes those souls in spite of your pastoral negligence. But I will not tolerate that, in addition, you start promoting a sin well defined by Rome and our Pope John Paul II so that the sexual promiscuity of this people may spread even more!

They exchanged challenging glances and the bishop continued:

-I warn you, Father. If I find out that you are promoting, no, not even that, allowing, the use of condoms, among your parishioners, I

will write to Rome and it will take me a few days for you to leave my diocese.

-But many young people are dying, have you no compassion? Is an ancestral doctrine more important than the lives of many young people in danger?

-Is a remote conjecture of a priest who neglects his responsibilities more important than the eternal salvation of the four million souls in Matabeleland through the chastity and virtue of abstinence and marriage?

-At least let us talk about it at a diocesan meeting, or attend the bishops' conference in Harare in August.

-I hope that you do not sow the meeting of bishops of the region of tension, confrontations and shame for our diocese. I remind you of your vow of obedience. There will be no talk of any permissiveness to any conduct branded as immoral by the Holy Father.

When he stepped out into the hallway he was met face to face with Father Pius. He was a tall and very cheerful Ndebele, very devoted to St. Teresa. He was the bishop's assistant priest. It was said that he might one day become the first black bishop of Zimbabwe. Patxi explained to him what had happened and his fear of the plague spreading in Matabeleland. Father Pius understood him well. He was angered by the bishop's paternalistic and superior attitude, often bordering on racist. Pius took Patxi to his office and showed him a magazine from the Pretoria diocese:

-It's from a person I admire very much. Father Kevin, from Pretoria. He talks about AIDS and condoms. When you have read it, write to me and propose something to discuss in the diocese and in the bishops' conference before the Pope arrives. If we at least get some flexibility, it could be raised with the Pope, and the repercussion would be important in the whole Church. I agree with you. But we are up against millenary traditions of submission and a steel layer of sexual prejudice.

-Thank you, Pius. I will get back to you soon. We need your help.

Patxi continued on to the airport in his little pick-up truck. He was crying with rage. Had he made a mistake in his vocation? Obedience to arrogance? Abstinence from love? Silent genocide? Expenses and

luxuries for papal visits? But he knew well that Christ's message was quite different and he would not allow the Pharisees of the twentieth century to usurp Jesus' message of love.

Patxi and Juan Mari met at the small airport in Bulawayo. Juan Mari came with a bushy gray beard and long hair, strong and with a smile of the one who rediscovers life. They had no words that could express so much emotion.

The two embraced with blurred vision, for a few long, longing, deep minutes.

XXVII. An epidemic of fear and prejudice sweeps the world. Atlanta, 1985

AFTER graduation, Aimsa spent time living in nature, with the bare minimum. She felt heavy in the abundance and consumption of California society, despite her cycling, her vegan lifestyle and her solidarity at Goodwill and People's Park. A friend who led a movement called Food First against the savage commercialization of land and food encouraged her to sail the Bay. She learned enough and qualified as a yacht skipper. Through a network of "*sabbatical homes*" she found an arrangement to live on a small boat in the bay and take care of it. Aimsa felt so closer to nature, always with its message and inspiration of simplicity.

What she was reading and thinking the previous years in science and philosophy was sedimenting in solid ideas of social and natural harmony. It all came back to the deep spirituality of Buddhism. She got a job as an assistant in Rob's department of global political thought research, and with her income she was able to send half of it to a foundation she created in Calcutta called "the white tigers", where they helped street children get an education and a future. She still rode her bike, now without climbing the steep slopes of Berkeley Hills, and spent time alone studying and reading, and playing her flute in the evenings in front of the Atlantic. She had not yet found the feeling of deep love in spiritual communion that she dreamed of, but she was fine in her serene and full solitude.

A few weeks into her work as a research fellow in political thought, she began to read with more interest the information about what was being discovered on that mysterious disease called AIDS.

At that time there was a struggle between a French group led by a virologist named Luc Montagnier and an American group led by Robert Gallo. Each had isolated a type of virus in the blood of AIDS patients. The French called it "lymph node-associated virus" (LAV) due the clinical signs and the Americans called it "T-cell leukemia virus type" III (HTLV-III) because of its similarity to a virus that caused leukemia. Everything indicated that it was the same virus, the same disease, which, from the descriptions of Dr. Gottlieb with whom Aimsa was still in contact, was called Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

Something began to disturb what until then had been competitiveness and scientific prurience (animated by egos). The Americans filed a patent for a diagnostic test that detected antibodies to the virus that the French had isolated from swollen lymph nodes of patients arriving in France from West Africa. Competitiveness was contaminated by economic interests like almost every social activity in the market system. Aimsa called it the jungle of capitalism.

The test began to be used for preventive purposes in blood transfusions, for clinical purposes in the early treatment of the sick and for epidemiological purposes to know the extent of the disease. Aimsa began to investigate patent laws and their perverse intention to monopolize profits and, often, multiply them insatiably, even at the cost of immense human suffering by lack of access due to unaffordable prices dictated by those greedy monopolies.

Self-indulgence guided most actions in capitalism. And what was more or less disturbing: it almost always triumphed.

On top of the economic aspects of the benefits of the test, other even more perverse aspects rained down: those of the medical insurers, the true triumvirate of the private health system in the United States. They began to fear insuring people with the virus and the costs that it would entail. Legally, when taking out insurance, they could ask if they had been tested and even know the result. This had important economic consequences. Even life insurance companies and their link to mortgages by banks also began to consider these issues. Having the infection was no longer just a slow diagnosis of death, but also a social curse of stigma, exclusion, blame for immoral sexuality and even economic destitution. Aimsa began to take an interest in the right to health and the defense of those who would be marginalized by society and the system because of this disease.

Sometime later, while poring over hundreds of documents, studies, legal frameworks, cases in the press, and hanging them around her small office in Barrows Hall, she learned of a meeting in San Francisco called by a gay and AIDS rights activist by the name of Ricardo Dunne.

Aimsa attended the conference, where Ricardo spoke to some two hundred participants and defended the right of confidentiality of test results and the medical and state's responsibility to shield that information from access by insurance companies, businesses, schools

and even the judicial system. The reason was that the stigma created around the infection, coupled with market interests, threatened to morally and socially ruin the lives of thousands of Americans.

Aimsa, as she almost always did, stood up fearlessly and asked a question:

-Mr. Dunne, thank you for your brilliant presentation. My name is Aimsa Kamble, I do research at Berkeley on health rights and the AIDS challenge. I would like to ask you a question: I agree with confidentiality and the abuse of human rights due to social and economic discrimination, but I am concerned about public health: keeping information secret, contrary to what happens in other contagious diseases, could it not favor, through fear, its expansion?

Dunne frowned. He felt harassed:

-That will be the excuse for the public authorities to break the principle of confidentiality and open up all the mechanisms of exclusion and discrimination. I would agree that those affected should be encouraged to discuss their clinical situation with their partners, but always in confidentiality.

- But, Mr. Dunne, recent studies in San Francisco reveal that two-thirds of homosexuals have had more than a hundred sexual partners and one-third have more than thirty a year. How could such multiple confidentiality be possible?

-It is up to each person's conscience how to conduct his or her private and sexual life. It is not a matter for the State.

Aimsa preferred not to ask any more questions and wait until the end.

When the lecture was over, Aimsa, who was wearing her sari when she was not riding her bike, came up to Ricardo and congratulated him on the lecture and his advocacy for the rights of those affected by AIDS.

As she was about to ask him another question, Ricardo suggested that she escort him out of the room as he had an engagement. Something in Ricardo's expression told her that his unfinished business touched his heart. She wanted to excuse herself and not ask him any more questions.

-I'm sorry I questioned absolute confidentiality, Mr. Dunne. And I am sorry if I have hurt your sensitivity.

-You don't have to be sorry, Aimsa. You have a point.

When they were about to say goodbye and Aimsa was doing her Indian salute, Ricardo said to her:

-Do you have time? I would like to share with you something beyond words.

-Aimsa hesitated. She was used to interested advances from men, but from this homosexual activist man she didn't know what to expect.

-All right.

They continued on their way through San Francisco. About two blocks away they took a bus up some steep streets and arrived in the neighborhood of "La Misión". There they entered a typical San Francisco house, made of wood, painted yellow. In the attic they entered an apartment.

-Aimsa, I'm not going to talk anymore. I shouldn't. I'm going to introduce you to Marc. He will tell you his story:

-Marc, this is Aimsa. she would like to hear your story. She can help us.

Aimsa looked at Ricardo questioningly, though she agreed with his daring assertion.

Marc was on a bed in the living room. Although his body was covered, his extreme thinness was evident. On his face he had several red spots and protruding cheekbones. He had a tired, glazed look, but showed a gleam of joy in his eyes as he saw that beautiful Indian woman approach him and sit in a chair next to him.

-Hi Marc, my name is Aimsa. I'm from India, I work at Berkeley, I do research on the right to health and its abuses.

-Aimsa. You see my situation. I have AIDS and I am dying with it. Hidden from a society that accuses me of having sought my fatal destiny.

-Tell me your story, Marc. I do want to listen to you. I think I will understand you well.

Aimsa had not thought about her untouchable condition for a long time. She recalled the neighborhood of lepers she met in Calcutta, marginalized by society and cornered by it around stinking ditches

where more than washing, they dirtied their stumps towards a slow agony, suffering more from loneliness than from the disease.

Marc told her his story. He was born into a well-to-do family in San Francisco. His father owned a clothing store and his mother, from the state of Nevada, worked there as a clerk. They were both Catholic and both of Irish descent. Marc grew up in the security of the family with his two brothers and sister. At the age of twelve, he became attracted to the boys in his class and neighborhood. At the same time, he was strongly attracted by the sensitivity of the music and the harmony of ballet and by the delicate ways of treating each other, communicating and feeling physical contact. He didn't force anything, it came naturally to him. A class friend, Robert, used to tell him to stop looking like a "sissy", that he embarrassed himself in front of his friends. It led him to get into mischief, to scold girls, to peek behind the curtains of a neighborhood prostitute's house, to peep surreptitiously at old playboys they found in the trash, and to look rough and tough playing soccer, flattered by the *cheerleaders*. Marc could not feel the slightest interest in that way of living and gradually isolated himself from the group.

At fourteen, his tendency was so strong that he could not restrain himself from stroking the hair of a boy who was sitting next to him in class. At first the boy blushed, but soon after, spurred on by the teasing of his friends and reacted aggressively towards Marc. The teacher also rebuked Marc for his insinuation and daring and the case reached the ears of his parents. His mother reacted more moderately, downplaying the importance of a simple gesture of affection and sensitivity. But the incident unleashed great aggression in his father. He even told him that if he became a faggot he would kill him. He took him to psychologists and centers for the treatment of "sexual deviations" where they showed him images and told grotesque and tragic stories of homosexuality and associated it with sin and immorality.

Marc repressed his natural tendency and became disgusted with himself. He lived with the feeling of being a sinner and social scum, and tried to take ice water showers whenever he felt any attraction to a boy, even seeing images in magazines or at the movies. He watched erotic magazines of women to look for any attraction to women and even his father, which appalled his mother, took him to watch porn

movies and at the age of sixteen took him to visit that prostitute in the neighborhood whom his friends spied behind the curtains. He paid her fifty dollars and left him with her for an hour. Marc not only felt nothing, but at her insistence he felt nauseous and ran out of the place.

He felt so desperate that he did not return home that night. His father smiled in satisfaction at his mother's concern. Marc walked to the Golden Gate Bridge and began to climb one of the steel cables thinking about ending his life and his immoral instincts. He was reminiscing about his life and inevitably he was thinking about all the beauty of existing, about the stifled desire to love of so many people, about the harmony of music and dance and how they made the heart vibrate. He was thinking about all that perched among the steel cables as the sun began to rise behind the Berkeley Mountains. The glow of the reddish sun bathed everything in gold. Marc felt absorbed in such beauty and saw clearly the absurdity of his impending act.

He returned home. It was Sunday and his parents had gone to mass. He went into his room and wrote them a letter. He packed his bags and left the family home. He knew of a homosexual support center on the other side of town where he hoped they would welcome him.

He was received with understanding and affection. They tried to mediate with his family, but there was never any response. He dropped out of school and began working in a drugstore. He met several men at the reception center to whom he felt physically attracted, and had his first sexual experiences. He had repressed himself for so long that he exploded with passion at each encounter. Marc lived for a time with each of them or even alternated houses. The promiscuity of many of them made this moving between beds and homes fit into their lives. Marc felt liberated but not happy. Physical relationships were often devoid of humanity and far from what he expected to feel for love. He then began attending dance and singing classes. There he met Ricardo, another dance student. They started feeling a strong mutual attraction but different from the others. There was modesty and extreme sensitivity in the mutual approach. They looked at each other for several weeks, then began to smile at each other. After a month they embraced in the changing rooms of the dance academy.

Thus began, when he was 18 years old and Ricardo was 20, a deep love story. They delved into music and composed together. Marc wrote

poetry and Ricardo drew pictures for those poems. They traveled the world and discovered places and cultures, fought and wrote articles on gay civil rights, working with Bob Ross of the *Bay Area Reporter* and across America with gay leader Marc Segal.

A year ago, Marc began to feel nauseous, feverish and weak. No one knew what was wrong with him. Soon after, he began to experience a dry cough and shortness of breath. They went to a dozen doctors, some gave them ineffective medications, the most honest ones told them they didn't know what it was. That is how they arrived at the San Francisco General Hospital. The infectious disease specialist, Dr. Gottlieb, received them in his office. Marc was very weak by then and was admitted. He underwent tests to find out what was wrong with his lungs. At that time dark red spots appeared on his face and back. Dr. Gottlieb had seen seven other patients with Marc's symptoms, all of them homosexuals.

They discovered an unusual fungal parasite in his lungs that required very aggressive treatment. He improved somewhat, but began to have intractable diarrhea. At Ricardo's desperate call to Marc's parents, his mother was reunited with Marc fifteen years later and held his hand several nights in the hospital praying to her God. Dr. Gottlieb asked Marc if he had ever had relations with anyone from Haiti. Marc recalled that among his first contacts was a Haitian man who cleaned the gay shelter and with whom he had relations for a short period of time.

When his condition became critical, Ricardo, after talking to the doctors, decided to take him to the house where they lived. There, where Aimsa was now listening to his story, they began to receive sky-high medical bills that the insurance company refused to pay on the grounds of "undisclosed risk behaviors". They also began to see their life insurance and mortgage premiums increase for "reassessment of risk" reasons. How did the banks know about their situation?

Even living in perhaps the most liberal city in the world in tolerance of homosexuality, they often received rejection in certain social circles. That rejection grew and people even covered their mouths and noses with handkerchiefs when Marc walked through his neighborhood. The parish priest refused him entry when he tried to go to pray one day, and the Salvation Army's social services denied him

help on the grounds that the disease affected innocent hemophiliacs infected by the blood of immoral behavior of gays and drug addicts. But even infected hemophiliac children were expelled from schools and President Reagan was complacent about those attitudes based on prejudice and mired in cruelty.

-That is my story Aimsa. Now I am just left to die surrounded by Ricardo's love and hope that this suffering does not affect many more people in the world.

Aimsa harbored other fears, but she did not yet know that thirty years later, sixty million people would have been infected worldwide and twenty-five million would have died.

Aimsa told him her story of stigma and marginalization as an untouchable in India and her struggle for life and good in the world. She tried to encourage him with hope in the face of life, and above all never stop loving, his true connection to eternity.

In a show of affection and against all prejudices, she gave her a deep and prolonged hug. They were both touched. When their eyes met, Aimsa saw Marc's beauty and courage and kissed his lips. It was the first time Aimsa offered the softness of her lips to any person. It was fleeting but it concentrated in a few seconds the union of two outcasts of society who believed in love and were not afraid of anything. Not even death.

Upon returning to her houseboat in the Berkeley Marina, Aimsa wrote a paper and sent it to the secretariat of the first international AIDS congress, soon to be held in Atlanta. Her paper was entitled: "Human Rights and AIDS". With her savings, she managed to pay for the trip and attend that congress with two thousand other people from all over the United States and many countries, especially from Europe. There he attended a lecture by a Harvard doctor named Jonathan Mann. He had worked in hospitals and with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in that city, Atlanta, and had encouraged the holding of that congress and the start of the global AIDS partnership. Shortly thereafter, he would launch the global AIDS program at the World Health Organization.

Aimsa, as usual, approached Dr. Mann after his talk and asked him:

-Dr. Mann. My name is Aimsa Kamble. I research human rights and AIDS from Berkeley. I would like to ask you if the confidentiality of the tests can maintain the fear of the disease, some to be marginalized, and others to be infected, and thus spread it exponentially.

-You are right. But fears will only be unlocked by fighting stigma and protecting victims. I prefer the price of silent infections to that of marginalization and pain. But you are right, I will reflect on it.

-Another question, Dr. Mann: I have heard your fears expressed in your presentation, about the magnitude of the problem in Africa. What is known about the actual extent and spread of the problem?

Mann confessed to her that he harbored the worst fears but that the clinical methods and the poor accuracy of the tests did not allow them to know. At that moment a tall, thin, blond man with a bony face but an endearing look approached him and asked Dr. Mann to accompany him. A colleague from Berkeley who was also attending the conference told Aimsa he was Dr. Mailer, director of the World Health Organization and the driving force behind the Alma-Ata conference seven years earlier. Aimsa had studied with fascination the energy, enthusiasm and ethics of the Alma-Ata principles. The world seemed to be in good hands with people like them. But would AIDS invade a world paralyzed by prejudices and interests?

XXVIII. Plants for a virus. Bulawayo, 1985

LITTLE THANDIWE was already five years old and started going to the nearest school. It was six kilometers away. She walked with her friends. In winter she would run, or when she was late. NoLwasi would see her out with her dark blue uniform neatly ironed and her notebooks well kept. She had found in caring for Thandiwe a flow to her heart, full of tenderness. She needed that world of affection without illness or deep but distant communication with the spirits. She had been tormented for five years by the tragedies of the disease spreading throughout Matabeleland and her memories of deaths in weakness and pain, of the dark world of Soweto. It all clogged her heart, thirsty for joy, smiles, caresses and affection. She was already thirty years old and although she discovered an ocean of affection and tenderness entangled with the wonderful innocence of Thandiwe, she often felt the lack of an embrace in her intimacy, of a helping hand on walks in the bush, of someone to whom she could confide her strength and also her fears, her courage and also her weakness. All the women of her age already had families, although the husbands of many were in Soweto. She was wary of dishonest men. And men feared her because of her mythical healing power and the way she communicated with the world of the *amakhosis*.

NoLwasi had been practicing for years with an *Mbira*, his father Themba made for her. She used it in her meditations. From her sacred altar of rocks, trees, bark, magic schemes and healing herbs. Before the marvelous horizon of Matopos. Deep harmonies, like the soul of NoLwasi, came out of her depth through her hands on metal and wood. So deep that one would say they were not entirely from that world.

The first quasi-democratic elections were held in the country. A portion of the members of parliament would be white. A part disproportionate to its population. This injustice would gradually disappear, but many considered it an insult after so many years of the war of liberation. Disputes continued between her mother's uncle and the president-elect. But they lived together, sharing power and intrigues. NoLwasi distrusted them all. In spite of everything, NoLwasi was proud to see her little Thandiwe, her adopted daughter, her greatest source of tenderness, going to school, singing *Nkosi Sikelela* at the beginning of class, writing down the letters with careful penmanship,

doing her mathematical operations with care and studying the recent history of her proudly liberated country. She also felt a serene pride in watching the public school teachers and health center nurses wear their only uniform with dignity, sing the anthem at the start of work, say their prayers, study their few worn-out books, and take painstaking care in their public service to a society excited about their freedom.

NoLwasi continued to see patients with the terrible disease. They were more than half of the people who came to her for advice. The others came with different problems of something she saw as knots in her sacred and invisible bond with the *amakhosi*, or in relationships with their families, friends or neighbors blocked and generating negative forces. They choked the flow of life and love that she felt as she heard their heart beating or felt their inner breezes that she listened attentively as she heard their lungs breathing. She also saw children with diarrhea and contrary to what many *nyangas* interpreted as infidelity of their mothers, she knew well that it was because of dirty water and prepared mixtures of water, lime and ashes of a mixture of a bark and grated with some stones.

She taught the mothers to give the brew to sick children and closely followed their recovery. In the few months of rains, NoLwasi knew that fevers began to be frequent, transmitting with water the accumulated heat of the dry land and the arid months. It was the call of the earth to the Kalanga to take better care of it and to avoid fires and wild felling of trees and branches. In her magical drawings she found the guide to the symbol of fever in the bark of a tree. Those barks kept magical transcendental knowledge. The true wisdom. NoLwasi. That of the soul in connection with the universe. She prepared brews of the herbs of some bushes (*artemisia*) that grew in the shade of some rocks of her magical *kopje*. She learned to take the seeds from them and plant them in suitable areas, in order to be well supplied. She cured fevers and restored harmony to the land respecting the cycle of life more and not to excessively scratch its entrails or cut the living trunks. She treated hundreds of types of discomforts with her magical vision that made her intuit blockages with the harmony of the natural, human and spiritual world. Everyone respected her.

NoLwasi also learned to treat many of the ailments that accompanied the disease-that-doesn't-cure. A more intense mixture of

lime, ashes and water improved diarrhea, vaping with mop roots improved coughs, potions of a type of red tea improved itching and pimples on the skin while soothing them with aloe juices, she used willow bark for pain, devil's claws for fevers, vomiting and muscular pains, fennel when she saw that the urine was blocked, mixtures with garlic and fermented goat's milk to cure the white spots that wedged the mouth, tongue and intimate areas. For each discomfort she found a sign, a magical relationship with a message of harmony or conflict, a treatment in her *kopje* hieroglyphics, and, above all, an immense tenderness for those sick people who, despite her devoted care, were gradually losing the energy of life.

One evening she was thinking about the origin of the sacred bond with the family, sullied in Soweto and passed on to women and mothers so unfairly. She realized then that her hand was stained by the charcoal from a small fire she had lit. It had rested on a bark and in lifting it, had left an image that, mixed with the natural markings of the tree, showed two lines. One was longer than the other and joined by a smaller line. NoLwasi thought that the spontaneous drawing symbolized the sexual act. On top of that image, black spots had formed like storm clouds. Below the lines, she could count a succession of about seven natural black spots leading to a rounded, pale area. Other traces of charcoal seemed to lead to something below that large white bubble. It was an image that matched many positions of the tabs she remembered, but never understood, in her sacred language and profound dialogue with ancestral knowledge.

She spotted about a hundred meters from her *kopje* a round stone of a shape similar to that magic drawing. She walked towards it and found seven other large rocks in her path. When she arrived she bent down and looked into the hollow left underneath a cleft in the stone. There were some plants with thin leaves in clusters similar to jacarandas and a red flower in the shape of a red bag. Perhaps resembling a male organ. NoLwasi remembered seeing Masora use them and other *nyangas* call it "*unwele*".

The image of the sexual act spoke to her of something logical that she had thought of many times since what she had witnessed in Soweto. Timidly, the only radio in town was also beginning to recognize the threat of the disease and its relation to multiple relationships. The

Church, which dominated school, hospital and radio messages from the Bulawayo diocese through its missions, advised against having sex outside marriage, before, during and even after widowhood. But NoLwasi thought that many of the women she saw slowly fading away, had had no other relationships, were taking care of the children, the fields, and were faithfully waiting for their husbands with double and dark lives in Soweto to come and pass on the evil to them. The Church was condemning those women to death.

But now, above all she was intrigued by that plant to which the magical messages had pointed. From the consistency, smell and shape of the plant, she intuited that its strength was in the dried leaves. She prepared scrapings from the foliage and mixed them with red ashes and lime and papaya juice. As she found the mixture and observed the reactions, she intuitively knew the best allies of that strange plant. She began to treat a sick person who had the symptoms of the plague and found out that after two weeks of treatment the diarrhea, pain, cough, white spots improved and he began to gain weight and regain strength.

Over the next few months she treated two other women the same way and observed the same results. They were still somewhat weak, but quite relieved. They had regained the energy to live and were working in the fields and with their children. She learned to cultivate that plant through small plantations under the rocks, where she found similar conditions of shade and non-dry soil.

NoLwasi decided she had to go and talk to other *nyangas*. They could study the plant better and cure the terrible disease. The Zimbabwe *nyangas* association, ZINATHA, had an office in Bulawayo. She had never been, in her over thirty years of life, to that Ndebele city. NoLwasi went in one of the giant wheeled buses that made the long, slow trips through the settlements, crowded with people, animals and belongings. Arriving in Bulawayo, she went to the offices of ZINATHA, which by then was already associating two thousand *nyangas* throughout the country. She felt that many were opportunistic and did not have the lineage, the spiritual connection or simply the devotion to the good of others. Many were even getting rich from such practice. NoLwasi feared that her finding would be misused and for the benefit of only a few. The office clerk advised her to write a letter to the president, a Masvingo Shona named Chivunduka. She insisted on

speaking to someone who was looking for remedies for the incurable plague. At her persistence, a gray-haired man with a knowledgeable look who was sitting next to her reading a book, told NoLwasi:

Salibonani mama (we see you, mother.)

Salibonani, Baba (we see you father)

-What do you want, Umama wami?

-I would like to know what ZINATHA is doing to fight the incurable plague.

-Not much, I'm afraid. The government still denies its importance, and many *nyangas* associate it with whites or water.

-But the government says it may be transmitted by sexual intercourse.

-They have already found out much evidence in America about how it spreads and how to prevent it.

-Why doesn't ZINATHA do anything about it? Our young people are dying. Soon there will be no young people left in the villages.

-I invite you to eat *sadza together* and talk about it. Do you accept?

The man seemed wise and respectful. NoLwasi agreed.

In a nearby canteen, in the suburb of small wooden and zinc houses of Makokoba, they sat down to eat *sadza* with *chomolia* and talk about the plague. NoLwasi discovered that the wise *nyanga* named Nāzema, knew much from within himself of the storm that choked harmony with the spirits, but he also listened to the knowledge of others. He told her the stories of a perished form of the disease in a faraway place called San Francisco and how some white people had seen a tiny animal, impossible to see with the eyes, and that it was transmitted between people when they slept together or when they passed blood from one to another. He had also read that that tiny animal, which they called a virus, normally lived in monkeys, but that white experiments with vaccines in Africa had spread it throughout the continent. He told her how important it was that people who might have the virus in their bodies not sleep with others. Or do so using something he called a condom. NoLwasi had never heard of that. Zyanemecarried several of them and showed her one and how it was used. NoLwasi watched in amazement.

She then explained her efforts in caring in her village for many sick people who had been dying, and her discoveries in Soweto. She also told Zyaneme about her discovery of the plant that seemed to help. NoLwasi had brought some plants and a concoction of them she used to treat the malady. Zyaneme looked at her with attention. He told her he lived in Harare and had a laboratory where he could see what made some plants be able to cure and the caution that had in using them so as not to cause harm. Zyaneme looked sternly at NoLwasi and said:

-NoLwasi, mama wami, this disease can wipe out our people. Your efforts in Soweto and here are generous, noble and courageous. I had heard about your grandmother, Masora. And I see that her strength is in you. Today there are many profiteers who just want to make money. Do not spread your knowledge for the moment, because they could misuse it or just abuse your generosity to make money and benefit only those more affluent. If it is good, we want it to reach all those who need it. I promise I will help you.

-Thank you Zyaneme.

-I want to see you in a month's time here, in this canteen. I'll tell you what I found out about the plant. I promise I won't tell anyone. You don't say anything either. Keep treating your sick and tell me what you see. Oh, and stop by the offices of an organization called "Matabeleland AIDS Council" and ask for condoms to take back to your village. They will give them to you free of charge. It would be good for you to start convincing those who don't know if they might be infected, to use them, while we find a remedy for this terrible plague. Soon we will also have a way to know who has this virus in their blood. Next month I will tell you more. *Amandhla*.

-*Amandhla*, replied NoLwasi.

XXIX. Jonay's quest begins. Saint Joseph, Matabeleland, 1986

JONAY GATHERED around a bonfire in El Cabrito with his parents, his grandparents from Hermigüa, Tomas, Fernando, Kadiatu, Lisy and some friends from the island. He also invited Yolanda but she preferred not to suffer and to keep her distance. Some fellow students from La Laguna, some of Kadiatu's friends from Gara, doctors from the island, fishermen friends of Tomas and some high school friends of Lisy, already fully integrated and even an expert in Gomeran whistles, also joined. They ate watercress stew brought from the waterfalls of Hermigüa by his grandparents, with Tenerife's *gofio canario* that he had brought from La Laguna, *almogrote* prepared by Umbela and wine that Fernando had brought from Valle Gran Rey. Tomas had brought *cazones* (smaller species of sharks) for roasting, but Jonay asked him to save them for another occasion. He felt very sorry for them, as he ate almost always vegetarian and grieved with animal suffering.

After some fraternal chatter, Jonay took the floor and looked at each of those people who were so deep in the depths of his soul:

Beloved family, soul friends:

Thank you for coming to this magical corner. My father was shipwrecked here, almost thirty years ago and thanks to a dislocated shoulder and a gap in his forehead, he met my mother. From their love I came to life and I have continued to witness their love for each other, for me and for the world, all my life. From these seashores, diving and swimming with my father, fishing with Tomas, gathering at important moments to celebrate life, welcoming travelers and adventurers, listening to Fernando's stories of Africa, going to the rescue of Kadiatu and Lisy, I watched many sunrises at the horizon that called me strongly. I understood that call by hearing Fernando's stories of other worlds where we are somehow more necessary, of the stories of my parents sailing around the world, of my vocation with the sick where the Teide reigns. Of what Kadiatu told me. Of what I, in the depths of my soul, felt.

And so, life now takes me far away from here, but I will always carry my island and my people in my heart. I will not forget you because

I will have you with me every step of the way. Even if the letters take time or life offers us different challenges, you will always be with me. I leave part of my heart in this island and in each one of you.

After his farewell he embraced each one with deep sentiment. He reached his mother last. That embrace lasted a lifetime. Both of them, moved, could not speak. Umbela could only say:

-Jonay, son, I am proud of you. I will think of you every day, I will meditate, sending you the best of me.

His father, John, gave him his harmonica, joking that he was going to buy a better one. Jonay knew that his father would not give him the harmonica that accompanied him for so many years in so many places, "to buy a better one". His mother gave him a blue knitted sweater with two stripes on the sleeves: red for the union to the family, to his blood and white for the white light of spiritual peace that Jonay carried inside and that, so Umbella felt, was meant to irradiate the universe. Fernando gave him the manuscript of the fifty counsels of Brother Ricardo. Tomas gave him a lantern that had accompanied him hundreds of times in his small fishing boat.

Jonay was soothing the night by playing the melody of Schindler's List, his favorite, on the violin. Then everyone sat around the fire under the stars and the moonlit sea. They sang to the rhythm of Fernando's guitar and John's harmonica. The last song, which stuck in Jonay's heart, was in Catalan, "Un nuvol blanc". The waves of life.

He flew to Madrid, then to Johannesburg and then to Bulawayo. Arriving at the small colonial airport, he saw Father Patxi and his brother Juan Mari in the old arrivals hall. Patxi was 47 years old by then, his hair quite gray, his skin tanned from the Kalahari sun, his eyes clean and cheerful. He wore a white T-shirt, jeans and sandals. Juan Mari was already 56 years old, a strong man, with long hair and a bushy gray beard, a stern look but melting when he smiled. He embraced them. The moment he had been longing for for two years had arrived.

-It took you long, eh? We were looking forward to seeing you, Jonay.

-I would have come a long time ago Patxi. You know the paperwork over and over again with the medical association in Harare

and with the Ministry of Home Affairs in Madrid, bureaucracy, but I'm here! This is one of the happiest days of my life!

-We've been in Bulawayo for two days for a provincial health team meeting and I've had enough of the city and words.

-I can't wait to get to the mission! And how about you, Juan Mari? You arrived recently, didn't you?

-Yes, only a month ago. I am very happy. This is a different world. There are real problems here. Up north, we often make them up.

Along the way Patxi was telling Jonay about the political situation after the elections, the drought, poverty in Saint Joseph, and the strange illness that was distressing everyone. The many people who were dying.

-Yes, I have been studying it, Patxi. The WHO (World Health Organization) has just changed the criteria for diagnosing it. And it seems that soon there will be a test to confirm it. But there is still no treatment. Are there many cases?

-Many. And surely many more that we do not see. And a lot of pain, Jonay, young people, orphans, grandparents who adopt them with almost nothing to give them, no hope. It is very sad. And the Church...

-They are scoundrels in their palaces of power," said Juan Mari.

-What's wrong with them? -asked Jonay.

-They don't let us promote the use of condoms. The only thing that can protect them at present, especially women. Many men live and work in Soweto and come infected, or dead. Well, but I will not discourage you on the first day! Everyone is waiting for you at the mission with open arms.

-I am very happy, Patxi.

Those words remained floating in the air. The three of them were sitting in the front seat of the pick up, with the tub full of sacks of flour, cement and utensils that Juan Mari could get in Bulawayo to make repairs in the mission while Patxi spoke at the health meeting. They drove through the Ndebele city. The poor northern suburbs, the large black hospital in Impilo (life), the city center, the park square, the city hall, they drove into Hillside and headed towards Kezi. Jonay looked in amazement at a different world, with more color and light, very old and well kept cars, people of simple dress and parsimonious walk, giant

African acacias, immense jacarandas still without flowers and a very red earth, perhaps reflecting the suffering of the people who after a cruel war against the racists and then between brothers, was now sinking in the most tragic epidemic that humanity would have ever seen. They then crossed the magical rocks of Matopos and Patxi stopped in front of one that he called "*la madona*" for its giant shape of a mother with a child in her arms. They crossed some baboons, warthogs and impalas, and saw buffalo and giraffes in the distance. Jonay gazed in fascination at the world he had dreamed of for so many years.

They arrived at the mission of Saint Joseph. It was noon. The last fifty kilometers had been on bumpy dirt roads. Half of the way had wooden posts, Patxi explained that they the communities around the mission were working hard to bring electricity. They only had fifteen kilometers to go, equivalent to four hundred and fifty poles. They were putting up two a day. Eight months, with luck, and they would have electricity. They passed hundreds of *kraals*, made up of mud huts with triangular Zulu patterns and thatched roofs of braided dry thatch, rudimentary wooden fences to keep the goats, interspersed fields of millet and corn, a few vegetable gardens, and people along the road waving. Children did so effusively, women with scarves on their heads and children on their backs made slight gestures of smiles and greetings. The elders bowed by clasping their hands together and clapping a palm with a back. Jonay was excited. Though also overwhelmed by the responsibility that laid ahead.

The mission was a group of low houses scattered on a plain of smooth, dry land. It was bordered by a few houses, stores and warehouses, the few that were not made of mud and straw in the whole area. A small old dark brick church stood in the center. Another larger, more modern church was to the left. To the right was a house with a porch that Patxi explained belonged to some nuns who had long since left the mission and used it as a home for boys studying at the school who came from far away or were orphans. At the back on the left was another house of cement and a zinc roof, with a large porch. It was the house where Patxi, Juan Mari, the aspiring seminarians Patrick and James, and little Joseph, who greeted effusively and ran around the

pick-up, lived. Jonay saw to the right the the consulting room and wards, and a small building in front with the letters "*theatre*".

They all ate together, Jonay's first sadza and chomolia. Patxi blessed the table and welcomed Jonay. Jonay brought out gifts for everyone: porcelains from the island of La Gomera, cans of *almogrote* (cheese with garlic), chocolate – melted by the heat- and a toy plane for little Joseph. After lunch, Juan Mari went for a walk through the villages. He use to spend long hours walking every afternoon.

Patxi went on with Jonay to show him the dispensary. When they arrived, a nurse welcomed Jonay. Her name was Rose and she greeted him very happily. There were some sick people waiting for the consultation. First she showed him the pharmacy, with old wooden cabinets and medicine dressers arranged in alphabetical order, a weight, a kerosene refrigerator and several shelves and boxes of serums. She explained to him that the government had a very good system called EDLIZ with generic drugs protocols for each level of care and an information guide. She said that now that he had arrived they might promote the mission from health center to district hospital. Rose had brought one copy from the provincial meeting and handed it to him. Then Jonay felt his heart pound when he saw a written sign on the door of the consultation room saying "Dr. Jonay Harris".

Jonay began to feel the weight of expectation upon him, a young doctor with hardly any experience, but with immense enthusiasm. The consultation room had a humble wooden table, two chairs, an examination table and two glass shelves in which he could see phonendoscopes, sphygmomanometers, colposcopes, oto and ophthalmoscopes, an ocular tonometer, boxes of cures and sutures and soft bandages and others for plaster. All very old but very well cared for and kept. The floor, he noticed, was cement, very old and cracked, but polished and shiny. He felt he was in a venerable place that invited whispered conversation.

They went to the delivery room, with the obstetric stretcher, a crib with a lamp hanging above it and a cabinet where he identified the vacuum cups, forceps, manual suction tubes for the newborns, intravenous fluids. Little else. He then went to the ward for the admitted patients. It was a large, long room with about fifteen beds. There were seven patients in the ward. Patxi greeted them.

-Salibonani!

They responded in kind.

-Liya pila Dokotela! -Dokotela Jonay!

He greeted them in the same way and instinctively repeated the gesture they were making with their hands cupped and clapping palm to back. It was a sign that was full of respect, he felt it in their looks. Jonay sensed that he could not act naturally and hide his excitement at such respect, in such a simple and beautiful place, at the dreamed challenge that awaited him. They passed into the courtyard and into the small building where the sign he saw when he arrived read: "theatre". There were many boxes inside and an operating table, a lamp, several showcases and steel tables. Everything was full of dust.

-Will you bring it to life? Patxi asked.

-If I can convey a tiny fraction of the immense excitement and joy I have to be here, this is going to be the most tender hospital in Zimbabwe. And I hope to improve day by day in everything. Be patient with me. I need your guidance and your help in many things.

-Of course, Jonay. Bit by bit. Welcome home.

XXX. The Vultures of Humanity. Matabeleland, 1986

JUAN MARI HAD BEEN at St. Joseph's for three months. He had been learning Ndebele. The aspirant seminarian, Patrick, gave him lessons every afternoon after lunch. He liked to walk in the Basque bush and although there were neither mountains nor hills in Saint Joseph, only but a dry savannah with isolated acacias, he enjoyed going for long walks and talking to people in the *kraals*, who grew fond of him. For everyone he became known as *ubudi Sindisabantu* (the brother of the one who saves people, after Patxi) but he gradually acquired his own identity and they began to call him *hambakatsana* (the one who walks far away) and ended up known as *Haka*. He would walk at dawn and discover where he could see the gazelles leaping across the savannah at that time. Then he would go back to the mission and have breakfast with Patxi, Patrick, James, Jonay and little Joseph. They were like a family, very united and welcoming patients, families, orphans, working together in maintaining the schools, workshops, and helping women's groups and youth networks....

Juan Mari, who always disavowed religion, was moved by the Sunday masses. They lasted up to four hours. Groups of boys, girls, mothers, the elders and the young people who had not yet left or had already returned from Egoli would meet separately. Every group would chat, elect a group leader, a secretary, say their prayers, talk about their experiences of the week, their worries and ideas to propose to the community.

In the church, round and with a half-ruined roof, everyone gathered in a circle, praying and singing in their deep Zulu chants. Juan Mari was stirred to see so much unity from so much humility. Those Ndebele songs made his heart vibrate. He was often enthused, as if he had repressed for many years, to let go the tears of emotion, the balm of existential anxiety. That was a real community, they shared what they had, they worked together post by post to bring electricity, to chase away the elephants when they invaded their crops, to accompany each other in sickness or death or to defend themselves from the attacks of the fifth brigade, which had no longer come back to haunt them. There were also disputes, envy and selfishness as in any human human group, but a spirit of union prevailed. Patrick told Juan Mari how Patxi

protected them from the 5th Brigade and the respect for *Sindisabantu* throughout the area. Juan Mari felt a deep esteem for his younger brother and it revealed more clearly why he had been imprisoned for so long by a gang chained to its own hatred.

In the afternoons, Juan Mari would pick Joseph up from school and carry him sitting on his shoulders to walk through *kraals* and up to a kopje from where they could see silhouettes of giraffes and herds of buffalo in the distance. One day, running through the acacia trees, a dagger-hard spike of dried Kalahari acacia made a deep scar under his eye, and Jonay carefully stitched it up. He was his first patient in the newly opened operating room with mass ceremony and blessing of *nyangas*, ndebele chanting and offering to the *amakhosis*. Joseph would tell uncle Haka where his school friends were and they'd go to visit them. Haka, always surrounded by children, nature, and mission work, regained the smile he had been choking with hatred for so long. One day they went to see a friend of Joseph. He had told Haka that he hadn't been to school for over a week and was worried that he might be sick. When they arrived, they saw how, as in many *kraal* in the area, two old persons, weak and worn out by the sun and the hard work. They were caring for many children, orphaned by parents who had been killed by the incurable disease. They greeted ceremoniously and pulled out a Ndebele stool for Haka. The old woman, according to tradition, sat lower, on a mat, and the old man, on another stool.

-*Salibonani Gogo, Mkhulu* (We see you, grandmother, grandfather).

-*Salibonani Baba* (We see you, Father).

After the ceremony of asking about the fields, the rains, the pests and the harvest, Haka asked them about Joseph's friend. He noticed that they felt some embarrassment in confiding to him that they had trusted him to some friends of their late son, who, like so many, had returned from Egoli in a wooden box. Haka insisted on knowing where he was and with whom he had gone. The elders, looking as sad as an ocean of tears, told him that when they brought their son back from South Africa, the driver of the pick up truck the coffin came in told them they had spent a lot of money on transportation. A month later the driver returned with two more people to ask them if they could pay their debt.

They also told them that, in memory of their brother, they could take some of their children with them to give them a good education in South Africa. Both proposals were related. Some families in dire straits, in the Ndebele tradition, gave their daughters into servitude, promised them in marriage to their creditors or let them take their sons to work the fields. But in this case they were strangers, claiming a dubious debt and offering an education of which those old men knew nothing, for whom, after seeing the agony of their children, life had lost all meaning. They described the people to him, how they claimed to be called, the type of car and little else.

In the following month, Haka learned of four similar cases. They were two boys and two girls between the ages of nine and eleven. And no one knew where they could be. That pickup and those men with dark glasses, supposedly Samaritans of helpless children, had vanished. Juan Mari told Patxi about it, with deep concern. Patxi told him that he had prevented Joseph from being taken away like that two years earlier.

Juan Mari -Haka for everyone, even for his brother-, went with the mission's pick-up truck to Bulawayo. The mission needed flour and boxes of medicines and serums for the dispensary and he volunteered to drive it himself. Patrick, with whom he had been developing a genuine friendship, escorted him. They first went to the public library. Haka had taken to reading every novel he could find by the prolific Wilbur Smith. Then they went to the cathedral to get the post. He saw from afar that retrograde bishop threatening his brother for having sensitivity and compassion for the people. They exchanged defiant glances. He sent for him. Haka would have "given him the finger", but he had already learned what was the power of a bishop in Africa. He approached and greeted him distantly. Familiarized to having his ring kissed, the insolence of that bearded Basque bewildered him.

-Haka, tell your brother that I need a report on his arrangements to assist in the reception of His Holiness. He arrives in a month's time in Harare. I hope he has organized the pilgrimage of parishioners from his community and they are praying rosaries for Him as I instructed. Here is a reminder letter of instructions for all the missions. It is perhaps the most important month for the Church in the history of this country.

Haka would have told him that they were busy helping people, putting up electric poles, caring for the fields and the sick, and

promoting the use of condoms, to waste time entertaining an old man who lived in luxury and power, the antithesis of Jesus' message. But he restrained himself. It could cost his brother and everyone in the mission dearly.

-Yes sir, I will tell him and give him the letter. Although he is very busy helping the poor and the sick.

He couldn't help but say that. He left with a feeling of nausea. He didn't understand his brother's vow of obedience. Well, nor the one of chastity. And thinking about it he realized that he himself was already fifty-six years old, still single, and had gone four years without a single kiss or caress from a woman.

They then went to a warehouse for flour. Before returning to the mission he told Patrick that he wanted to stop at an office of an organization. He had heard about it on the radio. It was called the Amani Trust. He had asked Patxi and knew that it worked with the Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice, headed by Father Pius, a brave and humane man, much unlike from the bishop. He preferred to deal with those strange disappearances of children outside the Church so that his brother would not be subjected to further criticism and even veiled threats not to concentrate on evangelizing his community. Haka entered the Hillcrest house where Amani Trust had its offices. He waited in a small waiting room reading his annual report: torture of Ndebele dissidents, police beatings of alleged homosexuals, minimum rights in prisons abused, AIDS patients marginalized and their children expelled from schools. A woman in her forties, red-haired, rather thin, with a tender yet determined gaze that seemed to pierce gently but deeply and fearlessly into her green eyes, greeted Haka. He sensed her as very beautiful and suspected much courage in her gaze and in her work.

-Good morning, my name is Helen Gray. I am the director of the Amani Trust, what can I do for you?

-Good morning, my name is Haka Beloki. I live in the mission of Saint Joseph, near Kezi, I would like to talk to you about some cases that concern me. Could we talk in private?

There was a receptionist and the door was half open, Haka was beginning to suspect something somber about the missing children. They went into Helen's office, a simple room with a wooden table, two

chairs and several bookshelves. Several posters from Amnesty International and *Human Rights Watch* were displayed, as well as one from an AIDS organization denouncing the government's *denial*.

-Thank you for seeing me without an appointment. We don't have a telephone in Saint Joseph. By the way, where are you from?

-No problem. I'm from Manchester. Tell me what's bothering you.

Haka explained the children's disappearances. By that time he had gone around with Patrick to about eighty *kraals* inquiring about the offers of the South Africans in dark glasses: they had visited twenty of them and had taken a total of ten children from six *kraal*. They were boys and girls, aged eight to thirteen. They were all AIDS orphans and in the care of their elderly grandparents. They had been taken away by South Africans in a white pick-up truck. They had offered money in four cases to the elderly, who were living at the end of their rope and caring for their orphaned grandchildren. In other cases they settled family debts, including those related to the transport of their children's corpses from Egoli, by handing over the children. In all cases they told the grandparents the children would receive the best education in Egoli and would return the following year with a brighter future ahead of them.

-And what makes you suspect that it is not true?

-Helen, there is no sign of an organization that does that, they don't ask for any signed authorization, those children leave without documentation, without a passport, nobody knows where they are going.

-It is strange, yes, and we already have three complaints like yours. A *Nyanga woman* visited us a short time ago worried about something similar. She came from another part of Builila-Mangwe. The others are from Bubi district and Gwanda district. They have informed us of five children in each case.

-Possibly there are many more that go unreported because of embarrassment or ignorance.

-Maybe.

-What can we do?

-The Zimbabwean government is not going to help us. We are up against it because of human rights abuses. The government will not

address any complaints of missing Ndebeles. Who knows if even the army is involved. I am going to talk to an organization we cooperate with in Johannesburg and with Amnesty International. In the meantime could you do a broader survey so we can identify more cases and estimate more accurately what might be going on?

-I will do so. By the way, although I have not practiced law for some time, I am a lawyer, and I would like to team up in the defense of human rights.

-That's great! For the time being, if you want, as a volunteer, you could cooperate in this case and talk to the other districts about similar cases.

-I will be here this time next Wednesday. I think it is better that nobody knows anything about this, for the moment, especially journalists. Can you give me the names of the people and contact addresses in Gwanda and Bubi? And of that *nyanga* woman you are talking about?

On his way back across Matopos he thought of each of those little ones, of the sadness of having seen their parents die, of having been taken away from their grandparents. Where could they be?

It had been a long time, maybe never, since Juan Mari had felt such a strong mission in his life. Nor such deep green eyes.

XXXI. A challenge for courage. Matabeleland, 1986

AFTER HIS meeting with Zyanemein Bulawayo, NoLwasi went to the Matabeleland AIDS Council and asked them if she could bring condoms to her village and promote their use. A receptionist greeted her and asked for her details. When she told her she was a *nyanga* she was shocked and told her to wait. She went into a room and came out a few minutes later with a woman who had fire in her eyes but at the same time conveyed enormous purity.

-*Salinbonani Mama wami.*

-*Salibonani.*

-My name is Anwele, I am the director of the Matabeleland AIDS Council. My colleague tells me that you are a *nyanga* and that you want to distribute condoms in your community. Is that right?

-My name is NoLwasi. I still don't know enough about this disease but I have been advised to promote the use of condoms, although I don't know how to use them.

-You are very brave. We have been trying for a long time to convince ZINATHA of the need to promote the use of condoms but they are still blocked in prejudices of whether it is a disease introduced by whites, or by water, or in any case by doing evil eye for infidelity.

-And in the meantime many young people die," said NoLwasi, as she began to feel in tune with Anwele.

-And many more are getting infected silently, NoLwasi. It is important to be brave and start talking about the disease, about the risk of having sex without knowing if anyone in the couple has had any other relationship and may be infected.

-And how can you know that, Anwele? People never talk about it out of shame.

-The only way is to get tested. I've managed to get a thousand of the tests the government is using to detect infection in blood transfusions. Let's start encouraging people to get tested and act responsibly.

-And can that "test" tell if one is infected? How does it do that?

-I know that in your traditional medicine diseases are understood and studied in a different way, but believe me, even with some

mistakes, this test detects if the body is infected and reacting against the "virus" the cause of the disease.

-Yes, I have been told. A colleague from Harare, Zyaneme, is reading studies from other countries far away where they are fighting the disease.

-Now I understand you, Zyaneme is a good friend. Very brave.

-And what can I do, Anwele? I'll tell you that I'm discovering some ways to help people with the disease. But they always end up wasting away and dying. I have also gone to Soweto and seen the dark world from which our young people bring the horrible evil.

At that moment she saw Anwele fix her gaze even more deeply, as if a force of tenderness surrounded her gaze and her eyes grew moist with emotion.

-NoLwasi. I am one of those women, the father of my children brought me the Egoli infection. I have tested myself. I am infected. I'm still healthy, and I'm going to talk about it in a fearless way. I dream of a future where people get tested, sick people disclose their status without shame, with dignity and honesty, and encourage others to do so. And non-infected people help them. Together, united, we will not only put an end to the infection, but we will manage to survive it. I am sure of it.

-You are very daring. Count me in, Anwele. You already have a *nyanga* friend. Can you show me how condoms work, and how to start promoting their use? Could we also do this test in the village, and in other villages in the area?

-Great, NoLwasi. We are already sisters in this fight.

Anwele showed her how to use the condom. She gave her a model of a wooden penis to teach her how to use it. She told her not to be ashamed or embarrassed of talking about intimate relations so clearly with the wooden object. Even make jokes so as to gain confidence. It was a matter of life and death for many young people. She told her that she would come to her village to help her and see if the tests could be taken there in case there were people who wanted to have it done. Anwele also told her that it would be important to encourage the mission hospitals in Brunapeg and Saint Joseph to do it.

NoLwasi told her that she would start doing it, that she would visit Brunapeg and that she would come back to Bulawayo the following month, with Zyaneme, to tell her how everything was going.

NoLwasi returned to Sansukwi with a box of two hundred condoms and the wooden penis model. She also had to make progress in learning about remedies to alleviate the disease. Especially the plant she had found and that Zyanemewas studying in Harare. In the next days upon arrival to her village, two other women and a man came to consult her showing symptoms of the disease.

NoLwasi began by talking to her father, Themba, now Induna (chief) of the village. She explained to him what was known about the disease in unfaithful relationships and that the way to prevent the disease from spreading further was to use those plastics she brought from Bulawayo. She also told him that they would soon have a way to know, by a blood test, who was infected, and thus help him or her and each other. Shee told him that it was a terrible disease allied with fear and resentment, but that it would be destroyed by fearless tenderness. Love for one another, sincere, honest.

Themba was reluctant to promote something as shameful as a white-invented plastic on something as intimate and yet as sacred as life-giving relationships. But he trusted his daughter so much that he agreed to call not only the village but, through other Indunas, several villages in the area, and have them listen to her.

As the day of the great meeting approached, NoLwasi attended to the sick and continued to administer the plant in the way he had discovered to prepare it.

She also used aloe vera, garlic, ginseng and other plants that she knew by other names and understood as forces to balance the harmony. However, she began to see that although it relieved some of the symptoms, it could not stop the horrible destructive force of the disease. Even patients who had begun to improve with her treatment a few months ago, relapsed.

Before the village meeting, she decided to go to the Brunapeg mission hospital. She shared with the doctors, mosly Cubans, that she was very wary of going to places dominated by whites. Further north, in another northern hacienda run by much more racist and cruel whites, the *Kalanga* and Ndebele were treated with humiliation and violence.

That hacienda was known as Tchabulaya (where they were killed). Severaleslaved Kalangas died. Before the liberation and independence of the country, the whites could whip to death rebellious workers. Even many of the elders who had worked on that and hundreds of other racist haciendas in the country, greeted the whites by looking at the ground, bending down, offering submission with a bowl salute of their hands and saying "Baas." NoLwasi felt deep anger when she saw that attitude. And at the same time she felt deep tenderness for those elders who had suffered so much throughout their lives.

But her father Themba told her that in Brunapeg they treated blacks with respect. He gave her a letter for a nun named Sister Johanna, whom he had once seen at a meeting of Indunas with a cousin, also a nun in Brunapeg, named Monica. He told her that she was a good person, he could feel it in her eyes, and that she could surely speak sincerely and confidently with her.

NoLwasi knew that people from the town sometimes visited Brunapeg for treatments and that they had sometimes helped with difficult deliveries that ended up coming out of a cut in the womb. She had also heard that they had a machine that looked inside bodies, and many medicines in a multitude of colors, which helped with many symptoms. However, the worlds of *nyangas* and whites' medicine lived with their backs to each other and mutual suspicion.

She arrived in a "scotch car" of countrymen from her village who were on their way to Botswana. She knew they were smuggling soaps, clothes, watches and other things that were cheaper in Francistown. She didn't say anything because she didn't believe in borders. But neither did she believe in a way of life based on buying and selling. Often strange things of absurd uses.

When she arrived in Brunapeg, she saw that the buildings were stretched out with zinc slab roofs, porches with polished concrete floors, and covered walkways between the structures to protect from the rains. There were hundreds of people around the doctors' offices, waiting at the pharmacy counter, sitting all along the aisles waiting to be seen or caring for relatives. It seemed a place of peace to her. She asked a nurse for Sister Johanna and was directed to a small building on the right with an "administration" sign. She knocked on the door, asked for her to woman busy typing. A few minutes later Sister Johanna

came out to greet her. She was dressed in a habit and pew cap, had a very clean blue eyes and although her face had sober features, she had a smile full of tenderness.

-Salibonani Sister Johanna

-Salibonani mama.

-My name is NoLwasi, I am a *Nyanga* from Sanzukwi. I would like to talk to you for a moment. My father, Themba, Induna in Sanzukwi, a friend of Sister Monica, told me that if you had a little time, you would listen to me.

Sister Johanna found the expression "to know how to listen" a beautiful one, a virtue that was often despised.

-If you wait half an hour, I will invite you to lunch at the convent.

-Thank you very much. Okay, I'll wait.

Waiting outside, she saw that in front of a very simple building, there were several fires with pots cooking *sadza*, ropes from which clothes were hanging, several women cleaning and others sitting and talking. It would not have caught his attention so much except for the fact that they were all pregnant. As she stared, she noticed one of them waving at her.

-NoLwasi, Mama wami!

She recognized a woman from the village, named Bongile (thank you).

-Bongile, Linjani (How are you?)

She approached the building. Bongile explained that it was a place where women came shortly before giving birth, especially if they feared that the delivery would be difficult. They did so because they would be attended to in the hospital, and could save their lives by cutting into the womb if necessary. In addition, they had a week or ten days of rest, with consultations by the nurses, eating, resting and not working in the fields. It was also a way to meet women from other places in "Mat South" and help each other. NoLwasi thought it was a good idea although she feared it would anger the spirits by being born outside the tradition in the *kraal* and without the help of the traditional midwives. She told Bongile that she was trying to learn more about the incurable disease.

When Sister Johanna got off work they walked together through the hospital. They strolled around so Johanna could show NoLwasi the whole small hospital-village. To the right were extended halls of classrooms for the nurses. Further beyond she could see ten small houses, where hospital workers lived.

As they walked, Johanna explained to NoLwasi that Father Pfanner was the founder of her order, called Marianhill for the religious and "Sisters of the Holy Blood" for the nuns. He was a XIXth century Austrian peasant with a missionary vocation who devoted himself with great compassion to the sick, in part because he himself had suffered from severe pneumonia and meningitis. He was greatly inspired by the life of the Trappists, which Johanna explained to NoLwasi, were religious who lived very simply, almost always in silence, keen on meditation and work in the fields. He rehabilitated an old Trappist monastery in France, abandoned because it was surrounded by what was then thought as unhealthy air ("malaria"), which made the population sick. He planted hundreds of eucalyptus trees and transformed the place into a healthy place where Trappist activity was reborn. He then worked in a place called Bosnia from wherefrom he went to South Africa and founded the Marianhill mission, becoming more and more involved in the fight against racism and on behalf of the poor.

NoLwasi listened in silence and followed Johanna's words and explanations with her dark eyes. She sensed the silence those strange white religious people professed as precious.

They continued to the west and other buildings corresponded to the laundry, workshops and kitchens. In front of the kitchen there was a huge metal cylinder. Johanna explained that it was the energy they used for cooking: from the dirt from the latrines and the farm that they would later see, a gas was made that raised the cylinder and was used for the cooking fires. NoLwasi was astonished and did not know whether it was as wonderful as she thought at that moment or dangerous because of fears she did not understand.

They continued to the western end where there was a farm with about ten cows and beyond that some pens with pigs and a large chicken coop. From there, Johanna explained, they got the fermented milk (*sourmilk*) and some protein for the diet of the sick. On the sides of the

mission there were vegetable gardens, especially chomolias, broccoli, chard, tomatoes, and corn plantations. They continued south and passed through the sick wards, men's wards, women's wards, maternity wards, children's wards, and a special ward for a disease called tuberculosis, which, Johanna explained to NoLwasi, was a disease that made holes in the lungs. She pointed out at the east end, near the entrance to the mission, the pharmacy buildings, the X-ray machine (that machine she had been told could see inside), and the doctor's house, surrounded by the three pine trees, the tallest trees in all of Matabeleland South. She noticed in the distance that hundreds of weaver birds were nesting in those pines. NoLwasi felt that colony of weavers had something to tell her.

They arrived at the convent, and behind it they could see a large building in the shape of a half egg, with a large cross, undoubtedly the church.

Johanna introduced her to other nuns working in the hospital and to the two parish priests of the mission, of Indian origin. Dr. Ndlovu, the mission doctor was also at the table. He was a somewhat obese man, with a warm smile and an intelligent look. Johanna introduced NoLwasi as a *nyanga* from Sanzukwi and could see in their reactions a certain surprise and a veiled rejection. Especially among the Indian priests.

During the meal, NoLwasi explained her experience with AIDS patients, her trip to Soweto, her experiences with herbal treatments, her alliance with Zyanemeand Anwele, the need to promote the use of condoms to prevent the spread of suffering and the possibility that soon they could be tested and better fight against the plague, without fear and with love.

The priests and some nuns reacted with rejection. The nuns' rejection was scandalized, as if they had heard blasphemies. That of the priests was even worse: they reacted with contempt, as if excusing her affront for her ignorance. They left the table at the end of the meal and said goodbye politely but clearly indicating that they would not like to see her again in that corner inhabited by holy and divinely lightened people. Johanna and Dr. Ndlovu remained thoughtful. Johanna only said that the bishop would not allow such activities. Dr. Ndlovu told NoLwasi that she was absolutely right, that she was very brave and that

they had to do something. They could not continue to act scared and just preach abstinence.

-Sister, Doctor. Many of the young women I have seen falling ill and die, have had no relationship with anyone other than their husbands. What good is abstinence to them?

Johanna told her she would talk about it at the bishopric. She told her about a priest who was fighting against the norms of the Church and promoting the use of condoms in his mission, that he was a very good person and very well liked by everyone. They called him Sindisabantu. NoLwasi had heard of him. She remembered that Teya, on his last visit to Sanzukwi before he died, told her about that white man with a big heart.

Dr. Ndlovu told her that they had discussed it at the Matabeleland Health Committee and that he himself had written a letter to the bishop and had asked the Ministry for tests to start doing them in Brunapeg. He wanted to start with the pregnant women in the place she had seen.

NoLwasi told her about the meeting they were going to have in the village, but Dr. Ndlovu, afraid of losing his job paid for by the bishop, said he could not attend. However, they agreed to discuss the tests and treatments again when she returned from her next visit to Bulawayo.

NoLwasi returned to Sanzukwi. She needed to meditate and find harmony and strength to fight that plague. She was finding clear allies and clear negative forces that continued to surround the plague of fear and perpetuate the suffering of so many brothers and sisters.

XXXII. Jonay flies in his dream. Matabeleland, 1986

JONAY BEGAN working ardently at Saint Joseph. Patxi offered him to move to the old brick church, a small building about six meters long and three meters wide, with a modest porch. There he could be more independent, study and take emergency calls. Patxi also suggested so in case Jonay needed intimacy in his relations. He also enjoyed very much the get-togethers with him. Jonay accepted gratefully and asked if he could carry on going for breakfast and lunch with Patxi - Sindisabantu-, little Joseph and Juan Mari-Haka-. The aspirant seminarians had already gone to the diocese in Bulawayo and Patxi felt they were heading to a dark place. He preferred not to encourage any more young men on that path.

-You can't: you must! They sealed the pact with a deep hug.

Jonay spent the first week seeing outpatients in the consultation room, putting the pharmacy in order and reviewing the "EDLIZ" treatment protocols with his nurse, Rose.

Rose would attend the more general consultations, do the dressings, hand out the medications and give the injections. In a short time they had built up a great deal of professional and personal trust between the two of them. Rose had two children in Bulawayo, cared for by her husband, a mechanic in the city, and her parents in the suburbs of Mkokoba. Before Jonay's arrival, she could only go away for one weekend a month, when a nurse from Bulawayo or Brunapeg could replace her. Sometimes not even that. This was the situation for most Zimbabwean doctors and nurses working in rural areas, and so there were many unfilled vacancies. Jonay insisted that she go every Friday, until Monday, to be with her family. She was thrilled with gratitude.

Patxi's routine gradually settled. He would pay a good-morning visit to the few patients admitted before consultation and spend some time for detailed examination in the afternoon. Before that, he would have lunch with his "family" from Saint Joseph, and would chat in his incipient ndebele with Haka and one of the teachers from the school. Then he would tidy up and carefully clean every piece of surgical and anesthesia instruments that had accrued from donations in the half-decayed operating theater. Haka brought from Bulawayo sheets of

corrugated iron, wooden beams, nails and cement to fix the theatre building, barely eight meters long and four meters wide. Jonay was sure "miracles" would take place there. Then he would go running at dusk, some days with Haka, through the acacia arid fields. When he returned, he would take a shower in the contraption Patxi had designed outside his house and study.

Jonay spent about two hours a day studying. The first was on cases he had seen that day. The second was following a review outline of diseases, public health issues, and laboratory and ultrasound techniques. He was writing a project to set up a laboratory and ultrasound room. He had brought with him Brother Ricardo's fifty tips, several books on tropical medicine, and the manual John Gray. It was Fernando's present and he knew it was valued by Cuban internationalist doctors working in the most remote hospitals with few resources. It was 800 pages of information and tricks to do human medicine and make the best use of limited resources. He felt a strange connection with the kindred spirit who wrote that manual, which he always carried in his pocket. He also read Maurice King's books on surgery, trauma and anesthesia in rural districts, Monica Cheesbrough's on tropical laboratory, Manson's on tropical medicine and David Morley's books on tropical pediatrics.

Joan had about ten consultations a day. He saw cases of severe diarrhea in children, some requiring admission and intravenous fluids for a day or two. He gradually improved at inserting intravenous *canulae* to children with veins that were almost invisible due to extreme dehydration and sometimes at night, with only the dim light of the kerosene lamp.

The rains had not yet arrived but he saw the first cases of malaria. He also saw many respiratory problems in children and the elderly: pneumonia, asthma and tuberculosis in adults. In many of them he suspected AIDS. He also detected a case of meningitis in the first week and did a lumbar puncture, which showed yellowish liquid due to pus from the infection. He also observed many skin problems: scabies, various rashes, ringworm, burns, tropical ulcers and Buruli ulcers (a type of tuberculosis), impetigo and other infections.

Jonay then saw some cases with typical AIDS lesions, Kaposi's sarcomas, mucosal candidiasis and punctate exanthemata. As he did in

La Laguna, he heard with devotion and through his inseparable stethoscope the rhythm of the hearts and knew how to detect and interpret the tones and murmurs. He identified cardiac insufficiencies, valvular problems, some rheumatic fevers affecting the valves and pericarditis due to tuberculosis. Jonay saw several cases of severe malnutrition in the first week and considered setting up a nutritional rehabilitation ward. He also detected, to his astonishment as he thought it was a western disease, many cases of hypertension and related vascular consequences.

Jonay attended several epileptic seizures in untreated patients. He explored the abdomen carefully in every patient and found out many enlarged livers from chronic hepatitis and cirrhosis, and giant spleens from chronic malaria and sleeping sickness, coupled with painful lymph nodes in the neck. He also suspected many cases of anemia, another urgent reason to write down his laboratory project.

Jonay was especially keen in attending the follow-ups of pregnant women and children under five years of age, for health checks, weight monitoring and vaccinations. He had reverence and great respect for the delicate magic of pregnancy. And felt that they urgently needed to prepare the "theatre" to be able to perform cesarean sections and not have to refer them late and urgently to Brunapeg, a two-hour drive over bumpy roads or four hours in a "scotch car" (donkey carts).

His first emergency in that first week was a broken arm of a child who fell off a scotch car. The child was only six years old and was crying in pain. His stern father told him:

-Angikalhela, noma ndidle uzahamba Egoli!

He found that it was a common saying in such situations and in general to children: "Don't cry or you'll never be able to go to Egoli".

Jonay thought about the obsession with looking for a future in Egoli, despite the clear link to AIDS, which was devastating those communities. He encouraged and reassured the boy in his rudimentary ndebele and was able to relax him and put him to sleep with ketamine, reduce the fracture and put up a plaster cast in the adequate position.

Another day, he was notified in the evening because a man had come in with a black scorpion sting on one foot. The man had

symptoms of severe intoxication, with intense pain in the entire leg, weakness throughout the body, excessive salivation, difficulty breathing and speaking, and muscle tremors. From the symptoms, he doubted whether it was really a scorpion, which was very common in the area, or a black mamba that he may have not seen in the night. He applied a tourniquet and released it at regular intervals, gave him IV fluids, local anesthetic, antibiotics to prevent infection and possible gangrene, and pain killers. He spent the night by his side checking his blood pressure, pulse and breathing. He did not improve much. At breakfast he asked Patxi about the anti-venom serum, which was indicated in the "EDLIZ".

-You will see, Jonay, that there are many medicines that are supposed to be provided by the ministry's pharmacy but are out of stock. We have to supplement with our own money, donations or much improvisation. DHve you heard of the "black stone"?

-No, although I heard something about it. Isn't it a myth of the White Fathers in Congo?

Patxi usually wore a wide-brimmed cloth hat. From a small pocket in the hat, Patxi took out a dark, elongated stone:

-Here is the myth. It is charred wood boiled with some liquids and herbs that some natives of Zaire shared with the White Fathers. Before I came, Father Daniel, a good man whom I replaced when I came, gave me this one. He was expelled as a rebel, and I sympathise with him more and more.

-And we only have this one? Where do you buy them?

-That's the point, Jonay: there are things, very few, that have escaped the buying and selling in which the world lives submerged. The black stone is made from nature. And the knowledge is transmitted once the good spirit of the person who is going to receive that knowledge is known.

-May we move towards a new world of respect, trust and love.

-That's right, dear Jonay. As I know well of your kindness and commitment, I will tell you the secret but you must promise for your honor and human dignity, never to use this knowledge for your privilege or to enrich yourself.

-You know that's right, Patxi. That's why I'm here with you.

-First go to treat the sick person. Wash the wound produced by the snake, make small cuts in the traces of the bite until drops of blood come out, place the Black Stone on the wound until it sticks by itself, try to make the patient calm down and rest. After the consultations and lunch, I will teach you how to prepare more stones.

Jonay followed Patxi's advice, passed consultation, and went back to the food, the usual *sadza* and *chomolia*, this time with rich peanut sauce! Before the ndebele get-together, Patxi and Jonay stayed in a corner of the dining room while Haka started his ndebele class outside on the porch.

-Patxi, it's incredible. The stone was stuck to the skin around the bite. Then I spent three hours in the consultation room. When I came back, the man told me that the symptoms had been reducing as if they were descending from the body towards the stone.

-And it will fall when it has done its job. Absorb the poison. If anyone hears us, let his kindness be the guide to the use of this ancient knowledge.

Jonay listened attentively, and Patxi whispered the secret solemnly.

-Jonay, once the stone is used, you can reuse it, but first you must soak it in a glass of milk overnight. Throw the milk away because it will be toxic.

-To make the stone, we need a piece of long bone from the hind legs of a buffalo. It must be washed and rubbed with detergent, dried and washed again three times. Then you need to file the surface well to open the pores of the bone. Next, place charcoal on a metal griddle until the it is very hot and then put the bone between the embers for about twenty minutes. When the bones are black and shiny, remove them with pliers from the grid and introduce them in cold water. Check if the stone has the necessary cathartic power by placing it on the tongue and seeing if it sticks. Be careful, it once painfully stuck on my tongue for a long time when I tested it! You take it off with cold water.

-Thank you Patxi, I will see where I can get the buffalo bones.

-Another thing, Patxi, we need to make a small laboratory and put an ultrasound machine in the office. I am making a project for those two ideas, explaining the need, how we would use it, the good it would do and what it might cost.

-Very good, Jonay. Give it to me when you have it and we'll see where to get money. Also ask among your contacts in Spain to see if anyone can help us.

The following week, Jonay delivered his first baby in Saint Joseph. Women used to give birth at home, assisted by mothers-in-law or by older women who were skilled in assisting laboring women. The woman, Lalani, had been in labor at home for two days and was in a lot of pain. Jonay saw that the baby was in breech position and it was too late to change it. The heart was beating fine. He began to carefully fill in a chart at regular intervals with the mother's pulse, temperature and blood pressure, the baby's heart rate, the degree of dilatation of the cervical neck and the level of descent and the frequency of contractions every ten minutes. He knew that there was a high probability that Lalani would need a cesarean section. He had to anticipate such possibility in case the labor was prolonged after she broke waters and the baby did not descend, if a foot came out before the buttocks, if the umbilical cord came out and became entrapped, or if the frequency of the heartbeat started to drop. The operating room was not yet ready. If it was the case, they would have to send her to Brunapeg and the two or three hours of distance and bumps could be deadly for the child and perhaps for her. He put up some oxytocin and checked that labor was entering the active phase, progressively dilating the neck. Rose washed her. Jonay preferred not to make the cut -episiotomy- that doctors almost always made to facilitate the passage of the head. He himself had been born in El Cabrito, and his mother helped women in natural childbirth. He trusted nature and preferred to wait for her wise guidance. He also did not want to manipulate the child's buttocks and legs to assist his descent as he was concerned that he would stimulate his breathing and the baby could aspirate meconium. Jonay gently and steadily supported the bottom of the mother's womb, whom he treated with all gentleness. She had insisted that the father, contrary to Ndebele tradition and most doctors' orders, be with her, holding her hand, giving her love and strength. The buttocks descended and when he saw the navel he gently pulled her legs uncrossing them and softly pulled the handle of the cord.

-*Uya Umfana* (it's a boy!)

The boy showed out one shoulder and Jonay helped him pull out the rest of the arm and then the other. The key moment arrived. He

knew that nature in those moments directs. He let the child hang down and pressed gently on the pubis. He had to assist the exit of the head with gentle traction of the forceps. He cut the cord and assisted the child, who took an agonizing few seconds to breathe. Meanwhile, Rose assisted in the descent of the placenta. The baby's cry broke the black, magical ndebele night.

-Amhlope (congratulations)!

This was Jonay's first delivery in Africa.

She helped Rose clean everything up and leave Lalani with her husband and newborn peacefully in the living room.

-Lilala kuhle (Have a good rest).

As he returned to his room that night, under the starry sky, he looked up at the southern cross, and something told him from deep inside that his life had meaning.

The next morning he learned from Rose that the Llani and her husband named the baby Sibindi-Jonay (Brave-Jonay).

Gradually he started to set up the operating room and met every first Thursday of the month with Dr. Ndlovu who came from the Brunapeg mission to help Jonay, supervise his treatments, see together some complicated patients and transfer, if necessary, some of them to Brunapeg, with more advanced means and Dr. Ndlovu's experience. He was a good man, passionate about his work, and like Rose before Jonay's arrival, he could only see his family one weekend a month, when a substitute was sent from the city. Jonay missed those get-togethers between colleagues, from which he learned so much. He thought about going to Brunapeg more often, but transportation was long and complicated.

He was surprised that there were not as many sick people with AIDS symptoms as he feared, in contrast with the many funerals of young people that Patxi went to console.

A month after his arrival, it was already May 1986, he received a letter from his parents. It gave him immense joy. He preferred to wait to read it, deservedly so, at the end of the day.

Dear son Jonay,

We hope you are doing very well, in the dream that you have been waiting for so long. Knowing your happiness, missing you hurts less, and we feel with joy how you fight for what you believe is noble in life. We are proud of you.

We look forward to your letters telling us how you are doing.

We are fine. Your father now takes visitors in Satia to La Palma. I have set up a natural medicine practice in the house of El Cabrito. The grandparents are well, although already weak with age, and I spend at least one day a week with them in Hermigüa. They ask a lot about you.

You may know from the radio or if you get a newspaper, that last month a nuclear power plant in Russia, in a place called Chernobyl, suffered an accident and released radioactive materials into the air which are estimated to be five hundred times greater than those released by the atomic bomb in Hiroshima. The Russian government evacuated more than one hundred thousand people within a thirty kilometer radius. But the radiation reaches hundreds of kilometers and has alarmed all of Europe.

As a consequence of this catastrophe caused by human greed, dozens of families fleeing from the center of Europe, especially Germany, are arriving in La Gomera. They are ecologists and very healthy and good people who want to start another way of life, far away from the destructive industry of Europe. We have welcomed three families, two childless couples and three adults, two women and one man, in our home in El Cabrito. At the moment they are in tents, but we want to fund with them a community, in social harmony and with nature. Fernando has hosted two families in Arguamul. Other friends in Valle Gran Rey, in Alojera and the grandparents in Hermigüa are helping other families to settle in.

I meditate every day at dawn looking towards Africa and I feel your strength and the nobleness of your dedication to the most needy, and I send you all my love.

Your father also sends you his loving embrace,

We love you, take care, fly in your dreams. And share,

Your mother

He imagined that community of good people, simple and in nature.
Perhaps as a symbol of a new emerging humanity.

XXXIII. If there is love there is hope. Pretoria, 1986

PATXI MEDITATED ON the porch at sunset. His face was still stained with the red dirt from the road. He had been to two funerals of young people. Lives cut short by the AIDS epidemic. Rather, by the epidemic of fear. He had the letter from the bishop that his brother had given him about all the preparations to pay obeisance to the Pope. Nothing about the urgency of the epidemic. He felt nauseous. In the last few months he had asked himself several times if he should not give up his priesthood.

He could not honestly feel the vow of obedience to a Vatican and a hierarchy whom he saw as the extreme opposite of the doctrine of Jesus. But to surrender would mean not defending the true word and message of Jesus.

He decided to leave the mission for a few days and meditate. His brother would take care of the details of administering it and look after Joseph, and Jonay was already feeling confident in the clinic.

On his return from his visit to Bulawayo, and on the advice of Father Pius, he had written to Kevin Dowling, a priest in Rustenburg, near Pretoria. He told him of his concern about the epidemic, the evidence he understood existed about protection from infection with condoms, and the refusal of the Vatican and his bishop in Bulawayo to even talk about it. He received a very kind letter from Kevin, agreeing with his concern, encouraging him to continue, with patience and perseverance, to insist with the hierarchy, and in his parish, to act honestly in what he understood to be the right thing to do in his mission to preserve, bless and glorify life. He concluded by saying that more grave than failing the vow of obedience was failing the mission of every Christian of compassion and commitment to life. He also told him that he hoped that he would be able to convince the Pope during his visit to Harare in a few months. Kevin sent Patxi some articles he had written and invited him to visit his diocese and share the work they were doing with people and families affected by AIDS.

He traveled by bus from Bulawayo. After six hours they stopped at the border, and more than half of the passengers had to stay on the Zimbabwean side as the South African police had tightened their migration policies. Five hours later, they arrived in Pretoria.

Kevin was at the bus station waiting for him. He was a slender man in his late sixties, well-groomed, strong and agile, full of life and also of serene intelligence.

They went to his parish house. Over tea and pastries, they told each other about their lives. Patxi told him about his origins, his inspiration from his uncle, his experience in the parishes of the Basque country, his struggle for peace and his missionary vocation. He then spoke about how he came to St. Joseph's and his experiences with the 5th Brigade, with the community projects, with the terrible illness, and his frustrations with the bishop in Bulawayo.

Kevin told him about his life as well, his vocation, how he became a priest with the Redemptorist congregation, his struggle based on Christian values and prooting peace, against apartheid, and his dedication to the many AIDS patients who were slowly dying in the humble shantytowns of that Pretoria slum.

That same night they went to visit several families in one of Pretoria's African slums. No whites entered those slums at night, where one could breathe the air of resentment towards white racism, and where alcohol, poverty and desperation were the ingredients for violence.

They arrived at the home of a man named James Moyo. He was in his thirties though looked to be in his sixties, and was extremely cachectic. He was laying on a makeshift bed on a rickety sofa in the only room in the house. Three children between the ages of two and six sat around him with frightened faces. There were more shadows than the dim kerosene light that barely illuminated that humble room. The woman, Daisy, was also thin, though not as much, and her gaze wandered lost between pain and the futile search for hope. Kevin introduced Patxi. They sat on two chairs around James. Daisy brought red tea. Kevin asked how she was feeling and James told him the ailments that distressed him most. He couldn't move without feeling a lot of pain in his ribs, and that his mouth was so dry and so swollen that he could barely open it and so it was getting drier and drier and hurting to breathe. Patxi watched as Kevin offered a solution for each of these ailments, even though he could not cure them. He advised a combination of dietary advice, hygiene and sometimes medication.

No doctor was coming around and they couldn't get him to the health center. Although no one was saying it, everyone knew that James had a few weeks, if not days, to live. Patxi watched as Kevin tried to distract James from his pain and cruel fate by talking to him about things he knew he liked, like soccer, the music of Myriam Makeba, or the life of his father's friend Steve Biko. After talking about ailments and the needs of the home and the boys, he hugged him tightly. Then he went out with Daisy to tell her more plainly about their condition and what they could expect. Daisy would stop by the parish to get help with food and clothing, and Kevin would talk to the school principal and the nurses at the health center to get her some medicine and give it to her at home. Patxi noticed that he gave Daisy a lot of affection and also a deep hug.

They visited several homes in similar situations. The following days they shared masses with community meetings and visits to homes, the health center and municipal offices. During all the activities, Kevin carried a bag of condoms and handed them out, insisting that this would protect them from infection. He was not shy about showing how to use them by using a sample on the finger of anyone who asked or seemed hesitant.

During the get-togethers when we returned home late at night, Kevin told Patxi that the Church of Jesus honored and blessed life and that in those situations, without being able to increase the quantity of life, they should increase the quality, treating the symptoms, giving affection, care and improving the living conditions of each of those families. He argued that in the midst of the AIDS epidemic, which affected above all faithful women who maintained the home and had relations with their less faithful husbands, they had the moral duty to promote the use of condoms as the main way to promote life, not to prevent it as the Vatican claimed against condoms. He also told Patxi that he had reviewed his canon law studies and the use of condoms as a contraceptive was perfectly compatible with the doctrine of the Second Vatican Council.

Kevin told Patxi that although the document "Humanae Vitae" opposed chemical and "barrier" methods for contraception, it was necessary to divert that concept, also debatable, to the use of condoms as a method to prevent infection, very similar to the fact of marital

relations of people infected by hepatitis viruses. It had the same meaning as a vaccine and to oppose it was immoral. They had to fight for the incredible strength of the Church to ally itself against the epidemic and wake up from its silence, which was doing so much harm. He advised him to continue to promote the use of condoms, as this helped to avoid suffering and with kindness, humility and respect, he could win, if not the support, at least the understanding of any mind, including those of hierarchies gripped by fear and anchored in power.

Patxi spent a week breathing inspiration from the strength of that courageous priest. He returned to Saint Joseph renewed, and determined not to let himself be overcome by anger or frustration. There was so much love to give. And while there was love, there was hope.

He traveled back all afternoon and all night and arrived early in the morning at the mission. It was the first Thursday of August and concurred with the visit of Dr. Ndlovu from Brunapeg. After a day shared by Jonay and Ndlovu of consultations, visits to patients, a dozen tooth extractions, operating on a hernia and putting a traction pin in a femur fracture, they all had lunch together at Patxi's house. During the after-dinner conversation, each one commented on their latest thoughts and deeds.

Patxi told them about his experience in Pretoria and his firm decision to promote the use of condoms, even if the bishop did not like it. Haka commented in his Basque accent:

-If he doesn't like it, let him not use it! Just let him take the test first!

Everyone laughed, although Patxi had to ask to avoid irreverence.

-Jonay told them that they had already opened the operating room and that he had done his first cesarean section that week. For the moment Rose and him were managing to anesthetize, operate, assist the baby and prepare and collect everything and boil all the material afterwards. But if they started operating more, they would have to ask the government for an anesthesia technician and some more nurses. He told them that he had already sent the plans for an ultrasound machine and a small laboratory to the diocese. He knew that German Caritas financed those type of projects and if not, he could try through Manos

Unidas in Spain. Patxi told him that those proposals had to go through the diocese and have the approval of the bishop.

Haka was outraged by the power of the diocese. He then told them about his inquiries into child disappearances, his meeting with Helen at Amani Trust, and the study he was going to start doing. He would start in an area called Sanzukwi where apparently a *Nyanga woman* was also concerned about child disappearances and was much involved in the fight against AIDS.

Dr. Ndlovu asked:

-Is she called NoLwasi?

-Yes, I think that's her name.

-She came to Brunapeg two weeks ago. She is a very special woman. I would say she has another kind of spirit, different from the others. She told us about ways she uses to treat AIDS patients, without secrecy or misgivings. She looks into the eyes with a depth that makes you shudder.

Patxi, without understanding why, began to feel something inexplicable when he heard about this woman again. He almost trembled at the words of Ndlovu, who continued.

-It is incredible what this woman does for the sick, how she takes care of them in their homes, how she looks for remedies, how she accompanies them in their fears and existential anguish. Something so different from our white coat medicine. And the most incredible thing is that even from her magical and spiritual vision of the disease, she is convinced of sexual transmission and is promoting the use of condoms by talking to the communities. I felt ashamed when the hospital, with all its means compared to this woman, who barely has a mud hut, reacted with rejection and even contempt to her call to work together to prevent the further spread of this epidemic. Even I, fearful of the bishop's reprisals, treated her with respect but without the support she deserves. I know that she has called together a few communities in her area to talk to them about the epidemic.

Haka said:

-I have to see her, to find out about the cases of children being taken to South Africa.

-I'll talk to her, Haka, it's delicate to deal with the *nyangas*. Besides, I want to be in that meeting," said Patxi.

XXXIV. An embrace without time or space. Sanzukwi, 1987

WITHIN A MONTH OF her visit to ZINATHA and her conversation with N'zanzeme, and meeting Anwele and her brave struggle from the Matabeleland AIDS Council, NoLwasi was back in Bulawayo. During her trips to Soweto and the last few to Bulawayo and Brunapeg, she had been seeing more of the world outside of Sanzukwi, outside of the altar over the world, her Kopje looking at Matopos and connected to the spirits with ancestral knowledge. Despite peering into the window of the world, she remained devotee to her simple origins and her natural world. She wore an earth-colored linen cloth, almost always wore a knotted scarf covering her hair, which peeked out from the sides and back, a string and seed necklace, and simple hemp sandals that she made herself.

She arrived at the meeting with Zyaneme, on the fringes of the ZINATHA offices, where they seemed more occupied by their power struggles than by joining forces to fight AIDS. NoLwasi had decided to stop using all the kalanga, ndebele, English and twana names that defined the disease in a thousand mysterious ways. It was important, as Anwele had told her, to start speaking clearly and directly: a disease, AIDS, that needed courageous people to prevent its spread and compassion to mitigate its effects.

He met Zyaneme at the public library, where they were able to find a table in an discreet corner. Zyaneme dressed more like a city person, with pants, shirt and a wide-brimmed hat, although he was recognized as a *nyanga* by the seed necklace.

They greeted each other with affection. There was mutual trust and appreciation.

-*Salibonani Mama... Linjani, Abanje banjani...* (How are you?, How is the family?)

They enquired about the crops, about work and about life. NoLwasi told him about her meeting and dialogue with Anwele and how after that he went to see the hospital in Brunapeg and had called the communities of the area for a meeting in two days. She encouraged him to come with her to that meeting. She also told him how the treatments with the red hollow bulb plant were still helping her patients, but not completely curing them. She told him about other treatments

she was using and her feeling that the spirits were still sending them a message with this disease, which she did not fully understand.

-NoLwasi, I am going to tell you what I found out about your plant. I took it to a chemical laboratory with which we have made an agreement through an organization called the World Health Organization. They have an office in Harare and there is a person who is very interested in finding out about plants that may be useful for different diseases, helping those who have identified them to recognize their contribution to humanity, and helping others to use them wisely and generously.

NoLwasi adopted the ndebele style of simply following with clicks of approval, or doubt, or disgust Zyaneme's exposition, to put all her attention on his story and not to alter the script of what he was going to tell her. They spoke softly and with the gravity and solemnity of those who feel they are talking about something that could have transcendence.

-I have noted the improvements you have seen in the patients you treated: they had improved their appetite, their sleep, they were better able to withstand exertion, they had gained weight, and they had improved their distress and general discomfort. I think it is very important that you also look at what they are eating and that they don't drink any alcohol.

-I try to encourage them and everyone to eat "all colors" and not to drink alcohol, chew glue or smoke any herbs.

NoLwasi used that expression to indicate that raw or undercooked foods, from nature and showing the colors of the rainbow, made people shine brighter in the sunlight.

-The plant you are using is called "*Sutherlandia frutescens*" by the white people. I have sent it to two white wise men, Ben and Carl, in South Africa. They tell me that it contains very special substances of "yam" (flesh, structure), which the whites call "protein" and "aMandhla" (energy, strength), which the whites call "carbohydrates". This explains the strength it gives people, and how they regain weight and spirit. I have been told that it can fight against deformities like the blue spots of AIDS, and against the invisible animals we talked about the other time, which whites call "infections". It also increases

something they call "defenses", something like an army of warriors inside the body that defends against those "infections".

NoLwasi thought of that strange way of seeing the body, as a being with no relation to the universe or the spirits, almost like a tree disconnected from the earth.

-Thank you, Zyaneme, I will continue to use it. I think I will make brews mixed with echinacea and some ointments with red earth and papaya for the skin lesions. But I also think that with this we only alleviate some of the pain and weakness, but we do not cure the disease.

-You are right. If you wish, we can prepare "*umuthi*" (medicine) in bags of dried herbs and sell them from Harare. We can make money and share the profits. They can have your name on them. With the money, we could do education and prevention programs.

-Zyaneme, everything here in the city is buying and selling. Look around. Nobody understands life without those papers called money. Nobody. It is part of our problem, part of the anguish of our spirits, part of greed. That money, or power, is not ours, Zyaneme. It belongs to the spirits, to the people, and to nature. We can share the idea, from group to group, with our words, with our minds and with our heart. Why in the cities everything has to be connected with business? Can't we think of a world of sharing and harmony? I share with you this experience, you with me what you know from friends in South Africa, they can know more things. We all benefit, but no one has to get rich. For every rich, there will always be several poor.

-You are right, NoLwasi. But hardly anyone is like you. May your strength and purity light like fire in the savannah and may we all fight together against the plague.

-So be it, *Thembinxosi* (trust in God...) Now, come with me to see Anwele, ok? We have to team up to avoid more "infections". See? I'm learning. My payment is my smile and a hug.

It was uncommon among the Kalanga, the Shona or the Ndebele, and in general among all Zimbabwean peoples, to embrace each other. But she thought it was essential to dilute their common energy and let it flow, so it could gain strength and light. So she explained it.

They went together to the Matabeleland AIDS Council offices and met Anwele. The woman's strength and courage were incredible.

However, NoLwasi had noticed some changes in her: she was thinner, and her eyelashes had started to grow. NoLwasi knew it was the beginning of a journey into pain and weakness. Anwele lived with her mother and three-year-old daughter in Mkokoba. Her husband never returned from Egoli. Although she had many friends and people who appreciated her, she suffered great rejection by many more people. Sometimes she could see it in the gazes, the expressions. Often she was also told clearly or even received anonymous letters telling her that she deserved death for her immorality.

NoLwasi convinced her to go with her and Zyaneme to the community meeting she had called for two days later in Sanzukwi. Anwele went to pick up her daughter Nothando and left some money and maize flour for her mother, and the three of them left on the rural buses, heading the long way to Sanzukwi.

There they went, two *nyangas* and a sick and brave woman, to talk to their people about how to try to stop the fire that was destroying the lives of so many people in their villages.

The day came. NoLwasi had been watching Anwele get worse and had started giving her brews of his plant. Nothando played with Thandiwe and the village children in the sandy riverbed. Zyaneme had long and pleasant conversations with Themba.

Themba lit a large bonfire between several *kraal*. and near a crossroads where different communities would come from. The women of the nearby *kraal* prepared a stew with *sadza* of "rainbow" vegetables that NoLwasi had requested. The boys had been rehearsing with drums and the girls, including Nothando, a dance. NoLwasi had been meditating all day, fasting, in her Kopje, feeling the strength of Mandhla and Masora in her spirit.

About three hundred people arrived around sunset. They came from many *kraals* in the area. Six indunas, with their robes and staffs of command, already occupied prominent places, seated on small wooden stools in front of the fire. Some had come in their "scotch cars", but most had been walking, some from more than thirty kilometers away, all day. They sat around the fire. The night was dark with the new moon and bright stars, with the majestic Southern Cross cresting the horizon towards the rocks of Matopos. Mandhla was busy receiving the travelers and sensed the solemnity of the moment, but he did not know

its significance until he saw, perched on a nearby rock, the silhouette of a black eagle. Could it be the same eagle from that night when he saw his parents from the other world?

The boys began to play their drum rhythm, magical, deep. The girls began to dance softly and harmoniously and slowly asserting with firm footsteps the rhythm of the drums. The women served the food in gourd bowls.

One of the indunas began to intone a soul sound... hmmmmmmmmmmmm... deep... everyone joined in... They called this way to the spirits and all seemed to be absorbed in the sound, the night and the magic of life. There were no smiles, no cries, no words, no silences. It was a union of all in the face of a pain they needed to conjure with the spirits, with the universe. Every so often, someone remembered the names of the people who had been taken away by the terrible disease. Perhaps not all were mentioned, nor had they all been victims of AIDS, but there was a feeling that those deaths were wrenched violently from the living and very early, with a pain and exhaustion to the point of nothingness... that everyone knew how to recognize...

Hmmmm...hmmmmmmmmmm....

-Among the attendees were some people who had come from nearby Saint Joseph mission, among them Awande's elderly parents. They had come with Patxi, the only white person at the meeting. Many people already knew about Sindisabantu, or had heard of him. He sat discreetly in the outer circles of the meeting. He went relatively unnoticed.

NoLwasi appeared. Behind her were Anwele and Zyaneme, who sat in front of the fire. NoLwasi remained standing. All the others were seated. The hmmmms subsided, only the whining of the logs in the fire could be heard, which even seemed to give way for NoLwasi's energy to fill everything. The black eagle fixed its gaze on NoLwasi's.

Patxi felt again the palpitations and tremors he had felt when he heard Ndlovu talk about the human being he now had in front of him. He had never seen any being as beautiful in his life. NoLwasi was then thirty three years old, the age of Jesus on the cross, the image that had most lit up his life. Until now...? She was not exactly "more beautiful" than anything else, because she was not comparable to none. Beauty

existed in her slender figure that the brown linen tunic could not hide, in the soft and harmonious features of her face, in the expression of her mouth of indescribable serenity, in a look that she had not yet seen because her eyes were closed, beholding into her interior and into a distant and mysterious world, and yet it seemed to fill all around with light that sheltered the anguished souls of an entire people in despair.

NoLwasi, absent from all stares, including Patxi's, with her eyes closed and her face to the stars, began to speak.

-Mkulumkhulu. Here are your people gathered to speak to you and to listen to you. In our daily breath of life, we feel your strength and your guidance to feel part of the immense universe. We also thank you for the rains that bring us water and food, for the winds that shelter us from your world of spirits, that make the birds fly and give life to the plants, to our food, for the sun that gives us warmth and light every day, for the moon that watches over our rest at night, for each star, where our amakhosi live and guide us and wait for us.

Amakhosi. We remember you with the tears of the emptiness of not feeling your looks, your voices, your laughter and genius, your singing and crying, your hugs, your helping hands, your work, your love. But the tears dry with the knowledge that you are at peace in the world that sees us and guides us, in your world of harmony after the work of surviving and loving in this life.

Today we are all gathered here to ask for your strength in the face of great suffering. We need power to understand, to alleviate it, to banish it and to improve.

