

Eighth EXTRACT from: (14 pages)
'I STILL CLIMB TREES'
by Drummond Marais

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Only a few years ago, I re-discovered the joyful art of climbing trees again. Having gleefully done it in childhood, which then later quite naturally led to my sexual awakening within a certain flamboyant tree, I had chosen to suppress the continuance of such activities during later adolescence. For adults do not climb trees. However, this one particular day I was making great efforts to enjoy a family picnic at Wonderboom Park in Pretoria. My son Matthew was temporarily in Johannesburg, on his way back to England for a second indefinite stay there, and true to my then generously familial nature I had taken him through to 'Pre-historia' so that Norman, Linda and my nieces might spend some enjoyable hours with him. I say that I was making great efforts, but the generally negative and exceedingly boring tone of our family conversation finally became too much for me. So I had casually wandered away from the group on the pretext of going for a short walk. I actually needed to be alone in order to restore my waning energies of positivity and light. Now having always known an affinity with all plant life and having already spent some recent years energising with the energy-giving 'auras' of plants, especially trees, I soon found myself predictably touching, stroking, and then hugging a particular tree, some way off from the family's picnic encampment. And suddenly I had a crazy notion to climb it. Now for some while I had been embracing the intrinsic principle for 'staying in the moment' by allowing intuitive Soul-spontaneity total freedom of expression. So giving my immediate needs full focus, I began to climb that tree.

My progress upon that wooden framework of natural ladders was effortless, and within minutes I had reached the inaccessible limits of the tree's welcoming branches. I felt truly alive again. Restored and invigorated. And the jubilation of my spontaneous cries of joy were unstoppable. It was some minutes before I fully registered my situation, which is when I glanced down towards the ground below me, only to be met by a small sea of confused and worried faces. There was facial evidence of horror upon one or two of the elders gathered there, and the younger faces portrayed a fascinated bewilderment:

“Hi guys!” I shouted down to them.

“What the fuck are you doing, pops?” Matthew responded with a laugh.

“He's had too much to drink,” my sister muttered, already fairly inebriated herself.

“Come on Drum....get down from there! Fifty-year-old men are not supposed to be climbing trees....You'll fall, man!” was my father's comment.

But I stayed up there a while longer without any conscious intention to provoke. For it was so wonderful to be high up in a tree again, suspended inside the fretwork of twigs and branches, and safe from the madness and confusion that inhabited the earth below. I wanted that feeling to last forever.

Unfortunately, human imagination is generally under-utilised by humankind at large. I know that a life coloured by ever-present imaginative abilities can turn the most mundane incident into something rather exciting, and likewise further enhance the thrills of already enjoyable events. Our individual imaginations, which as far as I am concerned are another of the mysterious links to each of our unique Souls, are capable of creating whatever we wish. Who needs drugs and booze when an active imagination is at work? Our limitlessly creative imaginative skills should be employed as often as possible. So if I ever have a need to symbolically escape and withdraw from human chaos and confusion, I can choose to imaginatively simulate that recent unforgettably free moment of climbing a tree by merely re-imagining it. It is the purest form of 'virtual reality' in my humble opinion. And although the imagined re-experience results in the same end product of euphoric freedom, I still tend to prefer the actuality. And

therefore, I still climb trees. And if one uses trees as a metaphor for one's life, then I am bound to confirm that I am still climbing mine!

* * * * *

AND THEREAFTER!

So where am I placed at this moment in time? How much of Soul is at work in my life, and how much influence do I yet allow the personality embodiment of this entity called Drummond?

The other day, during a wonderful meditation with Universal energies, I was given these simple yet powerful words:

“Life is a series of choices – The quality of one's life depends upon the choices one makes.”

It is my heartfelt and Soul-inspired ‘intention’ to continue making only intuitive choices for the remainder of this little lifetime of mine. I seek a permanently joyous, contented and fulfilling existence upon this earth-plane and fully realise that it is entirely up to me to channel and facilitate such through the continuous choices I am required to make, every moment of every day. The journalising of so many influential aspects of my life thus far has clarified for me that certain lessons have already been learned and assimilated. There are still many more lessons to be learnt, I am sure. But I can safely admit that I am no longer the fearful, embittered, disenfranchised, rejected and outcast human being I once believed myself to be. I value the persona of Drummond, but far more importantly, I reverence the presence of the Soul that inhabits my embodiment.

