

## **Appendixes**

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## Letters to Joan

### Letter 1: 22 April 2003

Dear Joan

Just to follow up on our *trauma debriefing* conversation, I thought I would attempt to recap the session by writing to you. I got the impression that you were very unsure about a *trauma debriefing* and even if you really needed one. I am hoping that you now realise that it is nothing more than an in-depth conversation, and while it may have stirred up much of the emotional turmoil you experienced at the time, have you found it helpful to re-look at the events leading up to and surrounding the time you decided to leave Mike? Has looking at the events from a number of different perspectives helped to clear some of the confusion and uncertainty you expressed?

As per our conversation, we agreed that you have experienced trauma on a number of levels and it seems most helpful to separate the events leading up to your hurried departure from Zimbabwe in terms of *personal* and *political* trauma. While both of these appear to have played equal parts in your life recently and appear to be very much intertwined, we nevertheless attempted to separate them into two camps. The *personal* being your decision to leave your husband, Mike, and the resulting move to a home of your own; and the *political* being your flight from the police. In keeping with that distinction, we spoke last night about the former and agreed to have a follow up conversation concentrating on the latter.

Perhaps commenting on the *intertwining* of both the political and personal aspects of these traumatic events would however provide a good starting point, or backdrop, to our conversation. Towards the end of our conversation, you said that you could see a number of parallels between what is happening to you and what is happening to your country. You said, "Mike wants what pleases him to be fulfilled at any cost to me." You added, "It is the same with Mugabe. He is prepared to lay waste to his country so long as he is in power. Mike also needs to be in control, in power, even if he has to lay waste to my life to maintain his importance." You went on to say that Mike doesn't want to share you with anybody – male, female, child or things – and that he wants to be your "entire universe." You told me that he had once said to you that he wants his dreams to be your dreams. Commenting on this, and what is happening in Zimbabwe, you said, "I feel incredibly entrapped by both things."

It seems to me that you have *dreams* of your own though, dreams that Mike appears to want you to give up. You described these dreams as your "job description" and saying, "this is what I am for, this is what I am about." You also referred to this as a *calling*. I sensed that you take much pride and satisfaction in this work and that you have been recognised by significant individuals in the cause for it. I am thinking about how a person in a significant political position personally asked you to help with protest banners for the planned mass action. This request came about at the time you left Mike, and despite the emotional turmoil, you were able to organise teams of people to get the task done. You quoted from "Steel Magnolias" a line you thought appropriate for this act of sheer determination: "My personal life is not going to affect the way I do hair (*banners?*)". Despite what was happening to you at that time you pulled this off - and on time. You had said to the MDC official "leave it to me, I will do my best." And, that's exactly what you delivered.

How did it feel to pull this off not despite but in spite of everything else that was going on at the time? I know you said it was "adrenaline pumping stuff" but it was more than just adrenaline that got the task done. What personal qualities can you name that helped you do this? If I were to ask the various people who helped out on that task, what would they say about you? Would they perhaps echo the words of the woman you had dinner with on that

Friday evening – that you *inspire* them? I suspect there are many other people who would stand with her in supporting that statement. I suspect even more people have been inspired by your contagious hope and the words of your song. Are you aware of the strength and the hope your ‘words’ are inspiring in others?

It seems to me that it was hard for you when Mike told you not to attend any more meetings or he would leave you. You said “I just want to get on with the job I must do for my country but Mike is holding my feet, stopping me from swimming.” It seems you were torn between wanting to be a “good wife” and the “political activist”. This pressure appears to have been intensified by two things. The build-up to “something” major happening politically and you all being asked to be ready for it and Mike’s imprisonment. You had been asked to play an important part on a task team but when Mike came home, you said you knew he would not let you do this. Added to this, you said things were really bad when Mike came home. You said it was horrible, that he wanted to hold you back even then – telling you how you had to be and how you must live. It was at that point that you said you knew you had to leave – that you “couldn’t go on any more.”

You said several times that you still love Mike and that you hated the thought of hurting him. You said when it came to actually leaving him, it felt as though you had chopped off an arm. You made the careful distinction that it was the “relationship” and not Mike that you saw as the arm that you had to cut off. You described it as a “horrible, septic, gangrenous thing that would poison my whole body – I thought I would die if I didn’t cut off my arm.”

It seems as though the actual act of leaving was very traumatic for you and your daughter, Megan. You told me how Megan had stayed home on the Friday night with friends and when you came home she had been acting strangely. You said they had been drinking wine and when Megan fled to her room you followed her not knowing what to expect. It was only when you saw the packed suitcases that you realised what was wrong. She was terrified that Mike would see her suitcases. It was at that point that you knew there was no going back. That you would have to go through with it. You told me that on your first night in your new home, Megan went out with her friends and while you wanted her to be with you, you said, “It’s not her job to look after me.” It seems as though you and Megan have not really had an opportunity to talk much between that time and the time you had to leave in a hurry.