NoLwasi opened her eyes and looked at her people. Patxi understood his quivering soul. He had seen that gaze in his depth all his life, perhaps from other lives. It was an expression of the deepest love that transcended words, dogmas, ideas, cults, science. Everything. It transcended life. It reached the depths of his soul. To that place that speaks of the eternal, where there is no doubt of our infinite existence with the rest of the universe, where even the doubts of faith that often tormented him do not reach.

As she placidly looked at her people, her gaze crossed Patxi's, not because he was the only *ikiwa* (white), but because his had the strength

of time, the nobility of nature, and the sweetness of the love he craved all his life. Patxi was then forty eight years old, a strong man, with white hair, a tender look, a sharp, Basque nose, an expression of harmony with nature and life that was difficult to explain. NoLwasi had heard about Sindisabantu, from Teya, from some people in the village and on her visit to Brunapeg. She knew it was him, and she knew he would change her life.

NoLwasi thought that there are feelings that travel and invade at the timeless speed of light. They do not need the mind to shape them, nor do they need time to sanction them or fear to filter them. They are so strong that they come from our deep selves. From that corner of the soul that speaks of the eternal.

NoLwasi kept talking, her eyes moistened, like Patxi's, with emotion.

-Omkhulu, Ogogo, Obaba, Omama, obudi, Odade Abanje wami... (Grandfathers, grandmothers, fathers, mothers, siblings, everyone...). Life is shaken by the pain and weakness brought by a disease that has invaded our people. We call it by many names but we know that it ends up taking the young people, taking away all their strength, leaving them in the bones, filling them with stains and pains, making them dry up all their water of life and stop their air.

We have remembered each of them before, with pain.

The nyangas try to give them umtuhi to relieve their pain, the doctors in the hospitals try other medicines. But in the end, the disease wins, exhausts our brothers in their struggle and fills us with pain.

Something has angered Mkhulumkulu and our amakhosi, something has broken the harmony with our magical world and with nature, which we must bring back into balance. In the meantime, the spirits take our brothers and sisters to continue shouting to us from their world to be united and with love to overcome this test.

One thing we know for sure: this disease is passed from one to another when sleeping together. Infidelity makes this fire spread more and more. I know this because I have been to Egoli and I have talked to many people, many sick people and their families. But even with faithfulness, it is already in many of you, even if it seems that you do not have any ailment.

She paused and looked carefully at all of them, feeling the fear, the responsibility, the gravity beyond those who got sick. It was in all of them, in one way or another. She could not look at Patxi, she feared her speech would break and she would not be able to continue speaking.

-We are going to try to improve how to help cure this terrible disease. Here is Nyanzeme, one of the wisest nyangas in Zimbabwe, and we are going to look for remedies that will help. But that will not be enough. We have to be daring. The bravest person in the face of this evil is here with us today - Anwele. She knows she has the disease, and she does not hide in a kraal to suffer in shame. She was always a faithful wife, she took care of the fields, her child, her parents, her neighbors, and now she knows well that she has to take care of all her people as well as herself. Soon we will be able to see the blood of each one of us and know who has the infection, how to help him or her and how he or she can prevent others from having it. Every time this evil is passed on to someone it not only affect that person but it will shake the one whom it passed on, and so gradually to everyone.

The only way to stop this plague is not to sleep with other people . That is impossible when love calls with the force of thunder to dilute our bodies and souls.

At that moment she could not help but to look at Patxi. They both stared at each other with a depth both never felt before.

-When we cannot avoid sleeping together and sharing the deepest love, it is necessary to use a condom. It is a plastic that men should use as long as they have not been tested or when the test is positive. Not doing so is like doing harm, like killing the one we love the most. It is the most irresponsible and perverse deed.

In the next few days, Anwele and I will teach one man and one woman from each kraal group how to use it, and we will give them enough to distribute to all the kraals. They will have to teach the others.

Together we can take care of life and make love win over pain and death.

Amandhla!

Everyone responded strongly:

- *Amandhla!*

At that moment, everyone started vibrating together again with their hmmm mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm..... sounds and NoLwasi's and Patxi's gazes crossed again. As if nailed by a timeless spiritual power.

The first thunder that announced the longed-time-awaited, after nine months, rainy season, tore the sky. Almost everyone interpreted it as the alliance of the spirits. A few understood it as their anger.

Faced with the intense rain that it unleashed, everyone went to shelter and the meeting place was deserted. Only NoLwasi and Patxi remained motionless and drenched by the rain.

They approached each other slowly, their gazes locked, moist with emotion.

-NoLwasi?

-Sindisabantu?

They melted into an eternal embrace.

XXXV. Profit or Life. From Coast to Coast, United States, 1987

AIMSA RETURNED TO Berkeley, to her desk in Barrows hall and her little boat in the marina. She still felt the echo of all she had experienced in Atlanta. She wrote an article on the rights of AIDS patients for *Health and Human Rights* about the abuse of their rights through stigmatization and how the private health insurance system, life insurance and mortgages, added to her already painful slow agony. She received calls from insurance companies berating her for trying to influence the abuse of an "irresponsible" part of society over the resources of the rest, mostly honest workers. She also wrote about the dilemma of confidentiality and liability for those infected, now that the test was available. She received calls from AIDS activists accusing her of encouraging stigmatization.

Her articles were quoted in various circles and within a few months an AIDS debate was organized in Berkeley and she was invited to a panel discussion on rights and responsibilities. It was recorded by televisions and filled the Hearst Hall amphitheater with nearly two thousand people. A quilt embroidered with more than three thousand pieces with the names of as many AIDS victims, sent from around the country to gay leader Cleve Jones, was hung behind the panel chairs. There was a wave of panic in the country and hundreds of support and advocacy groups were beginning to spring up. At one point in the debate, private insurers and conservative political groups criticized Aimsa's articles and accused her of doing harm to the country, with a veiled sentiment of racism to foreigners coming to alter the morals of generations of hard-working and devoted settlers. A Republican senator at the roundtable, told her defiantly:

-This disease is not like other diseases. This disease is the consequence of inappropriate and irresponsible behavior with one's own life and those of others. It cannot be treated like any other, and even less so with privileges over others. Your positions of free access to treatment and the abolition of risk clauses in insurance and mortgages, would make the majority of the population, honest, hardworking and responsible for their behavior, pay, and very high prices, for the irresponsibility of a few, and thus encourage and perpetuate those behaviors.

There was a murmur in the room. Some activists and AIDS victims, conspicuously on stretchers or in wheelchairs in front of the podium, were shouting in protest. Aimsa was cornered by moralistic and economic arguments. It was interesting to see how selfish motivations were continually disguised as ethics in that country which she hated and loved. In a few seconds she registered the faces of the audience, the shouts of those affected, the expressions of acceptance of the conservatives' eloquence and in a tenth of a second she registered that the senator speaker had in his jacket pocket a pack of cigarettes.

-Senator, do you smoke?

-Yes. I don't think it has anything to do with what we are discussing here, Miss.

-Maybe yes: if you, God forbid, develop lung cancer from smoking, or even people living or working with you and get smoke poisoning: Who should be held responsible? You for your healthily irresponsible attitude? Or the tobacco companies for inducing you to such behavior? Or perhaps the Hollywood movies for indirectly promoting it? Or, if not, the public authorities for allowing the legal trade, and even advertising, of a drug that kills? Or the fate that perversely befalls an honest, devout, hard-working, worthy descendant of settlers of such distinguished morals?

Thus, she put in simple language all the dilemmas of risks, information, responsibilities and the right to health. She knew well that true knowledge speaks in simple messages and conveyed at key moments.

The senator blushed with fury, stood up, put on his jacket and left the debate shouting:

-I will not allow immigrants who are disrespectful of our values and morals to come and ruin our way of life and take advantage of the sweat of our ancestors and ours!

A few dozen people from the round table and the audience stood up just as angrily and left the room protesting in similar ways. But most of the rest silenced their yells with applause for Aimsa. It was the first time anyone had ever praised her. She didn't like it. Aimsa gave a Hindu salute and quietly and discreetly left the room.

As she left the building she noticed someone was calling her while walking down the stairs behind her. She turned around and saw a young man with long hair and a headband, short T-shirt, Mayan pants and a cheerful, strong look. He reminded her of her times supporting El Salvador rebels.

-Aimsa? I would like to congratulate you on your commitment, intelligence, and I must say, beauty. Although I suppose you are not to blame or credit for the latter.

-I don't know whether to thank you for your compliment or to reflect on whether it really is.

-It is. My name is Joseph, I would like to invite you to have a drink or something to eat together, or just talk for a while.

-I'm riding my bike to the Marina, if you want I'll walk the first kilometer with you while we talk.

-I know. I've seen you a few times that side. I sail in many countries but I don't have a boat. Now I'm spending a few days in the Marina, on the boat of some friends who are sailing around the world.

-Do you have a bike too?

-Yes.

-Then I propose that we go there by bike.

When they arrived at the Marina they went to Aimsa's boat and she offered him tea. Joseph told her about his work: he had co-founded with a friend an organization in which they fought for the right to food, linked to the right to the land, to the right and responsibility to take care of it and maintain its biodiversity, and to promote solidarity forms of work and food. He spoke of the tragedy of hunger in a world where there was enough for everyone, but where food was poorly distributed, Crops, traditions and lands that for millennia had nourished man in harmony with Mother Earth were replaced by monocultures, machinery, pesticides and fertilizers that depleted the Earth's wealth and displaced the poorest. He told her how they were used more to export feed for unhealthy fatty diets based on immense animal suffering and polluting transports, or luxury crops such as coffee or tea. Aimsa explained, teasing but also proudly, that she grew the ginger of the brew they were drinking in an organic garden at the university.

-Interestingly, Joseph, there are many similarities in the intensive and destructive forms of the food industry, and how the industries of unhealthy lives and their treatment work: they also encourage nutrition and lifestyles, tuneless with our nature, some of them a consequence or cause of the cruel and destructive livestock industries that you mention. They also use chemicals that deplete or damage the human body. They do so favoring only some discriminating against others. We are victims of the greed for profit of a few. But we also blindly contribute to it through votes for those who perpetuate it or abstentions, with taxes that feed this inhuman and destructive system, and buying the products that hypnotize us through advertising.

They befriended each other and sailed a few times around the Bay. Joseph's Maya pants were linked to the relationship with a Guatemalan companion who joined the voyages and the gatherings. Aimsa, for the first time, felt envy and longed to live in the company of a soul mate.

Over the next few months, Aimsa began to feel a deep commitment to understanding the disease, to understanding its victims and to understanding the interests at work around the AIDS epidemic. It was the first clear challenge to her long-cherished desire to alleviate human suffering beyond her direct circle. By then, in early 1987, almost fifty thousand cases had already been officially registered in almost one hundred countries.

Such were the taboos of the disease that Princess Diana of the United Kingdom made the front pages by bravely "shaking hands with an AIDS patient"! Aimsa disliked the ignorance and even more the false compassion of politicians and powerful people who, by the simple fact of being so and owning hundreds of times more than the average, showed off fake generosity contradictory and almost hypocritical while securing their privileges. She knew well in her life that charity did not change the misery and unworthiness of people. "It is only achieved by their participation in the solutions and by justice", she told herself. She combined these social and political thoughts with the Buddhist path to Nirvana, but she did not let conformism numb her sensitivity to the suffering of the world.

Aimsa followed closely the first trials of treatments for the terrible disease. She learned all she could about the virus, drew diagrams of its structure, of its invasion of the cell nucleus, of how it took over the

entire cellular assembly tools for its own purpose, hung all diagrams in the cockpit of her small sailboat and in her office in Barrows. It was a full-blown, intelligent invasion, dominating the cell's brain, using its protein factories, rather than destroying it, to multiply and thus extend its conquest.

Aimsa had read papers by Berkeley scientists in which they had discovered that most cancers in chickens were due to viruses with the ability to infiltrate cell chromosomes, called "retroviruses". Although efforts to look for similar viruses in human cancers were unsuccessful, a wise scientist named Jerome, from Detroit, synthesized a molecule he amiably called "*zidovudine*," an affectionate diminutive of the combination of an acid with thymidine, one of the bases of the molecule of life, DNA. Jerome demonstrated that his molecule was capable of hampering the invasive mechanism of retroviruses. Aimsa closely followed this research and acted as a link between him and those affected in hope of treatment.

A friend of Marc's, weaker by the day and no longer able to get out of bed, worked for a powerful pharmaceutical company called Wellcome. Marc informed Aimsa that the company, knowing the retrovirus nature of AIDS described by Robert Gallo five years earlier, had contacted a scientist named Samuel, who at the National Cancer Institute was discovering promising effects of Jerome's molecule on the AIDS virus. Foreseeing big business, Wellcome designed how to produce it industrially and registered the patent without counting on Jerome, Samuel or any other scientist who, from public institutions and universities, and with taxpayers' budgets, had humbly contributed to the advances towards a treatment for the terrible epidemic.

Aimsa looked into the origins of that giant company which was bursting into the world of AIDS and whom she feared did not have good intentions. Henry Wellcome had been born in a Wisconsin cabin during "the conquest of the West". His father was an itinerant missionary who gave sermons from a stagecoach and raised him with strict religious criteria, against alcohol, in the Adventist expectation of the new coming of Jesus to Earth, and as an active member of Freemasonry. He became interested in medicine, but above all in selling, probably inspired by his father's proselytizing sermons. His first sale, at the age of sixteen, was of "invisible ink", which was really

lemon juice. He befriended another drug salesman, Silas Burroughs, and they formed the first factory dedicated solely to drugs and the first drugs in tablet form, at the end of the XIXth century. They were also the first to introduce a practice that became as common in medicine as the white coat: direct sales to physicians, including free samples. Silas, a Presbyterian, moved toward philanthropy and founded a hospital in England, dying shortly thereafter, at a young age, of pneumonia. Henry, who lived longer, continued to run the company and created his philanthropic Foundation, which he bequeathed at his death for the purpose of improving global health. His laboratories led the world in tropical disease research, with humanitarian but also colonial and military interests. It became the largest non-profit organization in the United Kingdom.

It was important to probe those origins. Freemasonry, Christian fundamentalisms, marketing skills and the link with philanthropy. The legacy of the Foundation and its companies towards a society: in whose hands? With what objectives?

Aimsa began to realize what was cooking in the guts of powers that she had not imagined ever before.

Back to the present, Aimsa found out in the patent registry that the company appropriated Jerome's molecule based on the reasoning that whoever discovers a new use for an old molecule is the owner of its use. With that ownership and without sharing that information, it agreed during 1985 with laboratories in the United States and Canada to provide the drug free of charge in so-called phase one studies. Aimsa feared very cloudy marketing strategies, but it was the only opportunity to move towards a treatment.

Those studies with volunteers showed that zidovudine improved immunity in people infected with AIDS. The following year, a "phase two" study involving Michael Gottlieb's patients compared the effects of the drug with those of a "placebo", i.e. the same pill shape but with no active compound, in more than two hundred infected people in various parts of the country.

Aimsa followed the study through Michael's information, and kept AIDS sufferers informed, already established as resilient organizations that reported any drug trial, if volunteers were sought, and at what stage of the disease. Aimsa had convinced Marc to ask Michael to be

included in the study. Everyone felt as if subject to a Russian roulette angst of destined to simply take the placebo or a drug with as yet unknown effects in humans. Marc improved slightly and could sit up to eat. But nineteen of the two hundred patients died in the first four months. Aimsa went to several of the funerals and wept with rage with the victims' relatives. She called Michael several times and they finally met at a cafe in the San Francisco Marina, where she arrived in her sailboat with her friend Joseph.

-Michael, you have an ethical dilemma: either you maintain your rigor of phases, times, statistical representation in this study, or you ask to stop the study and reveal the results in case there is already, with so many deaths, enough information. Every day counts in the lives of many people.

-Aimsa, this study can change the history of this disease. A few hundred patients accessing treatment earlier can now alter the strength of the results and their impact on the world. If we wait a year, as planned, anyway, we may prove that the proportion of deaths over time is statistically lower to what we were observing before, just treating their infections due to low defenses.

-A few days, a few weeks. It's life or death for many. You never come to funerals. You should get closer to that suffering and better evaluate your decisions.

Michael said he would think about it and keep her informed. The twentieth funeral arrived. Michael attended in the background. He felt the pain, anger, and hopelessness of many participants. Several patients joined in wheelchairs or assisted by their friends. At the end, one of the friends took out a harmonica and played the first notes of "*That's What Friends Are For*". They all left, hugging each other. Aimsa saw that Michael was in the back, half hidden. He had tears in his eyes. When she looked again, he was gone.

Michael fought with all his might against the company, more focused on profits and fearful, and pressured, by the Food and Drug Administration, to complete phase two and pursue phase three, before the drug could be safely registered. Michael made such strong ethical and even economic arguments for the company for the opportunity of a potentially effective drug before other "competitors", and for the good name it would acquire in the community of those affected. Faced with

that pressure and that of the patients and their letters, the company agreed to disclose the records before the end of the study and entering the third phase of the research: nineteen of the deceased were in the placebo group, only one was under treatment. The pressure of those affected and the anguish to nourish any hope of a cure meant that in a record time of less than two years from the start of the first trials with volunteers, the drug was registered for public use against AIDS in March 1987.

The English company Wellcome monopolized the trade of AZT, the first AIDS drug, under its patent. Aimsa studied patent laws and their commercial effects on access to medicines in depth. She could not understand that an organization inspired by the legacy of a non-profit foundation was seeking monopolies and exorbitant revenues. She gradually discovered a world of immense power and profit, and very murky means. The patent was denounced by other scientists and companies that had collaborated in the trials. By then, the Wellcome Society, formerly known for its non-profit research into useful drugs in the Third World, put a quarter of its gigantic assets as a public limited company, -Wellcome PLC- listed on the London Stock Exchange. From that moment on, it aggressively defended its privilege, even with weak and contradictory arguments. Wellcome knew that its investments of about one hundred million dollars in the studies and drugs during the trial could turn into billions of dollars in profits. It denied the right to Jerome for not finding its utility and to the other laboratories for finding the utility when the company already controlled the patent and funded and demonstrated them on the necessary scale.

Aimsa allied with activists such as *Act-Up* and scientists from public colleges and universities to sue the patent of the pharmaceutical powerhouse. But Wellcome PLC won the lawsuits with prestigious lawyers, a lot of money into lobbying and pressure campaigns. It began to sell the drug at very high prices: almost one thousand dollars for a bottle of one hundred capsules, equivalent to an expenditure of more than ten thousand dollars per year for each patient, most of it in profits. Wellcome PLC's shares tripled in value on Wall Street, in London and around the world, and the Wellcome company as a whole grew in assets by more than a billion pounds a year.

One day Aimsa managed to get Ian MacGregor, the Wellcome Company's chief financial officer, on the phone. She had researched his enormous power and contradictory interests. On the one hand, he was a well-known "investment manager". The company became more and more involved in managing "securities", the ultimate boosters of capitalism. Speculation and usury taken to its maximum intricacy and the speed of decisions, and accumulations of profits, through communications, which shot up exponentially. On the other hand, this wizard of making money from the speculative smoke of capitalism had the reputation, including those of thousands of English charities, of being a great philanthropist and defender of civil society in solidarity. Aimsa wondered whether the fiercest speculative capitalism was rationally and even ethically compatible with supposed solidarity.

She pretended to be an NGO coordinator in the United States (she somehow acted as a networker for AIDS rights activists) and insisted on the many phone filters, saying that she had to talk about something very important, and that Ian knew what it was about.

-Good morning, it is already dark here in Berkeley, thank you for your attention.

- Who's speaking?

-My name is Aimsa, I am a scientist at UC Berkeley. I am calling you regarding AIDS treatment with zidovudine.

-That's a registered patent, have you seen any unwanted effects, I can put you through to the scientific department.

-No, it is the patent itself. At the prices they sell it for, many sick people can't afford it, or they go bankrupt doing it, and it's causing a lot of pain. You are causing a lot of pain. Could you explain to me the reason for that price and what proportion of it is profit? Sooner or later it will be known, and I think I can help you preserve your solidarity image, and human reputation of your company, and the assistance history of the Wellcome Foundation, now the Society, and its credibility in solidarity. You can help thousands of people in the United States who will die because of the current pricing policy, let alone in poor countries.

Aimsa noticed a change in his tone of voice, drier but cracked from the pressure.

-Such information is confidential and is not shared outside the company. It is private information that may have competitive value. I am not in a position to discuss the components of market price.

Aimsa noticed that this answer was the official position and that man would have repeated the same message hundreds of times. She thought of a way to try to touch the human background of that person, ten thousand kilometers away:

-Ian, do you have children?

-Miss, you have no right to enquire about my private life and you are wasting my time and patience.

-The time you are wasting may mean a minuscule loss of profits, which I understand to be over fifty million dollars per day. The time you are wasting in not making a humane and ethical decision is not measured in profits, it is measured in thousands of human lives. Think of the opportunity you have to contribute to the noble part of human history.

After a silence on the other end of the line, Ian hung up.

From Marc and Joseph's friends, Aimsa learned of a Canadian company, Apotex, a producer of generics. She spoke with chemists at Berkeley's Lawrence Laboratory where a very resourceful and committed young woman named Eva excelled in her molecular biology skills. She helped connect activists in the U.S. and Canada, and with the legacies of several AIDS victims, some anonymous from Hollywood, convinced Apotex to make copies of the drug as a generic. She contacted trade and human rights lawyers, writing to Jonathan Mann, who now headed the Global AIDS Program under Mahler at WHO. He helped them argue for non-recognition of Wellcome's patent rights, in his view usurped from Jerome.

Aimsa's real argument was the lives of many people versus the profits of a few, already very wealthy people. Apotex got the Canadian agency to approve the copy and began selling the drug at ten times lower prices and sending them to clinics and hospitals in the United States and Canada. Wellcome sued Apotex and while the courts ruled, Apotex was authorized to continue selling the drug. However, Wellcome's pressures on suppliers and buyers were so strong that Apotex could hardly sell anything. Finally, and once again, Wellcome

once again garrisoned its monopoly to enrich itself at the cost of human lives.

Aimsa traveled to New York and demonstrated with Act-Up in front of Wall Street. After two years of disputes between the French and the English over testing for the virus, President Reagan facilitated an agreement whereby both would share the profits. Aimsa waited outside the White House with anti-greed, pro-life banners. The next day, Aimsa attended a Reagan lecture at the Philadelphia College of Physicians in which he promoted the message of abstinence and diluted the priority of condom use. He also promoted making AIDS testing mandatory. No questions were allowed. Aimsa continued to demonstrate against patent abuse, and she and others were arrested and removed from White House fences by police wearing long yellow gloves for fear of infection.

Then, knowing the strong influence of the Catholic Church in the society, economy and politics of the country, she went as an observer, under the accreditation of an NGO, to the Conference of Bishops of the United States. She intervened several times with force and clarity to say that the brave thing to do was to love those who suffered and those who would suffer by using condoms just as vaccines were promoted. Hence the same ethics of life, love for others and the blessing of life. She had read an article by a South African priest named Kevin and knew the arguments of canon law. She influenced the final document of that conference to call for the promotion, from the Church, of condom use as part of the program to fight AIDS. It was not long before, in response to that document, a powerful Vatican cardinal named Ratzinger declared on behalf of the Pope that the approach of the American conference would result in, at the very least, the easing of evil beyond its tolerance of it.

Aimsa thought: The epidemic was terrible, and the magnitude was not yet known, but even worse was the epidemic of greed of capitalism and the prejudices of some powers, so far from human beauty. She needed to be cured of so much rage and so much pain. She returned to her boat at the Berkeley Marina. Upon arrival there was a letter from Jonathan Mann supporting her in the struggle, giving her much information and sharing his fears that the epidemic would reach apocalyptic dimensions in Africa. He suggested she send her resume

and they would see what kind of work they could offer her. They needed fighters like her.

She then invited Rob to her boat to share her recent struggle. In the conversation she realized that she had to uphold her strength in the fight against the greed-that-suffocates-life. She felt the need to go to the areas of the world where the epidemic was even more silent, of gigantic magnitude and still unknown. Where the fight for prices or public responsibility for treatment did not even enter the imagination of those who agonized, forgotten by the world. She told him about Mann's offer, but confessed that she did not want to be chained to bureaucracies or to offices and meetings in hotels or conference rooms. At least now she needed to get back to the real world, to embrace the people who were suffering the most.

Rob told her about a missionary with whom he had a very close correspondence. He was in a remote rural area in Zimbabwe and in recent letters had told him of the tragedy they were suffering with that disease, the stigma attached to it, the silence of the government and the desperation of the community.

She meditated for a week of fasting seeking the light.

XXXVI. The tentacles of horror and the "disposable" . Southern Africa, 1987

HAKA HAD VISITED OVER six hundred *kraals* in a year, about two kraal a day, all over Bulilia-Mangwe. He also continued to help out at the mission with repairs, administration, and as a driver, while brushing up on his law studies to help his brother with some legal paperwork. In three months he had written down in his notebook 148 children who had been taken to South Africa in the last two years. He had all the names of the children, the date they were abducted, the names of their parents and if and when they had died, the names of their grandparents if they were still alive, their brothers and sisters, even photos of sixty-nine of them.

There were eighty-nine girls and fifty-nine boys. They ranged from seven to sixteen years of age, the average age being thirteen. In almost all cases a car had come to the *kraal* and they had introduced themselves in two-thirds of the cases as an "NGO" helping AIDS orphans, and in one-third as friends of a family member living in South Africa. In one-third of the cases, the elders caring for the orphans had been pressed to pay for the funeral expenses of their children who died in Egoli and were buried there or moved to the *kraal* in Matabeleland. In the rest of the cases, they had been given some money, supposedly from the NGO, to help the elderly indirectly affected by AIDS. On average they had been given a thousand Zimbabwe dollars (about 250 US dollars at the time). The people who took the children in the *kraals* matched to five distinct descriptions. Haka also knew of at least five sets of siblings, who had no parents or grandparents, lived alone in *kraal*, were half broke and had disappeared.

From the descriptions he made drawings of faces and bodies. All were black, one more mulatto. Two were shorter than 1.70, two were between 1.70 and 1.80 and one was over 1.90 meters tall. They were strong but those of intermediate height, slightly overweight. They wore dark glasses. One had a scar deforming one eyelid. Their hair was short, they dressed smartly, sometimes in jackets. Haka brought magazines, sample books, and so identified the families interviewed, models of glasses or clothing. One of them wore a Vuitton model and another Chanel, probably Chinese copies. One wore a watch, which from the

descriptions of an old man with great memory and curiosity, seemed to correspond to a gold Rolex, although perhaps it was also a copy. The car that had gone by the *kraals* was either white or red, in both cases a Datsun 1200, 1978 model: Haka had checked it by showing catalogs to the families. One of the elders had noticed the license plate number of the white vehicle: BKR 487 L. The grandfather remembered because those were the initials of the girl who was taken away: *Buhleve Kosi* (God's beauty) Rawana, and the number was the month and year 4/87 when she was taken away. He remembered the L because he thought his granddaughter would come back "Lwasi", wise, having studied at Egoli.

Haka took his notebook to Bulawayo to meet Helen. Haka was already 55 years old, but he was in great shape. He was a broad-backed Basque, with curly hair, a bushy gray beard, a face weathered by many years in the bush, now stained by the Kalahari sun and his long walks, green eyes with a sharp, almost defiant gaze, a nose, like his brother, sharp and curved, a white scar over his right eye and a broad, *aizcolari* neck. He met Helen at the Amani Trust office. He had been seeing her every three months and a pleasant trust and complicity weaved between them. Haka loved Helen's softness and her magical red hair, but most of all how stubborn she was in her fight, no matter what threats and pressure she received from the government. She had a list of more than ten thousand dissidents killed or disappeared during the last five years by Mugabe's repression of the Ndebele, called *Gukurahundi*. Helen had facilitated the great power-greedy adversaries, Mugabe and Nkomo, to sign the unity agreement, to unite their political parties, Mugabe to declare an amnesty for imprisoned dissidents and Nkomo to call on the his forces to disarm. It reminded Haka of his ETA comrade Yoyes in her courage for freedom.

Haka had also researched child trafficking schemes around the world, international agreements and national and customs laws. He had borrowed books from her sister, little Beatriz, who also studied law and was now a civil servant at the European Union in Brussels.

-Helen, we already have data from all of South Matabeleland, we have to report these disappearances. Things are calmer with the government because of the unity agreement.

-I already did, Haka. I have been insisting for the last few months and they don't listen to me. They are children of Ndebele families from the border, poor, orphans, "disposable". Besides, only 140 dissidents have turned themselves in and the government is convinced that there are many more who have kept their weapons in their *kraal*.

-And have you been able to talk to any large international NGOs to help us?

-I spoke to a friend of mine, Kate, from England, who works for Amnesty International. They are more concerned about denouncing the Zimbabwean government than pursuing criminal networks. She told me that they would discuss at the Board if they send a fact-finding mission, but they would first need the testimony of a victim, which we don't have.

-So, we are alone?

-More to the point.

-I'm going to South Africa to investigate. I'll try to come back with some victims, and see if they'll take any notice of us. I can't sleep well thinking about those poor children. I'll keep you posted, Helen.

-Haka, be careful.

Helen approached, the two were staring at each other, they gave each other a soft kiss on the lips. Haka felt all the strength to undertake this mission, not knowing how far it would take him.

While Haka was looking for a replacement for his foreman duties at the mission, Helen set up a project for a human rights foundation in Germany and sent them some money. With that Haka bought an old 1974 FJ40 Land Cruiser and had a little money for three months for transportation, communications, maintenance and unplanned extras. He did not know what he might face but feared a child trafficking mafia and as yet unknown risks. Yet Haka felt the strength of a titan to fight for these children. Zulu Buhleve Nkosi's (God's beauty) grandparents gave him a black and white photo of her. He made a T-shirt with her picture on the front and back and wrote in "I am looking for this angel". He did this with all his heart although he later thought he should remain as anonymous as possible and promised himself that he would only wear the T-shirt when he returned with Buhleve to his *kraal*. He bought a sleeping bag, a multi task knife, insecticide impregnated mosquito

nets, a powerful flashlight, a zoom camera, the smallest tape recorder he could find and several notepads. He adapted the car to be able to charge batteries. Patxi left him a wide-brimmed hat for his mission, Jonay prepared several black stones and a small first aid kit with instructions for emergency treatments. Beatriz had sent him a folder with international legislation on human trafficking and contacts to the European delegations in the region and to Interpol.

His intuition made him look for something that years before he had promised himself never to touch again. He was doing it for those children, he knew he might need it, and so he was allowed himself to break his promise. In the suburbs of Mkokoba he went asking around through Helen's contacts and ended up, after three days, meeting in the backyard of a house with a dissident in the hiding and still reluctant to give up his weapons. He bought from him a Soviet Makarov pistol and ammunition for five hundred Zimbabwean dollars. He hid it in the underbody of the Toyota he had prepared with his welding tools on the mission. Patxi suspected Haka was getting into a dangerous adventure. He said goodbye to his Saint Joseph "family" at a dinner that was also attended, for the first time, by NoLwasi. Seated at the table were Patxi, Joseph, who was now seven years old, Jonay, NoLwasi and Thandiwe, Johanna and Ndlovu from Brunapeg, Anwele and Nothando, and Zyaneme and Helen, who had come to the farewell from Bulawayo.

Patxi and NoLwasi saw each other more and more often. There was something magical in the union of their souls.

Anwele had stayed in Sanzukwi and led a group of people committed to the fight against AIDS. They put on plays in the villages, composed songs, sometimes broadcast radio programs from Bulawayo, taught condom use, spread the word throughout Bulilamangwe and helped the sick and their families in their *kraal*.

Nanazema had convinced NoLwasi to make a small plantation of *Sutherlandia* outside Bulawayo and pack the dried leaves for brews to treat debilitating diseases. He called them "Nolwasi leaves" (mother of knowledge), and they distributed them to homes and villages with a user's manual, full of loving advice for patients. With the modest income they helped the activities of Anwele and her group. NoLwasi did not even want to see the money.

Johanna, Ndlovu, Jonay, NoLwasi and Anwele's group worked as a team to fight AIDS in the district and met once a month, rotating between Brunapeg, Saint Joseph and Sanzukwi for information actions in schools, prevention in bars, buses, stores, posters along the roads and support to families.

Haka felt like the luckiest man in the world among that family of brave souls. There was also a very strong feeling of bonding with Helen even though they did not go beyond that kiss. An unknown challenge awaited Haka and his return would open a new stage in their lives. After dinner, this time with millet, broccoli and palm oil, Haka said goodbye with a few words. He was wearing the Buhleve T-shirt:

-My friends. In the last two years I have regained the joy of living together with my brother and his beautiful work in the mission. I have seen in each of you the light of living with love. I used to live with hatred but with your grace and your might I must leave southbound to find the whereabouts of some angels who have left this land without their most tender smile.

Haka, saying these words, became emotional. NoLwasi, who had talked a lot with Haka about her concerns for those children and what she had seen in Soweto a few years ago, was also moved.

-Amandhla! -they all shouted loudly.

Jonay took out his violin and intoned "Schindler's List". Then Patxi sang a sweet version of "Nkosi Sikelele", and NoLwasi followed with a melody that captivated everyone in a moment of deep peace, with her rudimentary *mbira*.

Haka left in early December in his FJ40 with his research data, the documents sent to him by Beatriz, contact details of Helen in South Africa and of Father Kevin given to him by Patxi, a card from Amani trust that he should not show except in extreme situations, the flashlight, a bag of clothes, what he had bought in Bulawayo and the gifts from his family in Saint Joseph.

He set out at five o'clock in the morning from Saint Joseph for Beitbridge, and soon had a carload of people whom he picked up along the way. He stopped at several crossroads stores. He asked about the Datsun 1200s and the group of kids, and slyly offered money for any

information. No one said anything but he noticed in a couple of cases that fear blocked the answer.

Arriving at the border, he spent the rest of the afternoon talking to residents. He went to Takani's house, whom NoLwasi had told him about, and informed him of his task. Takani advised him against further enquiry. He told him that the group would surely be armed and dangerous. Haka insisted and gave him money to accompany him to visit about twenty houses in the area, at random. None of them told him anything. In one of them a man was very clear:

-*Ikiwa* (white), don't you see that if we say something and you find them, first they will torture or kill you and then they will come after us? They have guns, they drink alcohol and take drugs, they have no respect for life, even for their own, let alone for those of others.

-Thank you, my friend. I'm going to try. Those kids deserve it.

As they were about to give up, Haka told Takani that he would be spending the night in town and asked if he could leave the car at his house.

He had an idea.

These unscrupulous people would surely stop at the customs office where they would have bribed several policemen on both sides and would not resist mixing with the prostitutes on the border, whom they might also control. He thus entered the red light district where, late at night, there were about two dozen women sitting on chairs in front of metal plate shacks. They encouraged him to go in with them. He entered the first shanty with a woman in her forties, with heavy paint on her eyelids and lips, a tight bra, a flabby belly and a red cloth that poorly covered her generous buttocks. Upon entering, the woman, without even speaking, began to remove her bra.

-*Udade wami* (my sister): do not take it off....

-It's going to cost you fifty Zimbabwe dollars either way.

-I'll give you double, I need to talk to you.

-Perverted? Depressed?

-No, worried... my name is Haka, are you?

-Maggy.

-Maggy, do you have children?

-Yes, two. If I didn't have to feed them, I wouldn't be here.

Maggy began to open up, to show some weakness and sensitivity, cracking her role and disguise as a saleswoman of her body.

-I'm going to tell you a story. Then I'm going to ask for your help. You can keep quiet or tell me what you think. I won't judge you. I will not force you. I'm just asking you to listen to my story.

-Go ahead, Haka. It's a break. I spend hours and hours waiting out there, and I have about five customers a day, most of them aggressive or dismissive, some of them don't even pay. All to make out a meager living and barely provide my daughter with a uniform and school fees so she doesn't follow my way.

Haka noticed that Maggy was now herself and felt a deep tenderness.

-Before I tell you my story: do you use condoms in your relationships?

-Even if I wanted to, customers don't want to. Once, when I proposed to one of them, he was so drunk and aggressive that he made me swallow it.

-I will help you, if you want, to get out of this. Now I want you to listen to this: During the last two years many children have been disappearing from Matabeleland. They were all AIDS orphans and were picked up by South Africans who tricked the elderly grandparents or took them by force if they were alone. They did this by telling them that they would take them to "good" schools, and also gave money to the grandparents, who, in their desperate survival, accepted and allowed themselves to be convinced that they would be better off studying in Egoli.

-God knows what has become of them...!

-Maggy: look at these pictures: they are the hijackers. They came in a Datsun 1200 like the one in this picture. I reckon they must have made at least twenty trips in these two years. I'm sure they stopped here and some of them were looking for pleasure with you. I will show you the photos of the children, which they probably left locked in the car or in some houses.

Maggy looked attentively at the photo of Buhleve Nkosi.

-I don't know anything. You can go. You don't need to pay me.

-I understand you, Maggy.

Haka left a hundred dollars and kissed her on the forehead. He knew it would be the same with the other prostitutes. It was late in the afternoon and he went for a walk, he needed to think. The information at customs was essential but if the bribed cops found out, he might not last long.

In the morning he crossed customs. He knew that each car was marked with the license plate number, the occupants and where it was going. He talked to the policemen as they searched the car. Although the Makarov was well hidden in a concealed, welded space above, only accessible from underneath and still difficult to find, he knew he was at risk. He posed as a priest. Patxi had left him a collar and a rope chain with a wooden cross. He had also told him to wear it with respect and to think of Jesus. He pretended to suffer from a slight tremor and limp. He preferred to speak in English because the ndebele would arouse suspicion and animosity among the policemen, almost all of whom were Shona.

-Good morning, son. How are you. God bless your work taking care of the safety of your brothers.

-Thank you, Father. Where are you headed?

-I am going to Pretoria for a meeting of priests.

-Are you going alone? Where did you leave your chauffeur? Be careful, Father. Criminals respect no one.

-My driver got sick with a fever the day before and I couldn't replace him. Don't worry son, I'm used to it.

-I need to ask you something: some brothers of a parishioner from our parish came to see you a month ago. They live in Soweto but they have a farm in Thohoyamndou. I need to give them an urgent letter as their mother has fallen seriously ill. It would be a whole day's detour to go east and not find them.

Even if this policeman was one of those bribed, he doubted that word of his inquiries would have spread as yet. He calculated a one in a hundred chance of discovery. He thought of the other ninety-nine.

-Come with me, Father, we can look it up in the registry.

-God bless you, son.

When they entered, the policeman took out some notebooks with handwritten lists, he looked for the previous month's lists. At that moment they began to beep outside, as there was a long line of cars waiting.

-Don't worry, son, I'll look for it and tell you when I find it.

He made his limp and trembling more evident, sat down at the table to review the notebook exaggerating the difficulty in turning the pages and reading the license plates noted, while the policeman went out to screen the waiting cars. He had about five minutes to review as many dates, names and destinations as possible.

He found in the previous three months, four entries of the license plate BKR 487 L. He memorized the dates (September 6, September 22, October 10 and November 3), the destinations (always Johannesburg), the persons: Jason Mathebula, Joseph Mabuza. Bheki Shabangu and Dumisani Sibañoni. The children always had the same six names Ayize Nkosi, Dingane Dlamini, Nathi Mhaule, Pilane Kaleni. Sizho Hlanganani and Zamilé Silongo. He quickly made a mnemonic rule with the first and last names of the adults: "*Jajo Bhedu and Mama Shasi*".

The policeman came in and the Father played dumb.

-Nothing, son, I don't see anything.... Couldn't you write more clearly?

-Let me help you, Father: what day was it?

-I think they left Hwangue on November 3 very early.

The policeman took a quick look and showed his dexterity. Let's see: Here it is! The same license plate, Father. They were headed for Johannesburg!

-Thank you son. You saved me a day's detour. God bless you.

-Be careful, Father.

He limped out, showing his tremor, and got into the car without stopping to memorize the names. Once on South African soil, he stopped on the side of the road and wrote down the names spelling them backwards and forwards. Of the children he could only remember a few first names: Ayize, Dingane Nathi and Sizho. In any case, they were not their names, only the names on the false passports they used again and

again to passall of them. How could the authorities be so blind as to allow the same names to be written down so many times?

Across the border he stopped in Messina. He had to plan his next steps well. He looked at Buhleve's photo, as he did every so often, to get his strength back. At that moment he saw a piece of paper sticking out of the passenger door that someone had slipped in from the outside. It was a letter addressed to "Mr. Haka" with many spelling mistakes:

I asked and dey told me you were at Takani's plais. Be careful, those men are dangerus. I now one of them well. He's the one with the scar on his aylid. When they cros the border, he comes lukiing for me. He trits me gently at first and then becoms violent. His name is Jason, I don't now his last name. I now he livs in Johannesburg. He always wers a gold watch and very strange sunglases, Chanel brand... He has another marc on his body: a wine-colord spot on the bac of his nec. They take "cookies" (a mix of cocein and crack). I can't tel you mor. Houup you can rescu thous angels, and houup thous demons wil disapear from Earth... and pray that I find a way out of this. You must bern this leter if you find it. If anyone sees it, my laif is in danger. And don't sey anyzing to the polis, many are sovorn. God bles you. Lihambe kuhle.

XXXVII. Two visions of health intertwine. Saint Joseph, rainy 1987

ANWELE WAS WORKING with NoLwasi to train women and men in all villages on condom promotion. They created images, songs, plays and names that would remove the embarrassment of talking about "dirty words". As Sutherlandia became known in Matabeleland as "the plant of NoLwasi" (the mother of knowledge), they linked the herb whose leaves helped to reduce suffering from the disease to the shape of its red bulbs, the message of nature and the *amakhosi* (spirits), to use condoms as long as one did not know if he or she had the disease. Not to do so was to attempt against the life of other people, always deplorable, and even more perverse when they were the ones who supposedly loved each other the most.

Anwele also managed to bring AIDS tests to Sanzukwi, Saint Joseph and Brunapeg. They began to encourage people to get tested so they could feel more confident about having sex without a condom when they were not infected, and with it if they were, as well as using the medicine plants. NoLwasi talked to Zyaneme in such a way that they would only sell the plants when the test result was shown. With little means, much sentiment and dignity, and the union to the spirits, to nature and to the people, that group of heroes was fighting against the worst plague ever seen in Matabeleland, and even without knowing it, the worst that Humanity had ever seen.

NoLwasi trusted at first in the wise advice of the ancestors who led her to know the plant, in the alliance of Zyaneme with *nyangas* of the country, with Anwele and the way to avoid its spread, and with the sense of living honestly and with much love, the most real and natural way to return to full life. But she began to distrust the plant. Although it had some effect, some sick people ended up going, albeit more slowly, on the inexorable path of emancipation towards extinguishing their lives. She tried increasing the doses, mixing it with other compounds, applying it through skin lacerations. Nothing worked. They continued to use it, because it helped, but did not cure. She insisted to Zyaneme that this was made very clear when they distributed the plant.

The saddest thing was to see that the affection, hugs and love she gave to the patients improved their spirits, and even their strength and

pain, but also failed to expel the disease from their bodies. She saw this clearly in Anwele: a year after being in Sanzukwi in a group of love and enthusiasm for life that she had never known before, she noticed a white spot appear on her tongue. NoLwasi knew it was the first step of a long, sad road. NoLwasi had given Anwele a lot of love, in the psychological sense of affection and empathy, and in the physical sense as well, with hugs, caresses and massages. So much so that Anwele had once felt in NoLwasi's hut the desire to sleep with her, something thought to be an aberration in the Kalanga and Ndebele tradition. She did not, not because of that, for NoLwasi and Anwele were brave and for love they faced all taboos, but because NoLwasi did not feel physical attraction to the extent of diluting their bodies in intimate pleasure. Moreover, she felt that she had a union, at the moment deeply spiritual, but with a horizon of even fuller and more magical light, with Patxi.

When NoLwasi saw the first sign, he decided to go and talk to Jonay, whom he deeply respected and valued in his fondness for the patients and his vow to do his best for them. He knew that whitemen's medicine did not cure the disease either, but between the two of them they could, perhaps, extend Anwele's hope, while they discovered other ways.

Jonay welcomed Anwele into his small dark brick church. They embraced warmly. NoLwasi escorted her and observed as she sat quietly in a chair in the only room/bedroom. She watched with awe as Jonay, a healer too, but from another world of ideas and inspiration, proceeded to examine how the disease was possibly invading Anwele's body. There was a hallowed silence in that corner of Matabeleland of two souls turned in different ways to healing a brave woman who was leading the fight against the plague.

Jonay sat on a chair opposite the one in which Anwele was sitting. No tables or barriers in between, that's how he liked it. He began to talk to her and ask her questions looking into her eyes, feeling with her. Empathy.

Jonay asked for every detail of Anwele's medical history: third daughter of Ndebele parents from Tsholotsho. Her father had died of tuberculosis and her mother lived with moderate hypertension and osteoarthritis in her knees. She was born in 1958 from a normal birth,

at home, and apparently with normal weight and no complications. Her mother breastfed her for a year, and it was at five months that she began to give her other foods as well, starting with diluted *sadza*, peanut sauces, papayas, guayavas, mangoes, millet puree, and gradually vegetables, sometimes chicken. Like so many children, she grew up healthy and in her time she received no vaccination other than for tuberculosis, which was given in mass immunization campaigns, even though it was almost useless to prevent the disease. At the age of two she had measles, and until the age of five she had frequent episodes of diarrhea and twice fever, cough and difficulty breathing. During the rainy seasons she had malaria fevers once or twice. She had also suffered from ringworm - fungus - in her hair and on her skin, a rash from scabies, an infection in one arm, probably impetigo, and had once suffered a severe scorpion sting. Once she suffered burns from a cooking fire, and another time she was poisoned by soda they kept for washing. But that was a fortunate girl's life in Matabeleland, and it almost surprised Anwele that Jonay asked about such details.

She was privileged and had been growing and was still alive. "*Ngiyapila*". A gift from the spirits.

When she finished elementary school at Tsholotsho mission school, she stayed at home working in the fields, with the goats, fetching water and firewood, and taking care of her younger siblings. Her close friend from primary school, Sibongile, went to high school in Hwange. She never saw her again. At the age of seventeen she had her first intimate relationships. They were rather forced by a man in his thirties who was courting her. After several times feeling the pressure, she was brave enough to reject him. Then she began to be different from the rest. She was very selective with men, even for a walk. She distrusted them. At the age of twenty-four she met James, a young man who worked in the Hwange mines and had friends in Tsholotsho. He seemed like a nice man and they fell in love. She had relations with him and talked about him to her parents until the families agreed to the marriage.

They built a hut in Anwele's parents' *kraal* and started living together. James was still working at the Hwange mine and tensions began to arise as she discovered that he was having other relationships at the mine and was barely bringing home any money. Anwele suffered

from several sexually transmitted infections that Jonay identified as chancroid and gonorrhoea. She never treated them out of shame. James started coming to the *kraal* less. Eventually he went to Egoli and then she heard less and less from him. Anwele was then pregnant. She had a lot of vomiting during pregnancy and the malaria during the rains was very severe, throwing her into a state of confusion. She received traditional treatment.

She gave birth to little Nothando in the *kraal*, assisted by a traditional midwife. She also breastfed her for a year and gave her all the vaccinations advised by the health center built shortly after the liberation of Zimbabwe. Shortly thereafter she learned of the disease-that-does-not-cure from a friend who was wasting away and she cared for her with all her affection. During a campaign by the Matabeleland AIDS Council, she was attracted to the fight against the disease and joined the activities, first in Thsolotsho and then moving to Mkokoba with her mother, now widowed and frail, in the Bulawayo offices. She then learned from mutual friends that James had died at Egoli. When AIDS tests became available in her organization, the first in Zimbabwe, she took the test and found out she was infected. After a week of enormous anguish wanting to die soon and stop fighting, one day seeing Nothando's look of tenderness, she decided to fight for the rest of her life, whatever it was. Soon after she met NoLwasi, and the rest of her story was known by Jonay.

Jonay then began the examination of the symptoms, strengths, their relationship with sensitivity, and how all this influenced Anwele's mood and energy: she had been feeling less strength, less appetite and less serenity at night to sleep. Even so, she was still active in her normal activities. It was for Jonay a "*Karnofsky* grade" nine, and like everything else, he was noting it down in a careful outline. She hadn't noticed any symptoms in her senses of sight, hearing, touch or taste. Nor had she had any headaches or felt any loss of strength in any particular part of her body. Anwele confirmed that she felt no breathing problems, and no throbbing or irregular heartbeat. Nor did she feel pain in any joints. She only felt a slight discomfort in her abdomen, on the upper left side, but she hardly noticed it. She had also had some itching, corresponding with some small pimples all over her body, but both the itching and the skin lesions had been easing. Her menstruation had

always been normal but lately the periods had been shorter and less abundant. Her diuresis and bowel rhythms were normal, except for some isolated diarrheal stools.

At that moment, Jonay asked Anwele to lay down on the bed with only her underwear on and covered by a sheet. He sat on the edge of the bed and began his examination as if it were a sacred ceremony.

Jonay checked and noted a normal state of consciousness. He saw that she was somewhat thin, the spaces between her ribs were noticeable and her pelvic bones and facial cheeks were marked. Later he would weigh her at the dispensary. He took her pulse carefully as he looked at her tenderly. He always did this for a full minute. With his ring finger he would increase the pressure of the radial artery as it passed through the anterior part of the wrist, the index finger would prevent reflux and the heart finger, "heart to heart", would feel the rhythm and strength of the heart and circulation. Already familiar to many patients and little time and resources, just by taking the pulse with three fingers, he could know not only the frequency but an indication of the pressure, the flow of the heart, the circulation, the sign of how life was flowing in the body. He then watched how the blood poured Anwele's nail beds after releasing them from his pressure and watching the vital pink hue when he released them. As when the waves wash the shore.

NoLwasi related it to how the connection with the spirits in the body flowed.

While he spent that first minute of tactile contact and gaze with all patients, Jonay also checked the frequency and shape of breathing, the temperature of the forehead and neck, the color of the skin and the brightness of the eyes and the tone of the mucous membranes of the conjunctiva, gently and tenderly lowering the lower eyelid.

He felt genuine reverence for his patients, and felt as sacred his permission to pry into the human body and search for clues to alleviate suffering. He could think of no other profession so sacred and at the same time so wonderful and magical. On this occasion, that tenderness with which he inspected the body of his patients and in which he felt many more sensations than the purely physical ones was expanded by the deep respect for Anwele's courage, and for the magical and ineffable greatness of NoLwasi's spirit, who observed in almost

mystical silence, that way of helping in illness, so different from his own. But so much the same.

Jonay brought his face slightly closer to Anwele's breath to also feel the different kinds of breaths that indicated different metabolisms and disorders. There was so much that mere sight, touch, hearing and smell already told of a sick person.

His first conclusions were that Anwele had an accelerated metabolism: a slight elevation in temperature, her skin was perspiring slightly, her circulation was accelerated, with a pulse of ninety-three beats per minute, weak and "thready" if he were to draw it on a graph, rising and falling sharply and slightly, like a slight fence, rather than a solid mound, causing it to fill the capillaries weakly and slowly. She had a certain acidic fruit breath, which Jonay related to a low oxygen metabolism of her cells, she also noticed a slight, imperceptible to most, yellowish-reddish tint to the mucous membranes surrounding her eyes, a sign that red blood cells were being destroyed at a faster rate than normal. He noticed a glassy tint to her eyes, from torpid hydration. Fragile. He also noticed that the nails had fine red lines and other signs of brittleness typical of iron deficiency. The hair was also less flexible than normal and the eyelashes had grown in number and length, curving a little, giving an aspect of a special, fragile, tremulous beauty that Jonay observed in patients who were developing AIDS. The especial tenderness he felt in general for his patients was even greater for those suffering from that terrible disease. The singular beauty that he perceived in their fragility increased his feeling of tenderness even more. Nothing was serious and almost everything was imperceptible to the eyes of those who were not inured to focusing their senses so intently on the body, and what it revealed, of another person's health.

He wrote down on paper the data he observed in the history and examination.

He then looked much more closely at the color of the skin distributed over the body and again noted that reddish-yellow tone, very slight especially in the unexposed areas, such as the abdomen. He also perceived a slight purple tone in the distal parts such as the nose, fingers, toes and ears. He confirmed that oxygen was reaching the areas farthest from the heart with difficulty. As when the rivers dried up after the rainy season. He noticed how when he pinched the skin of the

abdomen it slowly retracted and the folds took two or three seconds to disappear. The skin and its tissues were poorly hydrated. Like the banks of the Sanzukwi when it dried out. He said nothing although he constantly looked at Anwele to "cheer her up". To grant her courage, to feed her soul. She, so fragile and fearful at the moment, looked from time to time at NoLwasi, who observed every gesture with devotion. In the glances they exchanged there was a complicity, an unspoken vision of two very different ways of understanding the body and the spirit, but deep down, so much the same.

He continued to look carefully for any lesions Anwele might have on her body. He noticed some minimal spots on her back, reddish-pink, flat, drying the skin even more. Asking Anwele to turn around, Jonay recognized the spots of incipient Kaposi's sarcoma. He looked at NoLwasi, who knew well it was the sign that heralded the beginning of suffering. Their gazes became slightly moist with sadness. They waited a moment to regain their serenity and Jonay asked Anwele to face up again. He then observed in some areas some dilatations of the capillaries in the form of "spiders" that indicated a malfunction of the liver, which was not processing some substances well, such as sexual hormones, and there were isolated areas of widenings of the fine capillaries. He also saw how, in some parts of the body, the skin showed very small pimples, the size of the head of a pin, scattered, and in some areas ending in a group. NoLwasi had also often seen such lesions, which often improved greatly with her plant. Jonay knew they were a sign of impaired immunity and still reacting awkwardly, before it would fade and leave the door open to infections that would penetrate Anwele's body if nothing remedied it.

He then checked the mucous membranes by observing the mouth, pharynx, palate and tongue with the flashlight of good old Tomas. He noticed small vesicles on a red background around the mouth. The herpes virus was taking advantage of the weakness of Anwele's body. With close attention, he then noticed what NoLwasi had told him: a whitish area, as if it were a coating adhering to the tongue, and on some areas of the tonsils, which were enlarged, as well as on the back of the pharynx. It revealed that the fungi that usually lived in harmony in the body, in this case the so-called "*candida albicans*" (shiny white), were colonizing a body that was allowing itself to be invaded. Jonay thought

that like love when it becomes submissive and lets it override our personality.

He began to feel for lesions under the skin, very gently and without ceasing to meet Anwele's gaze. He noticed some lymph nodes, the size of chickpeas, soft, unattached, somewhat painful under the skin of the neck, behind the ears, in the armpits and in the groins. Something was stimulating the immunity, hindered by the virus. As he continued to explore, he was thinking about possible causes.

He began to delve into the workings of Anwele's nervous system: knowing her state of consciousness and orientation, he asked her to stare at Jonay's index finger, which he moved from right to left. He noticed that her right eye did not completely follow this movement and stopped when the pupil approached her nose. Something was affecting the nerve that moved the left eye inward. He knew its path through the brain and something was pressing on or inflaming the base for that to happen. He then noticed that when Jonay gradually flexed Anwele's neck, he felt some stiffness, and Anwele felt some pain. He noted with some relief that the strength and sensitivity of her arms, legs, and facial muscles seemed symmetrical and preserved. But when he explored the reflexes, he saw that her muscles reacted more intensely than usual.

Although he usually waited to do it at the end, he wanted at that moment to look inside the eye through the "fundoscope" that he had brought to Zimbabwe, a gift from Fernando. He observed some yellowish-red areas at the back of the retina, with a grainy appearance like the skin of a strawberry. These were signs that further confirmed his suspicion. Tuberculosis spread throughout the body. Anwele was much more grave than she appeared. He tried to conceal his concern.

He continued carefully auscultating the breathing and noticed that the murmur of the air passing through the lung sponge was diminished, weak, and somewhat irregular. As was the pulse, as was the circulation and as was the hydration of the skin. He also noticed that in one area of the lung he could hear a noise that Jonay had already heard a few times: it was like the sound of the footstep in the snow. Something he had not yet seen or heard in nature but could imagine. The membranes surrounding the lung, swollen, "sticky", came together on breathing in, and detached on exhalation, rubbing against each other. In that area, Anwele felt some pain when taking a deep breath.

He went on to listen devotedly to the locomotive of the body, the heart. First he noticed the tip of the heart moving visibly and more strongly than normal in the space between the fifth and sixth ribs, below her left breast. He confirmed the accelerated pulse, struggling weakly and awkwardly against the invasion. On auscultating in that area of the apex of the heart, he noted that the first heart sound was increased. The mitral and pulmonary valves were closing tightly as the accelerated rhythm and their low hydration and blood volume lowered the pressure of the atria and closed more tightly, almost violently, as if disgusted by the situation, their valves. In addition, after a second, somewhat milder noise, there was a third one, the so-called "atrial gallop". Something that sounded like "*ken-ta-qui, ken-ta-qui*". He could also hear, although better near the right side of the sternum, where the aorta flowed, a "pffff" murmur that increased and decreased in intensity in a symmetrical way. Jonay drew it in his notes, like a rhombus. All this pointed to the heart's response to a generalized weakness.

He continued with the abdomen, while talking about other things with Anwele to distract her attention and get her to relax. He asked her about Nothando, about life in Sanzukwi, about the results of the first tests, about how men and women were interested in condom use. In the meantime, he was noticing that under the left costal border, the spleen was enlarged and a little painful to Anwele if he probed deeply. Everything else was normal, including the liver, kidneys, gynecological examination and joints.

When he had finished his delicate examination, he asked Anwele to get dressed and the three of them sat around a small wooden table that Jonay had in his room.

-Jonay, what's wrong with me? Don't be afraid to tell me. I have already seen many people suffering from the disease and I know that I will get it sooner or later.

NoLwasi watched and held Anwele's hand tightly.

-I'm sorry, Anwele. It is true that the disease is progressing in you. You have the criteria that the World Health Organization considers as AIDS, and you are in the second stage of evolution. You still have strength, you don't have diarrhea, your body is not very affected. But you are weak and you have some infections that we have to treat.

-Thank you, Jonay, I know that in your hands and NoLwasi's -she squeezed it as she said it- I am surrounded by the greatest tenderness and the best care.

-We have some medications to treat those white spots, those blisters on your lips, or those pimples on your back. Although I think NoLwasi treats them much better than us, the ones with the colored pills.

-Don't think so, Jonay -said NoLwasi- together we can give her the best. Anwele has been taking my herbs for some time now, and although she improved at first, especially with her itchy pimples, she has been losing strength.

Jonay then said :

-In addition to those non-serious infections and loss of strength, I think you have a major infection throughout your body that we need to confirm. That's the bad news. But the good news is, if we confirm it, we can treat it and make it much better.

-Thank you, Jonay. Tell me what I must do. I want to live. I want to see Nothando grow up. I want to help my people protect themselves from this horror.

-I have to take some fluid out of your back, and study it. I take it out with a fine needle, it is somewhat painful but important that we do it.

-Well, go ahead, Jonay.

-You will have to stay a few days here in Saint Joseph. And we may have to go to Brunapeg to see you for X-rays, or at least take some blood samples or the liquid I was telling you about. I'll talk it over with Ndlovu on the radio.

-All right.

-I will stay here to care for her, and I want to learn from you, Jonay. I have felt a spiritual reverence in how you looked for ways to help our sister.

-I wish to learn from you, NoLwasi, even though I know I will never have your magical strength. But I want to know so many ways nature has to help us in our weakness. And not to depend on pills and all the industry and business that surrounds them.

They went to the dispensary room where Rose helped them to do a lumbar puncture. Jonay extracted about twenty drops of an opalescent liquid that confirmed his suspicions. The tuberculosis, which in people with normal defenses affected the lung, had spread throughout Anwele's body, including the meninges, and that was why it affected the movement of her eye, why she had pain in her neck, why the fever, the weakness, the glands, the way she was beating and breathing.

He saved that liquid for analysis with a stain and his MacArthur microscope at the end of the day, but Jonay had no doubt. They started the treatment. It was with the same drugs Fernando had told him about from Sierra Leone, now obsolete in rich countries, but the only ones the Zimbabwean government could afford. In addition to the oral medications, there was a daily injection of streptomycin, which Rose began to administer. Over the next few days NoLwasi learned and she was doing it herself, while treating the other minor ailments and infections with her wise remedies, which Jonay found to be far more effective than what he could give.

XXXVIII. The water that washes fear away. Saint Joseph, rains of 1987

NOLWASI SPENT A week in Saint Joseph. She cared for Anwele tenderly. They had developed a deep friendship. Still weak, Anwele gave some talks on the importance of condoms at the clinic to women's and youth groups. NoLwasi would have warm gatherings with Jonay. They learned from each other in their understanding of life. The relationship with the physical dimension that Jonay studied, the relationship with the spiritual world which NoLwasi felt. He helped her grow a garden at the mission with Sutherlandia and other medicinal plants. Jonay taught her how to look through the microscope at some blood samples. It was already the rainy season and they saw some cases of malaria that Jonay explained to her with symbols:

These fevers are caused by small ring-shaped creatures, look here. Come with me.

They went to the room where a child had high fevers and chills. Jonay explained that he had to give him a little prick, like a small scratch from an acacia thorn, and see in his blood the reason for the fever so as to give him the best treatment. Once the boy and his mother agreed, Jonay gently but quickly pricked the pulp of a finger and let two drops of blood fall on a small glass. He took it with NoLwasi to his home where he stirred with the same needle with which he had pricked the child, making a "mush" of those drops of blood. They talked about life and the stars while the blood dried. Then he added a few drops of a purple liquid (Giemsa's tincture) with which, Jonay explained to NoLwasi, they would be able to see those "invading rings". While the blood-dyeing liquid was drying again, Jonay explained to NoLwasi:

-When the rains come, there are small eggs that turn into larvae. These eggs (he showed her some that he had saved), can wait even years for the necessary conditions to evolve into another form of life.

Jonay had collected some larvae from stagnant water in the mission and several mosquitoes that he had kept in a glass covered with cloth through which the air transpired.

-It is so when they are larvae that grow in stagnant water, and after a week, they become mosquitoes like these you see in the glass, which also only live for a week.

NoLwasi looked at them with extreme curiosity. She had names and meanings for each of the insect pests that changed every few days during the rainy season. For her, each species had a function in life. Some cleaned the fields, others cleaned the leaves from the trees, others buried themselves and kept the earth clean and rich, others entered the spirits of the birds to bind them to the earth and prevent them from flying above the clouds and going to other worlds. Those mosquitoes were hard to see, rather their "zzzzzzzz" could be heard. For NoLwasi and her people, it was the concern of a spirit that lifted them up at night so that, looking at the stars, there would be solutions to their lack of harmony.

You can see here on one of them that they have palps, next to those hairy antennae, that serve to direct that firm, straight needle in the center. The males only take nectar, a kind of liquid sugar, from the flowers, but the females need iron. That's why they sting us, to get their blood. Without it, they couldn't lay eggs.

-It's funny, women also need more strength in times of pregnancy, I give them to suck some stones that give much strength to their blood.

Jonay thought for sure that those stones had iron in them, a habit of many mammals, and thought of the similarities in all animal species, including humans.

-So the female mosquito, while sucking human blood to lay her eggs, ingests parasites from people who have the parasites in their blood. There, males and females of the parasite mix, that magic assortment of genes that adapts the species to the changing nature. It is like the "honeymoon trip" of the parasite in the "Anopheles airlines", their mosquito ally. And then they place their offspring in a new person where they grow and multiply. Until the time comes to mix their genes again.

-Jonay, you have to explain to me what are the genes, the honeymoons. I don't understand well. It is true that mixing during our life is part of our destiny, of our path through the nature we come from and where we are going.

Jonay realized that he got carried away speaking in his own key of symbols and concepts, with no respect or approach to the magical world of NoLwasi. He thought that often foreign thoughts that we do not

understand but in which we sense power are considered as "magical". Surely what he thought was magical to NoLwasi.

-Jonay, don't you think that if mosquitoes really need blood to live and reproduce, and they only take a little from us and we can live, is it good to give them some? If they are in the world it is because *Mkhulumkhulu* wants them in the universe.

-We think that humans have lived for 2 million years, some 25,000 generations. Mosquitoes several hundred million years and the malaria parasite several billion years. Both have developed complex survival mechanisms, improved generation after generation, millions of times.

Jonay thought that even such huge numerical concepts would be foreign to NoLwasi.

-What I mean to say, NoLwasi, is that long before men began their life on this Earth, there were mosquitoes, and long before that, fever "rings". In each genetic mixture we increase our capacity to adapt to nature and its changes. That is why man suffers more in this relationship with the parasite: we have not yet adapted well to live with them. It takes us about five years of constant coexistence to learn to live with them and not suffer from fevers, pain, or even die in the attempt, with our arteries through which our blood circulates blocked by the parasite. During those five years we need help so that the adaptation does not hurt us so much.

-So, if we avoid being infected by mosquitoes, will we never learn?

-Yes, but also, if we only get bitten when it rains because the rest of the year everything is too dry for mosquitoes, then we never fully learn and we always suffer.

-It's funny, it's like fear, fright.

-What do you mean, NoLwasi?

-Because of fear, we never fully get to know strangers and so we never quite understand them and get rid of that fear.

-Yes, but imagine if those strangers only came once a year, we didn't understand their language, and they, not knowing they were hurting us, burned our houses and our crops, what would you do?

-Invite them to stay longer.

-But that is not possible, NoLwasi. Our rivers and fields dry up when the rains are gone and our bodies, which had just begun to get to know the malaria visitor, soon forget.

-It is difficult, yes, I wonder why Mkulumkulu has put us to live together, if he does not give us time to get to know each other and "adapt" as you say. We think that the fevers remind us, during the rainy season, of how hot it has been and will be. From under the earth, with the heat of so many months of drought, comes the message that we should not forget the cycle of life, and that we have to plant in the rains to harvest later and live. Is it possible that we have that reminder often and gently and thus keep our bodies in harmony with nature?

-I believe your thoughts, NoLwasi, reach a spiritual and universal level that I cannot understand. But I respect you so much! How much I wish to learn from you! To be inspired by your "harmony".

-See how interesting : The eggs hide in the soil, allied with a little moisture that hides under the dry soil. Look, the staining is already dry: look through this hole those "rings" of the fevers.

NoLwasi looked through the microscope in amazement. She now saw that the earth's message to the rain fevers was in the shape of the sun at sunset.

A week had passed and Anwele, with the daily injections, had been improving. Jonay sent, with some travelers, the tube of liquid that surrounded Anwele's medulla, to Ndlovu in Brunapeg so that they could look for the tuberculosis bacteria there with techniques that he did not yet have in Saint Joseph. They did not find it, but it was hardly ever found that way. Anwele had improved with the treatment and that was what mattered.

That afternoon, however, Anwele noticed that the red spots had increased, and she began to have the diarrhea Jonay had so often seen in late-stage AIDS patients. NoLwasi went to look for Nothando, as Anwele had asked.

She returned the next day with the little girl, as Jonay said that with the treatment, Nothando was safe and would not receive the infection. They spent most of the day hugging and cuddling, making jokes, talking about life. In the afternoon, Nothando went to play with Joseph,

building ingenious miniature hoops and carts with wires and pieces of wood.

NoLwasi went to see her friend. She sat on the side of the bed.

-NoLwasi. You are the nicest person I have ever met.

-Don't say that. We are all the same energy. Goodness is in all of us. Some express it with less fear than others. And others perceive it more clearly from some than from others. You are the bravest person I have ever met. And true courage is the expression of real love.

-NoLwasi, you and I both know that I will die soon.

-We don't know, Anwele. It so may be. You know that very well. But between Jonay and me, we are going to do everything possible for you to beat this disease. If anyone deserves to survive it, it is you. Not only your life is precious, but it is precious for Nothando and for many people in Matabeleland as well. We all need your courage.

They looked at each other deeply. Holding hands. Words were redundant. The mixture of love with fear, of sadness with hope, of clinging to life or letting go exhausted by pain and exhaustion.

At that moment, tears began to stream down the trembling face of Matabeleland's bravest person.

Instinctively, without knowing why, NoLwasi tore off one of the hollow peanut shells she wore on her necklace and gently collected her friend's tears. She asked Rose for a tube like the one in which Jonay had kept the liquid from Anwele's back a week earlier. She put the tears in the tube and kept it away.

She needed to go to a nearby *kopje* to talk to the spirits. It was far from her "altar before the world". She walked towards the west during twenty minutes and found a slight rise of rocks where some acacia and mopane trees. She climbed the rocks and looked over the vast plains into infinity. She needed to feel the voice of the spirits. To feel Masora and Mandhla. He called out to them:

-Mandhla, Masora, Amakhosi, Obaba, Omama, Omama, Umkhulumkhulu! Don't leave me alone! What do I do to stop so much suffering?

At that moment, several mopane leaves fell. It was the season when, in addition to the mosquito larvae that Jonay had told her about, other larvae grew in the form of maggots that climbed up the mopane

trunks and fed on its leaves. In a few weeks, the maggots that survived the aggressive hunt of the *amacimbi* collectors would become butterflies.

NoLwasi saw one of those butterflies. The first of this new cycle of life in Matabeleland. It was majestic. The spots on its wings, with two round figures of a deep maroon color surrounded by white, looked like watchful eyes in the incipient starry night. They were the sign NoLwasi was waiting for. They were there with her. The spirits. With the voice of wisdom. She could feel Mandhla's strength. She could almost smell her breath and her skin, feel her warmth. She heard her wise words. Looking into those two magical eyes in the dark night of Matabeleland, she said:

-Mandhla, *Umkhulu wami*. Tell me what should I do?

The butterfly began to fly slowly and NoLwasi followed it with veneration. Thus it reached a small waterfall that flowed from the rock into a small stream born from the rains. The butterfly sat on top of the rock, next to the waterfall. At that moment NoLwasi noticed that there was a peanut shell next to the butterfly. NoLwasi understood the message: she was to wash Anwele's liquid with clean water. And that would be the medicine that would save her. She didn't understand why that was the message. But she knew it was true because as she smiled at the butterfly with the magic eyes, it took flight and disappeared over the horizon.

NoLwasi mixed Anwele's tears contained in the tube where she had kept them, with the fresh water of that small stream. She did an offering dance to the ancestors while shaking the mixture. Intuitively, she emptied most of the jar, filled it again and shook it vigorously, with rage, with hope, with fear, with love. She repeated this process up to ten times.

NoLwasi returned to Saint Joseph and entered the room where Anwele was trying to sleep.

-Anwele, *Udade wami*. Trust me.

-I will always trust.

NoLwasi took a needle like the one Jonay had used to see the blood of the feverish child. She made a small cut on the flesh of Anwele's finger and waited for a little blood to come out. She looked at Anwele

in case she saw in her an expression of fear or distrust. She was smiling, as if she had been waiting for that act forever. NoLwasi took out the tube with the "clean tears" and bathed the blood and the wound with that liquid. With the "infection" cleansed and renewed under the guidance of the ancestors, of Mandhla's eyes and with the stars as witness.

NoLwasi gave Anwele a deep hug.

-*Mandiro. Udade wami* (Good evening, my sister.)

NoLwasi went out alone into the night of St. Joseph, out of that magical place of love and courage. As she looked to the west where the sun had set, where Mandhla had spoken to her, where she had found new hope, she saw a silhouette. Her heart skipped a beat and her eyes watered. The force was so uncontrollable that she could not think. She approached that silhouette that was like her shadow, her own self.

The embrace would never end.

NoLwasi and Patxi united forever.

XXXIX. It would be a good idea...London, 1988

AIMSA WAS STILL ON her boat in the Berkeley Marina writing and teaching some lectures on the right to health. But her sights were on the horizon. She began corresponding with Rob's friend, the missionary from Zimbabwe. She didn't have much to offer with his hands, but wanted to fight the injustice that divided the world into AIDS for the rich and AIDS for the poor. And to do that, she needed empathy in the places most affected by the epidemic. According to her analysis, the epicenter was in a triangle between Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

While her hope was to return to the life she could touch, embrace and feel; the one that is not disguised by words or filtered by clicks, Aimsa was already a reference for both scientists and AIDS activists. She also kept in touch with Marc, who had improved with zidovudine and who, with his contacts in the pharmaceutical industry, informed her of all possible advances, company profits and the perversion of plans to shield patents and continue living in the insatiable greed of capitalism. He had also written articles demonstrating the perversion of the Catholic doctrine of condemning the use of condoms, the only effective "vaccine" for AIDS, but which touched a part of the body taboo for that and other religions.

A group of AIDS advocacy organizations offered to pay her expenses to take part in a conference in London, where representatives, including many health ministers, from nearly one hundred and fifty countries were meeting. But Aimsa declined. She would pay for her own travel: she needed to speak freely, not to be coerced by those who had the money....

Aimsa took the plane from San Francisco to New York where she had about ten hours of transit that allowed her to briefly visit that power center of the world. She saw the Statue of Liberty where she felt the greatness of freedom but how greed, ruling the ruling market, corrupted it. She then went to the *Empire State Building* where she climbed to the top floor and saw the city growing towards the sky. Although she felt its grandeur, she did not understand the eagerness to live on top of others. Aimsa thought of the overcrowded cities of India where she spent her childhood, reflecting the same strange human phenomenon

of living concentrated, far from nature. She passed by the United Nations building and thought of the value of that idea that arose on the other side of where her boat rested in the Berkeley Marina, when in 1945, with still the throbbing pain of war, the idea of a united world took shape. "But how far they were from it." She thought she had things to say in there and perhaps her time would come one day. She spent the last few hours in Central Park where there was a large crowd attending a concert by two musicians who were at the time singing "The Sound of Silence." She thought how AIDS was chained to silence and fear. But at the same time she felt a great reverence for silence.

Aimsa continued her journey to London. She was traveling from the capital of the imperial power of the world today, to the one when her mother was growing up in her native India. She had read Gandhi's books and biography in which he mentioned that city, the center of half the world's domination in the previous two centuries. Those descriptions were mixed in his diary of experiments with truth, his principle of *aimsa*, nonviolence, and the stories Sri told her during his time with Gandhi in the *ashram*. She arrived in London on a Sunday morning in March. She left her suitcase at the hotel near Russell Square, washed her face and went for a walk. She walked around the square in the name of the philosopher she had read and admired so much, Bertrand Russell, and his conquest of happiness. Then he went to the British Museum. She was impressed by the millenary pharaonic art, although felt saddened by the imperial despoilment that the museum reflected. She passed in front of the mythical School of Tropical Medicine, where the leading scientists in the knowledge of health in Africa and other tropical regions studied and researched. She continued on to Tottenham Court Road and down the bustling street reaching Trafalgar Square and the great Nelson's Column. In front of the South African Embassy there was a group that had been demonstrating for ten years then, day and night, against apartheid and calling for the release of Nelson Mandela, another great man she admired. She entered the crypt of Saint Martin in the Fields and concentrated on meditating, seeing around her a kaleidoscope of cultures and languages, living or visiting that mythical city. She went down to St. James's Park where she strolled and saw the great Buckingham Palace in the distance. As with the cathedrals and megalomaniac palaces, she felt more pity than

reverence, and she felt sorry to see those steady soldiers standing guard. Immobile and protecting power. Body and soul paralyzed by absurdity and submission. She continued walking towards Green Park and ended up arriving at Hyde Park, magnificent gardens, similar to the Central Park she had seen the day before in New York. Large meadows, plane trees, oaks, laurels from her homeland, India, up to fifty meters high. Those were truly epic, venerable, to her eyes.

Aimsa walked towards a corner of the park where she noticed a bustle of people. As she got closer she noticed that people were milling around some persons who, perched on wooden or plastic boxes, were talking about different topics. She asked why and some passers-by explained that this corner was called "Speakers' Corner", and traditionally on Sunday mornings it was filled with people talking about different subjects and many more curious people listening to them. A British law stipulated that if one did not touch English soil (and in this case the boxes separated them from the soil), they could talk about anything, even criticizing the British Monarchy. She approached the first one and saw that he spoke vehemently of salvation through faith in Jesus. Who in his right mind could think of a God, Creator of the immense and wonderful universe, and who would have been so imperfect and unjust to show a word of truth only to a, small, part of Humanity and for a short period of time? Whoever believed that, could not have a just heart, could not feel love for all Mankind and at the same time accepted that truth was a "selective privilege". Besides, she had tried to read the Old Testament and after a hundred pages she thought that the author of it should be questioned for falsehood. So many impossible stories. She tried to debate these incongruities with the man, to the astonishment of the passers-by, but it was impossible to follow any logical reasoning.

Then she approached another who, at the opposite extreme of thought, said that there was no Supreme Being and that we would soon be replaced by another species, and that it seemed that the species that would make us disappear and would have supremacy in our tiny planet within the great universe, would be the AIDS virus. Aimsa, not afraid to state her opinion, replied that the AIDS virus could not live without our cells and genes, and that the natural thing would be a mutual adaptation, but that this symbiosis could take a hundred years and

claim, during the current period of imbalanced relationship, another hundred million lives. People began to ask Aimsa questions, seeing that she knew so much detail about the history of AIDS, and also sensing her great intelligence in so many subjects.

The man also thought so, stepped down and invited her up the wooden box. Aimsa began to talk about AIDS to the people who started to crowd around her, including those who, more out of curiosity than interest, surrounded the Christian fanatic. She explained the possible origins of the epidemic, the havoc it was already wreaking on tens of thousands of sick people, but the great silent epidemic of millions of unknowingly infected and infecting people. She spoke of the ethical responsibility to use condoms, to be tested and to have early access to treatment. She also spoke of the unethical business of the large pharmaceutical companies, with profits of hundreds of millions of dollars, while thousands of people were dying without access to treatment, to life.

When asked about the existence of God, she spoke of the universe, of matter and energy, time and space, the ideas she had long ago spoken in that *ashram* on the edge of the Himalayas. She explained Einstein's theories and quantum uncertainty and ended by saying that all expressions of life were the same energy, and in that nature they loved, dreamt, felt infinite and eternal, somehow, because they were so. And matter and the temporal and spatial limit of their consciousness was a passing state of entrapment, of rest, of the energy that flowed and of which all were a unique part. Aimsa spoke with such delicacy, simplicity and humility, and at the same time with so much wisdom, that about two hundred people gathered to listen to her in silence of respect.

Then she continued walking along narrow streets parallel to Oxford street, and arrived at Piccadilly, seeing Cupid pointing his arrow and feeling the desire to suddenly be pierced by that feeling, which she had not yet had in her life. She crossed Soho and arrived at Covent Garden, where street musicians, actors, comedians gave color and life to a city that, in general, was plagued by people "who-didn't-cross-their-eyes" one another. People who, she felt, were "hugs orphans, caress castaways". She was, in a way, too, and her desire to share throbbed her skin.

Aimsa continued strolling through streets and squares with large oak trees and white Victorian-style buildings, still with the flavor and majesty of a city that for two centuries was the power center of the world. Amazed she was, as in New York and San Francisco, by the fast pace of the people, the lost glances and the cold expressions, like the weather. She thought of the magic and the gift of stargazing: those photons traveling millions of years for us to welcome into our body and soul. That energy of which they were a part. And she also thought of the energy of two glances that cross each other even in seconds of affection and tenderness. How many opportunities lost by looking at the sidewalk or at infinity! How many smiles lost in the dark sack of the absent time of love!

As she was walking along with those thoughts, what was her surprise when she came across a statue of his greatest inspiration, Mahatma Gandhi, in the center of Tavistock Square. It was such an impression that when she saw him in the middle of that lonely square on a Monday night in March, she could not take another step. She stared at his serene and almost smiling-not-smiling face, from which she felt a great vibration of peace. Then she sat down in front of him, on a bench, and stared at him for a long time and then simply closed her eyes and "felt with him".

Aimsa thought with sweet serenity how that mythical Indian and that untouchable, now in the world of words between countries, would finally see each other "face to face" in the middle of a lonely square in London. And she thought with a smile of Gandhi's answer when a journalist asked him when he returned to that country:

-What do you think of Western civilization?

-I think it would be a good idea.

Aimsa thought in her meditations that she had to treat her opponents in the debates on AIDS rights with more love and humor. But she often felt angry when she compared opulent power relationships with pain, disease with destitution.

She had known through Rob a network called *couch surfing*, where people shared rooms, beds, sofas or even a corner to lie down in. So he

would offer his boat and travel always sharing, not consuming. In London he stayed with a picture framer named David.

The gigantic meeting began, with some eight hundred participants from all over the world. Aimsa thought about how many treatments could be bought with the expense of the conference. She recovered, thinking that she would try to contribute fearlessly to the meeting, perhaps influencing some ministers, for the good of so many people she knew were suffering from the terrible plague. She was especially interested in learning about the situation in Africa and understanding how she could, from her passion, help alleviate such enormous suffering.

The meeting lasted four days and featured dozens of speakers from around the world.

The inauguration by Princess Diana was very controversial. Aimsa detested those royals surrounded by luxury and pretending to be generous souls, when they lived in opulence that was based on injustice. How could such hypocrisy be tolerated and even applauded and revered by millions of intelligent and informed people? In his speech, someone wrote to him in the text he read, the tragedy of the "innocent victims", implying that one could also think of "guilty" victims. He recalled his polemic with the Republican senator in Berkeley, at the beginning of the epidemic.

The "Surgeon General", equivalent to the American Minister of Health, spoke about the controversial issue on which Aimsa had written several articles: the responsibility to be tested and to act accordingly. The debate between individual confidentiality and public health. He defended individual freedom, informed and responsible. Aimsa was well aware of the campaign she had led to inform every American household, and while she agreed that sex and the risks should be discussed openly, from schools to television to homes, she felt she had done so in a way that was disrespectful to gays, and further stigmatized them. On the other hand, she felt she ought to ask him a question in public, and when she had the chance he did so, in front of some five hundred conference attendees.

-Dr. Koop, my name is Aimsa and I am a researcher in political science and international law at UC Berkeley. I would like to ask you why you have allowed companies to get outrageously rich by

maintaining the high prices of AIDS treatment, prioritizing profits over the lives of millions of people around the world?

Dr. Koop, behind his Colonial-style beard, drew himself up in distaste and frowned at the young Indian woman speaking to him from the back rows. His assistants had prepared him for that kind of question, and he followed the defensive script:

-Miss, the American government recognizes and respects the right of researchers and companies to invest in medical breakthroughs, and to recoup their investments under patent protection. If we were to dismantle that right, that recognition of effort, investment, ingenuity, we would destroy the spark of progress. At the same time, the American government helps those people who cannot afford to pay those fair prices for research efforts.

Aimsa was already expecting this argument.

-So, Dr. Koop, do you consider it moral for someone to multiply his or her investments by more than fifty times in benefgits while millions of people die with no access to life saving medicines? Have you thought about the effect on Africa?

A murmur filled the room and Dr. Koop changed his tone and became aggressive:

-Our system of freedoms cannot allow science to be stifled by socialist arguments that would do away with our value system. Next question?

Aimsa would have told him many things, but the microphone was abruptly taken away from her. As they left the room, a tall man with long white hair and a sharp look approached Aimsa and said:

-I am Timothy Stamps, Minister of Health in Zimbabwe. You are absolutely right: while European and American companies are getting rich, thousands of people are dying every day in Africa. I congratulate you for your courage.

-Dr. Stamps, thank you for your appreciation. In fact, I am in contact with a mission in your country, and I intend to go and offer my self in any way I can contribute to alleviate the suffering. I believe that this abuse of corporate power cannot be allowed while people are dying.

-If you come, be sure to visit me, I leave my card here.

Aimsa had learned that this Welsh doctor, the only white in the government of the dictator Mugabe, had fought for the liberation of Zimbabwe and against the racist minority in Southern Rhodesia, had been part of Mugabe's party, whose socialist slogans had linked health to social rights, including land rights. He had four adopted children and alternated his work as a minister in the capital with sporadic duty shifts in rural hospitals.

Aimsa did not trust politicians, but would need alliances.

-It would be nice to be able to speak from the reality of a remote mission hospital in Matabeleland. I know you like to feel the reality of people.

Dr. Stamps smiled between flattered and surprised, and insisted that she call him upon arrival in Zimbabwe.

Aimsa participated in several colloquia with AIDS rights activist movements and sought out Dr. Mann, who still headed the Global AIDS Program. She found him on a break between conferences talking with a Belgian doctor researching the disease in Africa named Peter.

-Dr. Mann, do you remember me? We met in Atlanta a few years ago, and we've written a few letters to each other. I'm Aimsa from UC Berkeley, and I work in AIDS law.

-I do remember you, Miss Aimsa. And in my reply I asked if you would be interested in working at the World Health Organization. Did you get our preliminary statistics on AIDS in Africa?

-Thank you, Dr. Mann. I am honored by your suggestion. But I want to be close to reality. And I want to experience it where the suffering is greatest, where the epidemic is most severe and the resources are fewest: in Africa. I would like to help ensure that access to information, diagnosis, prevention and treatment is equal for everyone in the world.

-That is what we are trying to do, Aimsa. If you go to Africa, please keep me informed of your thoughts and observations. I am in contact with almost every country, trying to facilitate the setting up of national AIDS committees. You are a fighter. We need you in the fight against the epidemic.

Dr. Mann gave her an as yet unpublished report of the epidemic. Cases had already been reported in 130 countries, numbering more than

eighty thousand, although Dr. Mann told her that there were many cases dying anonymously or that doctors or institutions preferred to diagnose with other words or labels, to avoid facing the problem of the epidemic. He told her that according to his estimates there were between five and ten million people already infected in the world, most of them without knowing that they might be so. And that that way and with the few tests and the low use of condoms, the epidemic was exploding and the next decade the world would see the deadliest plague in its history. The Belgian doctor added that in Africa, those figures could be very high and that the infection was transmitted mainly between men and women, and passed on to children.

Aimsa left the conference sad. Statements, speeches, hours of words, spotlights, applause and papers. While thousands of people suffered anonymously in their homes, the real heroes of AIDS, the ones who would never catch a plane, write a word, receive an applause or be even near a treatment. She sensed the image of thousands of men, women and children suffering, and felt, with anger and pain, the deep desire to be close to them. Upon returning to Berkeley, she would write to Father Patxi to at least spend a few months accompanying those people and better understanding their tragedy, their needs and the injustice.

That night she decided to go with some acquaintances, AIDS activists in London, to an Irish pub with live Celtic music and try to forget about it by smiling at life and looking into other people's eyes in the same vibration as her soul. She even tried a lager beer, but found it not at all pleasantly bitter. She did not feel that longed-for vibration in two gazes that meet and enter into magical harmony. Her loneliness was beginning to hurt.

XL. Allies against terror. South Africa, 1988

HAKA DROVE ON IN his FJ40 to Johannesburg. He thought the more unnoticed he went, the better. He changed his identity now to that of a French tourist. He forged an international driver's license and put the name Yves Gotier on it. As he drove, he made a mental sketch of the situation:

Eighty-nine girls and fifty-nine boys, aged seven to sixteen, mostly AIDS orphans, had been abducted from their families, lured with education plans and varying amounts of money. Four abductors (S1-S5), between 5'10" and 5'11", dressed in fancy clothes and watches or glasses, and driving two 1978 model Datsun 1200s, one of them registration number BKR 487 L, had paid a total of about US\$30,000 for all these children and had been taking them to South Africa over the past two years, the last dates being September 6, September 22, October 10 and November 3, 1988, apparently bound for Johannesburg. They used documents, possibly fake, under the names Jason Mathebula, Joseph Mabuza, Bheki Shabangu and Dumisani Sibañoni. The children's passports were fake and they used them repeatedly for all of them. Jason may have been the leader of this group, wore a gold watch, possibly a rolex imitation, had a scar on one eyelid, was on cocaine and crack, and appeared to already have signs of AIDS.

His sister Beatriz had informed him of international agreements and laws in Southern African countries on child trafficking, child labor and violence against children. Although international agreements were clear, especially in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, national legislation was weak and vague, and implementation even poorer. Beatriz was in dialogue with a Portuguese woman, a children's rights advocate at UNICEF's Inocenti Institute in Florence, named Marta, who was working tirelessly to prepare an international convention on children's rights together with protocols against trafficking, violence and abuse of children in war. Beatriz and Marta had given Haka information about child advocacy organizations, contacts in ministries and at Interpol.

On the other hand, Haka had the contacts of Patxi's friend in Pretoria, Father Kevin, and Helen's friend in Johannesburg, Kate. He still needed more information, and especially some way to avoid

attracting too much attention in Soweto, where NoLwasi had seen signs of a place where Ndebele children were being held several years ago.

He stopped at Father Kevin's address in Pretoria. Patxi had written to him and Kevin was aware. He explained to him that there was known to be child prostitution in South Africa and a great deal of permissiveness by the police. Sex with underage girls was coupled with horror at the Xhosa and Zulu belief that sex with virgin girls cured venereal disease. Since AIDS had begun to ravage the area, the practice had increased. Kevin already knew of three girls under the age of twelve with AIDS in the neighborhood he served. At that age they could only get it from sexual abuse. He had tried to ask questions and report it, but the girls would not say anything, out of fear, and no one had supported him, not even the families of these poor girls. He advised him that in order to go unnoticed in Soweto, he should be accompanied by a local person and go with a different type of car and clothing. Tourists did not go to Soweto. He suggested that he should pass for a missionary.

Kevin was beholden of Haka's bravery. He had talked about it with one of the seminarians he supported. His name was John and he was originally from Soweto. John suspected these horrors and did not hesitate to volunteer to help Haka. He would spend two weeks accompanying him in his research in Soweto. He had also spoken to a local parish priest in Soweto named Cornelius, whom he knew would be in a good cause coming from his friend Kevin, and did not ask many questions. They would leave the FJ40 in Pretoria and take an old, small *Morris minor* from a relative of John.

Haka was sure they would not approve of him carrying his Makarov, but he had to do it. He knew something about criminal networks and could not enter their world unarmed. He told them he should get his luggage out of the car and filled a backpack with the essentials, including the Makarov in a false lining of his rucksack that he puckered up for the night.

John was a man of about 25 years old, with a clean look and an expression of calm determination. You could tell that this man "knew where he was going". He had grown up in Soweto. His mother cleaned houses in the white townships of Johannesburg, and his father was a security guard for a beverage company called *Appletiser*. He grew up

wandering the streets of Soweto, going to a school in Afrikaans, imposed by the fascist regime, where he barely managed to understand the language, learn the history of South Africa according to the whites, the Bible and a few mathematical operations. At the age of twelve he began to work loading boxes in the company where his father was a guard and on one occasion one of the white foremen beat him up for stealing, thirsty, a bottle of soft drink. His father had to restrain himself and not defend his own son, lest he lose his job. Gnawed by hatred, rage and shame, his father turned to drinking local beers in the taverns of Soweto and became violent with John's mother. He ended up dying in a late-night brawl. John began to wander the streets of Soweto in sadness. His mother could only come one Sunday every two weeks as she had to look after the white children in the house where she was brought up. John and his three siblings were in the care of their aunt, who alternated a job selling contraband tobacco with selling her body at night.

One day John met a priest named Father Cornelius. He was of Dutch origin and was known in Soweto for his kindness and help to the poorest of the poor. Attached to a humble hut that served as a church on Sundays and an adult school during the days and nights of the week, he had set up a handicraft workshop for the women and a center for knitting sweaters that were sent to cold Holland. This provided income for a soup kitchen for the poorest, a dispensary and school books and supplies. They had also bought a television and a video, and played movies on Fridays, after mass and community talks, filling the place. The apartheid police had already entered the premises three times, beating everyone and destroying everything they found, accusing them of being a "nest of terrorists of the African National Congress".

Inspired by Father Cornelius, John had worked his way up through the parish from altar boy to adult teacher until two years later he discovered his vocation to the priesthood. Cornelius spoke to his friend Kevin in Pretoria, who became his mentor within the Redemptorist order.

They arrived at the parish of Cornelius. It was Friday and the Mass, community talk and movie were beginning. Haka was moved, as he was at St. Joseph's, by the Zulu songs at Mass. He found out later that the community talk began with the hymn Nkosi Sikelele, and almost

everyone with their fist in the air. As they shouted at the end "*Amandhla!*" Haka felt a deep emotion. As a young man he had fought against Francoism but soon after the nationalist struggle became so distorted that he had never really felt part of an entirely just and noble revolution. The struggle against apartheid thrilled every pore of his body. But now he had another mission. He followed the community meeting with a screening of a film shot in Matabeleland, "The Power of One," in which he recognized Matopos and places in Bulawayo.

After the community meeting, Haka explained the situation in detail to Cornelius. He did not want to involve him, but he needed his advice, and he had to be honest in his intentions. He had to look for the kidnapers, the most identifiable being Jason Mathebula, his scar on his eyelid, the Datsun 1200 with license plate number BKR 487 L and his link to drugs. He intended to investigate what had become of that "Ndebele children's prison" that NoLwasi had described to him. Cornelius' advice was to pose as a priest linked to a drug prevention organization. He had several boys in his youth group, whom he was trying to get clean. John proposed that he would talk to them and ask about the Ron that NoLwasi had mentioned and the Jason and the others. He had to do it without arousing suspicion.

During the following week, Haka studied several books on drug addiction as well as the catechism and about thirty Bible quotations related to temptation, love and forgiveness. Kevin introduced "Father Jesus" to the group of young people, among whom were several addicts. After Haka's talk, convincing, John, asked some of the boys if they knew a Jason Mathebula as a sister of his - in the broad African sense of "sister" - had been looking for him, with news of their mother. It was a bluff, but they could always say they were simply someone else's transmitter, without them knowing.

No one in the group said anything. But within the hour one of the guys approached John and told him that he knew who Jason was but that it was best to stay away from him. If he found out they were trying to get unhooked from the drug, he would beat them up and inject them with a dose to get them back to his "clientele". John told him that he understood, but that he could go to him and give him the message from his family. Maybe he could even convince him to stop dealing drugs, which was causing so much harm among the youth of Soweto. The boy

told him which house they were in and where they were selling the drugs, but warned him that if he found out that he had said so, he would not live long. John assured him that he would say that Jason's so-called sister gave them the address.