Gratitude is not a negative state of mind. Yet most people apparently fear it. Simple gratitude does not indicate a weakness in one's persona. It does not make one vulnerable to harmful external manipulations. The expressions of gratitude and reverence are possibly the purest and most meaningful emotions of which we humans are capable. And yet so few people bother to express their gratitude at all. One only has to look at a glorious sunset, or observe the innocence of a child at play, or hear the celebratory singing of birds in the morning, amongst innumerable other

uplifting examples, to fully appreciate the immense beauty and glory of our earthly existence. How can one not humbly revere and be grateful for that? I assure you that “thank you” is seldom far from my thoughts and lips these days.

My present path of Spiritual Enlightenment is a truly glorious and rewarding process. I highly recommend it for anyone who senses an element of dissatisfaction or emptiness in their lives and is thereby courageously inspired to change their current direction. A certain detached solitariness seems to be essential for the smooth continuation of my spiritual journey and I suspect that such solitariness is probably an integral part of the enlightening process for all seeking-souls. Allow me to illuminate this philosophy with some rhyming-lines that were meditatively inspired during a recent trip to the great Namib Desert:

*‘No man is an island, or so the saying goes –
But this man IS an island, for my isolated Soul well knows
Such depths of Soul-security, whilst around my island humanity flows,
Insecurely searching for human support within other humans’ turmoiled
throes!*

*No longer do I share their need to seek out consolation
Within the arms of other lost-souls, who are likewise craving confirmation
Of self-value and self-worthiness – mine is internal, Self-consolidation:
‘Knowing the Self within solitariness is the only path towards Self-
illumination.’*

*And any human sharing which my Soul may need to do,
The Universe facilitates, provides from yonder blue
Soul-mates who truly understand – though they are far and few –
More often, shipwrecked-souls are washed to the welcoming beaches of my
island-hue.’*

(D.M.)

Back in the eighteenth century, Edward Gibbon penned these simple and poignant words: ***‘I was never less alone than when by myself.’*** It is a concept in which I presently abide. Fortunately the Universe has finally blessed me with a generous capacity for full acceptance of my inner Self. I no longer waste my energies upon destructively self-critical analysis, and I

have thereby grown to love and respect the truest me. And that is a direct result of my consistent introspection within solitude. How I now revel in my own company! Which reminds me of the words of Charles Evans Hughes, words that contain more than an echo of Oscar Wildean flippancy: 'A man has to live with himself and should see to it that he always has good company!' In my modest opinion, I am presently experiencing very good company indeed. However, I must hasten to add that I am still a mere human being, with very real human needs and weaknesses, as well as a very basic human need to share. So allow me share a few more lines from my haphazardly tinkered poetry, which aptly encapsulate the above sentiments but also include a surprise ending:

*'I sit upon swaying branches, having tree-climbed as high as I could;
My emotions of humble astonishment vibrate through both body and wood –
I feel so little and yet so large, disconnected from mundane humanity;
Its foibles, neuroses and ego-garbage have never inspired inner-soul-sanity.*

*The rhythms of tree-limbs moved by the wind, enter me, seeking the core of
me;
An unexpected shiver; my Soul is a-quiver; Universal Connection claims me.*

*From within this simple meditation, a fragmentary thought emerges –
Though I'm one with the Universe, I am alone, and my human need for
sharing, surges –
And although I accept that at fifty-three it's a solitary exercise to climb a
tree,
I cannot but hope for a twin-soul, like me, to join me and likewise seek to be
free.'*

(D.M.)

Well at last the Universe has deemed it fitting for that final hope of mine to be fulfilled, once and for all! But before I elaborate upon that joyous concept, I need to take you back to 2004.