If you think about the leaving - now that you have time to think about it – what do you think the effects of the poisonous arm (relationship) were on her? What do you think Megan would say about your decision. I think I recall you saying that you had spoken to her on a number of occasions in the past about the possibility of such a move – and that she had supported you? You said that your son, John, had shared with you – and with his father – that he thought it (the separation) was for the best. Does this knowledge stand with you/support you at this time?

We spoke a little about how you saw God in all this. You said you felt God was far away and yet not really. That He is in certain boxes for you at this time. You said you were cross that he was ‘male’ as you were struggling with males. That you felt He was dominant and likened him to Mike telling you what to do. You felt that Mike preached at you, claiming he talked to God and that he heard clearly from God. You could not understand Mike’s God at all. While you could not put God into your relationship with Mike, you could put Him into your country. I am wondering what it is you think that God can and will do for your country that He cannot do for you personally...?

I am also wondering what you make of the biblical reference to the creation of man and woman – how they are both made in God’s image? Is God exclusively male? Or is there a possibility that he is neither one or the other but rather both or even neither? Can we really put the God of the Universe into a gender box at all? Could it be that “maleness” is really

meaningless when ascribed to God? Does such a consideration help soften your heart a little towards God? When I asked you how you saw God before all this trauma in your life, you spoke of Him in terms like 'Gentle Jesus' and "Lamb of God'. These seem to be far more approachable images of God – would you agree? What would it take do you think for you to be able to see Him in these terms again? Could this be a source of strength that would help you at this time? Is this something you would want to explore further? How could you allow God to draw closer to you again – as the friend and comforter you used to know?

One final aspect that we did not discuss, but which I would like to raise in this letter, is your having to leave Zimbabwe and your obvious reluctance and resentment at having had to do so. If we talk in terms of the personal/political parallels, could we look at this aspect of your present dilemma? You spoke of your relationship with Mike and your decision to leave as an arm that you had to cut off in order for you to survive. It seems to me that you similarly had to leave Zimbabwe in order to 'survive'. After all, an arm in chains would be no use to those in the struggle.

While you still love Mike, you say you have left him because your relationship with him was "poisoning your body". It seems that you have had to leave a country you love for much the same reason. Can you see the parallel in this? It seems to me that you are mourning a double loss – the loss of a relationship with both Mike and Zimbabwe. I am wondering if hope sustains you at this time? A hope that change is possible. A hope that healing is possible. Do you think this time out from both is a God-given gift to you? A time for you to heal and regain your strength – physically, mentally and spiritually. Perhaps this is a time in which you will get a renewed sense of what God's plan and purpose for you in all this really is? Does this help to give your "exile" meaning? Maybe there is more to be done and achieved from a safe distance?

I am looking forward to the next part of our conversation and discussing aspects of this letter with you more fully.

God bless

Iain

## Letter 2: 28 April 2003

Dear Joan

Before commencing on the second part of our conversation, I asked you if there was anything you wanted to comment on in regard to my last letter to you. While you said it was helpful to look at the events from the different perspectives, you did feel that the actual 'leaving' was somewhat understated. You thought it did not do justice to the pressure, the pain, the stress and the anxiety that were invited into your life by both the abusive aspect of your relationship with Mike and the act of leaving him. Perhaps I may use this letter to address these aspects of the trauma you have experienced of late and their effects on you – and leave the trauma surrounding your departure from Zimbabwe for a separate letter? Do you think this would be helpful?

You shared with me how it had been so bad at times that all you wanted to do was crawl into bed with your back to the outside, facing the wall and never get out again.

You also spoke about how when you saw your counsellor, sometimes all you wanted to do was sit under her desk and rock. Another time you spoke of, was when you just lay on your bedroom floor and sobbed uncontrollably. Your children found you like that and didn't know what to do with you. Did their obvious love, concern and support for you help you to hold on to hope? Was it their support that gave you the strength to go on? Can you think of other things that helped you at times like this to push away the despair even when it seemed so overwhelming?

You said there were many, many times when Mike's abusive behaviour towards you had invited in this level of despair, and yet, what frightened you was that it was hard to recall the details of these interactions. You said you felt as though you had 'blanks in your head' and not being able to remember the details really invited in fear. I am wondering if this could be your mind's way of coping with too much stress/ anxiety/ fear – that it simply shut-down when things were getting too much for you to handle? Do you think this is a helpful way to make sense of these 'blanks' you have been experiencing?