Haka told John that it was better for him to go alone. He had a hard time convincing him. Haka knew how to hide, spy and make quick decisions. He waited until the third night, when there was a new moon. He painted his face with black shoe polish, and put on a hooded sweater and dark glasses. The rest of the outfit imitated a misfit rapper. He carried his backpack with flashlight, camera, tape recorder and, in the hidden, padded bottom, the Makarov.

He arrived at the place where Jason was supposed to be living or dealing. He saw the Datsun with license plate BKM 487 L parked in a driveway. He checked that there were lights on. He took a picture of the car, with high-sensitivity film, so as not to use the flash. He needed to get close to the house without being spotted. He circled the entire large block of houses and decided to approach from the side facing a vacant lot. He reached the back window. He carefully glimpsed that the Jason with the scar and Chanel glasses, wearing only long pants and a naked torso, was lying in an armchair in front of a table with beer bottles and white powdered papers. I could tell Jason was sick, thin, with rough, fair skin. There were two other men in the room, wearing dark glasses and sitting in other armchairs. Jason was talking to them with a demanding attitude. Haka thought the noise from the camera might keep him awake. Instead, he decided to leave the tape recorder on the window sill. The batteries and tape would last an hour. In the meantime he had to stand guard in another, safer place. He went out through the open field and advanced to a corner where he could see the entrance to the house.

At that moment he saw John approaching from the other side of the street. When he got near, he told him that he should not have come, that he was taking a great risk. John told him that he was as committed as Haka was to uncovering that barbarity. Haka told him about the plan of the tape recorder and a few minutes later they saw a man come out of the house with three girls of about twelve to fifteen years of age. Haka believed that one of them was Buhleve Nkosi. They got into the Datsun and drove down the street. John told Haka that he had his car a

block away, he would run for the car and try to follow the Datsun. Haka gave him the camera and told him that he would wait to retrieve the recorder and see if there was any other movement in the house. In the remaining forty-five minutes he only saw two men knock on the door and talk for a few minutes outside and leave. They were probably buying drugs. When an hour had passed, he approached with great stealth. This time he was carrying the Makarov with him just in case. He was able to grab the tape recorder before it made the click at the end of the tape. He crept out and made a big detour to walk back an hour into the Soweto night, towards Cornelius parish.

When he arrived, he saw that John's car was there. It was after midnight. Cornelius and John were waiting for him with a faint candle. He knocked on the door and Cornelius opened it:

-Thank God you are safe.

-This has only just begun, Cornelius. Tell us John, what did you see?

-Another car, a Toyota *Corolla*, took these girls to a house on the outskirts of Soweto. I'm afraid, Haka, it is a brothel, just as we feared. I took some photos of when they left and entered the house. Carefully followed the Datsun again, which went to another address in Soweto where the men came out and they seem to have stayed there. And you, did you see anything else? Did you recover the tape recorder?

-Just some drug addicts who bought drugs at the door. Here is the recorder.

The three set out to listen to the recording. During the hour-long recording there were moments of silence, parts of the conversation in English and most of it in Zulu. John and Cornelius were translating for him, although Haka already understood quite a bit because of his similarity to Ndebele.

In foul and aggressive language, they talked about sex, drugs and gang fights, score settling and drug money. It got to the point where they seemed to be talking about the boys; "*bafana*". and the girls "*bakasana*". They were talking about different plans. Of the girls, it was clear that they were being taken to a certain Dasy. Jason said they should give them drugs to keep them calm and docile, so they would control them better. He told the other two men to ask such Dasy for five

hundred rands per girl per month or they would bust the place. From the boys, the language was more cryptic. They understood that Ron had it all arranged and that they were going to get a lot of money from the "New Dawn Clinic". In addition, they would be treating Jason there. Haka could not understand what the business could be. There was no other information of interest on the tape. He put it away labeled Soweto-1 and took the reel out of the camera: they needed to develop it as soon as possible.

Haka's fists were clenched in rage, his eyes red with terror. On the verge of tears of horror, he said:

-I can't sleep thinking that these girls are being prostituted. I have to do something. I don't mind risking my life.

John responded:

-We have to think carefully. That brothel is just one of many that this mafia controls. And maybe this gang is just one group of a wider network. I think we should strike the blow in the most intelligent and precise way, and at the best time, allied with the police.

-I don't know. If we notify the police, if they're involved, maybe they'll blow the whistle, dismantle the place and come after us.

-We'll be talking to Helen's friend Kate in Johannesburg this evening. We need secure contacts in the press and the police. John, will you come with me? Cornelius, you'd better stay out of this. You're doing important work here.

-All right. Measure your steps with intelligence, Haka. Try to avoid violence. You also have a lot at stake and an important mission.

John and Haka set off for Johannesburg, to the address Helen had given him from Kate. It was two o'clock in the morning, the apartheid police could stop them at any time. It was illegal in apartheid South Africa to move at that hour. They dressed as priests and would say that they were assisting a parishioner in his last rites.

They arrived at Kate's house and asked her out of bed, telling her through the door that they were coming from Helen in Bulawayo and it was urgent. Kate was a white woman from South Africa, in her mid-fifties, somewhat overweight and with a look of great tenderness.

Haka explained what had happened, and conveyed the urgency of doing something that night. About the boys, he would follow up on that clinic.

-But Haka, child prostitution and violence against children in this country happens every day, every night. Do you know how many rapes of girls there are every night in this country? At least a hundred. And they are never reported.

-I know. But we know these ones. Something has to be done.

-I assure you, if you report to the police, they will not do anything as long as they are Bantus, as they say, and even less if they are illegal immigrants. And what's more, if you come across bribed police, they will tip them off and you will end up on the side of the road. I know of several cases.

Haka remained thoughtful for a few minutes.

-Kate, I need us to write an article on the girl trafficking scandal, with photos and the address of one of the brothels where they end up. That story needs to go to the press and the South African police. We need to know key contacts who would not ignore the report. We will also send it to Interpol, international press agencies, the Innocenti Institute in Florence, the African Union, the European Commission and the United Nations. We have contacts in all of them. But we have neither time nor full confidence that they would move or that they would do so without raising suspicions or tip-offs in the criminal network and we would lose track of them.

Haka had developed a strategy and was drawing it on a piece of paper. They needed roles for each other and a clear timetable:

- You should know John, Kate, that we are taking a risk: you have time to stay out of it.

-Haka, we are as committed as you are and grateful for your strength and leadership. Kate said.

-With you to the end. This is religion in action. Brave and smart. John said.

-Well, friends. So far we know this, the three of us and Cornelius. Plus NoLwasi and Patxi in Saint Joseph, and Helen in Bulawayo. They should receive the report as well, and a daily letter of our activity. This will be your role, Kate. You will keep the information with codes for

each of our names. You must keep everything confidential - and make sure our team in Matabeleland does - until Plan B or the end of Plan A.

-Haka, can you explain the next steps of Plan A?

-Plan A depends on the support of the African National Congress. They already have preliminary information and from here you, John, and I will go to speak with the contact point in Soweto. If they agree, we will go with them to seize Jason and take him to one of their shelters. We need to reveal the plot and where the girls are. When we know, we hope to have the logistics of the National Congress to go simultaneously to each location and free the girls. Going to one before the others will unmask us and we may lose the trail and part of the girls.

-What about Plan B?

-We send the reports to the press, the police and outside contacts. I hope we shouldn't do that because I think that will be slower than what we need.

-Let's try Plan A as soon as possible, there are girls at risk every minute that passes. And we don't know what's happening with the boys.

-John, we are going to Soweto. Hopefully the National Congress contact will support us. Kate, we will inform you at 12 midnight by a call in which we will simply say, "good evening, I got home safely." If at 3 a.m. you have not heard back, you trigger Plan B.

-Amandhla.

John escorted Haka to the contact address of the African National Congress. He asked for the "red zebra" and after a while they opened the door and went into a garage at the back of a house. There stood a man of medium height, about 40 years old; gray hair and beard, dressed in blue mechanic's overalls. Haka told him they had little time. During that night they had to disclose a horrible child trafficking cartel, and they didn't trust the apartheid police. The man listened speechless to Haka's story.

-Haka. Call me Jack. This is a hideous story. We need to do something. Count on the help of the African National Congress. Give me five minutes, I need to activate some contact lines to help us, and come out with you. Do you have a car?

-Yes. We need to apprehend one of the leaders, if he is home alone, and get the information from him about the kidnapping centers,

prostitution and God knows what else. I need a safe house to take him to while we unmask the network.

John dropped Haka and Jack off a block away from Jason's house and would stay about a hundred yards away with the lights off, prepared to rush past the house when the door to Jason's house opened. If he didn't come out in 10 minutes, he would have to activate plan B urgently, adding a call to the police.

Jack suggested and brought masks and black hoodies for everyone. He saw the white Datsun outside, approached the house and they checked through the back window that Jason was alone. They knocked on the door with their left hand, and at Haka's suggestion, Jack said in Zulu " *Baba, ngiyafuna cookies.*" (father, I want cookies –slang name for crack pills-). Jack showed Haka that he was armed and Haka had also pulled out his loaded Makarov from the false lining of the backpack. As Jason opened up, Haka pushed him into the house and pointed the gun at him. He was weak and fell to the ground. Haka had prepared himself many years for such acts without actually doing it, thinking that the struggle against Franco's dictatorship had lost its meaning after the democratic transition. Now he had the faces of those children in his mind and felt all the strength in the world. While Jack was checking the house, Haka told him:

-Jason, we know who you are. We know all the children you have kidnapped in Matabeleland. Don't lift a finger or we will end your life, don't you dare" said Haka.

Jack added, in Zulu:

-You are the shame of our people. While many of us risk our lives for a free and just future, you to take away the future and the lives of many children, with bribes to the white police.

Jason looked at the ground and waited for his cronies to arrive and get him out of the situation. All he could think of was terrible revenge.

Jack tied his hands, and gagged Jason with duct tape. He sat him at the table. They knew that the other mobsters or drug addicts could come in at any time. Haka opened the door and saw that there was no one outside, except a hundred yards to the right John's Morris minor. He signaled him with the flashlight. He saw the keys to the Datsun, a notebook, a wallet and a bag of cookies and the crack cocaine mixture

Jason was addicted to. He took everything and stuffed it into his backpack, where he also carried his tape recorder.

Jack said to Jason:

-We're going out and you're getting into a car. Don't even think about resisting or doing anything else because it will be the last thing you do.

It was the key moment. They had calculated ten steps and fifteen seconds. As John approached with the car, they got out with Jason holding his arm and Jack pointing at him, under his sweatshirt, while Haka opened the back door of the car. They pushed him inside and sat on either side of Jason.

John, who had barely slowed the pace of the car, accelerated. He drove out of Soweto, about ten kilometers. Jack had told him the initial address.

Haka was buying time and said to Jason:

-Listen to me Jason: I have all the information about the children you have kidnapped by deceiving them and their families, taking advantage of the AIDS tragedy. You are going to tell me where these children are. And we will check it out.

They headed for the African National Congress shelter. At 12 p.m., they called Kate:

-Good evening. I got home safely.

Plan A was still underway.

XLI. Passion for health. Matabeleland, 1989

JONAY WAS very happy in Saint Joseph. His vocation to care for the sick and prevent disease in the people of that area tuened into a great challenge. He had been learning Ndebele and communicated all the time in that language, increasing his empathy with patients and families. He had been organizing the practice, learning the Ministry's treatment protocols and developing a fairly complete pharmacy. Jonay had obtained funds from Caritas Germany and was able to set up the abdominal and obstetrical ultrasound, powered by a car battery. With another project he was building a small laboratory with mirror microscopes, manual centrifuge, stains, some serology tests, including AIDS, and the basic techniques of hematology, search for parasites and measure urea and glucose. He had many more plans, as soon as he could get electricity to Saint Joseph. There were only five kilometers left, about a hundred poles. He had also been reconstructing the operating room and was already regularly and safely performing minor surgery such as bone tractions, draining abscesses and cysts, biopsies of different tissues that he sent to Bulawayo, skin grafts with a dermatome and various cures.

But above all, he felt safe because he could, even with such limited means, perform cesarean sections and other emergency surgeries such as trephines for cranial hematomas, chest tubes for pneumothorax, pleural and pericardial drains for effusions that choked the heart or lungs, paracentesis for ascites, complicated inguinal hernias, amputations for gangrene due to snake bites or severe accidents. He had even performed bowel resections or removed the uterus for tumors, perforations or severe infections. In the wards he often had to set up a small intensive care corner with simple methods such as serums in the central veins measuring the venous pressure of the heart that he had learned in Tenerife, oxygen (they had an oxygen cylinder for very serious cases) and a box ("the black box", the locals began to call it) with means to intubate and revive breathing, and drugs to resuscitate the heart, together with the cardiac massage that Jonay had already done half a dozen times, without success. He sometimes felt a great frustration for not having the means he had known in his studies and knew could save lives that were slipping away, like fine sand between his fingers; between the giant cracks of such an unequal world. But he

kept striving to try to do his best, with the limited means he had. J Gray's "health aid worker's manual" guided him in the steps of operations, in preparing and administering anesthetics, in doing sandbag tractions for fractures, in diagnosing with the few means he had.

He planned to do something that the manual, a guide for internationalist doctors like Fernando, recommended: a community health study: for a month, he used the mornings in the office to analyze all the records of the last two years: where the patients came from, what kind of ailments, their ages, sex and conditions. The births, about ten a month, the weights of the newborns (which he almost predicted with his ultrasound scanner), the types of operations, etc. But the most important part of the health status study was the survey in the communities.

He wanted to know more about the population census, as the last official one had been taken five years ago. He also wanted to know the birth and death rates, as he suspected that many children were born at home and many people died at home without attending the hospital. Jonay also sought to discern what their way of life was like, their customs, how many people lived in each *kraal*, how was their access to water, what they ate and how they preserved and cooked their food. It was also important to know what sanitation was like, if there were latrines and what they were like, what hygiene surrounded the *kraal*, if there was stagnant water, mosquitoes or other disease vectors. If children went to school, what kind of work men and women did. It was essential to know what kind of diseases they had suffered and if and how they consulted and treated them. It was also essential to know how they consulted and used traditional medicine. Jonay had to find out what proportion of the children and women were vaccinated, how many used mosquito nets to prevent malaria and what their nutritional status was in general and some vitamins in particular. He also needed to know the status of some asymptomatic conditions such as anemia, intestinal parasites, or the presence of malaria or the AIDS virus in the blood. He was intrigued to know which sick people remained at home, either because they were wary of treatment at the mission or because they were too weak to move around, and what he could do for them. He

suspected that many sick people, especially those with AIDS, stayed at home.

Before starting, he spent two full days living with a family and acting as an "invisible shadow" to a mother. He wanted to feel how they lived. He needed that minimal empathy before thinking about how he could do the survey. A sister of a patient, who was visiting him at the mission, agreed to have him as a "distinguished invisible guest". Her name was Thabani ("let us rejoice") and she lived alone with three children, her husband coming only at Christmas from Egoli. Jonay checked that the day started around five o'clock, well before dawn. She would clean the area around the house, take out the goats and chickens, feed them, put water on to boil, get the children up, start grinding the maize in the big African mortar, prepare the *sadza* with some vegetables, and help the children put on their uniforms and get their notebooks ready to go on their own, in that case five kilometers, walking and running, barefoot, to school. Then Thabani would go, with a small child on her back, and pregnant, to the work the fields. She had to protect the crops after the rains with a wave and a stone to scare away the birds, complete some sowing, remove weeds, and pick some vegetables. Then she would go to fetch water, three kilometers away, and carry it in a large dry gourd on her head. She was lucky, because on that same trip she could also collect some firewood from dry acacia branches. Every so often she breast-fed the baby. On the way back she prepared more food, again *sadza*, washed the children's dirty clothes, saving as much water as possible and, when the elder children were back from school, she tried to understand and help them, with little success, with their homework. At sunset, with the help of her seven-year-old son, they brought the goats to the corral, and with her five-year-old daughter, they swept again the *kraal* grounds. They had dinner and the mother told some stories in front of the fire, of other times and of their ancestors, and they sang together some songs. Jonay ended up totally exhausted from the day's work. He would never have felt the same kind of empathy and respect for women that he felt thereafter, without sharing those days.

He asked NoLwasi and Anwele to help him do that study. Anwele had improved incredibly and had stayed in Saint Joseph where she organized talks about AIDS, encouraged couples to get tested and gave

them the best advice. She also organized campaigns to promote the use of condoms, with posters, songs, plays and talks, under a slogan with which Patxi, to the bishop's despair, had collaborated: "*show your true love to your partner: use a condom if you have not yet taken the test*".

They first made a map of the area covered by the Saint Joseph mission: it was about 80 kilometers from east to west and about sixty kilometers from north to south. They drew the towns, the roads and trails, the rivers, the crops, the wells, the poles of the projected power line. They would have to complete the map every day.

They knew that they could not cover the entire area, as they estimated about five thousand *kraal* scattered throughout the area, sometimes concentrated around crossroads. Jonay calculated, with the help of the manual, that to get a good estimate of the information he needed to obtain, they would need to visit at least five hundred *kraal*. That meant, if they divided the work, about one hundred and seventy each, and if they managed to do three each every afternoon, it would take three months if they rested on Saturdays and Sundays. They divided the *kraal* into groups of ten and gave them numbers, choosing one at random from each group. They would study the chosen *kraal* in more detail and ask them to bring them information, at least demographic, from neighboring *kraals*. It was intense work, in addition to continuing to take care of the sick in the hospital and be ready for emergencies. But Jonay knew that it was very important to design a good health promotion plan for the people of the areas, which would change little by staying in the hospital waiting for the sick to come, possibly only some of them.

Anwele and NoLwasi enthusiastically agreed to help him. Jonay taught them how to examine the spleen, take blood pressure, measure nutrition by arm circumference, store stool and urine samples, or do a thick drop for malaria, in addition to the AIDS test that Anwele taught them. Every morning at breakfast they planned the four hours of the afternoon. Then Jonay would go through the consultation and the wards, Anwele would do his AIDS activities and NoLwasi would attend to some people in the hospital or in her room, in Patxi's house, in her traditional way. Patxi and NoLwasi were developing a bond so deep that it radiated light all around them.

In the afternoons, they would start their tour of the *kraal* in the mission pick-up truck. Sometimes Patxi accompanied them. They knew something about Haka from Helen's letters and her plan against the child trafficking mafias.

They prepared questionnaires that they copied with a mission cyclostile that they also used for the AIDS campaign. The forms asked information about the people in the *kraal*, their relationships, ages, sex, deaths and births in the last year. They also noted crops, livestock, latrines, water sources and ways of cooking. They went on to ask about the level of education and literacy of elders and schooling of children, income in Zimbabwe dollars, their purchases, and the most important felt needs. In terms of illness the survey included questions of what ailments they had suffered, what they attributed them to, what they did to seek relief and how much time and money that care had cost them. They then explored the children's weight and height, the degree of nutrition by arm circumference, whether they had signs of goiter or vitamin deficiencies, explored the spleen in children and blood pressure in the elderly, and drew samples in laboratory tubes of urine and stool, on glass plates of blood drops, and in AIDS diagnostic kits. Everything was anonymous, by number codes, unless people wanted to know the result, talk about it calmly in Saint Joseph and seek treatment.

After each questionnaire in the *kraal* chosen at random, they left them a sheet of paper for the data, only of the people, ages, births and deaths, of the neighboring *kraals*. And then, they sat down to chat without questions, just listening as the people, the families, explained their lives, their desires, their sadnesses or fears, their hopes, their joys. In the face of their sadness and fears, they were asked what they would most like. Anwele suggested that in *kraals* where there were people sick with AIDS, they should ask the family members and the sick person separately, as fear of the disease could bias the shared questions.

Jonay had felt the strength of caring for the health of the neediest and those with few resources. This meant sometimes anger for injustice, frustration for need, doubts for loneliness, but above all, a deep satisfaction for the smiles and gratitude of those humble people, he used to say: "the best salary in the world". Jonay felt the privilege of sharing such passion with those two women as wonderful in courage as in knowledge, sensitivity, tolerance to mix cultures and concepts for

having the pores of love wide open for their ineffable courage. He was discovering primary health, participatory, sensitive to the causes, feelings and desires of those with whom Jonay wanted so much to share. Not helping. Sharing. He thought that the one who thinks he "helps" establishes a hierarchy of capacities, either of having or of knowing, or of both, and often imposes his or her knowledge. Such relations undermined not only the dignity of those "helped", but the truth of a "different knowledge" that could only be enriched by sharing with humility to learn, and of a "different having" that could only be enriched by sharing with responsibility for justice. He then understood the spirit of Alma-Ata that Fernando told him years ago and that inspired him, even without knowing the depth of its ethics and beauty that he now felt, to pour his heart into that profession that he began to realize went far beyond Dr. Delgado, but also beyond the white coat, the phonendo or scalpel, and beyond, far beyond the hospital or health center. The "fortress" of medical feudalism that Alma-Ata and justice and democracy and, above all, love, questioned, and challenged to be diluted in the true vocation for health. Without barriers or hierarchies. With brave tenderness.

After those fascinating afternoons of research, they would return to Saint Joseph where Rose would sometimes wait for Jonay with a complicated case. To compensate, he started operating and pulling teeth on weekends. She taught Anwele, who was taking her nursing school exams in Brunapeg with Ndlovu's help, to help him with consultations, treatments, ultrasounds, deliveries and operations. Rose could then go with her family to Bulawayo.

When those intense, grueling, but fascinating three months had passed, they convened the entire community at St. Joseph's Church. Before his departure after the child kidnappers, Haka had rebuilt the zinc roof, with a large Zulu roof of dried hard thatch, and had extended it outward with porches supported on logs left over from the power line, now down to only thirty logs.

About a thousand people came, elderly, men, women, children, farmers and merchants, teachers, policemen and other district officials, the front rows were set up for the sick, some in wheelchairs, others in makeshift hammocks, others in beds because they could not get up. Ndlovu came from Brunapeg with Johanna, with ten patients

representing the others and three women from the women's home awaiting delivery. Representatives of youth, women, children, the elderly, farmers, other trades, people with AIDS, whom Anwele had already encouraged to fight the fight bravely, were elected. The regional health delegate from Bulawayo, the district member of parliament from Harare, the *induna*, local chiefs, and many of the *nyanga*, whom NoLwasi had encouraged to come, came as well. Father Pius also came, but the bishop "was very busy" preparing for the visit of the Pope, arriving to Zimbabwe in a few months.

By then Patxi's activities promoting condoms, talking about social politics, sharing with other religions, with a null record of baptisms, communions or extremeunctions, and of his love and cohabitation with that local healer were obvious. The bishop had tried to expel him from the Church several times, with letters to Rome, but Father Pius had encouraged, without Patxi's knowledge, letters of support from the whole district to "*Sindisabantu*". The Pope, to the bishop's astonishment, had replied that he would speak personally with that wayward priest during his visit to the country.

That wonderful community forum began with the African hymn *Nkosi Sikelele*. That song under that place so beautiful in its natural simplicity, and intoned by those thousand souls and their deep Zulu voices mmmm mmmm made Jonay vibrate with emotion. Patxi was also excited, holding NoLwasi's hand while with his eyes closed he sang that hymn of African unity and gratitude to the creator. Anwele, with her little Nothando, playing with Joseph and Thandiwe, sang loudly. Then a large group of school children whom Anwele had encouraged, sang the song of Philip Latuya, the singer with AIDS who had bravely stood Uganda up against AIDS even as his legs, already consumed by the disease, made every step a heroic one. "Today Is Me, Tomorrow Someone Else". The twelve *nyanga* from the district and neighboring districts performed a dance so intense that it brought them to the brink of trance, to invoke the knowledge and support of the spirits, the *amakhosi*.

Patxi spoke only a few words to tell them that *Mkhulumkhulu* was among them, closer than ever, and excited to see their children united in helping each other to enjoy as joyfully as possible, in health, the gift

of life. He asked Jonay to tell them all what they had found after talking to so many people over the past few months.

Jonay had rehearsed, with the help of Anwele and NoLwasi, the presentation of that study in Ndebele. He knew he could not use numbers or percentages because many would not understand him, so he prepared sacks of rice with different fill ratios to indicate the magnitude of the problems. He also knew that he could not use strange names of diseases but the symptoms they caused, even with their local meanings, which Anwele would explain. On how to prevent those problems, NoLwasi and Anwele would explain ways to do so, from the harmony of families and communities, to ways to protect themselves from health damage and the symptoms that should make them think it was good to go to Saint Joseph Brunapeg. Anwele would later explain the more specific findings on AIDS. Some of the elders surveyed would also participate by explaining conditions such as crops, livestock, water, firewood, latrines, the cost of school uniforms, medicines, seeds, farming tools, clothing and transportation.

-*Omkhulu, Ogogo, Obaba, Omama, Odade, Obudi, Abantwana* (Grandfathers, grandmothers, fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, children).

Jonay explained, in those symbolic ways, that in that southeastern part of the *Bulililamangwe* district, "where the leopards cry," there lived about seventy-two thousand people: he explained this by repeating seven times the sign of his two open hands, as many times as there were people in the Church in that first health forum. Of these, he continued with sacks, one-third were children of school age or younger, and only one-tenth were elderly (*mkhlulu, ugogo*). Of the adults, three out of four were women, for there were about ten thousand young people in Egoli. About two thousand children had been born in the last year, and two thousand one hundred people had died, more than half of them people with the "disease-that-does-not-cure," which they should not be afraid to call AIDS, more than three deaths every day. The other half of the deaths had been children or the elderly, and twenty women had also died during pregnancy or childbirth. Only one in seven of the deceased had died in the hospital in Saint Joseph or Brunapeg, and that proportion was even much lower for AIDS patients, and only one in five deliveries had been attended in Saint Joseph or Brunapeg.

He then explained that one in five children, even in the dry season, had malaria in their blood: NoLwasi clarified this with the local concept of the "heat of the earth". He also explained that three out of four children had some parasite in the intestine that ate part of the food, and that half of the children were not well nourished or did not have enough "blood" to be strong and active. NoLwasi also explained that concept in Ndebele and Kalanga logic. Jonay went on to explain that a quarter of the elders had high blood pressure. NoLwasi also explained it as thunder sickness, as the headache that mostly in the absence of treatment, resembled thunder in their temples. They had found out that one in twenty adults suffered from diabetes, some of them with symptoms of extreme weakness similar to AIDS. He also explained other proportions such as the lack of some vitamins, the proportion of some skin infections, the frequency with which children got lung disease or diarrhea, or the lack of strength in adults due to "tired hearts".

NoLwasi explained what they had seen of people who felt sad, fearful of life or the opinion of ancestors, those who slept badly, those who felt lonely, those who needed to give or receive more love and those who cried without knowing why. She also explained how many people lived in disharmony with their parents, with their partners, with their children, and how many people usually looked at the stars, prized the sunrise or sunset, sang or danced in groups, or told or listened to stories at nightfall. All those signs of social harmony, not so appreciated by white medicine, were essential to understand the spiritual dimension of the disease. Jonay felt that they were much closer to understanding the true causes of the illness.

Some elders then explained how many *kraal* grew corn, millet, sorghum, chomolia, other vegetables, how many *kraals* had mango, papaya or guayava trees and how many had chickens or goats. They also explained how many cooked with firewood inside the *kraal*, how many outside, as there were no other ways to cook. They explained how far away the houses had access to water, and how many had well-maintained latrines around the household.

At the end, Anwele explained what was happening with AIDS. She took the opportunity to recall how it was transmitted and how it was prevented. Then she shared the somber news about the disease among them: From the tests they had done, they estimated that one third of

the adults and one in ten children had the infection. That was more than ten thousand people. Ten times as many as were at that massive gathering. There was a deep and grave silence among all those listening, a kind of icy coldness ran through the bodies of many of them.

That's when she played a game: she asked everyone to close their eyes. Anwele and the young people who were helping her with the AIDS talks gave every third adult a light slap on the back. When they had finished, she asked everyone to open their eyes. She told them that those who had received the pat on the back would act as if they were infected in the following game: The elders and children would sit around, while the adults would stand in the center of the large forum. They would walk around in circles and choose one or two adults, by mutual attraction, to hold hands, as if in an imagined sexual relationship. Those who were supposedly infected would shake hands with a bent middle finger, so that the one receiving the greeting would notice the "infected" relationship.

All adults played the game in amusement. When they had finished, everyone sat down. There were many more women than men, so the men had more diverse relationships. Anwele asked for a show of hands of those who, in the game, started out, by the pat on the back, infected. About two hundred people raised their hands. There was no longer so much laughter. She then asked how many of those had been infected again during the game: about sixty people indicated so. Then he asked how many had been infected during the game, not before: one hundred and twenty people raised their hands. She asked finally, how many before or during the game, were, imagined to be infected: more than three hundred people raised their hands. The faces were no longer laughing. Anwele said:

-This is just a game. But the reality of our people is like this. Without knowing it, we are allowing this horrible evil to take our lives. Without knowing what our test is like, that you should come and take the mission if you really love your partners, you are potentially infected, putting your life and the lives of others at risk.

Anwele continued the description of what they had found. About a thousand people already had symptoms of the AIDS disease. And of them three hundred could not get out of bed because of their extreme

weakness. Only one in five were in the hospitals of Brunapeg or Saint Joseph. The rest were dying at home. Almost all of them had been put in a separate hut. And two out of three of the seriously ill had continuous diarrhea. Anwele said she found many people in the greatest imaginable suffering: alone, with their relatives several steps away, dirty and smelly from diarrhea that they did not have the strength to clean up, nor did their relatives, gripped by fear, have the will to care for them. And with pains in every muscle, dry and painful mouth due to sores, cough and lack of strength to breathe, pains in ganglions or lesions scattered throughout the body and, above all, no one to hold their hands in those terrible and painful last steps through life.

Jonay remained thoughtful. On the one hand, he saw Anwele, infected and a few months ago terminally ill by a disseminated tuberculosis, recovered and full of strength, speaking with such clarity and courage. On the other hand, he thought of those sick people that he could not help from the mission because most of them either could not or preferred not to go. And he felt almost as his own the pain of loneliness, the "loneliness syndrome". He remembered that diagnosis with Fernando, among the elderly of Vallehermoso, in his beloved Gomera. He had to do something.

They all ended up saying that with everything they knew, they would make a plan to improve everyone's health, and they needed ideas from all the people, in writing or spoken to the delegates of each ten *kraal*, by the teachers in the schools or directly in a box of health letters that they put in front of the health center.

They prepared a plan to improve food, water, reduce fumes in the home, improve hygiene, detect hypertensive and diabetic patients, treat malaria and parasites, encourage pregnant women to go to the hospitals a few days before the due date, for serious patients to arrive on time, for children to receive vaccinations, for adults to be tested for AIDS, better in pairs, for the sick to receive care, at home or in the hospital. They set up a health committee with Rose, NoLwasi and several *nyangas*, Anwele and several brave HIV-positive people, with some teachers and elders, women and men, young people, even school children. Jonay could not wait to relieve the terrible suffering of those people in loneliness, filth, pain and hopelessness. In some way he did

not understand, he thought that tolerating such suffering perpetuated the plague among the people.

At night he thought that if they taught the families how to clean the very weak AIDS patients with soap and water and on hard plastic to wash them without lifting them, it would keep them clean and odorless, without flies, without that deep indignity and extreme pain of abandonment in filth. Then they could encourage the families to take better care of them, to tuck them in, to be there for them. They followed the palliative care that Jonay encouraged for dry mouth with serums and moistened gauze, analgesics for pain, sedatives for insomnia or antihistamines for itching, among others. Getting a kit with the plastic, soap, and instructions to keep them clean and dry while assuring them that it was safe would alleviate a lot of suffering. He made a project for the 1,000 AIDS patients in the district who, if nothing was done, would end up helpless in their huts. The project cost about ten thousand dollars, and the plastics, once cleaned and disinfected in bleach, could be reused.

As it happened, a fellow student had written to Jonay asking if he could come with another classmate to take blood samples to see what kind of virus was affecting the people in Matabeleland. Jonay calculated that the two of them and their expenses, not counting the sophisticated techniques for differentiating virus subtypes, would cost far more than they needed for their palliative care project. He responded to that doctor by saying:

Dear Andrés,

I welcome your interest in helping to fight the pain caused by this terrible epidemic here in Zimbabwe.

We have studied the situation of needs in the area, which I am enclosing in an attached summary. As you can see, the agony of hundreds of sick people is terrible. We need the basics: about five dollars per AIDS patient in the area. With this we will be able to keep them clean and accompanied, increasing their dignity and their relief in these last moments of their lives, far from access to any kind of treatment in these lands of poverty, forgotten by the world.

So please consider sending the money you were going to spend on your travels and studying the type of virus, because believe me, that is not the priority now. There is immense suffering and you can help us to alleviate it, even if it is not by extending lives. Hopefully that will come someday.

*I look forward to hearing from you,
Jonay*

Jonay never got an answer.

XLII. Love without prejudice. Bulawayo, 1989

ON THAT NIGHT of the magic water, Patxi and NoLwasi stayed in each other's arms for a long time under the southern cross of the Matabaeleland sky. They had embraced a year ago in Sanzukwi, and there was something magical between them. They looked for occasions to feel each other's presence. NoLwasi had stayed seasons in Saint Joseph, first for Anwele's illness and then for the health study and the big health forum in Saint Joseph. Joseph and Thandiwe were now six years old, three years older than Anwele's daughter Nothando. The three were inseparable.

NoLwasi saw in Patxi, Sindisabantu, a kind, brave and serene spirit. Patxi's hair was already white and he let it fall in half a mane, which he sometimes fastened with a ribbon on his forehead or a ponytail. He had been growing a beard that was less graying than his silver hair. He had straight, sober features, a strong jaw and dentures, a lanky, curved nose somewhere between Basque and Jewish, an anthropologist friend had told him. His eyes were, like many Beloki, between light brown and green, elongated, almost slanted, with a deep and almost always tender gaze. They were framed by bushy eyebrows and an incipient frown that never bothered him. His forehead already showed some furrows of time. He was fifty-eight years old, about six feet tall, kept strong with his daily walks and jogging almost every evening, with his simple diet of *sadza*, vegetables, fruit and cereals, but above all with a devotion to the beauty of the universe and of human souls that made a light shine in his eyes. As it vibrated in NoLwasi's soul. She felt they were united beyond time and space. Patxi had not had intimate relations since his time in the farmhouse and some sporadic and clandestine ones while he was in the seminary. He had often been attracted to women, but it was never linked to a soul attraction, and it never came to anything meaningful. His sexual need was impossible to quench and in his intimacy he often had to love himself, locked in the absurd cell of his imposed celibacy. He had often talked about it with fellow priests and religious brothers, and most of them felt the same way, but no one was able to confront the hierarchy. He felt, as in many other dimensions of priestly life, that chastity was the amputation of an essential part of man, of an essential channel for

loving and living, of an energy in caresses and dilution of existences, whose condemnation he felt incompatible with Jesus' message of love.

Patxi saw in Siphon, NoLwasi, the brightest light of beauty and courage he had ever felt in his life. NoLwasi was 33 years old, seventeen years younger than Patxi. She was a beautiful woman to Patxi's eyes, but also to many people in Matabeleland, where she was already almost legendary for her powers and bravery, as well as for her beauty. NoLwasi had a face somewhere between mystical and sweet, a soft and deep gaze, an almost imperceptible and constant smile that caressed the souls around her. Her skin was very dark and shiny, her features delicate, her mouth was elongated and her lips thin, more Zulu than Bantu, her nose not too flat, soft, and her eyes crowned those fine features with the light of eternity. They were stretched like Patxi's, as if in addition to the magical union they had been brothers in another life. Her eyelashes were curly and full, framing a deep gaze from her irises dark as night, surrounded by a brilliant white, like that of her shy smile. NoLwasi had dense kalanga hair, which she used to leave a little long and dodging from under the scarf, almost always white, that she wore knotted on her head. She was about six feet tall and had a slender, soft, delicate figure and a gait that Patxi spied and admired in secret. One would say that she floated above the earth, like the sensation he had of a soul more connected to the universe than anchored in the earth, in matter, in space or time. NoLwasi had never had relations with any man. Nor had she ever felt attraction for any, strong enough to want to explore her sexuality, which, in spite of this, pulsed eagerly to be diluted in love.

That embrace lasted an eternity. Between the two of them they had accumulated ninety years, more than a thousand moons, longing for that moment. Their bodies joined as one. They felt every pore of their bodies pulsing and glowing, melting in the warmth of a soul mate so long yearned for, their arms wrapped around each other with a strength and tenderness never before imagined in their lives. They surrounded each other with the warmth of the bravest and most generous love. And they caressed each other with veneration, exploring the bodies so long desired. They noticed that their heartbeats were strong and accelerated, and that their breathing, their movements, and the touch of their cheeks caressing each other in that magical moment that summed up a lifetime

of love. Without speaking, they searched for each other's gazes, which, clouded with emotion, shining with happiness, were fixed in the deepest part of each soul. In that place so long reserved for that feeling, which spoke of the eternal. The union of glances dragged them to the union of their lips in a deep kiss, warm, without fear and without end.

NoLwasi took him by the hand and without speaking, to the source of light and healing that she had known that day with Anwele's tears. There they made love under the moon and the stars as witnesses, listening to the gushing of the water of life, feeling the sound of the wind in the leaves of the acacias and mopanes, intoxicated by the smell of their bodies transpiring the deepest emotions, feeling the taste of their kisses, the beating of their bodies, the dilution of their existences in a union that came from one eternity and was destined to unite them in another.

Patxi and NoLwasi lived together in Saint Joseph, and did not hide their pure love. They poured themselves out in their generosity to others. Patxi continued in the tasks of sharing in Jesus-inspired love with everyone, in helping those most in need, in celebrating births, remembering the deceased, in sharing the tribute to life and love in community masses under the big thatched roof of Haka, lost in his adventure of rescuing the kidnapped children. NoLwasi would see people from the Saint Joseph area as well as those from Sanzukwi and further afield for his wise counsel. In the *kopje* of the creek she still felt her ancestors, Mandhla and Masora, and the wisdom of the ages. She had her scrolls with her life symbols and helped in many mission tasks. With Anwele they worked together on AIDS prevention, talking to young people with women's groups, with men, with the children at school. They made consultations every morning in a room they had prepared in the dispensary, where they encouraged people to take the AIDS test, better in pairs, they revealed it with great tenderness and support, they advised and accompanied everyone.

NoLwasi noticed that Anwele had improved with her healing water. He continued to apply the water to small cuts on her arms. Anwele gained weight, her breathing improved, her skin regained its glow, skin blemishes faded, her face regained strength and shape, her hair grew sturdier, her muscles regained tone, her eyes were alive and her spirit smiled again.

Nothando was also happy with her mother's smile and joy. NoLwasi knew that the healing water had relieved the pain, had chased away the weakness and had defeated the evil force of the plague.

She tried to think how the tears of desire to live, the healing water indicated by the precocious butterfly of the *amacimbi* and the magical dance repeated the times of the fingers of the two hands, turned that liquid into magic. She continued to use it with other AIDS patients who came to see her, who were detected in the test consultation with Anwele, or that Jonay admitted to the dispensary. Also, after meeting many more in the health survey, they began to visit twice a week to the weakest, to teach the use of the plastic sheet (McIntosh) to clean them, keep them warm, accompany them, and with Jonay's medicines and NoLwasi's herbs, to alleviate their symptoms.

One day, NoLwasi explained to Jonay the treatment she was giving. She had not told him before for fear of Jonay's rejection.

-Jonay, I need to talk to you.

-Sure, NoLwasi, tell me.

-What do you think about how Anwele has been improving?

-It's like a miracle. When AIDS is so advanced that tuberculosis invades every corner of the body, it is almost impossible to see the recovery we have seen in Anwele. The tuberculosis treatment may have helped, but there has to be something else. Perhaps her immense will to live. I think in this, as in many other cases, you understand more than I do.

-I have to tell you that I have been giving her, and twelve other people who have been consulting me or we have seen in the test consultation, a treatment.

-Of course, NoLwasi, your plant, the *Sutherlandia*, is useful, it helps a lot, we all know that. And I'm sure your spiritual strength, in ways I don't know, too.

-No. Plants soothe for a while but do not cure. Anwele is different.

-Tell me if you wish, NoLwasi. I also understand that you can keep it as your secret.

-I am telling you this out of the great respect I have for you, for our work together for the health of the people. But I ask you to keep it to yourself.

-You have my word, NoLwasi.

-I can't explain why, but six moons ago, when you examined her and we thought Anwele was saying goodbye to life, I went to see her one of many nights. She told me how much she wanted to live to help others fight this plague. At that moment tears streamed down her face. My spirit asked me to collect those tears of pain and deep desire to live into empty seed shells like these on my necklace. I then asked Rose for a tube like the ones you used to hold her back fluid or for blood tests. I don't understand why, that water led me into the fields and to a kopje with acacia and mopane trees and where there was a small stream. It was getting dark and I remained silent feeling the life force and the advice of our ancestors. At that moment, when I felt my grandfather Mandhla talking to me, whispering in my ear, I looked into the eyes of the wings of a butterfly, of an *amacimbi* that had escaped to the hunt. It was the first butterfly of the rains. It stared at me and led me to the stream, beside a seed husk just like the one that collected Anwele's tears. I felt the message to wipe away the tears. I mixed them with water and dances of union to life came out of me, of gratitude for the wise counsel of the spirits. I repeated this way of mixing the liquid of pain with the purifying water as many times as the fingers of my two hands. I applied this healing water to small cuts in the skin, so that it would bathe the infected blood. I did this for a week, finding that it helped Anwele. Perhaps there are other reasons why Anwele has come back to life, but I think this message from the ancestors is wise and I have been doing it with other sick people.

-Thank you very much for trusting me with your secret, NoLwasi. I will keep it to myself. I can't understand how it helps, but if you think it does, keep doing it. We both try, from our ways of understanding illness, health, life, to alleviate suffering and nourish the hope of living, of loving.

When that day was over, Jonay returned to his inn, the old parish. He could not stop thinking about NoLwasi's magic treatment. He looked for ideas in books on pharmacology, virology, immunology and the aid health worker's manual. Nothing. Would it be magic, witchcraft, were they seeing random effects, placebos? How could a water, so diluted, with possible, even antibodies or even viruses present or highly diluted, have that effect? Wouldn't it be promoting infections by

pandering to NoLwasi? He concluded that after all, people were already infected and it would do them no harm. And he could offer nothing better.

A few months later, Patxi attended the reception of Pope John Paul II, who was arriving in Zimbabwe. The bishop already knew about the "rebellion of St. Joseph", as he called it. He often commented to his acolytes, as Father Pius confided him:

-That Basque priest who neither says real mass, nor baptizes, nor gives extreme unction, nor maintains his chastity and exposes the shame of a union with a local "witch", and who also hands out condoms.

He was scandalized that the Pope had asked to speak to that priest before expelling him from the Church for violating the vows of chastity and obedience. To Patxi's relief, he was not allowed to go to meet the Pope in Harare, but the bishop had no choice but to accept that he attend the meeting with the religious community in the cathedral of Bulawayo. It was September 12, 1988. They were all gathered together and the Pope said a few words.

He spoke to them about his joy and pride in his religious devotion, quoting St. Peter and Leviticus, which Patxi did not identify himself with. He also noted that the speech had been prepared by some seminarians and had been filtered and modified by the bishop and then by the Pope's assistants in the Vatican. What was really authentic about that meeting? He was also annoyed with the expense of the visit, the attire, the luxurious cars and the gold ring. However, Patxi saw in the Pope a tender, penetrating look, vulnerable to love without fear. Perhaps his serious attack seven years earlier, which had brought him close to death, had humanized that man, surrounded by a heavy structure so rigid and domineering and flattering that it stifled the humanity of his soul.

The Pope went on to talk about the mission of parishes, and spoke of reconciliation under union in Jesus. It felt wrong when the Pope said that there could be no real reconciliation without conversion in Jesus. He then spoke of the meaning of family, making continuous quotations from the Bible. He also spoke of the bishop's guidance to priests and religious. Patxi saw the bishop's gesture of satisfaction and a reproachful look at Patxi. The Pope continued to speak of the wonders

and blessings of religious life, with almost all the religious nodding in agreement. Was there not a certain vanity in that complacency or confabulation? He seemed to be speaking of superior beings, to guide the lost people. He began to feel bad, guilty, dirty for not interrupting that arrogant speech. Then he was more explicit about the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, and against selfishness and individualism. The bishop looked at Patxi again with a gesture of smugness, almost contempt. Then he spoke of ideas that comforted Patxi, such as service, the fight against poverty, the dignity of people and promoting love. Patxi closed his eyes and tried to feel the word of Jesus. He detested the bishop's perverse game of looks, the cult of the pope, infallible for those people who gave their lives to him in the name of Jesus, and the hierarchy mixed with power and unjust privileges in the face of so much poverty just a step away from that sumptuous cathedral. He was surprised at the end of his words, remembering the determination of the Church during the war and the subsequent oppression of the government in Matabeleland, in defense of truth and life.

He then greeted one by one, introduced by the bishop. He had no choice but to introduce Patxi.

-This is Father Patxi, from the Saint Joseph mission, of whom I have already spoken to you.

-Yes, Father Patxi, I think we need to talk for a moment, wait for me when I finish.

-As you wish, Your Holiness.

He felt bad saying that word.

Half an hour later, while Patxi was waiting at the entrance of the cathedral, the bishop sent for him. The Pope was waiting for him in the bishop's office. When he entered, the Pope was with the bishop, who was looking at him sternly. Patxi felt absurdly like a child whom the teacher calls to reprimand for not having done his homework as he should. He was pleased that the Pope asked the bishop, against his will, to leave him alone with Patxi.

-Father Patxi, I was looking forward to meeting you.

-I thank you for your time, Your Holiness. There will be millions of people wishing to have this moment alone with you. I am honored by your interest.

-Well, I'll be honest with you: it's more of a concern than an interest. I have received a report from the bishop and another from the Faith Commission at the Vatican recommending that I expell you from the Church and ask you to leave the Saint Joseph mission. I believe you know the reasons.

-I think I know the arguments of the bishop, who has not visited Saint Joseph in the last four years and does not really know about my life, my ideas and my dedication to others. Of the people from the Vatican I cannot give an opinion, I have never seen them and I don't think they can know me or give an opinion about me and my service to others in the name of Jesus.

-I like the way you speak to me. Everyone talks to me with awe and devotion. I am not used to hearing what people really think, especially if it is criticism or disagreement. But tell me, Father Patxi: is it true that you have broken your vow of chastity?

-Yes, that's true. But I have no regrets. I am a much better person and I receive and give much more love together with a wonderful woman who inspires me every day with gratitude for life and love for God, our Creator.

-I have been told that she is not even a Christian, but a sorceress. Do you realize what an image of the Church you are giving?

-A human image, Your Holiness. United in love. United with the people we serve, without distance or veiled racism such as that contained in the word "sorceress".

-That is unacceptable, Father Patxi. Do you pretend to know better than the Vatican Council?

-Neither better nor worse, Your Holiness. Different.

-This shows your rebelliousness before the vow of obedience as well. And tell me something else: are you promoting the use of condoms among your people? Do you know that by doing so you are trivializing the sanctity of relations between man and woman, destined to create life? Do you know that by doing so you are giving rise to

promiscuity, to the destruction of the family, to the moral degeneration of your people?

-Your Holiness, let me explain in five minutes: AIDS is ravaging this town. I continually see dying patients and families in pain. We have estimated that one in three adults is already infected and one in thirty is sick and doomed to die slowly in extreme weakness, pain, shame and stigma. I love every person in my life. I love you too now. But most of all I love those people in their pain. Heroes of love. I do not condone the lack of fidelity but I excuse it in a world where they spend, for work, months and months in solitude in their intimacy. And in their infection, I give myself to relieve them, to do everything possible so that they do not suffer any more and so that this terrible plague does not spread any more. I wish time would allow you to come with me to see what is happening, to enter their *kraal*, their huts and see skeletal people, with lost looks, wrapped in filth, abandonment, sunk in their pain and, in their hopelessness, in their loneliness, in the anguish of thinking what will happen to their children when they are no longer in this world. Do you think it is also human to look at them as sinners?

-God forgives, Father Patxi. And your compassion moves me. But without promoting sin.

-I do not promote sin, Your Holiness. Promoting condom use in this situation is the same as promoting vaccinations and preventing pain and death. Did you know that most of the women who are infected and slowly die of AIDS have never had any relationship other than with their husbands? Many live in South Africa and have other relationships, get infected and transmit it to their wives, to their children. In Saint Joseph we encourage couples to get tested, married couples, unmarried couples, everyone. And we find many where one is infected and one is not. And there is love. And they are healthy. There is no one who can understand that in the Episcopal conferences it is repeated over and over again that the only message for them is abstinence. That really breaks love and the family. We need caresses, Your Holiness, love, union with others. Promoting condom use here is promoting life, not preventing it. And the Vatican Council has approved the use of contraceptives by medical indication, this is the same.

-I see that you have been in contact with Father Kevin in Pretoria.

-Yes, and many more. Think about it, Your Holiness. The lives of millions of people are in your hands. The Church influences thinking, behavior, education, mission hospitals all over Africa. I beg you, reflect. Promoting testing and the use of condoms when there is a risk is a gesture of true love in this land, which is dying of AIDS.

The Pope stared at him. Patxi noticed that he was close to being moved. There was tenderness and humanity in that blue gaze.

-Father Patxi. I am going to ask you to come with Father Kevin to Rome to discuss this with the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office. I will decide if your passion for helping others forgets forms and principles that are essential to our Church. When you come to Rome I will decide if you can remain a priest under the Church. I will pray for you.

-Thank you, Your Holiness. I will continue to try to love others as myself, every day of my life. To give myself to my fellow man.

As he said that word, something tingled in his gut.

XLIII. Buds of a new Humanity. Gomera, 1990

IT WAS JUNE 1990 and Umbela and John were already living with about two hundred people in El Cabrito. They had been arriving for the past year. At first they came out of fear of radiation from Chernobyl, or out of frustration at not being able to fight against governments and societies that, thirsty for consumption, were exposing society and many generations to come, to radiation that altered the genetic basis of life. They began by living in tents. They drank from a natural spring that came out of the northern slope of the ravine. They built latrines, one for every ten people. They began to prepare more terraces on the hillside with corn, tomatoes and other vegetables. When they numbered a hundred, they decided to start building a community house where they would teach the children, meet to plan the community, resolve conflicts or celebrate events, and store what they decided should be common to all. They began to talk about their ways of life. John, the natural leader of the emerging community, explored how they all shared the work to build the common house. He still believed in the goodness of human beings when they are not assaulted by hierarchy, by competitiveness, by loneliness and by fear. He believed in anarchism in nature, but he had never truly experienced it.

While they were building the community house, they received visits from the president of the island's council, the mayor of San Sebastian, and even the governor of La Gomera. All of them asked for all kinds of paperwork: residence permits for the immigrants in the community, building licenses, certificates for the collective use of the premises, latrine authorizations, housing certifications and qualification as a public campsite, among others. So on up to two hundred types of papers. A Frenchman, Yves, a former official of the Ministry of Labor in France, volunteered to respond to all that pressure from the authorities, annoyed by this "settlement of hippies". The power structures in the island feared it could scare away the golf tourism and bungalows that awaited in the luxury resorts built by the island's wealthy elite. Tomas, whose humble family had occupied the land for generations, allied with Yves to defend the property and make it common to the group, which gradually felt great shared warmth and fervor for a community life of love and harmony with nature.

A month later, they had finished the community house, about fifty meters from the shore, in the center of the ravine. It was rounded, made of lava stone and had windows covered only by linen curtains. John had been inspired by anthroposophical architecture, seeking energy, spirituality and beauty. The roof was built of fine limestone pebbles brought in from the sea. Inside, the floor was made of basalt stone slabs that they had polished with patience and resolve. They built benches with dry junipers and heather branches. In the center they built a huge circular fireplace that on cold days served as a communal fire, on rainy days as a water reservoir and on hot days as a source of light and air circulation. The community house could accommodate two hundred people to meet, live together, share, resolve conflicts, dream, learn, tell stories, listen to music and help each other. To be community.

John found that the then one hundred and twenty inhabitants were good people, each with their own quirks, like everyone else, but they shared the desire to live sharing and in great respect for nature. None of them wanted to kill animals and the goats they had were not in danger. They would only take some milk from them to make cheese. Some of them did accept the fish that Tomas brought. However, he himself, remembering Jonay, began to feel sorry for the fish dying out of the water, and gradually returned fish to the sea. One day he caught a female dogfish, a kind of small shark, and when he realized that he had, unknowingly, killed several baby sharks in its belly, so similar to the human cycle, he stopped killing fish and eating it.

He became the sailor who took members of the community on his boat, to the port of San Sebastian, or on trips around the island.

In the following months another two hundred people arrived. They came after reading letters from members of the community or from other people, and from the other communities of harmony that were emerging in La Gomera. John was already sixty-four years old, he was strong and had a great serenity. He was elected at a meeting of all the people in search of a new way of living, as their natural leader. They established communities in eight other places on the island where there were ravines or abandoned villages. In El Cabrito almost two hundred people remained. In Arguamul Fernando organized about sixty. In total there were five hundred people on the island looking for another way

of living that would not harm nature and would recover more even and harmonious human relationships.

On the one hand, John thought it was enough to welcome people with a desire to share. He thought that needs, conflicts or setbacks would be resolved with good will. However, some events began to happen that could often disturb everyone's peace. The first observation was the desire of some to enclose their property, their house, usually by choosing larger places or dwellings. This was a source of conflict or tension that surfaced often. Soon he also observed that there were those who planted much more than necessary, stored more and then tried to sell, trade for more land or for utensils or goods that John thought should be common. Same happened with property such as books, paper and colors, tools for farming, fishing, music or a telescope, with seeds, medicines and medicinal herbs, with matches and wood for the fire and with soda for detergents.

He thought it would be good to write some shared beliefs and basic rules that everyone had to accept in order to live in community.

He began to write some outlines inspired by his ideas of anarchism, against the concept of the state and borders, and against the accepted forms of government, authority and hierarchy in modern societies. He had read Godwin, Faure and Proudhon and his phrase, which John had written down in his wallet: "*property is theft*". He also frequently read Weitling and his inspiration from the early Christians and his conclusion that "*the perfect society requires no government, but only a simple administration with a few simple duties.*"

As new members of the community, in te making, he read how European anarchist thoughts had been understood differently in America, where the cult of life, liberty and property were essential and the state was understood to be destructive to them. With these ideas they had opposed the state.

Owen in his New Harmony colony and later Warren with the Utopia colony in Ohio inspired him reflections on what could be developed in El Cabrito. Those XIXth century colonies had been formed to respect individual freedom and social justice and where only "labor bonds" were exchanged, and thus no inequalities, accumulations of goods or injustices could develop. But they started from the private ownership of plots of land, which, in John's opinion, was the cause of

their dissolution. The American eagerness for property was, John thought, the very imminent end of that Empire, since it was not possible to maintain property, inheritances, purchases and sales, speculation and, in short, injustice and its consequences of tension and social suffering in general and individual misery of the losers in that casino that society had become. On the other side, in Europe, Proudhon's ideas had degenerated into the non-authoritarian socialisms of Bakunin and the authoritarian ones of Marx and Engels, which led to the Internationalism and communism, filled with rules and obligations.

He was also concerned about how many of those streams had slipped into violence, into revolutions that, almost as a rule, had installed tyrants in power in the name of collective good. He was deeply pacifist, and furthermore, the need for harmony with nature was fundamental. That is why he had been reading in recent years the ideas of "green anarchism", as *Walden*, by the American Thoreau, where he proposed "a simple and self-sufficient life, integrated with the natural environment, resisting the advance of industrial civilization". In essence, it was similar to the religious movement of the Amish, whom John admired, but without sacred doctrine, in freedom. This ecological anarchism had degenerated into many radical anti-progress and even anti-agriculture ideas, so that it was based on gathering and hunting, rejecting all progress. How then could children or the elderly be cured of diseases, among many other benefits of progress? Absurd.

He began to read Ivan Illich and his theories of degrowth and the unschooled society and self-learning, and even exchanged some letters with his center in Cuernavaca, Mexico. It was then that a German community fellow, Martin, told him that he knew Robert Gilman. John had read some articles by Robert, who edited the *Context* notebooks, and was recognized as a leader in the worldwide ecovillage movement. Martin and Robert had shared time together in a community in Scotland, called Findhorn, where Robert had inspired some principles of living together. He had written to him saying that a friend was sailing south and that his wife Diana, daughter Celeste and him wanted to stop in La Gomera to learn about the new community movement that he had read about in letters from Martin and other friends. It was part of a study he was doing for a group that was beginning to build up in Denmark, called Gaia, led by a Danish couple, Hildur and Ross. He wanted to

know the strength that many eco-villages connected to each other all over the world could have as a whole.

John thought it would be a good idea to talk with Robert and seek inspiration in his proposal for some principles of coexistence in the community of El Cabrito and the other emerging communities in various parts of the island. He thought that a good way to see the other communities and also to have some quiet moments would be to go around the island aboard his old faithful sailboat Satia, with Robert's family and Umbela.

Robert arrived with his family aboard Tomas' boat. Robert and John intuitively felt an especial mutual empathy. While Robert went around talking to the people of the colony, visited the community house and the other huts that had sprung up on the hillside, John began to prepare Satia, who had not been out since they returned from their round-the-world trip. They agreed on a plan to spend a week sailing around the island, visiting the communities and then going to an even larger community that was settling in the north of the neighbour beautiful island of La Palma.

At night, they used to light a fire outside if it wasn't too cold or rainy or otherwise inside the communal house. John played the harmonica. There were several musicians in the community: two were good clete fiddlers from Normandy, one played the Irish flute, two played the guitar, one played the *djembe* drums, and even a woman from Sweden had brought an old harp. They were expecting a piano from Austria, and there was already one person who knew how to tune it. That night they sat outside. There were about forty people sitting around sharing a dinner of watercress and gofio stew, and about twenty little kids playing on the shore. They introduced Robert, and went around telling stories.

Those people, lovers of nature and unafraid to seek destinations far from their roots, always had epic stories to tell. Robert brought them up to date on what was happening in Europe and the world, because although some of them had radios that could be charged with a hand crank, they had not been able to listen well to the news in the last few months. Robert told them that there were signs of change in the world, of hope. Despite the fact that power was still being monopolized by bankers and speculators, and that there were still bloody wars and the

accumulation of money, weapons and fear, there were signs of hope: in the last few months the Berlin Wall had fallen, Mandela had been freed and the Chinese people were bravely confronting the tanks in Tianamen square. They ended up following John in the harmony of "*The Times They Are A-changing*" and singing in chorus, under the stars and with bright looks of trust towards a new way of living.

They had been establishing a beautiful way of greeting each other: they embraced by gently putting their hands behind each other's head, and looking deeply into each other's eyes for a moment, concentrating their tenderness on the other person, drinking in the beauty of the other soul, enjoying the gift of crossing existences in a glance of time and space in the midst of eternity and infinity.

As they were retiring John went home to take out some gear to leave half-prepared in Satia. When he left the boat and was about to go to rest, he saw that Robert was sitting by the shore, on a juniper branch, looking at the dark horizon of the night ocean, strewn with the mirror of the stars.

-Wakeful, Robert? That's where my son Jonay used to sit.

-Where is he?

-In Zimbabwe, working in a rural hospital, in a nice community in many ways.

-My eldest son also wants to be a doctor, but an alternative one. He has started his studies in San Francisco.

Tell me, Robert, I read that you were a well-known astrophysical scientist. That must be exciting, what happened?

-I used to say that the stars could wait, the earth could not. I had studied astronomy at UC Berkeley. I took advantage of the most powerful telescope in the United States and the Lawrence Cyclotron, to also delve into the innermost matter. My colleagues are still there and are hinting the theory of the origin of the universe. I studied the energies of the cooling stars. Fascinating. The energy that surrounds us and of which we are a part. I continued working at other universities and at NASA. But I needed to work on the real, on the urgent, on what the world needs today. A change, a return to Earth, to harmony, to simplicity, to solidarity, to love. Simply to remove the chains of property, of religions and dogmas, of hierarchies of power.

-So what did you do?

-Well, about fifteen years ago Diane and I built our own house, with silica solar panels, windmills, with geothermal pipes, with an organic garden and biogas. A self-sustainable place. There we started to receive visitors, to inspire other people to change their way of life. And so we started writing *Context*.

Yes, I know it, I really like what you write. Remind me what you proposed about the eco-village challenge?

-Yes, I don't want to be dogmatic or prophetic, just to share some ideas that I think are logical and can be useful: first, ecovillages should be of a human size. A number of people that we can get to know with interest and time. Not with empty greetings when we cross paths with them without being able to avoid it. As we do in many modern cities. The "empty greeting" is destructive of sensitivities, empathy and true solidarity. Every day in cities we allow thousands of these destructive blows.

-And what is the "human size", and how did you estimate it?

-I suggested that no more than five hundred. I've been trying to find out from the many interviews I've done. Look, on average we have about fifteen to twenty relatives in the three generations we live with. Some will have fifty and some will have only five or ten. In our lives we may have between one and ten close friends, with whom there are practically no secrets, with whom we can trust always and in everything. It makes no difference whether you are a king or a beggar. The heart has a limit to give itself unreservedly. They are the ones who cannot miss an important ceremony in our lives. Then we know about fifty people quite deeply: we know something of their families, their homes, their professions, their hobbies, and we share some of them. There is a slightly more distant circle of about two hundred, friends or relatives from our closest circles, or co-workers or neighbors or people we see at least once a week for our activities. And finally there is a circle that we see a couple of times a month and of whom, we hardly know their name, origin and something about them. Beyond that circle, the relationship is diluted. It does not enter the hard disk of our brain, it is of no interest and we do not pay attention to it. They are people we greet politely without knowing their names or almost anything about their lives. It is what we usually say "acquaintance by sight". Or in

English "*on nodding terms*" (greeting by lowering the head). These empty relationships are painful and destructive. We do not notice it, but it is a constant aggression to our capacity and longing to live loving and being loved. Those empty greetings go against our nature, they build a crust around our heart, which ends up affecting the other closest relationships. And even more outside that circle there are thousands of people every day with whom we don't even cross glances, with the tacit agreement not to cross paths and assuming that may be the only crossing in our lives. Imagine being together in a miracle of fleeting time and tiny space in the immensity of the universe, in the eternity of time, and acting as if it were normal, banal, circumstantial, dispensable. I believe, John, that this aggression to our deep sense of love is taking its toll. Like a drop of water constantly on limestone. Imagine the pain of seeing hundreds, or thousands of anonymous, inanimate faces daily on the subway, in the streets, and even in the news. Faces we do not and will not get involved with.

-You mean living en masse dehumanizes us?

-Or we suffer every day in that cold and even cruel anonymity towards our tenderness. Or we build a thick layer of armor.

-Yes, Fischer's knight in rusty armor. Yes, we gradually believe we are incapable of love, and we limit it to a small space. So small that sometimes we fill it with tension.

-Or "Only love allows us to escape and transform slavery into freedom". From Paulo Coelho.

-Tell me another principle, besides the human scale?

-Never isolate yourself from the rest of the world, be supportive, attentive, interested in learning, respectful. It is necessary to continue paying the taxes of the larger territory to which one belongs, to question the local ones, which can be self-managed, but to harmonize with what is close and with a global thought of transformation. That is what I want to study now and contribute to the Gaia movement, of the Danish friends.

-And what can we do when from the outside they want to destroy us, despise us, humiliate us?

-You know well, John, you who read Gandhi, that no one can despise anyone, no one can humiliate anyone. Your master said "I will

not let anyone hurt me, without my permission". And destruction, look, I believe that if we respond with love, they will end up tolerating us, accepting us. We can explain to them that we are all good for each other. And we can show them in time the harmony of nature, the orchards covered with butterflies, the healthy food and body, the happiness and pleasure of not possessing, of embracing, of not competing. But to share.

-You are right. With a smile, with warmth instead of violence. With *aimsa*.

-And what other principles do you suggest?

-You have to feel them yourselves, and without dogmas, without laws, but in dialogue. I see that you do not want animal suffering, that you want to create a common language between your mother tongues and the whistles, that you want to share books, music, seeds, utensils, soda or oil in the house? These can be "agreed forms of coexistence", not laws, ready to be discussed, to be adapted. Always with the principle of avoiding that there are people superior to others in the community. Nor anyone in need of the essentials.

-And would you allow as private property? There are those who are very enterprising and sell the surplus of the harvest or sell handicrafts, or bring things from the city and resell them.

-I hope you don't introduce money. It has been the cancer of modern society. It is something that is easily accumulated and then used to accumulate more, it has no limit. But you will have to decide that too. Perhaps by putting a limit on it, with minimum and maximum salaries or property. But then you have to be prepared for more and more rules and control. I have seen more harmony when the necessary is collective, the superfluous can be kept, the personal, the memories, the art can be our own. Where we exchange skills and we all help each other and prosper. Between three or five hundred people almost always cover all the most important trades or professions for society.

-Thank you Robert, all this helps me a lot.

-We help each other. In each other we find inspiration. You know what I believe? that we are really ourselves seeing ourselves in magic mirrors. The imprint of the other remains in our body and soul.

They said good night to each other with their tender embrace.

XLIV. Dogmas, life and freedom. Brussels, 1991

BEATRIZ BELOKI WATCHED that Sunday morning from her home in Tervuren how the beech trees of the *Foret de Soignes* began to turn ochre. She marveled at those giants up to sixty meters high and four hundred years old. Their smooth skin, their firm trunks, the harmony among the prodigious family of beech trees, witnesses of the history of central Europe for the last half millennium. Beatriz felt through that forest the history of that small country where the heart of Europe now beat. She imagined its first known inhabitants, the Celtic tribes of the north, the Belgians, and how they were subdued by the Romans in what they called the province of Belgium.

After the fall of that first invading Empire, the Germanic tribes established what would become the Carolingian Empire in the 8th century, which gave way to a Middle Age of small feudal states. It was their union in the flourishing European XIVth and XVth centuries with the house of Burgundy, from central France, that created the Burgundian Low Countries and later gained autonomy and organized themselves into "the seventeen provinces". Then the Eighty Years' War from 1568 to 1648 led to the division between Northern and Southern Netherlands. Again followed centuries of wars between the French against the reigns of the Spanish Habsburg dynasty and the Austrians who wanted to expand their empires and dominate the trade and the most important port of Europe, then in Bruges. The history of Europe was a constant succession of wars. Those giant beech trees were planted by those invading sovereigns, for deer hunting. Those forests saw how the French ended the Spanish and Austrian domination but their rule was short-lived and was extinguished when Nelson defeated Napoleon at Waterloo, south to that magnificent beech forest. The Belgian revolution of 1830 finally established an independent Belgium, of interest for Austria and Prussia, as a barrier to France and the English.

Beatriz went for a walk with her dog Jenny, a beautiful and wild white retriever, in the Tervuren park, mostly according to local passionates, the most beautiful in Europe. She stopped for her mint tea and gingerbread cookies at the "Spanish House" and read a chapter of Eleanor Smith's novel of the same name, based on that magical corner of the forest. Thinking of the courage of the young gypsy in love, she

continued on to the gardens of the Africa Museum, so closely linked to the brief history of that small country where Beatriz had been living for four years. How did such a small nation with a history of barely fifty years manage to dominate the whole of central Africa at the end of the XIXth century?

After the proclamation of independence, Belgium looked for a king among the European dynasties. Beatriz smiled thinking that this was "the first of the European post-competitions" to occupy the power of that center of Europe. After several rejections of some aspiring monarchs, the provisional Belgian government convinced the German prince Leopold of Saxony who had lost his aspirations to the English crown when his wife Charlotte, heir to the English crown, died. It was his son, Leopold II, born shortly after his father was proclaimed king, who invaded the lands and the peoples of central Africa in the most horrible ways. He sent different expeditions to the most unknown area of Africa, the basin of the Congo River, crossing the jungle center of the center of the continent. He hired the Welsh explorer Stanley under the International Congo Association to "promote peace, civilization, education and scientific progress and to eradicate the slave trade". In reality the objective was to administer what he imposed as private property, an immense area equivalent to forty times Belgium in one of the areas of the world with the greatest natural and mineral wealth. The strategy was to make contracts with the indigenous chiefs and exploit the rubber, ivory and other riches that were discovered. He called the contracted areas "liberated zones" and gained fake fame as a philanthropic benefactor.

Soon after the Berlin Conference of 1884, divided Africa among the European countries, and recognized the "Congo Free State", belonging to Leopold in his personal capacity. There had never been a human being who owned such a vast territory. Of course, no indigenous representative was invited. For the exploitation of the Congo's resources, a "state" monopoly was established, which enjoyed loans from the Belgian state. And its owner, King Leopold, sent an army of sixteen thousand men to turn the region into a huge forced labor camp. Beatriz thought of the horrible history of conquest and oppression of the European countries and the policies of "cooperation" with those

former colonies, in which she now worked from the administrative capital of the European Union.

By then, a Scottish veterinarian named John Dunlop had invented the rubber tire with an inner tube and the world demand for latex skyrocketed. Leopold imposed a hellish pace of work to dominate world latex production, with punishments of amputation of hands and arms for disobedience. Beatriz was reading a book, *The Ghost of King Leopold*, which described that era of terror and estimated ten million dead natives, whose blood served to make Belgium rich and the colonialist North travel fast on Dunlop's hollow rubbers. Beatriz felt ashamed, often nauseated, of the colonial histories that made Europe rich. She reflected on the supposed "cooperation" that Europe showed to the world as generosity of solidarity. The knowledge of those atrocities forced the bloodthirsty king to "donate" the territory to the Belgian state in exchange for keeping the immense wealth and possessions he obtained with African blood and pain. However, bloodthirsty companies continued to administer the "Belgian Congo" and turned their interest to the rich minerals of Katanga and Goma.

Beatriz strolled through that immensely sumptuous museum and felt her heart shrink thinking of the immense suffering in the history of Africa. She had received a letter from her brother Patxi explaining the tragedy of AIDS, and lately from her brother Juan Mari, who was dangerously unraveling a child trafficking plot.

She was 53 years old at the time. After finishing high school, she spent some time helping in the family farmhouse. At the age of 20 she joined the "women's section" of Franco's regime and after participating in sewing, shorthand and "Catholic virtues and morals" courses, she taught girls in high schools or in women's literacy courses in Pamplona. This is how she met some women who invited her to meetings on "the role of Catholic women in Spain". They belonged to a group called *Opus Dei*, and they gave her a guide book called *The Way*. Shortly afterwards its founder, Escrivá de Balaguer, gave a conference in Pamplona, which Beatriz attended.

That Aragonese had seen the footprints of a barefoot Carmelite in the snow and had decided to become a priest when he was only sixteen years old. Shortly afterwards he was already a parish priest in Aragon. He combined his priesthood with the study of law in Madrid where he

founded Opus Dei when he was twenty-seven years old. He "saw" it by divine illumination and aimed to "the sanctification of men through work". He gained followers and wrote, during the Spanish civil war, the *Way*. Shortly afterwards he proposed the "life plan" to be followed by the members of the group, which included daily Mass, communion, praying the Angelus, visiting the tabernacle, spiritual reading, praying the rosary and even mortifications through the use of cilicium two hours a day and weekly disciplines (a series of rope whips). Among other things, it was stipulated that "*if you feel in your interior the need to dream, nip this urge in the bud, without mercy*".

Beatriz was dazzled by the personality of that man who, in spite of his almost masochistic stoicism, exuded an almost country-like happiness. It was then that the "Obra" offered her to live in one of its residences in Pamplona and, given her desire to study Law, paid for her studies, besides encouraging her to study Theology and Philosophy. She was considered a "numerary member" of the feminine section, with vows of chastity and obedience to the Order. The Order used "personal files" where the spiritual, personal, family and professional life of each member was noted, and the directors of the centers had the right to read the letters and correspondence received from her family.

This is how she spent her law studies in Pamplona. She felt the obligation to study continuously, not to give any space to laziness or leisure, to be one of the best in the class and thus contribute to "La Obra". As she feared that Juan Mari was involved in separatist activities and it could be mentioned in the letters of her parents or Patxi, her soul brother, she began to distance herself from the family because she knew of the connection of the Order with Franco's regime. She returned to the Beloki farmhouse for some celebrations, but hardly shared anything about her personal life. Beatriz would tell them that she had a scholarship from the University of Navarra, but nothing more. She surrounded herself with girls from the women's section, and from the "numerary" members' residence. They were studying law, medicine, economics, business administration, philosophy, communications and pharmacy. Often they were among the most advanced in each class. The order paid for their studies, residence and some out-of-pocket expenses, but everything was controlled in detail: where they went, whom they saw, what they read and, above all, what they thought.

The years went by and Beatriz finished her studies and her life was limited to study, prayers, conferences, spiritual exercises, some outings with fellow members, and mortifications. She devoted herself to civil-administrative law and worked for companies linked to the Order, of which there were hundreds in Spain and more than a thousand around the world. Like all the members of the Order, she gave all her salary to the Order, which took care of her needs. In addition, the Order had more than five hundred schools and universities, fifty radio stations, twelve film and television production companies, twelve publishing houses, more than six hundred newspapers and magazines and thirty-eight information agencies. Beatriz's proficiency gradually led her to responsible tasks in different companies of the Order and one of their banks, the *Banco Popular*. Everything was secret and the information was limited to the circles of the Order. Well, really, information, work and life. The salute code between them of "*pax*" and answer "*in aeternus*" came to replace in Beatriz's world the "Epa" of the greetings in the mountains around her family farmhouse.

Escrivá died of complications from diabetes in 1975, almost at the same time as his ally, the dictator Francisco Franco, and was succeeded by his disciple Álvaro del Portillo. When at the beginning of the eighties the Order saw that Spain would enter the European Union, it began to identify key people to infiltrate the European Commission, the center of political power in Europe. They also prepared politicians and members of parliament. During Franco's dictatorship, in spite of personality clashes between the dictator and Escriva, the Order had grown. Franco appointed Escriva as Marquess while the Order collaborated with Franco's regime in an uncritical way and its members occupied important positions in politics, law and economy of the country. The Order adapted to the political transition in Spain and infiltrated the democratic parties and the layers of political, economic and social power of the country.

The Order selected Beatriz to influence European human rights policies, as it was feared that non-Catholic Europe would have an influence by undermining the foundations of Catholic morality. Therefore, even before there was a competition for the first wave of Spanish civil servants after accession in 1986, Beatriz was already studying EU law, European treaties and all subjects related to the

opposition for entry as a European civil servant. Thus, when in 1986 she was able to apply for the position of administrator at the Commission, she was one of the first Spaniards to become a European civil servant. Even after passing the competition, it was necessary to look for possibilities to enter knowing people or being aware of vacancies and selection processes, something often contaminated by influences, contacts, favors and connivances between nationalities. Far from clean or transparent.

Beatriz managed to enter through the networks that Opus Dei already had in Europe. By then the Order was already present in sixty countries and almost eighty thousand numeraries like Beatriz belonged to the Order. She joined a directorate dedicated to human rights and justice. It included issues related to the fight against terrorism and immigration control. Before entering Brussels, the opponents of the Order who had passed the competitive examinations had a retreat in a convent of Augustinian monks in El Escorial, near Madrid. Prelate Portillo had a few words with each of them, thirty-six that year. When he spoke with Beatriz, he confided to her the fear that Europe was falling into secularism and permissive attitudes of Protestantism, such as those concerning reproductive health. She was to be very vigilant on such matters and would meet many people in the Order among civil servants, management positions, commissioners and members of parliament, who would contact her through her "*pax*" code.

Beatriz arrived in Brussels in 1987. She lived in a shared house on the outskirts, in the first Flemish village, Tervuren, opposite the wonderful tamed forest, *Foret de Soignes*. She lived with other numeraries, two Spaniards, in the employment and agriculture departments, two Italians, one German and one French. Their routine was, as it had always been in Pamplona, rigid: they got up at five o'clock, prayed Morning Prayer and, taking turns, read some passages from *The Way* while having a light breakfast. Then they would walk through the park, in front of the majestic African museum of the bloodthirsty Leopold, and arrived at the tram 44 station. They completed one of the oldest and most beautiful tram routes in the world, through the forest and the stately Avenue de Tervuren. When they reached the Montgomery Square they walked to the Church of Saint Michel where they heard mass from half past seven to a quarter past

eight. Then they would stroll through the Cinquantenaire, another blood legacy of the megalomaniac Leopold. There, in the heart of Europe, those persons of great intelligence, polyglots and committed to the Order, worked in key positions.

Beatriz's job was to prepare programming documents to support human rights activities. She had the tacit task of seeking funding for the *Europe Today* weekly magazine, which was widely distributed around the world, with conservative ideas on health, education and society. She also participated regularly in the debates and meetings of the Robert-Schumann Institute and the Catholic University of Louvain. Beatriz began to have a determined and organized activity in trying to prevent any move in Europe towards abortion. In the previous years she had collaborated in preventing the abortion law already passed in Spain from taking effect in the community of Navarra. Through networks of gynecologists in Navarra, mostly related to the Order, they managed, through conscientious objection, to prevent abortions performed in the community. People close to the Order in the government of Navarra also hindered it. Beatriz was convinced of the murderous immorality of abortions, euphemistically called "pregnancy interruptions" by those who allowed and even promoted them. She assisted in a clinic to counsel women who wanted to have an abortion, where gynecologists close to the Order referred them to psychologists, also close to the Order, and to support groups such as those in which Beatriz participated.

Beatriz thought about those children who were not yet born. She kept reading about embryonic development, seeing pictures of their marvelous growth, even reading about ways to communicate with them and studies that seemed to conclude that they felt, communicated and even had brain activity. Deep down, the vow of chastity and the numerary life had insulated Beatriz from sex life and any chance of motherhood. She had fallen in love a few times with fellow students, co-workers or men linked to the Order, but she always felt shy about showing it and repressed herself. On one occasion one of them tried to abuse her, and this generated even more rejection towards men. But her maternal instinct was very deep and she considered it inhuman that there were women who wanted to kill their unborn babies. That's what she thought, to kill, those lives so in need of warmth, future and love.

She would have adopted all those children whose mothers ended up going to Madrid, Zaragoza or London to have abortions. She even asked her spiritual directors, who quickly reprimanded her and gave her penances for the blasphemy of thinking of being a single mother.

But one woman's story changed her life.

She was Meimuna, a woman from Senegal. She had come to Spain following her sister Rosaline, escaping poverty and lack of opportunities in her home country. Posing as natives and refugees in South Africa persecuted by apartheid, they were granted refugee status. Rosaline got a job cleaning in a hotel in Burlada, near Pamplona. When Meimuna arrived in Spain, she went to live with her sister and while learning Spanish, she started working as a waitress in a local bar. She was a tall *Wolof* woman, with a statuesque figure and very beautiful delicate features on her face. She was always smiling and cheerful despite the difficult life she had left behind in Senegal, the nostalgia for her family and customs, and the limitations of immigrant life in a country that, out of ignorance, was still often prejudiced against other races. One night, on her way out, she was approached by a truck driver who had drunk too much at the bar. He began to provoke her and she pushed him away. The truck driver, out of his mind, grabbed her forcefully, threw her on a road platform and raped her aggressively, saying "nigger, whore, if you don't like it, go back to your country". He left her badly wounded and continued on his way to France. Rosaline, worried about the late hours of the night without knowing about her sister, went out to look for her towards the bar, finding her on the side of the road semi-conscious, bloodied and half naked.

Meimuna was treated at the University Clinic of Navarra. When she was recovering from the blows and wounds, and even from surgery on her genitals, torn by the brutal aggression. She was informed that she had become pregnant. Meimuna felt a mixture of sadness, shame, anger and despair. She was of Muslim beliefs and was wavering between becoming a mother or ending up with that consequence of hatred and violence in her womb, which would also stigmatize her for life, making it difficult for her to fulfill her dreams of studies, of a "normal" family, of so many dimensions as a woman. In fact, certain Muslim leaders accepted abortion in circumstances of rape. Even not doing so often placed the victims under distrust of having actually

consented to adulterous relations, something much more serious for many Muslims than abortion in that extreme case. But more than Muslim belief, she was tormented by the feeling of being defiled, invaded, her life stifled by violence and its consequences. She asked the hospital gynecologist if they could terminate the pregnancy, and was told that they did not perform abortions and advised her to attend sessions with social services, a psychologist and a support group while she decided what she wanted to do.

This is how Meimuna met Beatriz at a meeting with three other women in a similar situation. Meimuna was twenty years old. Beatriz was 50 years old at the time and her irregular cycles already indicated that her time to conceive biologically was over. She felt a maternal affection for Meimuna. Since the rape, Meimuna had stopped dressing up, she wore simple clothes, with hardly any colors. She had stopped combing her hair, with the handmade Senegalese braids that she and her sister Rosaline used to make for each other. She had stopped looking forward to the future. She was frightened of going to the bar and walking alone in the street. She was truly terrified of life. Her own and the one she now carried inside her. Beatriz noticed in her absent gaze a deep sorrow, like a bottomless dark well. At the end of the session, in which Meimuna hardly participated, Beatriz told her that she would like to visit her at home and talk to her alone, more serenely. Three days later, Beatriz visited her in the small apartment in Burlada. Rosaline was working at the hotel.

-Hello Meimuna, I came to see you, I brought you these pastries.

-Thank you, come in Beatriz.

By then Meimuna already spoke Spanish quite well, despite never having had the opportunity to take classes.

-I have come to listen to you, Meimuna. I want to help you.

-Thank you. The truth is that I don't feel like living.

-I understand you. Any one who has suffered violence, feels fear, a disappointment on the human being and a profound sadness to realize that dark side of human nature.

-But besides that, I am an alien in this country where I often suffer racism. I think it influenced how that man treated me. I face now without strength, without means and without hope the life of a being

who would be born with everything against him or her. Destined to pain. Even greater than mine.

-I understand your despair about the future, but I want us to talk together about each of those grieves and each of those fears. All of them. All the details of that life that now beats inside you.

Meimuna burst into tears. Beatriz simply put her arms around her and stroked her hair tenderly for a long time.

-It had been a long time since anyone had given me warmth. Between sisters we are not used to it. Neither my mother nor anyone else hugged me. Thank you Beatriz.

-I give you all my love, Meimuna. You can count on me for anything you want, at any time.

-Thank you. But I don't understand why you are so interested in helping me?

-I assure you that I have no interest. I only wish for your happiness and that of the life which is growing inside you.

-That's already an interest, Beatriz: that I act as you think I should. For your beliefs. That I don't go to Madrid or Zaragoza, and go back to being the woman I was before, with a future ahead of me, forgetting this terrible stain on my life. How can I forget it when every day I see in my child the face of that monster? When I cannot and do not know how to give him or her an education, or offer a safe space, a future of hope? How can I, from my pain, convey confidence, hope?

-I understand you, Meimuna. About my ideas, you are right. We all have ideas, some beliefs. I revere life and I believe that going against it brings in the end more pain and more anxiety than taking care of it. But you are right. I don't want to disrespect your ideas. If despite seeing all the details of what your life would be like, the baby's life, the two of you and the beauty that heroic strength of preserving, in spite of everything, life would have; you wish to abort, I will not judge you and I will respect you just the same. But it is something I cannot help you to do. I revere life, Meimuna.

-It's easy to say from your situation, it doesn't imply anything to you.

-I know. That's why I come above all to listen to you. And if you want to see what that life could be like by your side, ask me whatever you want, ask me whatever you want.

Beatriz thought about it. Deep down the Christian "goodness" came with a "price", that of accepting the ideas of the one who "believe and "helped". She felt so much tenderness towards that woman, that without thinking about her work, her norms, about anything, she said to her:

-If, when we have talked about it, you want to go ahead with the abortion, I will also help you. I will accompany you, if you want, to Madrid or Barcelona, and I will see how to help you with the treatment.

-But is that not a sin for you?

-It is a greater sin not to love, and my priority now is to give you all my love, in whatever way life chooses.

Meimuna's expression changed.

For the next month, Meimuna and Beatriz met every day to chat, to walk, they went to the mountains to watch sunsets and to the forests to walk barefoot on the wet earth. When she had regained a little bit of harmony with life, they began to talk about the child's life. Beatriz was massaging her belly, already three months pregnant. She was approaching the age limit to be able to end it. She wanted to be respectful and Meimuna asked her for information about the pregnancy, what was going on inside and what the life project was like.

-It is not a "project", Meimuna. It is life, in a different form, but life.

The next day he brought her the books with pictures of embryos.

-Look at the pictures, Meimuna. Look at their shapes, the details of their fingers, face, feet, their gestures, the curves of their lips or eyes, seeming to indicate expressions, feelings. You know, there are studies that have indicated brain activity and even sounds inside the amniotic sac. As if they were ways of communicating.

Beatriz continued:

-Meimuna, they are not projects. Yes, they are vulnerable. But with life. A life simply attached to their mothers. But aren't we the same or more dependent when we are born? When we grow old?

Meimuna gained confidence, felt the changes in her body, and began to think about the child's life. She saw children in the street, in the park, and her fear of a child with bad feelings began to dissipate. That violent father did not have to be inside her. She thought that bringing that life into the world would be a bet for life, a bet so strong, against what most would have done not to allow that birth, that such life would be sacred, it would be cherished by her Allah and of the Jesus of whom Beatriz spoke.

So they went to see children in the hospital nests and in the nurseries. They thought about every detail, about the feeding, about the music he or she would hear from the womb, about the crib, the clothes, about the nursery, the school and what he or she would be like. Surely would be brave for having beaten death even before birth. Beatriz gathered opportunities of support, from the social services, from Caritas and from the Order itself, that Meimuna gained confidence. Beatriz told her that in spite of motherhood, Meimuna should study and fight for her dream.

Meimuna revealed to Beatriz that she wanted to be a singer. To study singing and music, and sing songs of peace and love for a better world. Beatriz talked to people in the Order and they managed to get a numerary, an expert piano player and lyrical singer, to start giving her lessons. Slowly, she made other contacts as she improved her technique. Through acquaintances, Beatriz was able to get the direction of Amaya, the soloist singer of the group Mocedades. She wrote her a letter about Meimuna's heroism and her desire to sing peace and love to the world. The letter touched Amaya, who had a singing academy in Bilbo, as well as continuing to record albums. Beatriz told her that she could stay with friends and attend classes for a month with that woman with such a beautiful voice and a big heart. Meimuna's expression began to shine so brightly. One day Beatriz brought her a guitar and a guide to learn chords and rhythms. They learned together "*Sólo era un niño*" by Mocedades and "*Si te conozco bien*" by Victor Manuel.

One day, near the end of her pregnancy, Beatriz told Meimuna:

-Meimuna, I think you are the bravest woman I have ever met in my life. You have decided to bring a life into this world against all odds. And you have not done it out of belief, dogma, fear of sin or fright of what people will say. You have done it out of pure love. I have dreamed

of you several times and I have seen you beautiful as you are, with a wonderful child, a mixture of races and colors, who will love you very much, and with a guitar, a good companion who will take care of you, and a message of love to the world that will vibrate in millions of souls.

Meimuna elatedly hugged her.

At the end of 1985, "Mohamed-Jesus" was born.

XLV. To the rescue of pain. Johannesburg, 1992

JACK LED John to a farm about twenty kilometers north of Soweto. Haka and Jack were watching Jason, whose face they covered with a mask so he could not identify the road. He was securely fastened with tape on his feet, hands and mouth. They checked that no one was following them.

Kate, meanwhile, had finished an article on the kidnapping of children in Matabeleland by a mafia from South Africa and how some of the brothels where girls were prostituted from the age of twelve had been uncovered. She sent the article to Patxi in Saint Joseph, Helen in Bulawayo and Beatriz in Brussels, as well as the "zero day" report. She had envelopes prepared with the article for the Minister of Home Affairs, for the Chief of Police, for some local newspapers and others in Zimbabwe, for international news agencies, European parliamentarians, American senators and the directors of UNICEF in New York and its Innocenti Institute in Florence and even for the Secretary General of the United Nations. Also, without being in the plan, she had contacted a woman of Indian origin, Nadine, whom she had seen on television and who was fighting with overwhelming strength and clarity against sexual violence against children in South Africa. Everything was prepared and not yet sent. It was awaiting the end of Plan A, or the move to the alternative plans.

Some forty miles northwest, Haka, John and Jack arrived with Jason at the secret home of the African National Congress, a small estate in the mountains. A man in his sixties met them, to whom Haka and John were introduced as *Grey Cat*. He was already informed of the situation through the party's contact networks. They took Jason to a bed in one of the rooms and removed the tape from his mouth. Haka told him:

-No one will hear you. Here's water you can drink with this straw. You're smart and you'll know that you're here to tell us everything your gang has done and is doing with the girls of Matabeleland, with the boys, the networks you have with other gangs, everything. Every minute counts in rescuing those poor children from terror. We don't like violence. Tell us everything and we will look into how to treat your disease, your addiction and how you can pay for the crimes you have

committed, with justice, without violence. If you don't, your addiction will simply eat you up inside, your disease will progress and the white police, whom we will alert, along with people from many countries, will do the rest. Although they will probably not arrive in time to prevent the mafia of this horrible business from cutting your tongue and your neck. Think about it.

They left Jason in that room for an hour. They knew his own addiction was his torture and he would do anything, say anything, to get a fix. They had taken cookies from his lair in Soweto, enough for a week. By lengthening the periods between doses so that his abstinence would drive him to the brink of madness they thought they would get the information they needed.

While they were talking, they heard the news on the radio. They all felt a great emotion when they heard how Nelson Mandela was released after almost thirty years. They heard him say his first words. It seemed incredible to Haka that a man whose half life was ripped out of him and thrown into a prison for fighting racism in the last country in the world where that horrible concept of supremacy of one race over another was maintained, did not exude a single expression or feeling of hatred, of revenge, not even a human notch of resentment towards his jailers. He was firm, however, and courageous, not giving up the armed struggle as long as his people remained subjugated. He found tremendous similarities between that man, even smiling and kind to everyone, and the stories Patxi told him about Gandhi and his anecdotes in his diary in search of the truth.

“Today is a day that will change the history of South Africa and the world. But we must remain vigilant. There are those who say that he has been released to assassinate him, because his myth in Rhoden Island had more strength than someone free who can be falsely accused of something, muddy his name and assassinate him, as they did with Biko”.

At that time, the clandestine radio they heard broadcast the chants that surrounded Nelson Mandela when he went from Cape Town to the black suburbs of *Mitchel's plain* and *Kaleyitsa: Nkosi sikelele Africa*.

They stood up with their left fist raised and sang with emotion that song of noble struggle.

How different, Haka thought, to the cruel, cowardly and senseless struggle for Basque independence, to the hymn of the Basque soldier, to the gloomy prisons of the people, to the bribes, kidnappings, bombs and shots in the back of the head. He never participated in any murderous attack, but he had contributed in some way to that horror, but also, from the inside, to change it, to humanize it and turn it into a non-violent political party. He now felt a noble alliance with the people fighting for a freedom that his Basque people enjoyed, after Franco's death, against a racist dictatorship that in nothing resembled the Spanish state after the democratic transition.

Grey Cat offered them tea, while they decided on a plan:

-We have some information from our contacts in Soweto: this Jason has five acolytes, his lieutenants. We have informed our ZAPU brethren in Zimbabwe so that they will be ready when we can uncover the whole plot. They are looking into who may have been allied in the customs police and even in the ministry. They are concerned that this may be linked to the government's claims of crime against dissidents. They only ask that the *Amani* Trust, and that Helen, remain silent in the public eye until the children are released and returned to their families. The matter is now in the hands of Minister Stamps, who will follow every day as we unravel this horror and assures us that he will wipe away any traces or shadows of allies in Zimbabwe.

Haka was overwhelmed by the degree of information and how the news had reached such high levels. He feared how could it might affect Helen.

-*Grey cat*, at this moment we can't trust anyone. We only trust you. I ask that the information does not go beyond those who are already informed and send a message that it is undisclosed. I am convinced that this mafia is just one of many offshoots of a network of criminals linked to human, drug and arms trafficking. Any information beyond our control will jeopardize our lives and our ability to dismantle this horror web.

-I'll pass on the message.

Grey Cat said.

They went to the room where Jason was. He was staring at the ceiling and was already beginning to have fine tremors in his fingers

and dilated pupils. They put again the tape over his mouth and tied him to the bed.

-Jason. Think about names, places, dates and activities. Tomorrow you'll tell us everything. Even how you brush your teeth. Everything. If you don't, you will slowly end your days sinking in your own addiction and not taking advantage for once in your life, the opportunity to save hundreds of children from horror.

The next morning they began questioning him. John was taking notes. Jack was asking him questions. *Grey Cat* was busy sending coded messages through a young man who rode up to the farm on a bike.

In two days, Jason, increasingly shaking, sweating and in pain, told them a story of ten years of organized crime full of the most merciless horrors.

Jason was under the orders of a certain "Fat Godfrey", who lived in Johannesburg. He was a confidant of the white police and in return they left him alone with their dirty business. He had infiltrated the African National Congress and other anti-apartheid groups, and he had ratted out many freedom fighters. It was beginning to prove useful to fight this mafia together with the ANC. Jason received protection from Godfrey, false passports, weapons and secure contacts for drug trafficking. In exchange, they gave him half of what they made from their dirty business. Jason knew that Godfrey and his lieutenants had contacts in the South African military and in their support for RENAMO in Mozambique and UNITA in Angola. He had seen some, who were clearly targets from ex-Rhodesia. He also spoke of contacts for arms and for networks extending to other countries with a group called "Executive Outcomes", also called "EO", with offices in Johannesburg. Jason only mentioned that name, which he had heard several times but knew neither names, activities nor connections.

