

LOGA VIRAHSAWMY

Hell in Paradise

©Loga Virahsawmy

*5, Edwin Ythier Street,
Rose Hill, 71368,
Mauritius.
gonaz@intnet.mu*

CONTENTS

[1. Frances](#)

[2. Wedding Preparation](#)

[3. The Police](#)

[4. Thabo](#)

[5. Frances And Thabo](#)

[6. Provisional Charge](#)

[7. Trial by The Media](#)

[8. Police Station](#)

[9. Thabo In His Flat](#)

[10. Funeral](#)

[11. The Legal Team](#)

[12. The Maid](#)

[13. Departure](#)

[14. Prime Minister](#)

[15. Rita](#)

[16. Investigation](#)

Chapter 1

FRANCES

Awesome! What a beautiful lady in her white wedding dress holding a bouquet of the most magnificent white orchids. Her fitted dress was made of white raw silk and decorated with real pearls that were stitched in a disorderly style to give the embroidery a modern pattern. Her makeup was just perfect. Her lipstick of a pale pink champagne colour looked discreet and very classy. Her high heels shoes were made of the same material as her dress and decorated with a few pearls. Her diamond earrings and pendant were from Cartier especially bought for the occasion by her husband to be. The wedding dress was unique and made by the best tailor in Mauritius.

Frances' parents knocked at the door. No reply. "This is odd Daniel" the wife said. "Frances should be in front of the mirror right now doing all the finishing touch with her makeup. Why is she not responding? Myriam who came to do her hair, her makeup and helped to put on her dress left a few hours ago. She said she was in a hurry to leave as she was the main facilitator of a national workshop on grooming and self-development for high officials of a private company."

Myriam, the relooking and hairdresser designer of international reputation was a friend of Frances. When Frances gave her the confirmed date for the wedding, Myriam coincided the date with a workshop that she was invited to facilitate in Mauritius. She made sure that the date fell in the same week as Frances wedding. It was important for her to help her friend on her special day.

Frances and Myriam bumped into each other on the University campus. Their handbags and books fell on the ground. They looked at each other straight in the eyes and started to laugh like small children before helping each other to pick up their belongings. This was the beginning of a long friendship although they followed different routes.

Myriam sent an e-mail with pictures to Frances prior to the "D" Day to advise her on different hair styles. "I have chosen hairstyle of brides with short hair. Please let me know if you cannot get what you want in Mauritius. I will bring them for you. As for your makeup do not worry, I will bring everything with me and will leave them behind for your personal use. Knowing your complexion and the style of your wedding dress, this makes my task easier. I will also bring the exact make up shades."

Once the date of the wedding was fixed, both Frances and her husband to be, Thabo, went through a wide variety of pictures and videos to get an idea of the style of the wedding dress. They finally went for a white raw silk dress decorated with pearls and a hair clip covered with real pearls.

Frances did not wait long to send an e-mail to Myriam once the decision was taken on the dress and the hair clip. "You do not have to worry as I can get the clip in Mauritius and will get someone to mount the pearls on the clip. We have also decided that once the clip is fixed on my hair you will place a little white orchid at one end of the clip. Is this OK by you?"

Frances was known to be always well dressed with matching shoes and bags. She never wore fake and kept saying to her friends "if you cannot afford the real thing then go for simple outfits but do not wear fake." She had the figure of a young Jane Fonda. She had a personal trainer who came to her place three times a week for her exercises and over and above her training, she did aqua

gym twice a week. Frances had a good balance between her demanding job and her social life. Due to her busy schedule, she opted for a home coach rather than going to the gymnasium.

Christine knocked at the door even louder. Still no reply! Both Daniel and Christine looked at each other. Without saying a word, Christine slowly turned the knob of the door. The door was not locked. They entered very slowly and apologised to their daughter for entering the room without her approval. "We are so sorry darling for opening your door without permission but we did knock and there was no answer."