It seems to me that it took enormous reserves of courage and strength to actually leave Mike and "not keep coming back for more". Does it seem that way to you? You used the metaphor of 'dragons' to describe what it took to actually leave. You described it as having to slay two dragons. The first dragon was the abusive part of your relationship with Mike. You said you had to make a stand – that enough is enough. You had to show him that his abusive behaviour towards you was not right.

Since you have left him, you told me that Mike has been seeing a counsellor and is even doing a personal growth course – 'Who am I?' While you said you are thrilled at his efforts to 'change', you are really worried that he does not know the extent of his abusive behaviour. You thought he may not even remember these outbursts of aggressive behaviour and wondered if he perhaps blanks them out? I am wondering how you would deal with a definitive answer to that nagging question? How would you respond if he does in fact not remember his behaviour in those times when, as you put it, "he loses it"? How would you respond if you knew he is fully aware of his actions and yet cannot control them?

After leaving Mike, you said you wrote him a letter saying you needed 3 months to be on your own. As the time passes though, you said that fear has crept back into your life when you think about having to go back to Mike. You said that you don't want to go back and find that your relationship with him has not really changed. You said it worries you that he has not actually acknowledged his abusive behaviour or taken responsibility for that in your

relationship. One step you thought you could take to help alleviate some of the fear would be to ask your counsellor (who Mike is currently seeing) whether she believes Mike is capable of 'healing'. After a little negotiating, we decided that perhaps it was more a question of 'changing' rather than 'healing'.

You said that in his correspondence (e-mails, sms messages) and telephone conversations with you, he is really loving, saying things like: "I grow to love you more and more each day." You said it is wonderful that he is being so loving and romantic, but you are questioning whether he knows what 'love' really is? You said you are wondering if it is more a question of 'need' rather than 'love', and whether you nothing more than just a 'habit' to Mike. What do you believe 'love' is? What is it that you would really want out of a relationship with Mike? What would the ideal relationship between you be? How would it look and how could you go about achieving this? What would Mike have to bring to it? What would you have to bring to it? Is that an attainable possibility?

You described the actual physical 'leaving' as the second dragon you had to slay. Fear and doubt had you almost deciding to change your mind and to stay. Slaying the first dragon – by reaching the point of 'enough is enough' appears to have given you the courage to slay the next dragon. Would you agree? It was very hard to leave – you described it as a pain in your heart and stomach. Has some of that pain perhaps subsided with time? What would help to ease this pain?

When I asked you how you feel now about having taken a stand and slain these two dragons – the abusive part of your relationship with Mike and the leaving – you said you felt 'strong' and that you deserve a medal. But, you added, you are now worrying about: "Where to from here?"

You said that you have since let Mike know that after the 3 months you still may not be ready to come back to him – that you just need to take things one day at a time. You said he was really saddened by that – and that his response had invited guilt in. I am wondering if you consider all that you have been through, is taking a little more time to decide what is best for you, for Mike and your relationship such a big thing to ask for? If you decide to resuscitate the relationship, perhaps you owe it to yourself to make sure the dragon is dead? And perhaps that is something that will require time. How do you see it?

You did say that you had thought about continuing to have separate homes, but that now that Mike knows where you are living, he could just turn up at any time. You said you are fearful that he would have a "tantrum at your gate". Perhaps there in lies the answer you seek – when you look towards your gate, what is it you see? Do you see a dragon at the gate (the abusive aspects of your relationship with Mike) – or a 'St. George' - the Mike you later described as "my best defence and my knight in shining armour".

Perhaps your 'gentle Jesus' may help you see who it is at the gate more clearly - and without the fear you spoke of? I am wondering if you believe it is possible to rebuild a relationship if the voice of 'fear' is still present? Could it be that 'fear' is a third dragon that needs to be slain? And, if so, what will it take to do so? What are your thoughts on this?

Perhaps this is something we can discuss further?

God bless

Iain

### Letter 3: 30 April 2003

Dear Joan

In this letter I would like to go over our conversation about the events leading up to and including your departure from Zimbabwe – the *political* side of the trauma you experienced. I need to acknowledge though that dividing those events into *political* and *personal* is perhaps an over simplistic way of looking at it as it seems to me that the *personal* is *political* and vice versa. Does it seem that way to you too? We did talk about how these two aspects are inextricably intertwined and really impossible to separate. Perhaps it would be more helpful to view these two aspects as threads that run simultaneously through your story? Is that a more helpful way to view it?