The plan to abduct girls and boys to Matabeleland came about through another business that had been developing over the past five years. It involved taking young people who had died of AIDS, to Matabeleland. They started with some who were addicted to drugs. Some had saved money to be taken to rest with their spirits. Jason, then a drug dealer under Godfrey's protection, managed to buy two old pick-up trucks and began to charge these dying men and their families to

return their bodies, gnawed by disease and drugs, to the lands of their ancestors. To do this he had allies in Beitbridge Customs and the South African police. He stripped them of everything they had and when they reached their *kraal* in Matabeleland or other regions of Zimbabwe, they blackmailed their families to give them even more of what little they had left.

They also started to control the *amacimbi* business, and poaching in the Matopos and Hwange parks, from where they brought elephant ivory for illegal sale all over the world, and rhino horns for the superstition business in China. Everything was controlled by Godfrey and he gave them protection through police bribes, weapons and contacts with the logistics of a group within the South African army that united the 32nd battalion and SWAPOL, and that they knew as "EO".

Grey Cat suspected that part of the money went to EO, protector of Godfrey and many other criminal clans, and allied with the white South African army and its guerrilla activities in Mozambique and Angola. They also supposed connections between EO and the company that monopolized the diamond business in the world, "De Beers". They had heard that De Beers controlled diamond mining in Southern Africa and, in exchange for protection from EO, exported them largely clandestinely to networks of Jewish traders in Antwerp, Belgium, the center of the world's billion-dollar diamond business. EO and its networks obtained part of the payment in diamonds with which they exchanged black market weapons and sold them in turn to bloodthirsty regimes or to no less violent guerrillas, or to both sides. There were also connections with Gadafi in Libya, a supplier of arms in exchange for clandestine diamonds or influence peddling, often in collusion with intelligence agents of the two blocs, American and Russian. It was a complicated web of crime, clandestine business, favors and intrigues, which fed the wars, big business for arms trafficking and a cover for the illegal trafficking of diamonds and other strategic minerals such as coltan in Goma or "rare earths" in Katanga. Luxury, the most sophisticated communication technologies, power of tyrants, prostitution and drug business, maintained a massive industry. Colossal profits, appalling grief of peoples ravaged by violence, bodies corroded by drugs, lives destroyed from early childhood by prostitution, rulers

and businessmen corrupted by money and blackmail, and thousands of criminals like Jason all over the world, slayers and victims at the same time. A whole deep and complex and horrible network that had infiltrated the world.

By the third day they had a list of thirty-three names and addresses, plus a phone book Jason had in his pants when he was taken out of Soweto. They were confident that the abducted Zimbabwean girls that Haka had listed in his notebook were in those houses and brothels. Jason had confessed that some children also went to luxury club destinations in Johannesburg where they were abused by perverts.

Haka was distressed that he could not alert the police of the whole plot as soon as possible and put an end to so much suffering. He knew that with Kate's help they could avoid the complacency of the police by the alert he was willing to sow in media and institutions around the world. They also wanted as soon as possible to prepare the return to Zimbabwe with the support of Minister Stamps.

However, almost all of the boys and some young girls had been taken out of Soweto through a contact of Godfrey they called Rambo. There was another plot to unravel. If they didn't tie up that end, it could vanish in smoke by alerting the police of the prostitution plot.

-We need to find out who this Rambo is. Any word, date, address, is important.

Haka said.

Grey Cat reflected:

-We cannot attack Fat Godfrey ourselves. He is protected by the white police and by groups we don't know much about, such as EO and possibly arms trafficking, diamond and guerrilla groups. He must be heavily armored and it won't be as easy as it was to catch Jason in his lair. There would be only one way: to take advantage of his status as a confidant of the African National Congress. We could summon him to a phantom meeting in which the armed struggle would supposedly be reorganized with the release of Mandela. We have to cast a foolproof hook. But even if we catch him, his net will react immediately. We are gambling our necks, or that the web will vanish, or both.

-We can't wait too long, we must soon tell what we know and strike a blow. The longer we wait, the more they will be on our heels, or the

more they will be ready to evade, transform, and even carry off or do even more damage to the children.

They sent envoys to continually follow Godfrey, and activated all their informants in Soweto to find out who that Rambo was. In the meantime, they also tried to get any information out of Jason concerning that Rambo. Going into his second withdrawal, Jason said that once they brought in six children between the ages of seven and twelve, Godfrey showed up at Jason's lair. His car had a flat tire and he seemed to be in a hurry. So instead of taking the children away in his black Mercedes as he had other times, he asked Jason to drive them to a wasteland near Soweto, where someone would pick up the children. He remembered, under pressure from Haka, that there was a small white van with a name on it: "New Dawn," Johannesburg.

Haka decided to go to Johannesburg to find out everything they could about that place. Within 24 hours, they would alert the police, in coordination with the press and international contacts, of everything they had. If there were any loose ends from other contacts, they would follow up later. They could not clear the world of crooks in two days. But they could save many of those girls and put public opinion through the media, and national and international decision-makers, on alert for that mafia.

Haka would leave with Jack, while *Grey Cat* and John would continue to guard Jason. John had prepared the report for Day 2, with full details of Jason's interrogation, in a separate report. It described Jason and his five allies, their details, addresses and dates of meetings, trips to Zimbabwe, routine meetings, possession of weapons and drugs. It also described the six brothels that housed at least sixty of the girls, aged between eleven and sixteen. They detailed the addresses, the dates they were taken, the people who ran those dens, and the money Jason and his cronies received from them. They also described the upper hierarchies of the mob: how he received protection from Godfrey, including guns, drugs, and complacency from police and customs, in exchange for money from prostitution, from drug sales. And how in that access to weapons and protection, EO seemed to be involved. They went no further in unraveling the network of contacts, influences and activities of EO in the rest of Africa, perhaps in the world. And the link with the clandestine trafficking of precious minerals, linked to very

powerful companies such as De Beers, and other billion dollar businesses.

Before Haka left, John gave him the report to take to Kate to update the report that would go to the police and others.

Haka feared something even scarier in the "New Dawn," and had only twenty hours to add the information that could save the children, at least those who were still alive.

They arrived at Kate's house. Jack was an expert at checking to see if they were being watched. It all seemed quiet. They went up to Kate's apartment, who greeted him with surprise, worried:

-Haka! What about John?! Has Plan A failed?

-No, don't worry. Let me introduce you to Jack, whom I already told you about in my report on day 0. Without him and how he mobilized the African National Congress, we could not have done anything.

-Pleased to meet you, Kate.

-Thank you, Jack. Your fight for justice could not ignore this horror, I knew you would pour in. Congratulations on Mandela's release. The world is watching South Africa very closely. There is much hope.

Haka updated Kate on all the findings, gave her the report that John had prepared and told her that they needed photos of each of those locations. Kate called several people to ask them to do that work very discreetly. Haka told her about the urgency of pulling the Rambo and "New Dawn" thread. He told her that they needed to investigate for the next twenty hours to add to the current report, any information they could get on the whereabouts or fate of the boys and some of the girls. He suggested they break the story to journalist and activist Nadine. Kate knew her and called her. She would come in the afternoon.

They would spend the morning researching New Dawn. Haka made a call to Beatriz in Brussels, another to Kate in Bulawayo, and the third to Nadine.

The fourth was made to the Johannesburg telephone operator, who informed him of the telephone number of "New Dawn".

-Good morning. Is it "New Dawn"?

-Yes, good morning, how can I help you?

-A relative of mine has a serious health problem, and I need to find the best possible treatment in South Africa.

-We do not treat patients directly. We are a referral center for prestigious physicians from all over the country and abroad.

-What kind of treatments do you provide?

-I am sorry, sir. I am not allowed to give you that information.

-Excuse me. I understand confidentiality. I will talk to my doctor.

Strange, what was that clinic about that could not disclose its treatments?

Kate stayed at the apartment making calls to find out all she could about the center and what possible connection it might have with the children.

The operator had also given them the address. Haka and Jack headed there. They should exercise caution. It was clear that they did not serve the public directly.

It was a modern three-story building in downtown Johannesburg. There was no sign on the outside. The windows were smoked. There was a security buzzer, with a camera. Next to the entrance, a ramp led down to a garage.

Jack went to an adjoining building, to inspect the back of the building. It was an insurance company. He asked at the front desk for the life insurance department and was able to get lost down the fire stairs, trying to get to the back yard.

Meanwhile, Haka hid behind a dumpster at the bottom of the garage ramp. He was carrying his backpack with his Makarov, camera and recorder. His plan was to wait for someone to enter the garage, and slip inside the building without being seen.

In the meantime, Jack had climbed up to the roof of the insurance company and had been able to jump up to the roof of "New Dawn" even though the exit door to the roof was closed. He spotted a metal ladder and began to descend the three floors to the backyard, taking great care not to be seen.

While waiting for his chance, Haka discreetly opened the container and saw black bags. He opened one of them and saw that there were bloody gauze, suture remnants, bandages, empty bottles of antiseptics, empty vials of an anesthetic: *ketamine*, and also vials of a drug he had

not heard of before: cyclosporine. He also saw that there were empty serum bottles, used paper from electrocardiograms, and miscellaneous papers. On a piece of one of them he could identify the letters :...*HLA patiblity*.

It all fit Haka's worst-case scenario: organ transplants were performed at the clinic. The vials were of anesthetics and immunosuppressants to prevent rejection. Children were the source of organs for clients selected by "prestigious doctors," most likely for high fees. Haka felt his heart pounding as he suspected that child trafficking was linked to organ trafficking. He didn't know whether to investigate further in the few hours he had or simply spread the information they already had, even though no data was conclusive of anything. Haka decided he needed more evidence, some documents, photographs or conversations. Some trace of the children. He checked that there was a camera monitoring the garage entrance. He was able to access the connection cable and cut it with his Swiss Army knife. Possibly this would alert security, but he had to try.

A few minutes later he heard a car approaching the garage entrance. He hid behind the dumpster. The door opened with a remote control. The car, a silver BMW 625, pulled into the garage. Haka had a couple of seconds to check that the car turned a downhill to the right and he would have a few seconds between getting out of the driver's line of sight and the door closing automatically. It was ten-thirty in the morning. He walked down the ramp when he heard that the engine had stopped and the car door had opened and closed. He took a picture of the car and the license plate. He found a staircase next to the elevator, indicating that it was going up: lower, first, second, third. He climbed the stairs. He couldn't go out on any floor without going unnoticed. It was too dangerous. Besides, he sensed Jack's movements. He climbed up to the roof. He was lucky. The interior latch was manual. He opened it. He heard a movement. After a while Jack came out, hiding behind a chimney. With gestures, Jack indicated the metal ladder and they saw that in the backyard there was another container.

They slowly made their way down the interior metal staircase. Haka instructed Jack to go down to the courtyard and scrutinize the container. Haka slowly made his way down, trying to find out something of what was going on inside. On the third floor, where the

BMW driver had arrived, he could see through the window, with curtains ajar, an operating room, and a nurse dressed for surgery. He was able to take a picture, although no details could be discerned. He lingered for a few minutes when he overheard a conversation. He did not understand the language they were speaking. He registered it for an eternal five minutes, with his tape recorder. They continued downstairs and saw a child on a bed on the second floor. He appeared to be asleep. An obese woman was beside him reading what looked like notes on a piece of paper. He took another picture. On the first floor he saw an office, reception and a room that looked like a laboratory. He took another picture. He got to where Jack was. He saw that he was kind of paralyzed. His lips were trembling. He could not speak. With a gesture he told him to look inside the container bag, which was ajar.

As he did so, he saw the body of a child, with an incision in his abdomen and his eyelids sewn shut. He felt the deepest sadness and rage he had ever felt in his life. They were going to do the same to the child waiting in his sleep. Again the dilemma, uncover him now and alert the rest of the gang and possibly lose track of the other children, or wait for the police to surround them, with the press as witnesses.

-Jack, we can't let them murder that child. We're going to stop this, block the cameras, and stop these killers by tying them up. I've got a gun and duct tape. When we've stopped it, we call Kate. Plan B now. And we disappear. If they don't do what they have to do, we'll put the world on notice.

-Go get them, Haka. *Amandhla!*

They forced the window from the courtyard to the first floor. They put on masks and Haka pointed the Makarov at the woman at the reception desk. They told her to disconnect the cameras and then bound her with tape and gagged her. They did the same to two people in the lab, two nurses on the second floor where the child was sedated, and two other nurses and two doctors in the operating room and one more person in the intensive care ward. Before leaving, Haka copied all the information on the hard drive of a computer by the operating room onto several *floppy* disks and made a whole reel of photos of every corner of the clinic.

Then they called Kate:

-Plan B in five minutes, as urgent as possible. And total secret anonymity.

Jack got out first and brought the car into the driveway. Haka got out with the sedated child in his arms and tucked him discreetly into the back seat. He locked the door from the outside, to prevent anyone, still tied up, from getting out before the police arrived. They left for Kate's apartment.

Kate had adapted the letter, left it in the mailboxes of the police and the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health, then alerted each institution by an anonymous call, filtered with a damp cloth, advising them of the letter, which was very urgent. It took exactly twelve minutes to do so. She had summoned the journalist Nadine urgently, in view of the change of plans. At that time Haka and Jack arrived with the child at the apartment. They let him come out of sleep by putting him in Kate's bed.

Kate developed the photographs in black and white in her small home lab. They were important for the press. They had television and radio hooked up. The note to the police said that if they did not carry out and warn of the raid within two hours, the media would be activated. It was an hour and a half away.

They prepared the letter in detail, photos, addresses, data for the press. They called *Grey Cat* and John, and told them in code:

- "Plan B for children in danger". Maintain anonymity from Jason. He is to be left bound and gagged at the agreed point to be reported to the police.

They listened to the tape recorder. Kate identified the language as Hebrew, but they could not understand what they were saying. They went on to read the *floppy* disks: there was correspondence, accounting, a phone and address book, databases of materials and purchases of medical supplies, of the center's staff, of doctors in hospitals in South Africa and the most important: transplants performed, and two other terrible lists: one with children with number codes, and their HLA genetic system, identified in that death lab, and another with some four hundred names, ages, addresses, organ pending transplant and HLA. He saw that almost all the names corresponded to people in Israel.

By then, they saw the news on television:

-Police in South Africa have uncovered a prostitution network that they had been investigating for several months. Thirteen people responsible for these businesses and some sixty young women, many of them illegal immigrants from Zimbabwe, have been arrested. They have also closed a private clinic due to official registration problems, pending clarification of administrative problems.

They released a short video showing the arrest of Jason, some of his lieutenants and the heads of three brothels, in addition to putting the girls, painted and wearing provocative clothes, in police vans. Among them he recognized Buhleve Nkosi. The angel was free.

They feared it. The police claimed success, and they were limited to arresting Jason and his plot, without going any higher. What's more, they were arresting the victims! Helen would talk to Minister Stamps about this and ask for the repatriation of the girls, and an explanation to the racist police for the treatment of these abducted minors as criminals.

But the terrible thing was that they barely touched the case of the clinic. I was sure it was because there were very big fish linked to that hospital. Possibly they had already threatened the media.

While Kate went to deliver the international letters very carefully, as the mailboxes were maybe watched by the police, the sedated child began to wake up.

-Umama. *Ubaba. Ngiyalapa.* (Mother, Father. I am afraid.)

XLVI. A toast to love without fear. Rome, 1992

AFTER SPEAKING with the Pope at St. Mary's Cathedral in Bulawayo, and much to the bishop's dismay, Patxi contacted Kevin and together they prepared a trip, paid for by the Vatican, to go and speak with Cardinal Ratzinger, defender of the principles of the Christian Faith as interpreted by the Catholic hierarchy. They hoped to speak with a group of cardinals, with a representative group of Jesuits around Father Arrupe, "the black pope", and even with some representatives of congregations of missionary friars and nuns, scattered around the world.

Patxi said goodbye to NoLwasi, with whom he lived in the most beautiful harmony, to Anwele, recovered and strong in her crusade against the epidemic and Jonay, already so integrated, so loved, so dedicated to his patients and to the community.

He flew to Johannesburg where he had a stopover and was joined by Kevin. At the airport and on the long trip to Rome, Patxi and Kevin were preparing a report on "AIDS, Prevention and the Responsibility of the Catholic Church". Patxi had prepared a compelling report on the epidemic from data that Mann sent to Aimsa and she, who was already corresponding frequently with the mission, to Jonay. He prepared a shocking summary of the estimated number of infected, sick and dead; of the access to treatment that mitigated the progression in rich countries but denied to the poor; and of the knowledge of the virus, its forms of transmission and infection. They strategically compared the epidemic and the mechanisms of transmission with other infections. He cleverly focused on comparing it to hepatitis infection, without the moralizing stigma of AIDS, and with the same health and life threatening consequences in the absence of condom use. Kevin had thoroughly prepared the canon law references to human reproduction and sexual relations, including their adaptations following the Vatican Council and recent encyclicals. They also analyzed the Church's two thousand year commitment to the defense of life and the "grave historical error" of not responding with the same defense of life in this, the worst epidemic in history. They concluded by estimating the population in Africa that declared itself Catholic and that which attended schools and mission hospitals. With this they could estimate

the effect it would have in preventing infections and deaths targetting the people in which the Church had a direct effect through education and health services. They concluded that if the Church accepted condom use for medical reasons such as AIDS and actively promoted it, it could prevent some two million new infections a year, which, under current circumstances, amounted to slow agonies. Every day that this human, Christian and ethical decision was delayed, the Church allowed six thousand people to become infected in ignorance or by preventing their access to condoms.

If the occasion arose, they would also speak of the Church's moral responsibility to stand up to monopolies alienated by greed, which put billion-dollar businesses before the lives of people. They had written to the ecumenical magazine *Contact* to publish an article with all this information.

Besides the challenge of trying to change the Church direction, led more by Ratzinger than by the Pope himself, Patxi was to face a very singular emotion. They must have already been flying over the Great Lakes when he took an envelope sent from Brussels:

Kaiko Anaya⁷ Patxi

We are both more than half a century old, and half of that time we have spent apart. We have hardly seen each other during father's birthdays, and since he died, RIP, even less.

I must confess that it was largely my fault. You wrote me some letters from the seminary, from Africa, and I preferred not to answer you. I want to tell you why, dear brother:

As you know or perhaps you have suspected, through my studies and my life in Pamplona, I got involved in Opus Dei. I found in the Order the human values with which I wanted to live, the support for my studies and the role I wanted to give to my work in society. However, the Order was very suspicious of communication with the family, they checked the letters and controlled our relationships. I feared for Juan Mari's life: in the Order there were very powerful people close to Franco's regime. Any letter that came with a comment on Juan Mari and his activities could have compromised him and the whole family. I

⁷ Dear brother, in Basque

decided, therefore, to keep my distance, only to see each other at celebrations or family gatherings, to hope that in the future things would be easier and to pray every day for all of you.

Then came the death of Franco, the democratic transition and Juan Mari's new life. But silence had already grown between our lives and had turned us into strangers. I felt both guilt and emptiness when I thought of how to seek a reunion. The time has come. I am no longer afraid.

When I received the letters from Juan Mari and his fight against child trafficking, and your letters in which you told me how life had been going in the mission, and what you knew about Josu and Jon, I felt a mixture of pride towards my brothers and an enormous nostalgia of not being closer. Besides, I realize that I have lived with an enormous fear of what people will say in the Order. Recently, inspired by your fight against AIDS, I have raised with the Order questions about my work in the European Commission and the guidelines I must follow. I am confused by the pressure from the Order and other Christian circles to favor companies around them, to support conservative parties that basically favor the rich and, through your ideas and fears, which I share, brother, the positions on condoms. In the face of my alleged disloyalty, they have been summoning me to speak with spiritual masters and have even pressured me to see a psychologist who is linked to the Order. They will not see this letter. Anaya, I want to leave the Order. I feel like a prisoner.

In addition, there is something else that is very difficult to explain and before which our values since childhood and the reference of the Church, makes me feel dirty, sinful and even "sick". I tell you about it because I think you will understand me. I have been learning about NoLwasi and I know that in spite of the Church or precisely because of it, you bet bravely for love.

Before arriving in Brussels, I met a woman from Senegal. She was raped near Pamplona and I helped her to continue her pregnancy and to see a future with her child. Since then, I have been assisting her. It is another point of conflict, because I give to the order all my salary and I have to sneak around to have another account, divert some parts of the salary and help my friend and her child. She has been coming to

see me in Brussels and I have been coming to see them in Pamplona. And something more than friendship has been developing between us.

That is why I am writing to you now, Anaya. As I want to break chains, I need your guidance and advice, your brotherly love. Your life and dedication to others is an example to me. It has influenced my life, my Faith, my vocation. But now, just as you rebel against the Church's doctrine on AIDS, I feel doubts about the way the Order is acting, and I feel trapped. I need to see you.

As you said in your letter that you will go to Rome, I have booked a flight to coincide those days with you and talk about so many things. I hope you have time for your sister, who needs you very much.

Oh, and as soon as we go to the farmhouse together, I bet I'll beat you down the ladder from the attic and get the first sapaburu in the well!

With all my love, your sister,

Beatriz

Patxi folded the letter and put it back in the envelope. He was thrilled. As when Juan Mari had written to him. Somehow the three of them had committed themselves to their ideas through obedience to different structures. And the three of them had been entering into a crisis with dogmas, with hierarchies and with the lack of freedom. Freedom to think, to fight without fear.

And, in Beatriz's case and his, to love.

He found it difficult to understand homosexuality. On the one hand it was strange in his life, although he knew of several friars and priests who had homosexual relationships. As a man, and with a liberated attraction to women, he did not conceive of the image of two men or two women physically united, physically loving each other. He acknowledged that he felt a kind of rejection of that image. Besides, the Church considered it a disease. But on the other hand, he had seen in those fellow homosexual friars, great people, full of sensitivity and love for others. And also, who were they hurting? It was the same as his love for NoLwasi and the taboo against that love was just as absurd, unjust and even cruel, as the prejudice against the incipient homosexual love of his sister, also full of love. And courage.

They arrived in Rome and settled in a Jesuit residence. Shortly afterwards, Beatriz arrived. She called from the reception. When she came down, she saw her sister, twenty years after their last gathering at the family farmhouse. She was past fifty. Her hair was gray and pulled back in a ponytail. Her girlish coils were still reflected in a little curly rebellion at her temples. Her face was sweet, serene, with a kind, warm, almost shy smile. Time had sown furrows in her forehead, more than in her cheeks or eyes. He imagined she had had more worries than joys, more furrowed brows than laughter in her eyes or lips, perhaps more fear than love. She was thin and dressed in a way that hid her figure and her femininity. Curiously, Patxi felt like going for a walk with her, buying her clothes and making her feel more like a woman, more beautiful, more attractive to men. Well, or women.

-My dear sister, what a blissful day!

Beatriz was looking at him. She saw her handsome brother, strong, with a face full of strength and a guise that shone hope and life, as she almost never saw in her work in Brussels. She was moved. Her eyes were moist with emotion. She could not say a word. She could only approach him and embrace him as she had longed for so long.

Beatriz moved into a room in the Jesuit residence. She wanted to avoid being under the control of the Order in one of their residences in Rome, which she knew would bring her consequences, although she no longer feared them.

They chatted about everything, rambling around Rome. Patxi told her about his life in Saint Joseph, about his blending with the Ndebele, about his struggle against the government at one time and the diocese more recently. And he told her about NoLwasi. Beatriz felt relieved and told him about her life, her time in Pamplona, her work in the Commission, her difficulties with the Order and above all, about Meimuna and little Mohamed-Jesus, "Moyes".

-What two sinful religious persons!

Patxi joked. He encouraged her to go into a bar in Rome, they ordered a lambrusco and Patxi offered a toast:

-For love, without fear, without borders!

Kevin had gone to see companions of his order and the Cardinal of South Africa, with whom, despite his dissent, he had a good

relationship and believed he supported his cause. They met in the evening in Trastevere, in the Roman Church of St. Egidio, where Kevin had some friends who were very committed to the liberation of Mozambique and the fight against AIDS. In the Church and in the whole neighborhood, the San Egidio community welcomed undocumented immigrants and even helped them in their demands and their squatting movements. In their projects in Mozambique they had collaborated in the process of freedom of the people and peace with RENAMO, financed for fifteen years by apartheid South Africa to overthrow the African government after Mozambique's independence from the Portuguese. In those days a peace agreement was being signed between RENAMO and FRELIMO, thanks to the mediation of the St. Egidio community. They had lunch with lay members of the community, undocumented immigrants and homeless people. They sang at the end of the meal with guitars: "*Oh bella ciao, bella ciao*".

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had left a letter with the day's agenda, very meticulously detailed. They were summoned to pray lauds in the chapel of the palace of the Holy Office and then have breakfast while exchanging the first ideas with the cardinal and his team. Afterwards they would have meetings with the cardinals in charge of the doctrinal, matrimonial and disciplinary sections. Patxi and Kevin had foreseen those meetings and had prepared arguments tailored to each of the functions of those commissions. After these interviews they would have a meeting in Cardinal Ratzinger's office. The note made it clear that they were not to speak to other groups or individuals prior to the discussion, and that after the morning meetings, the instructions would be clear. The letter also stated laconically that the Pope regretted not having the time he would have wished to receive them in audience.

From the tone and agenda, they knew it was not going to be easy. Surely Ratzinger would impose his role and make it clear that they were the ones who warned and corrected deviations from the Church's doctrine, and they did not welcome other arguments from anyone. Not to see anyone else: fear of thought and debate in freedom. Not even the eighteen cardinal members of the Congregation, which they had explicitly requested. And distance from the Pope to avoid any harmful ideas beyond the Cardinal's control.

Beatriz would stay at the residence. At lunchtime they would also meet Rob's friend, Aimsa, who would fly with them back to Bulawayo the next day.

The following morning, they joined the prayers of lauds in the palace of the Holy Office, in the Vatican. During breakfast they already noticed an atmosphere of strong submission to the Cardinal, with no room to raise alternatives to the doctrine, which was clearly stated by Ratzinger, with Latin quotations from multiple encyclicals and biblical references. The meetings with the cardinals of the commissions that had decided on the agenda were also overwhelming, with no room for dialogue. They seemed like monologues of wake-up calls and warnings of temptation. But the worst of the morning was the final interview with the cardinal in charge of the disciplinary commission: Patxi presented the situation of the epidemic, the biology of the virus, the parallels with other infections and the equivalent of condoms to vaccines. Kevin spoke about the interpretation of canon law and the Vatican council. They dared to refer about the responsibility for six thousand infections and deaths a day. The Cardinal responded sharply. He told them that their minds were obfuscated in science without understanding the transcendence of trivializing intimate, reproductive relationships blessed to give life. That their ideas could lead the Church to a breakdown of its principles of faith and life. He told them to reflect, not to spread those sinful ideas and that, on the contrary, they should think about giving up their habits. He also told them that Cardinal Ratzinger had "more important things to do," and would not be able to see them again.

As they left that palace of oppression, Kevin and Patxi had their fists clenched in rage. Kevin said they should organize a revolution within the Church, that they could not tolerate such dictatorship, such "passive genocide." Patxi reassured him. They would do it little by little, acting in conscience, speaking openly from their missions and not in that Rome of luxury, power and chains to the past. After all, they had just left the heir of the Holy Inquisition, the same one that had tortured, burned and murdered tens of thousands of people for thinking differently from the Church.

-Patxi. We cannot be discouraged. The lives of hundreds of thousands, or millions of people are at stake. Remember how this same

congregation excommunicated Galileo, for thinking that the sun was the center of the universe, and not the Earth.

-Did you read that Ratzinger recently said, after five years of work by a commission, that in Galileo's time the Church was much more faithful to reason than Galileo himself and that the process against Galileo was reasonable and just? It was the time when non-believers or people who questioned the dogmas were tortured, burned and killed all over Europe.

-We don't have to go back centuries, Patxi. Not long ago Ratzinger spoke of homosexuality as a sin, amoral and somehow justified violence against people with these tendencies.

Patxi thought of Beatriz. And also of the Church's condemnation of those who did not respect the vow of chastity, like himself with NoLwasi. What were they doing under those inhuman hierarchies, so far from the genuine message of Jesus' love?

-Yes, it's terrible. The Pope seems more sensitive. In fact, he recently asked forgiveness for the mistakes made by the men of the Church throughout history, as well as for having failed to do the necessary good for Jews and other persecuted minorities. Have you read the letter the Pope sent to the cardinals in which the Pope exhorts the Church to recognize the mistakes made and to humbly repent?

-No, I haven't read the diocesan bulletin for a long time, it makes me sad.

-I am sure, Patxi, that what is happening now will be recognized in time.

-But Kevin: it has taken four hundred years to recognize the error in excommunicating and accusing Galileo. How many people can die in that time because of this closed-mindedness with AIDS? If Humanity survives this epidemic to which economic and religious power turns its back.

On their way out, they saw St. Peter's Basilica from the outside. They preferred not to enter.

They had arranged to meet Beatriz and Aimsa at the Roman Church of San Egidio.

XLVII. Alliances without spotlight or glory. Florence, 1992

IT WAS JUNE 1992. By then, Aimsa was already well known in AIDS activism, for the rights of HIV-positive people, and against pharmaceutical monopolies.

Princess Diana of the United Kingdom was to participate in a conference in London calling for compassion and prevention of discrimination against people infected with AIDS. The organizers had invited Aimsa to participate. She was hesitant but accepted, on her first stop, on her way to her longed-for Zimbabwe.

Freddy Mercury had died, very possibly of AIDS, shortly after recording the anthem for the Barcelona Olympic Games, in which the great American basketball star Magic Johnson, who had just declared himself infected with AIDS, was participating. The Act-Up organization had invited her to give a conference in Barcelona, together with Magic Johnson, in defense of the rights of infected people and the barriers in accessing treatment. She was also embarrassed and apprehensive of the show that the fight against AIDS was becoming, but she accepted. Aimsa sensed that those were opportunities to speak her mind compellingly.

Jonathan Mann, from Geneva, had encouraged her to go to the International AIDS Congress in Florence and to work with him on the Global AIDS Program. She had read the Convention on the Rights of the Child and contacted the mind and heart behind it, Marta Santos, heading the Inocenti institute in Florence.

She had been corresponding for more than two years with Father Patxi and lately with Dr. Jonay, with whom he had been deepening her understanding of what most concerned and motivated her at that time in her determined struggle for a better world: the situation of AIDS orphans in Africa. Patxi would be in Rome speaking to the Faith Commission about the tragic effects of the Catholic Church's objection to the use of condoms to prevent infection and defeat the terrible plague. She also knew of Patxi's brother's fight against child trafficking. She had read an article by Donald Woods in Newsweek about the horrors of child trafficking, where he anonymously portrayed a hero who stood up to the mafias, which she suspected was Patxi's brother. She had also been horrified by the story of organ trafficking and the

open ramifications of that horror, which was also being unmasked by brave anonymous people, by a South African journalist and activist with whom she felt a mysterious fellow feeling, Nadine.

Patxi and Jonay had invited her to get to know the situation by spending as much time as she wanted at the mission.

Aimsa had had suggestions from many of the organizations she collaborated with in the United States, to work with their groups in Africa. However, she preferred to decline contracts on projects with those organizations and alike. She needed to be devoid of any filters, even security, to submerge herself without protocols or rules into the world of AIDS orphans in Africa. She felt it was the most heartbreaking cry of Humanity, and she had to be there. In the "epicenter of the pandemic", in that corner of the world between Bulawayo, Soweto and Francistown, where one in three adults were condemned to death by the alliance of a virus and human rights-destroying capitalism.

Aimsa used almost all of her scholar savings on a one-way trip to Africa, with stops in London, Barcelona, Florence and Rome, to learn about the latest hopes and struggles against the pandemic.

She left her sailboat, which she eventually inherited from the former owners, to some folks at Food First. She then said goodbye to Berkeley's political and human rights department, and set out on her long journey. She took the Bart across and under the bay she used to sail, to the San Francisco international airport.

The world was in turmoil after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Gorbachev declared the dissolution of the Soviet Union while Yelstin took over the power in Russia. Within months, former Soviet republics were developing in independent states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Communism was crumbling and only an alternative political form remained, intertwined with rampant free market in China, and small redoubts such as North Korea, Albania or Cuba, which resisted, compromising democracy and some freedoms, to a world that was already advancing riding on the "Washington consensus" towards a capitalism without limits or controls.

While flying to New York, Aimsa read with interest the peace accords between the government of El Salvador and the guerrillas. She remembered the alliance in which she collaborated, at the beginning of her time at Berkeley, with the struggle for the freedom of those brave

people. She felt a brief burst of hope at seeing how a small group of men in a small country had managed to subdue the dictatorship and resist the great American power. She also read with interest how a treaty turned an economic and commercial union in Europe into a European Union with political and social dimensions as well. However, she felt some uneasiness when she sensed the giants of the United States, allied in dominant capitalist blocs remained almost unopposed by collective ideologies; betrayed by dictatorial communisms and now surrendered to capitalism. Rob had provided her with a copy of the last issue of *Pravda*, the voice of the Soviet communist revolution for 80 years. The end of an era in Humanity was thus certified.

Aimsa always traveled to AIDS meetings with her own savings. She felt it was dishonest to use public or private subsidies for such trips, while so many patients were dying for lack of access to vital medicines. She had continued to use the *couch-surfing* network, whereby she had hosted several people from different parts of the world on her sailboat in the Berkeley marina.

Now she had been able to get, through the incipient internet system, welcoming homes on her European stopovers to avoid going to hotels and share with willing people, the beautiful side of her journeys.

When she arrived in London, she returned to stay in the Islington district, in an old three-story house where John, a master craftsman who reminded Aimsa of the allegorical image of Gepetto, the noble craftsman in Pinocchio, offered a room. He lived with his wife, Helen, and offered a room in exchange for pleasant gatherings of sentiments from different parts of the world.

She attended the conference in which the press and television cameras swarmed to record Princess Diana, who told how she had just come from visiting Mother Teresa in Calcutta and boasted of "daring to shake hands", again, "with AIDS patients". This was considered "heroic" by the press, which fed the legend of a woman who was also being pursued in the now open mutual infidelities of the heirs to that archaic and absurd "crown".

Aimsa found the show surrounding that conference, at the luxurious Astoria Hotel in London, repugnant. She had once considered that the power of the media around gestures and personalities like that

"princess" could help to de-stigmatize the plague. But now she wondered: does the end justify the means? And in this case, the means extolled an anachronistic lineage of power and luxury.

Well knowing she would not be invited back, when asked to say a few words, she explained the struggle in America for the rights of infected people over the last ten years. She began to see "eyebrows rising" as she explained how the economic power of pharmaceutical companies, including in the nearby Wellcome buildings, ignored human suffering because of unchecked greed. When it seemed to be over and the Crown's advisors, representatives of the British government and the aristocracy guests, thought to be relieved by the end of statement from that unruly activist, she said:

-Let me also tell you something, Mrs. Diana.

A buzz was felt in the room and the cameras, at that moment looking for famous faces and gossiping about the tailors who had designed the models for the occasion, focused on Aimsa and Diana:

-AIDS, like other diseases that kill thousands of people in the world every day, is due to the horrible social injustices in the world. About thirty years ago, a fellow countryman of mine who had studied law a mile from here said, "*When I have more than I need and my brother does not have enough to live on, I am robbing him.*"

At that moment she paused and looked at the princess and continued to look at the aristocracy present at that spectacle.

-Mrs. Diana: there is unworthy poverty because there is obscene wealth. Your in-laws' wealth could pay for all the AIDS treatments in Africa. But it is protected to trail a life of luxury and power, rather than, as so many other fortunes should also do, be redistributed to avoid so much suffering. I cannot understand how luxury can claim to lead the relief of suffering, ignoring the causes of the injustice of poverty. As the Brazilian Bishop Helder Camara says: "*when I give bread to a poor person they call me a saint, but if I ask why the poor have no bread, they call me a communist*". I know that this message is "politically incorrect" and I thank you for allowing me to speak without screening my speech first. I guess it won't happen again.

There was a murmur. Aimsa was staring with a smile of tenderness that tried to break through the princess's armor of protocol. Diana, to

whom her chief of staff was whispering something in her ear, blushed and smiled slightly at Aimsa. She winked at her. She knew that deep down, the woman was a victim of this "golden cage". A few people started a timid applause, but soon the able emcee called the director of the Wellcome Foundation to the podium. As she left the dais, two people asked Aimsa to follow them. They identified themselves as Scotland Yard officers and told her they needed to check her papers. They took her in a car to offices opposite Westminster where they told her they could prosecute her for defamation of the Crown, but that if she left the country soon and did not stir up the press any more, they would file the case. Aimsa told them she was flying to Barcelona the next morning as she had more important things to do than delve into the anachronism of a hereditary luxury, although she would have loved to hear that "defamation" fantasy.

On his next stop, Aimsa arrived in Barcelona to participate in another show, this time around the declaration of being infected, by the famous leader of the American basketball "*dream team*", Magic Johnson. She was more interested in this meeting because she thought that the courage to declare himself publicly infected, without fear of moralistic criticism from some parts of society, deserved recognition and she wanted to encourage many people to follow this example of courage. However, when she arrived in Barcelona she was met by a person from the organizing committee and was informed that "for scheduling reasons" her participation in the meeting had been cancelled. She understood better when she saw that the Spanish monarchy was sponsoring the conference. She responded with a smile:

-I see that communication among European royals is fast and efficient. Or maybe it has CIA support?

She dedicated her frustrated stopover in Barcelona to watch astonished how that beautiful city celebrating the Olympic Games was the center of the world's media attention. On the one hand, she was fascinated by the splendor of such an event, undoubtedly beautiful and a reflection of what creativity and human effort were capable of. However, such an expense next to the poverty of her native India or that which awaited her in Africa, brought mixed feeling to her heart.

She stayed at the house of a violin student, Josep, near the Rambla and instead of attending the show where she was banned from, she

strolled through the Gothic quarter of Barcelona, dazzled by its beauty and the multicolored rivers of races flowing through its narrow streets. She bought a newspaper in which she could understand in Spanish the words of a writer, named Gala, in his speech to an AIDS congress: "*soon there will be more people living from AIDS than dying from AIDS*". Aimsa thought it was an exaggeration to put Africa into the equation, but it truly reflected the show and the nest of interests that the disease was becoming to be in the rich countries. She knew that in Spain the tragedy of AIDS was intertwined with the poverty and marginalization, cause and consequence of drug addictions, and while she was thinking about it, she heard the song "*que te puedo dar*" (what can I give you) by spanish musician Victor Manuel. Even without understanding it well, she was shaken by the pain it conveyed. In the evening she asked Josep about the meaning of that song and felt the deep pain of the mothers of drug addicts being infected by AIDS. They ended the evening with a chat about beauty and Josep played the melody of Schindler's List.

The next day she flew to Florence. She was amazed as she strolled through the city, crossed the Ponte Viecho and admired, still with her anti-megalomaniac sensibility, the *Bella Signora*, that majestic cathedral of white stones, and the sculptures scattered throughout the city. In the house of the Medici (as Dianne princesses of four centuries ago), she was able to admire the sculptures of Michelangelo. She was amazed by the perfection of *The David*, but she felt something much more profound when she approached *The Pietà*, at that time exhibited in Florence: when she saw the image of that mother's pain, she thought of "what can I give you" and, again, of the pain of mothers when they saw their children agonizing. She thought of the millions of mothers who were destined to that pain. Mary's face reflected the deepest tearing of the soul.

As she thought about it, almost absorbed and paralyzed for more than ten minutes by so much beauty and by such tragedy, she thought about the moralistic absurdity of stigmatizing and blaming so many people agonizing over illness and reflecting so faithfully the passion of Jesus. The pain of his mother.

From there she left for the international AIDS congress to which Jonathan Mann had invited her to participate in a round table on AIDS

rights. She had already witnessed such a conference in Atlanta and in London, paying her own way and overtly saying what she felt, with no political or academic clues, but her testimony of injustice. Each year the conference gathered more people and she began to feel that it was missing the point. She wanted to talk to Jonathan, but he was always surrounded by ministers and power people, inaccessible. When it was her turn at the round table, with other representatives of civil associations, AIDS patients, governments and the United Nations, she explained the abuses of the rights of people with AIDS through stigma and discrimination. Everything was in tune with the other presentations until she followed with two arguments inspired by her correspondence with Jonay, which caused a stir in the congress:

-Just as we defend the right to access to information, prevention, treatment, care and social support for people infected with the AIDS virus, we must do the same, with the same energy, with the same determination, in defending the right to health for all diseases. We must avoid creating a reign of privilege around AIDS. The right to health, endorsed by almost all the countries of the world in the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, except for countries like the one I come from which shamefully avoid signing it, is universal. We cannot worry about a man with AIDS in a village in Malawi, and ignore the agony of a woman with diabetes next door.

Murmur in the room.

-And let me say something even more politically incorrect:

Silence expectant.

-This congress already brings together almost ten thousand people every year. And more and more. If you calculate with me the prices of tickets, of registration to the congress, of the luxurious hotels or restaurants where many of you are staying or eating these days, it could be close to thirty million dollars. That money could pay for the treatment of the million people who today need treatment if the AIDS drug companies, which have already earned a hundred times the amount they invested in its research, would sell it with a margin of only ten percent of its production cost or allow the generic drug factories to do so. I want no more part of this waste as long as there is such immense pain.

She left the room, the pavilion and the congress. She felt bad. She was not belligerent and in exposing her differences she felt a tearing pain in the harmony she truly sought with her brothers, with all Humanity. But she had to say what she felt when, worse than in other ways, she was always ignored. Besides, her destiny was in the South, with the people, with their suffering, far from those spotlights, from the obscene luxury disguised as solidarity.

Aimsa continued walking through beautiful Florence until she arrived at what was the first known orphanage of mankind in Piazza della Santissima Annunziata, the Istituto degli Inocenti. She felt a deep commitment to the challenge of the millions of orphans that the epidemic was beginning to cause. She had agreed to meet there with a person who had strongly influenced the drafting and adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As she stood on the porches of that building full of history, she saw a small, almost frail person, but with an infinite kindness in her eyes. She proposed to talk to her while walking through that beautiful building, with so much wisdom of time.

-Marta, I have read about your work during the last ten years until the Convention on the Rights of the Child was approved. I congratulate you for your struggle.

-Aimsa, I beg you not to see it that way. I do nothing more than thousands of anonymous people in their daily struggle, without spotlights or glory. They are the real leads and the children who suffer from poverty, abuse, the forgetfulness of the world, are the real heroes.

-I grew up collecting garbage with my mother in Bombay and then alone, after my mother disappeared, probably due to violence on a train, surviving with groups of children on the streets of Calcutta. I want to devote myself to the fight against AIDS and especially its impact on children. I want you to advise me, Marta, to guide me.

Marta looked at Aimsa, the two gazes of those brave women in the face of a cruel world, merged in a deep connection and embraced each other. Words were needless. The alliance was sealed.

XLVIII. The skein of evil. Qunu, South Africa, 1992

Thulani, ufana wami (My son, be calm).

HAKA HAD approached the child they rescued from the transplant clinic. He reassured him and gave him water. His gaze was lost in infinity. He slept on. The news was talking about the police raid on the underage brothels and images of Jason and his cronies and the freed girls were coming up. On the clinic side, and in a disconnected way, there were reports of "temporary closure due to irregularities".

At that moment, journalist and activist Nadine arrived. Haka was impressed by her beauty and the strength of her gaze. Haka and Kate brought her up to date, showed her the dossier prepared for the press and what the police had done with the information.

-It is clear that the police were afraid of the independent press speaking out and questioning corruption or complacency with crime involving immigrants or revolutionary circles. With Mandela negotiating openness with De Klerk and the Inkhata attacking the African National Congress in collusion with the police, they are very careful. But the ostracism about the clinic speaks to the fact that interests or direct interventions by senior police or government officials are at play there. Surely some children have already been killed and pulling the thread would compromise high-ranking officials, even outside the country. We have to transcribe the conversation in Hebrew that I recorded at the clinic.

-Haka, you have done an amazing job. Those girls will go back to their homes. This will help the liberation process of our people. The government cannot continue to spread its propaganda of Zimbabwe's "dirty" politics or label the African National Congress as "terrorists". This news will help set the record straight: police negligence, exploitation of minor immigrants, poverty and exclusion of many people. I will follow the news and complement what the police do not want to say. But your anonymity is essential. They can threaten me but they know me all over the country. They will not dare to attack me.

-Thank you Nadine. I want you to make sure that all the girls on my list appear. There may be more girls from South Africa, Mozambique or elsewhere. Kate, I want you to go with the little boy to

Zimbabwe once we talk to him tomorrow and have more information about the transplant plot. There I want you to work with Helen from Bulawayo and in connection with Minister Stamps to get all the girls repatriated, back home and help their families. Help the Zimbabwean government ask for substantial compensation from South Africa to help the affected families and all those in the country who are suffering from AIDS. I suggest that you set up with that money a Foundation for "Orphaned and Vulnerable Children Affected by AIDS", and expand the support to so many children, parents and grandparents affected by the epidemic, but also others who without sick people in the family suffer similar conditions of extreme poverty. Nadine, could you eventually help Kate and Helen to dismantle, perhaps through a film, the myth of the paradise of Soweto, which continues to drain the blood of Matabeleland? I can also think of a book with the horror stories of these girls, without names or pictures, that would shock the world.

-But what will you do, Haka? Can't you pull the thread of the organ trafficking plot alone?

Kate said.

Jack added:

-I will help you, Haka. You need the National Congress.

-Jack, I think you should go back to your fight against apartheid, your people need you. I don't want anyone to be at risk. This could be an armed struggle and a very dangerous one. From my experience, I suspect wide and deep mafia ramifications. And here they can no longer hide the crime.

-Haka, we're in this together. I'm still with you. And I know what guns are.

-Thank you, Jack. But they must be on our trail by now. We left footprints at the clinic and you must be on file. The best thing is for you to take refuge clandestinely where the National Congress can protect you. I don't think the police would be foolish enough to hang you out to dry by reporting your fingerprints. There is too much to hide on their part.

-I don't know if it's good for us to get anything out of it to the public. Even with your notoriety, Nadine, they would torture you to come after us. I hope no one followed you.

-I know my country. I've made sure they didn't, don't worry. I have followed a chronicle of Nelson Mandela and I want him to know this story. I want you to come with me, Haka. Before we pull the thread, we need very high support.

-Haka, Nadine is right. We need to report to the top. Let me coordinate it through *Grey Cat*.

-Okay, but I'll start investigating from now on. I need someone who speaks Hebrew and information about organ trafficking, about the clinic, the car and the doctor we arrested. I will investigate the information we have taken from the hard drive.

Kate spoke to Sibindi the next day. She was eleven years old, from a *kraal* halfway between Brunapeg and Plumtree, near the Empandeni mission. It was unthinkable that he would ever get to study at that mission where the educated boys came from, the ones who could go to Bulawayo, have trades or businesses. So when they offered money to his grandparents and a school to him and everyone was very happy.

In the pick up they fetched other children, up to a total of six, from other Matabeleland *kraals*. He only knew one, with whom he had gone to elementary school. At first they were treated coldly, but without violence. As soon as they crossed the border at Beitbridge. Everything changed. They began to treat them violently at any excuse.

He saw they passed Soweto and entered a farm in an area called Lawley. There they saw only a rather obese and very rude woman. They were told that they had to have blood tests before going to their schools, and a very thin, pimply-faced man came and took their blood. Then they were put in a room with mats where they were fed twice a day. They had a room next door where there were latrines and where every two days a man who never spoke washed them with a hose. He had been there for about four months.

At first he thought they were waiting to go to the promised school. When they began to ask the lady about it, she told them that she didn't know anything. And when they told her they wanted to go home, she replied that if they gave trouble they would be taken to a separate room, without food or light. He insisted one day and tried to escape when the lady opened the door. Some dogs outside attacked him and the lady called the man who never spoke. She took him to a room with no windows, pushed him violently inside where there was only a bottle of

water, and there he spent an unmeasured amount of time in the dark. When he came out he never said anything again. He ate, slept, sometimes talked with the other boys, but little by little an atmosphere of deep sadness settled in that room that prevented them from communicating or even thinking. They began to take some of the boys away, about one a week. It gave them hope. They were sure that this was the beginning of their dream life of study in a school where they would begin to learn and eventually return to their *kraal* with a trade and help their grandparents and siblings.

As that hope returned to them they began to spend the hours imagining a world in which each of them was an educated person: one was a doctor, one a teacher, one a minister, one owned a car store, one wrote books, one a famous singer, one would be a bishop, one an army captain, and one even said he would be an airline pilot. In a corner of the wall they began to write the days, and tick the boys who were leaving. After three weeks they brought another seven boys. They spoke another language and said they came from a place called Mozambique. That's how it went for about three months.

Finally, when almost everyone who came with him had been taken away, it was his turn. He said goodbye to the boys in that room and they put him in a small car. They took him to the clinic where Haka rescued him. They told him that they had to give him some medicine so that he would be strong for his studies. He did not remember anymore, he went into a dream from which he had woken up in that room.

On the second day, Kate left with Sibindi and a false passport for Bulawayo. There she first met Helen and they went to Saint Joseph to inform Jonay and NoLwasi. Patxi was in Rome. John arrived the next day at Kate's apartment. Haka had no way of discouraging him from staying by his side until they heard from the rest of the children. Over the next few days, Haka read for sixteen hours a day through the hundreds of documents and floppy disk databases on which they recorded the contents of the clinic's computer hard drive. Nadine wrote a crushing article on the girl-trafficking plot, which was published in full in the *Daily Dispatch*, including a front-page summary. It called into question the inaction of the police, customs and government. It did not reveal the actions of Haka, John, Helen, Jack and *Grey Cat*.

In the meantime, this was Haka's summary of what he found at the transplant clinic:

The clinic had been in operation for two years. The premises had been purchased for 2 million Rands on behalf of a network of private clinics called *Netcare*. The registration documents of the clinic described it as a specialist geriatric clinic. There was no board of directors but only a clinic director named Larry Gordon. It had an account at Chase Bank in South Africa. The income came from a group from Israel called the Israeli Transplant Programme. The patients were all from Israel and paid an average of two hundred thousand dollars to an international broker named Ilan Perry. A database of "donors" listed different cases with initials and payment for each between five and six thousand dollars, except for a special list with the letters "GM" followed by numbers, from GM1 to GM12. The total GM was twenty thousand dollars. In all there were ninety-eight donors and an equal number of recipients.

There was also a list of fourteen doctors who had performed the operations and the fees of each one of them: ten thousand dollars per operation. There were also lists of medicines, laboratory reagents, salaries of the clinic staff and of a security company. Another database, called Tel Aviv-Waiting List, listed 389 patients, 235 pending kidney transplants, 67 cornea transplants, 32 liver transplants, 43 bone marrow transplants, and 12 heart transplants. The business accounted for about \$5 million in clean profits each year, and Haka assumed that under *Netcare* there were several clinics in the country, perhaps in other countries as well. The waiting list of patients kept the demand, the greed, and the absolute lack of scruples in sacrificing those children.

-Jack, this is horrible. What happened to those kids, what's going to happen to the others.

-I guess with the girls' alarm, they won't risk going to Zimbabwe anymore. They'll probably start bringing in children from Mozambique or other parts of South Africa. Don't you think we should grab Godfrey and get him to reveal the whole plot? Or maybe go after this Perry guy? We can't wait any longer, this is horrible.

-But if we stop him, the real bosses of this business will go into hiding. Although you're right, at least we can stop this barbarism and make these gangsters disappear from the map for a long time.

-Stay here. I have to talk it over with *Grey Cat* and the African National Congress contact in Johannesburg. This is very serious. We will catch him and take him to the farm with *Grey Cat*. From the information we get we can try to find out what has happened to the children who have already gone through the clinic, free Lawley's children and raise the alarm for Nadine in the media, so that the thread is pulled.

-No. I think they already know we are here. I'm sure they will follow Nadine after the publication of her article. We need to contact her more securely. Although they may have already tapped her phone. Call her and tell her you're a cousin, or something like that, unrelated to her work, and you want to meet her somewhere. We'll pick her up and go with *Grey Cat*, we need to figure out next steps.

They went first to Nadine. It seemed that no one was following them. The three of them followed to the *Grey Cat farm*. When they arrived, Jack told them that they had already tried to go and get Godfrey: he had been found murdered in his house.

Haka felt he was entering a world so deep and dark that he thought about leaving, going back to Saint Joseph, working with Helen, visit the *kraals* and attend the direct, immediate reality. Such a complex and perverse world was beyond his understanding and his concept of the human race, although he thought he had seen it all. But the image of the children came back to him. He could not forget that horror.

-And can we go after Gordon or Perry? That's all we have left.

Said Haka.

-But they're in Israel, and we don't think they'll get out of there.

-Can't extradition be requested on crime allegations in South Africa?

-Israel has no such agreements with any country, and they will not extradite them.

-The only thing left to do is to go to Israel, then.

-You will surely face the Mossad, and a world you can't even imagine.

Said *Grey Cat*.

At that moment Nadine spoke:

-I've been doing some research. I have a friend, Nancy Schepper, in a place in the United States called Berkeley. She has been researching the dark sides of human trafficking for some time. She has been sending me information on what is becoming known about the international networks. She has told me that the mafia is very powerful and that they will be at this time already directing their business to other places, most likely China, where the laws on living and paid donor transplants are very permissive.

-We need to find Perry's contact in the police, in the government. Jason talked about protection by the military and mentioned the EO group. And you, *Grey Cat*, talked about connections to the illicit diamond trade.

-Haka, we have been looking into that. For a long time the South African military has been supporting RENAMO and UNITA to bring down the communist regimes in Mozambique and Angola. It is the policy that Reagan started long ago, of supporting what they call "Freedom Fighters" although they have concentrated more on helping the Taliban rebels in Afghanistan and the Contras in Nicaragua. These are the same groups that have harassed us throughout our struggle for the liberation of South Africa. They are fanatical apartheid officials and radical anti-communist Christians who see the African National Congress and the governments of Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique as the communist devil. They have organized so strongly within the military and infiltrated the government that even President De Klerk cannot and will not dare touch them.

-And what is the relationship between this network and diamonds?

-The power of money is greater than any other in this world. UNITA has been financed by the illegal traffic of diamonds from the mines it controls. At first it sold them to De Beers, the world monopoly in the diamond business and owner of half of South Africa. But UNITA has been selling diamonds at better prices to the Zambian government and De Beers has been losing its monopoly. De Beers now wants to control the mines in Angola, as it already does in South Africa, Namibia and Botswana. As the Angolan government is gaining strength, has found oil and has attracted the interest of rich countries, including its old enemy, the United States, De Beers, and the South African

government behind, as in so many other matters, has been withdrawing aid to UNITA and its purchase of diamonds. They want it to disappear.

-And what is the link between all this and criminal organ trafficking?

-I suspect that the same army groups that supported UNITA, linked to the financial support provided by De Beers and its profit from the diamond trade, were the ones protecting Godfrey, Gordon and Perry, and the prostitution and organ trafficking schemes. But we cannot confirm this.

-You would have to know that EO group within the military. That is the key.

-They have been the main enemies of the National Congress. Nelson Mandela knows this well. And he knows what he meant when he said on his release that he could not yet give up the armed struggle.

At this point Nadine intervened again:

-I think we need to do two things: one, free those children. Only someone like Mandela can talk at the highest level with De Klerk and give the orders to the South African army and its most reactionary cells to dismantle that mafia. The other is to track Israel and its network around the world. Nancy in the United States and others around the world are thinking of creating an organization to unmask this horror network. I have allowed myself to speak personally with Mandela, whom I interviewed upon his release from prison and with whom I have maintained a very close relationship.

A few days later, Nadine contacted Haka for the meeting with Mandela. Although Mandela was free and even came from a tour in Europe where he had received awards and even cheered the South African team at the Barcelona Olympics, his movements were measured and Haka and Nadine passed several controls and codes until they met him at his home in Qunu. They entered a simple room with a table and several chairs around it. They waited seated and after a while Nelson Mandela entered, accompanied by one of his most trusted comrades, Oliver Tambo, whom he had replaced as head of the National Congress after his release. Haka was impressed by the serene determination and an almost perpetually tender smile in his eyes.

-Good morning Nadine, how are you?

-Very good Mr. Mandela, I see that your trip to Europe has been good for you! How did you see our Olympic team in Barcelona?

-It has been a tough year, Nadine. My separation from Winnie, the tense negotiations with De Klerk, the Inkhata massacre in Boipatong. But we are moving towards peace, towards freedom. There is no turning back.

-The entire world is watching you, Mr. Mandela. You have so many behind you. I wanted to introduce you to Haka Beloki. He is the one who, from anonymity, out of humility and security, has unraveled the prostitution network of young girls from Zimbabwe, in Soweto. And he has something even more grave to tell you.

-Haka, thank you for your courage. I read what the police said about arresting the traffickers of the girls, and I knew that someone would have pushed them to do it. I have already spoken to De Klerk and Mugabe to insist that these girls have the best future, and that this horrible crime be controlled in the countries and at the borders.

-Thank you, Mr. Mandela. I think we have only uncovered the tip of the iceberg. I trust that when the people of South Africa are liberated, the democratic government will pursue this horror.

-I assure you. But tell me, can anything be more horrible than that?

-I think so. I'll tell you about it in a brief summary, I know you don't have much time.

-I listen to you.

Haka knew that those could be the most transcendent five minutes in his fight for those children. He made a mental outline of the storyline and the main messages he wanted to communicate to Mandela, who because of his negotiation with the South African transition, and perhaps his prestige and world leadership, could be essential in ending that horror.

-At the same time as the Matabeleland girls, many boys were also abducted. With the help of your party we interrogated one of the gangsters who had kidnapped the children and brought them to Soweto. We learned that the contact person, the police informer and traitor to the National Congress, Godfrey, was in contact with a clinic called New Dawn.

-Yes, the one that just closed in Johannesburg.

-Yes. And I will tell you why. Godfrey delivered children to people who ran that clinic: We have very detailed information about how they harvested organs from them and we don't know if they were sacrificed or what became of those children. The organs were transplanted to wealthy patients in Israel. It was a million-dollar business. We know that the clinic is part of the powerful network of private centers called *NetCare*. We decided to expose the scheme by anonymously reporting it to the police and threatening to inform the press if they did not react, just as we did with the prostitution scheme. The police reacted by arresting the prostitution ring, although we think that there are many other nuclei that tolerate. But in the case of the clinic, they just closed it down, and there have been no arrests. The director of the clinic and the broker who negotiated between a group in Israel and NetCare have fled to Israel. And Godfrey has been murdered. We know that the EO group, within the South African army, which I think you know well, is behind this and they are clearing all traces so that the case will be closed.

Mandela stared at him with an expression of deep sadness.

-How can the human being reach so much evil. Girls prostituted, children sacrificed. All for money.

There was silence. Haka sensed that Mandela really felt the pain of the children, and at the same time he was thinking fast, mentally linking his hundreds of key contacts in the world and in South Africa to find a strategy.

-I know the EO group well. Since I have been released, the police and the army under De Klerk are downsizing and we have been talking especially about the SWAPOL "anti-terrorist" cells, the 32nd battalion and the assassins who have been harassing and persecuting us for three decades. I assure you that there are no more than three hundred people who keep this country in its apartheid hatred. Killers in the police and military, hate-poisoned media, and money. Money, Haka, money interests that look at nothing else. That's where De Beers comes in, the real diamond cartel in the world but also controlling half of the South African economy. Oddly enough, Rhodes' trail still causes pain and oppression in this part of the world. De Beers has worked with the apartheid army and in return has gained control of diamond exploitation by UNITA and RENAMO guerrillas, who massacre our brothers in

Angola and Mozambique. Now that UNITA is losing American support and South Africa has been pressured to turn its back on it, they want to dismantle it: it is no longer of interest politically to the government nor economically to De Beers, who prefers to maintain its monopoly in direct agreements with the governments it used to attack by paying the guerrillas. Money is the only thing that counts. *Chevron*, which dominates oil and refineries among hundreds of other aspects of our economy, has also decided that strategy. And these two giants have set up a private military company, borrowing the code of the apartheid killers, EO, *Executive Outcomes*. Money and apartheid are now united in dismantling the guerrillas they used to support. If anyone in that group is behind the plots you have unmasked, Haka, they will clean it up. The government can't handle those two powers.

-So, has EO become a "clean" and liberating company for governments beset by terrorists and guerrillas? The world upside down? Without any scruples?

-That's right, Haka. And that transformation continues to maintain power is the serpent that corrodes politics, and also revolutions.

-What do you think can be done? I'm just thinking about those children.

-This week I have a meeting with De Klerk. He promised me that he was going to clean up the police and the army of those groups, which now enjoy legality, prestige and even supposed humanitarianism, under "Executive Outcomes". I will tell him that until the children of the "New Dawn" plot are released, he will not count on me for anything, and that if he does not react in a month, I will take the case to the United Nations and with your help, Nadine, we will put names and surnames to this horror.

-Thank you, Mr. Mandela. I will also continue my fight: I will go to Israel. This plot infiltrates the whole world.

Amandhla.

He said goodbye to Mandela, looking at each other deeply and with the complicity of someone who knows what it means to fight for an ideal.

John went back with Kevin, who had returned from Rome and had been, to the astonishment of many, appointed bishop of Rustenberg.

They were struggling to promote the powerful Church's shift to love in AIDS times. Jack and *Grey Cat* were coming out of hiding. *Grey Cat* was now able to use his name, Thabo. Haka spent a few days in Cape Town, looking out to sea from *Table Mountain* and writing the story he had just experienced in a hikers' hostel.

Three weeks later, the television broadcast the news that the "New Dawn" clinic had been closed for having been performing illegal organ transplants. The head of the clinic, Godfrey Johnson, had committed suicide, and the transplant intermediaries were on the run in Israel. Seventy-six children had been released from various clandestine farms in the country, forty-five of them from Zimbabwe. Twenty-six others had been found in forced labor on those farms or on plantations in the country where they worked as slaves and with a huge scar on their side. Seven were unaccounted for. All the children were to be returned to Zimbabwe with substantial compensation and a formal apology from the government. The funds would be administered by an organization called "Support for Orphans and Children made vulnerable by AIDS" based in Bulawayo.

Haka smiled elatedly as he watched the images of the children entering a bus bound for Matabeleland.

Mission accomplished. Almost.

He needed to return to Saint Joseph. He longed for Helen's embrace.

XLIX. Flying over the dawn of a new world. Gomera, 1992

JONAY HAD SPENT six years in Saint Joseph. He already spoke fluent Ndebele and had his local name: *Ulibona* -he looks at us-, because of his way of observing, deep and slow, careful, when he looked after his patients. He was very happy in sharing life with Patxi, who became like his second father; in the magical medical and spiritual alliance with NoLwasi; in the courageous collaboration of Anwele and in the camaraderie of Ndlovu. He also enjoyed music sessions with Johanna on the flute, NoLwasi on her *mbira* and himself on a violin he got in Bulawayo. He enjoyed his walks in the dry grasslands, visiting *kraals* and taking part in the ecumenical Zulu chanting masses. He read the novels of Wilbur Smith, Noah Gordon, Stephen King, Leon Uris and others that he could get once a month from the Bulawayo public library, and the books of Coelho and Tagore that his mother sent him from La Gomera. He kept up to date on medicine through articles Fernando sent to him and through his subscription to *Tropical Doctor*, a magazine dedicated to work in the most remote places and where everything published was hands-on. He had published some ideas on the AIDS test and on a technique he invented to better concentrate samples and spot tuberculosis in the tropical laboratory. He also explored ways to decrease the transmission of AIDS from mother to child by using chlorhexidine in childbirth or vitamin A, but could not see clear results. Through it all, the government's desire for control and the envy of the hierarchy tried to block his work. In some ways, his courage in medicine met similar obstacles as Patxi had in religion.

He was in touch by letters with his great references in simple but quality medicine in the remote rural district: Monica Cheesbrough on laboratory techniques, David Morley and his knowledge and insights into tropical pediatrics, and he had even corresponded with Michael Gottlieb, after Aimsa shared with him his address. But his most challenging correspondence was with Maurice King.

King was a famous English doctor who was born in Sri Lanka and studied among the British elite at Trinity Hall in Cambridge and then at St. Thomas's Hospital in London where he became a prestigious pathologist. He started working in 1956 in the former Rhodesia where he already became known for not keeping quiet in the face of injustice:

he was confronted with the racist fact that he could not train black doctors. Eventually his contract was not renewed and he left. In 1962 he founded the Makerere Medical School in Kampala, Uganda, and used to say that he "jumped from the petri dish into the community". He volunteered to fill in for a doctor in a rural hospital and discovered the lack of books to support and guide that kind of work. So he called together all kinds of people connected with the work in those remote hospitals, gathered all the documents and comments and set about integrating them into a book that within a year and a half took the form of *Medical Care in Developing Countries*. It became like the "bible" of the then fledgling Primary Care movement, which inspired the Alma-Ata Conference that Fernando told Jonay so much about. From Uganda, King continued to write the key books for the rural district doctor: laboratory in the district hospital, pediatrics in the district hospital, management in the district health district, and his series with the German cooperation on surgery, trauma, gynecology and anesthesia in the district hospital. It also gave this XXth century humanist physician time to write about the dangers of nuclear armament. Somehow all that knowledge had been concentrated, together with internal medicine adapted to low resources and tropical medicine in the handbook of John Gray's aid worker, with whom now, also in Berkeley, he also maintained an endearing correspondence on the challenges of equity, fair limits of inequality.

During the last few years, however, Maurice was telling Jonay a catastrophic world view. In 1988, he prepared a lecture at the Royal Society of Medicine in London on health in Africa. He sent a copy of his speech to Jonay. King felt a flame of interest and alarm about the demographic evolution in the world. Two years later, he sent Jonay a draft of a paper he submitted to the prestigious *Lancet journal* in which he set out his theory of demographic entrapment in which the world's population was depleting natural resources. He went so far as to posit that the public health measures he had promoted with such strong leadership could, if population growth was not controlled, lead to greater human suffering. King received a wave of harsh criticism for his assertions. He went on to write more, including allegories of visits from Mars and the astonishment of aliens at the human folly of unlimited population growth. He was preparing his participation in the

great conference on Population and Development to be held the following year in Cairo and shared his ideas with Jonay. Alarming, he confided to him how his ideas of an ethical one-child-per-family world were being persecuted, and he had received pressure and threats from the CIA. King was deeply concerned about what population pressure on resources might mean in the Great Lakes area, where he foresaw wars of as yet unknown magnitude. Jonay replied that the real depletion of natural resources came from the consumerist alienation of the North, rather than from population growth in the South, but King insisted on the hecatomb to which population growth would lead humanity.

Jonay's professional, social, intellectual and even spiritual life was intense. He felt that magical mix of epic and serenity that tunes the soul to the wave frequency of life's adventure. However, he felt the longing to be diluted in love with a partner. At night he felt that emptiness, that need to embrace in the cold, to smile at beauty, to laugh at absurdities, to hold hands before challenges, to lean on a companion's shoulder in weariness, to cry together in anger, and to feel warmth in sadness and fears. Life was half empty without that soulmate complicity. He felt, as he used to say to himself in his intimacy, "shipwrecked of hugs, orphan of caresses".

He also felt nostalgic for his family, for the guidance of his father, strong and brave; for the inspiration of his mother, beautiful and serene, for the reference of Fernando's professional vocation, for the simple dignity of Tomas, for the ravines of her beloved island, for the magical lushness of Garajonay and the watchful shadow of Teide. He had been feeling a deep empathy with the eco-village movement that his parents were leading on the island and connecting with allies all over the world. He often felt the need to be with them, to hug, to laugh, to cry, to caress, to dream. Their absence burnt his skin.

Ndlovu helped him find a colleague to replace him for a month in Saint Joseph and left for La Gomera, passing through Bulawayo, Johannesburg, Madrid and Tenerife South. When he arrived at the airport in the Canary Islands, his parents, John and Umbela, embraced him warmly. Although the snows of time were dyeing their hair, he saw them full of beauty and strength. He wondered how he could live so long without their embrace. They went to the port of Los Cristianos

where Satia was waiting and sailed towards La Gomera. As they approached the ravine of El Cabrito, Jonay was impressed and moved, as if he saw the images of a new emerging humanity, returning to Nature.

As the that magical and mythical ravine loomed, he saw how its slopes had been greened with handmade terraces of volcanic stone and saw the corn, tomatoes and other vegetables, various fruit trees and honeycombs scattered on the slopes. He noticed that those small orchards, in harmony with nature, were covered with white butterflies, visible even from afar. Small roads meandered the slopes linking small stone houses, simple, sheltered by the mountains, the trees, facing the sea. There were artisan windmills, water tanks, he could also see some dogs, goats and donkeys among that harmony picture. A round building of stone and wood with a large porch stood in the midst with other buildings around. The port of Tomas had been renovated and in addition to his rowing boat there were two others and a wooden clipper. Even before docking he could see people busy throughout the ravine, working the fields or carrying wheelbarrows from one place to another. He saw a group of children gathered in a circle under a juniper tree and another group of adults gathered on the porch. As he got closer he saw in the open air, an area where some people were giving each other massages, others were bathing in the sea, naked and unashamed while others were drawing together a large mural. Then he heard music coming from a woman dressed in white linen playing a harp from one of the terraces. He felt that in that place a new way of living was being born without competing, without possessing, without imposing. A community without winners or losers, without sages or apprentices, without guides or guided in spirituality, without fear of being oneself, without fear of expressing the desire to love and be loved. Jonay was thrilled to return home. His family, in his absence, had increased a hundredfold.

When they docked, he met Tomas, who was fetching some villagers from San Sebastian in his boat. He hugged him and felt how the sea had tanned that noble skin in a way for which he felt, without quite understanding well, a deep veneration. They went home, which was still on the eastern slope. His room was as he left it. His violin, his books, his diaries and his memories. To the photos of his childhood, his

parents had been adding others of his parents' trip around the world in Satia, and others that Jonay had sent them from Saint Joseph, and one of Yolanda, whom they kept in touch with. They told each other the most recent stories with great affection and went for a walk around the community, which they called "Tenderness".

There were about three hundred and fifty villagers, including about a hundred children, from more than twenty countries. They spoke their own languages and a common one that was emerging naturally among them all. They knew each other only by first name, which, if repeated, was adapted. He saw how the greetings among them were slow, serene, looking into each other's eyes and hugging their heads in a way that inspired respect and affection. There were no clocks in the ravine. It was essential to take care of nature, sowing with the cycles of the moon, feeding it with the remains it gave and moving the water offered by the Garajonay with windmills and irrigation ditches that watered the terraces. It was forbidden to kill animals or cut down trees. And it was also forbidden to possess the land, the water, the food and the written knowledge for one alone. Soon no ban was necessary because it was so obvious that those gifts of life were as shared and free as air, music or sunlight. When there was pain in people, because of hunger, cold, weakness or loneliness, they simply crossed their hands over their chests, and everyone tried to relieve the ache and help each other. They knew the importance of embracing, looking at each other, caressing each other, and they did it without taboos, without fear, without prejudice, without barriers or chains in their relationships. Under the juniper tree, the children were reading, painting and singing, spontaneously. In the common house there were beautiful drawings, a large round wooden table, a fireplace, shelves with books of all kinds, maps, recycled paper and natural paints. He saw how the wood, braided from fallen branches or pruned to heather, junipers and Canary pines, glistened with natural wax from the honeycombs. Groups of people sitting on the porch or around the table were sharing dreams, ideas and plans for the Tenderness colony. Others were pedaling on stationary bikes that together carried a dynamo. They took turns among the whole community, they called it "human energy", and it kept them in good shape. It powered a refrigerator used for selected food and medicines and the colony's only computer, used as a community to review

information and communicate with other eco-villages around the world.

Each week the person who researched the Internet and shared their findings in the community sessions changed. A building next door served as a hostel for visitors. Beyond that, there was a group of latrines and next to it a deposit that Jonay was able to identify, as in Brunapeg, of biogas, which fueled the kitchen in another small house, all made of volcanic rock. Another building served as a granary and food pantry, in another there were farming, construction and carpentry tools. There was also a nursing home called "Jonay", where the two doctors who had joined the colony, practiced natural care and maintained a garden of medicinal plants, in addition to the great variety that grew throughout the ravine. There were two beds where people who needed more care could rest.

On the roofs of the houses there were terraces, observatories with telescopes and gardens, where he saw several people meditating. There were hammocks everywhere and places for games and exercises. A group was doing Taichi in front of the sea, as sunset was arriving. Jonay felt that his parents were engendering a new way of living. Overcoming without fear the imposed barriers of borders, possessions, fears and distances between people and between them and nature.

-This is wonderful, Dad, Mum. I am so proud of how you are encouraging this new dawn of Humanity.

-Thank you, son. We always dreamed of a life like this. It is a gift that the waves have brought so many wonderful people. Fernando has been encouraging a similar community in Arguamul. It is called "Courage". We will go to see him tomorrow in *Satia*. He is eager to hug you and will ask you to spend a few days with him.

-Of course I will. It's very important to me. I don't think I would be in Africa if he hadn't come into our lives. How is he? And what about *Kadiatu* and Lisy?

-He loves you like a son. *Kadiatu* is well. She works at the Gara women's association in San Sebastian. Fernando still loves her but she does not want his way of life. She is very beautiful and very intelligent, and she wants to progress, she says, to study, to have titles, properties, securities that she never had. We believe that from her origin of want, she feeds fears and protects herself with the chimera of possessions.

This is how most of society lives, the pressure is very strong. Lisy is already studying law in Tenerife.

-But you don't need those fears, those dependencies. You have everything here.

-No, son - said Umbela - isolation would be the end of us. We are open to give and receive, to people, ideas, knowledge, proposals, ways of living, of feeding, of integrating with nature, of healing. But we try to be alert to pressures to possess, to divide ourselves into unfair and absurd hierarchies, and to abuse each other and nature. That is why we have an agreement with the *Cabildo* (local island government), we pay taxes with money from the handicrafts we sell or from what they give us voluntarily at the visitor's hostel. We also use some of that money to buy some tools because we have no minerals or blacksmith here. With this we know that we can use the hospital when necessary if our natural remedies are not enough, receive a teacher who guides the children for their end of course exams and get to know and enjoy the rich culture of the island, meeting with its people. We are part of the island and of Humanity. We aspire to build a network of communities of a new Humanity. Next year we have a meeting of eco villages from all over the world, in Scotland. We hope during this year to get more and more in touch with those who are our greatest inspiration: the indigenous communities, adapted to Mother Earth for thousands of years. We are in close contact with a group from Ecuador, and perhaps we can be with them and they with us for a while.

-It makes me sad that I do not share with you day by day so much tenderness.

-We feel it, son. Every day. In our meditation, in every embrace of every person, in the beauty of nature. Your life in Saint Joseph is also beautiful. Life flows, reinvents us. As long as our hearts are open to love and be loved, we live with our truest energy, we transcend the physical, time and space. We are united. "*We are all the same energy*".

He spent a week with Fernando in his colonia Courage. He hugged him for an eternal time, thrilled. They spent hours and hours talking about their experiences, their patients, ideas, doubts, challenges, studies.

Jonay told Fernando about his ideas on virus transmission, his techniques for improving diagnostics in the laboratory, and his

fascination with NoLwasi's "invisible" treatment. He was convinced that the "non-presence" of the virus in the "diluted tears" had a "footprint" effect in the water, and stimulated the immune system in a way beyond their scientific understanding.

Fernando told him about an investigation he had started that alarmed him. There had been two cases of breast cancer in young women in Valle Hermoso. He investigated and breast cancer was almost unknown two generations earlier on the island. He compared lifestyles and risks that could explain this new disease. His hypothesis was in meat and, above all, cow's milk. Before, they did not drink milk. In any case, some families drank goat cheese. He examined what could be in cow's milk. He went to Tenerife, went into the cattle farms, explored in the slaughterhouses, from which he came out with a deep sadness at the sight of so much suffering. He thought, similar to the magical "footprint-in-the-water" that Jonay spoke of, that there was something of the animal suffering that was transmitted in the meat. But he also discovered something more concrete, that 5% of cows died from a type of leukemia, caused by a virus. He began to investigate and learned of a group in California that had shown how that virus, in humans, could cause breast cancer. But the industry was powerful and was blocking all avenues for this information to spread through science, society or politics.

Fernando already had his boat, which he had finished building with John's help. Her name was Aimsa. Jonay thought about the woman he would meet on his return to Saint Joseph. He felt a strange sensation on that boat, a kind of warmth, protection, a very special harmony.

When they arrived at Tenderness they had prepared a party for Jonay. A children's choir sang a new tune by Michael Jackson, "Heal the world". Then Johan told a story of Jonay's life, Umbela gave him a hat that she had knitted, and everyone in the community had drawn a picture of the ravine, the back of which was signed in all languages with messages of peace and love. It was then that he discovered something: under a large cloth, there was a shape that hid a surprise. When he lifted it, a strange machine appeared, like a kind of two-seater tricycle-motorbike. Next to it was a metal and fabric structure. John, Tomas and Fernando had been building it with materials from San Sebastian, Tenerife. It was an "ultralight" aircraft. Something so strange

in a naturist colony! It showed that they were not isolated from the rest of the world. At the top of the ravine they had adapted a track of about fifty meters, enough to lift that "flying tricycle".

During the following week, Fernando, who had taken courses in Tenerife, taught Jonay how to fly the ultralight plane. They learned to glide and hardly use any gas. Jonay was amazed seeing his island from the sky, the immense ocean, feeling the wind as he glided, like aboard Satia. He thought that something like that would help him go to the remote *kraals* more often.

During a month he received an enormous force of *brave tenderness*, and returned to Saint Joseph with renewed enthusiasm.

L. The braid of love's destinies. Flying over Africa, 1992

IT WAS THE AUSTRAL WINTER of 1992. Patxi was returning from facing a wall of prejudice in the Vatican. Kevin was returning to Johannesburg on the same flight, via Harare, together with Beatriz and Aimsa. Beatriz had taken a month's leave from her job at the European Commission to go with her brother and get to know another way of living religion, at St. Joseph's Mission. Aimsa, after eleven years in the United States fighting for AIDS rights in that country and for international conferences, was finally arriving at the longed-for destination where she had so often dreamed of devoting herself to sharing and helping to face the most dramatic challenges of survival: in the world epicenter of the pandemic, and where the means to fight it were most limited.

When they met in Rome, Patxi booked two hours alone with Aimsa to get to know each other better. Beatriz went for a walk in Trastevere, with the friends they had met from San Egidio, and with Kevin. She thought "what a different way, so joyful, so free, so authentic to live Jesus' message of love".

Patxi had sensed through almost two years of correspondence with Aimsa, an extremely intelligent, yet sensitive and respectful woman. Almost so much so that she seemed distant. Her interest in the persons infected, their families, and especially the children affected, by AIDS, was genuine. She never asked about anything: no place to be, no dates to get there, no activities to do. Patxi sensed that Aimsa, because of her knowledge and leadership- he knew that from Rob - in the field of the fight for AIDS rights, would have many options for work. He wondered why such interest in hearing from Saint Joseph, and, although she did not explicitly ask for it, in coming to that remote corner of the world. With the exchange of letters and ideas about the epidemic, its effects, Patxi had insisted that she come and spend some time with them. And at his insistence, she admitted she would be delighted. There both they were. In the jaws of the hierarchical and deaf power of the supposed heirs of the philosophy and belief in love, a Basque from the hamlet in love with the Zulu world, and in fact with a Zulu, and an Indian from the streets of Bombay and Calcutta trained in the vanguard of global knowledge. The two of them getting to know each other with open

hearts, and with strength and commitment to ally themselves against the suffering of some of the most marginalized people in the world.

Aimsa enticed attention. She wore an orange, silky sari, which fell down a slender body in an open attitude, self-confident, one would say almost haughty, if it were not for the sweet, slight but penetrating smile in her eyes and lips. She walked with such softness that one would say she floated that sari above the earth. Her eyes were black as night, and slightly highlighted by the quena, she had a straight, soft and fine nose, and a face one would say gentle and floodlit. Something ineffable in her inspired divinity, spiritual strength and alliance with the eternal.

-Aimsa, I am very happy to meet you in person. In Saint Joseph we talk a lot about you. Your struggle has inspired Anwele. Jonay and NoLwasi have often shared your information on medicines for AIDS. I am also interested in your knowledge of Eastern spirituality. But above all, your desire to share and to know the world of St. Joseph's mission. We are very happy, but I want to ask you something.

-I am very happy, Patxi. *Ngiyalibona, Baba.*

Patxi once again verified the mental and emotional intelligence of this exceptional being who had entered their lives. She had been learning ndebele. Like NoLwasi, she seemed to transcend the material dimensions in which most of them felt continually trapped.

- Aimsa, I know from Rob that your studies, your articles and your commitment have made you well known in the United States and that your contacts could make you work in the fight against AIDS in powerful and well-paid organizations. Our mission is remote, isolated, marginalized even by the diocese; we still have no electricity, the landscape is a dry and sandy savannah, the people have little strength and opportunities other than to barely survive, and we have few means to fight this plague.

-Patxi, precisely because of all that. And because I know that all of this is surrounded by an immense beauty of souls that yearn to overcome suffering, but above all, do you know why?

-Why?

-Because of you. I have never read from Jonay or from you a word of discouragement. Always of hope, commitment and love for these people. To be inspired by it will be the greatest salary in the world. I

have just spoken at a meeting with politicians and royalty in London where I expressed my criticism of the hypocrisy of false generosity installed in wealth and power. That is why I was pushed away from another conference in Barcelona by politics and the media, and yesterday in Florence I expressed my sadness to see how, "in the name of the poor affected by AIDS", thousands of people bathe in luxury trips, hotels and meals. I come from the garbage dumps of Bombay, from the streets of Calcutta, I know very well that unworthy poverty is the consequence of obscene wealth. And there is already a lot of business around AIDS. I wish with all my heart to share your lives for a while. We will see where life leads each of us. You will have my heart ready to share everything.

Patxi was speechless. What could these two women do together for the world? God must exist when he had made these two wonderful beings, reflected in a magical beauty, devote themselves to alleviate the suffering of the most forgotten people in the world.

Beatriz was ready to return to Brussels. However, after singing together in Trastevere and hearing her brother's struggle, she needed to go to St. Joseph. She needed inspiration. She knew she was entering a new stage in her life. She became even more determined when she phoned work and reported that he had to take a few weeks off her vacation due to "serious family business." She wasn't lying: it was serious that they hadn't seen each other and shared in so long, and she needed like air to feel that other world in which her brother, who shed off such a pure light, had found peace. They murmured but agreed. But the most tense call was with her Order group. Her so-called supervisor questioned her inquisitively about every detail of Rome, about her brother, about the activities, the companies and the plans. Beatriz was sure that they had spoken to the Order in Rome and were investigating that wayward Beloki, and his "contaminating" influence on a member of the Order. They should get her out of those unhealthy influences, and the doubts she seemed to be beginning to manifest, with good psychological sessions and "support" (pressure) from the group. Such was the inquisitive pressure that she ended the last conversation by saying:

-Leave me in peace. I am leaving with my brother and need say no more. Farewell.

During the long trip, Kevin talked to Aimsa about the reality of AIDS in South Africa, the cultural roots, the poverty, the racism, the situation of women, the lack of access to health services, the taboos of prevention, the lack of any treatment, the suffering of the terminal and stigmatized diseased. He also told her about his struggle with Patxi for the promotion of condom use from the conviction of its value in "promoting life" rather than "preventing it" as the hierarchy alleged from their palaces in the Vatican. Aimsa told him about her childhood, Buddhist spirituality, synergy with quantum physics, her commitment to the rights of people with AIDS in the United States, the drug profit mafia, the hypocrisy of the rich and aristocrats showing their supposed generosity with publicity, the industry created around AIDS and the millionaire congresses. She confessed her deep desire to come to Saint Joseph. Kevin also invited her to spend some time with him in South Africa.

They then talked about Haka and John's struggle unraveling the mafia trafficking of children into the sex trade and the horrific organ trafficking. Kevin was concerned about the risks they were taking, yet proud and admiring of the commitment and courage they were showing.

Meanwhile, Patxi spent the twelve hours of the flight talking with his sister Beatriz. They had never spent so much time side by side calmly sharing their lives' memories, their ideas and their desires. Patxi told her about his life since he left the farmhouse and went with his uncle to the parish in Garai. Of his time in the seminary. Of his struggle for peace and his arguments with radical abertzales. He told her, without the secret details, of his meeting with Juan Mari and how he gradually left ETA and came to Saint Joseph. He told her about his time in Empandeni and how he arrived in Saint Joseph, thirteen years ago. Patxi told her about people's daily life in that part of Matabeleland, their beliefs and customs, their living conditions and their social attitudes. He also told her about the time of the dissidents and the fifth brigade, the masses and community activities, Jonay's work in the dispensary, now turned into a hospital, the schools, the workshops, the cinema, the electric line about to be finished, and, above all, about AIDS. He told her that he had had to attend more and more funerals, many of them of young fathers and mothers, also more and more of

children. He told her of the emigration of young people to Soweto and their return sick or dead, shattering their families' spirits, their joy and even their means and hope to live. And she told her about NoLwasi....

When he shared her feelings about NoLwasi, Beatriz felt something light up in her brother's eyes.

-I had known about NoLwasi for about four years. She was known as a *nyanga* - traditional healer - with special powers, and mythical generosity. But I only met her when someone encouraged me to go and hear her speak at a village forum where NoLwasi decided to talk about AIDS to several communities in the area. From the moment I saw her I felt a deep union with her. There is nothing in this life that has touched me so deeply, sister. It was as if a part of my soul was beating in her. My attraction to her spirit was so strong that it transcended reality, time or space. It was not a need to see her or to be with her. I felt from the moment I saw her for the first time that it was a spiritual fusion that not only did not need physical dimensions, beautiful but ultimately spurious, transitory, but that we were already united in a previous eternity and in the eternity to come. Really, in the only eternity. I confess Neba it sounds mystical, esoteric, but it was, and is, so profound...

-What you say is beautiful, Anaya. It is the vibration and energy of love, the one we all carry within, the one we all belong to.

-Yes. Then we spent some time without seeing each other. She finally came to Saint Joseph, to take care of a mutual friend who fights for AIDS rights, to break down stigmas and prejudices. She started to stay over. And one night, our shadows under the stars merged. Since then we have lived together. The bishop, I know, wanted to remove me several times from my position at St. Joseph's, but it was all pending this visit to the Vatican.

-And what do you think will happen now?

-The visit to Ratzinger could not have gone worse. They will look for any excuse to withdraw me to a place of greater control, and "make me toe the line".

-That's horrible. Your world is Saint Joseph.

-Yes, I can see that my days of belonging to this hierarchy of Rome are numbered. But on the other hand, we have to fight more than ever

for the truth of Jesus: love with courage, without fear. Look at Kevin, in spite of his ideas, he is going to be appointed bishop, because the Cardinal of South Africa is open, and recognizes his charisma, his commitment and his tremendous humanity. There are glimmers of hope. But tell me about yourself, I am so eager to know about your life after so many years of hardly knowing anything!

-I realize, brother, that I have lived in a bubble. Life has filtered into my bubble where I have been enjoying security, but without really knowing the world, without being free to feel it, to make mistakes or not, to seek my own path and my freedom. Under the dogma of the Order, everything has been given to me: the reason for being, for living, the Creation, the "way" to follow, the contacts, the means, the career, how to use it for a noble purpose... everything... they have given me everything. And they have also taken from me the essence of life: freedom: to break the bubble and to search myself, with my spirit, the reason of my being, my vibration with the universe, my connection with life, Humanity, Nature, my own analysis of life, of love, my decisions, my friends, my family and my life!

At that moment Beatriz had her fists clenched. A contained cry, perhaps of many years, flowed with the force of a volcano from her eyes through sincere and brave tears that she also felt flowing through the pores of her skin, through all her senses. Patxi felt as if the need to love without barriers, so long contained by a dam of security, prejudices, dogmas, hierarchies, disciplines, in a word, fears, collapsed and love came out with force, although preceded by a vanguard of the mud of rage and pain for the freedom so long stolen. Patxi hugged her tightly and took her hand with the utmost tenderness.

-You are not alone, Neba, we are already together. Father will be watching us from his world. Happy to see us united.

-I have to tell you something else, Patxi.

Beatriz said, overcoming the trembling of crying and anger.

-I know you want to talk to me about Meimuna, Neba.

Beatriz looked at him with a certain shyness, not daring to enter her brother's pupils, fearful of the severe judgment against one of the greatest of taboos.

-And I can't wait for you to tell me about your beautiful love.

Beatriz felt a deep relief and her eyes filled with tender moist. These were already tears of happiness.

-Thank you, Anaya. I feel something very similar to what you say about NoLwasi. I met Meimuna in a support group. The Order, through the gynecologists at the Opus university clinic, referred women who were planning to have an abortion to support groups. That's how I met Meimuna. She is from Senegal, had come as a refugee to Spain with her sister and was working as a waitress when a truck driver abused her violently and cruelly. When I saw her, I felt a great tenderness and a physical attraction that I had never felt before. I did not identify it with anything sexual. My mind was blocked from even considering that sinful possibility. I accompanied her through pregnancy. At first from my Catholic prejudices, from my pastoral, or rather fiscal, responsibility for the Order. Then I began to do it from within myself. Love, of which I was not aware, diluted any other filter in the relationship with that wonderful human being. My love for her led me to care for her, to understand her, to be open to any decision she wanted to make, to accompany her, to be her support, her warmth, her refuge, her home and to find mine in her.

-I am thrilled to feel your joy, Neba.

Patxi said as he continued to hold her hand.

-I was quite a bit older than she was and owed to my vows in the order. From my prejudices I could only think of a maternal, guiding and protective affection. Absurd filters of love. Differences are neither important nor of superiors and inferiors. I embraced her, caressed her and helped her in everything. Thus Mohamed Jesus was born.

Beatriz looked at Patxi solemnly. She was going to disclose to him her greatest secret, kept in secret, guilt and fear before the rest of the world.

-A few days later, I was in the small apartment of Meimuna and her sister, who was working. Meimuna was in discomfort because she had had an episiotomy and was having trouble walking. I accompanied her to the bathroom. Instead of leaving her inside and closing the door on the outside, as I always did, something unspoken between our gazes made me stay inside. As she was washing herself, I helped her. I caressed her tenderly. Tenderness turned into shy pleasure and without knowing how or how to control it, into passion. Our bodies joined in

caresses and our lips sought each other. Since then, we feel life under the same heartbeat. I have been to Pamplona to see her several times, hiding from the Order. I can't wait for her to come to Brussels with her little boy. But you can imagine what the Order will say.

-It is similar to what the bishop will say about my union with NoLwasi. Neba, we are, after so many years, on a similar path in life: the challenge of true love in the face of the chains of prejudice. Together we will break those chains, the fruit of generations of fear, of understanding life in the narrow way of hierarchy and control. It is as if human beings were afraid to let go of the anchor of the material, chained to time and space, to the anguish of not understanding these dimensions, because we do not really belong to them. But faced with the vertigo of transcending them and surrendering ourselves to love without fear, we become anxious and impose rules, limits and controls. Deep down, out of fear of love.

-And when we have fear, we transmit fright, the strongest way to do it is by imposing rules, by exercising power. The clearest sign of weakness.

-You know, there's a friend of Rob's, from the same place where Aimsa comes from -they looked across the row at her, in animated conversation with Kevin-. He is a physicist named Perlmutter and is discovering that the universe is accelerating in its dispersion and as planets, stars, matter, move away from each other, the more the dispersion accelerates. It is like an acceleration of the *big bang* towards the final dispersion of matter. I believe that we are entering a scattering of the matter and moving towards a new spirituality, a return to energy, transcending matter. And of course, we feel fear and vertigo.

Talking about that, they were flying over the wonderful Rift Valley, Lake Tanganyika, Lake Kariba and approaching Harare at dawn. The pilot of the British Airways flight said:

-We are landing in Harare, fasten your seat belts and turn back the clock... Fifty years!

Nobody took it badly. It was a compliment to a city and a country that by means and isolation during Rhodesia's apartheid had anchored its values, education system, English traditions, courts, buildings and even cars in the 1950's or 1960's. A time after the great wars that in

England, regardless of the perverse colonization, was felt with nostalgia of a somehow more serene human beauty and dignity.

When the four of them arrived in Harare, they wished farewell to Kevin, who continued on to Johannesburg. They agreed to try to spend Christmas together somehow, somewhere. After clearing customs, they waited in the small domestic lounge for the plane that would take them to Bulawayo. Aimsa felt the delight of having arrived at a destination that, sure she was, would change her life. The smell of the air, without knowing how, as ineffable everything important was, made her sense it. Beatriz also felt a magical sense, a desire to break patterns that affected how she moved, how she spoke, how she thought and how she dressed. How she lived. To break imposed molds and rediscover herself.

Arriving at Bulawayo's small airport, they went out into the arrivals hall where the waxed woodwork of a small, charming building from the 1950s still creaked, announcing the few departures and arrivals each day on wooden signs with handcrafted letters. Haka and NoLwasi were there. The five merged in a deep embrace. Five such diverse origins and paths of life, intertwined in a common destiny, that of love without fear. Jonay was missing.

The spontaneous and wordless embrace gave way to expressions of joy among the three Beloki brothers, who had not shared their brotherhood for thirty years.

LI. Flying with the black eagles. Matopos, 1992

An ineffable energy vibrated BETWEEN NOLWASI AND Aimsa. It was as if they recognized their twin souls. When they looked at each other they knew they were feeling so. They simply smiled and hugged deeply. Patxi, in the midst of their Basque brotherhood reunion, glanced sideways at those two fascinating women. The energy of each of them did not belong to that world. Perhaps all carried their energy within them, but in those two souls, it pulsed with a light that dazzled everything superficial.