The parents looked around, went into the bedroom and found Frances fast asleep on the bed. "Frances, darling, we know you are nervous and wanted to get some rest before the official ceremony in church. But we do not want to be late. Do we now, darling? At least you are ready even with shoes on and bouquet in your hands; please get up so that we can make our way to the church. The close relatives and friends are waiting downstairs with their glasses champagne to welcome you while you go down the stairs in your beautiful wedding dress." Christine told Frances in a soft voice.

No reply! "She must be fast asleep!"

Very carefully, Christine touched both Frances' hands with the bouquet in them and said: "Why have you put the air conditioner so low, no wonder your hands are cold. I know you wanted to be at ease while putting on your makeup and your fitted dress but the room is too cold darling. Now your hands are freezing. Let me raise the temperature a bit while you get up to put the finishing touch to your hair and makeup after this good nap."

No reply! Her mother shook her.

No response!

Her mother shook her harder. No reaction.

Christine cried on top of her voice. Our baby is not waking up. Please call an ambulance. No, no, please call the police. Christine went into a fit and fell on the floor. The guests who were downstairs with their glasses of champagne climbed the stairs in the speed of lightening to know what was happening.

Horror! A young lady in her white wedding dress, holding her bouquet, with shoes and everything on including her jewellery ready to go to church laid on the bed like a dead body. Her mother without consciousness was at the foot of the bed. A father who lost control over himself could not decide what to do and was pacing the room by mumbling "SAMU, police, SAMU, police...", until one of the guests decided to take over.

Maudee, one of the guests, called both the police and the SAMU from her mobile telephone and told them about the urgency of the matter and gave the name of the family as well as the address. Hearing the name "Arnaud" the police arrived with a whole army of officers including a forensic doctor. SAMU arrived soon after the police.

There was no playing about. When the police heard the name "Arnaud", the Commissioner of Police put all his weight into the matter. He immediately called for a meeting with his senior staff and explained the urgency and the importance of the case. Five senior police officers including the

Deputy Commissioner of Police were sent to the Arnaud's residence. Another five police officers were asked to be grounded at the Police Headquarters to wait for instructions.

The reputation of the police was at stake if they did not handle the situation properly.

The Arnaud was a well-known and reputed rich Franco family with connections from high quarters both in Mauritius and abroad. Daniel Arnaud was the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the largest offshore company with Head Office in Mauritius and with branches in ten African countries.

Frances worked in her father's company and was in charge of quite a few departments. She had 400 employees working under her directly and indirectly.

But Frances' responsibility in the Company did not happen just because she was the daughter of the rich magnate.

When Frances was doing her studies in Corporate Management at Harvard University, Daniel Arnaud convened a Special Board meeting of the Company with only one item on the Agenda "succession plan".

Daniel Arnaud wanted his only child to take over the Company once he reached the aged of 60. He chaired this one item agenda meeting giving the full curriculum vitae of his daughter including age and experience. He suggested that his daughter took over as CEO of the Company once he reached the age of 60. "There are of course conditions attached to the offer before a final decision is taken. Miss Arnaud must obtain her first degree followed by her masters and a doctorate in Corporate Management. She will also have to undergo rigorous training in our home Company as well as all the overseas branches."

The proposal was unanimously agreed and recorded as approved. The Minutes were signed by Mr Arnaud and his Deputy.

Frances did all her University studies with flying colours. As soon she returned to Mauritius an internship in her father's company was waiting for her. She travelled to the ten countries to get a good insight of the running of the company and to understand the work with all its weaknesses and strengths. She was so good that she brought new creative ideas to the Company and all her suggestions were accepted by the Board. The Company flourished and profits doubled.

One of the police officers helped Christine to get back on her feet.

The Forensic Doctor asked all the guests, except Maude, the one who telephoned the police, to wait downstairs. He examined the body and confirmed the death of Frances. "I would say that she died over one hour ago."

The Arnauds could not believe what they were hearing. They were in shock. Christine cried on top of her voice and shouted "this is not possible. Is this a horror film that we are watching? Can't you see that she is all dressed up ready to go to church for the wedding? How can you say that she died over...?"

Christine did not even finish her sentence and fell on the floor again.