It seems to me that you had no sooner made the move to a home of your own – and were still experiencing all the trauma of having actually left Mike (a move you likened to slaying a dragon), when you got word that the police had turned up at Mike's home with a search warrant. You said Mike was really afraid of having to go back to prison and you felt you could not let him go through this on his own. You spent the next few nights together moving between *safe* houses (so you couldn't be found by the police). On the Monday, while you were fetching Megan from school, you said you had another phone call telling you that the police were now at your new home and that they were looking for you. As a result, you said you spent the next few nights in a *safe* house with Megan, while Mike moved back home. On the Friday, you said that Megan went to stay with a friend and you moved *safe* houses yet again. What helped you cope with all these moves and the fear and uncertainty that were invited in by these circumstances?

I am also wondering how you coped with being back with Mike when I think about what you shared with me about how difficult it had been to leave him? You said that you both saw your counsellor again on the Friday and that she had thought it was not a good idea for you to spend so much time together. You said that Mike was very angry about this and that you felt his response was like a tear in your heart. You also said that Mike would make it difficult for you whenever you left him again at these times. Was it perhaps like being faced again with the dragon (the abusive aspect of your relationship with Mike) you thought you had managed to get away from?

Besides wrestling with these issues, you continued to move houses until you finally moved back to your new home, where you said, you spent the first two nights on your own. I think it must have taken a lot of courage to be there on your own. Would you agree? You said Megan rejoined you there on the Tuesday night and it was in the early hours of the following morning that the police arrived at your gate. You said it was at 5,50am and that it was still dark. You said they stayed at the locked gate for at least half an hour, hooting and then throwing rocks onto your roof in an effort to get you to come out. It seems to me that you were thinking clearly enough to know not to put on any lights or do anything else that would confirm you were there. You said you peered out of a window and could see the grill over the Defender's headlights and just knew it was the police. I commented on how ironic the name is of the vehicle the police use in Zimbabwe ('Defender') – and you responded by saying, "Yes, who are they defending?"

You told me that you phoned Mike, packed and hid in the pantry with Megan where you planned your possible escape routes. However, the police did eventually leave. You said that Mike had parked further down the road and gave you the all clear when the police left. You and Megan managed to throw your things into the car and left the property in the opposite direction to which the police had left. You said Mike then came and closed and relocked the

gate for you. It seems to me that you really managed to keep your head – and were able to think clearly and rationally about your escape route. How was it that you managed to keep so calm? You did say that having Megan with you was a real blessing as it was not something you would liked to have gone through on your own. I am wondering how it must have helped Megan that you were so much in control and even capable of planning your escape down to the finest detail. What do you think Megan would say about her mom’s courage?

The next part of your story that you shared with me was that Mike phoned home and discovered that the police were now there looking for you. You said that they rummaged through your things and took a photograph of you. Once again you had to go to a *safe* house. You went on to say that it was at this point that Dave and other members of the MDC strongly advised you to leave the country. You said that you felt *bullied* into leaving. I am wondering how much of their advice was motivated by love, concern and care for you?

You said it was even harder to leave when Megan chose to stay in Zimbabwe and to go to Kariba with friends rather than to accompany you to Cape Town. You said you felt as though you hadn’t really had an opportunity to talk to her about how leaving Mike and being in hiding from the police had effected her. I believe that you have since managed to have e-mail conversations with her. Has this helped to push away some of the loneliness you have felt as a result of being away from her?

The final leg of your escape, you went on to say, entailed donning a wig so that you wouldn’t be recognised and getting to the airport. You said you cried all the way (on and off) to Cape Town because you knew you were leaving your country behind. You said you felt as though you were betraying people by running away and leaving them to fight the war without you. But, if you had stayed and had been arrested, I am wondering how effective you would have been then? You said that thinking about it from that perspective was helpful in terms of head knowledge but not the heart. It seems to me that the aspect you are struggling with most, is the fact that you are now in a safe place and no longer at the front playing an active role in the resistance. You said you are just blobbing and not doing anything constructive. Perhaps this is meant to be a time of healing, and regaining your strength though? Is it possible for you to see it as such?

You had told me that you had a fit of shaking when you made it to the final *safe* house. I am wondering if perhaps that was your body’s way of telling you that it has been traumatised enough? If you stop and think back over the events of the last while – and the extent and variety of traumas you have been through – do you not think that a time of R&R (rest and recuperation) is not a luxury as you seem to think it is, but more of a necessity? Perhaps there is some truth in the quotation: “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak”? It seems to me that nothing would ever be able to squelch your spirit – your passion for Zimbabwe. Yes? Perhaps it took divine intervention to finally force you to a place of safety?