The Beloki brothers ended, for that moment, their emotional embrace. Haka greeted Aimsa.

-I know about your fight against the mafias in South Africa, Haka. I am honored to meet you.

-I've heard so much about you, Aimsa! I think we have a lot to share.

It was the five of them in the Saint Joseph pickup. Haka told Patxi that Helen and Kate had gone to Matopos in the BJ40, which Haka affectionately called "Rufo", back from their epic adventures.

Haka was driving. Patxi wanted to travel in the back to let his sister and Aimsa ride in the front, in the bench seat where three could fit. But Aimsa insisted that the three siblings go together. She wanted to feel the air of Matabeleland and to continue twinning with NoLwasi.

-What will people say when they see St. Joseph's car with the whites in front and the black and "colored" women in the back, like in Rhodesian times? -said Patxi.

-Patxi, since when do you care about what people say? What did they do to you at the Vatican? Haka answered.

They laughed, and set out on their way.

While Beatriz, surrounded by her two beloved brothers, listened to their explanations of the journey through Bulawayo and towards the magical rocks of Matopos, Aimsa and NoLwasi were in the "bathtub" of the pick-up, hair blowing in the wind and breathing the African air. Aimsa always wore an orange scarf and NoLwasi a white scarf. They did not speak during the whole trip, although their looks said it all. It was as if two sisters from eternal times, had met in the transitory and

illusory material existence. They looked at each other. They smiled with deep happiness.

When they reached Matopos, Haka turned left, turning off the road towards Saint Joseph.

-Where are you going, Anaya? We're not in the mood for expeditions! I can't wait to go back "ekhaya" (home).

-You're still as bossy as ever, Father Patxi. Shut up a little and trust your brother.

NoLwasi, in the bathtub, was smiling.

They crossed lush grasslands and saw buffalo and zebra, herds of antelope crossing in front of and behind the pick-up, warthogs, baboon and, in the distance, a pair of rhinos. Seeing a couple of giraffes on the road, Haka slowed down and they stood still, watching their graceful and haughty walk. Patxi thought of the two goddesses behind them and the similarity of that image of power and beauty.

Patxi began to suspect something. They had been promising each other something like this for years and work had never allowed it. They entered the six-house compound of Matopos National Park and parked the car.

-Now leave the luggage in the car and let us guide you. Haka said to Patxi, Beatriz and Aimsa as he gently put a blindfold on their eyes.

They were guided through giant rocks full of monkeys to a house. They could not see the sign: "The Black Eagle". They entered it and passed into a room where Anwele, Helen, Kate, Johanna, Ndlovu, and little Joseph, Thandiwe and Nothando, who were already between seven and ten years old and inseparable, were eagerly waiting. A twelve year old girl accompanied them: Buhleve, given up for adoption to Haka, who had finally found her angel, as the T-shirt she was wearing said. They were guided to a terrace opposite the entrance. The veranda hung over a ravine that opened out into an incredible valley, furrowed by a river. The valley was flanked by two slopes of huge granite ridges. A dozen majestic black eagles flew overhead. At the bottom of the valley, the gentle, golden African sunset behind the majestic flat acacias began to bathe everything in red.

NoLwasi was an accomplice of the plan, of the surprise. And the main protagonist. But at the sight of the black eagles she felt her whole body shudder.

Haka removed the blindfold. Aimsa, Beatriz and Patxi were overwhelmed, speechless, by so much beauty. The children greeted them warmly and gave them gifts: an *induna* (chief) ebony walking stick polished by Haka for Patxi, a basket made of straw and handmade colors by Anwele for Beatriz and a notebook made of tree bark for Aimsa. They excitedly introduced themselves to each other and when the beauty of the place made them spontaneously hold hands and quietly gaze the daily majestic spectacle of the sun's farewell, they heard a faint sound of an engine in the distance. The sound grew louder and they could make out double wings of wood and cloth among the distant acacias. It approached the terrace, a viewpoint of unique beauty. The eagles widened their circling flight, as if making way for that strange bird. Patxi could recognize Jonay, waving at them at a height of about fifty meters, aboard a kind of tricycle that led that hybrid between motorcycle and glider. Behind the ultralight hung a cloth that Patxi recognized as two sheets sewn together. It bore a greeting:

"Amhlope, Baba Patxi, Mama NoLwasi".

Aimsa was fascinated by the image, the natural beauty, the alliance between those fighters against pain and injustice, and the image of Jonay appearing in the red sunset sky.

Everyone looked at Patxi.

Patxi, beyond the astonishment of seeing Jonay flying, began to fit the pieces together: that welcome, the most beloved people gathered in that magical place, but the sign in the air dedicated to him and NoLwasi. Amhlope was only used in Ndebele for the arrival of a new life.

Patxi turned his gaze to NoLwasi, who was standing next to him, holding his hand. His gaze denoted astonishment and intrigue. He was trying to understand. Or confirm. NoLwasi, with a slight, sweet smile, nodded. She caressed the belly where the fruit of an eternal love was growing.

Patxi, moved, embraced her and gave her a kiss that that family of heroes of so many stories and origins, sealed with the deep and deep chant: *Nkosi Sikelele*.

Patxi and NoLwasi's love budded a new life. A life that defied prejudices and chains of power and hierarchies and grew to join a destiny of a land torn by drought, demotion and a terrible epidemic. But it was a life, with all the beauty and strength, and, therefore, all the hope of eternity and the immensity of the universe.

Jonay, Ulibona for the Ndebele and Kalanga, landed on a nearby esplanade, a couple of hundred meters away. Everyone went to see him.

After returning from La Gomera and learning to fly the ultralight and fly over the ravines of the new humanity with Fernando, Jonay had found a note in the mission: he had to pick up a large box in a warehouse, which required transport in the pick-up. He thought it might be serums or medicines; or perhaps a new light for the operating room, which they were sending from some organization in Europe. What was his surprise when he read the note that accompanied it:

Dear son:

We could not bear the thought of having this invention to travel the ravines and connect the communities of the New Humanity and that you do not enjoy another one to travel those long journeys to see your patients in their homes or in the remote health centers you attend. We hope you enjoy it and feel your beloved Africa also as the flight of a sparrow hawk. Your parents and "your uncle" Fernando.

He couldn't believe it. He could not have imagined it in his wildest dreams. He practiced for a few days, while Patxi and Aimsa returned, now accompanied by Beatriz. He was preparing landing zones around the health centers he was visiting. It was fantastic. He had two places and had been teaching Haka. When he was alone, he took children and adults as passengers, fascinated by flying with Ulibona like eagles, frequent in Matopos, like sparrow hawks in Gomera and El Hierro.

When everyone had greeted each other and was back in the house of "The Balck Eagle", Aimsa and Jonay lagged behind.

Jonay was mesmerized by Aimsa. Her serene beauty, her soft, sweet, yet firm poise, those deep black eyes that seemed to pierce him, that soft orange sari, that like her anima, seemed to float above the earth.

Aimsa saw something special in Jonay. He was 32 years old and had spent the last six years in Saint Joseph. His features reflected the Celtic roots of his Welsh father, and the magical mix of Africa, Guanches and Goths of his mother. From Africa he kept curly hair, from the Welsh Celts and perhaps from the shipwrecked Guanches, brown to blond hair and brown almost green eyes, from the Goths, the firm features of his cheekbones and straight lips. His healthy childhood cared for by her mother with love and nature in the ravine of El Cabrito, now of La Tenderness, granted him a serene and healthy vital tone. His vegan life made his skin and eyes shine. His voyages swimming in the Atlantic and sailing aboard Satia tanned his skin and forged an athletic but not muscular body. His time in Saint Joseph had been a time of intense work, but he had been disciplined in doing gymnastics in his small parish home, and in walking or running through the dry savannah of the Kalahari, every sunset. His gaze, which since he was a child had looked far into the horizon of the sea, continued to reflect the depth of those who ache to love and be loved, navigating in the epic sense of living.

-Welcome Aimsa.

-Siyakuthanda; *Baba*. It gladdens my heart to see you.

First surprise. She had learned some ndebele before she arrived. So important. And she had translated the spirit of greeting in Ndebele into Spanish.

-I see you speak in the plural, like the Ndebele. Who are you greeting me?

-We greet you my present and the Aimsas who for years have been climbing the steps of life to this stage. So longed for. Perhaps to find you.

-*Lisale kuhle* (Stay in peace).

Inside, in "El Aguila Negra", Jonay took out the violin he brought from Tenderness, NoLwasi the mbira, Johanna her flute, Helen her guitar and they shared several *njembes*. They sang together to the

magical night, to the star of the South, to friendship, to the courage to pursue dreams and to placate those who stifle them. They sang to life.

A few weeks later, Haka left for Botswana, tracing the horror trail, which he was to finish unmasking. Helen, reluctantly, and Kate stayed behind to continue bringing the children abducted by the mafias back to their homes.

They were expanding the activities to other orphaned children, and, in general, to all the children of Matabeleland, so vulnerable to poverty, drought and disease. Minister Stamps had gone to Bulawayo and then to Saint Joseph to inaugurate the offices of the AIDS OVC organization, which they called "Jabulani" (we were glad). He had stayed with Jonay for two caring for patients, visiting those terminally ill in their homes and doing some surgeries together. Stamps said they had been the most humane days of his life, and from then on, he spent one weekend every month, on call or helping out at a rural health center.

Beatriz accompanied Jonay in his tasks, Helen and Kate in the organization of Jabulani, researching all national, regional and international legal frameworks related to child trafficking and proposing actions to influence policies and laws. She discovered the true world, without protective shells and prejudices, fears, power. She was even changing her way of dressing, leaving those gray and rigid clothes almost imposed by the Order, and sharing colorful and loose clothes with Helen and Kate. She kept a diary of her experiences, including a ultralight ride with Jonay, from where she saw buffalo and giraffes galloping in the grasslands. Beatriz embraced those children, that generation of brave ones who were destined to give birth to a new humanity, and those elders who were hardened in pain and poverty and who in spite of it, or perhaps because of it, smiled with the innocence and deep happiness, without filters or fears, of children. She shared the evenings on the porch of Patxi's house, with those wonderful people following the natural rhythm of the light, without artifices that unnecessarily lengthened the day, joining the simple life of daily *sadza*, washing with a basin, using the simple latrines, washing their own clothes often with nothing but water and sand, walking on the dry savannas, sharing talks in the humble *kraals*, and singing with the grave Zulu tones, in the communal masses on Sundays.

Patxi continued to work in the mission with passion. He cared for NoLwasi whose pregnancy was progressing without preventing her from continuing to attend hundreds of patients. She continued to dilute and administer her healing water, with incredible results, although in many cases, the patients ended up weakening. They were able to finish the electricity line and inaugurated it with a visit from Father Pius.

After the ceremony, Father Pius met with Patxi:

-Patxi, you know that I appreciate your work, your dedication to these people, my brothers. I think you are an example of witness to the love of Jesus. But I have some bad news to give you.

He handed her a letter from the bishop.

The bishop had decided to remove him from his work at Saint Joseph. He considered that his disobedience with the promotion of condoms, with how he altered the liturgies of the masses, with his null registration of baptisms, weddings, last rites, with his insolent message to the Pope and Ratzinger, and now with his relationship in full light with NoLwasi, pregnant, had reached a limit and he considered that "he was an embarrassment for the diocese". He said they were looking for a replacement and would tell him in a few months what his fate would be. Pius suspected that he would be put to do boring administrative tasks in the cathedral, on condition that he gave up his relationship with the native "witch".

Shortly after, in the midst of Christmas, Jonay, NoLwasi, Aimsa, Helen and Kate, spread the word that the bishop was kicking Patxi, Sindisabantu, out of St. Joseph's. Hundreds of people turned out in front of the Bulawayo Cathedral and the bishop's residence. They did not stop chanting Zulu songs of struggle. The *Bulawayo Sun*. published an article by Helen entitled "Bishop wants Sindisabantu, the symbol of love in Matabeleland, expelled". The bishop was forced to receive a committee of those people, camped in front of the diocese. In the face of such pressure he said that Father Patxi was following another way of witnessing to Jesus that the Church could not recognize, but that they were trying to find a way for him to continue working in Saint Joseph.

A few days later Patxi received another letter from the bishop telling him that he was giving him, with extreme mercy, one last chance to continue at St. Joseph's for two more years with a list of conditions

of ordination, sacraments, celibacy, public forgiveness and promoting the prohibition of the sinful use of condoms.

This news reached the ears of a priest of the community of San Egidio in Trastevere, who met Patxi on his recent trip to Rome. That community mobilized and took a decision. They wrote to the Bishop of Bulawayo and demanded the land at St. Joseph's which they had long ago ceded for the symbolic price of one dollar to the diocese and at the same time ceded it to Patxi.

Patxi responded to the bishop:

Mr. Kahlen:

It saddens me that you may think you have the right to force other people to live as you think. I shudder at the vision of your sad figure in the loneliness of power, far from hugs, from promoting life, relieving suffering, and from not feeling the caresses of love, the freedom to feel with others and the happiness of feeling unique in the universe and at the same time connected, without hierarchy or rules, to all creation through love.

You have hurt many people with your chains and prejudices, but most of all you have hurt yourself.

My humble advice is to leave that heavy and uncomfortable clothing, sell the gold ring and all the jewels of the Church, open the cathedral to all homeless people to live there, recover your childlike smile, go out to embrace people and let yourself fall in love.

Among us, stripped of your imaginary superiority, as one brother more, you will always have the community of St. Joseph and our hearts open to you,

Sindisabantu.

The land and buildings were returned to the St. Egidio community who in turn gave them to Patxi for the symbolic price of one dollar. Patxi resigned from the Catholic Church and called the community together to decide on a new name for the mission. He was still deeply inspired by the courageous life of Jesus against power, and for that very reason he broke the yoke. And also by the humility of St. Joseph. But he no longer believed in a world of kings and subjects, of bishops and

parishioners, of teachers and pupils, of saints and sinners. They decided to name it "*Ukuzwana*", a place of harmony.

Aimsa found in Ukuzwana a place of peace, of dedication, of harmony with nature, sometimes as cruel as beautiful, of harmony with people dedicated to others without seeking glory or applause. She found the light of allegiance to those orphaned children, for whom she developed projects of all kinds, together with "*Jabulani*" : on education, water, nutrition, gardens, crafts, community libraries, workshops and even a music choir that brought together more than a hundred children, singing hope, love and hope. But what filled her soul the most were the sunset walks with Jonay. Between the two of them grew a complicity beyond words, beyond anything that could be explained.

At the beginning of 1993, Patxi learned that his uncle, namesake and inspiration in his religious vocation, Aita Patxi, had died in his parish house in Garai after thirty years of unwavering devotion to preaching the love of Jesus in that valley. He was buried in the churchyard of Garai and was remembered on a plaque in the church as *Aita Pozik* (Happy Father). Patxi felt dismayed for being so far away from his roots, from his farmhouse, from his family. He had a photo with his uncle in front of Mount Anboto, and he prayed for him every night. They had maintained a close correspondence until his uncle's eyesight failed him two years ago. He continued to write to him, and a housekeeper named Amparo, who was very fond of him, read his letters and took care of him during his last two years. On informing him of his death, Amparo told him that there was nothing that made him happier than receiving letters from his beloved nephew in Africa. He had saved fifty-three letters and asked her to read them to him all the time. Amparo confessed that she too was moved when she read them. A nephew of hers, a publisher, had told her about that endearing correspondence and said that they could very well be published in a book as "*letters from a mission in Africa*". Patxi preferred to keep them confidential between his uncle and himself for the time being.

Patxi felt that with the death of his beloved uncle, teacher and inspiration, something of his soul went with him, something of his uncle remained in him, his follower, and also in the new life that was knocking at the door of the Beloki-Dube family.

It was late afternoon on January 22 and the Aimsa choir had just finished rehearsing in the church, now converted into the "community house". Just then NoLwasi felt the call of the life she was about to give birth to. Although she valued being alone with Patxi, she had such a bond and respect for Jonay, that she asked for his help and company. In Patxi's humble room at the mission, they had placed mementos, drawings, natural candles, incense, flowers. Patxi had written in Basque, Spanish, English and Ndebele words of welcome. NoLwasi had left two empty chairs with nothing on them at any time during a moon. She knew Mandhla and Masora were with her.

Jonay helped little Adam to see the light, the "first man" of NoLwasi and Patxi's love, holding hands, and united in love, brave tenderness towards their people, towards nature and towards the universe. So intense was their flow with the universe that they could not be differentiated from it. They were energy united, and diluted in the greatness of what they saw and what was beyond their comprehension.

It was the early morning of January 23, 1993. Adam was born to a Humanity of vertiginous changes, of neglected challenges, of a multitude of heroes of their own stories. Those of love.

LII. Spare parts for a religion. Tel Aviv, 1994

AFTER HIS time in South Africa anonymously unraveling the child trafficking and prostitution ring, Haka decided to let a few months pass before continuing to pull the thread of the horror of organ trafficking. Loose ends remained, even though, under pressure from Mandela, many of the child victims of the transplant ring were released.

John went with Kevin, who was returning from his trip to Rome to start a bishopric in Rustenberg, perhaps the first in Africa committed to ending AIDS prejudice, despite Ratzinger's closed-mindedness.

Kate had traveled with Sibindi to Bulawayo, who was the first of the abducted boys to be reunited with his family south of Plumtree.

Nadine and Woods, from South Africa, had caused such a stir with their articles that the De Klerk government, under pressure also from Mandela, prepared three buses called "*Sihamba kulhle ekhaya*" (we go home in peace) with police escort, child psychologists and nurses.

They agreed with Mugabe and Stamps to give each affected family ten thousand rands and a total of one million rands for the program to support AIDS orphans in the country, which the government, despite the "negative" report of the Minister of Home Affairs, gave to the Amani Trust and its "Jabulani" program. Stamps announced to go, in person, with Helen, Kate and symbolically Sibindi, to receive the children in Beitbridge. The South African and Zimbabwean governments wanted to surround the event with media and publicity but Helen and Kate objected on the grounds of the children's anonymity and possible stigmatization. Stamps said a few days earlier that he would not be able to go because of "scheduling problems."

Haka met Helen again in Bulawayo. She welcomed him to her home in the Barnice neighborhood. Haka had grown a bushy beard and his eyes reflected the gravity of what he had witnessed, and of the time he knew he was risking his life. Helen wore a white linen dress. Her clean gaze, her hair of reddish curls, her face freckled and bright, like a starry sky, had accompanied many a dream of Haka's since even before he met her. They did not need to explain the magnet of their gazes. They melted into an alliance, a complicity previously unknown to them. They did not need to embellish that magical moment with words. They embraced and melted their bodies with a passion held back

for so many years. The table prepared for dinner was a silent witness to the love of two brave souls. The casseroles grew cold and the candles burned down. From then on, Haka lived between Bulawayo and Ukuzwana. Buhleve started living with them in Bulawayo but was not used to the city, so she returned to Ukuzwana, with Joseph, Thandiwe and Nothando. They formed with Patxi, already freed from the Catholic hierarchy, NoLwasi, Jonay, Aimsa and Anwele, a big family.

Kate moved to Bulawayo to work on "Jabulani". Besides, she knew she was being harassed in Johannesburg and it was good to be away for a while. She combined her work at Amani Trust with Helen, with a workshop at the Bulawayo Art Museum, where she took up her great passion: painting. She painted images of children. Some dark and painful, others full of light and happy harmony with life.

One of those paintings formed the cover of a book called *The Kidnapping of Innocence*, in which Helen, Kate and Nadine collected each of the stories of the 89 girls. Three of them had died, two from beatings by violent, drunken clients, one from thrashings by one of the kidnappers. Anwele tested them and ten were infected with AIDS. Each of them told terrible stories of their abduction in terror. All the stories were anonymous and told in such a way that bringing out those stories coupled with the transformation of their present and hope for their future, relieved them of some of their anguish. The back cover was one of the pictures of light and joy.

Haka used another of the grim pictures in a book he entitled "The Darkest Corners of the Human Soul", in which he recounted with names and surnames of criminals still at large, the horrors he had witnessed about organ trafficking. He published it with an anonymous: "*la luita continua*". Forty-five boys had returned home. Ten of them with huge scars. Fourteen others were mercilessly slaughtered. Possibly the operation or post-op was complicated and the death doctors decided not to keep them alive. Or perhaps they used them for a wider demand for livers, corneas, heart. Although it went against all logic of survival, his rage triggered his bravest nature, and so he alerted the gangsters: he had only uncovered the tip of the iceberg.

Haka concluded the book in this way:

Fourteen children are now living in organs implanted in people who bought their lives, as spare parts depots. They meant no more to the kidnappers, to the brains of the Mafia, to the rich recipients of the organs, to the doctors who sacrificed "disposable" people to save their clients, so that all of them could perpetuate their life of power and luxury.

Haka toured every *kraal* he had visited before his crusade. In each of the fourteen that still awaited his grandchildren, he reaffirmed his rage and strength to unveil the depths of the plot. Despite Mandela's pressure, the mob bosses, EO protectors and diamond financiers were still not only free but expanding their businesses based on the pain of the "disposable." There were loose threads: De Beers, Executive Outcomes and the children of Mozambique.

Haka was convinced that De Beers and Chevron had quietly financed the apartheid army in the 1970s and 1980s to support the RENAMO guerrillas in Mozambique and UNITA in Angola in exchange for diamonds in their control areas. In this way they maintained a near-monopoly on the trade of diamonds, one of the most lucrative businesses in the world.

In the letters that Jonay used to write to Fernando in La Gomera, he had told him about Haka's struggle and his suspicions about the nexus with the diamond monopoly. Fernando at that time, besides leading the eco-village "Courage" in Arguamul, went every year for three months to help in the hospital in Lunsar. A "*big man*" (powerful man) had offered him diamonds for dollars. He was from the Kono area, occupied by the guerrillas of the Revolutionary United Front, linked to the bloodthirsty Charles Taylor, dictator in neighboring Liberia. Fernando had met a young man from Amnesty International who had reported how the sale of diamonds dominated by the guerrillas in Sierra Leone translated into the purchase of weapons, many of them coming from Russia, bought by Gaddafi in Libya and sold to intermediaries who supplied the guerrillas in Africa and often also the opposing armies.

Jonay told those stories to Haka and the latter began to correspond with Fernando. Haka drew a scheme: about a thousand diggers in the Kono area spent the twelve hours of tropical sun and about six hours with flashlights, looking for diamonds in the mines. Another thousand

people searched around the mines, on the roads that the earthmoving trucks traveled, anywhere. Only a couple of hundred were paid each month for finding something of value. The wages were barely enough to buy a sack of rice. If they found anyone leaving with a diamond or trying to sell it, they were mercilessly executed in front of all the workers. The diamonds were given to the guerrilla leaders. The latter sold them to intermediaries for about one hundred million dollars a year. That money was used to buy weapons and drugs from international mafias, and to inflate some one hundred secret accounts in Switzerland and other tax havens. Greed, drugs, weapons and the cruelest techniques of alienating the population, including thousands of child soldiers, kept the horror going. Middlemen worked informally for De Beers, who sold them tenfold in value to the network of Jewish jewelers in Antwerp. The value doubled in luxury jewelry stores around the world. Those blood diamonds bejeweled some twenty thousand women each year. Haka calculated that each diamond caused, in a way that was as complex as it was perversely direct, about three innocent deaths. Haka wrote an article and sent it to Nadine. It ended with the slogan that De Beers had popularized: I don't know if "a diamond is forever," but its effects of death, mutilation and human depravity and destruction are perverse and permanent. He discussed these issues with Aimsa, who recalled the diamonds worn by the English princess and much of the aristocracy at that hypocritical AIDS meeting in London.

He tried to put the anguish out of his mind when the reunion of the Beloki brothers and the announcement of the coming of his nephew Adam. All that gave him strength for his new struggle.

Aimsa had also done research on organ trafficking. Through a friend of Nadine's named Nancy, a courageous Berkeley anthropologist, Aimsa had told Haka that organ trafficking was widespread throughout the world, and that Haka's hit on the South African network had been effective but the demand for illegal organs of the unscrupulous rich and potential supply of the poorest would continue to fuel that tragedy elsewhere.

For the next six months, Haka tried to trail Ilan Perry's footsteps. He still had some funding from the Amani Trust for the project, and could pay an air ticket to Israel. From the data he could download from the "New Dawn" clinic hard drive, there was a list in a D-base program,

which had codes for numbers, dates, and incoming and outgoing money. In total there were four hundred and sixty-five files. He checked that for "SA" there were twenty four entries: the ten who survived the kidney extraction and then were enslaved, and the fourteen who were slaughtered. It was clear that "SA" was South Africa. From the letters Nancy had sent him, he assumed that the abbreviations of TU, RU, GR, GE, PH, CH, KO, AZ, CO and US corresponded to Turkey, Russia, Georgia, Germany, Philippines, China, Kosovo, Azerbaijan, Colombia and the United States. In all of these places there were indications or evidence of clandestine operations of transplantation of organs taken from poor people in other countries. After several times listening to the tape he recorded while perched on the fire escape of the terror clinic in Johannesburg, he was able to translate the following conversation from Hebrew:

-Don't worry, Mr. Goldsmith. We will cure your illness here. As long as the law does not change in Israel and the Torah is properly interpreted, we will continue to save lives through transplants outside of Israel. Our principle of "pikuach nefesh" - saving a life - is the reason for everything we do, and we apply the Torah to our lives. Amen. We do not violate the integrity of cadavers or form anonymous organ banks. And the risk of donors, voluntary, paid and minimizing risks by the best specialists, is justified by unique lives, which, like yours, will be saved. But we maintain the anonymity of the donor to respect their privacy.

What kept that horrible business going, then, was a Jewish religious prohibition, with an interpretation that allowed other lives to be put at risk anonymously outside Israel in order to save the patient's life. A tremendously hypocritical interpretation based on the subtle assumption that the life of a Jew was more valuable than that of another person. What was really justified was that the power of money, capitalism in its most extreme and inhuman expression, served to interpret and twist capriciously for the benefit of the buyer, any moral principle. Haka also found that all the recipients on the list had male names, and that the donors they had been able to identify were all boys, no girls.

The images of the slaughtered children, and the lukewarm reaction of the South African police and judiciary, despite pressure from Mandela, kept Haka awake at night. Several times he had to be reassured by Helen during nightmares, when he saw children running with their abdomens open and empty and crying, repeating the words with which Sibindi woke up that day: *Omama, Obaba, ngiyalapa*.

Having studied the situation, he wrote to Nancy saying that the only way to stop that horror was to outlaw "transplant tourism" from Israel. They needed to convince rabbis and politicians, to make them see the horror that organ trafficking mafias, such as the one coordinated by Ilan Perry, a free citizen at the time in Israel, were causing. The international press disseminating that horror would tarnish the name of Jewish orthodoxy and Zionism, already tarnished by the tensions with the Palestinian people. He had to try.

Wrong, as he eventually thought that his abertzale struggle against Franco had been, or not, Haka could not stop fighting against what he considered unfair. He could not live with the shame of passively tolerating such horrible perversion and human suffering.

He knew that he was entering a militarized state and that he had to leave the Makarov well hidden in Bulawayo. In case of any absent-mindedness or indiscreet intrusion, he would have the Mossad, the dreaded Israeli secret service, following his footsteps. He had only the contact of one man, Aaron, a friend of Nancy's. He was a Tel Aviv-based anthropology professor who had studied at Berkeley and had met and hit it off with Nancy. Aaron detested Zionist interpretations of superiority to other races or religions. He had invited Haka to spend a few days in his home. Haka was granted a tourist visa.

For the first two days, Haka talked with Aaron, a man in his forties, single, friendly, loquacious and deeply ashamed of Israeli foreign policy. He wrote in the press about his critical thoughts and also developed the dilemmas of Zionism versus universal human rights at the university. He was tolerated, but he was also largely ignored in his family, his neighborhood, his work and in society.

Aaron often thought about leaving the country, going back to Berkeley or other places in the world where he could speak more freely. But he felt that then it would be like accepting half defeat. His "ethical logic" was his most powerful weapon and he had to keep trying to

overcome the arrogance and conceit of the terrible combination of a fundamentalist religion in some dimensions and a militarized state, transgressor of international resolutions and consented by the largest military empire in the world.

Aaron told him that in addition to what Nancy had found out about Jews usurping organs and lives of poor people with their money in different countries of the world, there were in Israel several religious groups, "patients' rights" groups and "humanitarian organizations" in support of such horrible trafficking. Aaron and Haka talked about international and Israeli law, Torah interpretations, history and life in Israel, the conflict with Palestine, political and economic ties with the United States. They went to Jerusalem, and despite his almost militant agnosticism, Haka felt a deep sense of spirituality as he visited those places sacred to the three great monotheistic religions which, though often manipulated by human power and selfishness, had marked the history of mankind possibly more than any other influence.

He later introduced himself as the son of a patient in Spain whose life was in danger because of the long waiting list for a life-saving transplant to the *Kav LaChayim* organization. He knew from Nancy that this organization was linked to seeking funding to help organ transplants abroad. He was informed, without any written proof, that the price was two hundred thousand dollars, but that there was a waiting list. He was told that for some additional money "he could shorten that waiting list."

He later learned from Aaron that part of those expenses were reimbursed to the patients by the Israeli government: the perversion bordered on perfection: religious taboos prevented "touching" healthy Israelis or their sacred corpses, so dark networks were sought to do the same with "infidels" as well as poor and desperate, or even worse, kidnapped and sacrificed children from Matabeleland, and this small digression blessed by religious fanaticism was repaid with public money. How could human perversion go to such extremes. Deep down, Haka felt that the human soul always had the capacity for good. This feeling had been growing in his life in Ukuzwana at the side of his Anaya Patxi. But he differed with Patxi, in that sometimes it was necessary to use methods of blackmail and even violent threat, to save human perversion from its spiral of power and abuse.

Haka was drawing on the back of a large tourist poster of the Wailing Wall, a very appropriate name, a detailed scheme of the international network of *brokers*, intermediaries in the buying and selling of organs, hospital managers, laboratory technicians, customs officials, police, ministries, and even NGOs. The map had some three hundred names, with dates, places, amounts of money, details, and arrows linking that complex and perverse plot. It confirmed that the core of the problem was the legal tolerance, and even official support, for the "demand" of that terrible market. He needed to sensitize civil society, the government and Jewish religious orthodoxy to the painful consequences of that terrible business.

There were also, like Helen, Nadine, Kate, John, Nancy and Aaron, about a hundred people who were fighting, and risking their lives in unmasking that horror. And he was sure there were many more he didn't yet know about. Nancy sent him a clipping from a Sao Paulo newspaper where a brave Afro-Brazilian nun named Elida had denounced organ trafficking of street children in Sao Paulo. Like her, so many others had seen the consequences of the horror. Stopping the center of gravity of that horror, in Israel, was essential.

At that time, he learned of another terrible story: the accusations of a Palestinian mother who, upon receiving the body of her son, imprisoned in an Israeli jail for throwing stones during the intifada, found that the corpse had had its eyes gouged out. His brother had seen a huge scar on his abdomen and had checked with a horrified family doctor friend that his liver and kidneys were missing. A Swedish journalist named Donald was publishing the news. He tracked Donald down through mutual friends in Tel Aviv, and they met in a coffee shop. Donald told him that he had information about a medical examiner who was dealing in organs from Palestinian corpses that were piling up in his autopsy rooms. Donald told Haka that he was being threatened by Jewish ultra-Orthodox, accused of being an anti-Semite and a Nazi, and that he suspected he was being watched by the Mossad.

The worst was that plain citizens in Israel, victims of their history and obsessed with the harassment they had always suffered as a chosen and persecuted people, interpreted those accusations by Donald and others as anti-Semitic smear campaigns. In the same café where they were there was a sign calling for a boycott of Swedish products. Donald

was leaving Israel the next day, full of anger and frustration, on police orders. Haka realized that it was not the time to veiledly threaten any link in the trafficking network with international press.

On the other hand, Haka tried to link that complex web of organ trafficking with his diagrams of the diamond black market and its connection to the wars in Africa.

A web of evil almost impossible to understand: Jews in Antwerp and diamonds, Jews in South Africa and organs, Jews in the United States dominating the unleashed market of speculation and investments and "derivatives" - the incipient name for financial speculation, De Beers buying diamonds from guerrillas or governments at war, or both at the same time, economic powers covering up both plots and in collusion with apartheid first and its later transformations as the mercenaries of Executive Outcome, serving the very wars they fed by protecting the black market for diamonds from their economic patrons.

Was Ilan Perry also involved in the diamond, arms and drug trafficking networks? He was finding that the mechanisms of all those gangs were so similar that their perverse synergies diluted them into a great interconnected mafia of horror.

Greed and pain connected by perverse and complex international networks.

Haka had to better understand that society, that blind religious fanaticism and that government deaf to the cry of pain. He wanted to understand evil from where good failed. Haka from a young age had idealized the commune system in Israel. Aaron put him in touch with a friend on a kibbutz.

Before spending a month isolated from society, he sent a letter to his sister Beatriz, back in Brussels.

LIII. Love, the key to freedom. Brussels, 1994

MEIMUNA ARRIVED WITH MOYES, as she called his son Mohammed Jesus, who was already 5 years old, at Brussels airport. They had gone by bus to Bilbao and from there to Brussels by plane. Beatriz greeted her with a hug she had been longing for since Moyes was born. It was the first time Moyes had taken a plane and he looked at every detail with attention and wonder. Meimuna had come twice during the last five years that Beatriz had been living and working in Brussels. On the first trip they had gone on a trip together from Brussels to Bruges, and the second time to a beautiful village in the Ardennes. Those journeys had been as clandestine as the ones Beatriz had made to Pamplona, to meet Meimuna, about two or three times a year.

Since that day their bodies merged when Beatriz took care of Meimuna after the birth of Moyes, their love had not stopped growing, gradually overcoming all the prejudices and fears of hundreds of generations engraved by fire in their genes, their conscience, their infinite number of instincts and reflexes braided into an expected, acceptable way of being, of dressing, of talking, of eating and drinking, of looking, of touching, of loving. Of living.

Initially, the two preferred to live their love in secret, and not without a certain feeling of guilt, of sense, almost conviction, of being "sinning". That is why they tried to avoid seeing each other, being close, talking or writing about it. Even both of them, at different times, tried to distance themselves by thinking, or saying "this is wrong".

But the memory of the tenderness they mutually felt, even if they did not see each other, the overwhelming sense, unequaled by nothing else in life, that took them to another dimension, to another reality where eternity and infinity seemed to make sense, all that made them relentlessly think about their love and longing for its physical dimension.

In addition, their love was manifest by mutual support, by getting to know each other's stories, memories, frustrations, dreams, sensitivities, and fears. What made them laugh and cry, tremble and vibrate.

After a year and a half of shame and fear to share her love without fear or modesty before family and society, Beatriz's trip to Rome and

then to Zimbabwe with her brother Patxi triggered her courage to love without fear, brave and tender. She discovered another way of understanding religion, morality, and love. Her brother had fought against similar social, racist, hierarchical and proselytizing prejudices. In a word, alienating. Patxi taught her to enjoy herself, just as God, if he really existed, had created her. She remembered Patxi's words as they said goodbye at the Bulawayo airport:

-Nothing more beautiful than to shine with our unique and irreplaceable existence and in harmony with the universe from which we come, to which we go, of which we are. As immense and eternal as the expression of its beauty in our being.

When she returned to Brussels, she asked for a meeting with her supervisor. She explained her personal situation and her decision to live as a couple with Meimuna. Initially she was referred to priests who could help her out of her "sinful deviation". She went to the first appointments with priests of the Order but they soon verified her stubbornness and referred her to psychologists and theologians specialized in "exorcisms". They tried everything, biblical readings, quotes referring to homosexual perversion, even threats of eternal fire. Nothing stopped her. Although Beatriz took it almost as a crusade to try to "humanize the Order", she began to get tired of so much closed-mindedness, proselytism and arrogance of those who claimed for themselves the license of possessing the truth. She began to reflect from a human rights approach and investigate the rights abuse of sects, religions and in general any dogma, in stealing the freedom of people, from early childhood, in the most subtle ways to the cruelest threats.

At work, she became involved in European positions on reproductive health. Moyes' example inspired her to respect human life, which, even in the most adverse circumstances, flourished with love. In her reflections during her walks in the Foret de Soignes, she thought that all problems were due to "lack-of-love", and abortion was one in which she saw it clearly.

However, she could also understand the tragedies of so many other women who, lacking love in their lives, could neither appreciate nor strive to transmit love to the life they were engendering. She knew of the thousands of deaths each year from clandestine abortions. She had seen two of them in Ukuzwana, for which Jonay could do nothing. The

stories were tragic, full of pain and despair. The fact was also that if those women could have gone to Jonay to have a safe curettage, they would still be alive. That clandestine death, stigmatized and cursed by moralists from their safe bubbles of "perfect morality" was happening to hundreds of women every day in the world.

Beatriz began to defend more flexible policies regarding therapeutic abortions in extreme situations, as well as plans for human, family, social and spiritual support without codes or norms. Like the one that made Moyes grow up healthy and with intense happiness and passion for life. The European Commission was discussing with its member countries the positions before the Cairo Conference on Population and Development and Beatriz began, disobeying the instructions of the Order and the calls of its circles of influence in the European Parliament. She was also under pressure of the conservative and powerful lobbies in Brussels. For the sake of European neutrality and the pro-life positions of both groups and countries such as Ireland, and the so-called pro-choice positions of other more feminist groups and countries such as Holland and Denmark, she defended the consensus position of supporting reproductive health policies and programs including safe abortion according to the sovereign legal frameworks of each country. This involved intensive work in preparing a "communication" from the commission to the European Parliament and its committees on rights and freedoms, and to the council of home ministers of European countries. There were dozens of meetings, discussions, thousands of analytical documents, and "briefings", the word used to define the information dossier for the dialogue between two high-level politicians, such as her director general or the European commissioner for rights and freedoms. Sometimes those dossiers had to be so detailed that they even spelled out literally every word in the mouths of politicians, their speeches or their messages to other statesmen, their "defensive points" to answer critical questions, especially if they touched on the weak points of European policies and realities.

Beatriz began to receive a barrage of questions from parliament and citizens, who, by law, could ask the Commission about anything and the Commission had to answer and in the European language in which the question was asked. Sometimes it was a simple question or

concern from a citizen. Other times it was a question in the session in which the Commission had to defend certain policies or budgets before the Parliament.

She began to be the target of a defamation campaign in which some media in some European countries accused the commission of preparing "genocidal positions before the Cairo declaration". A total of 765 letters arrived in her office from all over Europe; they came from citizens and associations addressed to the Commissioner directly or from members of parliament from conservative circle and close to the Order. She prepared a response centered on the arguments of human rights, children's rights and public health ethics.

In the following months she definitively disassociated herself from the Order. Although she wanted to continue living the message of Jesus from an organization to which thousands of good people belonged and which could do so much for justice and to alleviate suffering. When the Order's attempts to "rectify her sinful deviations" failed, her supervisor, another Spaniard named Isabel, summoned her to a meeting:

-Beatriz, I see that the theologians and psychologists who have seen you are finding it difficult to help you and solve your "problem".

-Isabel. I don't have a problem. You have it when you try to impose on me ideas that are contrary to love.

-Well, put it that way. But at least you will accept that you have a problem with the doctrine of the Church regarding homosexuality and the principles of our Order and our founder.

-Yes, I accept that. And if I am still here, it is because I believe that you should change if you really want to live the sense of love that Jesus inspired in us.

-Don't you think, Beatriz, that you are sinning of vanity in thinking that you are right and that thousands of priests, spiritual guides, cardinals and the whole structure of our Order is wrong? Think about it with humility, Beatriz, are you not falling into the pits of pride? Have you been practicing indulgences lately to recover your humility?

-I don't believe in it, Isabel. I don't believe that making our body suffer, the wonderful gift of Creation given to us as we pass through this world, would be well seen by God. Would a Father like to see his children hurt themselves? Even if it was directed to be more honest,

more kind, would it be ethical to induce our children to cause themselves pain?

-Beatriz, you know well that our bodies are temples but also subject to carnal temptations, which, if left in the hands of hedonism, lead us to lust, concupiscence, depravity, obfuscation of pure love and veneration of life.

-Isabel, can I ask you something?

-Of course, Beatriz, I'm here to help you.

- When was it the last time you gave and received caresses, passionate kisses or the warmth of an all-night hug.

-Hail Mary most pure! I never let myself go down that road. And if I had wanted to be a "super numerary" and serve the Order from a marriage dedicated to our mission, those carnal expressions would not have come before marriage.

-But tell me: have you never desired them?

Isabel blushed. A few seconds later her gaze became stern, her gestures more defensive and even aggressive, and her tone of voice became more serious.

-Beatriz, if you are lost, at least don't try to make the rest of us lose our peace and moral rectitude.

-Nothing further from my desire, Isabel. I only asked you a question. You have been accusing me for months, treating me as a sinner, even as a sick person. At work I am under constant pressure to direct European policies towards your ideas. I am only trying to explain to you that there is another way of understanding the love of Jesus, and when I ask you a question, you accuse me of proselytizing. I think you are putting reality in reverse.

-Well, Beatriz. I see that you do not yield in your positions. But because of the affection I have for you, I am ready to suggest something. I have discussed it with the highest circles of the Order in Rome. Why don't you reflect for a year and then tell us if this tendency persists in you? The only thing we ask of you is that you do not make public your relationship with "that woman". If you want, you can think about meeting men of the Order who wish to be supernumeraries and direct your carnal needs, if they are irrepressible, along the path of morality.

-What you are proposing makes me sick! "That woman" is called Meimuna and she deserves respect. Are you asking me to live, as you interpret, "sinning" and to do it in hiding and "lying". Do you think that is really Christian? And as an alternative, you suggest other relationships to me, as if you were a dating agency and advise me on a "more acceptable" product. You are the sick ones.

-We would not wish it to be so. It is your choice, and take our offer as generous forbearance for a time, in the hope that you will return to the harmony we all desire.

-Isabel, this is absurd. I have been suffering for a long time. I am not going to go on pretending, nor repressing my purest and deepest love, nor tolerating all your pressure. I will write a letter this afternoon saying that I am leaving the Order.

-But that's not so easy.

-Ah, isn't it?

-Keep in mind that if you are here in this position of high responsibility in European policies, it is because the Order helped you in your studies since you left the farmhouse and then in your opposition and in your guidance in Brussels.

-Isabel. I have given a thousand times more to the Order than I have received. I have given you half my life, my salary, my painful distance from my family, my life. I assure you that if you want to blackmail me in any way, emotionally or legally, so that I will continue to give you my salary, I will take the case to the Ombudsman and to the European Court of Justice, as well as making it public in the media. I am leaving this very afternoon. Tomorrow I will inform the commission to put my salary in another account. Be thankful that you will not be in the newspapers tomorrow.

-As you wish. But as a friend I tell you to be careful. With that attitude you may not be able to "go far".

-As soon as I take one step out of this house, I will have gone further than you can ever imagine. Or I hope you will. That someday you can imagine the world of freedom and love without fear. If you do, I will always be with open arms to help you and to share without fear.

Beatriz left that afternoon with her two suitcases from the house of the Order in the village of Tervuren. The little dog Jenny escaped

behind her, as if fleeing from a prison. She went to sleep at the home of a colleague with whom she had already shared her challenge. In the following weeks she regained her freedoms. She opened, for the first time in her life, now past the age of fifty, a bank account in her own name and asked her European salary to be transferred to her account. She signed, also for the first time, a rental contract for a beautiful Flemish farmhouse, bordering the Tervuren park. She bought a bicycle. Beatriz was always envious of the cyclists she saw from tram 44, who made the effort to ride to work on their own power, without polluting, in an honest relationship with nature. This also meant she changed the way she dressed. The skirts with splints below the knees gave way to pants or skirts with shapes or with free fall and loose materials, free. As if they reflected her own conquest of freedom. She began to like linen skirts and dresses. She let her hair grow longer, looser, more her own. Her daily cycling made her body more lively and agile. Influenced by her "family in Ukuzwana", and especially by Aimsa's inspiration, she incorporated a vegan diet, meditation and even another way of breathing in harmony with nature into her life. Beatriz recovered herself and felt an immense joy of revival.

During Meimuna's two previous visits, they had decided on the house and had bought some furniture in the Sablon district. Others were obtained through colleagues of the commission who were going to destinations far from Brussels and sold or gave away some of their belongings. They also prepared the enrollment of Moyes in the European school, where, they thought, he could learn different languages and open doors for his future. They adopted an abandoned puppy they named Haki, who became Jenny's companion, and with whom both Beatriz went for long walks in the Foret de Soignes.

Meimuna was adapting to life in Tervuren and Brussels. She was learning English and together with her French from Senegal and her Spanish from her time in Navarra, could get some jobs as an assistant in lobbies around the European Parliament. She also advanced in her studies and the baccalaureate for adults that she had obtained in Navarra, she added her pass to the free university of Brussels, where she studied law. She became interested in human rights abuses in the world and contributed with studies for *Human Rights Watch*, as well as collaborating sporadically with many other organizations.

A few months later, Beatriz prepared a document to propose to her hierarchy. It was an analysis of the AIDS situation in the world, the need for European solidarity with the poorest countries affected by the pandemic in Africa and the promotion of condom use. She proposed an initiative - "communication" - to the council and parliament, a program of assistance to governments and community organizations, and a dialogue with governments, the United Nations, the private sector and religious organizations to promote the use of condoms, the key to the survival of millions of people. Jonay and Aimsa helped her with arguments about the disease, and Patxi and Kevin, already a bishop in Rustenberg, near Pretoria, sent her ideas for religious dialogue. Her boss in the rights and freedoms directorate did not get back to her for the following month. She insisted, and continued to receive no response. One day she saw her having lunch with Isabel and other officials and parliamentarians close to the Order, and she understood why. Beatriz sent her boss a message saying that if she did not receive a response she would have to suggest the proposal directly to the commissioner. The director reacted angrily and threatened to lower the "points" on her annual assessment. She didn't care: she wrote to the Commissioner. But she never got an answer either. That assessment of the hierarchy was the greatest obsession of the civil servants: to climb up in the points ladder, in the ranking, in the salary, in the pension and for that, often, to please the bosses who were feeding their ego and narcissism. A perfect vicious circle of vassals and kinglets that perpetuated and encouraged mediocrity, cowardice and immobility of a commission that was often as "politically correct" as "sadly cowardly", thought Beatriz.

But at the same time there were brave and very honest people, for whom moving up in that perverse game of points, often linked to influence and favors, was not the priority. For Beatriz, and she knew many wonderful, intelligent and committed people in the commission who shared that attitude, the thought of points, grades, salaries and pensions, did not occupy a second in her mind. Her conditions were already very privileged and allowed her to send half of her salary to Jabulani and Ukuzwana.

She opted to look for other places where her work would be less gridlocked. She found a vacancy in the foreign service, in the human

rights directorate. Despite the "negative reports" from her boss, Beatriz attended an interview in which she expressed herself fluently, sharply and with sound logic, ethics and knowledge, to the tribunal's questions. The director knew of the conservative networks and the links to the letter-writing campaigns and accusations that were also raining in their direction. Before being selected, he summoned Beatriz to his office and asked her about her ideas and aspirations. Beatriz conveyed to him her origins in Christian values, her aversion to alienating hierarchies, her sensitivity to children's rights and the right to health, with the immediate challenge of the AIDS epidemic, and her ideas on policies, regulations, dialogues and programs. He shared with him the initiative of the dialogue on condom promotion. The next day, the director of human rights in external action called to offer her the job. Her first task would be to encourage the religious dialogue on AIDS prevention.

A few months later, that dialogue took off. It included a conference at the European Parliament with leaders of religious denominations. Beatriz tried to get Kevin to come, representing the AIDS challenges in Southern Africa. The representation of the bishops' conference in Brussels, "COMECE", tried to prevent it. In the end he came, along with a cardinal from the Vatican, from Ratzinger's office. There were also Muslim muezzins, Jewish rabbis, Hindu gurus, Buddhist lamas, Lutheran and Calvinist pastors, Orthodox priests and representatives of indigenous beliefs. The Catholic Church was the strictest in advocating other avenues of prevention, and in attacking condoms as unsafe in prevention and as encouraging promiscuity and the destruction of the family. In response, Kevin made a sobering speech, to which the Vatican representative was unable to respond, leaving the Catholic image divided and in question. Kevin gave like no one else a picture of the impact of the epidemic on communities, on women, men, children and the elderly. He recalled that canon law was relevant because its aspiration was to promote life. He cited the Second Vatican Council and its approval of "contraceptive methods for medical purposes", exactly the argument for the use of condoms to prevent AIDS. He finished by saying these words:

Think about this reality: as we are talking in this two-hour session, five hundred people have died of AIDS. Let me choose the one who may

be dying as I say these words: she is a woman with three children, she works hard in the fields and at home, she has only had one partner in her life, her husband, she went to a Catholic mission school where she did not know about condoms, where she did not know about the risks to her health if her husband had had other relationships. Even if she heard a program on the radio talking about condoms, it was not available at the health center or the local district hospital, which also belonged to the mission, and if she had asked for it, she would not have dared to discuss it with her husband, fearful of being violently expelled from the house. She was infected. She could not protect herself from it. She did not even know how she could have done it. She would possibly pass the infection to one of the two or three children she would still have, before falling into progressive illness and weakness until death in the most extreme cachexia, hidden in shame, fearful of the stigma, in loneliness because of the fear of family and friends, anguished before the even more uncertain future of her children. One of whom was already showing signs of a cursed destiny.

We can stop this. We must. Let us not hide in our moral prejudices, from our paper offices, even from our liturgies and hierarchies. Preventing AIDS is a moral and ethical obligation, beyond our beliefs or different historical inspirations in the life of love, which unites all religions, all Humanity. Promoting testing and acting responsibly by using a condom before knowing it or if you know you are positive, is a moral obligation, it is promoting life, and not preventing it, as some suggest.

He looked at Ratzinger's cardinal acolyte, who gave him a stern, as well as embarrassed, look. As he left the meeting, he was called to COMECE. He was told that he could not speak like that in public, showing the division of the Church, speaking without the approval of Rome. He replied that hiding the reality of the division of the Church was an act of hypocrisy and that he was sure that neither they, COMECE, the nuncios, Ratzinger's office nor the Vatican, were supporters of the hypocritical life. Something beyond Ratzinger's hierarchy had promoted him to bishop and allowed him to speak with such freedom.

Beatriz continued to work on human rights initiatives in foreign affairs, founding a loving home and family with Meimuna and Moyes, and enjoying nature on long walks with Haki and Jenny. She corresponded intensely with Ukuzwana and Jabulani and also with her uncles Josu in Madeira and Jon in Idaho, with his older brother Agustin in the farmhouse and especially with his beloved "soul family" in Ukuzwana. She had a picture of all of them on the balcony of the Black Eagle refuge with the background of the eagles and Jonay approaching from the clouds of that magical valley where she began to change her life.

During the previous year, she had studied the Rwandan genocide and the responsibilities of those who instigated or allowed it, including the lukewarm positions of the Belgians, the French and the United Nations. In those reports for debate among the services, delegations, parliament or the council of European countries, her boss gave her full support. Within the commission, in spite of slow bureaucracies and struggles of interests and egos and visibility of the highest and political positions, officials could, if brave, fight for noble ideas, could contribute to face the most dramatic challenges of Humanity.

At the end of 1994 she received a letter from her Anaya Juan Mari, Haka, in which he told her about his findings on the organ trafficking ring and the links with the diamond trafficking ring. Beatriz had already been studying child trafficking networks and international law. Aimsa had put her in touch with Marta Santos, who already ran the Inocenti Institute in Florence, and together they had made an analysis of the situation including numbers, conditions, finances, networks, places in the world where the criminals lived almost unpunished by the law, and ideas on how to combat it. Beatriz prepared a conference in Libreville, Gabon, with the governments of West Africa, and encouraged a declaration in which the governments committed themselves to a series of measures for customs control, prosecution of mafias, prevention of the most vulnerable children and rehabilitation of victims. She prepared another similar meeting in Maputo, Mozambique, which also involved Interpol and the participation of representatives of children from the region, and of the most vulnerable groups, especially AIDS orphans and some released children such as Buhleve, who was accompanied by Helen.

But Haka was right: as long as the demand existed in places like Israel, the mafias would continue to be attracted to that market and would find ways to avoid anti-trafficking programs, or bribe them, or temporarily switch countries. In fact, there was already some evidence, according to Nancy from Berkeley, that the mafias had been moving out of South Africa after Haka's coup, and donor recruitment had been shifting to Brazil, Moldova and Russia, and transplants to China and other Asian countries, although they were also increasing in the United States.

Beatriz spoke to those responsible in the committee for relations with Israel. She proved that Israel's permissive laws for the transplants of organs from living donors - Beatriz thought to herself: alive at the time of harvesting - abroad and even their subsidies by health insurers and sometimes public money, contravened at least five international conventions and agreements. She cited above all the Convention on the Rights of the Child. She also cited data pointing to the possibility of the use of Palestinian corpses for organ trafficking. Another wall built with bricks of interests. To her many suggestions and analyses, Beatriz got no response. But her boss defended her, and managed, much to the chagrin of those responsible for political relations with Israel, to get an item on the council's agenda for discussion.

Beatriz prepared the analysis and arguments and presented them in one of the imposing rooms of the Justus Lipsus building on Schuman Square, the heart of Europe. About fifty people representing the then 15 member states of the European Union, through interpreters in their booths, listened attentively to Beatriz. Some countries, especially Sweden, appreciated the commission's intervention and initiative. A Swedish journalist had uncovered the scandal of the Palestinian corpses, and Sweden had allowed freedom of expression in the Swedish media, being accused by Israel of promoting anti-Semitism. Other countries remained silent. It was then that the United Kingdom opposed any dialogue on this issue with Israel, citing "strategic and political inappropriateness". Beatriz thought to herself that the calls between Washington and London were well tuned.

But she did not throw in the towel. She looked for other strategies. In the meantime, she investigated the diamond scheme in depth. Meimuna, from *Human Rights Watch*, helped in the enquiry. Just as the

mix of religious fanaticism and wealthy patients were the basis of organ trafficking, the basis of the wars in several African countries was the uncontrolled demand for diamonds for the luxury of the West, which fed the monopoly of jewelers in Antwerp and De Beers trade. Beatriz thought that a process like the one that a colleague of hers, Simon, had managed to put in place to control the felling of tropical forests - they called it FLEGT (*Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade*), could help to prevent the black market and unscrupulous use to enrich the mafiosi and perpetuate the wars from which diamond, arms and drug traffickers profited. She began to write an analysis and a proposal that included an international meeting in Kimberley, South Africa. Beatriz already felt, like his brothers Haka and Patxi, the strength and courage to fight injustice.

LIV. A Decalogue for a New Humanity. Findhorn, Scotland, 1995

THE ECO VILLAGES of La Gomera already had one thousand three hundred people from forty-two countries, and settled in five areas of the island : Tenderness in El Cabrito, Courage in Arguamul, Peace in Alajeró, Harmony in Chejelipes and Beauty in Hermigua. John and Umbela were chosen to represent them at the meeting in Findhorn, Scotland, where other communities would gather with the same hope of harmony with the Earth and among communities. They would be accompanied by Lisy, who had finished studying law in La Laguna and wanted to contribute ideas for the international network.

Robert Gilman had kept in touch with John during those years. He had been visiting eco-villages all over the world and encouraging the communities of La Gomera to attend this event.

John and Umbela had prepared Satia for a symbolic voyage: forty years later, Satia would sail in reverse the same voyage that led John to be shipwrecked in La Gomera. John was 69 years old and Umbela 59. They no longer had the same strength as when they defied the aristocracy and traditions of an island by uniting in love and building their home in the ravine of El Cabrito. Nor did they have the energy they had when they went around the world. But they remained healthy, agile and even more serene and confident in life. Lisy, who had finished law school in La Laguna and loved them as if they were her parents, volunteered to accompany them. They carried a message from that wonderful network of communities that for five years had lived in a harmony of simplicity and veneration for the beauty and purity of the Earth. They paid their taxes with handicrafts or surplus vegetables that they sold in the markets of the island, but they hardly used public services because they witnessed, sadly, how the consumerist society was destroying the Earth and the harmony between people.

Roads were plaguing the island, cars were invading it, schools were teaching the way of production and consumption, and health centers were perpetuating unhealthy lives and abusing chemical medication.

In five years no one under sixty years of age had died in the ecovillages. The doctors and nurses who lived there had used natural

remedies, acupuncture, osteopathy and a new form of treatment that consisted of intensifying human contact, hugs, caresses, tender looks, in front of people whose physical and emotional energy, always connected, was abating. They called it human warmth. Their way of life included constant greetings with "head hugs" and deep glances, relations without prejudice and they often slept hugging between groups, without bigotry or monopolies of norms between sexes, or within ages. When someone fell ill, the collective warmth towards that person was even greater. The Canary Health Service had sent an inspector to do a health examination and checked the state of domestic hygiene, vaccination of children, parasite infections, malnutrition and levels of blood pressure, cholesterol and tumor markers. The result was a much higher level of health than the rest of the population. He insisted, however, that they should vaccinate children under five years of age and not do their "hug therapies" when there were symptoms of coughing.

Some eco-villagers opposed any kind of vaccination. They met in assembly and presented their opinions. They concluded that as long as there were no cases of measles, the vaccine would be voluntary. The island authorities wanted to enforce them but could not justify their obligation as a public health problem, since they had no epidemic problems and their health was better than that of the rest of the society. Two cases were diagnosed with appendicitis and operated on in the hospital, four children had severe asthma did not improve with purple bougainvillea flowers and needed nebulizers that were adapted with pumpkin bark, three adults had diabetes that did not respond to healthy food and needed insulin and ten had hypertension that did not improve with diuretic herbs. In return for this hospital care, the island's eco-villages, in addition to paying their taxes, offered medicinal herbs and hug therapies at the hospital.

Thirty-two people had died in those fifteen years, almost all of them over eighty years old, in their beds, surrounded by hugs, caresses, music, stories about their lives and about the world, poems of the great infinite universe and eternal time, in which they were diluted and how the whole community went partway with them, and they left their bequest forever in the hearts of all villagers. From each one there was a drawing, a memory, a sculpture, a music, a story to add to the common

book. They kept, in rotating charge, a community diary. Each villager who passed away was remembered by a tree that nurtured on their bodies, instead of graveyards of inert stones, and by the next newborn, who bore as a middle name the one who left.

In those years forty-seven children were born, twenty-two girls and twenty-five boys. Of them there were only two cesarean sections that were programmed and assisted in the hospital. The rest were born at home with their families and with the naturopathic doctors and nurses. Five of them were even born in the sea, bathed by the waves on the shore. In the Tenderness community they had a tradition of singing a hymn to life during birth. Over time they had mixed Spanish with different languages that blended into their conversations, writings and songs. John and Umbela felt an immense harmony and happiness.

Of course, there were also disputes and problems. In the absence of material property, there were no such conflicts. The shifts in books, tools, writing and drawing materials, musical instruments and the, by then, four computers, avoided conflicts. Some did dispute the use of one or another dwelling and trials were necessary with a random popular jury to decide what they thought was fairer in the use of land or dwellings, always thinking of the common good and the equality of all. Most of the disputes were due to jealousy or deception in couple relationships. There were heterosexual and homosexual couples and several cases of polygamy and polyandry, almost all in serene harmony. But some cases of "imbalances of affection" had led to sadness and even violence. John also attributed it to the concept of ownership, which in the minds or in the genes, also aspired to possess the desired persons.

During those years, eighteen people left the community, ten to other ecovillages and eight to modern society. And twenty-three had arrived from outside.

Life went by tuned with the seasons in the countryside and the cycles of the moon. They celebrated the full moons with songs and music, and more intensity of hugs and caresses in community.

About ninety people followed historical religions, thirty-nine were Christians, sixteen Buddhists, fourteen Hindus, twelve Muslims and nine Jews. The rest did not believe in specific stories of the origin of

life or the codes of life. But they all shared the common ceremony each month and felt part of a universe as mysterious as beautiful it was.

John and Umbela left for Madeira in April 1995. Robert and others insisted that they go by plane but they insisted sailing on respect for nature and coherence with the eco-social harmony meeting. They had calculated that it would take about 40 days including stops in Madeira, Lisbon, Vigo in Galicia, Audierne in Brittany, Isle of Wight, Ipswich, Newcastle and finally Findhorn Bay.

They met Josu and his family. He had not sailed for a year because during a strong gale off Conakry, he had suffered a heavy blow and had fractured his femur in three places, without having regained the mobility necessary to sail. He was already in his eighties. He had founded an NGO with his wife Fatima, raising funds to send medicines to mission hospitals through the same shipping company with which he had worked for so many years. He had three children and five grandchildren, but except for a single daughter with a three-year-old grand daughter, the queen of the house, the rest were in Lisbon or Sao Paulo. Josu was deeply moved to see Lisy so precious and strong towards her future. It had been seventeen years since he had taken her on his boat escaping to freedom, fragile and full of fears to the unknown. They told him the stories of Jonay in Zimbabwe, of Fernando between his colony Courage and Sierra Leone and of Kadiatu and her association Gara. Josu already knew from Jonay the meeting of his brothers in Zimbabwe. They also explained to him the eco-village movement they had been leading in La Gomera and his mission to Findhorn in Scotland.

Fatima and a sister of hers were very interested in the ecovillage movement and on the second day they had concrete thoughts of where and how to start that idea in Madeira. Robert had contacted ecologists from all the ports that John, Umbela and Lisy would be visiting. They were waiting for them in each one to explain the ecological movement of La Gomera and then have a hot dinner with the local groups with eco-social commitment.

Thus they arrived, forty-three days after setting sail from El Cabrito, at Findhorn Bay. Robert's study for Gaia had concluded to convene representatives of communities representing different regions and cultures, different states of evolution and diverse ideas of

organization and relationship with their social environments. All of them, according to Robert, shared an aim for natural harmony, for spirituality without dogmas and for the union of humanity, without borders or property. Umbela encouraged the communities of La Gomera to write a ten-point manifesto together, on "a new humanity". The manifesto was written on melaleuca bark from Zimbabwe brought by Jonay and in calamus ink. After an introduction of blessing to life, it read as follows:

(They did not use capital letters, as a symbol of the feeling of being all equal).

*first, the earth, gaia, pachamama, is our mother and generates and regenerates our lives, all united in eternity and in the infinite universe. our deepest feeling is that of love for our mother earth, and our first commitment is to listen to her, understand her, feel with her, care for her and love her. we are born from her. **nature***

*second, each life, human, animal and plant, is unique and sacred, concentrates all the magic and beauty of the universe, and in each of them we all live. we are born, we grow, we feel, we suffer, we enjoy, we die, all in each of us. we profess, therefore, veneration for the life that engenders and nourishes mother earth, and we devote ourselves to harmony among all living beings, respecting all lives equally, which we call **harmony**.*

*third, each human being is a unique creation and transmits a unique and unrepeatable message from mother earth. as human beings we feel we are one more family in nature, with no more rights than others and called to harmony with all the others. between us we feel a special vibration through feeling and thought, and we sense the deep peace through our physical and spiritual union that we call **love**.*

*fourth, as human union in love, born of mother earth and harmony with all living beings, we forsake the fear of existential loneliness by sharing our physical warmth and our spiritual light, we relinquish the fear of not surviving by sharing our work in harmony with nature for our shelter, food and drink, which we call **sharing**.*

fifth, born of the earth, harmony with life, dilution in love and sharing, we renounce all individual ownership: of people among

*themselves, of nature in its land, its water and its expression of life and food, and of what we transform from nature without harming it, and of our thoughts, ideas, knowledge and expressions of feeling in art, writings or music. To this feeling of renouncing to own, we call it **freedom**.*

*sixth, with devotion to mother earth, harmony with life, dilution in love, sharing and uniting our lives, we aspire to receive and feel the energy of the universe of which we are a part, and especially that of humanity, our great family. to this end, we aspire to open ourselves to all human beings and their feelings, to feel with them and thus be able to live in love, solidarity and freedom. we call this attitude **empathy**.*

*seventh, it is through devotion to our mother, in harmony with our brothers and sisters in life, in love, in sharing, in freedom and through empathy, that we recognize that there is no being superior or inferior, with more or less right over nature or over their brothers and sisters. that is why our decisions as a community arise from the approval of all, and our representation and responsibilities in the community are rotating. we call this way of organizing ourselves and flourishing, service to the **common good**.*

*eighth, it is in devotion to the mother, harmony with life, living together in love, sharing in freedom and in empathy and service to the common good, how we deal with differences of opinion and sadness due to misunderstanding. we renounce any expression of violence. we resolve differences through dialogue, empathy and reflecting on the breakdown of our commitments. no one is guilty or innocent, but we all fall into weaknesses when we forget our common nature and purpose. it is then when we need more love. we call this way of solving conflicts and sadness, **compassion**.*

ninth, birth, harmony, love, sharing, freedom, service and compassion, direct us to seek new forms of harmony in nature that better avoid pain, hunger, thirst, sickness and increase our joy of feeling, thinking and meditating on our existence. aware that there is no fixed truth, no single religion, no single measure of beauty or goodness, we feel the joy of sharing the adventure of knowing and the endeavor to dream and create, without believing that we are overcoming the past, but simply flowing into new ways of

*understanding and creating in harmony. we call this way of challenging the mind , **discovery**.*

*tenth, aware of the immense magic of living in devotion to the earth, in harmony with life, in love, sharing in freedom and empathy, service, compassion and discovery, we live in a human group that allows us to know each other, rotate responsibilities and live in harmony, but we know we are part of the great human family with which we wish to have exchanges and union in the happiness of harmony with the universe. we call this community of communities a **new humanity**.*

Umbela had been thinking about the words of the Decalogue and four of them in the following order: Compassion-Humanity-Unity-Nature. "*Chun*." During the navigation the word Chun came to her mind again and again in forms of melodies she had never felt before.

They arrived in Findhorn and docked the ship in the harbor. They shared their leftover food with other sailors in the harbor, and walked off with their packs. They always traveled, and lived, lightly. They had been sailing for a month and a half and would be in Findhorn for a month and then return, stopping at other ports, perhaps in Holland and Belgium. In total they would be away for about four moons and all their clothes would fit in a simple backpack where they also carried some books, which they exchanged in the ports, a small first aid kit, John's harmonica and a transverse flute played by Lisy. But their backpacks were overloaded with hope, passion for life and faith in the new humanity that they were sure would be born from the ashes of capitalism and the alienating and destructive consumerism. They arrived at the park of The Findhorn Foundation, barely a mile away. The park was transforming from a trailer park to an eco-village of about 300 people, a similar size to the Tenderness colony.

The environment, lush and colorful in that spring of 1995, was dotted with a hundred or so houses, workshops and meeting centers, an art center, and scattered windmills and biogas tanks. One could see the beautiful Findhorn peninsula on one side and the coast and dunes of the Moray Firth on the other, crowned by the village of Findhorn.

A woman named Eileen, in her sixties, greeted them with a countenance of gentleness and peace. They left their backpacks in a simple wooden hut and joined Eileen and another woman named

Dorothy for mint tea from the orchard. Eileen explained that in 1962, after becoming unemployed, her husband Peter, she, her three children and Dorothy moved into a motorhome at Findhorn.

Umbela reflected that their adventure had begun around the birth of Jonay and how it was from difficult moments that courage, genius and the strength to transform were born.

Eileen went on to explain the history of that community: out of sheer necessity they began to plant vegetables, in alliance with spiritual meditation and harmony with nature. In the village they began to be amazed at the lushness of the garden on the sandy coastal land. The community grew around spiritual peace and started a program called "university of light" which began to attract visitors and people interested in joining the community. They started their own printing press where they published their experiences and visions of harmony with nature. The community grew and they acquired the Cluny Hotel to become the community's residence. They built the Universal Hall, an art center, a theater, a holistic café, dance and recording studios, and offices. For the past five years, like the Tenderness colony, Findhorn had been committed to eco-sustainability, in harmony with economic, cultural and spiritual sustainability. Peter had died the previous year. John and Umbela told them the story of the La Gomera communities and their journey to Findhorn.

They then moved on to the Universal Hall where a group was beginning to settle in, sitting on the floor and around a circular fireplace, surrounded by windows, themselves surrounded by oak, birch and leafy, multi-colored rhododendrons. A woman with curly red hair played the harp in one corner. Lisy accompanied her on her flute. John and Umbela sat down and together with the rest they formed a circle. The feeling of serenity and peace was such that no conventional greetings were necessary. The light, the fire, the harp music, the simple harmony with nature, invited to simply meditate. Spontaneously everyone closed their eyes and remained like that for about ten minutes. In a magically synchronized way, they connected with their gazes and created a complicity even before speaking. Little by little they introduced themselves. Eileen and Dorothy began by introducing the host community of Findhorn and welcoming everyone, followed by the farm community from Tennessee, founded by Robert, the Lebensgarten

and the Steyerberg Ecovillages communities from Germany, the Crystal Waters community from Australia, the Rysovo and Nevo Ecovillages from Russia, Gyürüfü from Hungary, the Ladakh Project from India, the Manitou Institute from Colorado, the Danish Association of Sustainable Communities, and La Gomera Harmony Community, represented by John and Umbela. In total there were thirty-two adults and fourteen children. For three days they shared their experiences and ideas.

All felt the need to create networks between communities aspiring to human and natural harmony without dogmas or hierarchies. The results of the debate were presented to an open meeting attended by some four hundred people from more than forty countries.

One of the issues that most concerned them was the balance between the eco-spiritual initiative they all embraced, and the link with modern society and nations. If they acted as just another community, paying taxes, they felt a contradiction in protecting nature with their way of life, but attacking it by contributing to states with capitalist and destructive policies. On the other hand, if they isolated themselves completely, they would stop connecting with the rest of the world and the progress of knowledge. They decided to create a global network of communities, with a legal basis that could maintain that balance. Lisy undertook to work on it.

The open meeting was attended by representatives from many places. One group that made a special impact on John, Umbela and Lisy was the landless peasants' movement in Brazil. A Brazilian peasant named Joao explained the origins of that movement: he said that the concept of land ownership and its capitalist exploitation was the source of so much damage to the Earth and to humanity. Ten years earlier, Joao, barely seventeen years old, was already a leader in condemning the abuses of landowners in Curitiba, in the state of Paraná, where he participated in a meeting, encouraged by the Church of Liberation. From that meeting emerged the landless peasants' movement and Joao began to lead the Paraná grassroots commission. He explained that in the movement there were no roles of president or other positions. They did not believe in hierarchy, so closely linked to the concept of power and property. They managed to get the 1988 constitution to declare that non-productive lands could be redistributed, but as those lacked

definition, the powerful always kept all their lands, either by exploiting them and their workers, leaving them barren or destroying their nature by cutting down the forest. The last national congress, held every five years, had appointed him to look for links with the idea of eco-village communities.

A Belgian named Martin spoke on behalf of a network called "*Via Campesina*" of which the Brazilian movement was a member. They represented more than one hundred organizations from fifty countries, defending family and sustainable agriculture. Martin spoke of the concept of food sovereignty as the right of peoples to define their agricultural policies and to produce food locally and sustainably, maintaining the Earth's biodiversity and through community work and management, against being exploited by market monopolies and the distribution of distant and chemically manipulated foods, which already constituted more than three quarters of the world's food supply.

Killari was a Quechua woman from the mountains of Ecuador whom Robert met on his round-the-world trip and whom he encouraged to come to the Findhorn meeting. She impressed everyone when she spoke of her community's struggle, together with "Ecuadorunari", a network of indigenous communities in the mountains. She told how they had been asking for five years for the plurinational character of the state in the Constitution, bilingual education, legalization of indigenous territories and agrarian reform. She also explained how they had mobilized in 1992 against the "celebration" of the fifth centenary and the so-called "discovery of America", and had managed to bring together a march of thousands of indigenous people to stop oil exploitation in the Amazon that was destroying nature and the health of the millenary indigenous peoples.

John took the floor:

-We are here, people of different cultures. Our parents and ancestors of many generations have spoken different languages, have thought about the Earth and our life on it in different ways, and we have felt how the nations that have been developing and their governments have been harming the Earth and our relationship with it and with each other in different ways. Joao tells us how millions of Brazilians live exploited or without access to care for and live off the Earth as they

would like, in a country where each Brazilian would be entitled to an average of four hectares of land. Marin tells us stories from around the world in which they struggle to protect or recover traditional ways of living in social solidarity groups, sharing the land and caring for its wealth, and thus live from what the Earth we care for gives and not sell it, and thus sell us, to international trade, anonymous and focused on production and profit, destroyer of customs, social solidarity ties and harmony with the earth. Killari has made us see how the indigenous ancestral knowledge is taking care of this harmony and has stood up in defense of its identity and of the Earth, opposing the sacrifice to which the Earth and its entrails are subjected. Elileen has told us how in the return to the earth hundreds of people have found here in these dunes of Findhorn, spirituality, harmony with the earth and an alternative to a fierce world obsessed with competing, producing and consuming, which beats only a few miles from here. And Robert has told us how on his tour of eco villages around the world he has seen thousands of people seeking a return to the Earth and with it our nature of sharing and respect for life. To love. We have different reasons but we all fight to protect our mother Earth, damaged in so many ways and in so many parts of the world. We are all brothers because we all have the same mother, and we are all comrades because we are united by a common pain: the damage done to our mother. All together we can help each other and take care of nature by stirring a new Humanity. I propose an Alliance of communities for a New Humanity.

Umbela discovered, talking to some Buddhist communities in Nepal, that Chun meant spring, renewal. She wrote a story about "the house of Chun" and told it on a night of fraternity in which those people, excited about a new humanity, joined hands and hearts around a big bonfire in the dunes in front of the northern sea. John sang with his harmonica, Bob Dylan's "The times they are a-changin'". Lisy strolled along the shore with Joao.

LV. Flying over the immense beauty of the world. Victoria Falls, June, 1996

AFTER ADAM'S BIRTH, Aimsa decided to spend three days a week in Bulawayo where she began collaborating with Karen and Helen on a project to reclaim fertile land for Matabeleland villages whose survival was increasingly fragile due to drought, a reflection of global warming of which the world was not yet well aware. Most of the fertile land on the plateau linking Harare and Bulawayo was owned by white "Rhodesians" who, despite the defeat of apartheid, maintained their power and even their racism within their estates and private clubs. Aimsa made a detailed map of land, production, populations, degrees of poverty and malnutrition.

She was also determined to get the zidovudine treatment she had fought so hard for in the United States to Africa, to Zimbabwe. She wanted to talk to Stamps about all that.

She then traveled to Harare where Minister Stamps, who remembered her well from that meeting in London, had given her an audience. After seeing her at the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, he invited her to his home where he dined with his wife Lucy, an ethnic Shona, and five children adopted from Zimbabwe and around the world.

They talked about land reform. Zimbabwe's whites, one percent of the population, owned sixty percent of the arable land. According to the Lancaster agreements, land redistribution during the first ten years of independence was attempted by a system of voluntary sales by white settlers, with financial assistance to the Zimbabwean government from the former British colonial power. This phase resulted in little land transfer, less than half of what was expected. Three years before they introduced a law on forced sale of white-owned farms, with the price dictated by the courts, but in three years the process had hardly advanced and the inequalities in the country were still bleeding. Hunger in Matabeleland was chronic, in addition to the terrible bloodletting caused by the AIDS pandemic. The British refused to contribute to the purchase of their subjects' land, and the government of Mugabe did not speed it up either, since most of its income came from tobacco export taxes from the farms of white Rhodesians. Aimsa questioned the

attitude that kept people destitute in the increasingly dry sandy lands of Matabeleland for the sake of exporting tobacco, a health scourge that killed even more people each year than AIDS. Stamps defended his government by saying that it was being done slowly and that they needed the revenue to buy back the land and provide health and education services to the population. Change would take time but it would come, so they said.

Aimsa told Stamps about the eco-village model of La Gomera, about harmony with the land, about how traditional subsistence farming in collective ownership harmony could lift half of Zimbabwe's population out of hunger. That exports could be devoted to other goods such as sustainable mining, and in the meantime increase income from eco-tourism. Stamps said that it was difficult to move forward with expropriation, that the pressures from the World Bank and the American and British governments to which Zimbabwe was indebted were too great.

They then went on to talk about AIDS. By then, the government had already become actively involved in alerting about the epidemic, the ways of sexual transmission and distributing free condoms. Brunapeg was one of ten "sentinel centers" in the country, where they anonymously tested pregnant women and calculated the proportion of infected adults. The average in the country was fifteen percent and in southern Matabeleland it was as high as twenty percent.

-Minister, I would like to thank you for providing the Amani Trust and its Jabulani project with the funds provided by South Africa as compensation for the trafficking of the Matabeleland children.

-It was because of that organization and that Spaniard, the missionary's brother, who could unmask such dreadfulness. I want to hold a ceremony to present him with the government's medal of honor.

-I doubt he will accept it. Haka did none of this to his glory. And there is still the trail of children who were not rescued. There is a part of the trafficking that is still hidden and protected, the trafficking of children's organs, the worst of human perversions.

-I know, and I need to know where that untamed Basque is. I want to help him.

Aimsa knew that telling him of his whereabouts in Israel could put him in danger. Zimbabwe was too dependent on Mandela's South Africa, and South Africa was too dependent on De Beers and Chevron, and they protected the mafias that protected their diamond monopolies as well as dealing in every possible and unscrupulous business. Maybe Haka was obsessed, paranoid about these plots but he only wrote to Ukuzwana through Beatriz and in code.

-I don't know where he might be. We haven't heard from him in Ukuzwana for a long time.

-Minister, I wanted to talk to you about AIDS treatment. For now, there is only one drug that is effective in slowing down its progression, as you know, zidovudine. Moreover, it has been shown in several studies that a short course of treatment can prevent the infection, and certain death, of half of the children who are infected by their mothers during pregnancy and delivery. In Zimbabwe, I have calculated that this corresponds to about ten thousand children per year. Brazil already gives free treatment to its entire population and has forced Welcome's monopoly prices down, as well as offering to export the drug to Africa. Can't Zimbabwe import the drug, or even manufacture it in government laboratories?

-Thank you Aimsa, I have thought about it. But we have enormous pressure from the British and American government. If we import Brazilian zidovudine or try to manufacture it, we may be put under sanctions by the newly created World Trade Organization, which you know is pushing for the obligation of patents.

-But that is criminal! Thousands of young people are dying, infecting thousands of children. Are the already immense profits of a few, full of insatiable greed, more important? What can Zimbabwe be afraid of? Of not placing its noxious tobacco? What kind of world is this? With these businesses of death and these fears of prioritizing profits before anything else, human life, can one sleep with a clear conscience?

Aimsa had lost control, thinking of so many people she had already seen die of AIDS in such a short time in Matabeleland.

-It's not that easy, Aimsa, but I promise I will write to Brazil and talk it over with the president.

-I only ask you to think about something: every day that passes, almost three thousand people die in your country, in pain, in silence and stigma, in the most extreme weakness, often without even a helping hand.

-I know. I think about it every day.

Something made Aimsa feel that the man did feel the pain. But that he was hand-tied, ashamed.

-Another thing, Minister, have you heard of David Ho?

-No, who is he?

-A friend of mine in San Francisco, Dr. Gottlieb, knows him, and he tells me that he is getting near cure by combining several AIDS drugs. I will keep you informed. We have to get drugs to the people, Minister. It's a matter of life and death.

-Count me in. I will come to see you in Ukuzwana at the end of this year.

It was the austral winter of 1995.

Aimsa returned to Ukuzwana. She had been on that magical Ukuzwana mission for three years now. Ever since she first saw Jonay at the airport in Bulawayo, she had felt an intense allure. Aimsa was thirty-three years old. She had only had two short relationships with colleagues at Berkeley that had not lasted long, and in which she had not felt the deep complicity she longed for. She felt she had to give herself entirely to fighting for a different, more just world. And she was afraid. She had seen a lot of suffering since she was a child, and she had protected herself in her shell. She had talked about it with Jonay.

Jonay did not cease to be fascinated by Aimsa since the first day he saw her. He sensed her intelligence and courage from her letters from Berkeley. Then he learned the details of her life surviving in the garbage dumps of Bombay and on the streets of Calcutta. When Aimsa told him of her time at the Ashram, of her Buddhist studies, of quantum physics, of philosophy and thought, and of science, he felt overwhelmed. He thought he had some idea of human knowledge but next to Aimsa he felt tiny. Her struggle in the United States reminded him of Haka's courage, NoLwasi's spirituality and Patxi's generosity. And all that with a beauty that Jonay never ceased to be aware of and dazzled by.

After his breakup with Yolanda sentenced by the Father Teide crossroads, Jonay had not had any lasting relationship. He had met a few Ndebele women, among them Anwele's sister, with whom he had even had a short relationship for a few months, but whom he only saw on a few trips to Bulawayo and with whom he did not get to deeply share his ideas and dreams. Since he met Aimsa, he could think of no one else. But he respected her to such a degree that he did not dare to seduce her. He often thought about it at night, but when he was near her, he was speechless.

Aimsa had returned from Harare to Bulawayo and then to Ukuzwana on one of those endless bus routes through the villages of Matabeleland. Her health was pure as was her vegan lifestyle, her yoga discipline and her long sunset walks, but that long journey gave her a sore back. Arriving in Ukuzwana at sunset, he watched as Jonay came out of the little house that served as an operating room. Joseph, Thandiwe, Nothando and Buhleve were playing with little Adam, who at only two years old was already running around the mission and its surroundings.

Jonay approached her and noticed her sore walk:

-How did it go, Aimsa? Are you in pain?

-It went well, Jonay, and you? I have a slight back pain. Nothing major. Many hours of bumpy bus ride.

Something made the walls they had unconsciously built before each other despite their deep attraction, almost veneration, crumble. Their gazes crossed in a deeper way than ever. In that feeling that framed the silence, Jonay dared to say:

-Come to my house, Aimsa, I'll cook you dinner and give you a massage. And tell me how it went. Do you accept?

Aimsa was troubled by the invitation, though there was nothing she wanted more strongly. At that moment little Adam came running awkwardly over and wrapped his arms around Aimsa's legs. Between the relief of being rescued from a situation as desirable as it was delicate, and the sorrow of seeing that moment of magic fizzle out, Aimsa took little Adam in her arms and went to Patxi's house where she had her room. She looked back several times smiling at Jonay.

An hour later, when Jonay was resting in his bed and thinking about her, there was a knock at the door. The knock was not followed by Rose's usual call for an emergency at the dispensary. Jonay felt his heart skip a beat when, through the frosted glass, he saw a figure that had been lighting up his heart for some time.

He opened the door and there stood Aimsa in a purple sari and the same look that had pierced his soul.

-Is that invitation still open?

-It has been standing for three years.

They embraced each other with a strength so long repressed. They both trembled. Their arms caressed each other's backs and hair. Their faces were brushing shyly. And their lips were seeking each other. They kissed sweetly, both transported to another world of pleasure, of peace, never known. They opened their eyes again, now looking at each other just a few centimeters away, and their strength and depth made them moisten with emotion. They made love with piety. That gave way to passion. They were in each other's arms all night, without speaking. Both deeply moved. Words were redundant.

They would never after be separated.

The following month, Jonay got a two-week substitution. Ndlovu had been appointed health director for southern Matabeleland and in Brunapeg they had secured the assignment of two Cuban internationalist doctors, as Fernando had been in Sierra Leone. They agreed for one to come for two weeks to Ukuzwana. Jonay convinced Aimsa to take a trip she had always dreamed of. He told her to pack only a rucksack and wear pants. Jonay had been planning the trip in his mind for months. Now he had put it down on paper with days, times, routes. And a diary that he sensed was beginning a new horizon in his days. As his father used to say : "this is the first day of the rest of your life".

Jonay got up before dawn and prepared the ultra light on the track, south of the mission. He knocked on Patxi's house, who welcomed him with a smile between cheerful and mischievous and gave him a big hug. They had breakfast together, they were really like a big family of hopes. Patxi told the latest news of Beatriz, fighting for just causes in Brussels and creating a beautiful family with Meimuna and Moyes, and of Haka,

who was in a kibbutz from where he was still exploring the route of child trafficking. Something no one should know about.

-Well Jonay, where are you going?

-Sorry, Patxi, it's a surprise for my Indian princess.

-Can I trust this canary, Patxi? -said Aimsa,

-You can trust him, I assure you. It makes me very happy to see you together.

-Be careful with these Spaniards, Aimsa. And call me if you need a ransom!

NoLwasi told Aimsa.

They had already installed electricity in Ukuzwana, although it only worked a few hours a day. They had also installed a telephone line, which was hand-cranked and kept them connected to Bulawayo.

They aññ walked to the esplanade south of the mission. There was the two-seater ultralight. They climbed into it and Jonay started it up.

They said goodbye to Anwele, Rose, Patxi, NoLwasi, and the little ones.

He accelerated on the runway and they took off. Jonay had used the ultra light a couple of times a month to go to Brunapeg and to Mayobodo, a clinic where he went for monthly consultations for the last year. But this time the route would be longer and the purpose of the trip the most important of his life: to see, from the sky, the future of two souls who already felt united forever.

It was a pendular ultra-light with two seats. They could fly at about ninety kilometers per hour at an altitude of about three hundred meters, and had a range of about three hours. Jonay had spoken with people, all former patients of his or colleagues or missionaries from other hospitals in Matabeleland, at the five points where he had planned the stops along the route: Matopos Park, where they would sleep in the Black Eagle, of such exciting memories. The next stop, a plain within the Hillside swamp park in Bulawayo, the track next to Saint Lukes mission in northern Matabeleland, a track in front of Nantwich central camp, north of Hwange, and another one near Victoria Falls.

For two weeks, Jonay and Aimsa flew through those places of such immense beauty.

While flying over Matopos they saw herds of wildebeest, buffalo, zebras, groups of giraffes, two rhinos and they could also see a leopard in an acacia tree. They then flew over the southern *kraals* of Matabeleland until they reached the lush park of the Hillside swamps. There they spotted two dozen species of migratory birds, and colonies of thousands of weaver birds. In the two pines of the Brunapeg mission, the tallest trees in the entire region, thousands of weavers nested twice a year, and Jonay, whenever he went to Brunapeg, watched them with curiosity and wonder.

-Do you know what rules follow this frantic activity of the weaver birds building the nests? The males build the nest and the female supervises it: if she doesn't see it as very secure, she breaks it and throws it on the ground. The best thing that can happen to the male is that he is approved by the "boss", in which case? he will not be allowed to enter!

-It's not a bad system!

Aimsa joked.

They slept at Helen's acquaintances in Bulawayo, who had a butterfly farm and a huge garden of cacti and succulent plants.

They continued their journey a few days later to Saint Lukes in the north of Bulawayo, near a town called Lupane. They stayed there for two days visiting the mission hospital, although they felt the Catholic morality for which Patxi had suffered so much and soon resumed their flight. They arrived in Nantwich. They were exceptionally allowed to land inside the Hwangue National Park thanks to a patient, a worker in the Park, whom Jonay had operated on for an intestinal obstruction. Nantwich was a truly magical place:

They arrived after crossing about a hundred kilometers of the northern part of Hwangue, an immense national park bordering Botswana where, among all the other African mammal species, about forty thousand elephants lived.

They also saw herds of antelopes, zebras, thousands of buffaloes, cheetahs hunting, lions watching the horizon, hyenas and vultures fighting over carrion. So much beauty!

Arriving in Nantwich, they occupied the house in the center. There were only three, one on each hill. Each overlooked a horizon some fifty

miles to the east, possibly the most beautiful sunset in the world. There they stayed for a week, feeling all that beauty. Embracing and diluting all their senses.

They had brought some provisions from Lupane and with the kerosene refrigerator and wood stove they enjoyed a week in near silence and levitation in the midst of that ineffable beauty. They continued on to Victoria Falls. From fifty kilometers before they could see the steam rising up to four hundred meters above the abysmal crevice a hundred meters deep into which the immense flow of the Zambezi River fell.

Upon arrival, they were in awe of such beauty and such a majestic force of nature. They flew the almost two kilometers to the Zambian bridge and then went about ten kilometers into the Zambezi, towards the lush Caprivi in Namibia.

They saw crocodiles and hippos. They stayed in one of the houses in the national park. In the evening, under the full moon, Aimsa prepared rice with peanut sauce, and lit candles on the porch, facing the bank of the Zambezi.

-Jonay, thank you for this trip, seeing, like the birds, the immense beauty of the Earth. I have never spent so much time simply enjoying the beauty. I have always lived by surviving or fighting for others to survive. I didn't know what rest was like except fleeting moments of meditation.

-I have not struggled as much as you have, Aimsa, though I too feel I have lived life as a race, and also distressed by pain, illness and injustice to the poorest of the poor. I feel somewhat uncomfortable with the privilege of this journey flying over such wonderful places, and sleeping in these park homes while so many people will never see this. But I think we both, especially you, deserved it.

-We both find it hard to enjoy life without our minds questioning the privilege. We will have to learn together. Harmony with beauty is part of life.

-In you, in your gaze, I see the deepest dignity and courage. I want to dilute my body and soul in you.

-I wish so too, Jonay. But let us not allow love to make us a closed cycle that doesn't flow out to the universe, to others.

-I know what you mean. The chain of love. The dilution of Erich Fromm's existential anguish, the one that chains and does not liberate. I love you in freedom and in whatever form life shows us.

-He has already shown us a way, Jonay.

-I am engendering a life of our love.

The following May 22, 1996, a baby girl was born in Ukuzwana and named NoLwasi, after her godmother. Mother of knowledge. It was a magical night, when the stars and planets conspired to welcome a girl who would become one of the most beautiful women the planet Earth had ever seen.

LVI. The havens of greed. Zurich, 1997

HAKA'S EARLY INVESTIGATIONS indicated that one or more networks in Israel arranged organ transplants in several countries for Israeli patients, given the religious limitation on anonymous transplants or organ harvesting after death. In addition, a forensic doctor reaped organs from Palestinian prisoners for illegal transplants. They did so in contradiction to Torah principles - putting other people's lives at risk and harvesting organs from non-Jews - and with the hypocrisy of subsidizing such transplants - turning a blind eye to their mafia networks and criminal conditions - by insurance companies or even with public money. The Mossad had kicked out of the country the Swedish journalist who uncovered the forensic plot and was following Haka's footsteps, so he preferred to take refuge in a kibbutz. Meanwhile, Beatriz in Brussels faced an unyielding wall in trying to get the weak European diplomacy to question Israeli policy on the matter. "*It is politically inopportune*" they reiterated to her.

Haka took a volunteer position in a kibbutz near the Gaza Strip. He needed time to understand the Jewish psychology and sociology that apparently allowed those crimes based on a supposed superiority of the Jewish people. He needed to organize and relate all his data of people, dates, relationships, about the child trafficking mafias into an outline. And he needed to feel, from a young age, how life was in community. He called Helen to explain the plans and as they mutually felt a great desire to be together, Helen joined Haka for a month in the kibbutz. Buhleve would stay with Kate, who together with Aimsa would keep Amani Trust and the Jabulani project going.

Earlier, they spent ten days in Jerusalem. Haka reflected on the irony of the name - "Princess of Peace" to the city that for the past two thousand years had known no peace. A battleground between the three Mediterranean religions that had marked Western history. Conquered eleven times and destroyed five times in its entirety, the biblical Jerusalem lay in rubble twenty meters underground. Haka and Helen were agnostic and deeply skeptical of Western monotheistic religious beliefs. They thought they were based on fantasy-filled legends, like the Old Testament, that contradicted each other in their messages of love of God and between men and their premises of superiority of some

over others (the Jewish chosen people over others, Christians and Gentiles, Muslims and infidels) and in that they had become allied with power, the hierarchies, the cruel wars and the industrial capitalism of the Christians, speculative of the Jews and the oil-related wealth of the Muslims, all of them already mixed in a magma of power and greed, in a skein with beliefs and fears, that had, and continued to choke the life of more than one hundred generations in the history of Humanity. Helen had opted for Eastern spirituality, without gods or hierarchies, which she shared in meditation with Aimsa, like a sister to her. But Haka could not feel that diffuse divinity and bordered on atheism, skeptical of everything he could not touch with his hands, and convinced that life ended with the last breath and how nature recycled us was something that no one could pretend to know and even less impose.

But something inside made them want to walk in silence through the cradle places of the religions that had sculpted the history and culture that shaped the lives of their ancestors and in many ways continued to mark theirs.

They began by approaching the Wailing Wall, the remains of the temple that replaced Solomon's and where the ark with the Ten Commandments was placed two and a half thousand years ago, later destroyed by the Romans. It was Friday and they saw hundreds of Orthodox Jews in their *kippah* hats and *talit* shawls, with their long gray beards and curls in their sideburns, weeping at the wall for its destruction two thousand years ago. Helen's maternal grandparents had been Jewish, but her mother married an English anarchist, a member of the international brigades in the Spanish Civil War, and love turned her away from religion and grew gradually detached her parents. Seeing that fervent weeping, she could not understand that pain for stones built by the infanticidal Herod, when there were so many children dying for injustice every day.

They then walked along the Via Dolorosa where Jesus was supposed to have walked the road between his conviction and his crucifixion, where the holy sepulcher recalled the place where he was buried. They saw hundreds of pilgrims praying at the fourteen stations that evoked Christ's passion. There Haka felt a chill that he could neither control nor explain. The story of Jesus had fascinated him since childhood. His message of love and humility enchanted him, and the

vocations of Patxi and Beatriz, though he had never revealed it to them, touched his heart. But he had been accruing anger at the crimes of the history of the Catholic hierarchy and the stories of oppression of which his brother and sister had been victims. It made him feel deep rage, similar to that felt by Jesus when he violently drove the merchants out of the temple. Unlike his brother and sister, he thought that violence was sometimes necessary.

They then went to the esplanade southeast of the Old City of Jerusalem where the Dome of the Rock was located, a sacred place for Muslims, who prayed in their El-Aqsa mosque remembering how, according to their legend or belief, Muhammad was brought in a magical night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, from where he ascended to the heavens to the presence of God, to return again to Mecca.