Towards the end of that year, which in it self had proved to be a year of spiritual consolidation resulting in constant emotional peacefulness, an unanticipated and rather exciting vocational surprise came my way. Ever the 'jobbing' actor, seeking consistent employment, I auditioned for the new national production of "CHICAGO". As ever, this was an emotionally taxing

and predictably humbling process, and one that I have endured for far too long now as it definitely becomes no easier with age! However, the process was made more bearable by the presence of Scott Faris, the American director, and Gary Chryst, the Broadway choreographer. I immediately sensed that both these men knew this show backwards and their 'directorial' advice during that audition period was very useful. I respected them from the outset, although I held little hope that I would be cast in their show. This was primarily due to the fact that I had seen their London West End production in 2000 and predicted similar casting decisions being made here. Apparently 900 aspirant performers auditioned for "CHICAGO" at the Civic Theatre during September 2004. I had waited for my own audition-call alongside many younger, high profile actors who were likewise 'applying' for the Billy Flynn role. Ian Von Memerty was among them. And without personal defeatism at play, I automatically assumed that I stood no chance against such musical theatre 'luminaries'. But I was wrong!

When Hazel Feldman later invited me to accept the role of Billy Flynn in "CHICAGO", I was overjoyed. At last I was being granted some well-earned confidence in my potential performance abilities. Of course the fact that such a belief in me actually came from two 'foreigners' did not totally escape me! Nor did the subsequent gossip regarding certain actors' 'noses-being-put-out-of-place' surprise me in the slightest! But then, you have already had a little insight into my route of doubtful 'acceptance' within local theatre circles, during the past twenty-five years.

At the end of the day, "CHICAGO" has to go down in my personal history as the major highlight of my dubious career. At last I was treated with respectfulness by both management and peers alike. Unfortunately this has been an aspect sorely lacking in most productions I have encountered in this country. Our indulgently extended rehearsal period was an absolute delight, with our inspirational directorial team being pleasantly surprised by the quickness and spontaneity of our cast of gifted young local performers. And I, the elderly member of the cast, was personally allowed to gradually evolve the character of Billy Flynn with confidence and suitable *panache*, through the supportive encouragement of our wonderfully sensitive and highly knowledgeable director.

"CHICAGO's" successful achievement of the very highest theatrical standards to be seen in South Africa is now common knowledge. Even the so-called *aficionados* and critics within local thespian circles were stunned

by this production! In my opinion, it was flawless in every way, and it is my greatest hope that the standards so ably set by it will inspire the continued pursuit of theatrical excellence hereafter, replacing the general mediocrity that South African audiences have been obliged to accept over the past few decades.

I would be lying to you if I suggested that my involvement throughout was 'plain-sailing'! Unfortunately, once the Americans vacated South African soil, leaving a team of 'prefects' to supervise the maintenance of the high standards that had already been established, I began to suspect elements of too many prior experiences of 'The Great Amateur Dramatic Society of South Africa'! Little people being granted authoritative empowerment over others is seldom a pretty picture to behold. And as has ever been my self-assertive need, I naturally felt justified in calling such behaviour to task. Fortunately, in this respect, my minor altercation with Hazel Feldman's management was dealt with fairly smoothly and without repercussive results. I believe that no grudges have been born of such action. I want to state that I personally hold Hazel Feldman in the very highest esteem. She is a 'theatre-being' who fully understands and respects the artistic temperament. She is also a highly skilled and courageously entrepreneurial businesswoman who deserves major accolades for the recent inroads her management has made within world-class professional musical theatre productions in this country. Hazel, you have my unquestionable respect and praise, and I was so very grateful for the opportunity to be part of your astounding production.

Coupled with my public exposure during the seven-month run of "CHICAGO", which included a great deal of publicity-media coverage, I became subject to a certain amount of 'fame'. This was a first for me! As you will by now have gathered, 'fame and fortune' have never been driving motivational forces with regards my work in show business. I have always cherished my comfortable anonymity. It was therefore slightly disturbing to have strangers frequently approach me in public places, unabashedly stating: "You were that lawyer guy in "CHICAGO"...weren't you?" And often enough one of those still-remembered, thoughtless comments would accompany such a stranger's approach: " You know....you're much smaller than you look on stage, hey!" Somehow the Universe always granted me the good grace and placating patience to suitably acknowledge what I presume such people saw as a complimentary recognition, on their part, but to then make my exit as quickly as possible!