When I asked you if you could see gentle Jesus’ hand in all this – almost as if He had gone before you and prepared a safe passage for you – you said that there were a number of ‘uncanny things’ that seemed to indicate that this was the case:

- the fact you were supposed to fetch Megan from school at 3pm but had a call from her asking you to fetch her at 4pm rather. This change in time meant you were not at your new home when the police arrived there looking for you
- the fact that you had been to a self-defence training session the day before the police arrived at your gate in which you were taught exactly what to do in precisely that situation: not to turn on lights, not to let them know where in the house you are etc.
- The fact that Megan returned home the night before it happened – so you were not alone
- The fact a Christian friend was walking past when the police were hooting at the gate and that she tried to phone the owners of the house and when she couldn’t, she phoned Mike!



He asked her to tell the police that the old lady who lived there (the previous tenant) had left – and this could well have been why they gave up and left.

- The fact that you sat next to a young black man on your flight to Joburg – and despite some initial fears on your part that he could be a CID plant, he shared your views on what is happening to Zimbabwe

I am wondering if this time-out could well be a part of His plan for you? It seems as though He has gone to great lengths to keep you safe. You asked why is it that you feel He is far off then and that you have to do it all yourself? I am wondering if it is not more a case of Him being very close to you and you being taught how to do it all yourself. You said “no-one can make decisions for me – I must sort it out myself.” Having already slain a couple of dragons, could that not be precisely what this has been about? It seems to me that through all this trauma you have found your own voice – you have found courage, resilience, and commitment. Would you go along with that observation? How else has trauma uniquely-abled you?

From what you shared with me, it seems as though Mike would not allow you to ‘make decisions’ for yourself. You said you have had a similar response from your Dad on certain issues. But, whereas in the past, you would have agreed with your mum’s philosophy of “Let’s not make a fuss” – you are now standing up for what you believe. Does that not speak of stretching and personal growth?

You said you were worried about *not doing anything* at the moment as if you had not already done an incredible amount. I am thinking about how in the midst of your own personal trauma, you were able to gather five teams of people to paint banners. I am thinking about the song you wrote and performed at rallies (a song that someone in prison with Mike spontaneously began to sing). I am thinking about the street hawkers who recognised you on the street when you were on the run from the police, saying: “Hey, Tshisa Mpama!” I am thinking that even while you say you are “blobbing” you have started to contact significant individuals and organisations down here with whom you can share your story – the story of a nation in trauma.

I know we spoke about the metaphor of how a single drop of water can make a difference – the drops become a trickle, which becomes a stream, which becomes a river, which becomes an unstoppable raging flood. When I think about your story, I see your contribution as more than just a drop. If you could listen to your story through my ears, what do you think I hear that makes me say that your contribution is more than just a drop?

Your gift of *hope* is something else that you have contributed to your country. I think the song you wrote encapsulates this gift perfectly. It is a gift that will probably be appreciated for years to come in the New Zimbabwe. Is *hope* also a gift that you can use to see your own personal future with more clarity and optimism?

I sincerely hope so.

God bless.

Iain

#### Letter 4: 16 May 2003

Dear Joan

In a brief conversation we had while watching a rugby match at Westerford last Saturday (10 May), you told me that you felt you were being pressurised by Mike to come home to him in Zimbabwe and you felt pressurised by your family in Cape Town to stay here. You said you felt so confused. When you asked me what I thought you should do, I said that what I thought was not really important, and added that what was important was that you did what *Joan wanted to do* regardless of the pressures being put on you by others. I was wondering if perhaps once you knew the answer to that question, you might know what to do.

During our final conversation, the day before you left to return to Zimbabwe and Mike, you referred to my comment about doing what *Joan wanted* as “the main turning point” for you. You said it was a question you had really thought about and in the quietness and time of considering you had before our final chat, you said you realised that you wanted to be with Mike. Part of that realisation, you added, was that you wanted to consider your family’s needs rather than your country’s. This seems to me to be quite a shift in focus for you. Does it seem that way to you?

You described your decision to move back home with Mike as a “move of love” and that you wanted to get back in touch with the love. You also said that you wanted to show him *mercy*. You explained that he had been trying so hard to change. You said that he was trying ‘sincerely and humbly’ and that you could see again the goodness you’ve always known was inside him.

You went on to explain that you want to return to a *new* Mike, not to how things were before. You said that Mike has assured you he wants to be that for you. You told me that Mike had told you that he has prayed for his marriage for years and that he has “cried out before God” about the way it had become. You said that Mike told you that your leaving him had been a “wake-up call” and an “answer to his prayers”. That it had “opened his eyes”. Does this knowledge stand with you and help strengthen your resolve to return to Mike? Does it help strengthen your hope for the possibility of a new relationship?