Haka could not understand how such far-fetched stories had dominated the life of much of human history and were still, in the age of knowledge, the cause of cruel wars between those who, in the deepest and truest sense of religions, were children of God and brothers and sisters to each other, bound to be united by love. Haka remembered his conversations with Aimsa in the few days he shared with her upon his arrival in Ukuzwana, about Buddhism and quantum physics, the common energy of love, and the illusion of matter, a very limited perception of the many dimensions and multiverses of our existence. Thinking existence that way gave him a deep sense of peace.

Helen and Haka then traveled to a Kibbutz in the south, near the Gaza Strip. It was one of the few that followed the egalitarian tradition and where work, time and property were shared. About three hundred people lived there, almost all of them of Jewish descent, from Russia. They had drunk from the Bolshevik revolution but had fled anti-Semitic pressures, arriving in Israel in its constitution after World War II and settling in an arid land that they were, drop by drop, turning into an oasis where they cultivated and lived almost self-sufficiently. They made surplus humus, which they sold in Tel Aviv in exchange for kerosene for the generator and the three tractors, medicines, books, and some tools. They lived very simply and took all decisions collectively.

There was no private property and they had access to education and collective childcare, health care, healthy food and water from their

gardens and even some tobacco, alcohol, coffee or chocolate, as they chose. There were about thirty volunteers, half from the United States, half from Europe. Some practiced their religious ceremonies, others were agnostic and did not follow any, while a few celebrated joint ecumenical and spiritual rituals, around meditation. One of the Americans was a Quaker and explained to Haka, the Christian-inspired, pacifist, ecological movement linked to community solidarity actions and international movements such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace, during an endearing get-together. Many evenings they met to sing together melodies of peace and love, and to discuss ways to better organize the work.

Haka and Helen spent a month very close. Haka tilled the fields and Helen worked in childcare at the nursery school. During their stay, Haka befriended a Yiddish man who lived in New York. His name was Aaron and he worked in banking, but he had been feeling jaded by the competitive, consumerist life and brewed a guilty conscience about the banking business.

After several days of sharing confidences and gaining mutual trust, they began to part their experiences and ideas. It was the month of December and Aaron and Haka shared a day in the olive harvest.

-Aaron, I've only known you for two weeks, but I have a sincere trust in you.

-Me too, Haka.

-I have a deep respect for your people, who have survived hundreds of years of persecution in so many countries, and I understand in this community how your sense of togetherness and effort has made you strong in the face of adversity, drought and pursuit.

-You are right, Haka, but this union is also our destruction. We have closed ourselves to the rest of the world, our walls have engendered fears and prejudices. It is reflected in that absurd belief of being the "chosen people". The mix of fear of the unknown and pride of our roots, has made us withdrawn, fanatical and I feel ashamed of the violence against the Palestinian people whose land we seized, with the connivance of European and American powers.

-I understand you well, Aaron. It has taken me a long time to comprehend the nationalist fanaticism of some groups in my people,

the Basques. I also love them for their nobility and courage. But traveling opens the mind, makes us see that there are neither people superior to others but different and unique in their journey through life, nor religions superior to others but dissimilar ways of trying to understand our existence in the universe. I believe we are more honest the more we recognize the search and less avow a truth, nor even unique political ideas and owners of ethics. The only thing I believe in is respect among all people and their lives, and in my case, in the happiness of sharing.

-You're right, Haka. Do you know what the ocean life activist, Frenchman Jacques Cousteau, wishes-for?

-No, tell me. I believe that the greatest wisdom comes from those who are in harmony with nature.

-He says that a small part of the expenditure on jewelry or weapons could be used so that all young people of the world could spend a year of their lives in cultures and societies other than those of their origin. This would soften pride, dilute fanaticism, increase empathy, strengthen solidarity, gradually put an end to absurd borders and prevent wars.

-It's a wonderful idea.

-Although I enjoy this shared life, I cannot only think of sharing in this oasis of solidarity. I feel guilty for this privilege while there is such immense suffering out there.

-I understand you, Haka. After these months, I will go to live with a Palestinian family in Gaza. I want to understand their suffering, and fight against the oppression of the Israeli army, armed by American money and crushing with tanks the cries of freedom and anguish of the intifada.

-My challenge began with some children in Zimbabwe, where I lived in the mission my brother leads, in the Kalahari.

Haka told him about his findings on the trafficking of children from Zimbabwe to South Africa, its link with the protection of the cruelest apartheid groups turned into mercenaries in African wars and financed by De Beers and Chevron to protect their monopolies, and with the trafficking of organs and transplants with the complacency of the Israeli government.

Haka thought that the scheme, which fluctuated between prostitution, arms and drug trafficking profits, and links to the diamond business and other strategic raw materials for weapons, science and communication, required massive financial and political backing.

-Haka, I admire your nobility and courage. But you are up against an immense power, which is at the heart of all the political and economic entrails of our system. I will tell you that the bank where I stopped working out of conscience, has investments in countries with dictatorships, in arms companies, including anti-personnel mines, which they export unscrupulously to those countries, in the diamond business extracted by bloodthirsty guerrillas in Africa and even more in the extraction of coltan and "rare earths", the basis of our communications, in the area of the great lakes, where companies like those you have told me about and like the bank where I worked, maintain the most cruel wars because of their insatiable greed. Those same all-powerful companies have bribed judges and politicians all over the world. Governments pay their debts and no one can attack them. What can we do?

-We are not sleeping easy at the moment. We have been able to save a few children from the prostitution and organ trafficking mafias, but I know it is only the tip of the iceberg. I need to fight it, even if it means my life. My sister is fighting for at least the diamond trade to be regulated, as has already been achieved with tropical timber, and at least some of the black market to be prevented. My brother is fighting against the arrogant intolerance of the Church to prevent the immense suffering from AIDS that we are witnessing in Southern Africa. And friends from the Canary Islands, allied with communities all over the world, including some Kibbutz like this one, are aligning themselves to suggest new ways of living in social harmony and with nature. There are glimmers of light, but the boundless dark and dirty trade persists, the trafficking of arms, drugs and strategic minerals continues, and the victims of war, slavery, prostitution and injustice continue to increase.

-Not only those extremes, Haka. On a day-to-day basis, the banks, with their dark business and endless greed, are creating an immense web of speculation that they call "securities" and "derivatives" by which they gamble, through the internet that has just been created, with virtual money and win billions in a "great world casino". These

immense profits are obtained by mortgaging the lives of workers all over the world who are kept enslaved by paying loans at prices virtually inflated by the same banks allied with the owners of construction companies, intoxicated by junk food coming from fields they exhaust and peasants they exploit, and full of chemical substances that are destroying our health, and manipulated by the media that they themselves own and warn of the communist danger in case of any doubt about this cruel and insatiable capitalism.

-Aaron, the world needs a revolution.

-When you know how, count on me.

A few days later, Helen and Haka celebrated Christmas together. Despite their doubts in religion, many generations of their ancestors had celebrated it with devotion, and in their memory were the family celebrations. But in addition, the image of Jesus, of his courage against injustice, of his struggle for love, somehow lit up their lives. They had falafel and corn cakes with hummus. And they toasted with a wine of the earth.

-Merry Christmas, Helen.

-Merry Christmas, Haka.

-I wanted to tell you something.

-Tell me.

-Ever since I saw you, I have not stopped thinking about you any day. There is something in me that calls me to this fight against terror, but at the same time there is another very deep side that asks me to be by your side, to have the home I never had, and to love and care for you with all my tenderness.

Haka was not used to expressing feelings, let alone such intimate ones. In the last few days, in their conversations about life, religions, Humanity, in that remote Kibbutz, Helen had sensed a wonderful humanity in the person she had loved for nine years, ever since he appeared in her office in Bulawayo. They spent most of that time in physical distance, while Haka worked in Ukuzwana or chased mafias in South Africa or around the world. With Kate and young Buhleve, and the kindred spirits of Ukuzwana, they belonged to a big family, but Helen longed to care and be cared for, to love and be loved by Haka, every day. The two of them, she at forty-six and he at sixty-five, had

spent their lives fighting against injustice, but longing for the embrace and warmth each night, of the person with whom to pour out their innermost and deepest souls.

She also feared for his life, although he was strong and had a unique alertness and intuition, he was old enough to rest and be cared for.

-The last thing I would do with the person I love the most, is to cage him. But you know I look forward to you, to take care of and love each other every day.

-I've been thinking, Helen. You've seen all my schemes. I have to tie up a loose end, in Switzerland.

-Do you want me to come with you?

-I'd rather you were with Buhleve. Kate will want to go back to Johannesburg.

-I will leave tomorrow for Bulawayo. Will I hear from you?

-You will know from Ukuzwana, from the envelopes that Beatriz will send you from Brussels. Every two weeks.

Helen returned home to Hillcrest, Buhleve was now eighteen and had been admitted to study medicine in Johannesburg. She would move in June and spend time with John and Kevin, studying the challenges of AIDS in Pretoria. Helen continued to work with Aimsa and Anwele on the challenges of AIDS, support for families, grandparents, orphans, and the right to access both prevention and treatment. Kate returned to Johannesburg and began working with Sun City on a television series that attempted to treat AIDS as naturally, tenderly and responsibly as she had seen in Ukuzwana. Patxi remained with NoLwasi and little Adam. Joseph, Nothando and Thandiwe, teenagers already, were growing up. Jonay continued his passionate work and took care of little Nour in love with Aimsa. Beatriz lived with Meimuna and Moyes, who at the age of eight was progressing in his studies at the European school in Brussels and already mastered Spanish, English and French.

Haka was happy about the family that those energies of courage and tenderness had shaped. But he had a mission.

He had made a complex diagram of names, dates, places and relationships, in which he could connect the network of child trafficking for prostitution and transplants with *Executive Outcomes* -

EO- and those with De Beers and Chevron and with two networks of companies in South Africa and the United Kingdom, many of them listed on the stock exchange. In turn, EO and its group of companies negotiated with guerrillas or governments at war, sometimes with both, and with arms trafficking gangs, protected by Gadaffi from Libya, and with drug trafficking mobs, linked to the Nigerian and Colombian cartels. Another link in the network connected them to private clinics in South Africa and their investors, with the transplant business network in Israel coordinated by Ilan Perry. Both EO and de Beers had investments in all kinds of privately held or publicly traded companies, and there was evidence of significant money evasion to tax havens and secret accounts in Switzerland. Several mining groups were fully controlled with capital from those giant monopolies, and were also part of the EO network. In turn, he was able to discover in the complex world of investments that maintained the terror traffics, that both the members of many management committees and the capital of the companies belonged to banks and to the new generation of agencies of the "derivatives market", virtual operations in which literally the investment and speculation banks bet for and against risky operations and their insurances. It was an impossible-to-understand web.

To simplify it, Haka created five groups; victims, traffickers, guerrillas, investors and speculators. The victims were exploited or sacrificed by traffickers in prostitution, arms, drugs, diamonds, strategic minerals or oil exploitation rights. Those traffickers and their armies or terror groups, sometimes linked to guerrilla groups, which amounted to a network of more than five thousand groups in the world, each with an average of fifty connections, protected the monopolies of diamonds, strategic minerals, including uranium on the black market, or oil or timber exploitation without human or ecological scruples. Finally, those monopolies that lived off terror, invested their profits in other companies that often served them as logistics, cover or influence in their businesses or in blackmailing governments, and in banks and derivatives agencies, which speculated with the billions of terror. The most sombre side was that there was a sixth group: ordinary citizens, who, unaware of all that, consumed the products of those companies or invested their savings in the banks that speculated and lived off those monopolies with tentacles in the cruelest expressions of Humanity.

What could Haka do in the face of such horror? Look for allies. But Nadine found out many so-called solidarity organizations were infiltrated by those very same networks. He could only do two things: send anonymous information to the free press in strategic places like Israel, Switzerland, Belgium and New York, and inform citizens of the companies and products that were based on pain and terror. He could do the same with ecology and other types of human rights abuses. He would talk to Amnesty International about it; he had a good contact in London.

Haka wrote an article about the scheme of transplants to wealthy Israeli patients from Palestinian corpses and from living donors who were paid or kidnapped and enslaved in various countries around the world. He sent it anonymously to Arutz Sheva with a note explaining the risk of making it factual and nominal, but based in all the sources he cited.

He then traveled to Zurich. From the Johannesburg clinic database and the research Kate and Nadine did, he knew where the money was accrued from the child trafficking business, transplants, bloodthirsty guerrilla diamonds, and the offshoots in arms, drugs, profiteering and so many other horrors. He knew that part of Perry's, EO's, *Netcare's* and De Beers' funds, and many of their offshoots, were safely at UBS and *Credit Suisse*. He needed to have more data on those investments and to provide data for an article that would touch the consciences of Swiss citizens, who benefited from the taxes and speculative profits of these blood-drawn fortunes.

He stayed with a journalist named Sabine, whom Nadine put him in touch with from Johannesburg. Her boyfriend, a young computer scientist from Monaco named Hervé Falciani, worked for the banking giant HBSC. Falciani extracted the data and Sabine had been compiling a huge list of names of dictators and criminals who had their fortunes in Swiss banks. With the collaboration of contacts all over the world, infiltrated in the financial circles around a group known as "bankers with soul", they had quantified about three million million dollars coming from abroad and shielding the money from taxation or justice in their countries of origin. Sabine estimated that half came from Africa. That money could pay off the foreign debt of all of Africa and its interest alone provide medicine for the entire continent. Haka shared

her information about the mafia plots and Sabine, shocked by the horror of the stories, arranged a meeting the next day at Paradeplatz.

There they met a man named Marc, who guided them to his home, a penthouse in the center of Zurich. Marc was well acquainted with Sabine's study and was preparing a book that would draw the map and routes of the bleeding of money, and lives, from Africa. He took notes of the plot discovered by Haka, and assured him that within a month that book would be in every bookstore in Europe, questioning Swiss banking policy, accusing the Swiss government and people of living in luxury based on the interests of theft and money from crimes in other countries. He even made an estimate that each Swiss benefited about three thousand dollars a year from that black money, in addition to the social services paid for by taxes on money that did not belong to them. On the contrary, he made an analysis of the cost in human lives of that drain on Africa's scarce resources, calculating what the money could prevent in disease and death. He concluded that some 10,000 people died every day as a result of Switzerland's embrace of such corruption. The book would be titled: "Can you sleep easy?"

LVII. Two worlds, two epidemics. Madrid, 1996

JONAY WATCHED THE little NoLwasi at night. They called her Nour Lwasi to differentiate her from her godmother and because of its meaning. Nour meant in Aramaic, light, and from that language were born the Jewish, Nurit, the Arabic, Nour, and its influence in Spanish, Nuria. And light was what always surrounded that precious being that life had brought into the lives of Jonay and Aimsa.

The first dilemma was deciding, when registering her birth in Harare, which consulate to register her at: the one where her father, a Spaniard, or her mother, an Indian, would be a national. Aimsa, after so many years working in the United States, had only obtained her *green card* after a lot of paperwork in which Rob helped to demonstrate Aimsa's academic and social contribution to the country. She was blocked many times and was "invited" to leave the country and had to request recurrent visas as a scholar at Berkeley. Her already repulsion to the concept of nation, imposition of lines and borders with origins often of power, oppression and violence, increased with those constant formalities to justify being in one place or another in the world. She dreamed of a world without borders. They considered what to do, and decided to give Nour, as Jonay always called her, Spanish nationality, for the simple fact that it would make it easier for her to move around the world. But they promised to fight so that Nour could see in her life a world without borders.

Jonay agreed again with the Cuban doctors from Brunapeg for two months of replacement in Ukuzwana. Ndlovu, now health director for Matabeleland, asked Jonay and Aimsa to represent Matabeleland South at the international AIDS conference to be held in Vancouver that July 1996. Since her experience in Florence, Aimsa had promised herself not to contribute to those enormous expenses that she had calculated would not save so many lives. Even less with money from pharmaceutical laboratories that linked, in connivance with "armchair corruption" of doctors and professionals to use patents. Those gatherings were mainly useful to return profits for the use of those drugs shielded by greed in monopolies. Aimsa had translated into cost of human lives, which were sacrificed before greed ignoring the ethics of fighting for human life. Again, the Hippocratic oath. And often with

public money, from taxpayers who could never even imagine those trips and luxury hotels of a class of professionals and billionaire companies installed in a hidden corruption network. A clear case of generalized bribery in hundreds of national and international congresses that mobilized some ten million congress participants a year in the different specialties and motives, and some twenty billion in expenses paid to feed these favored deals and the big business of health and medicine. The one with the highest margins, abuse in prices, of all the industries.

Ndlovu had insisted that they go. Aimsa could present the studies she had done of the treatment data from NoLwasi, who preferred to stay in Ukuzwana caring for Adam and the many sick people she continued to treat. Aimsa had worked with NoLwasi following the stories of two hundred and thirty-seven people on whom Anwele had shown positive tests, and to whom she had administered the treatment of "healing water" diluted from those tears of Anwele on the magic night of the amacimbi, coupled with the already popular in Zimbabwe, "herbs of NoLwasi". Aimsa had managed to get the ministry to allow blood samples to be sent to Michael, in San Francisco, who had obtained a grant from the association of HIV positive patients, to test the CD4 lymphocyte level, an index of the degree of infection. In recent months they had developed a technique to measure the concentration of the virus in the blood, called "viral load". Despite Michael's insistence, Aimsa had repeatedly refused to allow those expenses, totaling some ten thousand dollars, to be paid by pharmaceutical companies prepared to unscrupulously appropriate the knowledge and make a business out of it. Studies showed that the treatment increased immunity and decreased other signs of its progression in the blood. In Ukuzwana they had seen that two thirds of the patients, mostly women, had not developed symptoms of the disease, and that out of the one hundred and twenty who started treatment with symptoms classified by WHO as AIDS, eighty-three saw the symptoms disappeared or improved. Michael had also found that in samples of the "healing water" there were no traces of the virus or its proteins. He had also been able to study some effect against the virus when exposed to NoLwasi plants in the laboratory.

Aimsa was afraid that the evidence would lead the international community to manipulate or take advantage of the results and use them inappropriately or for profit. In addition, she had been verifying and feeling more unequivocally than science, that NoLwasi was transmitting with that treatment a strength and wisdom of the spirits that could neither be explained nor demonstrated. Nor perhaps should it be. The two of them had talked about it many times. Those two women of immense beauty and courage, who had become like sisters. In the end, the desire to contribute to the relief of the disease throughout the world, to be united in their knowledge, and not to fear the perversion of those who guided their actions by fear turned into a lust for power and money, won out. In addition, she had written to several people linked to the world of homeopathy who would be attending the congress and were very interested in discussing the mechanisms of that dilution and the use that could help millions of people. Ndlovu, who had always been somewhat skeptical of NoLwasi's *nyanga* treatments, insisted that it was also important that she demonstrate the effects of the zidovudine monopoly on the lives of thousands of patients. Aimsa had presented her chilling analysis at the Matabeleland South health meetings, where it had caused quite a stir.

Jonay, for his part, followed with interest dozens of studies in Africa that showed that, in the absence of any intervention, one in three children of infected mothers acquired the infection. That amounted to thousands of death sentences for Zimbabwean children each year. And he had seen several die in Ukuzwana, slowly, losing all energy, taking their bodies of sores, their lungs of pus, dehydrating in uncontrollable diarrhea. More than once he spent the night with a child holding hands, hugging them and watching as inexplicable cruelty ripped those innocent lives and stares from life. He cried many times with rage in his room. Joany read studies in San Francisco that had shown that chlorhexidine, an inexpensive antiseptic used to disinfect equipment in the operating room, killed the virus in cell cultures used in research, and that its use was safe for both mother and child. He had also read how in neighboring Malawi some doctors had lowered some of the mother-to-child transmission with safe doses of vitamin A for the mother. Jonay thought that because of the large number of infected mothers he delivered babies to, he could provide more data on whether

these two interventions combined could save lives. With the approval of the ministry and its research council in Harare, he combined vitamin A in the mother during pregnancy with deep cleansing with chlorhexidine in infected women. In one hundred cases he had shown that the proportion of transmission of the infection to the offspring was lower, one in five, but still very high. In addition, he also used in almost all of them the NoLwasi treatment, which had an effect on the mother, and certainly on the child.

They would also represent the region in other studies on prevention that Anwele had written, and on the use of some medicines in the prevention of respiratory infections or diarrhea. Aimsa thought it was important, in isolation from businesses that put profit before life, to participate and make alliances so as to improve the lives of thousands of people.

They insisted on paying their own way, and Beatriz, from her European salary, and Nadine, whose book on child trafficking mafias had been a success in South Africa, insisted on contributing to the trip. In addition, Aimsa and little Nour would pass through Gomera to be in the Tenderness community so that Nour could meet her grandparents. On the way back, they would return from Vancouver to San Francisco without much additional cost, as they would talk to Michael about the results, Aimsa would give a lecture in Berkeley and show Jonay that other part of the world. They would fly some sixty hours in two months and some thirty thousand miles, but after careful consideration, they decided it would not be bad for little Nour, who seemed destined to travel worlds and cultures.

Jonay had long been looking forward to accompanying Aimsa on her return to India. He had heard her stories of her childhood in Bombay, of her mother's forgiving journey to Calcutta, of life on the streets of Calcutta and the white tigers, now an association for street children, and of her inspiring time at the *ashram* with Shri. Aimsa could never finish telling the story of the train to Calcutta as the pain tore her soul. Jonay made her promise that her next trip would be to India.

They arrived in La Gomera in June. NoLwasi, Patxi, and little Adam and Nour took them to the airport in Bulawayo and saw them off. They were joined by Joseph, Nothando and Thandiwe, already high school teenagers from Ukuzwana High School. Patxi drove and led the

two moms with Adam and Nour. Jonay joined the teenagers in the back. Thandiwe kept asking him questions about medicine. Joseph and Nothando did not hide their affection for each other. Jonay kept greeting every walker they came across. "Ulibona!" all children shouted, chasing a few meters after the car in a fast race, barefoot, light as the wind. As they drove through the magical rock formations of Matopos and the image that had so inspired Patxi, of motherhood, Jonay looked ahead and saw his beautiful companion and her precious daughter. He saw that brave man at the wheel and that woman at his side, with the greatest spiritual strength he had ever known, and with little Adam, full of curiosity in his eyes for the wonderful world around him. He thought of the work he had been doing for ten years in that corner of the world full of commitment and tenderness. He reflected on the rage of hundreds of nights when he returned to his room in the old chapel, helpless at the pain that global injustice allowed. But he thought also of the thousands of patients they had been able to help, the consultations, admissions, operations, the water of NoLwasi, the brave truth of Anwele, the connection to the perverse drug business that Aimsa deciphered, the courage of Haka in decoding the mafias that kidnapped, perhaps, the most vulnerable and vulnerable beings in the world, the AIDS orphans, the connection with the people. His most beloved title, Ulibona, the connection to those parents and their pride and hope for the eco-village project, Fernando's inspiration and his life commitment to medicine. The human and social courage from the European politics of Beatriz, from the social activism of the rights of Helen and Kate, from the struggle within the Church of Kevin, from his charisma in the media and in the writing of Nadine. And as that generation of brave people that had been surrounding his life, gave birth to a new generation of, as Patxi said, "dreamters", a magical mixture of dreamers and fighters. Lisy now linked to Joao in the landless peasants' movement in Brazil, Buhleve starting her medical studies in South Africa, Thandiwe thinking about that as well, Joseph passionate about engineering, and Nothando, poetry and music. What would Adam's life, Nour's life, be like in the arms of those incredible women at Patxi's side?

He thought about it all and felt in deep communion with the beauty and epicness of life. His eyes became moist and his vision blurred as

they crossed Bulawayo. So absorbed was he in his thoughts that he did not hear well the last questions of Thandiwe, who, insisting, brought him out of his wistful state. .

-Uncle Jonay! What's wrong? Are you sad?

-No. Sorry, I'm just very happy and I was thinking about it. What were you asking me?

-Can I come with you in the afternoons to the office, or come into the operating room one day?

-Of course, Thandiwe. And if you like it, I will help you in everything towards this beautiful path of dedicating yourself to protect, as a sacred treasure, human life.

They said goodbye to that part of their beloved family and took the flight to Johannesburg and on to Madrid. Aimsa nursed Nour on take-off and landing, who spent most of the trip sleeping in Jonay's arms, also drifting in and out of dreams that could not come close to the beauty of Aimsa's sweet gaze and the peaceful aura of Nour's sleep.

Aimsa avidly read the issues she was able to buy in Johannesburg of *Science* and *Nature*. She read with great interest the discovery of an anti-hydrogen atom, the first step to understanding and identifying antimatter. She also avidly read *Le Monde Diplomatique*, and during the trip she read "diagonally" three books she had bought in Johannesburg on the world economy: by Noam Chomski, *Manufacturing consent*, and *How they divide up the cake*; by Joseph Stiglitz, *Whither Socialism*; and by Amartya Sen, *Welfare Economics and Inequality Analysis*.

Rob had sent her a CD with hundreds of articles distributed in folders on subjects he knew she was interested in: quantum physics, astronomy, molecular biology, nanotechnology, political science and sociology. Jonay never ceased to be amazed at Aimsa's intelligence: she had a photographic memory, an incredible analytical agility, an ability to abstract complex relationships superior to anyone Jonay had ever met.

On one wall of the room where they lived she had made molecular, genetic and virological abstractions trying to understand the strategies of the AIDS virus in the human body. She had questions in critical places. One of them related to "healing water". But all that, although

fascinatingly complex, was, according to Aimsa, too simple, "Newtonian", she said. There were relationships to quantum physics to be decrypted. There were energies around molecular clues to the binding of the virus to human cells that transcended the material. In another graph, she had been translating the complex relationships that maintained an AIDS of the rich with access to treatment and an AIDS of the poor condemned to death. She had followed the track of the zidovudine monopoly, the connections of Big Pharma with the pressures for the Uruguay round to put patent protection on the agenda and the founding of the World Trade Organization, the new world court "paving" the way for unlimited greed.

She knew from Rob of the connections between the pharmaceutical industry and American politics, between both and speculative banking, between all three and the oil, strategic minerals and diamond industries. Among them all were secret links to the arms industry and groups like *Executive Outcomes* and the vicious wars in Africa. Through Haka, indirect links to arms trafficking, drug trafficking, organ, child and prostitution trafficking were being uncovered. Although more than links, these were common and synergistic benefits.

She also had many questions on her chart, which she had been updating with Haka each time he returned from investigating the plots of terror. But in addition Aimsa had an ineffable spiritual depth. Jonay had been joining her analysis until he was so overcome by her agility and mental quickness that he simply marveled and occasionally contributed some insight. He did yoga with her and began the occasional meditation session, but he could not feel that peace "in nothingness" which, Aimsa said, was our origin and destiny, revealing our deepest nature. She explained to Jonay that it was in that peace without time, space or matter that she best felt beauty, infinity and eternity. And she relativized all the mental and material illusions in which they were absorbed, in their lives. Jonay was often troubled of that higher spiritual and intellectual level of the person he loved more and more. And so he expressed it to her. But Aimsa assured him that his commitment, his knowledge of human biology, his empathy with others, his natural intuition in decisions about life or community, were constant sources of inspiration for her. But that above all, love was not

measured or calculated or controlled. And she loved him, more and more every day.

Jonay, for his part, read everything he could on medicine, Fernando sent him articles on new knowledge and treatment protocols, he devoured the summaries of the three hundred monthly articles in the tropical disease bulletin, he followed with special interest the WHO and UNAIDS guidelines, and he kept reading and making notes in Gray's remote health worker's handbook. From the Bulawayo library he had read all the novels of Wibur Smith, Noah Gordon, Le Carré and Dominique Lapierre. It was from the latter that he had brought two books to read: *Bigger than Love*, about the history of AIDS, and *The City of Joy*. He kept imagining Aimsa in each of those stories that intertwined epic adventures in different parts of the world. He told himself that he, too, would have things to say, especially about those wonderful people who surrounded his life and who, in their humility, would surely never write about their lives.

They arrived in Madrid where they had a six-hour layover before continuing on to Tenerife. Jonay felt very angry as he took Nour to the Spanish passport queue and left Aimsa in the foreigners' line to be questioned with skepticism and veiled suspicion by policemen who knew no language other than Spanish, nor any attitude other than superiority.

Jonay had been in contact in recent years with a good friend from Tenerife with whom he had shared his studies in La Laguna. Juan had specialized in internal medicine and infectious diseases in Madrid. He had learned of Jonay's work at the tenth anniversary reunion of his graduating class and had obtained his address from the Tenerife College of Physicians, where they kept Dr. Harris's data, after he had left the islands. Jonay felt uneasy at that guild obligation and obligatory contributions to a group with which he did not feel much identified.

When they arrived in Madrid, Juan was waiting for them. It was June and already very hot. He took them to a nearby hotel where he had reserved a table to eat something, next to a swimming pool where they could cool off. He had also asked for a room where they could rest. Aimsa went to sleep for a while with Nour, while Juan and Jonay waited for them by the pool.

-Thank you for setting all this up, Juan. This break is wonderful for us. But I don't know if I can afford it.

-Don't worry, Jonay. I know well that my salary here is about ten times yours in Zimbabwe, and although life is more expensive, we are privileged.

-Only those who feel happy to live and discover all the epic of this adventure are fortunate.

-You always were romantic about life, I'm glad you're still like that!

- And I remember your great vocation for our profession. Tell me about your life.

- Well, when we finished, I took the MIR –exam for medical specialties in Spain-, and I got a good number. I came to do internal medicine here in Madrid, at the Hospital Gregorio Marañón.

-Yes? A huge hospital..

-Yes, it was an exciting time in residency. There were detective-like sessions, with detailed histories of symptoms, thorough scans, and then the lab data, plus biopsies. I think I learned a lot. Although they also made us do a lot of work, especially on call. And I got into the infectious section, which gradually filled up with AIDS patients. What did you do during that time?

-Well, as I was determined to go to Africa, I joined a doctor friend to learn, I did some replacements in health centers and in the emergency room, and I went to Zimbabwe, to a rural hospital in the southwest, near Botswana. And tell me, what did you do after residency?

-Well, by then I had already married Cristina, who was also a resident, but a microbiology resident, and we had already taken out a mortgage on a house. Our first child was about to be born. So we were looking for job stability. I was offered an interim position at the hospital, Cristina too, and we have been staying here. And you, how did you learn, you don't have a specialty?

-Well, no, I don't think I need it. My job is in a rural hospital, where my clinical, surgical and public health responsibilities would have required residencies in internal medicine, pediatrics, general surgery, anesthesia, traumatology and public health at least, even tasks on laboratory analysis and radiology.

-Well, to do them all and then retire!

-Yes, but not only the time. But all this with very limited means, and I think that more than half of what I would have learned here would have been with a sophistication and cost of means that would not have been useful for me. In addition, there are also differences in the type of diseases, the way of using drugs, the relationships with patients, and above all the community health dimension. You know, the Alma-ata principles.

-Excuse me. What are those principles?

-For me, they are like the ideology of health. Working with the communities, encouraging their participation in health promotion, which is the most important thing. I spend a lot of my time in people's homes, in community meetings. How do you do that?

-Well, that's what the health centers are in charge of, and if I'm honest with you, from the friends I have who are family doctors, not very much. But tell me, how is AIDS there? It seems that life has taken us to treat AIDS, me with more or less means, and you, for sure, with less means.

-I am very happy with your sympathy, Juan. The world is highly divided, and we all need each other. We must build a fairer world.

-I think about it a lot, I assure you. Between so much technology and so much security based on salaries and schedules, bills and taxes, rules and laws, I sometimes have the feeling that we live life like driving on a toll road, with long straights and on autopilot. We are all so focused on that road that we don't even look to the sides, communication and solidarity are lost. It is a life with hardly any risk, hardly any adventure. I think we are losing the passion for living.

-Don't say that, Juan. Each one of your patients is a universe, a story, an opportunity for empathy, for sharing, for learning from their tale, for alleviating pain and fears. The epic of life is not measured in latitudes, nor in poverty, it is in every corner, even if we seem full of routine, protocols and fixed routes. The doctor who inspired me in my vocation, a Cuban doctor, works in a health center but he gives himself entirely to each case, to the community, comes and goes to Sierra Leone and gets involved in all kinds of commitments, animates an eco-village, navigates, writes and lives very intensely. It is in our hands.

-Thank you, Jonay. It could be that abundance makes us dull. But tell me, how is the health system there?

-Well, I would sum it up for you like this: we take care of a population of about sixty thousand people on about five thousand small Zulu farms called *kraals*. Seventy percent of the adults are women because there is a lot of migration of men to the mines in South Africa. I am the only doctor, I work with a nurse, and we have been training four nursing assistants, forty beds, an operating room, a delivery room, an ultrasound machine, radiography and a simple laboratory for hematology and direct microscopic bacteriology. The average health budget in the country is about fifteen dollars per person per year, that is less than one million dollars per year for us, with everything, salaries - mine is one hundred dollars per month -, generic medicines - many manufactured in the country although with substances that come from India -, antiseptics, energy for the generator, food for the patients, cleaning of sheets and others, vaccines, mosquito nets and public health campaigns, transportation to bring medicines or take serious cases that we cannot treat to the city. Everything. We have manage every cent .

-I do not understand how you can. We in Spain spend about fifteen hundred dollars per person per year, that is, a hundred times more, half of it in the hospital. And surely the needs are less. The salaries are twenty times more and the drugs and protocols are induced by the pharmaceutical industry, which, as you will remember in La Laguna, is infiltrated throughout the hospital and health centers. Community health is far from our activity. It is part of the primary care programs, I think very different. When you come by again we will organize a talk with primary care physicians so they can learn about other realities.

-I need to learn a lot from them, I haven't shared and discussed with colleagues for a long time. Every month we do share work with the doctors, now Cubans, from a nearby hospital, and every three months we get together from all over the province, but most of the time I'm alone. And tell me, how is AIDS here?

- Well, it is increasing. Let me tell you: through the blood bank, where we screen all transfusions from healthy donors, we estimate that one out of three hundred adults is infected. Eighty percent are intravenous drug addicts, the rest are homosexuals or other infected by their drug addicted partners and other heterosexual transmission. There

are almost no more infections in children because they are treated with zidovudine around the time of delivery and they usually have a cesarean section. We treat many of them with zidovudine as soon as their infection is diagnosed, as UNAIDS has been lowering the criteria for starting treatment. We also give them prophylaxis to prevent pneumonia and tuberculosis and often prolonged treatment for candida and herpes. In total, we have calculated that for each patient we spend about three million pesetas and from what we are seeing, we calculate that the we have lowered mortality rate ten years after infection to only ten percent.

-Thank you for sharing all this, Juan. Look how different our reality is: the blood bank only works in the city and it is not even very representative because they discard any history of risk. Even so, twenty percent are infected. But the most representative sample is that of pregnant women, to whom we test anonymously and we estimate that thirty percent are infected. That is, about a hundred times more than in Spain. In our case, almost all of them are transmitted between men and women, but more than half of the women have only had one sexual partner and socially they feel a lot of pressure not to use condoms, not even to talk about it. As for the children, it is very sad, because despite using a protocol that I will explain in Vancouver, one out of every five children of an infected mother gets AIDS. We estimate that in our community there are ten thousand infected, and about a hundred children infected every year. We are very frustrated , Juan, hope you can help us.

Jonay continued:

-The zidovudine monopoly means that we cannot provide any treatment or prevent mother-to-child transmissions. Aimsa knows a lot about the policy of these very high prices. Our costs per patient cannot be much more than the general health care costs. I treat tuberculosis with treatments that were discontinued here forty years ago, such as *thioacetazone*, pneumonia with *cotrimixazole*, candida with *tincture of genziana* because we cannot afford *miconazole*, herpes with the same, because it is impossible to pay for *acyclovir*. There is less pneumonia due to *pneumocystis carinee* than here, but there are dreadful cases of generalized pimples and horrible itching that I can only treat with steroids, worsening their defenses even more but relieving them of a

terrible agony. Because that's what it's all about, Juan, we can't increase their life expectancy very much. More than eighty percent, we have calculated, die within ten years of their first infection. We devote ourselves to relieve their pain, their diarrhea, their filth, their aches, their itching, their dry mouth. And above all, their loneliness and anguish. Notice, we have concluded that what they needed most is hygiene and the company of others. You don't know how many times I cry with rage.

At that moment Juan stared at him, imagining the situation, feeling ashamed of the privilege, injustice of those laboratories that paid him for the congresses, as now in Vancouver, and with an enormous sadness for the pain that Jonay's words conveyed.

-Jonay. It may seem absurd what I am going to ask you: I want you to help me.

-It's not absurd. And count on it. Tell me how.

-I don't know the details yet, but I want us to share your AIDS situation and mine. That we humanize ours here with your example, and that we alleviate yours there with our abundance. No, I lie. Justly. Let me think of a way. I'll bring you a plan to Vancouver when we meet there in a month.

Juan and Jonay stood up, stared into each other's eyes, and shook hands, sealing a pact to alleviate the deep, unfair and painful gap between AIDS in rich countries and AIDS in poor countries.

At that moment Aimsa appeared with little Nour, rested, showered, smiling and hungry. They had fruit and "horchata", and Juan took them to the airport to continue their route.

They arrived at six o'clock at Tenerife South airport. There were John and Umbela with a sign in Ndebele: "*Amhlope, Ulibona, Aimsa, Nour*".

LVIII. Aimsa meets her family. Community of La Tenderness, Gomera 1996

AIMSA LOOKED EXCITEDLY AT her new family she had heard so much about from Jonay. John was already seventy years old, hardened in the sea and in nature. Although his long hair, his tanned complexion, his athletic and agile body, but above all his look full of brightness, between innocent and passionate, made him brimming with life. Umbela was already sixty years old, with gray hair that she gathered in a ponytail and covered it partly with a scarf, like Aimsa. Her face already showed the mark of time in look that melted in tenderness and a shy smile that inspired freedom bathed in her beautiful wheat coloured skin. A slender and erect body, inside a simple white linen dress. Into her open arms Aimsa went as if she had found her mother.

Something between the two of them made them know that, without words, they were united forever. Silence gave way to a long look. And then Umbela gave her the "head hug" of the community of Tenderness whose custom had already been spreading to other eco-villages on the island, on other islands and in other faraway places.

Meanwhile, Jonay hugged his father tightly, and thereafter John took little Nour in his arms, who was watching everything in amazement.

-Aimsa, are you going to leave me a little bit of my mother? -asked Jonay jokingly.

When Umbela hugged Jonay and then took little Nour in her arms, her eyes were already totally clouded with emotion.

They had *Satia* in the bay of the port of Los Cristianos. A sailor rowed them to her and after quickly hoisting her up, they set sail for La Gomera when the sun was already setting on the horizon, behind the Garajonay and the more distant volcano of Taburiente. They arrived late at night at the wharf of El Cabrito. In the room where Jonay grew up, with his things as a child and as a young man, Umbela had prepared a beautiful place for the three of them.

The next morning they had gofio⁸ and honey with Tomás and Fernando, and talked for hours about the stories of the past and the hope

⁸ A traditional Canarian porridge with roasted corn flour

of braiding their lives together. Aimsa carried Nour on her back in a cloth, although Umbela constantly asked her to take her in her arms between feedings. They first visited the grave of Umbela's parents, in Hermigua, then walked and crossed the magical Garajonay where Jonay felt the presence of María and Ramón. Thereafter they visited every corner of the community of La Tenderness. The houses, the community house, the library and the computer room in turn, the workshops, the common energy room with the invention of the static bikes applied to a generator, the mills and solar panels, the dining room, the pantries, the bread oven, the loom, the pottery kiln, the school, the art and music rooms, the organic and anthropomorphic crops following lunar cycles and the richness of the earth, the telescope at night, the community gatherings in front of the fire and the trees that remembered those who had left life since Tenderness.

Aimsa and Nour were welcomed the following evening with a ceremony of music and poetry, and were presented with drawings by the children, pottery, a shiny sabina trunk made of natural wax in the shape of a mother and daughter, and a blanket made on the loom. Aimsa felt in that community a joy of living and sharing that she had never felt before. Not only did she feel at ease, and not only did she see this alternative as a beautiful life option. She was thinking, in her mental agility, of something much more transcendent. The next day, she asked Jonay to let her have some time alone with his father. Jonay went with Nour and Umbela for a walk to *Roque Nublo*.

-John. You know I never had a father. And in just a few hours I already feel you as one. Jonay always talks about you and says that it is from your example of courage and Umbela's tenderness that he gets who he is. And I love him with all my heart. I would like to tell you how he is in Ukuzwana, where you have to come.

- Thank you Aimsa. For three years now, in every letter Jonay told us something about you. We knew that his heart was beating with yours. He spoke of your beauty, your intelligence, your spiritual depth. And do you know what he told me in one letter?

-No. What did he say?

-That he had never met anyone like you before and that he wanted to share his life with you, but that your beauty, your epic story, and your intelligence and strength to fight for a better world, made him feel

lesser, distant, not worthy of having you all to himself, in the intimate sense. And do you know what I told him?

-No.

Aimsa felt a little embarrassed but at the same time with a strange and quick complicity with John.

-I told him that my son was a brave man. And that if he felt for the first time such a deep bond with someone and was not able to be brave and express his feelings because of absurd fears, because we all have our unique value in the universe, that he should change his last name. Of course I told him that as a joke, but I think I helped him to get rid of his fears.

-I want you to tell me about the eco-village network, about the Findhorn meeting. I have an idea boiling in my head.

-Jonay must have already told you. In Findhorn we created a global network, which is now coordinated by the Gaia community. But it is mainly for the exchange of experiences. I am concerned about the relationship with the states of which we are a legal part, they make it more and more difficult for us. It is difficult to be self-sufficient and at the same time contribute with taxes, which also increase them, because we are a nuisance. But it is also contradictory when our taxes are used to finance activities that degrade nature or go against our principles, such as wars, the arms industry, financial derivatives or genetic manipulation of food or toxic chemical processes. Look at the perverse extreme to which we have reached that we have created a new disease, mad cow disease, by making them have a cannibal diet. There is also a toxic industry in the dairy business. We try to talk about it, through meetings, citizens' movements, going to municipal or town council meetings. But they block everything.

-And haven't you thought of creating an independent network with a legal identity before the United Nations? A new network of eco-villages of solidarity that would grow, attract and facilitate initiatives from all over the world. I would love to collaborate in this. And I think I know how I could help. I can prepare a proposal for you while I travel now to Vancouver, I will review it with international law experts in Berkeley and send it to you.

-It's a wonderful idea, and even more so with you.

Jonay also asked Aimsa for a day to spend alone with his professional inspiration, Fernando. While Aimsa and Nour stayed in the community, sharing with two other moms with babies at the beach, the music house, and receiving mutual massages, Jonay went to Arguamul, where he had begun, in his accompaniment of Fernando, the vocation that had been filling him with so much happiness.

He left in a bus, he wanted to surprise him.

LIX. Reencounter with the master. Arguamul, 1996

JONAY WENT BY bus around the south to see the west of the island. He crossed Valle Gran Rey and continued in the direction of Vallehermoso, seeing the detour to Alojera, Tazo and other ravines. All over the island there were signs indicating roads with acronyms ESV (eco spiritual village) and different names: freedom, harmony, breeze, eternity, goodness, love, union, soul. He left the bus at the turnoff to Arguamul / ESV Courage. After one kilometer he left the asphalt road to take the dirt road downhill. After two kilometers, Jonay took the detour to the Santa Clara Chapel on the right and continued for another two kilometers taking the diversion to Tazo / ESV Luna. The road left the turnoff to Tazo and continued hanging on the mountainside with wonderful views of Teide to the southeast and the immense ocean to the north. It reached about two kilometers later a fork that divided the upper quarter, where the sign announced the ESV Courage, which was scattered along the San Juan ravine. Numerous palm trees and orchards festooned the landscape of Courage. With community structures, windmills and activity similar to what Tenderness had led. He crossed paths with several people and they nodded to each other, respecting the silence with which Jonay wanted to surround this magical moment of reunion with his master. He continued another kilometer down to the house rebuilt by Fernando, beam by beam, bordered by the sea.

When he arrived, it was three o'clock in the afternoon. The house was empty. Jonay saw from outside that the porch was finally finished, with six majestic shipwreck masts, brought up from the sea shore. Jonay knew very well the effort of raising each one of those massive logs, weighing about three hundred kilos, from the beach of "Fernando's cliff". The roof was also reinforced with Arabic tiles that he had probably collected from other ruined houses. It was whitewashed and Jonay noticed the indigo tone. The shutters were painted blue. The vegetable garden surrounding the house was lush with spinach, chard, broccoli, tomatoes, green beans, lettuce, and plants of carrots, potatoes, onions and garlic. There were chickens on the loose and two very affectionate dogs that came to greet him. From a house next door, a blonde woman, about forty years old, greeted him with a foreign accent. Her name was Linda and after a while two boys about seven or eight years old came out and started playing with a ball.

Jonay explained his friendship with Fernando and that he came all the way from Zimbabwe. Linda told him that Fernando talked a lot about him and was very proud of Jonay. A few minutes later heard a voice calling him. Fernando was coming down the road, carrying a backpack:

-Jonay!

Out of sheer excitement he dropped his backpack and ran to Jonay, who also ran to his friend and teacher. They hugged each other in an emotional embrace.

-What a surprise! I'm so happy to see you!

-Me too, Fernando, I remember you so many times. The letters keep us in touch. But it's not the same. I am half of what I am because of your inspiration.

-Don't say that. I only told you stories from Africa. Your vocation, your passion and your courage were already inside you a long time ago. Why do you think I suggested this name to this community?

-Because of you, Fernando. You have been brave. You have a lot to tell me about your time in Sierra Leone, about life here, about *Kadiatu* and Lisy, about this Courage community.

-Yes. And you to me. I am impressed by Aimsa, and by little Nour. It makes me very happy to see the three of you together. To see you so happy as a father.

At that moment, he noticed a shadow in Fernando's expression.

-But let me start by introducing you to Linda, my neighbor and soulmate.

Jonay noticed that between them there was something more than friendship, and he was glad for it, but he did not feel deep love. He often thought of the loneliness of his great friend, after the pain of the heartbreak of his breakup with *Kadiatu*. Fernando told Linda that they would be catching up at home. She understood that they needed their space, their time. Inside, Fernando had also been finishing the whitewashed walls, the polished cement floor, the few pieces of furniture treated with linseed, and some photos that he framed with juniper branches, of Cuba and his family, of Sierra Leone and the hospital in Lunsar, of Vallehermoso and the one of *Kadiatu*, when he met her for the first time. Jonay noticed that he was still looking at that

picture with the same expression as so many years ago, when he first spoke to him about her and they plotted the rescue from Josu's boat in which Jonay almost lost his life.

-Are you still thinking about her, Fernando?

-Every day.

-I never understood what could have happened to her. You always wanted to share your whole life with her, all your effort.

-That is precisely why, Jonay. With time I realized that I was offering her "my whole life". It was not hers. She came with nothing and was swamped by my dedication. I offered her everything, yes, but it was my home, my profession, my way of life.

-Would you have changed your life for her? Fernando, you love Arguamul, your beach, your ravine, your valley, your patients in the village.

-What good is it to me, Jonay, to be in paradise, if I am alone?

-I understand you.

-Do you still love her?

-Very much so. But we haven't seen or spoken to each other for a long time now. Lisy has gone to Brazil, while Kadiatu has a partner, a man who provides her with an apartment in the city, a car, a credit card, vacations in Tenerife or even in the Peninsula and brand-name clothes. I know she needs those securities from the fragile and precarious life she had before. And I didn't know how to give them to her, I was too convinced that what I was offering her was the best.

But you couldn't live a conventional middle class life, Fernando. Don't you like life in the colony?

-She used to live like that. I was looking for solidarity and a simple life. She had no other choice in her life and was looking for security, power. We met in the same place, but our directions were different. It took me a while to understand.

- What if you talk to her now, Fernando?

- It is too late. She is happy with her partner, she is safe, comfortable, protected. Me, look at me, past sixty, half wild, what can I offer?

-The most beautiful and valuable thing, Fernando: love.

Fernando remained thoughtful for half a minute. They both stared at the candle, as if trying to find the answers in the fire.

-Even from my clumsiness. I give you a piece of advice. You know I love you like a son.

-And I love you like a second father. Tell me.

-I have seen in the union between you and Aimsa something precious. Take care of her, Jonay, don't let it happen to you like it did to me. She is, as you say in the letters, an exceptional being. It is clear that she is destined to transform the world. For her intelligence, for her courage, for her spirituality. Life in Ukuzwana must be precious, but she belongs to the world. Give her her space. May her flower of guidance towards a new Humanity not wither. I can sense it.

-Thank you, Fernando. I will think about it. Really the center of my life are Aimsa and Nour.

-What about you? Do you have any warmth of tenderness in your intimacy?

-Linda keeps me good company.

-I am very happy, Fernando. Although you don't look at her like you look at *Kadiatu's* photo.

-That's life, Jonay, you can't always have everything you want. I am happy that Lisy is making her way as a lawyer and in the eco-village network and the landless movement in Brazil, and *Kadiatu* is already leading the women's rights organization Gara. She has secured funding from the Canary Islands government to fight against female genital mutilation in Sierra Leone, although now the war is devastating the country and she cannot start any projects.

-Yes? How is the situation?

-It's getting very tense. But I feel I have to go there to work and help. After helping *Kadiatu* and Lisy escape, it is possible that their family will blame me, but I need to go back with the brothers of the hospital in Lunsar. After Ricardo's death, another brother, Francisco, works day and night and I would like to help them, the tensions in the country are increasing, and it is still one of the neediest places in the world. Here in Vallehermoso there are many young doctors eager to fill my position. I am already in my sixties, I share everything in this beautiful community of Courage, Nancy is a very sweet woman and we

share the ideas of a natural life. But I need to spend some time in Sierra Leone to ally with those who do not have our privileges.

Jonay thought of that word. "Privilege". Fernando lived in extreme simplicity, in harmony with nature, and yet he felt privileged before those people who suffered from disease and did not have access to vital treatments. In comparison with the complex of loneliness-obesity-depression or idleness that infiltrated modern societies burdened by abundance. He understood very well his need to feel the epic in his life. To become a doctor again, immersed in the struggle for life and the struggle for justice, without which he did not live fully.

-I understand you, Fernando. And I appreciate your advice about Aimsa. You have been a guide in my life and you will continue to be. But, I ask you to be careful. Write to Haka. He knows the plots of diamond trafficking, which conditions so much of the struggle in Sierra Leone.

They embraced deeply, and Jonay returned to La Tenderness, where his two princesses were waiting for him to cross the world.

LX. A message in the Mecca of tropical medicine. London, 1996

THE BOEING 747 had already crossed the North Atlantic, and was approaching Greenland. Jonay, Aimsa and the little girl had returned to Los Cristianos on the faithful Satia, and had taken a flight to London. During a transit of about six hours, Aimsa showed Jonay and Nour her London haunts: Gandhi in Tavistock Square, the Russell Hotel across the square of the same name, the buskers of Covent Garden, the meeting place of her Quaker Friends, the immense Foyles and Dillon's bookshops and the School of Tropical Medicine, which Jonay gazed upon with veneration. That area was "the Mecca" of tropical medicine that had been his calling since he first ventured into the quest of becoming a physician.

Knowing of his veneration, Aimsa encouraged him to go into the temple alone for an hour, while she went with Nour on her back to watch a rehearsal at "The Place" dance school.

Jonay entered that mythical building of what he had been studying and working for twenty years. He went to the library, took a hundred-year-old original of the school magazine and sat for a few minutes in one of the worn Chester armchairs next to the large windows through which the scarce and precious treasure of a few rays of London sunshine filtered. He felt with admiration that epic medicine that fought with scarce means during a century against parasites of a fascinating intelligence to survive, allied with insects, true owners of the planet earth. He also felt sorry to see how many of those doctors were at the service of the English colonizing army. On the other hand, most of the diseases that killed people in poor countries, or rather, impoverished countries, were not tropical but pandemics, which in contexts without economic resources, turned out to be lethal. He felt how the hierarchies of medicine, including tropical medicine, often remained in their shrines of power and knowledge, oblivious to reality, to the right to health, to its link with social justice. He had begun to feel, even from his dear friend Anwele, that most international health cooperation efforts were limited to fighting the HIV pandemic. AIDS activists seemed to care little about the deaths of children from diarrhea, of women in childbirth, or of peasants from pneumonia. Ever since

Fernando told him about Alma Ata, discussed with Aleida Guevara, or learned about Maurice King's struggle, his enthusiasm for medicine, for health, was linked to those principles, inspired by the right to health and linked to the commitment that everyone had been repeating since the 80s and 90s: Health for All by the year 2000.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the newly independent countries of Africa had been taking loans from the World Bank, initially created for European reconstruction after the war, and had then been looking for new clients for their immense loans, closely linked to the philosophy of the global market as the "engine of development". Those young countries, conditioned by their relations with the colonial metropolises and the American economic and military empire, continued to be suppliers of raw materials whose prices were well controlled by the stock exchanges and speculations of London, New York, Paris, Frankfurt and Chicago. Their economies remained peripheral, unable to accumulate the capital that was being concentrated in the capitalist investors of the North, and going deeper and deeper into debt to pay the arrears of that "development model". The loans came in the 80's and 90's with the philosophy of the *Structural Adjustment Program*, "SAP" (Structural Adjustment Programs). The World Bank, with another even more ferocious arbiter created later, the International Monetary Fund, lent more money in exchange of imposing rules for governments to limit their outlay, especially social spending such as health. In that way they reduced the need for taxes, and thus facilitated the investments of the multinationals of the North, eager for more and more business and profits, and convinced that development and happiness came with unlimited production and consumption. Countries became executors of SAP recipes. The traditional greeting to the new life in the remote areas of Matabeleland, "Amhlope", became "welcome to the SAP world". Health expenditures, even by African socialist governments such as those of Nyerere, Kaunda, Mugabe or Rollings, committed to the struggle for universal social rights such as health and education for their populations, long oppressed by racist hierarchies and systems, were shrinking. Moreover, with few exceptions such as Nyerere, power was corrupting those initial libertarian hopes and new oppressive hierarchies were germinating.

All that was growing as the economic helm of the world in the United States was taken over by Reagan, a staunch anti-socialist, who summed up his vision of government in one phrase: "what the government does for the people, the people will not do for themselves". His alliance with another anti-socialist leader in the British government, Iron Lady Margaret Thatcher, and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990, had spread the "neoliberal system" throughout the world. The "freedom" of movement of the adored "capital" prevailed, as if it were a spirit of "development and human dignity". In reality it was the galloping horse of the enrichment of those who knew best how to speculate with those movements faster and larger, in what the world was becoming: a great casino of speculation by the economic powers insensitive to the freedoms, rights and real dignity of people. Jonay was getting to know, through Haka and Aimsa, the network of important players at that great table of power.

Reflecting on those questions, he wrote a note and posted it on the notice board of that "mecca" of health studies, supposedly for the poorest:

To whom it may concern:

My name is Jonay Harris. I am a rural doctor in Zimbabwe. I have, remotley, followed with esteem the work of this temple of knowledge in tropical medicine, during my studies and my work. I want first of all to express my respect for your work in leading the knowledge of exotic diseases for tropical climates. But I also want to share a reflection: in the certainty that all the efforts of this place and so many thousands of people related to research and knowledge in health, want to pursue better health for all, I want to remind that only ten percent of the burden of disease in low-income countries is related to tropical diseases. Most of the suffering and loss of life is not because of latitude, but because of the attitude of politicians and societies that maintain a world of the rich in obscene abundance and the poor in undignified want. We must all fight for healthy lives in harmony among people and with nature, for the right to health that is real and claimable by people and not at the expense of the benevolence of politicians, academics, wealthy foundations or social groups usually mobilized for very focal causes

and populations. Health today depends on social justice, natural harmony and relations of solidarity among peoples.

For an alliance of people for a fairer, healthier and greener world.

jonay.harris@hotmail.com

www.Ecolovingcommunitiesnetwork.com

He arrived at The Place. There were his two princesses watching that wonderful rehearsal of the dance students. It was time to move on.

LXI. Jonay feels the fate of Aimsa. San Francisco, 1996

THEY CONTINUED ON A flight to Vancouver via San Francisco, where, again, they got a six-hour layover, enough to visit the mythical United Nations Plaza. Again Aimsa acted as guide for Jonay, who had only lived in the Canary Islands and Zimbabwe. Nour had slept well and they had been able to use, after passing through customs, some toilets where the three of them could freshen up. They left the checked luggage for Vancouver and left with a backpack. They took the BART subway and arrived at the United Nations Plaza subway station. Jonay could tell that Aimsa was excited. She began to tell him the story of that place and of an idea that seemed to be beating in her since she was born, maybe before...:

Exactly two hundred years ago Kant proposed an notion of perpetual peace and a league of nations that would prevent conflicts and promote peace among peoples' self-declared free states respecting their citizens and visitors. More than a century later, the first "rules of the game" were signed, international laws, such as the Geneva Convention to protect humanitarian aid during wars, and the Hague Conventions, at the beginning of this century, which were intended to put limits on cruelties during wars and to establish ways of resolving international conflicts.

At that time two pacifists emerged, an English parliamentarian, Cremer, and a former minister of Napoleon, Passy. They founded the Interparliamentary Union, which included parliamentarians from twenty-four countries, also aimed at avoiding wars. However, shortly thereafter two alliances in Europe entered into a war in which for the first time the advances of the industrial revolution were used for warfare, causing more than twenty million deaths.

-I remember that well, Aimsa. My paternal grandfather was a soldier in the war. My father used to talk to me about it and the postwar period. It had a profound impact on Europe and a pacifist sentiment. It was called "the war to end all wars." They investigated the causes of war: arms race, alliances between sides, secret diplomacy and the freedom of sovereign states to go to war for their own benefit.

-Yes, it was then that the American president, Wilson, proposed his fourteen points for peace, of which the last one wished-for a general

association of nations of mutual guarantees for political independence and territorial integrity.

-Yes, but do you know who Wilson's main ally was?

-Yes, I know, Smuts, the racist Boer who presided over South Africa at the time and maintained the enslavement of Africans. But curiously enough, he had a lot of opposition from the Republicans. Shortly after the Treaty of Versailles, which sealed the peace after that horrible First World War, the first council of the League of Nations was held and that same year it moved to the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

-Yes, Aimsa, but in less than a decade the League of Nations failed to prevent World War II.

-That is true. Precisely because of that and because of the cruelty of the Second World War with more than fifty million dead, it was then Roosevelt who first spoke of the "United Nations" to describe the war winning allies. The twenty-six countries that had won the war signed the Atlantic Charter and convened in 1945 the constituent conference of the United Nations, with fifty member countries at that time. Precisely here, Jonay, where you are stepping. Here you see the plaques of all the countries of that beginning of a allegedly world government for peace.

-Yes, Aimsa. But it was an organization dominated then and now by a few powerful countries that had won the war. Only the United States, Russia, China, France and England are still members of the security council. It is archaic. What kind of democracy is that?

-I know, Jonay. That's why we have to improve it, for the new Humanity that is being born.

Jonay felt a shiver. He knew that Aimsa's intuition, thought, almost certainty, was what truly awaited the world. And he discerned, even without knowing how, that Aimsa would be key to this new emerging humanity. He thought, with pride and at the same time a certain sorrow, of Fernando's advice, that he could no longer limit Aimsa to a corner of the Kalahari. She belonged to the world, and the world needed her. And for the love he had in her, he would do anything, anywhere.

But he would not tell her still, a major shared challenge awaited them in Vancouver.

LXII. Hope is coming, but only for some? Vancouver, 1996.

JONAY, AIMSAS AND Nour traveled from San Francisco to Vancouver. They stayed at a painter's house through the *couch surfing* network. They had been itinerant for a month through Madrid, Tenerife, Gomera, London, San Francisco and Nour seemed to be getting used to it. Almost all the time Jonay carried her in a backpack on his chest, or on horseback on his shoulders. Nour was almost always smiling and calm, although sometimes she had a temper and calmed down after a while breastfeeding. Jonay, in conscience to compensate for Aimsa's effort to breastfeed her day and night, was in charge of diapers and baths. He felt more and more strongly the image of Aimsa as a leader destined to contribute to a new Humanity, and left her more space for her reading, thoughts and meditation. Aimsa was noticing Jonay's commitment. There was no need for words between them. Jonay waited for them to finish their tasks at the congress to talk to her about their future. He felt a love of veneration. She felt a love of complicity. Nour looked at them and planted in her heart a conviction that life, in the eyes of her parents and in the looks between them and for her, was an epic adventure. It was, truly, an epic adventure.

Vancouver was one of the most "developed" cities in the world, according to human development indexes. It combined a powerful clean industry, a fascinating nature towards the Pacific and the immense forests of the North, a social model that guaranteed free health and education, very different from its neighbor to the South, and a racial mix by its reception of refugees and immigrants from all over the world, which denoted its tolerance.

The city was papered with congress posters reading "*One World, One Hope*".

However, the Harris family was discovering that in the participating groups, in scientific communications, even in social demands, there were two distinct worlds. Perhaps never before had the gap between the world's rich and poor been so stark. The AIDS of the poor was killing, half of the studies in Africa simply described the drama coldly: how many people died over time, what they died from, how many children were infected. AIDS gradually stopped killing the rich. Most of the articles showed survival rates with treatments similar

to those of other well-treated chronic diseases such as hypertension or diabetes.

Jonay became even more aware of the strength of Aimsa's destiny as people from all over the world greeted her in the halls of the congress.

Soon after arriving, they saw Michael, Aimsa's friend who had described the first cases in San Francisco and who had helped them track the effectiveness of NoLwasi's treatment and prevention of mother to child transmission combinations, which Jonay was trying in Ukuzwana the absence of access to treatment. He was speaking with a man with oriental features. Some photographers surrounded them although they seemed oblivious to the media interest. Aimsa approached them.

-Hello Michael, I am so glad to meet you. Thank you for your support of our efforts in Zimbabwe.

-Hello Aimsa. It is the least I can do. I often feel shame and anger at living in privilege and knowing of the injustice that keeps most patients in a lethal fate.

-This is Dr. Harris, my colleague. He has spent the last ten years trying, without antiretroviral treatments, to alleviate suffering in the epicenter of AIDS, the triangle of death between Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa.

-Pleased to meet you, Dr. Gottlieb. It is an honor to meet you, and thank you very much for your help.

-Let me introduce my colleague and friend David Ho. I assure you that his studies will stir up this congress and the history of AIDS from now on.

-You exaggerate, Michael. You discovered the disease, the rest of us are following in your wake. Now I have to go to an interview with Time magazine, but it would be a pleasure to meet you again for a while during the congress. I am much concerned about conditions in Africa and would like to hear about your experience, Dr. Harris.

-The pleasure will be mine.

When David left, Michael invited Jonay, who was carrying Nour placidly and curiously on his chest, and Aimsa, in her blue sari, to a fruit juice in a corner of that congress where almost ten thousand people

from all over the world were fluttering in meetings, conferences in more than ten large conference halls at the same time, hundreds of stands of industry, international organizations and civil society organizations, in an intense murmur and wandering. Aimsa, combining her intense sense perception and her capacity for abstraction, imagined the view from a hundred meters high, even perceived the movements of people in fast motion and intuited the strategic nodes of contacts and the rooms where attention and movements were being concentrated.

Michael told them about that little oriental guy that Time magazine was interviewing:

-David was born in Taiwan when his parents fled Mao's China in the late 1940s. Taiwan is one of the few countries that are not members of the United Nations, due to China's opposition in the Security Council.

Jonay looked at Aimsa. Again, he felt an unspeakable strength in her gaze. Nour was upset and needed a diaper change. Jonay insisted that Aimsa stay and chat with Michael and he would take care of Nour for a while.

-At the age of twelve, his mother emigrated with him to the United States to join his father, who had been waiting for them for a decade. David grew up in Los Angeles, where he studied and excelled in science and physics. He then moved to the "San Francisco of the East," Boston, where he studied medicine. He then returned to Los Angeles and we shared the specialty of internal medicine and the challenges of describing the first cases of the epidemic, fifteen years ago now, as you well know, Aimsa. He has been devoting himself more and more to research into the behavior of the virus and knows its reproduction mechanisms like no one else. What is really going to change the outlook of the epidemic is the evidence that he is achieving that by attacking the virus in several mechanisms of its reproduction, simultaneously, it is possible not only to rapidly improve the patient's defenses, but also to make all traces of the virus disappear in the blood.

-Do you mean a cure?

-We don't know, because there are areas where we know that the virus is protected, and it is premature for treatment yet. But it is certainly a step towards a cure.

-Who holds the patents on these molecules and their combinations, Michael?

-I'm afraid it's even more serious now than it was in the 1980s. It is no longer just Wellcome and its zidovudine but others as well. Abbott, Hoffman, Roche and others are shielding their molecules, often usurped at bargain prices from public research, investing in clinical trials and protecting their monopolies with astronomical prices. You will see the stands of your Act-Up friends with information about this business. I can only continue to give the treatment I can best in the system that protects a part of society and look out for that group. But when it comes to me more strongly the awareness of the world that is left out of this hope, I feel so much pain. The world needs you even more, Aimsa.

-He needs all of us.

-Look at this, Aimsa. I feel dellply sorry...

Michael handed an envelope to Aimsa that read "Anwele Moyo, viral load and CD 4".

Just then a couple arrived to greet Michael. Aimsa quickly recognized Bill and Melinda, owners of one of the world's largest fortunes. Aimsa had seen him in photos in articles and in interviews and reports on television. She had read articles about his rivalry with Steve, and his "command-spoon", now known worldwide as a mouse, and his computer projects, with the symbol of a fruit. Aimsa perceived something confusing in his way of getting rich so fast, and so much through the monopoly of combining operating systems and internet access, and through buying and selling ideas, patents and businesses, monopolizing much of the world's information power, that was already riding into the new century on the internet.

-Hi Bill, Melinda, sit with us for a moment. I'd like to introduce you to a good friend of mine, Aimsa. She is one of the most tenacious fighters for the rights of people affected by the epidemic, both in America and now in Africa.

-Thank you, Michael. And nice to meet you, Aimsa. We are not scientists, we come to learn and to support the fight in the global challenge of the epidemic.

-It's very generous of you. How do they want to help?

-Life has smiled to us and our efforts and ideas in computing and communication have led us to a privileged life. My mother died recently and her last words have inspired me to *give back* to society.

-On behalf of so many people in extreme poverty and suffering, I thank you for your solidarity, although if I could be honest with you....

Michael feared one of Aimsa's eloquent, sincere, intelligent provocations. He, like David and many others, was beginning to live off the support of the fledgling Gates Foundation.

-I wish that a fairer world would not allow such extreme wealth as yours, nor such extreme poverty as that of hundreds of millions of people. I find it hard to believe that your intelligence or your effort, measured by your money, surpasses that of more than fifty million poor people, toiling in their day-to-day lives in fields, mines, workshops, seas and squares all over the world.

-I appreciate your sincerity, Aimsa. In my country we believe in opportunities, in fighting for them with ingenuity and risk, and in playing by the rules of the market, equal for all.

-Do you really believe that the rules of the market are respected by your trust and communications monopoly operations? I am the first to admire your ingenuity and appreciate your solidarity. But I repeat, it pains me that the lives of millions of people depend on your goodwill, and not on a fairer world.

-I am not the one who has dictated or maintains these rules of the game, but I trust them, and I try to compensate for their effects of injustice by sharing a good part of our privilege.

-I understand that you have put billions in investments and that your Foundation will work with your interests?

-Even this means that we will not leave an inheritance of this fortune to our children, but a good education and living conditions. They will have to fight for their destiny. Keeping it invested is the way not to exhaust in a short time the wealth generated by these solidarity funds.

-And are you sure that the investments will not do more harm to health than the goodness you claim with your interests? For example, your economic ties with the pharmaceutical industries that shield unaffordable prices for the poor, condemn them to death and at the

same time enjoy profits of billions annually, may cause more pain than all your solidarity efforts.

-I don't understand, Aimsa, your aggressive attitude, we are here to help, we could be protecting our savings out there in the privileged world.

-I reiterate my appreciation for that. Another question: do you know the price of patent monopolies in human lives? Tomorrow I will present an analysis on that and I would be very honored to have you there for the debate.

Aimsa noticed a certain concern and anger in the look of that human being, so powerful due to the vagaries of the market. But she also caught a human look, genuinely sensitive, vulnerable to the truth. The Gates couple left, claimed by their assistants, and she saw them approach Dr. Mann, who recognized Aimsa and waved to her in the distance.

-Aimsa, I don't know whether to introduce you to more people. You put them up against the wall, too direct, too fast. I hope they don't pull my research grant. And I was thinking of asking for support for your studies and efforts, but I'm afraid you've blown that possibility out of the water with your defiant attitude. In America we depend on this "*give back*" from those who are economically successful in society, to generate knowledge.

Yes, which is once again being usurped by billion-dollar investments to evade public taxes and accumulate more and more, and give you the crumbs. This system, Michael, will be over in little more than a decade.

-In any case, Aimsa, I love to keep feeling your strength.

At that moment Jonay returned with Nour, fresh and smiling. They said goodbye to Michael and went to eat at a vegan restaurant near the congress. Aimsa told him about her conversations with Michael about David and Gates.

-If I leave you a little longer, you'll get Clinton and the Pope off the hook!

-I don't want to know about anything or anyone unless I am with the two beings with whom my soul is forever entwined.

They embraced with emotion. Nour was magically left in the middle of that embrace of deep love and respect.

In the following days they presented their work and studies. Jonay shared his study on the prevention of mother-to-child transmission with chlorhexidine and vitamin A in a room with only about forty participants. Next to the rooms where David Ho and others presented scientific advances to two thousand people filling the main hall and to as many others in satellite rooms with live screens. Just after his presentation, Jonay was able to attend other lectures by David and Michael on the hope of combination therapies.

When he concluded, he missed Aimsa and Nour, and entered a room where a panel was presenting several studies in Europe, America and Thailand, demonstrating the enormous reduction in mother-to-child transmission with certain zidovudine protocols.

Jonay had lost sight of Aimsa, with Nour. He felt a restrained rage at hearing such news of hope, vetoed for the poor of the world. Then, during the question time in that immense hall, he saw in the distance a woman with a strength that shone with intensity, with a vaporous sky blue sari and a scarf of the same fabric covering her black hair and with a sleeping girl attached to her back by another white cloth. She stood up as one of the congress hostesses handed her a microphone. Everyone focused their attention on that woman, whom Jonay observed with deep awe, with deep pride and responsibility.

-My name is Aimsa Harris.

It was the first time Jonay had heard her say his name like that. His heart skipped a beat. He repressed the urge to proudly tell the man next to him, "She's my partner!"

I thank you for your brilliant work and eloquent presentation. It is clear that there have already been dozens of studies showing that zidovudine saves lives, delays death in those infected, and decreases infections in children of infected mothers. And it is clear that in the absence of zidovudine and other even more hopeful treatments that we are learning about at this historic congress, AIDS infection carries a death sentence and one in three children born to infected mothers will share the same sentence. It is not the condemnation of a virus, it is the condemnation of a world that looks the other way and allows it. Wellcome has earned since the beginning of its patent more than ten billion dollars, more

than fifty times the money it invested in usurping the molecule and applying it in clinical trials. That profit comes from prices up to one hundred times the cost of production. If the greed of this blood monopoly had been exhausted by recovering "only" five times its investment and had been limited to maintaining profits but "only" of about one hundred million dollars a year or allowing other laboratories to manufacture it at that fair margin, the treatment would have reached the countries with marginal economies and dependent on those which, with a world casino, control prices, exchanges, currency values and interest. This would have saved in the last ten years most of the ten million deaths in extreme weakness, sadness and pain that the world has "allowed" in this time. Every thousand dollars of annual profit, gentlemen of Wellcome and its thousands of shareholders, has the price of a human life, of a man, woman or child in agony. But your ears do not hear that cry of anguish, your eyes do not see those skeletal bodies. I come here to cry out for them. How many of you have had one of these people, a victim of boundless greed, dying in your arms?

A few hands went up in the back rows and a gray-haired man in a white shirt looked across the room excitedly at her. A murmur rippled through the room, the speakers stared, uncomfortably, at the floor or at their papers.

And how many of you have shares in this company? Or in the others that are already shielding their billion-dollar monopolies from the new treatments of even greater hope? Or in the companies where those centers of greed in turn have investments? Or through your savings in banks that invest in them? I assure you that few in this room could fail to raise their hands if they knew the deep roots that nurture the abundance and privilege of the dominant countries. Think about it. While I have wanted to convey that voice of the absent who suffer from the greed of the system, three people have died. You beat the goodness of humanity under your skin, we all feel it, let it flow and break the cruel barriers of greed.

The room was silent, Aimsa was staring at the panel, without severity but without humiliation, she was not begging. She was crying out for justice. She was not demanding. She was appealing to the humanity that united everyone. The silence gradually turned into a murmur and some isolated applause with cries of "treatment for all!".

The panel moderator took the floor:

-This is a scientific congress. We are all pained by the poverty in the world. But it is not our function here to solve it. Nor could we. Please limit your questions to the scientific aspects we are discussing and respect the honesty of these scientists who are working hard to discover ways to fight this epidemic.

Aimsa slowly left the room. Jonay walked out through another hallway. They met at the exit and gave each other an excited hug.

-Not in a thousand lifetimes would I have found anyone with your light for the world, Aimsa. You must be at the center of the change to a new Humanity, and I will always be at your side. As long as you wish it.

-We will do it together, Jonay. The three of us. Without you nothing would make sense.

A group of about twenty people surrounded Aimsa. Jonay withdrew from the embrace and took Nour with him, while representatives of various organizations encircled Aimsa and asked her questions.

Fernando's words echoed again. Jonay knew that he would adapt his professional vocation, his whole life, to that woman who carried the strength of humanity in her soul.

He stood discreetly about fifty meters away, sitting on the floor and looking out the windows of the conference center at the vast Pacific Ocean. Nour had awakened in awe and curiosity at that rain-like sound coming from the clapping of hands of all those people. Aimsa joined them about ten minutes later.

-It is wonderful what you have said, Aimsa. You have brought the voice of the forgotten to this great circus of vanities and interests, which in the name of AIDS, maintains a great business.

-I speak with your strength in my soul, Jonay.

-But tell me, Aimsa: we have the NoLwasi water left, don't we? How are we going to present the results in this temple of money, molecules and "double blind"?

-Jonay. I have been reading about the possible molecular basis for the effect of the NoLwasi water. I believe it is due to an effect of the first molecules of Anwele's tears, infected by a virus then rampant in

her body. These molecules have been diluted to such an extent that only the "footprint" and its influence on the spatial and energetic distribution of the water have remained in this magic water. When it enters the blood, these geometric and energetic structures paralyze the virus by magnetic symmetries. It is related to the material expression of quantum dimensions. But science has not yet advanced to understand it and simply rejects it. There is something magical and inexplicable surrounding the NoLwasi treatment. No one would understand it here. Nor would they respect it.

-Well, at least we have that hope and the hope of the wonderful magical world of NoLwasi. Even if they can't understand it here. We can ally ourselves with the homeopathy movements.

Aimsa stared at the ground, her expression grave. She could not hide her pain. Since she had read the envelope Michael had handed her with Anwele's results, she didn't know how to tell Jonay.

-Jonay. I have something to tell you. It's not good news.

-What's going on?

-Michael has given me the latest results of Anwele's blood tests. The virus is invading her blood again, her immunity is weakening rapidly, NoLwasi's water and herbs have stopped working. I don't know why. That is also why I spoke even louder in that room.

Jonay said nothing. He asked Aimsa he'd take a walk alone. After hugging her and Nour, he went out towards the ocean. Since he was a child he had been in the habit of wearing a swimsuit as underwear, with which at any time or place he could run or swim. He ran along the coast to the south looking for an entrance to the sea. He found a small cove. He left his clothes hidden on a rock and entered the cold ocean. His tears of rage diluted in the immense ocean. Like Anwele's in the magical dilution of NoLwasi. As he swam, he thought of Anwele and her struggle, of Nothando hugging her in the dispensary bed, of the hundreds of patients they had in treatment, of the spirit of NoLwasi uniting the wisdom and magic of the ancestors with the hope of his people to survive the plague. What would become of them? He wept angrily as he swam out to sea. Exhausted by the effort and numb from the cold ocean, he stopped and screamed at the top of his lungs surrounded by the force of the sea.

-Why? What now? Don't you have enough?

He realized that he was rebuking Mkulumkhulu like his brothers ndebele and kalanga.

He returned to the cove where he had left his clothes, let the sea breeze dry him, and returned with a strange sense of strength and peace, to the congress. He found his two princesses sitting at the entrance.

-Excuse me, Aimsa, I needed to cry with rage, alone, far away.

-I understand you, Jonay. Now weep with me and lean on my strength, receive my warmth, melt your aching soul in mine.

They embraced and left the congress to go to the painter's house.

The next day, they approached the congress reluctantly. If there was no justice, science only increased injustice. They did not want to be accomplices of a cruel world. As they entered, they saw Juan.

-Aimsa, Jonay! How are you?

-Somewhat disappointed, to tell you the truth.

-I could not go to the mother-to-child transmission conference because I was speaking about the toxic effects of antiretrovirals. But I have already heard three people talk about the "woman in the sari" message. You have made more of an impact than you think, Aimsa. Even if they have not reacted and this and all the congresses are still linked to and paid for by the monopoly industry, you have sown a strong seed in the consciences of thousands of people. You have made me think a lot. I want to propose something.

-Thank you Juan, tell us.

-I treat AIDS patients in the rich north. You try to relieve AIDS patients in the impoverished south. I want us to bring these two worlds together. Access to life-preserving treatment in my world, and a sense of life-preserving solidarity, togetherness, in your world. We need each other, and the bridge must ignite or be allied to movements for justice.

-We are all united, we are all the same energy. Trapped and disintegrated in traps of time and what our mind creates as realities.

Said Aimsa.

-That's right. I don't reach your spiritual depth. But I think I understand you, Aimsa. What I raise is perhaps banal, minor, but the seed that you are able to plant in the consciences of the people, must

reach many more. I would like to organize doctors and other professionals to spend time in your hospital, learning and at your orders, and to bring medicines and anything useful. I am convinced that each one of them, knowing that reality, would be a source of solidarity and of movement for justice. And in the meantime, we will bring medicines even if we have to overcome many barriers. The fight for life justifies everything. It is in our Hippocratic oath.

-Thank you Juan. It is a beautiful idea. We will have to look at the logistics, travel, where to host them, registration as doctors in the country, import of medicines. But let's try. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

-I am the one who thanks you for your dedication to the most needy.

They went to several sessions that were less scientific, more social. The more they talked about justice, the darker the average skin color of the attendees.

They attended devastating lectures: if the epidemic continued on its current trend, demographic models predicted a decline in life expectancy of 70 to 40 years in Zimbabwe. From being the model health system in Africa to the country with the lowest healthy life expectancy in the world. Faced with a certain painful conformism in the absence of access to new combination therapies, not even to simple zidovudine and often not even to antibiotics to prevent or mitigate opportunistic infections, many studies in Africa focused on prevention. In Thailand, transmission of the virus had been very clearly reduced by intensive condom distribution. Something similar seemed to be beginning to emerge in Uganda. But the human bloodletting was increasing year by year in Africa and it was difficult not to feel more and more anger at the gap between the two worlds, between life and death.

On her way out that day, Aimsa ran into James, a well-known Act-Up activist. He encouraged them to go to an event where Erik gave a speech and then symbolically handed out golden urns to actors who caused or perpetuated the injustice of AIDS. They gave those shameful urns to the Abbott companies benefiting from sky-high prices of *ritonavir*, *serono* and BTC for the same economic abuses with growth hormone and *oxandrolone* respectively, which palliated the effect of

chronic diarrhea and cachexia, extreme weakness, to Hoffman La Roche for the same with *saquinavir* and to Merck with its *crixiban*. They also criticized France, Canada, the United States and Russia for requiring AIDS testing of immigrants and denying entry to those infected. Of course, none of the privileged attended the event.

As they left the meeting, Aimsa was approached by a lawyer named Zachie wearing a Treatment Access Campaign (TAC) T-shirt from South Africa. He was accompanied by a man in his forties named Eric and wearing a Doctors Without Borders T-shirt.

-Congratulations on your speech yesterday. You have touched a few people and sowed questions of conscience in many more.

-I just say some conclusions about injustice and health. And not only in AIDS, but in all diseases. The one who really works day in and day out for those the world ignores is my partner and inspiration, here at my side, Dr. Harris.

-Where do you work?

-In the south of Matabeleland, Zimbabwe. And you?

-In the slums of Cape Town. Especially in one called Kaleyitsha. How are they struggling in Zimbabwe for access to treatment?

-We tried to talk to Minister Stamps and encourage importation from India or manufacture in part by public laboratories called PLABS, but still no response. There still seems to be some denial of the epidemic, coupled with growing tension over land expropriations from whites, strange intrigues of Mugabe supporting Kalinda in the Congo war and cases of violence against members of the opposition. These are times of great turbulence, and AIDS is not given the importance it deserves. It has even been associated with homosexuality, which is a perverse deviation punishable by imprisonment.

-What are you doing? -said Aimsa.

-We are also going through a confusing period, with ideas from African National Congress leaders that AIDS is a Western invention and can be cured with diets, herbs, garlic. But we believe we have Mandela as an ally. We have also managed to get the international congress in Durban in four years, and the politicians will want to make a good impression," said Zachie.

-But how are you trying to get access to medicines?

-Now in two ways, let's join forces: we pressure the South African government to import drugs from India and Brazil, which manufacture generics of the new patents to whose owners Act-Up has given the "golden urn". We can get drugs from Brazil, up to five times cheaper than those protected by patents, and from India, some of them even ten times cheaper. For starters, the government seems intent on importing zidovudine from Brazil, and others from India," said Zachie.

Eric continued:

-We are going to provide treatment by directly importing zidovudine from the public laboratories of Brazil, Farmamanguinhos.

-And how has the Big Pharma reacted? -asked Jonay.

-Well, they have threatened to take the South African government to court. But in the meantime, we have to get drugs to the people, importing them or even asking Aspen, a large generic manufacturing company, to manufacture them at low cost.

Aimsa recalled with his photographic memory that Aspen was a billion-dollar company, was indirectly linked to De Beers, to Netcare, and also appeared to be evading taxes and laundering money in hidden Swiss accounts.

-Keep a close eye on Aspen's patent agreements. Said Aimsa.

-We will keep you informed, we must join forces. We could import zidovudine for Zimbabwe as well, and the whole region.

-We will discuss it with Minister Stamps as soon as we return.

They said goodbye as comrades in struggle, and left the congress. They felt they had no more to say in a place where science and money seemed to ignore justice and people.

They took advantage of two days to visit the west coast islands off Vancouver. They met a Canadian writer whom they had hosted a year earlier on his Matabeleland tour. His name was Tony. Aimsa had helped him think of an initiative for his "*give back*". They had found two things in Matabeleland: that the women walked about three hours on average a day, going to fetch water, firewood, to the market, to the fields, to school, to the market and to other chores and places. And secondly, that they had excellent knitting skills. So they devised a system whereby they gave in Ukuzwana knitting needles, balls of wool, knitting classes, practice weaving while walking, and a pricing system to sell them in

Canada to give half to the knitter and half to the cooperative for their purchase of materials and local development programs. He had been establishing a network of stores in Canada that bought for twenty Canadian dollars per wool sweater, reporting the origin of the sweaters and supporting the women and their development projects.

They went to his home, a small log cabin, but with a small plane and a dirt runway for takeoff and landing. Tony had been suffering from depression since he separated from his wife and an adopted son from the original Indian tribes of Canada, who had been sinking into the world of drugs. The doctor had forbidden him to fly only north to the vast Nordic forests. He feared that the vastness and beauty would absorb him and he would never return. But with Jonay, Aimsa and Nour, they traveled for three hours north in the little red Vissner. Jonay and Aimsa still remembered their bonding trip in the ultralight over Victoria Falls.

They flew over immense forests, rivers and lakes full of glacial purity, meadows where they could land, majestic mountains. They slept two nights in a tent in the middle of that immense and virgin nature. They talked about life, about nature, about love as the only authentic harmony with beauty.

Somehow, the rage they felt at the "congress of injustice" was sifted with the beauty and immensity of nature. In their souls they knew that that alliance with love and beauty would transcend the miseries and perversions of those who lived with fear and its spirals of greed, property and injustice. They had to melt the armor of fear that stifled the authentic nature of love and sharing.

Full of hope for life, they said goodbye to Tony and left for Berkeley.

LXIII. Knowledge deaf to the cry of poverty? . Berkeley, 1996

Jonay and Aimsa HAD BARELY ARRIVED at Rob's house when they received a call from Patxi informing them that Anwele was in serious condition. They decided to cut their stay to two days in which Aimsa showed Jonay the key places of her life in that world's knowledge hub. They strolled through Shattuck and Telegraph streets, went up to the Rose Garden to see the view of the bay and the Golden Gate, ate at the Gratitude Café, saw her old boat at the marina and, most of all, ambled around the university campus under the watchful eye of the Campanile. They went to a talk on the damage of climate change and attended a Handel concert.

Sally, her street friend, had died the previous winter. She passed away in the "people's park" hugging a picture of her drug-addict son. With him went Sally's soul long before she fell asleep in the park forever. Because she had Aimsa's first phone number and address in Berkeley, Rob's home, they called him, who was the only attendee at her funeral. Aimsa sent Rob money from Zimbabwe for a large bouquet of violets and burial expenses. At least in death, Sally had her place in society and a phrase that said "we're together now, James".

They met the second day for dinner at Rob and Kathy's house, with some dear mutual friends, such as Richard and Marc, who had undetectable virus load in their blood because they were on combined treatment and were healthy and more in love with life and each other than ever; Michael who had also returned from Vancouver, Frank, one of their environmentalist friends and who now lived on Aimsa's old boat and Henry, from the Salvador support group, now linked to other liberation processes in Latin America, especially Guatemala. Two friends from the political science department also came; Steve, the computer genius who now owned a large company with the symbol of a fruit; Carol, with whom Aimsa had shared discussions upon her arrival in Berkeley at the free speech café on the evolution of life, Gordon, a friend of Rob and Steve, and another mutual friend named Raymond.

Gordon, a man in his seventies, had helped in the 1950s discover the semiconductor role of sand and founded Fairchild, at the origin of the fledgling Silicon Valley, south of Berkeley. Silicon Valley had

become the source of the knowledge that had transformed communication by multiplying the speed at which the world generated and conveyed its information and data. He explained his famous Moore's law that had been confirmed for almost half a century: every two years the number of transistors per circuit doubled, leading to an exponential growth in communication capacity.

Raymond intervened to say that according to quantum dynamics by an Englishman named Penrose, the processing capacity of computers would increase much faster than the capacity of the human brain.

Jonay, uncomfortable with this statement, said:

-Ray, I believe that any machine we can develop cannot come close to the wonder of the human brain. We each have about twenty billion neurons, and each neuron has about ten thousand connections that uniquely record every sensory experience, conscious or unconscious, and can record information corresponding to twenty million books. The most dynamic recording, which also shapes how our brain functions and interprets the world, occurs in the first year of life, during which it triples in size. That is why we are writing a book for Nour, in which we describe what happened around her during this time of such intense growth that she cannot keep any conscious memory of, but in much deeper forms of her thinking, which will condition his existence.

Aimsa, with Nour in her arms, remembering her speech so many years ago at the Ashram, added:

-It is not only our mind that is profoundly complex and wonderful. We barely develop a fraction of its potential, nor of our capacity to feel, to love and to connect with spirituality. We are more energy than matter, energy without dimensions of time and space. An energy that unites all the universe and all the multiverses that reason creates. Transcending the entrapment in matter we connect with our authentic nature, beyond the limited reality and limited reason. But more than anything else, what good is our reason if it leads us to destroy nature and create enormous unfair differences and suffering between human beings? While we are talking in this privileged corner of resources and knowledge, people are dying where we live in Africa, for lack of the slightest solidarity.

-That is why, Aimsa, we must continue to explore the limits of knowledge to enable healthier and happier lives for all Humanity. In their material state, those quanta that transit between the duality of thought matter and spiritual energy allow us to develop artificial intelligence close to the prodigality and the complexity of human thought, creativity and even feeling. I have estimated that such a capacity, in its planetary aggregate, will be reached in about thirty years.

Rob, the host and common link between those privileged minds of that historical moment of Humanity, turned to Ray:

-But, Ray, as Aimsa says, what's the point? Progress has also caused immense pain, injustice and destruction of the planet.

-Less and less. This new Humanity based on intelligent knowledge will be different. For example, we are developing applications in text reading and other advances for the blind.

He told of his recent meeting with Stevie Wonder and the ideas that had inspired him. He told Jonay that he was developing many techniques to help in the distance to medical practice and that he was convinced of the future of medical nanotechnology that would repair the thousands of unremitting DNA defects, the origin of many diseases and aging.

Carol recalled her discussions with Aimsa ten years earlier about the basis of life and the proteins she discovered in the lab at the time, when she was just twenty-three years old, called telomerases, and their function in adding pieces of DNA to the ends of genes, preventing the aging Ray was talking about.

Steve explained how his company was trying to bring that ability to make people's lives easier by computing, to every home, every person, but the commercial world was full of interests and selfishness. Since he had last seen Aimsa he had developed computers and the spoon they played with turned into the now famous "mouse" and a graphical way to interact with the computer in an intuitive, even fun way. But he had had to sell all but one of his shares and change jobs. He had this time developed an animation program and was preparing animated films that would revolutionize the history of cinema and entertainment. He also told of how he was considering starting up the

fruit-name company again and striking a deal with Bill to make the two worlds that dominated the computer world compatible.

Aimsa again spoke of the dangers of creating virtual worlds while ignoring the wonder of nature, and the real human challenge. Frank recalled the barbarism that the agribusiness industry was doing to the health of people and the planet, and Henry spoke of the genocide by the American government of peoples fighting for their freedom in Latin America. He recounted the activity, in his view criminal, of the so-called "School of the Americas," and the hypocrisy of maintaining bloodthirsty dictatorships while touting democracy and international human rights declarations that it continually avoided signing.

All this created a somewhat uncomfortable climate among those leaders of human knowledge and their horizons of getting to control the human brain and biology, but oblivious, from their palaces of knowledge to the cruel reality of poverty, the interests of power and violence in the world.

To soften the debate, Gordon spoke of his recent activity in a company called Gilead, dedicated to the discovery of new drugs, and hopes for new AIDS drugs.

Jonay had learned in Arguamul some guitar chords with Fernando, and encouraged by Rob, he sang on the guitar the song *Imagine*, trying to convey to those people, who were accelerating in the world the potential for both security and self-destruction, the keys to the union of humanity, without borders of religions, countries and above all, in the genesis of all that frenetic innovative activity, of properties and immense benefits. As he sang, he felt how some of the people present in that discussion, were accruing immense personal fortunes that were invested more and more in unsatiable knowledge and accumulation of power, while another part of the world, like his beloved Ukuzwana, remained ignored and sinking in pain.

The next day Jonay woke up with some back discomfort, possibly from the long trips. Aimsa was keeping her body more limber and flexible with yoga. Rob convinced him, and while Aimsa went with Nour to a Buddhist temple, he took him to an acupuncture session at a community clinic in Oakland on his way to a meeting at Ukuzwana University. There he met a sweet, gray-eyed woman named Lisa, who treated him with great gentleness and willingness. Jonay felt, as Aimsa

had told him so many times, the contradictions of that world as unjust as it was supportive, as innovative as it was destructive. Lisa asked him about his health and discomfort, took his pulse and explored his tongue, then put needles in his ankles and wrists. After the session, and while Rob returned, Jonay invited Lisa, who was interested in knowing about the situation in Africa, to a coffee. He was very curious about that ancestral knowledge that had been absent from his training as a doctor. Although he did not know his future in Ukuzwana, and felt "in transition", he sensed that acupuncture could do a lot of good in Africa.

-Tell me, Lisa, is there only one type of acupuncture?

-No, although they have common foundations, there is Japanese, Korean, and classical Chinese acupuncture.

-And does it have religious or philosophical connections?

- Yes, it is related to Confucianism, which focuses on man in society; Taoism, which gravitates around harmony with nature; and Buddhism, which is based on tolerance and self-confidence. All these philosophical thoughts have in common that they conceive of the world as a whole. And so they apply traditional Chinese medicine, based on the *zang fu*, organs of the body, and the five elements: wood, fire, earth, metal and water.

-And how do the energy channels and needles that you put in me work?

-Life energy, called *ch'i*, or *qi*, flows through the body along fourteen channels called in Chinese *king*, which relate to the twelve organs and reflect the conception channel, in the midline of our forehead, and the governor, in the midline of our back.

-And how do you identify the points where you put the needles?

-There are more than three hundred and fifty points in the channels called *Jing Xue*; others outside the meridians called *Qi Xue*; and the painful points or *Ashi Xue*.

-And tell me, Lisa, how do the needles work in those points?

-Chinese medicine considers disease to be an imbalance between the two forms of energy or *qi*, yin and yang. When I have applied the needles to you I try to rebalance the energy.

-I assume that, like traditional medicine in Africa, it is a private healing practice?

-Well, I will tell you that they had a good system of control in ancient times. Chinese doctors were paid for keeping patients healthy and if they got sick, they stopped being paid, besides falling into disrepute. Therefore, they strove to promote healthy lifestyles. Now, like so many things, it has been commoditized although there are still places where the old and noble traditions are maintained. But tell me, Jonay, do you think I could be of use somewhere in need in rural Africa?

-Of course you can. If you wish, you could come to Ukuzwana and we can select some diseases to treat at the same time. I don't know if you have been treating AIDS patients here with acupuncture?

