



Writing Letter

April 2025

re-story, re-create, re-
imagine you

for this letter, a weekly story
and ongoing opportunities -
dorianhaarhoffblog.co.za

Dear writer, storyteller, reader, lover of words, images, silences...

Thank you for those who subscribe to the monthly letter and/or who receive the weekly Sat story. While the letter and story remain as a gift to all, for those who wish, I appreciate any voluntary donation.

Dr R D Haarhoff Standard Bank Current account 0828 59 248

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light...
(St. Francis of Assisi)*

Living this Prayer

This month's letter is a tribute to the Carl Schlettwein Foundation in Basel who, for many years, has supported and encouraged me. This March, inland and at the coast, I spent another 23 days in Namibia where I lived for 20 years. Marsia Reed of the Lithon Foundation arranges my visit, as she is connected to many of the NGOs, a free ambulance services et al. People in a country with little resources, but rich in passion, altruism and imagination.



The nature of the project? To train storytellers so they can pass on this life changing medium to children in need / at risk. I storyshopped at orphanages, ECD, a free ambulance unit, a Lighthouse ministry where they teach children archery - some 20 engagements. I remain moved by the faith, power, humility of these women and a scattering of men. In Okahandja I encountered 25 women singing, all from 25 different preschools, most of

them teaching in tin shacks. So open to story learning. They are PDF - Passionate Dedicated Faithful and ECD - Energetic Courageous Determined.

Here is sprinkling of their responses:

- ✦ I learned to think out of the box
- ✦ You can use anything to tell a story even a piece of cloth
- ✦ It's important to use objects & or pictures
- ✦ Include the children in the story
- ✦ I can now through a story recognise a 'troubled home'
- ✦ We will be writing our own stories. We know how.

At MYO (Mondesa Youth Opportunity) there is a wall with past student names stretching back 20 years. Some of them have become doctors and teachers. One alumni, Janice, is an acclaimed opera singer who will perform in her home town. She sang for me. This is testimony to the amazing work that the staff do in providing aftercare for over a hundred children often from a traumatic life at home.

Volunteers such as Hendrik Schmidt with light in their eyes encourage self-help, building a jungle-jim in the orphanage yard, setting up waste collection competitions, designing and selling LYN (Love your Neighbour) socks and developing a board game. The youngsters take it to the weekend market, where people pay NS\$20 to challenge them and receive an iced lolly the children make at the orphanage.

Encountering these people is humbling and opens me to reaffirm my *vocare*, calling, re-question my faith and the beliefs of childhood. Rekindle the metaphors by which I live. While engaged in story, I wrote this poem:

Faith Cathedral

my left brain houses an academic
who follows the logic and the linear path
of a university hall and quadrangle.

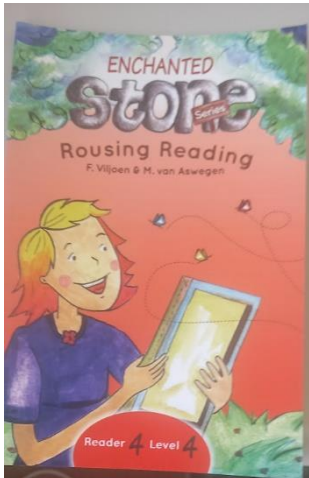
right brain inhabits a gothic cathedral
piping organ hymns of childhood,
stirring the font waters in the call to faith.

I bridge the corpus collosum,
stretch out one hand towards
the agnostic discipline of the red gown.

the other links fingers with the story priest
who sings the disciple prayer of St Francis
in the choral service of divine belief.

born left-handed, this vision holistic
beyond rationality, this mysticism,
this mystery resounds, the loudest.

I interpret their faith, which might for them be literal, as metaphoric, for I believe we are energized by divine power. Attempting to engage with St Francis - 'Where there is darkness let us bring light.' I believe that stories do not come from but through me, that 'still small voice of calm' suggesting where to go next, which 'lit match' (prompt), which story, which song. In such a world synchronicity sits and chats, a parrot on my shoulder, as a care giver mentions the specifics of the very next story I am about to tell.



The more I live in stories, the more I live in synchronicity. At Special Olympics (special needs) children collect a stone then I tell the *Stone Soup* story. I look down and on the teacher's desk - behold this book. Synchronicity subverts cause and effect.

Two minutes walk from my Swakopmund apartment, I saw sudden a poster - *The Incredible Journey of Tinkerbell Van Tonder*, (Amanda Strydom.) Off I went to greet the echoes of the theme that I'd been engaging with every day. A Khoisan fairy helps an orphaned girl escape from a cellar in an abusive Home. She boards a train, finds a surrogate mother in a city taxi and next door to her restaurant, a gay hairdresser father. They raise her. Tinkie ends up in exile in Holland, to return as a singer when Mandela is released.

Many sessions ended with us singing

*You raise me up so I can stand on mountains
You raise me up to walk on stormy seas
I am strong when I am on your shoulders
You raise me up to more than I can be*

May stories raise us up.

Dorian

Writing Retreat Radar – Autumn 2025

detailed flyers on request

1 Mentoring: ongoing one-on-one attention

You help me to sound like myself (numerous clients)

Like a pair of sandals we walk this road together.

2. Magic Carpet Writers (Somerset West)

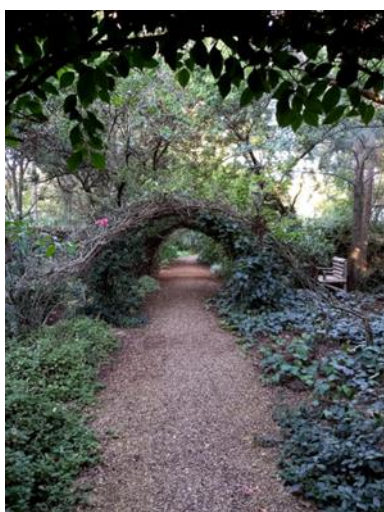
last Wed of the month writeaway (next 26 March)

a fun-loving supportive thinking/being group of aspirant writers

3. Writeway in Pringle Bay 17-18 May

Are words and ideas stuck in your head? Want to shake them loose? Need inspiration and writing company? Befriend words/let words befriend you?

Then this weekend is for you.



4. Word, Image & Being

Fri 13 (17.30) – Mon 16 June (12.00)

@ Temenos McGregor -www.temenos.org.za

+27 23 625 1871

for info (bookings via Dorian)

discover the writer / artist inside

5. Tides 2025

A Story Apprenticeship on Zoom

The story is wiser than the teller

The **zoom story mentoring course** is about passing on story-knowing, insight and delight. It is sharing a passion for stories, know-how and and and...

6 x 2 hour fortnightly encounters - 11 & 25 May 8 & 22 June 6 & 20 July