I was really curious to hear how you had managed to deal with the dragon of fear that we spoke about previously – the fear that abuse may rear its ugly head in your relationship again, particularly as you had shared with me how Megan had tried to dissuade you from going back to Mike and asked you: “How do we know he’s going to change?” When I asked you how you would answer that question, you said that you thought a number of people would say they thought Mike could not change, but you had faith that he could change. You said God can do anything and that you just have to Trust Him in this (even if you still have to hold thumbs too). When I asked you if this meant the dragon of fear was slain or contained, you replied that it was in a cage. You said the cage was *love* and that this was bigger than the fear. In response to my question about how will you manage to keep the fear dragon caged, you said: “By both of us being committed to trying and working on our relationship”. It seems to me that your courage is once again at work in slaying dragons. Does it seem like that to you?

If I think back to our initial conversations, you said that you felt that God was far off and that perhaps it was his *maleness* that played a part in this. I was struck by how differently you spoke about God in our final conversation. You spoke of trusting Him again for your own needs (a *new* relationship with Mike), whereas previously you had said you could only trust Him for the needs of your country. I was wondering what had changed your relationship with Him? You told me that you had gone to church with your family on Mother’s Day and how

the sermon had spoken of God as being like a *mother*. This facet of God, the gentleness, was something that you were seeing in Mike now. You said you previously had not liked the ‘maleness of God’ but, “seeing this strong man of mine trying so hard has changed that.”

When I asked you what else had changed about your spirituality since the traumatic events that brought you to Cape Town, you said that you were now wanting to find those fruits of the Spirit in walking closer with God in all you do. You said that having to suffer through things was no excuse to become bitter. You said you had realised that you wanted to be driven by *love* again. You described *love* as the strongest force in your life and referred to the expression “love conquers all” as being very apt for your life. You said that if you sow goodness, you will reap goodness. When I asked what you meant by that, you said that if you are kind and gentle with people, even when they are being horrible to you, they will soften.

When I asked how is your spirituality different now, you replied: “I want my spirituality to be a new way too. I used to love the Lord. I could speak spiritually but I was perhaps too heavenly minded to be any earthly good. My Christianity was sincere but a bit airy-fairy. What I want now is a “feet on the ground” spirituality. I want to be a hands-on Christian. A lot of the churches in Zimbabwe just encourage their congregations to pray for God’s will to be done in the country, but they don’t speak up or speak out about the evils being done. I want to live my Christianity now rather than just talking it. Before, I didn’t really know where I was going. Now I have a path to try.”

When I asked you if there was anything else different about Joan before and after the traumatic events, you said that you feel more focussed now, that you have a vision – a deliberate path and that you were excited by this. You said that you have *hope* again and that you want to start something new and good. You added that you have also learnt to believe in your *gut feelings*. You said you had realised you don’t want to give up on the things you originally believed in – hope, love, mercy – but especially the hope, and that you felt that you are now better equipped to encourage others to overcome difficulties. This seems to be very much an empowering realisation. Do you see it that way?

You told me that the one thing that had still been troubling you (to the extent that you battled to sleep) was the guilt that your being in Cape Town had invited in. You said you felt you owed your country more, that people were still suffering in Zimbabwe, and that you were letting people down because you weren’t doing anything to help the cause while you were here. You said you had experienced two dismissive type responses from people you had contacted telephonically and that this just invited the voice of rejection to join the guilt that was keeping you awake. You described the realisation that you needed to be kinder to yourself as a ‘little light bulb’ that suddenly went on. You realised that you had in fact left your husband and that the police had been chasing you - that it was a case of “So what?” if you weren’t doing anything while you were here. You said that realisation had helped you to put the guilt away - although you still find it difficult because you are an expert at inviting guilt to have a voice. Does being more aware of guilt’s tactics now help you to put it away before it can take over? Can you think of ways that will help you to slay or at least contain this cunning little dragon in future?

You said another thing that had changed for you is your perspective on the traumatic events leading up to your brief exile in Cape Town. You said you have no fear about going back now. You said you know the time is right to go back and even if you do end up in jail, you know that you will cope. When I asked you what resources would you use to cope, you said you will just keep saying, “I deny all charges”. You said that you are so certain that you are doing nothing wrong, that you no longer fear them (the police). You said that you certainly won’t be careless or get yourself into trouble on purpose but you will do what you have to do. I suspect there will be a significantly fewer dragons in the new Zimbabwe.

You said that your time in Cape Town has helped you. You described being with your family here and experiencing the unconditional love of your mother, your sister and nephews in particular as a healing thing for you. You said you have felt really loved and summed it up by saying, "What you sow, you reap."

Thank you for sharing with me some of your story in our conversations. There is something contagious about your *hope*. I see it as a gift that has helped rekindle something within my own spirituality and something I trust I will always be able to carry into my conversations with others in need of it.