-Yes, we treat many of its symptoms, such as constant tiredness, diarrhea, itching, and there are even people who say that it increases the defenses and in some cases has cured fungal infections or tumors such as Kaposi's disease.

They said goodbye and arranged to write to each other to see how Lisa could go to Ukuzwana and help with these ancient techniques. Jonay would talk to Minister Stamps to consider whether acupuncture could be introduced as a form of treatment into the health care system in Zimbabwe, and whether Lisa could give a talk about it.

The next day, Jonay, Aimsa and Nour took the plane again. This time they were going direct, without long stopovers, to London and from there to Johannesburg. Something made them feel sad to have seen the contrast between two worlds, the injustice of how one, anchored in abundance, was ignoring the other, sunk in poverty. They felt that the dynamism of Northern California, the region of the world with the most patents, initiatives, innovations and new proposals for knowledge and a more secure and materially comfortable life for mankind, seemed disconnected from the survival needs of the greater part of the world, oblivious to that maelstrom of knowledge and consumption. And all that was reflected in the grim fate that awaited their good and courageous friend, Anwele.

At the San Francisco airport, Jonay was able to get his hands on a Spanish newspaper and read with amazement the million-dollar figures for soccer transfers between teams. He took paper and pencil, made some calculations following Aimsa's example, and wrote a letter contrasting those million-dollar figures for one person to change the

color of his shirt while kicking a ball, while others died without access to treatment. He calculated that a transfer of a famous player from La Coruña to Barcelona, costed as much as it would have cost half a million treatments to pregnant and infected mothers for three years to prevent a good part of the cases of mother-to-child transmission, and thus prevent some eighty thousand infections in children and their tragic sentences of slow and agonizing deaths.

Was it worth more for a man to change the color of his shirt by kicking a ball than the lives of eighty thousand children? It seemed that in the crazed society that dominated the world... it was.

LXIV. The footprint of Anwele's courage. Ukuzwana, 1996

FLYING between San Francisco and London. While Jonay was busy taking care of Nour and writing the letter to the Spanish newspaper about the contrast between million-dollar soccer transfers and the poverty and death from AIDS in Africa, Aimsa was reading a report that Rob had told her she should know about.

It was the second report of the inter-governmental panel on climate change, which had been working throughout the 1990s to analyze the scientific evidence of humankind's effect on the climate and the earth. The first report in 1990 was already revealing, but Rob recommended that Aimsa read the newly published second report and see how she could contribute. The reports were prepared on a voluntary basis by thousands of scientists for the United Nations. Aimsa was initially uncomfortable that entering with passion and depth into another human challenge might take away from her commitment to the fight against AIDS and the web of global greed causing so much injustice and immorality. In no way did AIDS seem to relate to climate and ecology.

But Aimsa had an intuition.

It was August and they were flying over Newfoundland, in northern Canada, and crossing Greenland. From her photographic memory she could sense that on her outbound flight a month earlier, the glacier area was larger. Despite the height of the flight, she saw an image that looked like that of a polar bear isolated on an secluded islet of ice in the ocean. She opened the report and began to read the three volumes, starting with the "scientific evidence" volume. As she read it, her attention grew and invaded her senses. The evidence seemed to be very solid, showing that the increasing levels of carbon dioxide, as a result of human lifestyles, was the major contributing factor to the increase in the Earth's temperature.

She then imagined Earth as poor Anwele, to whom they returned in fear of facing her suffering and grim fate.

Anwele's body had been invaded by the virus transmitted by an infected semen of a man meant for a magical act of union, but sullied by falsehood. The Earth had been invaded by Humankind, the product of the evolution of billions of years of life, through genetic diversity of reproduction, mixing of genes and their adaptation to perpetuate

themselves. That genesis of life seemed to come from materials transmitted to Earth by a meteorite from other solar systems.

Judging from the studies Michael had done, Anwele would have about five thousand viruses per milliliter in blood, that is about twenty-five million in the blood but many more hidden in cells throughout the body, and shielded from attack in the central nervous system. The virus population in Anwele had increased tenfold in one year. The Earth was overrun by Humanity, by some six billion people and had doubled in population during Anwele's lifetime.

The AIDS viruses invaded the cells of Anwele's body. They used the parts of the human body, its cells and its genetic and metabolic resources, to reproduce themselves in an exponential, crazed way. In that way, they were destroying more and more cells and were ending Anwele's life, looking for a way to invade other bodies and continue their process of reproduction and destruction. Similarly, the Earth was invaded by humans. They were using its, or rather, her resources from the fields and the sea, mineral and biological, at an exponential rate and destroying their generous host, or rather, mother in which life was gradually being depleted. The human species was also looking for other planets, perhaps aware of its destructive effect and the agony of its generous mother Earth.

The AIDS virus in Anwele had a particularly harmful activity: it attacked a part of the body, the immune system, which had been storing the memory of Anwele's life in relation to its surroundings, to life outside. On Earth, mankind had been discovering the treasure of the fossils of life on its depths, carefully stored for billions of years. Human greed was burning, destroying without scruples, that treasure of the Earth, the cemetery of its life, revered in its entrails, in an interval equivalent to a millionth part of the time to be created.

Anwele's body, destroying itself by the effect of the crazed reproduction and consumption of billions of viruses, reacted with substances coupled to the virus, which produced fever, heating her body to try to stop the destructive invasion. The Earth, being destroyed by the effect of alienated consumption of billions of human beings, reacted to a substance produced in excess by the destruction of the fossil treasure, carbon dioxide, which coupled to the Earth's atmosphere

produced a greenhouse effect and a warming process. The Earth had also high fever.

NoLwasi and Jonay had tried different treatments to alleviate the destructive effect of the virus. From the chemistry of herbal substances or derived medicines, to stop its effects or those of its allies, opportunistic infections, to the magical action of NoLwasi's water, which bore the mark of the virus and acted by a geometric and energetic effect still unknown to the human species. Many indigenous communities in harmony with the environment, and other more recent ones such as the spiritual eco-villages of Courage and Tenderness, had been proposing ways of living in harmony, but their voices were drowned out by the greed to possess and destroy of a part of Humanity that dominated the rest and irreversibly damaged the planet.

What was Anwele's hope? Aimsa knew that it depended on the human conscience of sensitivity to the suffering of others and the justice of avoiding the harm of those who perpetuated it. She needed to spread the advances in knowledge, the new combined treatments, for the moment shielded by those who preferred profit and power to life and solidarity. She would fight for it with all her strength.

What was the hope for the Earth? It also depended on human conscience, on sensitivity to the suffering of all life, and on justice to avoid the harm of those who did not respect it. It needed a system that would return to the harmony of human beings among themselves and with the Earth, returning to previous balances or using with intelligence, respect and balance, the resources of mother Earth. She would fight for it with all her strength.

Even before reading the report, Aimsa had structured the logic of eco-human relations, and mentally linked them to quantum physics, biology, anthropology, philosophy, socio-politics, economics, information sciences, biotechnology and international relations.

The report estimated future projections of global average temperature increase and sea level rise. It also estimated the consequences of those and other processes related to the unhealthy production of carbon dioxide on life on the planet, including human life.

So they arrived, after stopovers in London and Johannesburg, in Bulawayo, where Haka and Helen were waiting for them at the airport.

NoLwasi and Patxi had stayed in Ukuzwana, which Jonay found strange.

-Tell me, Haka, it's because of Anwele that Patxi and Nolwasi couldn't come, isn't it?

-Yes, Jonay, she is very weak, we are fearing the worst.

Sadness invaded them all and barely without speaking they advanced towards Ukuzwana with their eyes clouded with grief.

In an attempt to distract the mind, Haka updated them on his work since he had returned from Israel and Switzerland. He had sown those countries as well as many others through Nadine's articles, anonymous papers and books about child and organ trafficking schemes for the unscrupulous rich, natural resources in monopoly, banking speculations parasitic on noble human endeavor. But he preferred to be with Helen and Ukuzwana's family.

The number of orphaned children had been increasing throughout Zimbabwe and was now approaching one million. Despite successfully lobbying the government to legislate for their protection, free schooling and to prosecute those who trafficked them or even dispossessed them of their deceased parents' land or meager resources, the suffering was increasing. Although extended families often took in children, the process of linking children with relatives who often lived far away or had not had contact for some time left most children in very precarious situations for many years. In addition, at least one-third of the orphans had no father, mother, grandparents or other close relatives who could be identified.

For that reason, and with the funds from the books, which were destined to the Amani Trust account, they had been building homes for orphaned children, while, in most cases, they were integrated into other families. The homes functioned as spiritual eco-villages, in harmony with each other and with Mother Earth. The first ones had been named Sibindi (courage) and Ukuthanda (tenderness). Haka told them how they had been following John's advice from Gomera and the network of spiritual eco villages. In total they now had twenty-three communities of orphans and their caretakers, all over Matabeleland, welcoming more than five thousand children and encouraged by six hundred adults who had embraced that natural and harmonious way of life, without property or destructive aggression between people or with

the Earth, and sharing their lives with those children, perhaps the most marginalized human group in the world.

Jonay felt a deep emotion when he heard Haka's story. He thought the wonderful story of Haka had been forging him into a true hero of Humanity. He was almost seventy years old, with white hair and beard, and a look that had been filled with tenderness over time, without undermining an ounce of his amazing courage. Again, courage and tenderness, Sibindi and Ukuthanda, the expressions of the same energy of love, which united all human beings, even if some did not know how to feel it yet.

Aimsa noticed that Jonay had a lump in his throat thinking about Anwele, and it was she who told the story of their travels, meetings in Madrid with Juan, in Gomera with the Harrises, their time in San Francisco, their struggle in Vancouver and the get-together in Berkeley.

Thus they arrived at Ukuzwana. Several little kids ran alongside Haka's old BJ-40 shouting, "Haka! Ulibona!"

They entered Patxi and NoLwasi's house, who welcomed them with deep emotional embraces. They were speechless. Adam was already three years old and started speaking to them in a mixture of Ndebele, Basque and English. Joseph, Thandiwe and Nothando were in high school, already preparing their "*A levels*" to go out into the world, as Buhleve had already done. Rose, who had been in Bulawayo with her family for some years, had returned to Ukuzwana when she heard of Anwele's condition. Ndlovu had also left the provincial health directorate in Matabeleland for a few days to be at Anwele's side in what everyone knew would be her last days. They greeted everyone. Nour stayed playing with Adam, they were like brothers. They went into the room where Anwele was lying.

Jonay approached with NoLwasi. There was between them like a pact of strength. Anwele with her courageous prevention, NoLwasi with her magical spirituality and Jonay with his attentive - hence Ulibona - care for the sick, formed a magical union against the epidemic, despite the pain and discouragement often caused in them by the inevitable ravages of the disease. But that blow was too strong.

Jonay took Anwele's hand and watched her tenderly, painfully and in detail. She was asleep. He noticed her acetone smell, from the prolonged fasting, which was possibly due to vomits that left an acidic

odor as well. Her skin was shiny, sweaty, pale and at the same time slightly yellowish and gave the appearance of fragility. Her eyelashes had grown. She looked at NoLwasi noticing together the omen of that sign they had observed so long ago with the epidemic. He did not need to look beyond her shoulders to see an extreme thinness, almost skeletal, and a difficulty in breathing mixed with slight rales. He only needed to take her pulse and feel her forehead to guess that she was infected with pneumonia or tuberculosis, that she had chronic diarrhea, acidosis due to the effects of the generalized infection and that her body reacted with fever and a weak and accelerated pulse and breathing.

As he sat, as he had so many thousands of times with his patients, on the edge of the bed and took her hand, Ndlovu told him of the treatments they had started, every possible one, with no response. NoLwasi told him that they had continued to give her the healing water and her herbal prescription, and that she had implored the amakhosi with all her might, and often with great anger, for the past few weeks.

Still without fully awakening or opening her eyes, Anwele squeezed Jonay's hand and said even without hearing or seeing him:

-Umulaphi wami, ungane wami, ubudi wami (my doctor, my friend, my brother).

Jonay remained speaking in ndebele, his eyes clouded with tears and trying to overcome the sadness that blocked his throat.

-I am here, my sister. We are together. Your whole family is with you.

Anwele opened her eyes slightly and put all her little energy into a slight smile and squeezing Jonay's hand.

Aimsa watched discreetly and respectfully from a corner of the room, also with deep emotion and sadness. When the others were leaving and only Jonay and she were left in the room with Anwele, she walked over and sat on the other side of the bed, taking her other hand. Jonay and Aimsa joined hands, as if trying to create a triangle of love and energy with that life that seemed to be irremediably going to another world.

Aimsa felt Jonay's pain and when Anwele closed her eyes again and NoLwasi returned to her side, they went for a walk. As they walked

hand in hand through the arid plains surrounding Ukuzwana, Aimsa revealed a secret:

-Jonay, I had not told you, but blinded by the rage of injustice, when you went swimming in the Pacific in Vancouver to dilute your tears for Anwele in the ocean, I snuck into several booths at the congress and took samples of the new combination treatments. We have enough pills to try to treat Anwele for a month. I hope you understand me. I also feel immense anger and pain.

-Thank you, Aimsa. I understand you. I would have done the same. It is a logical and honest sign of confront those who put greed before life.

-We have to try. If she gets better, we can see how we can continue to get treatments. Michael told me that in a sample of patients, they have been able to leave the viral load in the blood undetectable. I'm sure he would help us.

-Thank you, Aimsa, I will talk to Anwele.

That night, already in their bed, in the humble cottage where they lived in Ukuzwana, Jonay and Aimsa embraced each other with a new sense of vulnerability before the world, united by sadness and anger. Nour slept peacefully between them, with a rag toy Adam had given her. It was shaped like Anwele's fragile body. She squeezed it tightly, as if not letting it slip through her fingers.

The next day, Anwele's conscience was a little more alert and Jonay was able to talk to her alone.

-Sister dear. I am here with you.

-Thank you brother. I love you with all my soul.

-How are you feeling today?

-Ndlovu, Rose, NoLwasi, give me the best. For the pain, the itching, the dryness, the nausea. You are the best people and caregivers in the world.

-What we have is deep love for you. Little by little, sister. Be strong... Amandla. You are the bravest woman in Matabeleland.

-Jonay. I know my situation. I know it is the end. I want to talk about Nothando and her future. And I want to leave in peace, surrounded by your love, leaving part of my soul in you, taking part of your soul to the other world where I will wait for you.

-It doesn't have to be like this, Anwele. I want to tell you something: in Vancouver, we have learned that there are new treatments that can stop the virus. We've brought back samples for a few weeks. If you get better, we'll try to find more. You have to fight.

Anwele stared at Jonay. In a few minutes she summarized the images of her life and mixed them with her values and ideas, with her union to those wonderful human beings. Those intense minutes with the little strength she had left, made her feel deeply her destiny, decide her end, and, in a strange way, feel a deep peace.

-Jonay. We have fought together against this epidemic, with all our strength and with two noble principles. Remember?

-Yes, truth and justice.

-Exactly. And I want to die with those principles too. I could not look into the eyes of my ndebele brothers and sisters receiving a treatment that thanks to your love, I can take and keep my life a while longer, others cannot.

Jonay did not know what to say. He could only feel his tears already irrepressible, blessed by the courage and nobility of the person he loved so much.

-Call NoLwasi and Aimsa, my brother.

Jonay explained Anwele's noble decision to Aimsa.

When the three of them were around him, Anwele spoke her last words to them:

-NoLwasi, you have been my sister and I leave my soul in harmony with the universe with you.

Trying to brighten up those sad faces, she joked.

-Aimsa, you stole from me the most incredible man I have ever known, but you gave him the love he always longed for. You are a guide for a new humanity and I entrust you with the courage of my soul to always be with you.

-I will always carry it with me. Guide us from your new life. We will listen to you every day.

Anwele smiled and nodded.

-Jonay, you have been my ally, my inspiration in our dedication to alleviate the suffering of others. I leave with you my soul in harmony with love.

-To the three of you I ask something: take care of Nothando as your daughter, she feels you as her family. And keep on fighting for truth and justice. Make these treatments reach those who need them, all our Ndebele brothers and sisters in memory of those of us who are now saying goodbye to you. Do not forget us. I carry you with me.

The three promised her to take care of Nothando with all their love and the memory and example of her mother's brave and noble life. They also promised her that they would continue to fight with all their might for it, in her memory and honor.

-Now call all my family, I want us to say goodbye with a music of our souls, without words, and feeling our hands joined. Then I want to be alone with Nothando.

Thus the life on Earth of that wonderful spirit of courage faded. Anwele. It was September 1996.

Thousands of people attended the celebration for the life of Anwele. In the Ukuzwana church, converted into a meeting of love between peoples, Patxi led a ceremony of veneration for Anwele's life. They sang Zulu songs in grave soul sounds, which conveyed pain, admiration, gratitude and a firm incomprehensible hope. They alternated stories about Anwele's life, epic, tender and also funny anecdotes of her life, of her struggle for truth and justice.

In all of them remained the memory of a brave woman. In all of them she lit a new brave light towards a new world.

LXV. Tree hug. Kyoto, December, 1997

After ANWELE'S SAD DEATH, Aimsa put all her efforts into access to AIDS treatment in Africa. She wrote articles to many newspapers in the United States, Europe and Africa, worked with Nadine on a book entitled *The World's Greatest Shame*, and coordinated actions with the group that was setting up the Treatment Access Campaign (TAC) in South Africa.

She remained in contact with the lawyer, Zachie, who, like Anwele, refused to get treatment through the private system until all South Africans who needed it could have it. Some time later, Doctors Without Borders, allied with the TAC, managed to import zidovudine from the Brazilian government at prices ten times lower than those of Wellcome, by then already merged into Glaxo-Wellcome. This encouraged the new Mandela government to pass a law allowing licenses to manufacture in South Africa generic drugs copies of the unaffordable patents, or to import them from other countries. The powerful companies owning patents on AIDS and other drugs filed a lawsuit against the South African government through the Pharmaceutical Companies Association of South Africa.

Aimsa knew from Nadine's contacts in Pretoria that the American government and the CIA were pushing South Africa to honor the patents, fearing that the same justifications could be applied to three billion people living in middle-income countries. Despite all these efforts, it had been ten years since AIDS patients and infected mothers in rich countries had access to zidovudine, and the millions of people who needed it to survive in Africa were deprived of it.

Aimsa, who was still supporting the orphans' home, the White Tigers, in Calcutta, shared her concern with her former street mates in Calcutta and asked them about the AIDS situation in India. Within three weeks she received a letter that could change the story of AIDS in Africa, in the world:

My dear sister Aimsa,

Your letters always make us happy. We are proud that from our poor group surviving the streets of Rambagan you rose to change the world, as you said you would. Your money helped us have the

orphanage and have education and jobs. We long for the day when you will return to Rambagan and see all that has been done because of you.

In my case, I was able to study administration in an adult school. Then I got a humble job in a tool store. I gained experience and the boss encouraged me to study more and to aim at positions of greater responsibility. I did so and was hired by a wheel distribution company all over India. Some Americans bought part of the company and offered intensive management courses to a few of us.

I changed jobs a few months ago. I am now in a production and export management position in a drug company called CIPLA. We advocate for the exceptions to the World Trade Organization obligations to grant monopolies the production and sale of drugs under patents, so we can manufacture those drugs, such as the expensive AIDS drugs that you recounted in your last letter, and export them to governments in Africa. We have already copied zidovudine and sell it ten times cheaper than Glaxo-Wellcome. As you say, there is no need to worry about them, they have already earned a thousand times what they invested. Some law should put a stop to their greed, and if not, we will do it by demonstrating at much lower prices, the abuse of these monopolies of power. I have read many of your articles, some have been published here in India, and it makes me feel a good sense of pride. Next year we will have generics of and different drugs for combination therapy ready.

Count on me to speed up the delivery to Africa of these life-saving drugs for so many people, now marginalized by the greed of patents.

On behalf also of my wife and my three children, and all the friends of the white tigers, I send you greetings with all our affection,

Alin

Aimsa reread the letter several times. That lanky white tiger chief had become an officer of CIPLA and was threatening the inhumane patent business. She had to convince the governments of South Africa, Zimbabwe and others to import those drugs and legalize their use in the country. Life over business! for Anwele's sake. She estimated that the annual purchase of the amount of zidovudine needed in Zimbabwe would cost about thirty million dollars to treat about three hundred

thousand patients in the most advanced stage of the disease, and eight million for prevention in about one hundred and fifty thousand mothers infected with the virus. But the government could not afford the nearly forty million dollars.

They needed to mobilize more funds. It was important to talk to Doctors Without Borders and other organizations to convince them of the humanitarian emergency of AIDS. She prepared an explanatory brochure so sharp yet humane that, through Rob, raised some ten million dollars in donations in the United States, half from Hollywood's great fortunes. It could be done through a foundation Rob created in Berkeley called Life First, mimicking Food First.

It took still more than a year, during which Aimsa met often with Minister Stamps, before treatment began, first with the zidovudine program for infected pregnant women.

Jonay found that despite offering a drug that could save the lives of their children, most pregnant women did not want to be tested for AIDS. Anwele's death had hit them hard and they saw no reason to know the infection status if the death sentence was certain. NoLwasi had stopped diluting Anwele's tears and only gave her herbs, but with little hope. Funerals continued to multiply throughout the district. He gathered several focus group discussions and understood well that patients, especially women, had little incentive to know their infection status, and mostly feared the reactions of their husbands, who could blame them and throw them out of their homes. He knew of some cases of domestic violence as a result of the test. He understood that fear and futility very well, and wrote a letter to the prestigious journal *Lancet*, which he entitled "*the right not to know*".

Jonay shared those concerns with Aimsa and NoLwasi. The lives of thousands of children depended on mothers getting tested and taking the drug. Even one only dose already had an effect, and a recent study in Thailand showed that taking it from a few weeks before delivery to a week after, prevented most infections.

Jonay proposed the following to Aimsa and NoLwasi:

-We understand that women need time and support, ideally with partner counseling at the same time, advice on how to prevent further infections and hope for the future with new medications. But at the same time, when we see them in the prenatal clinic, we need to know

their status and prepare the appropriate treatment. Why don't we prepare a gadget that does the test, they are not informed of their infection status until they are confident and prepared, and, in the meantime, they get the treatment they need or, if they don't need it, a "placebo", or just vitamins? This double-blinding is done in medical research with much less justification or need. We can call the gimmick "*take you time*".

Aimsa and NoLwasi agreed that it was a good idea while promoting that all people should be tested, act responsibly and lovingly towards others, respect and support those who knew they were infected and all together fight for access to treatment. They had to organize marches of thousands of people in Harare, to ask for the drug that would save their lives ahead of roads, official cars, military expenses and so many other expenses not saving lives.

Joseph was already studying in an electronics workshop in Bulawayo, and designed the machine. It was a wooden box, the size of a shoebox, where the hand and index finger were inserted into a special area. A button activated a puncture of the pulp of the index finger. The blood dropped into an AIDS rapid test carton. After three minutes, a light sensor on the test was activated and recognized whether it was positive or negative by triggering the release of treatment or placebo with only vitamins. The person could see the result if he or she wished and in private. Joseph developed a workshop for its production and employed several boys from Ukuzwana. The machine also enabled finding out the proportion of pregnant women infected with the virus. The machines were distributed to over two hundred health centers and hospitals in Zimbabwe and word spread to South Africa and other neighboring countries with hundreds of orders. Joseph set up several workshops in the eco-spiritual communities of orphans and trained about a hundred young people between the ages of fourteen and eighteen for their production.

Given the success of that method and the impact it had on preventing infections and deaths in children, Jonay called a meeting of the great Ukuzwana family. He proposed to create an association that would promote AIDS prevention with human values, as Anwele had always done. Haka and Helen proposed to merge the Amani

Foundation into the new association. The profits from the machines would be invested in orphan communities and prevention campaigns.

Meanwhile, Aimsa kept thinking about the duality of AIDS and the damage to the Earth that she had thought about by blowing up the Arctic. She discussed it with John and wrote to him proposing an ecovillage network action at the climate change conference to be held in Kyoto later that year. After discussing it with Haka and Helen and at the Anwele association board, they also decided to ask for the integration of the orphan ecovillage network, now called the Sibithanda network, into the global network of spiritual ecovillages.

A month later, she received the following reply in a return envelope from "Tenderness ecovillage, La Gomera, Canary Islands".

My dear daughter Aimsa,

Thank you for your letter full of love for us and also of strength and hope for the world.

I hope you are well and that Nour has celebrated in your beautiful family of Ukuzwana, her first birthday with happiness and love. We are well, although the years are already showing. We miss you and hope to see you here again soon. You know that it is difficult for us to travel, both because of our non-economy and the fear of polluting our planet. We prefer the wind to carry us with Satia, but we already have to plan our ocean travels carefully. It was wonderful to have Lisy join us last time. She is happy with her partner, Joao, in Porto Alegre, collaborating with the landless peasants' movement and promoting the eco-village network in Latin America. Fernando has left for Sierra Leone, where war is raging and leaving the poorest without access to any treatment. We were worried that at his age he would get into such difficult situations, but there was no way to stop him. He is very stubborn, but he follows his big heart and we can only admire him and hope he comes back healthy.

Regarding your idea of the ecovillage network beginning to have a strong voice at international meetings and in defense of the Earth, I will tell you that after our conversation last year here at Tenderness, I sent a letter to the network's board of directors. I explained to them your idea, which I share. We are already six hundred eco-villages in

eighty-three countries. I can't tell you how excited I am about the inclusion of the Sibithanda network. If anyone deserves to lead Humanity towards a new world, it is those children full of courage and hope.

Although at the beginning there were those who thought that it was preferable to stay out of any political discussion, others thought that it is not ethical to limit ourselves to our small islands of harmony and ignore the suffering of Humanity and the Earth. There are those who believe that our example is our dialogue, but others think that we must also get involved in the proposals for a new Humanity. The power of greed and power, allied with the alienation strategies of education and the media, is too great to ignore. I told them that we must be courageous and consistent, and act locally but also think globally.

It was then that we began to think about who could represent us: who knows our reality and feels it, who knows the world of international relations, who can speak in several languages, with passion and intelligence, with honesty and also with assertiveness? With courage and tenderness. I proposed to them that you would be the right person, the voice of a new world. I told them about your story, about your commitment against suffering and for love, about your studies and the struggles you have undertaken. I sent them a few of your articles. We want you to represent us in Kyoto and to consider proposing ways to raise our voice in the international community.

My daughter, I would not tell you any of this if I had not received a letter from Jonay almost at the same time as yours. Your travels and work away from Ukuzwana could mean putting distance from your family or from Jonay's profession and passion for Ukuzwana. But I will tell you that Jonay admires you and feels, as I do, that you have a destiny to lead this crazy world to a human destiny and harmony with nature and the universe. You will see how to let him know that I have told you, I hope he is not angry. He conveyed to me that you would be the best ambassador of the network of spiritual eco villages. He also said he felt guilty for depriving the world, for his selfishness to have your beauty, your warmth, your constant inspiration, someone who can do so much good on other levels. And that he would follow you wherever you went, he would look for what to do and how to share challenges.

So, my dear daughter, think about whether you want to represent our way of feeling and thinking about life and the world in Kyoto, and then think about whether you can carry our voice further. All our communities and your family, will support you in whatever you decide.

The whole community, with whom I spoke a few days ago about this idea, sends you their love and affection. You will see in this envelope the drawings that the children send to you.

Umbela and I, full of love for you, send you our deepest soul embrace.

John

After reading the letter, Aimsa stared at the infinite, moved by so much love and so much respect. She also thought of the noble task of raising the voice of those who really loved Mother Earth and of those who lived in harmony free of property and greed.

The sun was setting and dyed everything red. She saw Jonay approaching, coming from the dispensary and holding hands with Nour and Adam, who were already running around the mission.

-You took revenge for my drug audacity, eh?

-What do you mean?

-Your father is already my father. He has no secrets from me.

-Never trust a Harris.

-I love you. I could not imagine such a great act of love. But I will not allow you to leave your passion, nor keep me away from you.

-Don't even worry about the latter, you won't get rid of us. Isn't it so, Nour? I'll take care of the former. At your side, wherever life tells us, I will have a lot to do. By your side I feel all the strength in the world.

At the end of that year in 1997, Aimsa left for Kyoto. Nour was already a year and a half old and happy in her large family in Ukuzwana, where she had become the queen. On the day of her birth, Jonay had planted a jacaranda tree that she herself had learned to care for. Before reaching Kyoto Aimsa would spend a week in Copenhagen, meeting with representatives of the eco-village network and receiving her official endowment to represent them. She was also asked to

propose a plan to raise her voice in other international forums after Kyoto, if so she wished. Umbela's decalogue at Findhorn was now the common constitution and the values to represent and promote.

Aimsa arrived in mid-November 1997 in Kyoto. She flew from Frankfurt to Tokyo, with a stopover in Bangkok. From Tokyo she traveled by fast train to Kyoto. She was staying, as usual, by *couch surfing* at the home of a pianist named Yoko. Aimsa spent two days touring the city and being inspired by its history and culture. Kyoto was the capital of Japan for over a thousand years. She walked to the center of the city and visited the Imperial Palace. Despite its relative simplicity, Aimsa felt, as always when visiting monuments of power, a mixed feeling of awe of beauty and dismissal of hierarchy and power. She then reached the Higashiyama district and visited a temple with a thousand and one gilded wooden statues of Kannon, the goddess of mercy. There she meditated for a few minutes thinking about the concept of mercy. But she desisted from finding harmony in that concept. It was not mercy, neither from the Gods, nor from the powerful, that Humanity needed, but justice and responsibility. She was then absorbed by the beauty of the view from Kyomizu Temple. In local buses she then visited the temples of Kinkakuji and Ryoanji. She felt a special peace in the garden of Ryoanji. In its beautiful simplicity of rocks and white sand, she meditated on the destiny that awaited her, on her love for her family, on the memory of her mother.

The ecovillage network had provided her with a laptop computer. It was her first computer. They had kept in a “floppy disk” all the documents from the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, where the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change originated. She could also read from the disk hundreds of scientific papers and studies gathered and related to climate change and other harmful effects of human predatory activity. She wrote a proposal for the promotion of eco-villages, and a system of tax relief in relation to non-ecological expenses, as well as a statute of autonomy in many countries that attacked Nature. She proposed a strategy on how to obtain resources for ecological exchanges and for the setting of eco-village networks.

In the first few days in Japan, she met representatives of civil society, UN officials and delegates from many countries. Rob had given her some contacts and through them she met more and more. Her

unique beauty, her blue sari, and her ability to abstract ideas, to make innovative plans and to debate with arguments that were as logical as they were sweet and respectful in their diction, captivated more and more representatives and delegates to the conference every day.

Aimsa had studied in depth the chemistry, dynamics, status and projections of carbon dioxide, methane gas and nitrous oxide, all of which have a greenhouse effect. She had also analyzed the status of hydrofluorocarbon, perfluorocarbon and sulfur hexafluoride gases. She developed complex graphs of their effects on the sun's rays, on temperature, humidity, water cycles, winds, oceans, biodiversity, and electromagnetic energies, estimating effects on quantum harmony, beyond the Newtonian physics on which the official reports focused. In her schemes, Aimsa suspected an effect through biological destruction, an alteration of the matter-energy duality that she had to investigate in depth. Not only the physics of the planet and its life were being damaged, but its, her, very soul, which connected the material illusion with her deep energy identity, attuned to the universal one.

During the discussions, Aimsa presented the proposal of the spiritual eco-villages and the simple way of life in harmony with nature, exchanging their creativity ideas and tools for other global goods for life and its sustenance, Mother Earth. As she presented those ideas, she noticed attitudes of astonishment in many, indifference in others and even derision and contempt in some. No matter, she knew that she represented possibly the only worthy and possible future of Humanity and she would fight for it.

The final conference agreement was to reduce 1990 baseline emissions by only 5% by 2012. Aimsa insisted that the reduction needed to preserve life on the planet was at least forty percent, but failed to break the predatory inertia of industrial societies. Even so, after signing, countries would be required to ratify it and the agreement would only come into force if more than fifty-five countries responsible for more than fifty-five percent of carbon emissions would ratify it. It was like a power game in which no one would make a move if the others did not.

Aimsa felt so deeply sad. The human species to which she belonged was destroying the planet and itself. When the evidence was so obvious, the powerful gathered together, traveling on expensive,

polluting trips and staying in luxurious hotels, to sign wet paper. The most polluting countries, such as the United States, said that even lowering emissions by just five percent over the next twelve years was "unrealistic".

Aimsa needed to get out of that room dominated by hypocrisy, insensitivity, greed to grow, to prey on mother Earth, to destroy. Humanity in the hands of greed only knew how to grow, more and more, to keep on destroying. Like infections, like tumors.

She went out into the street and ran until she found a park. She hugged a tree and asked for forgiveness for belonging to such a cruel species.

LXVI. The most beautiful lie. Ukuzwana, Matabeleland, March, 1998.

IT WAS DECEMBER 1997. They had just received in Ukuzwana news of Aimsa from Japan and her anger at the hypocrisy in the face of nature's damage. NoLwasi was expecting a second child. The failure of the healing water and the loss of her friend and soulmate, the brave Anwele, had left her with an imprint of sadness. Patxi had felt for the first time in NoLwasi, who was already forty-three years old, moments of fragility and existential anguish. That light of spirituality and dignity seemed for the first time vulnerable to the blows of life.

Patxi was already sixty-four years old but still shining brightly in his passion for life, for the love of NoLwasi and Adam, for the dedication to that mission without religious hierarchies, a center simply of love, which Ukuzwana had become since his arrival from his Basque valleys, fifteen years ago. Jonay waited for Aimsa with devotion, knowing well his destiny to follow in the footsteps of that force for the New Humanity, and took care of little Nour who was already walking throughout the mission. Jonay became ZakaNuri, and the Ndebele people respected Ulibona even more, who besides his relief from pain, had brought to the Ndebele people a princess of knowledge and beauty, already spoken of in many villages of that arid shore of the Kalahari.

Jonay had received letters from Juan in Madrid and Lisa in Oakland. He was also in constant contact with Buhleve, to whom he wrote weekly with clinical cases and ideas for treatments and plans to improve health in the community. Juan's letter surprised him:

Dear friend and colleague Jonay,

It was a pleasure to meet you again in Madrid, to meet your two princesses, Aimsa and NurLwasi and to see you again in Vancouver. I hope your return to Ukuzwana went well.

We are doing well. Cristina is still in the laboratory and I am in the consulting rooms, the wards, the emergency rooms, you know... We are moving all the patients we had on zidovudine to combination therapy and the truth is that from two to three AIDS deaths a month for

our entire coverage area, we have now been six months without anyone dying.

In truth, since I met you in Madrid and then felt the strength of your message in Vancouver, almost a cry for justice, I can't get it out of my mind. As I told you, we have two children still young, five and three years old, and we want to devote a few years to show them, and ourselves, another way of life. From what you told me about Ukuzwana, I would deeply like to get to know it and see the possibilities of collaborating and, if you think it would be useful, to move there as a family for a while. Compared to you I am very limited, as we are all specialists here in Europe. Well, and the non-specialists: I do not know how to do a caesarean section, I am almost afraid of childbirth, I do not reduce fractures, I do not give anesthesia, I do not know how to do an X-ray, or look at samples in the laboratory, I have not treated children and I am used to each patient having about twenty biochemical analyses and several sophisticated tests before making a decision. I humbly know that any nurse in Matabeleland can do the job in Ukuwana ten times more useful than I can, plus they know the language and the culture. But what I have, Jonay, is a huge hope and commitment in being useful. For my position on leave here ten doctors will fight to replace me, and there you have an immense work and with so few means....

I will tell you that I have also been talking with the medical association, with pharmaceutical laboratories and with university chairs about how we can help to get AIDS treatments to you. But I don't have a clear idea. The laboratories want to make some donations, of course, linked to studies. I'm suspicious... Tell me what you can think of. I can talk, if you like, with some NGO...

I have spoken about it with Cristina and now she is the one who keeps pushing me to write to you and to prepare how to go to be with you. She does not stop reading things about Zimbabwe and Africa.

Jonay, I wanted to tell you the following: we could get ready to come to see you for two weeks in February. If we can see a plan to stay longer, we could prepare to come in the summer and stay a few years, if you think it is possible and good. I know the paperwork is slow and that is why we would like to start as soon as possible.

If this is not possible or if "transforming" me professionally would be too difficult or time consuming, I will understand, and you can count on me in any other way you think I can be of service.

I look forward to hearing from you.

A big hug and all the encouragement in the world for your noble work,

John

Jonay thought about it. Juan's letter came at the best time. He was sure that despite the frustration of Kyoto, Aimsa could bring the voice of the spiritual ecovillage network to international forums and begin to lead a worldwide movement of human values. If Juan were to replace him for a few years, it would give Buhleve time to finish her medical studies. And then would come Thandiwe. There were Ukuzwana hospital souls for several generations. And better times were to come: they would get treatments to recover from the agony of the thousands of young people who continued to fall from the terrible plague. He was sure they would succeed. He was already looking forward to another gale of ideas from Aimsa on his return.

He went to talk to Patxi that same night, on the porch of his house.

-Hello, Aita.

He called him that, affectionately Father, in Basque. Truly he felt him as a second father, like Fernando.

-Tell me Jonay, how is everything going?

-How is NoLwasi doing? The last ultrasound said you are going to have a second baby and very soon!

-Yes, I'm worried that I'm getting old, and it's even a little late for NoLwasi, but we have a deep hope. The one who is not so convinced about sharing his throne is Adam. He already has enough to put up with as all the attention from twenty kilometers around gets taken away by your princess.

-Don't worry. Everything will be fine. We will do it with the tenderness and care with which Adam and Nour were born, here, in this beautiful home that you have been forging all this time and that I will never forget.

Patxi felt in those last words the sense of imminent departure. Many times he had thought that Jonay's professionalism would lead him to other places with more resources, and they had even discussed it, but Jonay always told him that he could not imagine a more humane place to practice his passion as a doctor. But since Aimsa arrived, something made Patxi feel that the time would come when that doctor and friend, like a son, with whom he had shared so much, would end up leaving for other higher destinations.

-You know, Jonay, that I will never forget our friendship, our union for our dedication to others. We have fought together against the epidemic, against malnutrition, for bringing the lighting poles and the telephone, remember? For breaking the bishop's taboos, we have cried together out of anger and sadness at times, and we have sung, prayed, celebrated. Jonay, we have lived intensely a part of our lives, side by side. And I will always thank God for having crossed our paths.

-Thank you, Aita. And that's why I wanted to tell you something. You know how much I love Aimsa, don't you?

-Yes... And how hard it was for you to tell her, you rascal!

They recalled those years when he felt so dazzled that he was at a loss for words when she was near!

-I feel, Aita, that Aimsa is destined for something great. Her intelligence and courage are incredible. They used to make me feel overwhelmed, tiny next to her. Even more so if I leave my vocation as a doctor in remote and under-resourced areas like in this, the most beautiful corner of the world. I know I must encourage her to be the leader I feel the world needs. You know that she has gone to Kyoto representing the network of spiritual eco-villages and if it happens like with the struggle for AIDS justice, she will have made her mark. If she is offered to continue representing them, I cannot and should not stop her and I don't want to live far from her either. We are united in the depths of our souls. We are the nucleus, the proton and the neutron, I am afraid I am the neutron, and the rest orbits in our lives. I love her so much!

-I understand you, Semea (son in Basque). I will tell you another thing: the community of San Egidio has been checking how we have been developing our community of Ukuzwana, the spiritual sense without religion, the sharing of land and work, the energy we use from

the wind, the sun, the biogas and the harmony of the people, our ways of organizing ourselves in committees, of deciding. They want to follow such a model in many centers of the world and there are more and more religious communities of other orders that have responded to an article they wrote about Ukuzwana in an Italian magazine. I believe that like Sibithanda, we can go on creating eco-spiritual communities of hope. I want to tell your father. They should come to see us, meet Sibithanda and encourage this transformation of the missions. Let's see if we can convince him to take that plane, we will get funds, it is a lesser evil for what it pollutes, because it will be for a noble purpose. Little by little we will infect the world with small communities of love. An epidemic of love against those of pain, power and greed. And you are right: we need Aimsa leading our voice in international forums, encouraging a new form of human existence, a new dawn. There will be nothing that will hurt me more than seeing you go far away from here, but your spirit will still be here with us, in the dispensary, in everything we have done together since the operating room was an old warehouse, remember? But I understand your destiny well, and God willing, we will continue to cross paths.

-It looks like everything could be a good fit: I have a fellow student, Juan, who would like to come and spend a few years in Ukuzwana. I'll have to accompany him for a few months so that he can get used to the resources and needs here and lose his fear of emergency operations and all that. But I am sure he will put all his heart into it. His wife is a microbiologist and can also help in the dispensary, the wards, the operating room and improve the laboratory. And after them we are looking forward to the coming of Buhleve and Thandiwe when they finish their medical studies.

-If you don't come from time to time to replace them and help them, I'll take your word away.

-I'll be looking forward to coming, at least every year. I have to see Nour's jacaranda growing!

-I will miss you, Semea.

Patxi could not suppress his excitement. Neither could Jonay. Those two men who had crossed paths, hopes, efforts, anger, love for others, embraced each other under the southern cross.

Christmas and the school vacations were coming. Joseph was already sixteen years old. He had helped design the "take your time" machine, and was helping the Anwele association from the office they had adapted from the old Amani headquarters. Helen ran the organization and Haka the network of Sibithanda orphan centers. She had learned from NoLwasi to play the Mbira and sang with the low guttural Zulu sounds, Ndebele and Zulu songs. Nothando was fourteen years old and attended Ukuzwana High School. Since her mother's death she had become very introverted, shy, fearful. She spent many afternoons on the rocks where NoLwasi felt the spirits. She thought she could talk better with her mother there. She was the last of the Ukuzwana family to be with Anwele, and she remained in Anwele's arms for the last hour of her life. She still remembered every breath, every movement, the warmth on her skin, her mother's faint breath on her forehead. It was more than sadness she felt. It was a cold and painful emptiness that seemed to call her to another place far away from that life. Her passion for poetry and music took her to a world outside the material one, where her vertigo was often unbearable. Jonay had taught her to play her violin and she spent entire afternoons playing it, looking at the horizon and imagining her mother's smile. Joseph, who made no secret of his special affection for Nothando, could hardly cheer her up when he came out of town on weekends to see her and walk the plains. Thandiwe was somewhat older, about the same age as Joseph, and she wished fervently to emulate Jonay and one day be a doctor in Ukuzwana. She corresponded with Buhleve, who was already a third year medical student in Johannesburg, living with Nadine. She played the Zulu drums with a deep, magical rhythm. Those teenagers had experienced the rawness of poverty, the epidemic, the loss of their parents and the uncertain future. But they had found in the Ukuzwana family a warm home, full of love and hope carved in the effort and dedication to others. Patxi said that commitment was the true source of happiness.

In the following days Buhleve and Nadine arrived from Johannesburg, Haka and Helen from Bulawayo and Beatriz, Meimuna and Moyes, who was almost nine years old, came to spend Christmas from Brussels. Aimsa, from Kyoto, arrived on Christmas Day.

They celebrated life together. Without rites or truths. Only with the indecipherable strength, indescribable beauty and ineffable force of love.

In memory of her mother, Nothando had composed a beautiful song. Thandiwe's drums, NoLwasi's and Joseph's *mbiras*, Jonay's violin, Patxi's chistu⁹, Helen with her guitar and Aimsa with her flute, accompanied her...

*Mother, always with me,
Mother so it must be...
Our love bathes everything in color
Like the evening sun
Mother, your courage
It gives me strength to continue...
Our union will be eternal
And I am no longer afraid to die
Mother, your hope
Until your last breath
It makes me feel you
At every moment...*

That night, Jonay looked for Aimsa under the stars. Aimsa had angrily, but with a thousand ideas, told him of her frustration in Kyoto. She had a letter prepared for John, about a way to apply for recognition of the network of spiritual ecovillages (NSEV) as an association recognized by the United Nations.

-Aimsa, I need to talk to you.

-What is it, Jonay.

-I am tired of being here. Everything is wonderful in this great family and in this human challenge, but I need to go to a place like New York, to study, to know what is going on in the world.

Aimsa looked into his eyes. She immediately noticed the beauty of that lie. He was hiding his love so that she would not feel burdened by

⁹ A traditional Basque flute

it. She could not imagine a nobler attitude. And through a lie! A lie so clearly true that it oozed beauty. She didn't know whether to unveil his contradiction to her or to play along, but she couldn't, on the other hand, not fail to appreciate his wonderful offering. It did not deserve not to be recognized. Besides, with her keen intuition, she felt that something wonderful also awaited Jonay in the next stage they were approaching.

-Jonay. I know you like I know myself. We beat at the same pace. Far away or near. I know you love your profession and this corner of the world, with all your heart. And I know what you are offering me. I ask only one thing of you:

Jonay realized, once again, the depth of thought of the person he loved the most.

-What is it?

-If in our new life, fighting for the NSEV to lead a new Humanity, you feel loneliness, sadness, nostalgia for your daily life with patients, or tired of the world of words or the traps of abundance, let me know. With the same generosity that today you take my hand for a new stage in our lives, we will return to this, which will always be our first and most beautiful home.

-I promise.

The love they felt at that moment was so intense that, strangely, they could not embrace each other, only hypnotize each other with their tender gazes that gradually became clouded with the deepest emotion.

Two months later, Juan, Cristina and their two girls, Ángeles and Daniela, arrived. Jonay showed them every detail of life and work. They were very happy and determined to sign up and apply to replace Jonay in his job, despite the local salary: about a hundred dollars a month. He only asked Jonay to share at least one month, twenty deliveries, ten cesarean sections, ten fractures, ten laparotomies, three amputations, and at least one month at his side in consultations and visits to inpatients and *kraals*. If there were not enough cases for John to gain confidence, he would be attached to the hospital in Bulawayo for a few weeks. Jonay encouraged him not to be afraid, but simply cautious and willing to always do the best for the sick. Juan and Cristina read with amazement and curiosity every page of Gray's manual, that other medicine of commitment, imagination, and togetherness with

communities and patients. Cristina also made diagrams reading the Cheesbrough laboratory manuals. Daniela and Ángeles were playing with Nour and Adam, without batteries or plastics, without lights or screens, only with nature and their immense imagination. They wept bitterly when they had to return to Madrid!

And then came the big day. It was midday on March 7, 1998. Jonay was helping NoLwasi. The young ones were playing music on the porch. Patxi was holding NoLwasi's hand. Aimsa soothed her with wet towels. Unai, shepherd in Basque, came to that family of love and hope. His destiny was written in his name. His gaze hypnotized with tenderness whoever approached him. Everyone was filled with happiness. Although Adam looked curiously at his brother while he pressed his favorite wooden car more tightly than usual.

LXVII. Saidu comes back to life. Lunghi, Sierra Leone, July, 1999

*Hail Mary, catch me, if I'm gone
let's go deep into the lonely mind of an angry man.
who cries out in the dark, demons attacking him
my enemies see me disappear
I activate my hatred, I let it escape, like a flame
I get ready, emptying the entire load, while keeping a good aim.
some say this game is corrupt and screwed up.
but my mother told me not to stop until I get what I want.
Fuck the World if it can't adapt to me!*

IT WAS OCTOBER 1998. Black Rambo was thirteen years old. He was compulsively rapping the verses of his hero, Tupac Shakur, who had been killed three years earlier in a gangland shootout in Las Vegas. Black Rambo had been a member of the *West Side Boys* guerrilla group for two years. That was when a group of boys between the ages of eight and sixteen, led by *Black snake*, broke into his family's home near Kono. His memories of that night were vague. Whenever they tried to come to his memory, he would binge drink palm wine, smoke marijuana and snort cocaine to take his mind to another world. Tupac's songs helped him escape. But when night fell, the drugs didn't take full effect and the images became clearer: he remembered his mother's rape, his father's death and how he was forced to unload more than a hundred bullets from an AK-47 into his mother's body, who lay half unconscious after *Black snake's* insane aggression.

Haka had received a letter from Fernando in Sierra Leone. It told him of the horrors of war and the links between diamonds, guns and drugs. Haka had decided to walk away from the world he had chased for a decade, and lived in peace with Helen, helping the Sibithanda network grow and bring hope to the hundreds of thousands of AIDS orphans in Zimbabwe. But it was because of that sensitivity to child suffering that Haka could not help but ally with Fernando in unraveling another web of terror, that of child soldiers in Sierra Leone.

Black Rambo had been shot in an attack by the main guerrilla group in that war that had been raging for six years in the world's

poorest country in terms of health, education and nutrition, but one of the richest in diamonds. Nearly all of his comrades had been killed and maimed before or after agonizing. Black Rambo was taken by *Abu*, a *Temne* farmer from the rice paddies of Lunghi Island who found him dying in a ditch. Although he had the hated West Side Boys tattoo and his name Black Rambo also tattooed, *Abu* was a fervent Christian and did not hesitate to assist him and take him to the clinic of the Brothers of St. John of God in Lunghi.

Fernando, along with three missionaries, had been kidnapped while operating on a strangulated hernia by one of the army groups that had failed in a military coup, six in the last five years, and were allied with the other guerrillas in terror. They were taken to Masiaka forest and hidden under some low palm trees. The rebels that kidnapped them were demanding the withdrawal of the Nigerian army, allied with the government, and the release of their leader, something they were sure would not happen. It was by the mediation of the Bishop of Makeni, a Xavierian Italian who knew all the powerful people in the region, that they were released. Meanwhile, the hospital in Lunsar, which had taken so much effort to build and maintain for forty years since Brother Richard arrived in the country, was destroyed by the rebels. The religious set up a temporary clinic on the island of Lunghi, while waiting for funds to rebuild the Lunsar hospital.

When he arrived at the dispensary, Black Rambo had three gunshot wounds in his right leg and one in the right flank of his abdomen. He was semi-conscious, dehydrated and malnourished, as well as in hemorrhagic shock from internal bleeding. Fernando estimated that he had lost a liter and a half of blood and that the wounds had been inflicted about three days ago. There were signs of infection and pus was coming out of one of the bullet holes in his right thigh.

Just as he was being examined with the help of a nurse in the entrance room of the dispensary, about ten men and women armed with sticks and machetes came in, shouting in Creole and fearing: "Death to the murderer, death". Fernando stood in the middle:

-If you kill him, you'll have to kill me first.

-Stand back, doctor. This child has killed his parents and many more people. He deserves to get what he has been giving.

-Surely you are right, and I understand your anger, but look at him: he has a faint chance to survive, and if he does, he will never be able to do any harm. What do you gain by killing him? Revenge? Do you think it will make you happier, bring you more peace?

-You don't understand, doctor. This kid has maimed and killed a lot of people. West Side Boys need to know that we are not afraid of them. They will see at the entrance to our town his hands, with which he murdered so many people, hanging on a pole. That way we will protect ourselves.

-I assure you that these boys are continually drugged and that violence, blood and provocations like the one you are talking about, make them even more violent. They started out suffering violence in their flesh, being kidnapped, drugged, their minds have not functioned in any other way, their souls have not received love. I do not take away his guilt, but we must heal him and recover him as a person, take him out of that violent and desperate mind. Only that will set you free. Only then will Sierra Leone regain its peace.

He was able to convince them and was able to operate on Black Rambo. He started with two liters of serum. He knew he would need a blood transfusion but asking for volunteers for that was already too much. He checked by cross testing in the rudimentary laboratory of the dispensary that their bloods were compatible and donated half a liter. He then put antibiotics in the serum and with the help of Brother Agustín, an anesthesiologist, they began to operate. First he opened the abdomen. The bullet had torn the spleen and lacerated the ascending colon. He had to remove the spleen and about twenty centimeters of intestine leaving a colostomy until he could prepare a clean repair. The leg wounds were gangrenous. He tried to clean them and repair the circulation, but as he debrided he found rampant gangrene. He had to amputate the leg above the knee.

In the following days he regained consciousness, but not speech. He would stare at the ceiling and every two to three hours he would have profuse tremors and sweating. Fernando thought it might be malaria, especially since he had lost his defenses because of his spleen, but he did not respond to treatment and he did not see the parasites in the blood samples. He concluded it was withdrawal from heroin and alcohol and God knew what other drugs. He kept him sedated with the

few vials of *diazepam* they had at the dispensary. Within a month he operated on him again and was able to close the colostomy. The other patients and their families reproached Fernando for not only saving his life, but also for giving so much care to that murderous child.

When Black Rambo recovered, Fernando taught him how to use the crutches. He noticed that he never smiled and that his look was always one of panic. It was time to discharge him. He knew that he would not last long alive once he left the hospital. Fernando went to talk to him:

-*Sheke* (greeting in *temne*)

-*Sheke you.*

-How *the body* (Creole form of asking how are you).

-body *fine.*

-Then you'll have to leave the hospital now, won't you?

-Yes

-Where are you going?

-I know they are going to kill me.

-You are afraid.

-No. I want to die.

Fernando got no other response than that to his attempts to encourage him to switch to a new life, to ask for forgiveness, to look for his remaining family. He insisted during long sessions at his side for three days. He never mentioned his leg. It was as if being without it had been a relief. On the fourth day, Fernando he took him to his room. He hid the crutches from him. He couldn't let him give himself up to death or to continue killing. Nor could he hand him over to the Sierra Leonean army, as bloodthirsty or more so than the rebels. For two weeks he nursed him, fed him healthy food, and showed him affection. Imperceptibly he felt for him, the affection for the son he never had.

Gradually, Black Rambo began to open up, to feel confident in Fernando. He was also coming out of his abstinence syndrome and gaining strength. He began to do exercises to strengthen his arms, and to clean the house, wash clothes and cook meals. His childhood name was Saidu. He came from a village in Kono where his father was a school teacher. It took him several days to tell the story of the attack on

his home and how he was forced to kill his mother. At first he said it quickly and with hardly any feelings, as if jumping without looking over a deep pit. Then he spoke more calmly and wept bitterly for several days. Fernando knew he needed to regain consciousness before entering a long process towards peace and hope. Like the whole country.

It was then that Fernando wrote to Haka. His initial intention was to tell him the story of Saidu and thousands of child soldiers in Sierra Leone, and to seek ideas like Sibithanda's for a future in that country, which seemed to be slowly emerging from one of the cruelest wars in the history of mankind.

Haka responded with ideas. In addition, the Anwele association had funds because the new United Nations AIDS organization, UNAIDS, had shown interest in the "*take your time*" device, and after using it on a pilot basis in several countries, they had placed an order for five thousand units to be rolled out in Africa. Joseph designed a workshop with ten workers to manufacture a couple of hundred a day, and they were paid in advance. Haka told Fernando that they could help him with a first home for war orphans and former child soldiers.

Intrigued by the situation, Haka pulled out his old notes and map from some of the loose threads he had left behind in South Africa, Mozambique, Israel and Switzerland. They now had internet at the Anwele Association office and he was able to read about the war in Sierra Leone, as well as consult history texts in the old library in Bulawayo.

It had all started about eight years ago. Liberia's guerrilla and bloodthirsty dictator, Charles Taylor, had instigated and supported the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) guerrillas led by Foday Sankoh, to seize power in the country under a West African expansion. Something like a Hitler in Africa. He succeeded in getting the RUF to take control of the diamond producing areas. Faced with the weakness of the government, deprived of the diamond revenues previously used to keep the army encouraged and the wealthy and opulent classes in the poorest country on Earth satisfied, a group within the army - the Provisional National Council of Government (CNP) - staged a *coup d'état* and reinforced its fight against the RUF. Haka noted how in 1993, the Sierra

Leonean army had hired - surprise! Executive Outcomes, to increase its strength against the RUF.

Of course, such support was paid for with concessions in diamond mining, which, of course, would be controlled by De Beers. Siaka Stevens' army began to exercise the same violence as RUF rebels against the population. Diamonds, money, drugs and weapons. It was only necessary to fall the first time, and there was no way out of the cycle. A cycle well fed by the powerful of the north who adorned the necks of their ladies and damsels, feeding the billionaire business of De Beers and at the same time, their bloodthirsty intermediaries and the indirect business of arms and drug trafficking. Everything was dressed up as a semblance of democracy when elections were held and the RUF signed a peace agreement that also committed the government to Executive Outcomes leaving the country. To maintain that fragile peace, the United Nations had decreed an arms embargo on Sierra Leone, on both factions.

But the weapons continued to flow and feed the horror, as did the diamonds, most of which were smuggled to neighboring countries from where they entered the channels of luxury and greed of De Beers, who multiplied its income a thousandfold through its networks of jewelers in Antwerp, polishers in China and chains of luxury jewelry stores in the world of deaf abundance. Haka identified networks in the arms trade. Nadine helped him and even spent a week with him in Bulawayo, when he came on a vacation with Buhleve.

Nadine was in contact with an organization called Gunfree South Africa. They knew of suspected arms traffickers. They confidentially gave her the list of the main traffickers in Africa: Lenoid Minin, an Israeli-Ukrainian linked to the timber trade in Liberia who was apparently in the lead, Victor Bout, a Russian linked to a cargo airline with unclear merchandise, Talal El-Ndine, a Lebanese businessman close to Charles Taylor and Sanjivan Ruprah, a Kenyan suspected of arms trafficking in Eastern Europe.

Haka could not bear the thought that those gangsters were fueling the massacres in Sierra Leone. He had to go. Although he was well into his seventies, he was still feeling strong. He did an hour of gymnastics every day and took great care of his diet. But above all, his anger against those mafias gave him the strength to fight. He had to go to see

Fernando in Sierra Leone. He explained it to Helen. Initially he told her that he would go to see how to link Sibithanda with the projects of homes and communities for war children in Sierra Leone, but he could not look her in the eye and keep anything to himself in front of Helen, whom he loved deeply.

-I confess to you, Helen, that I also want to tie up some loose ends of the trafficking networks. I am convinced they are connected. And I can't sleep easy knowing that those criminals are on the loose.

-Haka, that's what the police, Interpol, is for. I know you are capable of unraveling them as you did in South Africa, in Israel, in Switzerland. But you are risking your life. Sierra Leone is at war, life there is worth nothing.

-The police in Europe and the countries of origin of those traffickers, and Interpol are not effective. I suspect that they even tolerate those businesses. I cannot understand that they remain unpunished. I need to make this last trip. Trust me.

Helen felt a fear she had never felt before but she could not shackle that great man determined to go to the end of the plots of pain and terror against children. He would spend Christmas in a remote and dangerous place. She felt she would possibly never see him again. The last few nights she hugged Haka every minute in his sleep, every inch of his skin, counting every breath, every heartbeat.

Haka packed the same luggage he took to South Africa, but this time, he also got a bulletproof vest. He arrived in Freetown via Johannesburg, Nairobi, London, Brussels and Banjul. At Lunghi airport Fernando was waiting for him. They had been writing to each other or through Jonay for several years. They were of similar ages, revolutionary spirits partly frustrated by their original struggles, and a sense of justice that crossed the boundaries of fear.

They arrived at the Lunghi dispensary where he met the brothers of St. John of God who worked there, the two nurses and other maintenance and administrative personnel. Then they went to Fernando's small house, attached to the dispensary. Saidu was there, with his crutches and preparing the rice.

After lunch, Haka and Fernando sat down to talk.

-Haka, I am happy for your company, Jonay is like a son to me and he considers you as his uncle, that makes us brothers. Besides Josu, your blood brother, was like a brother to me too. We called each other "Anayas". He died last year surrounded by the love of his family in Madeira. But this is a very dangerous time, I warned you.

-And what are you doing here?

-I try to treat sick people, we are safer here than in Lunsar. And the airport is nearby. We can talk about the community of orphans and former child soldiers on this island. I want you to tell me how you organize yourselves in Sibithanda.

-We will do it, Fernando. We also have about thirty thousand dollars to help you and we will mobilize more in South Africa and Spain. But I also want to find out how these criminal groups are maintained. I know something about the diamond network and its mercenary allies. If we find out something of the plot, bringing it to light will help stop this massacre.

-It is very dangerous, Haka. Saidu has told me that he knows from conversations his group had with the RUF, that their fifty thousand bloodthirsty guerrilla, well armed by Taylor and brimming with alcohol and drugs, are preparing a campaign they call "*not a soul alive*". I advise you not to move around the country alone for the time being.

They spent a few days around Christmas telling each other about their lives, with amazing synchronicities, communitarian ideas, rejection of hierarchies, courage against terror and corruption and tremendous tenderness for the children and Haka for the family of Ukuzwana and Sibithanda and Fernando for the Valyter communities. Together they wrote letters to those amazing brotherhood groups close to their souls.

After Christmas, the RUF began its bloody campaign. In just one month they estimated that they killed ten thousand people and mutilated as many others. Enraged by the elections that supposedly gave legitimacy to Tejan Kabbah's government, they came to the villages and lined up those they did not kill directly. Then, like a summary trial, the RUF guerrillas, drunk, drugged and crazed, would ask: "*long sleeve or short sleeve?*" and, to the terror of the innocent prisoners, insist that they answer or be killed. If they were lucky, they would amputate with a machete the arm with which they had voted.

That week more than fifty adults arrived at the clinic with amputated arms. Several developed tetanus, others septicemia, in other cases the hemorrhages were so massive that they arrived bleeding to death. Twenty-two of them died. In the rest, Fernando made an effort to leave more or less functional stumps, for which he had to anesthetize them, clean the wound, cut some more bone and leave more soft tissue cushioning the stump. But it was the sight of fifteen amputee children, including three newborns, that was most heart-wrenching. Haka, who had already assisted Jonay a few times, learned to help Fernando in the operating room with the amputations, but when he saw those children, something broke inside his soul. He apologized to Fernando and set off, despite the danger warnings, for the sea.

Haka felt the deepest rage and pain he had ever experienced. He thought of the horror of child trafficking, of the new dawn clinic, of the prostitution rings. He had reached the deepest depths of the darkest nature of the human being, but this surpassed everything. How could there be any human soul capable of tearing off with a machete blow the arm of a newborn baby? His sadness and rage exploded in him. He cried with the fury of an eternity. Perhaps the pent-up wrath of generations and generations of repressed crying, of the energy of love imprisoned and stifled by cruelty. He felt within his soul the most heartbreaking cry. The bitterest shriek, the coldest blow to hope.

Over the next few days he spoke in depth with Saidu. Sensing Haka's deep sadness, and seeing those children with their amputated arms, Saidu's tears dragged even more secrets hidden in his tormented soul. That's how he told him that the leader of the West Side Boys, Foday Kallay, once took him to buy drugs. In arrangements with the RUF, they had certain privileges and diamonds from the Kono area in exchange for spreading terror. They went so far as to exchange hands or even skulls of captured and tortured and killed army soldiers with the RUF for diamonds. With those diamonds, Foday knew how to locate a person who supplied them with drugs. He was known as Minin.

Leonid Minin. Could the Israeli-Ukrainian be the key to the knot of diamonds for money, for drugs, for weapons? How could he unravel it? His notes showed that Leonid Minin owned a dozen companies all over the world, camouflaged as logging, transport and communications

companies. But how to follow his steps and unmask him? He felt alone and powerless in the face of such a web of terror.

That night, a mercenary patrol approached from Sandline International, another company similar to *Executive Outcomes*, based near London. He also had some notes from that company: "common properties" and investments in each other, with *Executive Outcomes*, and, again, the fatal link: its chairman Tony Buckingham, also a former founder of Executive Outcomes, owned several companies, including *Diamond Works*. It had just been discovered that the previous year *Sandline International* had been contracted by President Kabbah, in exile, through an Indian, Saxena, who paid an initial sum to Sandline for military operations and arms sales not respecting the UN embargo, in exchange for Kabbah's promise of concessions in mining operations, linked to Tony Buckingham's companies. With the money that those vultures of society had left over, they played at speculating with "derivatives", the name used to subtly describe the great world casino that was parasitizing the global economy.

He approached one of the mercenaries, named Ralph, who stood guard around the dispensary. He managed to break the ice by talking about soccer. He was a Manchester fan, a former hooligan, and managed to talk about a match a few years ago with Barcelona. From there they went on to talk about music, a fan of the *Sex Pistols*. So they became acquainted and Haka played along. When his service was over, Haka invited him for a beer in a local bar. Gradually he told him about the horror they had seen in the amputee children, and the connections of the gun and diamond purchases. Ralph knew about guns. Over beer and the rage of the RUF massacre, Ralph began to talk about how the guerrillas got their weapons. He had heard it from his commanders. The weapons they had seized from imprisoned guerrillas came from the Ukraine.

He managed to connect via the internet and although he suspected it was not secure, he wrote in a code agreed with Nadine in which each of the organizations on the terror map, had a number, and each person a letter, the countries a plant, and the objects an animal. He sent the code of pine (Ukraine) and rat (weapons) in one sentence: "have you read the book of pines and rats". He received a reply, "I saw it on September 27, and it was fun and moving!". "2, 7 and 9" and in "f and

m", equaled *Spetstenhonexport*, in Kiev, Aviatrend, arms and transport intermediary, and Exotic Tropical Timber Enterprise and Valery Cheny, president of Aviatrend, and Leonid Minin, owner of the timber cover. Days later, Nadine emailed him again: "on the 9th I'm going to see cherry trees". Burkina Fasso?

He did not know what he could find, but he took an Air Afrique plane to Accra and then another from there to Ouagadougou. He settled in a small hostel. During his time in the mountains believing in the liberation movement of his basque people, he had felt a deep fascination for Thomas Sankara, the Che Guevara of Africa. The only head of state in history who exchanged Mercedes for small Renaults, equalized the salaries of politicians and civil servants to those of the population, nationalized the land to feed his people, denied foreign aid and said: "*he who feeds you, will be your master*". He continued to live in his humble house, refused to use air conditioning and rode his bicycle to work. He went to visit his village, and to be inspired by his life. But he needed to find the connections between Minin and the military dictator of Burkina Fasso at the time, Robert Guei.

One day, he saw trucks with the logo of "Exotic Tropical Timber Enterprise (ETTE), Monrovia" passing by. It was clear that those trucks were carrying arms sold by Minin to the Burkinabe government with the agreement that most of them would be diverted to Liberia and Sierra Leone. The next day he took a flight to Monrovia. Upon arrival, he took photos of the De Beers and ETTTE offices in Monrovia. He hid in a workshop across the street that he rented for thirty dollars a day from a Galician businessman full of humanity named Nito. The next day, he saw a black Mercedes arrive at the ETTTE offices. He saw Leonid Minin, of whom he had seen photos on the internet in Bulawayo, get out of the car. He was about fifty years old, with a thick, greasy neck and a coarse, defiant gait.

Haka had rented a *pick-up* and was able to follow him afterwards. He drove to the Africa hotel. Haka let half an hour pass and went in the hotel to ask if he could eat there. He stayed at the table next to Minin. He was sitting with four other diners: one had a South African accent, two others Russian or Ukrainian and the fourth was an African dressed in a suit under which Haka could see part of the RUF tattoo on his right

arm. He heard Minin talk about leaving the following Monday for Milan.

Haka took another flight to Milan two days earlier. There he was able to contact Nadine more freely. He needed to know as much information as possible about Minin. Nadine told him "that she would take care of it"; that he just had to get the "owlet" arrested during one day... M for Owlet.

He rented a Fiat Cinquecento. He waited in camouflage at the airport early Tuesday morning for the flight from Monrovia, via Dakar. Minin arrived there. He was able to follow him through the Milanese traffic to his hotel: Hotel Europa. He could see how he checked in as Manfred Morales, of Bolivian nationality. He occupied room 341. Haka got an adjoining room. He didn't have to wait long for Minin to call several prostitutes to his room. He was sure there would be drugs and other business to keep the "owlet" a few days.

At midnight, he made an anonymous call to the police in Milan's Cinesella district. He said a man was dealing drugs and holding prostitutes in room 341 of the Hotel Europa. To add to the alarm he said he heard what sounded like a gunshot. Milan police arrested Minin that night for possession of thirty grams of heroin and various weapons. They also found diamonds and an amount of thirty thousand dollars. An email arrived at the police station the next day from an anonymous hotmail address called blooddiamondsinsierraleone@hotmail.com. As attachments it had scanned faxes between Minin and the Burkina government, Aviatrend and Diamond Works.

Haka sent a postcard to Fernando:

My dear Anaya. Mission accomplished. I hope I have dried up the RUF fountain. I don't know how to pray but I will pray my way for those children. I am proud of your friendship. Soon you will get the money for the Sibithanda project in Lunghi. Hopefully Saidu will be able to run it one day....

LXVIII. The concealed gaze. Ukuzwana, Matabeleland, September, 1999

JUAN'S REGISTRATION PAPERS remained in the inbox pile of the secretary of the health professional council in Harare. It had been three months and they still had not prepared the summary for discussion by the committee overseeing the country's new medical registers. On the one hand, the government and the medical association had been watching every file very carefully since two years earlier an American medical aid worker was linked to the illegal testing of AIDS drugs. But what was really slowing down and often blocking the process was the inaction of those officials, hoping for a bribe to get the application off the bottom of the pile. Even worse, the corporatist zeal of Zimbabwe's doctors, who wanted no competition, neither real in their lucrative private clinics in the cities nor moral from outside doctors who were doing good work and were appreciated by the rural communities.

But there were also many doctors like Ndlovu, passionate about their work and their service to the country. And nurses like Rose, who even sacrificed time with their families to devote themselves to those in need. Jonay asked Ndlovu for help to speed up Juan's registration, but at that time the political tension between Mugabe's ZANU-PF and Tsvangirai's MDC made everything polarized, even the professional associations. Ndlovu, an MDC sympathizer and critic of Harare's dictatorial practices, was ignored in Harare and his days as provincial director were counted. Aimsa called Minister Stamps, who insisted on meeting with her, calling on her daring intervention at the London AIDS conference a few years earlier.

Shortly before traveling to Harare, Aimsa received replies to her letters to Doctors Without Borders and the Treatment Access Campaign in Cape Town, and again from her white tiger brother at the head of CIPLA's headquarters in Mumbai.

Before taking the steps towards her representation of the SEVN, she needed Juan replacing Jonay and the path to access to life-saving AIDS treatments cleared in her now beloved Zimbabwe. It had been almost two years since the Vancouver conference and the evidence of life saving combination treatments did not reach millions of Africans, , except for the few thousands cases of prevention of mother-to-child

transmission. Greed of a few prevented hope of treatment in Zimbabwe, nor most countries in Africa.

Eric, from Doctors Without Borders in Kaleyitsha, one of the poor suburbs surrounding Cape Town, encouraged her to visit them to exchange ideas. They were fighting to import Brazilian generic zidovudine from Brazilian non-profit public laboratories and they were defending the government against a lawsuit by five multinational pharmaceutical companies suing the Access to Treatment Act. They were also in talks with Indian companies to encourage the production of combination therapies that could save the lives of thousands of people dying every day in the continent. Eic also informed Aimsa of the perverse plans of the World Trade Organization around patents and the profits of the economic powers, and how they were preparing to ally with antiglobalization movements towards the next G7 meeting in Seattle, by the end of the year. Eric passed her Anna's contact, a friend of hers who had just been appointed head of AIDS at Médecins Sans Frontières in Barcelona. They had recently shared a training workshop and he knew that the Spanish section of Doctors Without Borders was looking for places in Africa where their collaboration was needed and welcomed to start AIDS treatment programs. Aimsa wrote to Anna and received the following response:

Dear Aimsa,

Your letter, as recommended by our mutual friend Eric, fills me with joy. I see how strongly you argue for the significance of Doctors Without Borders' involvement in the fight against AIDS. You say in your letter that AIDS in many regions of Africa, such as the one you work in, sadly already meets the definition of a humanitarian emergency of one death per thousand people per day. I am amazed at your community health diagnosis and estimates in the district, and also at the work of Anwele, whom we had heard about at several AIDS meetings, Jonay and his efforts with prevention of mother-to-child transmission of the virus, and NoLwasi's efforts with traditional medicine. With all that I feel much in tune through my previous experiences in Africa and Latin America and in the attitude of commitment and respect for the communities you work with. The truth is that I am tempted to take the

first flight and go to meet your work and see together how we can engage MSF in this humanitarian priority, but it is more fair that you come, give us a lecture in Barcelona, and we talk about the next steps. I have no doubt that with your mix of uncompromising ethics and unbending logic, you will win the alliance of this organization. For that quest you already have an ally in Barcelona. We can pay for your travel and if you tell me your dates within a month, I will organize an agenda of about three days to compensate for your time and effort in coming.

A hug with all my esteem and fondness,

Anna Mitin

AIDS Project Manager

Doctors Without Borders

Barcelona

Alin wrote to her with a CIPLA letterhead and officially addressed to Aimsa as the "strategy officer" of the Anwele Association in Zimbabwe, inviting her to come to Bombay to discuss possible collaboration agreements for the production of generic anti-retrovirals in India and access to treatment in Zimbabwe.

She didn't know how to handle all those invitations.

On the other hand, in response to her comprehensive report of the Kyoto conference where she represented SEVN and raised the voice of alarm and relief for nature in the face of human predation, the SEVN steering committee had asked her to develop a proposal for institutional representation of SEVN in the international community. She had prepared a dossier, after many days and nights working in Bulawayo at Haka and Helen's home and with access to internet and public library documents. The dossier explained the process of formalizing civil associations at the United Nations, the relevance of SEVN's voice in the General Assembly initially as an associate member, but aspiring, by sovereign population representation, to a seat as an additional member state. Aimsa had devised a plan that, based on complex international law jurisprudence, could be used to give SEVN future "statehood" status, and to demand a strong voice in the international community, inspiring a new Humanity. The report also described the UN agencies where the SEVN should ask to be associated, such as health,

agriculture, environment, culture and human rights, among others. Finally, it detailed dates, timeline, budget, organizational and communication strategy and networks of partnerships related to the spirit of SEVN. Aimsa asked the board if she could write on behalf of SEVN to exchange ideas and seek alliances, to the Dalai Lama in his exile in Nepal and with his tireless message of Buddhist spirituality, to Nelson Mandela in the South African government (through Nadine and Haka), to Brother Roger in the ecumenical community of Taizé, France, Hindu guru Sri Sri Ravi Snakar in India, Yusuf Islam, the controversial musician who championed Islamic humanism, Amartya Sen in Paris, Noam Chomski in New York, Marta Santos, a peerless fighter for children's rights from Florence, and indigenous Mayan leader Rigoberta Menchu.

In the meantime, Jonay continued to work with enthusiasm and allegiance every day. Lisa, from whom he received such humane treatment for acupuncture in Oakland, had arrived as a volunteer and was helping them with some treatments, including anesthesia, at the hospital. Aimsa had prepared a thorough and convincing dossier for Stamps justifying the use of acupuncture in Zimbabwe's public health service, increasingly weakened by the isolation produced by the bellicose policies of Mugabe, Kabila's ally in the cruel war in Congo, and aggressive in his fair but violent retrieval of land from the white settlers who often still lived in their racist world of former Rhodesia.

Nour was already three years old and played tirelessly with Unai, whom everyone called Kike, who at the age of two was running around the mission on a wooden tricycle. They waited for Adam's daily return from the mission's elementary school, which, at the age of six, he had just started.

Patxi and NoLwasi in Ukuzwana, Haka on his return from his last fight against evil in Sierra Leone and Helen in Bulawayo, Lisy from Brazil and her fascinating letters on the right to land, John and Umbela from Tenderness, Fernando between Courage and Lunghi, Nadine and Buhleve from Johannesburg, Kevin and John from Pretoria, the new generation of Joseph, Thandiwe and Nothando, and their alliances with Rob in Berkeley, Marta, leading the children's rights institute in Florence, the activist friends of AIDS, ecology, spirituality, the well-known leaders of science and technology, the thinkers of a new

humanity and the new contacts that were beginning to flourish in other countries, shaped a rich universe of feelings, harmony, beauty and strength on which Aimsa meditated peacefully every sunrise and sunset. She began to draw complex schemes of the world order in black, of the negative forces of greed and power in red, of alliances for solidarity and justice in blue, of harmony with nature in green and of new ideas for a new humanity with a white chalk that could only be seen when the rest of the complex web of more than a thousand concepts, institutions, policies, organizations and people, with more than five thousand arrows that related them to each other, was darkened by the night.

Jonay wanted to talk about their future with Aimsa, because of the delay in the registration and therefore replacement of Juan. Nour, as often happened, slept with Unai and Adam at Patxi and NoLwasi's house, they were really like three brothers. Jonay and Aimsa went for a walk with the full moon, to NoLwasi's healing water *kopje* where they had now put up a nice stone monument in memory of Anwele.

-Aimsa, time goes by and Juan's papers are delayed. What has Stamps told you?

-I will go to see him next week in Harare, but he has promised me that he will take care of it before my arrival. Even so, I think that since it has been six months already, Juan has to send more updated documents. I estimate that they will not be ready before Christmas.

-And I see how your proposals for the SEVN, and the activities with MSF, CIPLA and the network of key contacts for a better world in your "map of the future" multiply. Now I don't need lies anymore. I tell you that your place in the world is not here right now. The New Humanity needs you at its center.

-My place is at your and Nour's side.

-Distance will not shake our union, our love. If you want to go ahead, fight for those challenges and prepare our home where you think it will be better, let me know. There is nothing nicer in my life than coming home from work and meeting you. But any other way you think, it will be beautiful too.

-Without you by my side, I don't know if I'll have the strength I need. I propose something to you.

-Tell me.

-I will go to Harare to see Stamps, then to Cape Town to talk to Eric, to Barcelona to meet Anna, to Bombay to meet Alin, then to Seattle to arrive around the WTO meeting, then to New York, where I think I can arrange a meeting with Marta and I will be back by November. I will be away for two months in total and by then we will see how Juan's papers are and what proposal I will bring to you for the new stage of our family. We'll do it by vote, by then Nour will know how to vote! and don't campaign in my absence!

Jonay, once again, watched in amazement at that power. The more she united strength, intelligence, commitment and courage in her existence, the more beauty shone through all her pores. Jonay woke up often at night just to watch her. That night he did it again.

Her long black hair was already showing some snow on her temples. Gathered during the day in her white scarf, or blue to match her sari of occasions, it was released at night and spread on the bed as a reflection of her source of love. Her face of simple, full, sweet light, almost fragile features prevailed with the years, and the slight traces of time on her forehead and framing her eyes, made her even more serene beauty. Those lines of time spoke of thousands of hours of hope and strength in a vision of the world that Jonay felt would conquer humanity. He liked to watch those eyes closed with the light sleep blanket and imagine behind them the gaze of beauty and courage that had captured his heart since he saw her land in Bulawayo.

What he didn't know was that Aimsa knew of his concealed habit, and felt it to be the sweetest token of love.

LXIX. Greed hogs the Earth... Bahia, Brazil, November, 1999

LISY HAD ALREADY BEEN in Brazil for four years, after having a crush on Joao during the Findhorn meeting, to which she sailed with John and Umbela.

Since she arrived in La Gomera at the age of eleven aboard *Satia*, Lisy had grown into a beautiful and, although shy, very assertive and courageous woman who stood up for human rights and global justice. When she left Sierra Leone she still had the after-effects of a tropical ulcer that invaded her entire right leg, the threat of genital mutilation and a fear mixed with guilt of having turned her back on religion, tradition and family. She spent three years with her sister and Fernando in Arguamul, until both the relationship between Kadiatu and Fernando cooled and the romanticism of life on that isolated cliff was filled with emptiness. They then went to San Sebastian where Kadiatu got a job with the women's association Gaia and became a leader in the fight against female circumcision, giving lectures first in the Canary Islands, then in the rest of Spain and then in other countries. She set up an organization that obtained funding to initiate projects, wrote a book on "the alternative rite", maintaining the African values of family, tradition, ancestors, rites, responsibility, union with the community and nature, but changing the mutilating act for a washing with herbs that she also knew were antiseptic. She studied anthropology and political science at the adult and distance learning university and got a job at UNICEF, first at the research center for children's rights in Florence, and then at the headquarters in New York. After a time when heartbreak and frustrated mutual expectations - Kadiatu of protection, and Fernando of union - hurt deeply, she and Fernando came to appreciate their epic and courageous alliance and each kept fond of the other with deep admiration.

Lisy attended high school, first in Vallehermoso and then in La Gomera. At fourteen she spoke perfect Spanish, at sixteen she mastered the Gomeran language of whistles and at eighteen she entered law school in La Laguna with a scholarship from the Canarian government. The efforts of skin grafts on the ulcerated leg in Sierra Leone prevented greater evils and although left scars and a certain limp, did not prevent her from learning to sail and even compete in the Europa class. Jonay

taught her a little violin and in La Laguna she became acquainted with a boy who introduced her to cello. She gathered some savings with jobs helping in the bakery of Jonay's friend, Yolanda, with whom she became a close friend, and bought her cello with which she played long hours Schindler's List and dreamed of a Humanity of love.

Joao was forty-five years old. His grandfather fled Portugal during the Salazar dictatorship and they settled in Rio where he opened a leftist bookstore called Justice and Liberty. His father married a mulata from Bahia and moved over there. The Brazilian dictatorship began to harass him for his anarcho-socialist ideas which he combined with a libertarian Christianity.

At the age of fourteen, Joao felt a deep emotion when the resistance movements against the Brazilian dictatorship kidnapped the American ambassador to exchange him for fifteen militants of the resistance on the condition of reading a declaration against the dictatorship on national radio and television. After the Carnation Revolution his father returned to Portugal where they opened a small hotel in the Algarve. Joao was then nineteen years old and was already linked to university groups in the struggle against the Brazilian military dictatorship. At the age of twenty he joined the Ação Libertadora Nacional founded by Carlos Marighella, for whom he felt great admiration.

Through his father's Catholic influence, he became involved with the Pastoral Land Commission, which aimed at transforming social inequalities and began to encourage struggles for land and against the immense estates of Brazil's powerful families. Before his departure to Portugal, his father became a personal friend of Leonardo Boff and Joao witnessed gatherings and lectures at the bookstore. He later led one of the Basic Ecclesial Communities in Bahia. Because of his Christian ideas, he was against violence and the kidnapping of ambassadors committed by other groups such as the Popular Revolutionary Vanguard. He rather demonstrated for the liberation of political prisoners chaining himself with companions in front of the government headquarters in Brasilia. He was often arrested and went on hunger strike several times.

Joao was responsible within the student movement for following the support given by the CIA to the Brazilian dictatorship. After the arrival of democracy, Joao, having finished his studies in political

science, began to encourage land struggle movements, which began to multiply in the country. At the age of thirty, he took part in the Curitiba congress where the Landless movement (Movimiento Sin Tierra -MST-) was founded and Joao was appointed coordinator of the Bahia state commission and in charge of the national commission for international affairs. Although his greatest obsession, since he was fourteen years old when he heard that liberating speech on television, was to learn how the CIA fought against social movements in Latin America, he became interested in the positive side of alliances and was very excited about a global movement of eco-villages against the private property of nature and in harmony with it.

That's why he went to Findhorn. And there he fell deeply in love with Lisy. On the night after John's harmonica was playing "The Times They Are A-Changing", Lisy asked John and Umbela if they could sail back to Gomera with Joao. He made a special friendship with John with whom he spent long nights on watch at the helm and entertained him with bossa nova on the guitar. The four of them returned with great harmony and Joao was able to feel more deeply the spirit and sense of the eco-villages. In La Gomera, Lisy introduced Joao to her sister Kadiatu and the man she felt was her father, Fernando, in Colonia Courage. They joined a couple passing through La Gomera on a beautiful 1950's German oaken boat, which needed crew to cross the Atlantic. They arrived in Bahia at the end of 1995.

Upon arriving in Brazil, Lisy helped Joao in the state tasks of the MST and also approached and collaborated with the Global Social Forum of Portoalegre and other movements of the continent, such as Via Campesina. She tried to link those revolutionary vanguards of Latin America with the concept and the network of spiritual eco-villages SEVN, which was already spreading all over the world. She was appointed delegate for Latin America and encouraged the foundation of communities throughout the continent, inspired by the decalogue of Umbela.

A few months later, they supported a settlement claiming unproductive land from the "Macaxeira" ranch in Dorado dos Carajas. Joao had led a similar settlement in Canudos, in the State of Bahia, and was asked to help with the "Macaxeira" claim. At that time, the area occupied by landowners' unproductive lands was more than three

hundred and fifty million hectares, about ten Spains. Most of them were huge properties of more than one thousand hectares, while the majority of Brazilians were landless and lived in poverty.

They helped to set up a camp that gradually welcomed almost three thousand landless families. Lisy shared the "decatalogue of Umbela" to organize themselves in harmony. There was a deep union, songs, solidarity. She felt that the seed of love and harmony was beating together with the demand for justice. There were many elderly people, workers and children, the "landless".

By then, the powerful landowners had been compelling the circles of power around the Brazilian government, which agreed to lower taxes and resist the MST social movement. At night, in front of a big bonfire of dry branches, Joao sang "Grandola Villa Morena" and remembered his father.

After several weeks of demanding the expropriation, the MST decided to block the road. Shortly afterwards, the police arrived and threw tear gas bombs, to which the peasants responded by throwing stones and sticks. One peasant, who was called the "little deaf man" because he could not hear well, did not notice the bullets and fell wounded by a bullet in the leg. The police then shot him on the head and finished him off on the ground. Lisy watched as the police identified Oziel, a young MST leader in the region, and tied him to a van. He was tortured for more than four hours and then finished off with shots in the ear. He was heard saying his last words: "Long live the Landless Movement!" Joao escaped by a miracle and from then on he felt a weight of guilt at being alive. He often had nightmares in which he saw himself tied to a police car and felt his whole body immobile until the very breathing stopped and he woke up in deep anguish.

But they could not despair or give up.

The following year, Lisy partook in the annual national meeting of the MST and teamed up in reviewing the articles of the constitution that linked land to its social function and allowed expropriation in its absence. She proposed an analysis of all private properties that, as they remained idle, morally owed taxes often greater than their value. Millions of hectares were hence recovered, often on a temporary basis while waiting for the government, through the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) to determine whether the

occupied land was idle. But at the same time, the lowering of taxes to landowners and their bribes to corrupt police fueled a war which raged throughout the country.

Joao and Lisy continued to fight for the right to the land. Joao did it more for vindication and social justice, and felt such deep anger since the events of Macaxeira. He began to consider whether violence could be justified. He continued to lead ecclesial base communities and went to Rio at least once a year to meet Leonardo Boff class and chat for a while at his home in Petropolis. Lisy maintained the origin of her commitment to harmony with the land without property. She thought that exchanging the property of some few landowners for that of many peasants, even if fair, would continue to maintain the absurd and unjust distribution of a sacred good that could not be the slave of anyone, rich or poor.

While Joao was joining more and more radical trade union movements, Lisy was joining movements that understood the new society not from the social struggle but from the change of values to live in community, repudiating the unnatural ownership of the Earth.

After Lisy was appointed delegate of the network of spiritual ecovillages in Latin America at the end of 1996, she began to actively promote the Umbela decalogue and to study in each country the fiscal and legal aspects of alternative and ecological settlements. Within two years, she had promoted the creation of almost five hundred settlements throughout the continent.

She convened a meeting with movements claiming land, indigenous rights movements, labor unions, grassroots church communities, the MST and Via Campesina, to explore common principles for an alternative model of society. For her, borders and property were incompatible with social and ecological harmony. Joao had been distancing himself because he considered that Lisy's arguments weakened union and workers' demands, and also led to utopias with no way out. The flame that had ignited in Findhorn four years earlier was dying among them.

At that meeting she met an indigenous leader from Cochabamba, Bolivia. His name was Kurumi (rainbow) Daza. He had Aymara indigenous features and dark complexion, frizzy jet hair, a deep, inquisitive look, and a bursting smile from his full jaw, strong, as if sure

of every step. He echoed the meaning of his name in his *llama* wool *poncho* with colourful natural dyes. Kurumi told Lisy about Pachamama. A week later, she traveled to Cochabamba to learn more about the mystical connection to the land of the Andean communities, and to see Kurumi, with whom she felt a deep friendship. Her heart was divided as she still felt attracted to Joao but developed a deep tenderness and spiritual empathy with Kurumi. Joao's farewell was sad. They both knew that a deep rift was opening in their union.

LXX. Even the rain. Cochabamba, Bolivia March, 2000

LISY ARRIVED IN Cochabamba for Christmas 1999. Kurumi met her at the bus station and they went to his parents' house where he lived with them, a sister and two nephews. He had a son with a woman from Santa Cruz who eventually considered him "too indigenous" for her pale skin. Kutumi's younger brother, called Victor Hugo, joined the welcome dinner. Kutumi's father, a humble Aymara construction worker, had learned to read in a Catholic mission school and had read *Les Miserables*, his heart moved in each page. Hence the name of Kutumi's younger brother. From the moment she began to feel the Andean culture, Lisy felt captivated. After dinner she went with Kurumi for a walk and ,under the stars, Lisy began to enter a new world...

-Kutumi, tell me, what is Pachamama for you?

-Each one must feel within himself what it is. Pacha is Mother Earth, where we come from, where we will go.

-What isn't the Earth? Isn't it everything?

-Yes... Although it speaks to us more clearly where we feel attuned to its strength, to its beauty... I feel it more clearly in the springs... that is where its purest fruit comes from... water.

-And how do you talk to her?

-I talk every day... As one talks to a mother...

-What do you say to her?

-Above all I ask her for support, sometimes I apologize for some fault or for not appreciating all that she provides us....

-Besides talking to her... how do you relate to her the most?

-Like a mother too... I take care of her, caress her, watch her, listen to her and follow her advice. And I often give her gifts too. She gives me a lot, and I must give her too. You will see that when we eat, harvest, draw water, firewood, food, stones... we give her a share too. Not only in the rituals, but in the day to day. Like a mother.

Lisy suddenly felt an icy cold in her heart. She had left her mother so long ago... She had fled from traditions she feared. But she also left so much behind. She often thought of going back, of discovering, of not having to surrender, not having to run away, just love.

-Tell me, Kurumi, does Pachamama sometimes hurt? Does she sometimes get angry?

-Yes, also like mothers. We think that Pachamama is often hungry and if she does not receive what she needs, or if she is offended, she sends us diseases.

-And tell me, what do you give her as an offering?

-In some rituals, animals are sacrificed, especially llamas, to shed their blood.

-That makes me sad.

-It is the tradition, but it is being abandoned. It saddens me too. I believe that animal life is also sacred. I haven't eaten their meat for a long time, and quinoa and other gifts from Pachamama give us enough nutrition.

-And what do you offer her?

-I offer, here, under the stars, what I value. The real gifts are not leftovers but what one appreciates and shares. I give her mostly coca leaves, a share of my drink when I am thirsty, a share of my food when I am hungry.

-Do you have common celebrations, or do you live your veneration in an intimate, personal way?

-Yes, there are celebrations, but, for example, when the llamas deliver, we offer the placetas to the earth to increase its fertility. On Challa Tuesdays people bury food, sweets and burn incense.

-Is Mother Earth alone in her divinity?

-The Sun God, Inti, and his wife, the Moon Mama Quilla, engendered Mother Earth... The Inca legend says that Inti taught his son Manco Capac and his daughter Mama Ocllo the arts of civilization, so that they would be respected by Humanity.

Lisy found it hard to believe in those very concrete images that seemed to surround all religions, but she did see deeply into harmony with nature, where all came from and where, after that transitory assembly of molecules, would return....

They celebrated Christmas, as the Pachamama was related to the Virgin Mary of colonial Catholicism. A few nights later, on the first Friday of January, Kutumi and Lisy, joined together the ritual of the

Pachamama, called *Challa*. The ceremony was led by an old woman revered in the community whom they called 'Yatiri'.

Lisy gave some talks to peasant communities on the idea of spiritual eco villages, establishing links with their sacred Pachamama. She explained that the world was suffering from an infection of cities and factories that were leaving her without her black blood, without her green skin, without her jungle hair, making her breathe badly because of the fumes, sweat because of the heat trapped by those fumes and that her heartbeat was weak and sad because she felt so much damage from her children, maddened by production and consumption... the network of communities that love the Earth could save her from that damage...

But before their plans to start promoting networks between communities and to explain the legal and fiscal aspects, and even discuss them with the government in La Paz, something happened that deeply shook the heart of Cochabamba, perhaps of all Bolivia, of the whole continent, of the whole world. The greed was reaching the limits of life and was going to make it react with strength, dignity and determination.

Faced with rising water prices, neighborhood associations, farmers', coca growers', and workers' cooperatives began to mobilize. Kutumi was a well-known peasant leader and had studied the case in depth. In front of some five hundred Quechua and Aymara people, he explained the following in an illegal night meeting in a school.

Dictator Banzer led the government after after fraudulent and manipulated elections.

Brothers and sisters,

With respect to the Pachamama.

Your water is being stolen by foreign companies greedy for power and money. They do not have enough in their countries and they come here to take it away from us, and they want to kidnap the water from the bowels of Mother Earth, appropriate it, and sell it to us...

There was an angry murmur.

A few months ago, an American company called Bechtel agreed with President Banzer, also advised by the World Bank, that our water would be their property. Not only are they buying the municipal water network, SEMAPA, but they are also appropriating our communal systems. This company has given two billion dollars to the president and told him to finish the Misicuni dam and connect it to Cochabamba making a deep wound in the Tunari mountain range...in exchange, he has given them our water for the next forty years...And this company would not even work for it. It would make another company that you know, Aguas del Tunari, whose owners are Europeans and Americans, work and charge us the money. So, since they think they already own the water, they have been raising the prices to almost double...Almost all of us have to pay 20 dollars a month, when our salary is between fifty and one hundred for most of us....

Murmurs turned into shouts from some who said they could not pay those prices... Others explained how they had to withdraw their children from school or stop going to the doctor because of the money they had to pay for water...

And in response to our anger, American Mr. Geoffrey Thorpe, who is in charge of this company here, has said that they will cut off our water if we do not pay...

Many very humble, even shy, women and people said with an innocence that touched Lisy:

-And how will we be able to live...?