By then the SAMU had arrived and looked after Christine. The medical doctor of SAMU administered an injection to her and asked Maude to take her downstairs and give her some sweet tea.

Having done with Christine, the Responsible Office of SAMU then said that they had better leave as this was now a police case and they preferred to leave the matter in the hands of the police as the victim was already dead. He added "But your wife, although quite shaken up and still in shock, will be fine. Do not worry Mr Arnaud."

The Pathologist then tried to find out if the death was natural. Very discreetly he told Mr Arnaud that he would need him to answer a few questions. He wanted to know the state of health of his daughter; whether she had heart problems or any other illnesses.

Mr Arnaud said "you better ask my wife. She will be in a better position to talk about the health of our daughter."

By then Mrs Arnaud accompanied by Maude had joined the police. The doctor asked the same questions to which Mrs Arnaud replied in the negative. The doctor went further with his questions. He wanted to know whether it was a homicide, a murder or a suicide. "Was your daughter under extreme emotional distress or severe depression? Was she the suicidal type? Was your daughter taking drugs?"

Christine started to go into a fit again and shouted to the doctor. "What kind of question is that? We know you are doing your job but can't you be more humane? Can't you see that our daughter was ready to get married? Do you think she would have been able to get so well prepared if she was on drugs or if she was terminally ill?"

"Doctor, you may be the professional here but these questions are really unwarranted. The parents are already under severe trauma and you are adding insult to injury," one of the senior police officers said.

"I am doing my job and I must know the cause of death. I need to know how she died. In my 25 years of career this is the first time I see such a case. A lady ready to get married found dead on her bed. I need to explore all avenues to know the cause of death. From what I gather the door was not locked and there is no visible wound. It does not look like manslaughter. We need to take the body to the hospital do an autopsy in order to be able to investigate further into the cause of the death."

The doctor spoke to the parents to ask for their consent to do the autopsy. Mr Arnaud signed a consent form and said "We have no objection. We want to know how our daughter who was so vibrant, full of energy, enjoying life to the fullest and has never had any serious illness could die so suddenly. She was so excited and has prepared her wedding ceremony with every single detail. She was over the moon with this wedding. So, why this sudden death. We thought she was sleeping and now we hear that she is dead. We need to know the truth."

[Back to contents](#)

Chapter 2

WEDDING PREPARATION

With the help of a few friends from abroad and in Mauritius as well as her maid, Frances planned her wedding in all its smallest details. She did not want to involve her parents in the wedding preparation and even told them so. The only exception she made was to ask her parents for the list of their guests and made it clear that only close families, close friends and partners from overseas should be on the list.

There was a huge organisation with many staff involved for the wedding. Guests from overseas including Namibia were invited to the church wedding as well as the cocktail, dinner and dance in the most beautiful and newly built hotel in the South of the Island. The hotel gave a panoramic view of sea cliff where waves crashed directly on the cliffs. This would have made the most spectacular scenery of a wedding party. It was the first time that a wedding party was organised in the hotel.

The wedding card was white with embossed off-white lettering, leaving a space in the middle of the card for the names of the guests. At the foot of the card there was a mention that the church ceremony would be followed by cocktail, dinner and dance at Myriad Hotel in the South of Mauritius. Myriad Hotel was a six-star hotel that only very rich Mauritians and international stars could afford.

A separate note was printed and put in the envelope to inform guests that the reception as well as the dinner dance would be held under a "marquis" in front of the swimming pool. The guests were invited to a firework show on the dot of midnight to be followed by more champagne and a hot mulligatawny soup.

Rooms were booked in the same hotel for overseas guests as well as Frances' Mauritian friends who wanted to stay overnight.

Fresh flowers were ordered from Singapore and shipped by plane to Mauritius. Downward flow of orchids and lilies with one single pink rose in the middle were placed in a crystal vase on each table. A scented big candle was also placed in each vase. The main table where the bride and bridegroom with their witnesses would sit was decorated with the same flowers but the bouquets cascaded one after the other so that only flowers could be seen on the outer side of the table.