May your torch of hope grow ever brighter in your new relationship with Mike and in the new Zimbabwe.

God bless

Iain

## **e-mail conversation with Todd**

Q1: What changes can you see in yourself (if any) if you compare the person you were before the arrest to the person you are now?

I don't think there have been any major changes from the jail event except that I find I hate Robby even more and my determination has been renewed - I thought I was losing hope in our struggle for goodness.

Q2: Whilst not diminishing the trauma of the event, do you feel as though you have grown in some way as a result of it? If so, in what way?

Yeah, the thing I think I've found is that I no longer am so scared of the sting of this evil. Been there, done that and have had the experience so next time I can be even more prepared ( I pray I'm not inviting this again into my life, because I didn't like the discomfort/claustrophobia of the of the cells).

Q3. How has it affected your faith? If you compare your faith before and after the event - how has it changed? (i.e. how you feel about God and your relationship with Him?)

I don't think it has changed my faith much. Maybe I have got a little closer to God, but my faith in God was strong before and is still strong. I do know that God is always close - hearing my prayers - not always answering the way I want but He mostly seems to give me the positions/things I need. E.G. I realised that there was no way I was going to get out the cell, I was in for a long time, claustrophobia, fear, exhaustion etc had set in. I picked a spot or mark on the roof and would concentrate on that spot asking God to see me through the next time period - say 4 - 8 hours until something else would occupy my mind and time. Things like mealtimes, seeing my wife or interrogation/question time.

Q4. Where was God while the event was taking place (i.e. far off/close by)?

See above. God was close by on the roof. Sorry to sound disrespectful but its a simple fact, He was close by always.

Q5. Did you experience any kind of spiritual encounter with God during this time? (If so - please describe it)

Hard to say cause I have always expected a lot from God and I knew he would get me through this fix, especially since I had committed no crime. My innocence was a freeing thing - I could expect even more from God. If I could see each time frame through with God's help then I would be able to face the following time frame.

Q6. Can you think of any way in which this traumatic experience has "uniquely enabled" or equipped you?

No, just reaffirmed the fact I'm still going to see plenty miracles in my life time, I've already seen plenty, both very big and small.

I hope all this is ok? It seems a little short, but I trust you can decipher my thoughts?

Todd

## Letter to Rosie

Dear Rosie

First of all, thank you for sharing your story of trauma with me on Tuesday. It seems as though coming to Life Line for a trauma debriefing was another courageous step you have taken towards overcoming the fear that has come to visit since the assault took place. Does it seem that way to you? I feel privileged to have had a conversation with you about the assault you suffered at the hands of the gangsters just over a month ago not because of what happened to you, but because of the way you appear to be taking steps against the effects of it. Hearing how you are taking steps to reclaim your life from the trauma has enriched my work as a trauma debriefer. You told me that looking at what happened in detail from different perspectives has helped you. I feel privileged that our conversation appears to have contributed to your being able to stand even more firmly against the fear.

I have been thinking about your story a great deal today and have been touched again by the courage you showed in standing up to the group of gangsters by fighting back and how you turned to God in that moment. You spoke about how you could feel His presence and had His assurance that despite something bad happening, you would be ok. Would you say that calmness and bravery came to your assistance because of the faith you have in God? These qualities appear to have helped you to regain the will to do something when they were beating you and not to just give in. I am wondering whether the clarity that calmness and bravery provided helped you to get away from the gangsters?

I am wondering if bravery and calmness are still available to you when the fear tries to come back? I am thinking in particular of your ability to catch a taxi to college every day and to travel past the very spot where it all happened. Rosie you also said you were surprised that you could *take* the physical beating – that you are in fact so strong physically. Is that realisation helping you to take back any confidence the gangsters may have tried to take from you?

Your mom spoke about how you have always been loving and caring. When you spoke about your concern for the little boy and his dog that you caught a glimpse of when you opened your eyes, I witnessed the loving and caring qualities that your mom spoke about. In the middle of all the trauma, you were concerned about someone else – how witnessing your assault would affect him.

Both you and your mom were surprised at how bravery came to the fore at that time. Now that you have had time to think about it, do you agree that you were very brave? It seems as though bravery was needed when it came to telling your family what had happened to you. Your mom and sister appear to have been particularly supportive though. While your dad was initially angry about you going to an “unsafe area”, do you think his anger could be more about his concern for you? Does having your family and friends stand with you help to minimise the fear?

Your mom spoke with obvious pride about how well you are doing with your college work. Does this mean that you are not allowing the fear to take over this area of your life? You did say that on a scale of 1 to 10 you would place yourself around 8 or 9 in terms of coping.