I have received much personal praise for my interpretation of Billy Flynn, and I shall always retain uplifting and positive memories of my involvement in "CHICAGO". As a direct result of my exposure within that show, I have subsequently been invited to play the role of Henry Higgins in Deon Opperman's forthcoming production of "MY FAIR LADY" (2006). Now this particular stage-persona has held a deep fascination for me, since early childhood, as does the musical play it self. So I have already claimed this current vocational opportunity as a 'dream' to be fulfilled. I sincerely look forward to it, as well as the long 'rest' thereafter....for I intend "FAIR LADY" to be my 'swan song'! I believe that I have devotedly 'served at the altar' of the performing arts for 50 years now, half a century to be precise! And although I confidently sense that I have yet many more vibrantly energetic decades left within me, I am choosing to close the biggest chapter of my life-focus until now. It is timeous for me to soon explore the other diverse realms of my soul creativity and spiritual enlightenment.

A major influence upon my current vocational transition is the wondrously humbling fact that the Universe has finally sent me the Soul Mate I have subliminally been seeking throughout my life! And with this definitive bonding has come the realisation of my own as yet untapped future potential as a human being.

This relationship proves to me that there IS a soul mate for each and every human upon earth. And although our earthly meeting has been delayed until the latter part of both our lives, our soul bonding is unquestionable. For me there has been the added confirmation and consolation that I was not required to 'fall in love' as I have done far too often before. That an inexplicable deep love and devotion exists between us is a given, and yet neither of us experienced the 'falling' sensations that prior love-encounters had provided. For Gary and I have been graced with an almost unbelievable 'ascendance' into love! Our mutuality in Love was already awaiting us. All we did was ascend upwards, into the welcoming embrace of our presently hallowed and glorious consciousness.

"Nous nous sommes élevés, en amour!"

Our awe and gratitude is limitless, as is the potential future longevity of our continued loving partnership. Intuition suggests that we shall spend the remainder of our earth-lives together, ever mutually supportive and

caring, as well as being forever invigorated and stimulated by each other's embodied presence.

I experience a certain sense of human-achievement within my presently elated consciousness. This is partly due to the fact that, prior to my serendipitous encounter with Gary Pitt, in 2005, I had finally succeeded in exerting control over a past habitual human debilitation of mine. With Universal grace on my side I had managed to avoid the 'falling-in-love-syndrome' for quite a few years! Perhaps this in itself had been one of my major Soul-purposes for this present incarnation? To acknowledge my previous lack of self-worth, which forever had me seeking love-partnerships to complete and fulfil me. Always looking for someone else to take care of little me, because of my own psychological inadequacies. So giving myself an 'nth' of credit for this tiny humanoid achievement had already had a great impact upon my overall growth and evolution.

Coupled with my evolving spiritual growth, I had gradually become a whole human being. Independent, content and at peace. I had truly believed that love-relationships were over for me and I was quite content to be facing a future of continued 'bachelor' solitariness for the rest of my life. However, to be perfectly honest, I had not altogether given up hope! For without consciously wasting further energies upon that prior search for a special intimate partnership, I somehow intended to remain open to the possibility of any such blissful unification any future stage of my life. I would keep my ears, eyes and intuition wide open with human hopefulness but with no human expectations at all!

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'To hold a dream is to live in hopefulness!'

(Anonymous)

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From the day I turned 54, and with the realisation that I had now entered my 55th year on earth, an intuitive knowing settled upon my consciousness. I inexplicably knew that this would become a very important 'threshold' year for me. One that would provide me with exciting new opportunities, which in turn would launch the next big chapter of my life.

With my prior dabbling into Numerology, I added the 5 and 5 together to make 10, and then reduced it by discounting the 0, which has no numerological relevance to my knowledge. So I ended up with a ONE. Then I got to thinking about all prior birthdays that would have led to exactly the same numerological result. Well they happen to be birthdays falling upon the ages of 10, 19, 28, 37, 46, in other words every nine years! Suddenly my intuitive spiritual curiosity led me to examine personal occurrences and emotional states at each of those passed 'ONE' years. The revelations astounded me!