A bouquet of the same style was made for the single bridesmaid. The recipient for holding the rings was made with white orchids twisted and arranged in the form of a basket. Two buds of red roses stood inside the basket and the two wedding rings were placed in them.

The crispy white table cloth for each table was immaculate. The napkins were shaped into white doves. A whole set of silver cutlery was placed on the side of each fine porcelain plates with three crystal glasses of different sizes in front of each plate. A table setting that looked very much like that in *Remains of the Day* where Anthony Hopkins made sure that everything was perfect and even used a ruler.

There were two huge bouquets of white orchids at the opening of the main entrance of the marquis and all along the aisles where the bride and bride groom would walk. Shallow vases with big white candles were also placed along the aisles.

Even the place where the orchestra would sit was decorated with white flowers with a couple of very high fat candles.

Laminated flooring was placed on the sand and a huge Persian carpet covered the flooring. Frances did not want her guests to have to remove their high heel shoes when they walked or danced under this magnificent huge marquis.

Provision was made for ten tables of ten guests on a round table with plenty of space between the tables so that disabled guests could have plenty of room to move around in their wheelchairs or those walking with clutches. The dance floor was also designed in such a way so that guests in wheelchairs could have the chance to dance sitting in their chairs. White carnations forming big balls with a lamp in them hanged from the roof of the marquis just over each table.

There was another note in the card envelope to invite all guests who stayed until the early of the morning to respond whether provision should be made for them to have breakfast at the hotel before taking off the roads.

The church was also well decorated. Two giant bouquets were placed on each side of the entrance gate of the church. A long red carpet was placed in the middle. Small bouquets of white orchids were placed along the aisles. The alter looked like the Kew Garden with all the magnificent flowers. There was a candle in each bouquet.

Chapter 3

THE POLICE

The five high level police officers including the Deputy Commissioner of Police divided themselves into two groups and started to search the room, the living room and the attached kitchen and bathroom.

They saw nothing that could help them with the cause of death. They searched the small medicine cabinet and the stylish pill case for any compromising drugs but apart from a few vitamins, pain reliefs, anti-histamines and first aid kit, they could not find anything not even sleeping pills.

The Deputy Commissioner of Police in an authoritative voice and sure of himself told the parents: "It cannot be a suicide. She is all dressed and ready to get married. There must be something else".

The police raked their minds. They started asking questions on who prepared the food for breakfast and for lunch. They asked questions on the relooking lady. They took samples of Frances' makeup, took the bouquet of flowers to be analysed at the forensic laboratory. The parents confirmed that as it was their last breakfast and lunch together, Frances agreed to eat with them in their big dining room. "We all ate the same food cooked by our cook who has known Frances since she was a baby. It cannot be the food. We are pretty sure about that otherwise we would have been in trouble too."

Christine told the officials that Frances stayed in the house the whole morning. "She had so many things to do that she did not want to go out. Furthermore, she was waiting for Myriam Kendall, the relooking lady to do her makeup as well as helping her with her hair and her dress."

The Forensic Doctor intervened and told the parents that he was ready to take the body to the hospital for an autopsy and to do further analysis and he would keep them informed.

The Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) asked the parents to find out for them where Myriam was staying. "There would be an objection to departure on the lady until this mystery is solved. We will also take all her products to be examined. The DCP also asked questions on the maid of Miss Frances. They wanted to know her marital status, her age, her background, her level of education, length of service, her address and her ethnicity.

Chapter 4

THABO

While the Forensic Doctor was busy doing his investigation, Maude telephoned Thabo to inform him about the bad news. Thabo thought it was a nasty joke as the Arnauuds were dead against this wedding. He jumped into his white Ferrari and drove as fast as he could to Frances house which was in the same town. Thabo climbed the stairs doing two steps at a time. He could not believe his eyes when he saw Frances' body on the bed. He shook Frances and told her to wake up. "Look at me, Frances. Please tell me if I look nice in my wedding outfit. We chose it together, remember. Look at my stylish white shirt with the beautiful diamond cufflinks that you offered me for my birthday. How do you find me? Please answer me? Oh Frances, you look stunning in your wedding dress. When we chose the material for the dress, little did I realise that the dress would turn out so marvellously on you. Why are you not waking up? Please do get up. We will be late for church."