I am wondering if, with the love and concern of your family and friends, plus having bravery, calmness, physical strength and faith on your side, is it only a matter of time before you regain those last two points on the scale? Does that seem like an attainable goal to you?

Thank you once again for sharing your story with me. Your faith and confidence in God, and your determination not to give in to the fear, has really touched me.

Rosie I wish you well in your studies and every success for your future in banking.

Remember, if you would like us to talk further, you can always phone LifeLine to make another appointment.

God bless

Iain

## Letter to Andrew:

Dear Andrew

It has been a few days since our conversation about the hi-jacking ordeal and I have been wondering how you are doing? Have the anxiety and stress loosened their grip on you a little more now? You did say that our chat had been helpful, despite your initial misgivings about coming to LifeLine for a trauma debriefing. Would you say that you are able to do things that require you to step outside your comfort zone – and that you are able to adapt to new situations quickly?

I have thought a great deal about how this traumatic event was the latest in a list of very traumatic events in your life recently. You told me about how you managed to save a colleague from drowning during a hike, about having another motor vehicle stolen from you and about having an intruder in your home. You summed up these previous traumatic incidences as parts of a puzzle that culminated in the last trauma where your life was physically threatened. You said that you thought that it was almost as though you had been exposed to a *conditioning* exercise – almost as though you were being prepared for what happened in the car park. In what way have the experiences in the last while served as preparation for this last incident? Have you learnt some things about yourself that perhaps you didn't know about before? Have you started seeing life in a different way perhaps? What do you think contributed most to your amazing calmness when you were being robbed at gun point? It seems to me that your calmness probably saved your life and your colleague's (Matthew). Is this something you would agree with?

I was wondering if your ability to control your anger was another quality that helped you in this situation. You told me that you were a rebel when you were growing up – rebelling against all sorts of things. You said that it was through your sport that you taught yourself to control your anger and to channel it through safe actions like tackling in your rugby matches. This ability of yours to manage or contain anger seems to me to have played a crucial role in the encounter with the armed men. As you said the one deliberately tried to get you to react by being aggressive towards you. You opted not to respond in anger and co-operated with their demands. Do you agree that this must have surprised them somewhat? It certainly appears to have been a factor that worked in your favour. Do you see it that way too?

Andrew, a couple of the things you said have really stayed with me. You said: "It's not what happens to you, it's how you respond to it that matters. I choose to be positive." When I asked you if there was anything you would have done differently during the hi-jacking, your response was "Nothing". Would you say that the philosophy you prefer to live by is one that really works for you? It seems to be a philosophy that you extend to others too. An example I am thinking about is when you told me about the shopping mall's security guards. When they had been a bit hesitant to actually stop the hi-jackers, rather than giving in to anger or frustration, you said you were glad because at least then they weren't shot. Listening to you, I witnessed you as being someone who cares a great deal about others. Does this fit for you? Would you rather see yourself as a person with a caring heart rather than a heart filled with revenge?



When I asked you what had changed in your life since the hi-jacking, you said your perspective on things was different. It had made you realise how important people in your life are. You said you spent a bit of time actually tracking down and making contact with friends and family members. These “connections” were always important to you, but you now seem to have prioritised them and that you are now making time to chat to them. What do you think these important people in your life see in you that they appreciate about you?

You explained that your time was previously taken up almost exclusively by work matters. You said you were religious about time-keeping in this regard. Part of this re-allocating of your time has been to spend more time just appreciating life in general – slowing down, watching sun sets, taking walks on the mountain with your dog. You told me you were passionate about the outdoors and that you were finding this passion again. You said that you have taken up running again. You also spoke about the fact that you are spending more quality time with your partner. Would it be right to surmise that the lessons you took from and the choices you made following the hi-jacking has brought you closer together?

One of the things I remember asking you about is your sense of spirituality. What made me ask you this was the fact that you shared with me a sense of almost knowing something was going to happen, just before the hi-jacking took place. Also, when you finally got hold of your mother, she told you that she had been frantically trying to get hold of you because she had a “premonition” of something bad happening to you. Is it possible that this could be another dimension of that *puzzle* you used to explain what happened? Now that you have had more time to reflect on the *puzzle*, do you think God could have played some role in helping you stay calm, and to survive? Is this a thought that could help strengthen you further in standing against the anxiety and stress?

Andrew, I wish you well as you continue to heal yourself through all the constructive steps that you have already started taking. May you find that all of the people who care, the things that you prefer to do and the way in which you choose to live your life contribute richly to you regaining your passion for life. Please remember, should you need to talk further, I can be contacted through LifeLine.

God bless

Iain