At about the age of 10, I became consciously aware of my misfit, out-cast status within society and I had necessarily adopted a self-invented independence of spirit. At the time of my 19th birthday, I fully claimed independence from parental dependency and arrogantly began smoking, drinking and generally behaved as most tertiary students do, with a total disdain for society and the overall 'system' at work upon the earth. It was the beginning of the adult 'me'! I was married, had fathered a child and subsequently became divorced by the time I reached 28, and that was the breakthrough year that I finally claimed and began to live my profoundly homosexual identity. Around my 37th birthday, a romantic love affair with a third party negatively threatened my then five-year love-partnership and I chose to end it in preference to losing the stability I had already established with Cecil. Right or wrong, who can say? However my 46th year on earth provided me with the opportunity to reclaim my life, for myself at last. After moving from one relationship straight into another and then yet another, for the previous 27 years of my life, I finally reclaimed my original childhood state of solitary independence. And then, barring a couple of misguided potential partnership choices along the way, I spent the next 9 years preparing for this major event. The meeting, recognition and re-bonding with my truest of all Soul mates, Gary Pitt, my brother, friend and lover!

You may well be interested to note that, with undoubted Universal synchronicity, my present love-partner turned 46 in 2005! He now likewise acknowledges the existence of strange numerological possibilities within a lifetime, and with the 'ONE' years being the obvious providers of amazingly turnabout opportunities and events. So who knows what yet lies in store for me at 64?

Remaining on the subject of age, you cannot help but have noticed that Gary is my junior by nine years. However the age-gap has no

significance or influence upon our partnership, which is one of absolute equality. We share such similar childhood, teenage and early adulthood generation referencing, which may simply be a result of our both having been born and reared in Rhodesia? On the other hand, this ageless phenomenon between us could be due to his advanced maturity and my personal lack of such! Although I jokingly remind him that any crazy manifestation of my immature 'tree-climbing-pixilated-ness' is merely proof of my ever-buoyant creativeness and extremely high levels of childish energy. From which he naturally stands to benefit, positively of course!

For the first time in my life, I now share a home with a compatriot who is unquestionably my equal. Fortunately we possess intrinsic similarities when it comes to humour, so laughter ever punctuates our endless conversations. In fact we are of the quirky opinion that we must have both been previously deprived of the 'sleep-over-syndrome' that most teenagers take as a given. For under the pretext of an 'early night', we invariably find ourselves engaged in deeply interesting conversations until the early hours of many a morning. It is such wonderful fun to be going to bed with one's best friend and buddy, every night. And our connubial bed is naturally a favoured place for activities other than cerebral! Suffice it to say that our monogamous sex-life is absolutely amazing and so mutually satisfying that we choose not to restrict such activities to the bedroom. Our individually established *penchants* for nudity are likewise an added commonality and the extreme privacy of our present home and garden are highly conducive to spontaneous outbursts of lustful testosterone! Our home literally sings with the joyful love filling it.

Seriously though, I know that our initial recognition of one another's Souls must have depended upon our individual spiritual awareness at that time. An intuitive sensitivity within each of us took control that night. This is the quality we most respect within our relationship. May that soul-nurturing continue forever. Our mutual goal of seeking continued spiritual evolution and enlightenment within our separate embodiments, is a given. For we both take responsibility for the supportive, encouraging roles we potentially play within each other's continual spiritual growth.

Amongst other commonalties are our individual experiences of heterosexual marriage and our progeny thereof. My son Matthew has met my new partner and favourably approves of my choice. And I have been presented with a second opportunity to have some influence in the hands-on

rearing of a young family. Gary's two children, Amber and Tyler, currently spend every alternate weekend with us, during which we all bond positively and purposefully like any nuclear family!

Like me, Gary has had many previous gay encounters, one of which developed into a significant long-term partnership. However, when we met, we had separately come to terms with our individual acceptance of future solitariness. We had both already spent some catalytic years of quality time, alone, with ourselves. Which suggests to me that our relationship contains no emotional neediness or insecure dependency. We are presently co-joined because we want to live, love and grow together. For ours is truly an unconditional love. And we felt that the process that would be most conducive to our future accomplishment of those ideals was 'matrimony'. But of course, gays cannot legally marry within the borders of our 'democratically liberated society'.