Thabo very gently started to shake Frances.

The parents and Maude looked at Thabo without saying a word. Looking at the distress of Thabo they thought he would do the irreparable like Romeo and Juliet.

When Thabo got no response from Frances, he put his head on Frances stomach and sobbed uncontrollably. "I thought it was a bad joke when I got this telephone call. But am I living a nightmare? Your body is cold." Thabo started to kiss Frances on the cheeks, on the neck then on the lips. He had no control on himself and his tears were dropping all over the wedding dress.

Christine touched Thabo's shoulder. She then tried to separate him from Frances.

Maude intervened "leave him alone. In fact, we should all get out of the room and let him grieve on his own." Apart from the Forensic Doctor, they all left the room and waited in the corridor.

After a few minutes Thabo's parents and his young sister, Thembi, all dressed in their wedding outfits arrived in a limousine that they had rented for the wedding. A butler accompanied them upstairs. They entered the room in the company of Mr and Mrs Arnaud. Thabo's sister came with her little flowery basket with the wedding rings in them as she was supposed to be the bridesmaid. They were in disbelief when they saw Thabo on Frances' chest crying his heart out. They had never seen him sobbing. Even as a child Thabo refused to cry in front of his parents, let alone strangers.

[Back to contents](#)

Chapter 5

FRANCES AND THABO

Frances and Thabo had moved mountains and had fought many battles to be accepted by Frances' parents and the Franco Mauritian society at large. Thabo had been given all sorts of names. He was called a nigger. He was virtually branded "nigger" with a red-hot-iron like a slave by the Arnauds. He had never been invited to their house although he used to sneak to Frances' apartment from time to time. Frances joined Thabo in his fight to face her parents. The more blows they were getting, the stronger they became.

Once Daniel Arnaud even tried to kill Thabo right in the middle of the street.

One day when Daniel Arnaud was on his way home from a meeting, travelling in one of his Mercedes, he noticed a man who looked like Thabo. He asked his driver to stop the car. He saw Thabo walking on his own in a street that was not too well lit. He pulled down his window and started to shout at Thabo who did not respond. Daniel Arnaud opened the car door and rushed towards Thabo with his revolver. His uniformed driver rushed after him. He was on the point of pulling the trigger when the driver intervened and in a soft voice told him to calm down. "Do not do that Sir. You might be in trouble."

"Me in trouble" was the reply. Justice is on my side. I only have to give the police a few rupees and nobody will know." He put the pistol back in its case and put the case in his belt and started to hit Thabo who became a punching ball in the hands of Daniel.

Daniel only stopped punching when his knuckles started to bleed.

The athletic and well-built Thabo did not hit back but only protected his face and eyes with his arms. He fell on the road and was kicked by Daniel.

Daniel went back to his car and shouted like a vulgar person: "You nigger, over my dead body you will not get married to my Princess. I order you to stop seeing her. You might regret it."

A few days after this incident Daniel Arnaud sent a few bouncers after Thabo. He was heavily kicked; his lips were cut and he had a broken rib. Instead of going to the police he telephoned his Doctor friend to ask him to attend to him at home. He then telephoned Frances to tell him that he would not be able to see her for a few days.

After severe resistance, discrimination, verbal as well as physical violence from the Arnauds and their cronies towards Thabo, Frances could not bear it any more. She gave her letter of resignation to her dad in which she said. "I am an adult and can take my own decision. I am leaving you, this country and this house to go with Thabo to live in Namibia. With my qualifications, I am sure I will get a good job there and will refund you all the money you have spent for my studies. I do not need the money of people who are so vile not only against the black but against the person closest to my heart. Thabo and I will get married the African way in Namibia and his parents will treat me like their daughter."

Thabo and Frances knew each other at Harvard University.