And not only are we being robbed of Mother Earth's water, but we are forbidden to collect rainwater!

After that meeting, the demonstrations of the irrigating peasants and many other groups, unions, students, indigenous people... the rage filled the streets of Cochabamba. Lisy felt united with that cry for life.

In the following days, the youth, among whom Victor Hugo was taking a leading role, began to try to take control of the main square and to form barricades at the entrances to the city. Following the peasants and youth, workers, merchants and students from the University of Cochabamba came with banners against the privatization policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In this way, the demonstrators managed to bring the city of Cochabamba to a standstill for four days.

Army troops from Oruro and La Paz joined the police to repress the demonstrators. Initially they fired tear gas and pellets, but after a while gunshots could be heard. At that moment, Lisy saw a man in civilian clothes firing a rifle. She was able to take a picture of him amidst the chaos. What she didn't know until some time later was that when the chaos calmed down and people ran away terrified by the gunfire, a young man was lying on the ground, riddled with bullets.

Amidst the chaos she had lost contact with Kutumi, and went straight to his parents' house. The parents and her sister and nephews, were waiting with concern.

An hour later, they heard a rumor approaching their house. They opened the door. It was Kutumi. He was carrying Victor Hugo's lifeless body in his arms.

Lisy felt deep sadness and anger, and joined in the deep grief of a mother embracing her son, dead for resisting having the water of life taken from them. The pain was too deep. Lisy noticed in the tears, the disbelieving stare, the trembling arms, the cry choked with grief, the strength waning in that mother, that father, that brother and sisters, and the fists of rage as the army and police retreated to their barracks and President Banzer reported on television that the "forces of order" were doing their duty and the minister of information accused the demonstrators of being drug traffickers.

Victor Hugo was a young man full of life, of love for his parents, of affection for traditions, of hope in life, of falling in love with nature, with people... That life torn away, for claiming that rainwater did not belong to anyone, had to change the course of a sick Humanity. Lisy could not stop thinking about it. Otherwise, how else to make sense of such a humankind?

Lisy sent the photo to Joao. Two weeks later she received a letter:

Dear Lisy,

I send you my deepest condolences and those of the people of Brazil for the death of comrade Victor Hugo. I know that he will be a martyr of the New Era that is already beginning throughout the continent.

After several months of your absence I have come to understand what is best for both of us. I will always remember our time in Findhorn, in the Canary Islands, crossing the Atlantic, and our fight together for the right to the Earth, as one of the most beautiful parts of my life. We have different sensitivities, cultural or ideological, but deep down we both want a new and fair Humanity. I wish you the best with Kutumi and you will always be welcome home. I am sure that the future will unite all our arms and liberate the oppressed people from the capitalist yoke.

A hug with all my love,

Joao

PS: I am sending you as an attachment the research I have been able to do on the facts you tell me about Cochabamba. I ask you to delete the information and never quote my source, once you have read it.

Another page summarized Joao's investigation, knowledgeable about the connections of the armies with the CIA, the intelligence services of the dictatorships and the links with the economic powers. He explained that the man in the photograph she took appeared to be Captain Robinson Iriarte de la Fuente, a graduate of the "School of the Americas". From its headquarters at Fort Benning, in the United States, more than a thousand soldiers were "trained" every year, supposedly as "professionals in the defense of freedom and human rights". Its main mission was to "promote or serve as an instrument to prepare Latin American nations to cooperate with the United States and thus maintain a political balance by counteracting the growing influence of political organizations of Marxist ideology or leftist movements". The more than forty thousand soldiers trained up to that time fed dictatorial regimes allied with the United States. Banzer, Galtieri, Somoza and the

long list of bloodthirsty dictators of the continent had been outstanding students of that factory of hatred and terror. In that school they were trained in methods of torture, assassination and repression.

Lisy imagined Captain Robinson attending those classes, blinded by fear and hatred of communism and forged into not hesitating to shoot a young man in the head who was screaming for water.

Perhaps that school had forgotten the most basic human right, through the water provided by Mother Earth, the right to life.

LXXI. Ephemeral love. Harare. October, 1999

AIMSA SET OFF IN October 1999 on a round-the-world trip to explore partnerships on how to launch a new century that, she was convinced, would change humanity forever.

After an emotional embrace at the Bulawayo airport, Jonay bid her farewell with the relevance he knew that trip would have in their lives:

-Lihambe *kuhle* (go in peace)

-Lisale *kuhle* (stay in peace)

Her initial trip was to Harare where she visited Minister Stamps.

Stamps received her at his home where he wanted to host her and put at her disposal an official car with chauffeur. Since he met her in London, he felt the strength of that woman and sensed a kind of blind confidence in her vision. On the other hand, Aimsa's alliance with the brave Ukuzwana clan who dismantled the prostitution and organ trafficking mafia in South Africa increased his admiration for her and in general for that group that was already becoming known throughout Zimbabwe as "Sibithanda".

Aimsa, however, preferred to look for a modest place and move around, like most Zimbabweans, in the crowded and ramshackle cab vans. On the one hand, she disliked the world of power privileges, and she did not approve of the oppressive policies of the Zimbabwean government despite the fair cause of reforming the still pending imbalance in favor of the racist white stronghold of the Rhodesian apartheid era. She thought of the historical connection between Rhodes and Southern African racism, and its legacy in the economic power through De Beers, which subtly and indirectly, continued to dominate the lives of Africans by monopolies of financial power linked to terror plots. Her map of the world identified this subtle plot of power and greed and saw how it was infiltrating politics and dominating even the most appreciated leader in the world, the former freedom fighter and prisoner Nelson Mandela.

She preferred to blend in more deeply than the *couch surfing* system would allow her in Harare, practically only known to the privileged white minority. Arriving in Harare on the train from Bulawayo, she sought out a person in whom she sensed ease and fairness, which she called "easeness," to decide where she would stay

overnight for the next three days of that first lap of her round-the-world journey to guide the future of her family.

Shee approached a man in his fifties, white cropped hair, horn-rimmed glasses repaired with zeal on one sideburn, clean-shaven, a look between wise and tired, a grey suit worn by time but dressed with slight pride and not so slight dignity. He was waiting for a transport van, called in Harare "Tshovas".

-Kanjani.

Aimsa initiated the conversation in Shona, as she knew that speaking directly in Ndebele caused tension given the rivalry between the Shona of Harare and Mashonaland, generally closer to Mugabe's ZANU-PF, and the Ndebele of Matabeleland, demanding change and close to Tsangirai's MDC, harassed by the regime.

-Kanjani.

-*Muri Rayiti?* (how are you?)

If she were in a village in any part of Zimbabwe, she would have to spend about five minutes asking about family, fields, rain and health. But she had little time before she and her backpack climbed into the cab van.

-Can you recommend a simple hostel where I can spend three days, without paying a lot but being safe and well connected to the city?

Aimsa had a system for learning to express herself in a language after only six hours of, as she put it, "intuitive absorption". She observed how people from different countries and cultures usually stored in their concept-linked memory about a hundred thousand words and combined them into about a million different phrases. When she wanted to immerse herself in a language, she would retreat for about six hours to a place where no words, no human voice, could be heard. She would spend the first two hours with a dictionary or more selected word guides, choosing about a thousand words. She did that with her photographic memory and simultaneously making a selection of nouns, adjectives and verbs, about three hundred of each type, and covering the most common circumstances of an everyday life. Within an hour she stored that information in her memory, and used intuitive forms of association between words, sounds, meanings and different languages, to retain what she had learned. She then made etymological

associations between different languages and thus understood subconscious meanings of words and concepts that even the native speakers of those languages did not know. The second two hours she reviewed verb forms, articles and adverbs, and combined words with those "joints" of the language. She created random and multiple combinations, letting her imagination run wild. She did that at a rate of one sentence every three seconds, linked one to the other, spinning in her fast mind some two thousand phrases related to a spectrum of situations that might await her. The last two hours were spent learning about the customs, traditions, taboos and sensitivities of the language and culture she would be dealing with. She considered it essential to speak in the native languages of the people. Certain degrees of communication were not possible or easy in languages other than those modeled from infancy, and especially while the brain was doubling its cells and connections in the first year of life. She had not been exposed to different languages and cultures for some time and felt a hunger to immerse herself regularly in new cultural challenges, according to her, the most natural way to make her thinking more flexible and fluid, ductile, agile. She saw it as represented in her complex web of colorful dynamics in the world. Each language and culture she integrated produced almost graphic effects of fluidity and new logical relationships between the structures of that image that Aimsa visualized in an abstract way.

Thus she arrived at the "El Rino" guesthouse, in a neighborhood near the center of Harare, full of jacarandas gravid with millions of violet flowers that filled the southern spring with color and life. The guesthouse was an old middle-class building, with a porch of elegantly carved white wood, gently aged by the passage of time. At the entrance was an obese, smiling woman whom she greeted in Shona with more pause than she hailed the man at the Tshovas' stop. The woman identified herself as the one in charge of the rooms and gave her room number three out of a total of six, all facing the courtyard with the were communal latrines and kitchens, and three leafy mango trees. A few minutes later, Aimsa noticed various signs that made her suspect an unexpected situation: two old trucks were parked outside, several empty chairs were placed in front of the rooms, a woman came out of a room with curlers in her frizzy hair and brightly painted lips, there

were several empty beer bottles in front of the doors and the woman in charge of the place was looking at her in a mischievous and inquisitive way. A woman came out of a room in her underwear, barely concealed by a silk-like robe, and sat on a chair, crossing her legs and staring into infinity. Aimsa had set up shop in a brothel!

Instead of questioning her intuition and looking for another place to get away for those three days, she marveled that her sensitivity to the AIDS epidemic had led her to a source of infection where the lives of people she would not otherwise normally know were fleetingly intertwined.

She also reflected on the circles in which people relate and build their worldview, their ideas, and their mechanisms to feel safe and to draw a fragile logic to existential reality, so incompatible with reason or at least the limits of human reason. Those circles usually included some three to five hundred people, hence the concept of "human size" of the spiritual eco-villages. It was impossible for those people to represent the broad spectrum of humanity. Nor could that group of human beings who were diluted in their existence in ways much deeper than physical or sensory, represent the immense universe of personalities and ways in which the prodigious human mind perceived its reality and interacted with it.

Aimsa was truly fascinated by every human being she met, and saw in people their unique and unrepeatably deep of magical connection with the universe. She also saw that people wore several layers of protection for their most authentic selves: their name, nationality, profession, family and self-image constituted a first layer, largely artificial, imposed and arbitrary, which gave them a false but convenient identity to relate to society. That layer was in turn covered with forms and ways acceptable in their environment, from the use of sounds and words, the ways of dressing, the gestures on the face and hands, the ways of eating, drinking, walking, looking. That layer was related to an even more transcendent one: how those imposed identities conditioned them in their most essential need, that of loving and being loved: that flow of light and energy that was related to the multiple meanings that cultures and societies gave to love, was modulated by the previous layers in a way that controlled, as a rigorous system of

traffic lights in a city, whom to love, how to love, how much to love, where to love, when to love and even if to love.

Aimsa saw those layers on people. And she saw them in colors, dark reds and blues the heavier and more adherent the layers were, faint whites and yellows the lighter, looser and more fluid. She saw the number and thickness of the layers, and she observed how people with coatings similar in thickness, in number, in color and in stiffness were attracted to each other, joined and reinforced their colors. Wearing two similar colors they walked around, increased their stiffness and their weight, but if the light, nimble, smooth layers were mixed with others, they softened them, liberated them. There were few people with almost white and windy capes that Aimsa could identify and even intuit before seeing them.

She did an hour of yoga and meditation, visualizing her round-the-world trip in eight weeks through which she intended to see more clearly the challenge of stirring, of "soulish" a new humanity, that call she felt since she learned as a very young girl to survive by foraging for food in the dumpsters of Bombay and the streets of Calcutta. Harare, Cape Town, Madrid, Barcelona, Bombay, Seattle, New York and back home. She planned to include one last leg but had to plan it in detail. In those places she would see ministers, activists, academics, businessmen, and all of them in a beautiful sea of cultures, languages and people with their colorful coves and their magical and unique flights through life. She was already missing Jonay and Nour, and also the rest of her family from Ukuzwana, those wonderful "Sibithanda" who, she was sure, were already spreading an epidemic of love and harmony in Humanity, sick and infecting its mother nature. She thought of that concept of illness, not as an excess of something, or even the presence of something. But as lack of something, really, lack of love. And oddly, that lack of love, as the root cause of the want of vital, psychic, physical harmony. It led to "an excess of love surrogates", chimeras that tried in vain to supplant it, like power, money, possessions, titles, glories, prestige, eloquence, beliefs, noise. That is why she often wondered and asked herself in the face of the lack of real happiness, "what do you have-in-excess to be happy?"

That was the way she was thinking when someone knocked on her door. She opened it and saw a woman lightly dressed and with heavy make-up:

-*Kanjani*, sister.

-*Kanjani*

-Do you have tobacco?

-No, I don't smoke, sorry.

A slight smile between them encouraged them to keep talking.

-Where are you from? I've never seen you around.

-I was born in India. I live in Matabeleland, my name is Aimsa, you?

-I come from the north of Matabeleland, from Hwange, my name is Sibongile, but they call me Nancy.

-Pleased to meet you, Nancy.

After a pause with a questioning look, Nancy asked:

-Are you in this business? Are you new? I can help you.

-I imagine you mean the work of satisfying intimate relationships. Fleeting love for money, what they call prostitution.

Aimsa chose those words, now in Ndebele, with great care and respect. She realized once again the power of words, the connotations they had and how they could become, without hardly perceiving them so, darts to defend ourselves with, or hands outstretched to unite us. She said therefore, with all its sense and respect, "work". She had known little of that world, but she respected it even more than many other "reputable" worlds and trades. Even without knowing it well, she felt that tough circumstances, sometimes heroic, were what led those people to those activities. On the other hand, she felt a deference, almost wonder, for the ability to offer the body, inevitably linked to the soul, to strangers. Yes, for money, but not remotely comparable to the value of that, the most profound of offerings. It was curious that those who gave the most love, even though it was often so reviled by society and compulsively concentrated in the physical act, were more marginalized and despised by society. It was a constant in all cultures and all times. She reflected that fact with a red arrow on her abstract map, the arrow of conflict, with the concept of property. Property from

the most artificial to the most artisan, to what nature gives and even claims to possess the spiritual nature of the human being. Abstract property, based on conventions of papers and scribbles that claimed to give "property" of goods, of lands and even of people through marriages and so many other types of contracts, of ties. She thought that if the union was voluntary and in harmony, it did not need any paper. And if it was not, the paper, the convention of property only served as a chain that stifled freedom. It was the most repeated reflection in her vision of the "map of the world", how absurd and harmful the human concept of property. But how instinctive and defensive at the same time, from the vulnerable human weakness in the face of the instinct to survive and the existential anguish of not understanding where from, where to?

Those thoughts kept her engrossed for two minutes, when suddenly she heard Nancy's booming voice:

-You're not taking drugs, are you?

-No, Nancy. I was just thinking. It's nice to meet you.

-What do you do for a living?

-I am looking for ways to improve this world.

She said it with the innocence with which she had thought it since her early childhood. And she did not regret it. She thought of repeating it every time they wanted to pigeonhole her with that question, to label her.

Nancy let out a chuckle.

-How do you do that? And who pays you?

-It's done with a lot of love. And you don't always get paid. In fact money is one of the causes of our darkness.

-Tell me, how can I pay for my children's food and schools without money? When you find a world without money, let me know!

They laughed together. Nancy thought Aimsa was joking. Then they talked for an hour about Nancy's life.

She was born into a family with a Malawian father and a mother from a village near Hwangue called Lupane. Her father worked in the Hwangue coal mines. In 1972, when Sibongile was only three years old, a huge explosion in shaft number two of the mine killed her father and four hundred other miners. Her mother was left with no income and

ashamed to return to Lupane where her family had disowned her for marrying a non-Ndebele man. She tried several jobs in Hwange but to no avail. The mine took her house, Nancy's pneumonia took all her savings to pay for admission to St. Mary's Catholic Hospital, and a miner known to her late husband offered her a room in his house. Soon the man began to abuse her sexually, and she, paralyzed by the fear of biting her master's hand, began to acquiesce. That sexual compliance was linked to obedience to work in the house and to all facets of life.

Aimsa heard that story with fascination and deep empathy. She felt she was learning more than in a Berkeley master class.

Nancy continued to relate that as time went by, her mother, without the will to live, without the air of freedom or the light of dignity, began to drink and to allow herself to be invited and abused by other men. She went with Nancy to a rented room where she began to welcome clients in order to have money to buy food, school fees, uniforms and books for Sibongile, and also for her drinking addiction. Soon that order of priorities began to change.

Nancy left school at the age of eleven and helped her mother in the house to clean. At the age of thirteen, Nancy was molested by a client of her mother's, with her mother's consent. After that event, her mother lost her mind. She would spend the day crying or staring at the ceiling in her room. Nancy had to learn to steal to pay the rent for the room and bring back some food for the two of them. She mostly stole from tourists who stopped in Hwange on their way to the National Park and Victoria Falls.

One day, when she returned home with food, she couldn't find her mother. She looked for her all over town. One person told her he thought he saw her take a bus to Bulawayo. She paid a fare and left for Bulawayo with a plastic bag containing two books she still had from school, a photo of her parents before the accident, and some clothes and soap. There she kept looking for her mother. She never found her. She also started drinking.

She was sixteen years old when she began to prostitute herself, to eat or to forget. But she did not know any other alternative way of life or the way to find it. She told Aimsa that she had been in Harare for two years, although she spent time in Kariba and Mutare. Nancy had about two hundred regular clients and many more whom she saw only

once. She served about six clients a day, for the equivalent of a dollar per client. Although Nancy had heard on the radio about the risk of AIDS, most of her clients demanded that she not use a condom. She had a child, by an unknown father. She decided not to abort when she found out she was pregnant because she had a dream in which her father and mother were looking with joy at a smiling baby. She continued to have sex throughout her pregnancy. She gave birth at a clinic in Mutare and moved to Mbare, a southern suburb of Harare. There she rented a room and took care of her toddler, also receiving clients in the same room. A wife of one of her clients came into her room one night and beat her almost to death. She left Mbare and moved to Mashvingo, where she continued doing the only thing she knew how to do in life. Her son, whom she named after her favorite singer, Alpha Blondie, was already studying at the age of thirteen at Empandeni Catholic Mission School, south of Plumtree. She would give her life for her son's studies and for another future than the one she had. And meanwhile, she treated with tenderness all the lonely hearts that sought the warmth of her embrace.

Aimsa was moved by the story. She saw in that story more heroism than in many other "respectable" and even "prestigious" life stories. She saw courage, she saw tenderness. She also saw hope, she saw harmony. The capes of Sibonguile, of Nancy. They were pale in color and blew in the wind, like her mother's veil on the train between Bombay and Calcutta.

The next morning, Aimsa visited Paryenatwa Hospital, where Ndlovu had put her in touch with a doctor in charge of the internal medicine department, where AIDS patients were treated. She witnessed how they were treating more than a hundred new patients a day coming from other clinics or district hospitals, with AIDS-related illnesses. Almost all of them ended up being treated for tuberculosis, cold sores, pharyngeal candidiasis, diarrhea with no clear cause, pruritic exanthema also of unknown cause and a few other conditions that if they did not have when they consulted, they would develop them over time. But mostly because it was the only thing they could do.

Ndlovu's friend, Dr. Chengeta, explained to her his great frustration of caring for hundreds of sick people, thousands every month, without being able to prevent their slow agony. He saw in him

and his team dignity, commitment and a deep desire to help all those people and families who wandered from clinic to clinic in the vain hope of alleviating the galloping weakness that was snuffing out their lives. They knew of the NoLwasi herbs and used them too, and had heard about the Sibithanda network and Jonay's attempts to reduce mother-to-child transmission.

Aimsa explained the situation in Ukuzwana, the attempts to improve the lives of the patients, the hope they had for a while in the effect of the healing water of NoLwasi, the effects of about ten traditional herbal treatments for the many symptoms during the disease and the story of the plastic sheet and human warmth as the first priority in AIDS. She then told them of the previous year's discussions in Vancouver and the efforts from South Africa to get medication that could actually reach the people who needed it. She explained that she would be speaking that very afternoon with Minister Stamps, and over the next few days with organizations in South Africa, in Europe, generic drug labs in India and politicians in Seattle and New York, wanting to accelerate steps for treatment in Zimbabwe. The conference was attended by about 100 doctors and nurses from the hospital, and many of them were moved by the strength and sensitivity with which Aimsa spoke. So was she when she knew of their stories.

That night, a rickety cab took her from the El Rino guesthouse to the Minister's residence in one of Harare's wealthy neighborhoods. The house was shielded by armed guards. Stamps, with his long white hair, greeted her warmly and introduced her to his wife and children, several of them adopted from other continents. She thought about the contradiction of international adoptions, when almost all the countries that "imported" orphans, still had orphans in orphanages and city streets. In Zimbabwe at that time there were already half a million AIDS orphans, many of them without a family to take them in, they knew it well from Sibithanda, where a new generation was growing up: the generation of hope.

Stamps told her of his frustration at how rampant inflation in the country was destroying the health care system he had encouraged to develop after independence, a model public system throughout Africa. They could barely pay the bills for imported drugs. Doctors' salaries had dropped in real value due to inflation and they were migrating. He

spoke angrily of how the English national system, in need of doctors because of a lack of vocations or because they were migrating for even higher salaries to Australia or New Zealand, would come to Harare and actively seek out doctors, interview them and offer them salaries ten times higher than what Zimbabwe could offer them. When the British cooperation agency came to offer them assistance, he felt a rage that had to contain because in the face of need and the death of the people, they were forced to accept any help, even if it was poisoned by the alliance with the monopoly of patents and shielding of billionaire profits of the pharmaceutical industry.

Aimsa updated him on the Anwele association, the Sibithanda network, Nadine's books, the situation of the orphans, the success of the "take your time" gadget and the work in Ukuzwana. She then asked him about the status of Juan's registration. She explained her plans to link up with the international debate on new societal alternatives, the concept of the SEVN, the more concrete and urgent challenges of the World Trade Organization's plans and the laws in South Africa and their tensions with industry.

Stamps told her that he understood the urgency to start preventing infection in children and making combination treatments affordable, but that the government was going through difficult times financially because of unfair external aggressions, especially from the UK and the US. Among other things, it had had to privatize the national drug production company and was dependent on foreign exchange payments for imports.

Aimsa was very frank and told him that she could not condone the use of force and violence on Rhodesian farms, by the army or by government-paid veterans, and the harassment of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change. Nor could she understand the expense and cost of lives of Mugabe's support for Kabila in Zaire.

Stamps, inured to such criticism, in a much fiercer form, by the international press, especially British, replied that it was true that the anger pent up for twenty years had exploded and politics was full of tensions and intrigues that he detested. He was tired and did not think he would last long in the job. But first he would do everything he could to get AIDS treatment to the people. He told her to keep him informed of every step.

They discussed a possible project in Matabeleland though he told her it would be difficult to justify without doing it nationwide or combining regions of rival Mashonaland. Aimsa thought that AIDS was not about "projects" but, like all health, about equal "public services" for all. And what Zimbabwe's faltering health system needed was vital AIDS drugs, hijacked by greed and fueling profits in exchange for loss of human life.

Blood money.

Aimsa told him that she would report back on a plan to introduce AIDS medication nationwide, rather than in isolated projects, and that she would see him again before Christmas. Stamps proposed to appoint her as an "AIDS ambassador" for the Zimbabwean government. Aimsa declined the offer:

-Minister: I do not believe in property or hierarchies. We are all equal. If anyone deserves distinction it is the thousands of sick people who are now dying in Zimbabwe, without help or hope. The world of AIDS is full of glory-seeking egos, profit-seeking interests, and, sadly, selfishness that limits any help for AIDS, restricted to that disease. Privilege has always bred selfishness, and I fear that the great attention to AIDS, which is necessary, will make us forget that not only this but all diseases deserve equal attention through the universal right to health.

-I wanted to ask you one more thing before I leave, Minister: I have been talking to prostitutes in Harare. They are forced not to use condoms. I could think of a law that would make it compulsory to use condoms when the infection status is unknown or positive. AIDS is chained to stigma, silence and irresponsible behavior that ignores the significance of gambling with life and death.

-I assure you I will think about it. I will talk to the courts. There is a lot of pressure from the infected groups to keep the tests confidential so we can never reveal criminal behavior. I'll look into it in detail and legal advice and we'll talk about it upon your return.

Stamps thanked her efforts and promised to do all he could with her help to make the access to treatment happen, through public service and not by "infecting" the country with isolated projects.

Aimsa spent the last day at the El Rino guesthouse talking to Nancy and other fellow workers, encouraging them to always use condoms. She also told them that if they wanted to change trades, with all due respect to theirs, there would be jobs in the communities of Sibithanda, taking care of the new generation of hope.

LXXII. Home or the world? Cape Town, October, 1999

AIMSA TOOK THE flight from Harare to Johannesburg. Nadine was waiting for her there. Having heard of Aimsa's arrival through Helen, she sensed that behind her journey was a story the world needed to know. Moreover, she felt a strange connection with Aimsa, because of their common roots in India, because of their struggle against the plots of greed and power. She updated her on Haka's adventures and his inquiries into the plots and relationships of De Beers, Angloamerican, Aspen and other companies that dominated the country's economy, protected their monopolies and profits, and directly or indirectly fueled plots of arms, drugs, war and destruction. She was sending a script idea to a writer named Charles in the United States. Movies were what reached people the most.

They went to meet Eric, a persevering Belgian doctor who, through a program of Médecins Sans Frontières Belgium, was trying to establish, in one of the poorest suburbs surrounding Cape Town, a clinic where AIDS patients, half of all adult patients in the country, would receive the treatment they needed with dignity.

Eric worked side by side with the Treatment Access Campaign, an association created the previous year and led by Zachie, the lawyer they met in Vancouver, infected with the virus, who had refused to take any treatment until it became available to everyone in South Africa. Zachie accompanied Eric.

The four of them went for lunch at a restaurant on the famous Long Street called Mama Africa. Eric told her of plans to import generic zidovudine from Brazil and start preventing infections in children in Khaleytsha, over red tape, permits and laws, which if allowed, would prove to be against life.

Zachie explained how Minister Dhlamini-Zuma was opposed to the introduction of zidovudine and how alternative ideas about the origin and transmission of AIDS seemed to prevail in the ANC environment that questioned the relevance of the drugs.

Nadine observed how that attitude did not help to mitigate the tragedy of the country and of millions of sick people, but that it was prompted on quite plausible evidence of how vaccine experiments in Africa or bioterrorism in various armies of the world had originated the

AIDS virus. She mentioned the book that had just been published by an English journalist named Hoopes, entitled *The River*. Aimsa mentioned having read an article by the same author the previous year in *Nature*.

Zachie, who looked healthy, went on to say that what was really urgent was that every day more than a thousand people were dying of AIDS in South Africa, and that while patients in rich countries were beginning to have a quality and quantity of life similar to chronic diseases in Africa they were all doomed to die.

They then took the cable car up Table Mountain. Aimsa painfully felt the contrast of the tourist center of Cape Town and the "*water front*" with its lush greenery, restaurants, luxury hotels and the mansions on the high streets of the city, with the squalor of the surrounding suburbs. From there they could see Robben Island, from where Mandela was released ten years ago. But the contrasts of a society divided by race and class remained. That afternoon, Eric received a call on his cell phone from Brussels: Doctors Without Borders (MSF – Medecins Sans Frontieres) had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

He was congratulated, although Aimsa was very skeptical of that award, especially after it was bestowed twice to presidents of Israel with a very violent record and no respect for United Nations resolutions, and to U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, responsible for Operation Condor, allied with dictatorships in Latin America and responsible for tens of thousands of murders and disappearances.

On the other hand, the glory of MSF, with their famous logo and their media campaigns, left in the shadows tens of thousands of people like Patxi, who had spent their lives in remote places and with the most needy populations, without any logo, noise or glory, quiet and committed work day by day. Aimsa knew many aid workers from the United States and Europe who went on cooperation projects to a country for a few months, not learning the language, not integrating into the culture, not sharing the way of life of the communities where they lived. They lived, somehow, in little bubbles of expatriates isolated from poverty, pretending a saving effect, a crusader medal of the new society and more grants for more projects to really change nothing.

But on the other hand, she felt respect for the many aid workers who left their securities and humbly sought to give as much as to

receive, to teach as much as to learn, to respect and share local ways of life, to speak their languages, sing their songs and share their crops and stews. Together they proposed new, fairer ways of relating to one another. It was not charity, not even solidarity, it was about Justice! She didn't want to dampen Eric's joy or the opportunity for the world to think more about the suffering of many peoples and the need for justice, but she did feel saying:

-MSF now has an important responsibility. Hundreds of thousands of people have devoted their lives to international cooperation, many anonymously, quietly, and sharing the harshest conditions, without any organization or logo to protect them or give them a "badge of glory". MSF decided to break into humanitarian aid with its demand for the right of humanitarian interference and litigation when needed. We hope that MSF will be able to share this award without arrogance with so and recognize so many efforts of so many years in so many places, with less or no visibility, and that it will use it so that the testimony of many and the legal actions lead to a fairer world.

Eric nodded thoughtfully. He then said he would propose that the prize be used to fight for access to medicines.

Eric and Zachie then explained to them the situation of access to medicines in South Africa since they had discussed it the previous year in Vancouver: the Mandela government was standing firm on the proposed law to authorize generic manufacturing or imports from other countries, as they knew, in the interest of affordability of those vital medicines for the lives of millions of South Africans and at prices up to ten times lower than the current monopolies. Forty multinational companies had sued the South African government. The governments of the rich countries were coercing South Africa to repeal the law and avoid the lawsuit. They especially accused the government of having approved the generic manufacture of a breast cancer medication. The most perverse part of the case was that such medication, called *Taxol*, had been developed by the U.S. National Institutes of Health, i.e. with taxpayers' money. This was often the case with new discoveries, typically engineered by brilliant researchers and even students spending long hours in laboratories, and at universities funded by taxpayers. All logical: public money, for a public good. Until someone decided to give these inventions away to companies, in this case *Brystol*

Myers, capable of investing hundreds of millions in clinical trials, but, above all, eager to earn billions for their monopolies on these inventions. In this case, the European Union had also sent warning letters to South Africa. The transatlantic lobbies that drove the creation of the World Trade Organization and its protection of the powerful were still at work.

With the information they had, they wrote a letter to the American vice-president, Al Gore, to stop forcing the South African government through the US alliance with the big multinationals, all of them with billionaire profits and confronting any attempt to put life before their monopolies, a source of immense profit. They would send the draft letter to civil organizations fighting for access to medicines.

They agreed to coordinate efforts in the negotiations with CIPLA in India, in the protest in Seattle and in lobbying the World Trade Organization not to put greed for profits before the right to health and life.

She then cooked rice and dined with Nadine in an apartment where an Australian journalist, Beth, was hosting them on the couch-surfing network. Aimsa felt a little uneasy. And Nadine noticed it.

-How are you feeling, Aimsa? You have committed yourself to many trips and in each one you have so much to read, to discuss, to plan. I marvel at your strength.

- Sometimes my strength fails me.

-Yes? I am surprised. You always seem to have clear ideas and the courage ready to argue them, defend them and fight for them. I will confess that I have thought of writing about your life, if you allow me to do so.

-I'd rather you didn't, Nadine. I am a person like everyone else. All are equal in their unique beauty and magic. We must flee from the trap of vanity in believing ourselves to be above others.

-Well. I can't totally agree. But tell me, what's wrong with you?

-It's barely been a week and I already miss Jonay so much. You can't imagine how much. Seeing all this activism of letters, logos, demonstrations, awards. It reminds me of the quiet, humble, anonymous work of people like Patxi and Jonay. I feel so well in that peace, I get so much energy from that sweet and simple harmony. I fear,

Nadine, that going to the center of the maelstrom of these political struggles will embitter my soul, and eat away the beautiful space of harmony with Jonay. I also fear that we will tear Nour away from her brothers Adam and Unai. They run through the mission, through the fields, they know the animals, the trees, the stars, the songs, they sing at the life meeting on Sundays, they greet everyone and everyone knows them, they know where the water comes from, the food, how to help the sick, how to celebrate in a big family. Do I have the right to tear them all away from such a beautiful life?

-You must decide. What is your agreement with Jonay?

-That I will ponder on it these two months and I make him a proposal. He wants us to leave and so I may lead the SEVN movement and jump into the world of political dialogue towards a new humanity. It was always my dream, but now I have doubts.

-I understand you well, Aimsa. I have devoted myself with passion to writing, researching, fighting for causes that I consider just, and I gradually remained lonely. I am now fifty years old and most of my nights and moments when I am tired or fearful of the future, I don't feel a helping hand, a shoulder to lean on. But on the other hand, we cannot go against our nature. And if I may say so, you have two enormous forces with you.

-Which ones?

-The strength of your intelligence and courage that the world needs, and the unconditional support of Jonay. I know for sure. Haka, with whom I am in close contact, tells me often, with wonder.

-You are right. That's precisely why I don't want to hurt him.

-You can try it for a while, and always be very sincere. Your home will always be Ukuzwana, and your family Sibithanda, which is invading the world and you can lead that invasion.

"Leading the invasion". She liked that. But he kept reflecting on vanities, leadership, power. What a subtle difference between encouraging, leading and commanding. What slippery spaces between them.

-In any case, I want to propose a plan. Let me tell you, I need your complicity.

The next day Nadine was taking the train back to Johannesburg. Aimsa said goodbye to her and delayed her flight to Madrid. She needed to meditate and she knew who was the ally that was always waiting for her to give her strength: nature. She got a guide and went back up *Table Mountain* but this time walking and climbing up the Plattekilp Gorge. When she got to the top, she was drenched in sweat and with a few scratches. Her body was still athletic and agile. Yoga, healthy living and her constant activity and that mix of readiness, engagement and fascination with life, kept her full of strength but she felt she needed to bond more with nature and its forces. She would tell Jonay. She wrote it down in a small notebook in which she wrote down places, sometimes she drew them, activities, people. And about special places she would like to return to with Jonay. It would be a Christmas present.

As she climbed to the top she toured the plateau and stopped at each viewpoint to look from the west to Rodhen Island, to the south and the immense ocean that was lost where human beings no longer inhabited, and to the west where the cape of good hope defined the passage of navigators to the east. To that other world where she had come from and where she was about to return after thirty years of absence.

And looking to the horizon and wanting to see her destiny, she thought she saw a silhouette on the horizon of the sea. She thought of the legend of the ghost ship of the *Flying Dutchman* with precious treasures inside, which was said to have never reached port and was condemned to sail forever.

She continued her search of the future by sending the sweetest hug to Jonay with the air.

LXXIII. With the queen of swing. Barcelona, Spain, November, 1999

SHE THEN TOOK A train to Johannesburg, and a direct flight to Madrid, where she met Juan again in a four-hour transit and gave him new forms for the medical registration in Harare, telling him that with the help of the minister they hoped to have his registration ready by Christmas. Juan confirmed his wish, his understanding of the slowness of the paperwork and his and his family's eagerness to go to Ukuzwana. He insisted on trying to live together for a few weeks, to which Aimsa said that Jonay would certainly do it but that she did not know if she could. She also told him that she could put him in contact with Anna so that they could meet in Barcelona, if the project of access to treatment in the district of Ukuzwana went ahead.

-Juan, it makes us very happy that you can start this project, and see how life returns to so many desperate people, to a people that has been suffering so much for twenty years.

-Without your commitment, nothing would be possible.

Juan drove her to Chamartín station. Aimsa was surprised by the density of billboards all the way to the city and the wide promenades of El Prado and La Castellana. She slept in a couch surfing bunk bed overnight and arrived at Sants station in Barcelona where Anna was waiting for her.

Anna was a cheerful Catalan, with a look between mischievous, tender and cuddly. Her brightness already showed her magical world, a mixture of continents and cultures, dances and music, dreams and challenges, courage and tenderness. She had already promoted international student movements to encourage exchanges and knowledge between cultures and realities. Through them she had already fallen in love with a country where she kept a part of her heart: Ghana. She went on to study tropical medicine and returned to Ghana to develop a beautiful program of Primary Health Care to almost one hundred villages in a remote district where, when she arrived, not even five percent of the children were fully vaccinated. She lived there in a mission, among religious, workers, volunteers and local people with whom she fell in love.

Little Luchi, an orphaned chimpanzee whom she loved like a daughter lived with her. She suffered deeply when Luchi's misdeeds in the hospital forced her to be taken to a reserve, with a handsome boy chimpanzee. Anna felt even more heartbroken when she learned that Luchi had actually ended up in a zoo. She knew from another doctor who had a thorough knowledge of animal psychology that the hostility of caged animals was difficult to rehabilitate. Anna never quite forgave herself for not releasing her beloved Luchi in the forest. She often thought of the same trap of bars and chains into which the men and women of modern society fell, and of the subtle and refined belligerence that citizens showed, for example through fierce competitiveness, unbridled production and alienated consumption.

But Anna above all worked in Ghana with deep passion, walking the paths between those hundred remote villages, sharing meetings with communities, crossing forests and rivers, sharing with the empathy that only flows from hearts without prejudice and without fear. She linked traditional medicine with official health programs, encouraged the construction of health centers, a nutritional and child health care center, trained hundreds of health workers and got some of them to continue their studies with scholarships to be trained as nurses and return to that remote district to continue to devote themselves to the health of their people.

Through her efforts, vaccination coverage increased, the proportion of malnourished children decreased, and the effects of local endemic diseases such as river blindness and biliarzia were mitigated. She thus won the hearts of many local people and was named "*queen-mother*", an honor no one with that skin tone had ever had before. With one of the most beautiful primary care projects in all of Africa underway, named "Nsoroma", stars in the local sefwui language, Anna went on to work in Brazil for another long period and thereafter traveled to half the countries of the world promoting health and collaborating with civil associations, universities and local groups. Her smile never left her, her strength to fight for a better world never surrendered. A year before she had joined Médecins Sans Frontières -MSF- to link the organization's vision and actions to the AIDS challenge. She lived in a small apartment in El Carmelo, rode the streets of Barcelona on her scooter, enthusiastically attended classes and practices of swing dancing and dreamed of bringing

together soulful friends in a community in the countryside linked to the dream of a better world.

From the moment they met, Aimsa and Anna felt a very special connection. Aimsa saw in Anna a person with no filters between her eyes and her soul, and almost none between her words and her feelings. Aimsa, in her mind of perception, analysis, synthesis and ideas, intuitively saw in people their filters to be themselves, their armors, she associated them with colors, she guessed them in their tangles of brown lies or gray interests, so frequent in positions of power, but above all in their yellow prejudices, red fears or blue pains. Between those filters flowed the green of pure feeling, which Aimsa knew how to intuit in the depth of the glances, in the paused words, in the moments of deep, moving empathy.

Anna saw in Aimsa a woman of immense courage, serenity, self-confidence, and at the same time latent tenderness. She could not identify any shadow of vulnerability, something that gave her a mixture of wonder and pity. Without understanding why, she thought that vulnerability was necessary for love. Although Aimsa's tenderness and gentleness denoted an open heart, loved and loving. But what surprised her most was her deep insight. Her perception was quick and sharp, her analysis seemed to have three or four more dimensions of complexity than usual, and her simple and powerful conclusions were dazzling, challenging, soundly ethical and logical.

They talked for two days in the MSF offices and in Anna's small apartment in El Carmelo, to which they returned together on the scooter crossing that beautiful and proud city, queen of the Mediterranean since her coronation during the recent Olympics, when Aimsa avoided being used in political AIDS shows.

Aimsa gave a lecture in the attic room of MSF headquarters on the AIDS situation in Zimbabwe and the complex map of power and interests blocking access to the most basic rights, including the right to health, including access to medicines. She encouraged MSF to use the money and prestige of the newly awarded Nobel Prize to fight for universal access to vital medicines, above profit interests, but to take it in its broadest dimension of the right to health. A group of about ten people, including the medical director, a woman named Gloria, with a straight and principled tenderness, encouraged her to continue with a

more relaxed chat in the bar “Glaciar”, the usual meeting place for MSF cooperation talks and plots in the nearby lively Plaza Real. In that small group Aimsa revealed with some concern that she was beginning to sense a certain selfish corporatism of AIDS rights activist groups.

On the last day she sat down with Anna to map out an AIDS treatment access project in Zimbabwe. Until then, MSF only treated AIDS as a "cross-cutting issue" in broader, short-term humanitarian projects, usually lasting less than six months. This would be the first MSF project specifically aimed at relieving the suffering of AIDS, considering it a humanitarian emergency according to the data and arguments that Aimsa stated. They agreed that Juan would come to see her in Barcelona to prepare Anna's exploratory mission, while advancing with the data analysis and a preliminary proposal for Minister Stamps.

-Anna, it's been a great three days. We have to stay very close. I will try to connect at least every three days on email, remember aimsaharris@hotmail.com. I will keep you posted on what I can discuss in Bombay.

-Yes, tell me what they are offering. We have received an idea from Eric to use the Nobel prize money for a drug access campaign.

-Yes, he told me in Cape Town.

-We will set up delegations in Brazil and India, where the medicines come from at decent prices, we will fight before the trade organization and we will put pressure on the pharmaceutical companies and on the rich and powerful countries that strangle life for their selfish profits.

-Sounds good. Join testimony, analysis and blame. Count me in. I'll tell you what I think we can do to challenge the World Trade Organization's plans in Seattle, I'll let you know while you're in Bombay.

-Upon my return to Ukuzwana, I will try to go at least once to Bulawayo to keep in touch and try to get this project going as soon as possible. I understand Stamps well when he told me that it would be frowned upon if it only starts access to treatment in Matabeleland. Think, Anna, if you could as MSF help mobilize funds to enable the supply of generic antiretrovirals from India through the Ministry's central

pharmacy, and for the whole country. perhaps by joining different sections of MSF? I find it hard to link the principle of universality of the right to health with isolated projects for isolated diseases, for isolated places.

-You are right. But MSF cannot cover all the needs. That's why we do projects and then we wait for the government, the rich countries and the international agencies, to scale them up to the whole population.

-But Anna., if instead of sending expensive four-wheel drives, foreigners with high salaries and costs, satellite phones, computers, trips, all that, you put everything in medicines? Those who want to come to work, could simply register, like Jonay and Juan. Don't you think so?

-The truth is that it would be the best way to support the public service, but it would be a revolution for NGOs. We live from the projects, from us managing and verifying that the money translates into medicines, that the patient takes them and that they save their lives. Or we do, we claim, we think..

-So it's out of distrust?

-Not from you. But we have had many regrets with many governments.

-I don't know. You can see ways to make sure that the money, the drugs and their effects get to the people. I'm sure Stamps would allow you to be in touch with the doctors in the districts.

-I will tell you one thing, Aimsa: I agree with you. Justice is not achieved by an army of "redeemers", but by the dignity of the people, who have access to their basic needs. Since Alma Ata we know that the most essential health is in the district and at that level neither the sophistication nor the specialization that dominates rich countries' health services is necessary. I am going to propose these changes in MSF and in the Spanish NGO network. Sowing small parts of the world with thousands of projects does not protect the right to health nor does it strengthen the universal public service, equal for all. Somehow, with the best of intentions, we are increasing the inequalities between and within countries and disempowering their governments.

-Look, Anna, I've calculated that we would need about a hundred thousand annual treatments for people who might otherwise die this year. And one hundred and fifty thousand short treatments for pregnant

and infected mothers. When I have the price we could negotiate with CIPLA I'll tell you. I'm sure we can bring it down a lot if we place large orders.

-Count on me, Aimsa I understand you very well. I too believe in the public system, and in local resources, and I am wary of people who come to command, monitor and judge, to a place they do not know and where they are only there for a short time and often without speaking the language, without sharing the local housing, food or customs. I have often seen such attitudes in Ghana. I despise expatriate cocktail parties or barbecues, in their luxury bubbles in the country, and from where they feel superior, cleansed of all criticism and ready to continually criticize and distrust everything local. In truth, if we wanted a system of right to health guaranteed by the state, we would all have to put the resources in solidarity in the public system and not create any parallel, isolated and privileged systems

-In my view, Anna, the ideal system is one of solidarity work and collective ownership. I will leave you a copy of Umbela's decalogue that now inspires the movement of spiritual eco-villages that is multiplying around the world. But solidarity only lasts if it is based on empathy, knowledge and respect. Nothing that is imposed, not even solidarity itself, is good for the dignity and future of peoples.

They deeply embraced each other. A strong alliance began to grow between them. Aimsa began to feel more confident about her destiny.

That night, Anna took Aimsa to her favorite pastime: swing dancing. In a popular square in the Gracia neighborhood, about three hundred people gathered with bread, oil and tomato, music and a great desire to let themselves be carried away by the rhythm in good company.

Anna was the queen of the night. She danced with passion, alone and with men and women in the group. She never stopped smiling with her eyes, inventing new movements, amused by life, by herself, at simply and plainly feeling. She said:

-Life is beautiful and deserves our deepest smiles, our eyes gazing wonders, our body dancing, our souls living every day as the only one.

Aimsa felt very happy. She sometimes disconnected her mind through meditation, yoga or harmony with nature. But that night,

among simple and joyful people, with her new good friend and ally,
with the soft and elated rhythms of swing, she let her body fly.

LXXIV. The master's robe. Rishikesh, November, 1999

AIMSA CONTINUED HER JOURNEY TO Bombay. She had been delaying the trip to her home country for many years. So many mixed feelings: pain and longing, passion and rejection, anger and affection....

Last time she left Bombay she was only seven years old, thirty years ago, and it was to lose her mother forever.

She had dreamed hundreds of times of getting back on that train and finding her. Often imagined that she would find her as a venerable woman, gray-haired and dressed with distinction, in one of the first class compartments. In that dream her mother would tell her that she had been waiting for her and had read all her articles and reports of America and Africa and knew well of her struggle for life. In the dream she also told her that they were going to a beautiful palace where they would meditate surrounded by harp music. The last image of that dream was always of the veil of her mother's sari, coming out of a window of the train.

As she recalled that dream, she walked towards the arrivals gate of the Bombay airport. Alin was waiting for her there.

It had been more than twenty years since they had seen each other. Alin was in his forties, wore a suit and tie and had an air of authority, confidence and poise around him. However, Aimsa could see the marks of the years on the street on him. It was not only his scar on his cheek and his silver chain around his neck, the same as twenty years ago, but Aimsa noticed subtle and constant gestures of alertness to his surroundings, the wandering look, a certain restlessness in his hands and gait, slight and multiple signs of insecurity that Aimsa was able to record in the first images of their reunion. His cape was definitely dark blue.

-*Namaste* (greeting in Hindi) Aimsa! What a joy to meet again!

-*Namaste*, Alin. I thank life for being able to meet you again.

-You are very beautiful, and you look very healthy. I have read your articles, we have followed your footsteps. You are a legend in Rambagan.

-Don't exaggerate. I was just lucky. And I tried to share it with you.

Indeed, Aimsa had succeeded in building an organization from afar. They started with a home for street children. Aimsa sent a third of her earnings to a Western Union account in Anil's name. Three other young men from the white tigers worked at the home and sent her letters telling her about the situation. Although there were often small arguments, peace and hope were never disturbed.

The "house of white tigers" became known when Aimsa published an account of life on the streets. She used the images from her book of the gods, the one she rescued with her mother from the dump in Bombay. Shri, whom she wrote to the Rishikesh Ashram, wrote the foreword and sent a recommendation to the same publishing house where Tagore used to publish. The book became well known and two hundred thousand copies were sold all over the country. The proceeds went to a foundation she created: the White Tigers. Aimsa went, always in the distance, as if afraid to return, organizing the foundation of new centers for the white tigers. The book continued to be reprinted and sold in other countries as well. There were now forty-seven "white tiger" shelters all over India. The centers had agreements with schools, with musicians and with spiritual masters, to follow a path that instead of learning or education, they called "discovery". The concept was that the greatest treasure of knowledge and feeling was within us and therefore the most important objective was to discover it and bring it to life, to make it flow, to make it shine. To do so, they were inspired by certain examples of courage in knowledge, in expressing oneself with art, and in feeling our unique, eternal and unrepeatable beauty in the universe. In the course of that discovery, they were getting to know and taking exams in the education system and then in trades or professions with which they could become independent. The only condition for being welcomed in the centers was that when they left, they had to give at least ten percent of their income and their time for five years to the foster homes. When a house had more than twenty mentors, they started the constitution of the next one. Aimsa's greatest satisfaction was that most were still contributing after ten years. In all, a total of six hundred young people had left the white tiger houses and were now engaged in all kinds of professions, continuing to grow the dream that began on the streets of Rambagan.

-Aimsa, before we go to CIPLA, I want to show you something.

They hopped on Alin's motorcycle and rode through the bustling streets of Bombay. Aimsa watched in rapt attention how the city had been modernized. The former landfill where she grew up was now a shopping center. She saw a fast-paced, competitive, polluting life. Aimsa thought of the Sibithanda network, and the inspiration of eco villages.

Alin took her to the white tiger center in Bombay. She was thrilled. About thirty children and young people of all ages, and about ten adults, already mentors at the center, came out to greet her. They sang "*aavo ni padharo hamare des*". She visited the four rooms, each with three bunk beds, the kitchen, the library, bathrooms, the meditation room, the painting and music room. Photos were taken with everyone. There was a picture of Aimsa that they had cut out of a magazine and had her in a frame, as the founder of the white tigers.

She felt a great joy and thought her mother would be happy with her effort. That was the most important thing. And that was enough. Her smile from wherever she was. She was sure of it.

Two wounds remained unhealed, but they could not overshadow the emotion of so much affection, the faces of hope for the future of those children.

They then proceeded to the CIPLA offices at 289, Bellasis road. At the entrance was the portrait of Dr. Hamied.

-Aimsa, as you know, this company was founded by Dr. Hamied. He created it in 1935 after studying chemistry in Germany and donating all his patents. For twenty years he worked in a small apartment in this very building, but he went on to manufacture quality generics and export them all over the world. In India there is no patent on the final molecule, and we can manufacture under what they call compulsory license, generic copies by different chemical routes. We will see next year how long the World Trade Organization will allow us to continue manufacturing generics.

-We will fight for it, Alin. You are very much appreciated in the world. In Africa, most of the medicines come from your factories.

-That makes me very happy. We operate as a company, of course, with profits and reinvestments. Last year we made a hundred million dollars after selling almost a billion dollars' worth of drugs worldwide.

And in the case of the AIDS drugs, we have decided to sell them at cost price, without profit. We have already succeeded in synthesizing the three drugs that we know in combination, from Vancouver, can prevent disease progression and save the lives of people with AIDS. They are *zidovudine*, *stavudine* and *lamivudine*. In addition, last month we synthesized *nevirapine*, which has shown enormous efficacy in preventing infections in newborns, after only one dose during childbirth. We can now sell all three drugs in the amount needed to treat one person per year, for about a hundred dollars, compared to twelve thousand dollars at patent monopoly prices. Those companies have a different philosophy. They buy patents from researchers, they invest in clinical trials, which are very expensive, I do not understand why, and they patent drugs at prices up to a hundred times what it costs them to manufacture them, as we have shown with AIDS drugs. That is why those companies make more than a quarter of their sales in profits. The six big ones are the American Pfizer and Johnson, the English Glaxo, the Swiss Roche and Novartis and the French Sanofi. All of them sell more than forty billion and have profits of more than ten billion dollars a year, but it is not enough for them and their shareholders. They always want more. And they bribe politicians and play lobbies of all kinds to protect their patents, monopolies, rights to extreme profit. There are studies that show very well that the system of patents with the right to abuse with no margin limit during twenty years, does not create more innovation. The only beneficiaries are capitalists and speculators.

-I'm very glad to hear you talk like that. I fought hard in the 1980s for access to zidovudine, shielded by *Wellcome*, now Glaxo. And still no access in Africa. I calculated the billions of their profits and the millions of deaths allowed for profit and said it loudly in Vancouver.

-I know, Aimsa. Your words inspired me to seek this job. It makes me very happy to be here and see how we can get our medicines to Africa.

-But tell me, don't you have agreements with generic companies in South Africa?

-We are trying, but they are under pressure, or even bribed or sold, not to manufacture with compulsory licenses and to do it with voluntary licenses giving royalties to the big pharmaceutical companies.

-They hold no scruples to preserve human life, they have no limits to their greed.

-But tell me, what happened to your life?

-I went with Shri to Rishikresh.

-Yes, that got you off the streets. Shri saw in you an enlightened soul and intelligence to save the world. Remember how we laughed at you when you came to the group and stated daringly, "I want to fight for a better world and to make all the suffering go away".

-Yes. I remember. And you asked me how I was going to make it. And I answered: "my mother, from her light in the stars, will guide me".

-And so it is, Aimsa.

-I will tell you, Anil. I have spoken with the Minister of Health in Zimbabwe and with Doctors Without Borders in Barcelona. We need one hundred thousand adult treatments a year and one hundred and fifty thousand newborn transmission preventions. How much would that cost.

-At cost price without any profit, which I can defend to the steering committee, it would be about one hundred dollars per patient per year, and about ten dollars for each prevention in children. In total, about eleven and a half million dollars a year.

-A transfer of an average soccer player.

-What do you mean?

-Nothing, don't listen to me. Europe's follies.

-I need you to send a letter referring to our conversation and certifying that for an order of the quantity I have told you, the total price per year would be that, and in which you specify when the shipments would be ready, how is the situation of certification of your production and product quality, guarantees, etc. I need you to send it to Minister Stamps in Harare and to Dr. Mitin at Doctors Without Borders, Barcelona, at these addresses.

-Here you have the cards with those two addresses. I also want us to be in contact every week, on Fridays, by email, use mine aimsaharris@hotmail.com. We are going to have to fight hard this year against the monopoly protection plans of the World Trade Organization. We need to exchange a lot of information.

-Count on it.

Aimsa gave a lecture in the company hall, to some two hundred workers and managers, on the AIDS situation in Zimbabwe over the last twenty years and Ukuzwana's efforts to combat it. She told the story of Anwele, a symbol of the tragedy in which the AIDS of the poor was still plunged twenty years later. She encouraged them to continue earning forty times less than each of the big pharmaceutical multinationals, but to reach forty times more poor people for whom their work meant life and hope.

-Now I want to invite you to dinner, Aimsa. You haven't told me anything about your personal life.

-Okay. And tell me also what happened in your life?

-Now you will see.

-They arrived at a restaurant in Thardeo, called Swati snacks. They reached a corner where a woman was sitting at a table. She was wearing a dark green sari, her face was half covered and she was looking away from them. When she heard them coming, she turned her face slightly towards Aimsa and looked at her with both embarrassment and excitement. Her gaze was fixed on her. She dropped the veil from her face.

-Inaya!

She stood up and they gave each other a deep, long hug. Inaya was in tears. Aimsa had been living on the edge for thirty-two years and thought that the grief since the loss of her mother had made her somewhat cold, distant, especially with sporadic, ephemeral encounters. But this time she was, like Inaya, deeply moved. The last time she saw her she was being prostituted as a girl and then disappeared without a trace.

-Aimsa, meet my wife. Inaya. The girl who brought you to the white tigers twenty-five years ago.

-Are you married? Congratulations! But tell me, Inaya. What happened to you? We were so worried.

-I am ashamed to talk about that dark period of my life. I only tell you that I escaped death.

-Don't worry, Inaya, I understand your sensitivity. We'll talk about it when it's time, alone, in peace.

Aimsa thought of her first pending concern: the mafias that abducted her as a child and got her into the sex trade. She thought of Nancy in Harare. She thought of the children disappearing from the streets of Calcutta. Organ trafficking. Possibly the same threads Haka pulled in Soweto were frayed there in Bombay and waiting to be unraveled. But she couldn't do that now, nor could she tell Haka. They had a plan. After dinner, she was invited to stay with Alin and Inaya. She asked Alin to make a call to Rishikesh.

-I didn't know how to tell you. Aimsa.

-Did Sri pass away?

Her second great anguish...

-Yes. A little over a year ago. Since he wrote for your book and helped spread the word, he came every year to the white tiger assembly. We appointed him as our spiritual guide. He always spoke of you as "the light that will guide Humanity." He admired and loved you. When he missed the assembly last year I inquired. I was told at the Rishikesh Ashram that he had gone to meditate in the mountains and after three months without news, they went looking for him. They found him lifeless and stiff from the cold. He was in *Arda Padmasana* position, and with an expression of immense peace on his face. His eyes closed with subtle lightness, a faint smile on his lips. Everyone in Rishikesh says that he reached Nirvana.

-I should feel joy. But I wanted so much to see him and tell him how much he changed my life since he took me to Rishikesh. His image of anonymous kindness and humble wisdom accompanied me every step of my life. I carried him so deep inside me.

She needed to go to the place where Sri reached Nirvana.

Aimsa traveled by plane to Dehradun and then went by bus to Rishikesh. She then walked to the Ashram where she spent her years of meditation and inspiration towards a new existence. It was also there that she explained her ideas of the universe and of the unique energy that unites everything in the face of the skepticism of the Buddhist monks. And it was there that she met Rob and began her journey to where Sri felt she would go since he heard her tell the stories of her mother with the gods in the streets of Calcutta.

Aimsa then walked to the meek shrine before the world where Shri, his eternal master, passed on to another life, or Nirvana after a life that illuminated the world. His "robe" was the whitest, lightest and softest she had ever seen. He would be in the stars by then, with her mother. In a strange way she saw them together in the Pleiades. Both of them guiding her. She needed them. And she already felt their strength. She sat on the throne where Shri looked at the world for the last time and meditated all night.

When dawn broke, Aimsa knew her fate.

LXXV. World wakes up. Seattle, December 1999

AIMSA FLEW FROM Delhi to Seattle, where she met up with Zachie, Eric, Anna and her old buddies from 1980s AIDS activism in San Francisco. She stayed at the home of a couch-surfing network art teacher.

The ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) met without an agreement on the agenda due to deep gaps between the North and the South on the round of trade negotiations known as the "millennium round". In the five years of its existence, the WTO had structured more than sixty types of agreements that it intended to coordinate, such as those relating to customs and tariffs (GATT), services (GATS) or patents (TRIPS). The warning of many organizations was grouped in a feeling of "anti-globalization" because of the effects of market invasion (*dumping*) by multinationals and the suppression of national mechanisms to protect their farmers or workers from the invasion of much cheaper products for different contexts, especially labor, or to protect the prices of basic services. Aimsa reflected that the philosophy of eco-villages would naturally protect from these invasive and devastating effects of local, large-scale commerce, since in the absence of property, of nature and workers' exploitation, of accelerated production and alienated consumption, the predatory effect of unregulated capitalism would have no space. Without that fundamental structural change, capitalism called for free capital flow as the main dynamic to create accumulation and capital force, the basis of that system. Thus, the flow of capital, known as "economic growth" was the basis and goal of the system.

Aimsa was particularly concerned about AIDS because of the patent agreement. If the SEVN remained strong in its principles, it would be immune to the increasingly less regulated globalization, a mirror of the deregulatory and neoliberal model emanating from the Washington consensus between Reagan and Thatcher. Theoretically left-wing and socially-minded governments, such as those of Blair and Clinton, had not really put a stop to the free, invasive and destructive flight of capital, which dominated the rights of the people, the minimum dignity of many, who lived below the minimum while others became obscenely rich. In recent decades, since the fall of the Berlin

Wall, the rates of inequality and injustice had accelerated throughout the world.

In the days leading up to the summit, Aimsa attended several informative and discussion meetings on intellectual property agreements. She then attended assembly meetings in which representatives of more than 140 countries and a thousand social organizations made proposals on content and ways to take to the WTO and the representatives of its more than 150 member countries who were already arriving in the city.

Aimsa brought two voices. Speaking for the SEVN, she had made detailed and in-depth analyses of the effect on ecology of the proposals for the Millennium round of trade negotiations. On behalf of the Anwele Association, and in coordination with MSF, TAC and others, she made very concrete legal proposals that could allow putting public health needs before monopolies and patent profits.

Aimsa feared that the more than sixty thousand people who had come to protest against the plans of the global market and its effects on people and nature would lead to violence. She favored silent marches like Gandhi's salt march. She came from feeling Shri's nirvana and felt that the real change in humanity would not come from confrontation, but from harmony.

A strong and united society that would be unchained from the mad production, alienated consumption and speculative investments of savings, would paralyze the predatory effect of unchecked capitalism, which Aimsa called "the world greed casino" -WGC-. Although representatives of governments of the capitalist world came to Seattle, behind them were the big multinationals and fortunes. In her mental scheme of thousands of factors, actors and vectors of different colors, Aimsa saw the strategy of the WGC: on the one hand they protected their price monopolies by patents, on the other hand they used all their strength to invade the markets of the whole world with cheap productions on a large scale, at the lowest production costs through the most painful working conditions and without limits to the destruction of the environment.

Aimsa contacted by email former Berkeley mathematics and statistics colleagues, experts in complex and multi-causal analysis. She was in touch with geniuses in data processing software and temporal

and spatial representations. She also had a friend from Berkeley, at the HAAS business school, who had access to databases of over thirty million companies in the world and the relationships between them. He was part of a company that owned the VISA and American Express credit card data of over half a billion people in the world.

Aimsa could see a mental scheme of complex relationships. Her pattern then of more than a thousand points and about three thousand arrows, kept flowing. And it was only an approximation of the world's complexity. She sensed that the concentration of power was limited to a small part of the world, and that the evolution of colors and forces was concentrating predatory power in a few nodes. Her first analyses pointed to some one hundred powerful companies with relationships between them, which dominated more than half of the formal world economy, and above all, the informal one, the most harmful. Trafficking in arms, drugs, strategic minerals, people and influence. They were gradually joining a force that was dominating everything else: complex speculation. Those powers were focussing in speculating with those great and destructive productions not only through the stock market, that great poker game table of the world, but in much more complex, dark, perverse, hidden ways. She calculated that every day more than five million million dollars changed hands, countries, currencies, stocks, stocks on stocks, stock insurance, stock insurance of insurances and so on. It was a world as virtual as it was perverse: the realm that was elegantly called "derivatives" and that progressed, like the AIDS epidemic, insensitive to pain and destruction, invading the world and concentrating the power of money, the true master of Humanity in this sad and dark phase of history, in a few hands.

She made an initial outline and shared it with that group of mathematicians, computer scientists and economists, sensitive to the social and ecological tragedy into which the world was plunging. She call it the CAP group - complex analysis of perversion. Tony, the computer contact, set up a secret system of communication and data transmission between them. He was also an expert in decoding information and communication sources, and was in contact with an Australian colleague named Julian Assange, who would help to complete the information. At the beginning of his idea, Aimsa doubted whether it would be honest to access confidential trade information, but

then concluded that such information was essential to uncover the source of the pain rooted in those who lacked the necessary honesty to be transparent in their business dealings or actions. She knew she was entering a complex, dangerous world that went beyond the rules of the legal game. But at least in the analysis, she had to have that information. She could not stop thinking about the hundreds of millions of people starving while others, jealous of the "confidentiality of their business" swam in the most obscene abundance and luxury.

In the following days, sit-ins and demonstrations united thousands of social and ecological voices. For the first time, trade unionists and environmentalists walked hand in hand in defense of another, more humane, more natural world. Aimsa felt that on the edge of the new millennium, everything was changing. The destructive forces and the alliances towards a new humanity were both concentrating forces. She had to be on that battlefield and she had to encourage love, the deepest human and universal energy, to win. She felt deeply that nothing that came from violence would engender peace, light and harmony.

Aimsa joined the demonstrations. They were trying to prevent the ministerial meeting from taking place so as to rethink the concept and objectives of the WTO, within the United Nations and based on the declaration of human rights. They wanted to prevent the three thousand delegates from one hundred and fifty countries and international organizations from entering the luxurious Paramount Theater in Seattle. They used the same strategies as the labor movement in the Great Depression, with massive sit-ins that overwhelmed the power of the police.

There were people from more than 140 countries, trade unionists, environmentalists, students, pacifists, representatives of indigenous peoples, Third World peasants, farmers, human rights activists, churches. All united in the face of predatory capitalism. The next morning, while union leaders gathered at Memorial Stadium, two large groups, one of students and the other of "Third World" representatives, joined by Aimsa, converged in downtown Seattle.

At the same time, several hundred anarchists began to block strategic street crossings. This made it impossible to move between the hotels and the Paramount Theater, where the inauguration was to take place. Government and United Nations representatives were trapped in

their hotels. Outside, the colors, races, religions, ideas of a united humanity in the face of injustice, chanted hymns and slogans.

Aimsa led with a megaphone adapted chants of "*all we saying, is give peace a chance*", following the words *peace, love, us, light, truth, earth, life*. There she met a young African girl dressed in Andean clothes and shouting slogans of the right of nature, land and water with an Aymara group. They exchanged glances, then locked gazes, approached each other, greeted each other. Her name was Lisy, she was from Sierra Leone, had grown up in Gomera, now lived in Cochabamba.

-I know why I was attracted to your gaze. We are like family. I am Aimsa, Jonay's partner! I am representing SEVN.

-Yes! they told me. I am promoting them throughout South America. It would be so beautiful, Aimsa, if you could represent us at the United Nations.

-I will.

It was the first time she was clear about it. And the first time she said it.

They gave each other a big hug and marched together, side by side. "All we are saying..."

On President Clinton's orders, the security forces launched a violent crackdown. Aimsa received several blows from truncheons but she remained, like many hundreds around her and her megaphone of love, seated, impassive. Then the thousands of union demonstrators who had gathered at the Memorial Stadium began to arrive. The WTO decided to suspend the inauguration. The police were still trying to dislodge the demonstrators with tear gas and the authorities declared a state of emergency and a curfew.

The following morning, the first day of the last month of the millennium, the police were joined by the National Guard and SWAT groups, who took over an "exclusion zone". Social pressure encouraged governments in the South to unite and block unfair agreements. The slogan that began to invade all spaces of dialogue was: "Fair trade, not free trade".

On the second night of mobilizations, Aimsa joined the Latin American group, which was beating with tremendous force and where

it was decided to create an alternative forum to the economic forums of the powerful, Davos, the G8, the WTO. They would call it the Global Social Forum.

Such was the social pressure that a ministerial declaration was not agreed upon.

But not only was it possible to stop a plan to make the world a big business, dominated by WGC powers, which Aimsa was beginning to analyze with its CAP group, but the idea of an alternative world began to be glimpsed.

She began to feel the rage of the ignored deaths of AIDS, the plans to confront the drug monopolies, the defense of the right to health for all, the hope and hope of the eco-village network, of Sibithanda, of the white tigers, the inspiration of peace in the love and harmony of Sri, the white cloak of his teacher, the windy veil of his mother, the love of Jonay and the sweet and joyful innocence of Nour and his brothers, in the great family of courage and tenderness that spread throughout the world, illuminated a beautiful path along which he wished to walk hand in hand with his companion.

The last stages of that round-the-world trip made more sense.

LXXVI. In the jungle of power. New York December, 1999

AIMSA FLEW FROM Seattle to New York. She stayed by *couch surfing* at the home of James, a philosopher with a fondness for woodcarving, in Brooklyn.

The next morning she took an aimless walk so as to feel the life in the city. She wanted to imagine Jonay and Nour there. She needed to see them smiling, to know that their passion for life would continue to shine. The house where she was staying was between Wythe and 8th street. Although it was about a hundred yards from the Williamsburg Bridge that linked Brooklyn to Manhattan, the place was not noisy. The houses were low-rise and there was a certain neighborhood atmosphere. There was a public daycare nearby, Epiphany Park and a few social centers. She had lunch with James, who explained to her what life was like in the neighborhood, and the activities that were beginning to emerge of solidarity economy, of time banks, of exchange of ideas, knowledge, of collective purchases of organic food, of helping each other.

She then calculated the transport time to the United Nations area and to Bellevue Hospital, a well-known public assistance center for the needy classes. It was the perfect neighborhood, just ten minutes to the hospital and twenty to the United Nations. As she continued to stroll through the neighborhood she could see Nour playing with girls in Epiphany Park, Jonay running along the harbor avenues in front of Wallabout Bay, the three of them going for a walk and greeting those they would meet in the neighborhood exchanging ideas, tasks, goods. She thought of the beauty of the exchange of equals, the humane treatment it entailed, the opportunities for solidarity and mutual appreciation, as opposed to exchanges based on papers with a drawing of someone unknown and some numbers and codes designed to make it worth for everything. And for nothing.

She was thinking about it all as she peered behind the windows of Patricia's Eating House, when James snapped her out of her thoughts:

-What do you think, Aimsa?

-I imagined life with my family here.

-Well, if you wish, I have something to propose.

-Yes? -Tell me.

-I'm going around the world on my sailboat. And I need to rent out my apartment. If you take care of my dog Sam, who gets seasick on trips, and the plants, I'll let you have it for five hundred dollars a month. What do you think?

-I really appreciate it, James. And it seems like a perfect place for us to enjoy family and neighborhood life, and get to and from work easily. Can I give you the answer on December 20?

-All right. I'll wait for you.

The apartment had three bedrooms, a bathroom, a living room that opened onto an interior courtyard with a garden, and a kitchenette. Sam was a cheerful labrador. Everything seemed to be falling into place.

The next day she went to the UNICEF building in the United Nations Plaza. There she had arranged to meet Marta, who welcomed her with great joy after they had met eight years ago in Florence.

-It's good to see you, Marta. How are you?

-Very good. You know that I have been made director of the Innocenti Institute in Florence and we are promoting research on the situation of children in the world, thus feeding the arguments in favor of children's rights. I also come here every two or three months for meetings with UNICEF and for the monitoring committee of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. My husband is also working here.

-I am very happy. It is very important that people with your kindness and your social commitment are in these places.

-That's why you have to come, Aimsa. I have been following your work with the white tigers, with Sibithanda, your articles and statements in Vancouver and your article on the eco-village network after the Kyoto meeting. You have to be at the center of the debates, of the conception of a new world.

-Thank you Marta, we must all be there. All people will be essential. And it is not good that some of us consider ourselves more capable than others. It makes me feel uncomfortable.

-And why did you just say that about me?

-Well. In international organizations you have selection processes and I have met many people who do not feel enthusiasm for what they do, for what you represent, for the noble profession of service to others,

which is what politics should really be. Knowing about your effort and your commitment is a very powerful light beam.

-It's similar in civil society, Aimsa. I know that world too, and not everything is noble. In your honesty, without affecting your humility, you must accept that you have an uncommon intelligence, that you have seen and lived with the most marginal situations among street children in India and among AIDS orphans in Africa.

-But I will tell you that I am worried about tearing Jonay away from his passionate life for his patients in Ukuzwana.

-I'll tell you something. He must have heard about me, because he found out my address and wrote to me. Sure, he has a huge passion for his work, for his dedication to those in need. But he has an even greater passion, which is you. And he knows better than anyone that this is the moment in history. And you are key.

Aimsa felt a deep emotion. It was not enough for Jonay his beautiful lie, but he was trying to facilitate her decision anonymously through dear and noble people.

-I will come. Marta. And I will need you as an ally.

-We already are, aren't we? In addition, we have already registered Sibithanda as a UNICEF partner organization and you already have an office as a research associate here and in Florence. You can now come with a residence permit.

-Thank you Marta. Although I will try to relate my work to the central objective of the spiritual ecovillage movement. We are not yet associate members of the United Nations, we have to formally request it now that we already represent more than five thousand eco-villages around the world and more than two million people.

-How wonderful, Aimsa! I will be at your side in everything. I know well that it is from human and natural harmony that Humanity will put an end to the immense suffering.

-Yes, Marta. Especially in children.

-We are preparing an idea with Kofi Annan, which we call "the millennium goals", with clear targets, ways forward and priorities for education, health and environment. You have to come soon to push it forward, Aimsa, we need you. And from here we will be better prepared

for the new WTO plans in Doha. There are intense times ahead for humanity, full of pitfalls, but also full of opportunities.

Aimsa said nothing. She smiled. Inside she was igniting a strength she had never felt before.

They went for a walk in Central Park and then continued on to the giant Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center. Walking through the streets of New York in the full consumerist maelstrom of Christmas, Aimsa reflected on the profound difficulty of uprooting the cult of money from human values. Christmas was the clearest and most contradictory case. In the name of love and of the modest, humble and solidary life of Jesus, people spent madly, ate compulsively, and fell into the commercial rat-race of objects of unknown origin, of frequent predatory effects on men and trees.

With love between people, in families?

She also saw groups of homeless people and others begging in the streets, and she thought of Jonay, of his passionate devotion to those most in need and those who gave him the best salary in the world, that of the smiles and gratitude of the soul.

In the evening, Marta invited Aimsa to dinner at her home in Manhattan. Her husband was away, but she could feel a very special tenderness between the two of them and their children. She knew that the three of them could also be happy for a period of their lives, even if it was in that jungle of concrete and haste. They would know how to find nests of tenderness, challenges of courage, allies in love.

Her last stage between New York and Ukuzwana was kept secret.

LXXVII. A new dawn for the new millennium. Ukuzwana,
January, 2000

AIMSA HAD ARRIVED in Bulawayo on December 15, where Jonay and Nour were waiting for her. The three of them hugged each other excitedly. Nour, who was already three and a half years old and full of joy, curious about everything, spoke Spanish, English and Ndebele fluently. She also learnt some expressions and songs that her mother taught her in Hindi. Jonay was as happy and talkative as ever. His hair was almost white, and the hard work and the Kalahari sun had accelerated the imprint of time on his face. Aimsa had imagined him by her side every step, every moment of the night, every journey. She preferred not to speak. Just to look at him. There was so much to feel just by looking.

As he drove to Ukuzwana with Nour between them in the front seat of the *pick-up*, Jonay gave her an update on the big family: Patxi's community meetings, Haka's latest adventures in Sierra Leone, Sibithanda's departure, NoLwasi's spiritual strength, Adam's progress in school, Nour and Unai's mission-wide games, Joseph's factory work, Nothando's music and poetry, Thandiwe's studies, already in South Africa with Buhleve, soon to graduate and the memory of Anwele, whom he went to see at her resting place often. He also told her about his parents, from whom he had received a letter.

Aimsa smiled.

-How about you? So quiet? Tell me how it went?

Aimsa gave him a summary of the highlights of Harare with Stamps and at El Rino's guesthouse, and they had a good laugh, which in turn spread the laughter to Nour. She went on telling him about Cape Town and the struggles for access, MSF, TAC, the conversations with Nadine and the climb up Table Mountain. Every few minutes she would tell him how much she would have loved to share those moments with him. She never wanted to be apart for that long again. She continued to tell him about her time in Madrid with Juan, but without much detail, and then about her time with Anna in Barcelona and the treatment access project they could fund. Jonay was asking her all kinds of details that Aimsa preferred to tell calmly at home. She told him with even more emotion about her return to his country, the joy of seeing the

center in Bombay of the white tigers, her reunion with Inaya, the conversations in CIPLA and her pilgrimage to the Nirvana of Sri, where she wanted the two of them to return together.

Jonay watched as Aimsa got excited and took his hand as he drove. She would not let go of it until Ukuzwana. They did that often when they traveled and she would shift gears now with Nour's help!

Aimsa went on to talk about the struggle in Seattle and the birth of what she thought would be the beginning of an unstoppable social movement.

She did not talk about his last two stages.

They arrived in Ukuzwana. NoLwasi greeted her excitedly. There was a special bond between them. Patxi and Jonay had often talked about it, they felt united to women with a strength beyond their understanding. Patxi confessed to Jonay that she often felt giddy about it, but love bound them together with more strength than the universe seemed to claim from their companions.

On the night of December 19, Aimsa knew that Jonay would follow his custom of every year. She watched him without him noticing as, at the stroke of midnight, he celebrated in solitude his last round the sun. He would write in a diary his feelings about life, his memories of what he had experienced, his hopes for the future, and, above all, his deep joy and gratitude of living.

Monday, December 20, 1999, dawned. Jonay put on his white doctor's pijama and went to the dispensary as he did every morning. He was surprised not to see the waiting room full of patients for consultation, as usual. Besides, Aimsa was no longer at home and had left with Nour. He went to Patxi's house and found no one there either. It was all very strange.

-Daddy!

He heard Nour's voice playing with a wire car that was surely Adam's handiwork. He approached her and knelt down beside her.

-Where is Mum?

-Come.

Nour took his father by the hand to the Ukuzwana Church, converted since Patxi's schism into a "space of harmony" where the community still gathered to work, to sing, to celebrate, to give thanks

to life, to plan together for the future, to protect themselves from the heavy rains or to offer lodging to passers-by, in the same place where almost twenty years ago the community was protected from the attack of the fifth brigade.

Haka had worked at the church in its early years. On the outside it had Zulu geometric patterns, and the roof was thatched in the Zulu style as well. Inside they changed the shape of the rows of pews in front of the altar to an amphitheater of concentric circles and gently descending to a center where there was a table with the Bible and other books or inspirations of love and harmony.

As he entered, he saw that the church was full of people. He thought he had forgotten about some celebration. Everyone stood up, watching Jonay walk down the aisle with Nour by the hand. They began to chant *Nkosi Sikelele*. Jonay could not hide his excitement. Looking to each side he could see the smiling and grateful faces of hundreds of patients, elderly, adults, children, entire families. He also saw representatives of many communities of Sibithanda looking at him with deep appreciation as they sang with those deep Zulu mmmm's that so touched the depths of his soul.

As he approached the center, he saw Patxi waiting for him with open arms. When they embraced, the whole community applauded excitedly. Patxi took the floor, in Ndebele:

-Today we celebrate another round the sun of someone very special to Ukuzwana. Jonay, Ulibona, Zaka-Nour, you have been among us for fourteen years, giving all your love and intelligence to alleviate suffering and restore health. We are all deeply grateful to you.

Applause and expressions of approval.

An elderly man, a woman and a girl, representing the community, explained how they felt as Ulibona patients.

-We know that what you appreciate the most is the tenderness between people, that's why some special people are going to say a few words to you. People essential to Jonay's life were entering through the back door and telling some anecdotes of his life:

Aimsa began. He spoke of his shyness for two years to express his feelings for her. He then joined her side and whispered mischievously to her:

-Do you see what happens to you for starting the secret-keeping game?

Nour followed, who with her beautiful innocence told a story that happened to them when she was sitting on her dad's shoulders in the field and it started to rain.

Unai approached him and instead of talking he gave him a drawing of a car.

Adam was already six and a half years old and told how one day his "uncle Jonay" taught him how to make wire cars, and gave him one he had made.

NoLwasi recounted that day when together, with their different visions of life and health, they lovingly cared for the good Anwele.

An emotional silence in her memory filled the place.

Joseph continued to relate the idea of "take your time" and Nothando read a beautiful poem about Ulibona, ulithanda (He watches us, he loves us).

They then talked about Rose who was now working in Harare, Johanna, from Brunapeg and Ndlovu, who had already been dismissed for speaking out in Bulawayo, and was back to being a happy doctor and treating his patients in Brunapeg. They told stories about how some patients did not want to go to Brunapeg but to be sent back with Ulibona to Ukuzwana!

Lisa explained their work together in acupuncture.

Haka and Helen from Bulawayo came in and told stories of how they knew Ulibona throughout Matabeleland and of their efforts in the Sibithanda network.

Haka read him a letter from Beatriz, Meimuna and Moyes.

At that moment Thandiwe, Buhleve, Nadine and Karen, who had come from South Africa for the occasion, came in. Thandiwe and Buhleve explained that their vocation for medicine was inspired by Jonay, Nadine talked about how Haka and Aimsa talked about him.

When it seemed that the excitement was over, Juan and his family came in from behind. Patxi introduced him as the new doctor for Ukuzwana. Juan explained Jonay and Aimsa's bravery in Vancouver.

Jonay looked at Aimsa in surprise: she had managed, with Stamps' help, to expedite the registration and they were already on that day to stay.

Jonay felt a mixture of emotions. So much love from so many people, from so many patients. He could not imagine greater happiness in life. Nor in any other kind of existence. At the same time, seeing Juan meant that his next phase was already beginning, he looked at Aimsa, next to him, and they held hands tightly. Aimsa looked questioningly. Jonay nodded. His new life had already begun.

When it seemed that the wonderful surprise celebration was over, music began to play. Jonay felt a shiver.

The music was "That's What Friends Are For" by Stevie Wonder. And it came from a harmonica that had accompanied Jonay's childhood, his dreams and his passion for life.

John entered playing that melody to the silence of all, admiring and feeling the emotion. Umbela accompanied him at his side. The three of them embraced each other with the long-awaited emotion.

At last her parents were coming to the place where she discovered so much magic and love. The song continued and Fernando, who had also come from Gomera, accompanied on guitar. His mentor, his teacher, came with a young man of about fifteen who walked with crutches: here's my son, your brother, Saidu.

Fernando told stories of the beginning of Jonay's passion for medicine and the moment he was almost swallowed by the sea when they rescued Kadiatu and Lisy, who were sending him a letter.

John spoke of their crossings together in the sea off La Gomera, of their climbs to Roque Nublo, of the nights under the stars. He summed it up by saying:

-To be able to hold you in my arms and watch you grow and see you grow into a good man for the world is the most wonderful thing that has happened to me in this life. Together with your mother's love. Umbela then explained the emotion of being a mother, how Jonay was growing up and the happiness and pride of seeing him follow his dreams, in spite of feeling him so far away for so long.

Umbela continued in a humorous tone, saying that, despite so many compliments, it was all for his birthday! But really Jonay, like

everyone else, had defects that we should not forget. She spoke humorously of his absent-mindedness, of his anger, of how he never learned to whistle or snap his fingers, of how stubborn he was, of his disaster as a cook, and even of his clumsiness in love, concluding that for that and much more, she loved him with all her heart.

They sang another song that Jonay loved to sing with the children at the mission: "Heal the World". There was no greater beauty for Jonay, than the sweet innocence and sweetness of a children's choir singing to life. And over a hundred, including Adam, Nour and Unai sang the verses "We Are The World, We Are The Children".

Then, Jonay wanted to speak and thank everyone. He started in ndebele:

-Ngiyalithanda.Mukulu, Ugogo, udade, ubudi, afana, abatana, ungane (I thank you, grandfathers, grandmothers, sisters, sister, boys, girls, friends). Twenty-five years ago I was sitting on my favorite rock, on my island, La Gomera, looking out to sea.

As he said these words, he realized that for almost everyone listening to him, the words "sea" or "island" were not understandable.

The sea is an immense plain of water. Like the Ingwesi dam but thousands of times bigger. You can't see the end. It is like the time before and after life. And the islands are the lands that are like floating in the sea. They are like life. Some are bigger like Africa. Others are smaller, like my island, La Gomera.

Twenty-five years ago my hair was black and I didn't wear glasses, I swam and ran for hours without getting tired, and the beautiful women of the island sought my company. That day, the sea was rough, like a lone bull elephant when attacked. The sun was reflected in the rough sea and provoked like fast moving drawings. I imagined Gara, a beautiful princess in the very remote times of my ancestors, far out at sea, approaching the island, as the legends of my grandparents said.

I grew up in a beautiful valley on my island. My parents, whom you know today, gave me the greatest treasures: the love of nature and all that lives in it, and the freedom to dip myself in the mysteries of life.

And they did it through the two values that give us harmony with life: Courage and Tenderness. Courage to open our souls always and to all people. Tenderness to make our soul's love flow towards all that surrounds us in life. If you do not feel shame, which is a form of fear of what they say about us, and you are brave enough to take the hand of the person next to you, and you do it with tenderness, looking into his eyes, caressing him with affection, like the head hug that I have told you about other times and that my parents have been spreading all over the world, you will be making the love of your soul flow outwards and when it flows out, it also calls for more love that fills us. It is like when we draw water from the well. More and more water, and fresher and fresher, fills it up again.

At that moment, Jonay took the hand of Aimsa on his right, of his mother Umbela on his left. Aimsa gave her hand to Nour and chained herself to Unai, Adam, NoLwasi, Patxi, Joseph, Thandiwe, Nothando. Umbela shook hands with John who took Fernando's hand, and the chain continued with Haka, Helen, Buhleve, Nadine, Rose, Juan and his family. And so on both sides, the chain joined the hundreds of people who were celebrating Jonay's life.

Now courageously feel the love you are giving, especially if you have never before caressed with your eyes and hands the one next to you. Tenderness and love flow between us now without fear and without barriers. You can feel how it spreads through our hands, arms and souls in a joyful dance, with the strength of the sea, with the warmth of the sun, with the purity of the wind. Now we feel that we are all made of that energy of love, that if detached in our bodies, we are nothing. That united by love, we are everything. Courage and tenderness. We are all the same energy.

That's how I grew up. Passionate about life. To live it with love, as my parents inspired me. And the sea called me to discover other islands, to join my hands and my love to other distant worlds.

I know for Patxi, Sindisabantu, our father guide in "not-being-fearful-of-love", that among you my wishes to alleviate the pain of diseases, would be welcome. And here I came fifteen years ago.

Among you I have felt that love that beats in our souls, flowing with strength and purity. I have felt it in your glances, in your clapping of thanks according to the Shona and Malanga tradition, in your songs mmmmm that reach the deepest part of my heart. In a thousand ways. We have fought the plague of AIDS with the courage that Anwele inspired in us.

Jonay paused as emotion choked his words as he remembered his friend. Emotion also clouded the eyes of NoLwasi, Rose and Nothando. They all began to clap their hands in remembrance. Joseph held Nothando's hand even tighter.

And besides living giving and receiving so much love among you, I had the inspiration of the link with the spirits of time, that immense sea that surrounds the islands of our lives, of NoLwasi. I had the guidance of Rose in my first steps as a "clumsy-doctor-white" in Matabeleland, I had the support of Patxi, Sindisabantu, in creating the hospital we have today, I came almost at the same time as Juan Mari, Haka, and I always felt his strength and courage in seeking and fighting against the forces of evil. Each of you have given me so much inspiration to feel the air and the sun from this land. Life. And to look to the east at the horizon of the sea of the past, from where the sun comes and returns every morning, and to the west at the horizon of the future, where the sun sets every evening, with the harmony and confidence of feeling part of something immense, beautiful, invincible, called love.

-But among all that I have lived, the most beautiful thing in my life came to Ukuzwana eight years ago.

He looked to his right and raised his hand, joined with Aimsa's.

Aimsa came into my life, as Gara came for me in La Gomera twenty-five years ago. I felt the union of love, the harmony of beauty, the magic of the immense sea of the universe and eternity. All this in his gaze. It took me a long time to have the courage to express to her what I felt from the first day I saw her, and not to feel vain or unfair in

wanting to be the one who felt her beautiful light more closely. Our union brought to life Nour, my other princess in this life.

But life has moments when we must know how to take paths, to follow the call of our soul. As the sea called me to come to Ukuzwana fifteen years ago, now it calls me to other places. The world is suffering from the greed of men, who destroy nature and life in it, and who break the chain of love because they put up barriers of selfishness, built with power, with money, with property. All this comes from the fear of being alone and not knowing how to simply hold hands and make love flow. As we feel now.

And there is one person who can best make love and union overcome greed and selfishness, harmony among Humanity melt the borders of countries, properties and religions, harmony with nature overcome the false beauty and security of subjugating it to our fears. That person is Aimsa. She has been my most faithful companion and support every day of my dedication to you in health. The time has come for me to be your most faithful companion in your struggle for a new Humanity.

But neither the distance of the horizons of the earth, nor the time of the horizons of the sea, will take us away from Ukuzwana, our beloved home, from you, our dear family. We will always carry you in our hearts, your songs will be our strength, the memory of your looks our confidence, and we will always feel the harmony of living with our hands united, as we do now.

Siyalithanda. Lisale kuhle.

They dined the great united family of Courage and Tenderness, of Ukuzwana, of Sibithanda. He received gifts from the soul. He always said that he only wanted gifts that did not cost money but tenderness, that did not come from the stores but from the soul, nor from distant factories but from the hands of the giver. Aimsa gave him a notebook made of maleleuca leaves and covered with the bark of the jacaranda of Nour. The back cover had Umbela's decalogue written on it. The first page read: 421 Whyte avenue, Brooklyn, New York, February 1, 2000.

John gave him his logbook, kept secret for forty years, before he was shipwrecked in La Gomera.

Umbela made her another sweater again in her favorite color, navy blue and a symbol of eco villages, a triangle of the forces of spiritual, human and natural harmony.

Fernando gave him a Sabina branch polished for hundreds of hours in the shape of two joined hands.

Patxi gave him a finely braided rope with a mopane wood cross and NoLwasi gave him the seed husk where he first kept Anwele's tears and from where the hope of the healing waters emerged for several years.

Jonay left his parents the diary he wrote since he looked at the sea and the Teide and felt the arrival of Gara.

He gave Patxi and NoLwasi another one that he had been filling out since he arrived in Ukuzwana fifteen years ago. They were inconsistent, but every twentieth of December there was a long and heartfelt writing reflecting on life, and they had many drawings of their life experiences.

He gave Fernando the first model he made with Joseph, from "take your time".

Haka, Joseph and Nothando, who had not let go of each other's hands since Jonay's words, were left in the care of the ultralight, to visit and sow the islands of hope of Sibithanda with Nothando's poetry and songs.

To Nothando he gave his stethoscope and to Buhleve his J. Gray manual with hundreds of notes correcting and updating it, so that Buhleve could write a better one "where there are no specialists".

Aimsa was not given anything that could be played or kept in a pocket or a drawer: he played a melody he had composed for her on the violin: a melody so beautiful that it made everyone around the table be connected. It repeated itself around his favorite note: E minor. And it entangled the soul with enchantments of soft dances of intertwined notes. Like the hands of that family of brave souls. At that moment, Aimsa felt her mother's veil wrap around her, and a sea of white, soft, almost transparent layers invade the air and surround everything with light.

That night, Aimsa told him the hidden details of her round-the-world trip. Her agreement with Stamps and Juan and her last stop in La

Gomera to arrange, with funds from the sale of her book in India, the trip of her parents and Fernando to Ukuzwana. She also told him the details of the house and the neighborhood where they could live in New York, and that James was just waiting for a confirmation call. And of the residency and work procedures at the United Nations, all ready to travel on January 31. He also explained details of the solidarity activities in the neighborhood, of Nour's day care center, of the opportunities at Bellevue Hospital.

-But all this is as beautiful as staying here. As long as we are together everything is light in my life. If you want to slow it down, slow it down, or stay here. We can also be very happy and contribute to that new world in another way.

-You're so stubborn! After all you've done, let's make that call! And we've only got six weeks to get Juan into Ukuzwana's orbit!

The next day, there was one more surprise. Longed for twenty years.

In the Ukuzwana hospital there were already sixty patient beds. About twenty were occupied by AIDS patients. Almost every week one died. And it was a tiny proportion of the sad and agonizing deaths in the whole area, despite the human warmth around their plans for plastic sheets with which to wash, care for and tenderly care for the sick.

Aimsa had managed to bring from CIPLA, and with the contribution of Stamps, doses to start the treatment of one hundred patients, while they managed, with Anna from Barcelona, to start the projects with the ministry. With Beatriz's help, they had already obtained funding from the European Union and the necessary drugs for five years were guaranteed. Everything was discussed with Juan, who had obtained a manual from J Gray and had been studying it for three months, and all the EDLIZ protocols in Zimbabwe. He needed only the hands and the confidence of some emergency operations, which he hoped to share with Jonay in January and three five-day stints at the huge Mpilo hospital in Bulawayo.

That was how the first AIDS treatments arrived in Zimbabwe. *Livukile* (we woke up), a thirty-three year old mother of four, widow of a Ndebele miner in Egoli, in extreme weakness, with blue spots on her skin, white in her mouth and ravaging her every breath, received from the hands of Jonay and NoLwasi, deeply moved, the first dose of

zidovudine, lamivudine and nevirapine. They were of Indian generic origin, at prices a hundred times lower than those of the monopoly companies for which profits twenty times greater than all the public health budgets in all the countries of Africa could not satisfy their greed. They would fight against this and so many other things hand in hand with Aimsa in New York.

They arrived with all that hope of a new world full of hope, at the turn of the millennium according to the Christian calendar. They all celebrated at the *Black Eagle* in Matopos and toasted to a new Humanity that was announced. John, Umbela and Fernando returned to the communities of Tenderness and Courage, which were already the normal way of life on the islands.

Jonay spent the whole month of February with Juan, who got used to the protocols, to start speaking some Ndebele, to the most necessary operations, to work with few material resources and a lot of hope and teamwork. Between Ukuzwana and Mpilo he assisted in five caesarean sections, did another ten assisted and five alone. And a similar number of urgent abdominal, trauma and thoracic surgeries. With that and Ndlovu's referral in Brunapeg, he felt confident enough to let go of Jonay's hand.

They continued to treat ten patients in the ward. They then had a meeting in Bulawayo organized by Ndlovu and attended by Anna from Barcelona, Beatriz from Brussels and Minister Stamps. At the press conference they announced the first treatments and the plans to reach the whole country soon. Anna, allied with Aimsa, had managed to get a very special musician for this historic moment, so longed for by Jonay, NoLwasi and so many others: Phil Collins, to come and adapt his song "It's Not Too Late" to the new dawn of life expectancy of thousands of people in Zimbabwe, and millions in the world.

On January 31, 2000, Nour hugged his soul brothers Adam and Unai at the Bulawayo airport, Juan gave a grateful hug to Jonay, Aimsa hugged her spiritual sister NoLwasi. Then Haka, Helen, and Joseph and, Nothando also gave them heartfelt hugs.

Patxi stood apart for a few minutes with Jonay:

-Jonay. You have seen the mark you have left in Ukuzwana and in our souls. The farewell is hard. A mixture of older son, younger brother, soul friend, companion at work and comrade in the struggle is leaving

me far away. I will remember you every day of my life, and you will be in my prayers, you know, in my own way, every sunrise.

-Lihamba kuhle.

-Lisale kuhle, Ubaba wami (my father)