Then I was fortuitously presented with a wonderful new word: 'PROTHALAMION'. Apparently, from the Ancient Greek, it means - 'a pre-nuptial song raised up to connubial union'. And this concept soon became our reality.

"On Saturday 22nd October, 2005, Gary Pitt and Drummond Marais solemnised their Soul Union and Connubial Bonding at a symbolic 'PROTHALAMION CEREMONY', hosted at Zietsies Restaurant in Auckland Park, Johannesburg. The blissful couple were surrounded and lovingly supported by family, friends and fellow-soul-mates. Drummond and Gary ask for God's Blessing upon their future partnership."

For the second time in our two separate lives, Gary and I formerly and publicly proclaimed our love for another human being and earnestly pledged our fullest commitment to our future together, our Soul Union. It will ever remain one of the most important moments of my entire life. I am genuinely grateful to God that I have been given this most wondrous of opportunities, at this late stage of my life, and I pray for God's continued guidance and blessing throughout this special 'marriage' of ours.

Literally a week after our Union Celebration, the media suddenly announced that the South African Parliament had finally decide to officially recognise same-sex marriages in this country. Of course it will take a year or so in order to achieve the bureaucratic legislative procedures that such a

uniquely contentious decision necessitates. However, I can assure you that Gary and I will most certainly be amongst the first participants in 'legalised' gay marriage in South Africa. We believe it is part of our God-given 'right' as humans!

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This has been a most interesting and illuminating process for me. Looking back upon my life thus far. Re-examining incidents and events that have influenced who and what I am today. Deciding what to share and what to ignore. It was the amazing film director Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980) who once said: '*Drama is life with the dull bits cut out*'. And although I have occasionally ignored such sage advice, during preceding pages, by sometimes including seemingly dull accounts of certain events in my life, I have likewise decided to omit the inclusion of many other contrastingly dramatic past incidents. There are various reasons for this final choosing, my prime excuse being a driving intention to honestly show the contrasts between the divergent circumstantial influences that have affected the life-route I have come so far. And whilst accepting that this *memoir* has been episodic in nature, I sincerely hope that you the reader have at least gained some levels of insight into the uniquely divergent aspects of this oft confusing human condition. For every life is exactly that, individually unique and necessarily human.

Having just re-read the preceding pages, I know it is highly probable that my impetuous life-choices may be perceived as having often been misguided and irresponsible. And if that is the case, it is surely my responsibility to acknowledge that every new circumstance I have ever encountered has contained great purpose and necessary 'teaching'. For although the end results may have been both positive and negative, they have always led to purposeful results, and those have provided potential for my overall growth and evolution as a human being. For nothing occurs without purposeful impact upon one's life, no matter how minuscule that purpose may be. I believe it rests with each one of us to find the purpose behind every circumstance, give it deserved value, and then attempt to apply the life-lessons we have learned from it. Humans continually make mistakes, or should I rather call them 'mistaken choices'. I have little doubt that I shall continue to do so. But one of the most vital lessons I have learnt in recent years is the fact that mistakes should never be viewed as failures.

Human failure is a man-made concept, and one that stems from the human race's gullible belief that God, of any religion, requires certain things. Yet the true God asks nothing at all of Its creation, other than it should BE. Therefore we humans can never fail in anything. We either choose to evolve through the experiential circumstances of our lives, or not, in which case we merely stagnate for a while, *sans* the consolidation of lessons learnt and any soul growth achieved thereby. And I predict that any future 'mistakes' I happen to make will probably occur within fresh new realms of life-encounters, for I choose to believe that I am presently in the process of applying the lessons I have learned thus far. And thereby, past 'mistakes' should now re-occur less frequently.

*“The road to wisdom? Well it’s plain and simple to express:
Err and err and err again, but less and less and less.”*

(Piet Hein - 1905-1996)

People will always own their private opinions about others, but progressing individuals cannot allow outside opinion to affect the monitoring of self-growth. For individuals are their own best monitors of personal evolutionary progression. You should know whether or not evolutionary growth is taking place in your life. I know that it is in mine. Thus I can honestly and humbly claim that mine is a life in progress and a bright future still lies ahead for me. And hopefully there will forever be trees for me to climb!