They sat next to each other during the first introduction lecture. They chatted a bit after the lecture and became good friends. They then realised that they both registered for the same

degree. What they thought was friendship turned out to be love at first sight. They were always together. At the canteen, in lecture rooms and sitting near the pool sharing notes.

After one year at the University they decided to move together without letting their parents know. Both were bright students and did extremely well.

Thabo went to Harvard University on a scholarship. He was the top of his class in Namibia while Frances' parents paid for her studies. After their studies, they both went to London. Thabo followed a course at the London School of Art and Drama and Frances did her masters in Management.

After returning to their respective countries, Thabo was offered a very well-paid job in Namibia while Frances worked as a Senior Manager in her father's Company pending her appointment as CEO of the Company.

Thabo's parents insisted that he took the job in Namibia as they wanted their only son to be close to them. Thabo, also felt that he had a responsibility towards his country and wanted to give something back in return for what his country had given him. On top of his job and being so nice looking, tall with an athletic figure, Thabo was solicited by the most popular designers to be a model for African wear designs for men. He was so proud of this rich heritage of African fashion styles that he wanted to show to the world the culture and tradition of his country through designs and fashion. Thabo accepted to be a model not for the money but to highlight this part of the African legacy.

He had the chance to travel all over the world as an African model. While at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, Thabo was trained as a stage actor and obtained a prize of excellence. He had the chance to perform in Othello and in Tempest in London. His good look, personality and versatile ability to play different roles could have made him blaze the Hollywood trail and obtain important roles in films; but he decided to return to his home country.

After one year of physical separation although they were on skype nearly every day, Thabo and Frances were both miserable. They could not live without each other.

Thabo made the sacrifice. He made the big leap from a country he was so proud of; a country where his umbilical cord was buried in the back yard of his house. His mother used to say that his boy would have a bright future and would always flourish in life after seeing the blossoming of scores of African Moon, a white daisy native to Namibia, grew in the place where Thabo's umbilical cord was planted. Year in and year out the daisies kept on blossoming while Thabo too kept on thriving.

Thabo was heartbroken when he took the decision of leaving his parents, his young sister, Thembi, who was like his daughter being given the 16 years difference between them. Leaving his beautiful country which was home to diverse wildlife and the cheetah population was indeed a tough decision to take. A country he was so proud of. A country which was also called the land of the brave with its breath-taking scenery, desert and mountains, different species of animals and the myriad of traditional villages. But his love for Frances was stronger and he could not live without her.

[Back to contents](#)

Chapter 6

PROVISIONAL CHARGE

As soon as the police officers saw Thabo's family, without any compassion neither for the dead nor for the living, they said that the family must follow them to the police station to be interrogated. Mr and Mrs Arnaud did not budge an inch to stop the police from taking the Dumi's family with them in the police car. In fact, if they could, they would have asked the police to handcuff the whole family. The police ordered Thabo to join them at the police station. "Once you are done with your crocodile tears join us at the police station," the Deputy Commissioner of Police said.

The Arnauds were questioned by the police in the lounge of their own home with a fox terrier sitting by the side of Madame who kept on caressing the dog. The main questions of the police were on Thabo. On his background; when and where he met Frances; the length of the relationship; his place of work; his friends; his financial situation and lots of question on the family status of Thabo. The Deputy Commissioner of Police promised the Arnauds that a few police officers will fly to Namibia in the first flight that was available. "We must question their friends, neighbours and colleagues to know the source of their money. We must also know if they are not drug dealers, money launderers or are in other illicit transactions. It looks like a straight forward case of murder. We now need proof."

According to the police Thabo being a professional actor, must have framed Frances into making her believe that he was madly in love with her and Frances fell into his trap all along.

"Ah, I understand now. The bastard, the nigger, this is why he wanted the civil marriage to take place well before the church ceremony," Daniel Arnaud responded. "He planned everything in the slightest details. How right was I in refusing to have him as a son in law. We must find out if Frances has not signed any documents to say that all her fortune will go to this bastard if ever she dies before him."

The parents immediately went to Frances' room to search in her drawers. On top of the chest of drawers they saw a collection of books by Franz Fanon which included "The Wretched of the Earth". They finally found a beautiful leather folder of prune colour in one of the drawers. They opened the folder. With trembling hands, they found the civil marriage certificate and a stamped document stating that if Frances died before Thabo all her fortune would go to Thabo.

The Arnauds could not believe what they were reading. "We did warn Frances that Africans are corrupt people. They are known to be drug dealers and engage in all sorts of illegal transactions. They are as corrupt as their leaders. Thabo is known to be the most intelligent chap of his promotion. He used his intelligence to deceive Frances. On top of that being an actor he knew how to play with Frances' sentiments. He is cunning, deceitful, selfish and immoral. He has come after Frances money and has obtained it. He cannot get away with murder so easily. We live in a country where the law of the country prevails. We have good lawyers and good judges. We will see to it that he will be punished severely. Unfortunately, we no longer have death penalty. This is what we would have asked our lawyers to go for," Daniel Arnaud told the police.

The police then asked Mr Arnaud why he agreed for this wedding to take place. "If we did not accept this wedding, we would have lost our daughter. She gave her resignation to the Company

and wanted to go with this black nigger to Namibia and have an African wedding there. Can you imagine the shame this would have brought to the family and our community? We had no other alternative than to accept. But now we have lost her for good," Mr Arnaud said.

The police listened carefully and added that this was the first time in their career that they saw a Machiavelli. "The boy is indeed cunning and has no moral code to have been able to plan everything so carefully," one of them said.

About seven police officers went to Thabo's flat for a full search. Everything was turned upside down. The mattress was torn apart. The furniture in the living room was turned upside down. Perfume, toothpaste and all other liquid items were taken to be analysed. As nothing compromising was found in the flat, the police thought the liquid items could help them to solve the mystery.

The Commissioner of Police (CP) decided to take the case in his own hands and told his Deputy that he would need him and two other officers to help him in his task. "This is a high-profile case. Mr Arnaud is a well-known personality. There is no margin for error. Black people cannot come to our country and kill our daughters. I am sure this whole black family joined hands and heads together to make a plot to kill that innocent girl".

At the Police station, the Dumis family were put in a row and called one by one to the office of the CP. The interrogation started with the Head of the Dumi family.

As soon as the Commissioner of Police started questioning Muna Dumi, the Forensic Doctor entered the room. "I apologise for disturbing you, Sir, but can you come outside for a minute, please. This is quite urgent."

The Commissioner of Police left the room leaving his Deputy with Muna Dumi.

The Forensic Doctor talked in a low voice to the Commissioner of Police. "Sir, we have finished with the autopsy and have found no trace of violence or rape. But from the blood analysis we can confirm that the death is by lethal injection."

The Commissioner of police went back into the interrogation room with a big smile and his two hands in his pockets. As soon as he entered the room a handcuffed Thabo was thrown into the room and asked to sit on a chair next his father.

"We have every reason to believe that the young lady has been murdered. The Forensic Laboratory found a lethal drug in her blood sample. She definitely did not commit suicide. Furthermore, it is impossible to get this type of lethal drugs in Mauritius. We are pretty sure you brought this drug with you when you came to Mauritius. Mr Dumi, you must have paid a professional to do the dirty job."

All the personal belongings of the Dumi family were taken away from them by a police officer and put in a plastic bag. The white golden chain with a diamond pendant and the diamond ring of Mrs Dumi as well as Thembi's gold bracelet were also thrown in the same plastic bag. A state-of-the-art iPad that Mr Dumi had with him was also dumped like a piece of dirt in another plastic bag. They were then all thrown in police cells. Mrs Dumi and her daughter in one cell while Muna Dumi and Thabo were in different cells.

The Commissioner of Police told his assistant "how can people have so much jewellery and diamonds. There is something very fishy with the family. I am pretty sure they are drug barons."

Chapter 7

TRIAL BY THE MEDIA

As soon as the media heard that Frances Arnaud was found dead in her wedding dress just before the church ceremony, journalists from all media enterprises rushed to the Arnauds' residence in Floreal. The security guard stopped them from entering the gate; but the television crew started to shoot from the gate. They got snap shots of the big house, its surroundings and whatever images they could capture. Journalists with their recorders, mobile telephones and cameras were like starved people ready to devour any sensational images and pieces of news they could get hold of. They asked the security guard all types of questions on the guests. They wanted to know the number of guests, the way they were dressed, the models of the car they travelled by. One of them even asked: "Have you seen the mother? Was she crying? What about the father was he crying too?"

Hundreds of questions to the poor security guard who remained quiet and stood upright like a statue in uniform. The journalists took his picture from several angles. But he did not budge an inch. He looked like one the guards in front of Buckingham Palace.

All programmes on radio and television were stopped to announce breaking news: "Frances Arnaud found dead in her wedding dress in her room."

The media continued with the normal programme until suddenly all were stopped again to announce another breaking news: "The Dumi family who has travelled from Namibia to attend the wedding of their son as well as Thabo Dumi, the bridegroom have been arrested and charged with the murder of Frances Arnaud. They have all been detained and are now in police cells until they are sent to the central prison."

The news was on all media included social media and went viral. It did not take long for Mauritius to make headlines of international media. Some social media as well as the television showed the gate of the Arnauds with the security guard standing in front.

The journalists at the Arnauds' residence was so great in number that at a certain point the security guard had to use his mobile to ask for help.

The gardener came for his rescue but they both lost control and could not stop the journalists from forcing the gate.

Some journalists who could get into the yard started to shout: "Mr Arnaud, we are here near your swimming pool. We want to help you. Your testimonies which will appear in the media will help with the case. It is about time that the whole Mauritian population knows the reason behind such atrocity. People must know that we just cannot accept foreigners to come into our country and kill our daughters."

On these words Mr Arnaud opened the door of his living room. He paced his huge veranda full of potted flowers and the most beautiful endemic plants. On one end of the veranda there were rattan sofas and a round rattan table on which stood proudly a big brass pot with one Venus

slipper orchid. At the other end of the veranda there was a dining table with eight rattan chairs. A beautiful bouquet of fresh flowers sat in the middle of the table.

Mr Arnaud was blinded by the cameras. Some of them nearly pushed him while putting their speakers and mobiles near his mouth. He stopped walking and in a strong voice he told them that the case was in the hands of the police and he would rather not give them any information. He, however, thanked them for their concern.

The journalists rushed to the police station. The Police Officer in charge of communication told them that the enquiry was still on and there was not much he could say. They asked to see the Commissioner of Police. Being given that it was such a high-profile case, the Commissioner of Police decided to talk to them. "Our Forensic Doctor has just told us that a lethal substance was found in the blood of Miss Frances Arnaud. It is a substance that is not sold in Mauritius, we have, therefore every reason to believe that the drug was imported illegally to be used on Miss Frances Arnaud. We are at the moment questioning the whole Dumi family and will send an official press release to the media as soon as we can."

The evening newspapers made headlines of the Arnauuds showing pictures of their house, the swimming pool, the veranda with its potted plants and a few pictures of the security guard.

The radio and television gave this information as their first news item.

Some press titles read "Black man murders white woman"; "Girl in wedding dress murdered"; "Shattered dream of the Arnaud family"; "Should Africans marry white Mauritians?"; "Greed for easy money; How far can one go"; "White girl framed to marry black man". Details were given on the life of Thabo and his family with no verification. Some media reported that Muna Dumi was a poor family in Namibia and did small jobs as well as being a drug dealer.

Chapter 8

POLICE STATION

The news reached Namibia in a split of a second. Before the police team had the chance to fly to Namibia, Namibian journalists arrived at the airport. When the Immigration Officer enquired about their stay, they said they were in Mauritius to cover the alleged murder case of a white Mauritian lady. They were all blocked at the lounge pending information from the Commissioner of Police whether to let them in or not.

Meanwhile the Commissioner of Police advised Muna Dumi to do his best to get the best lawyer as his case was a lost one.

Muna Dumi asked for permission to use his mobile telephone. The Commissioner of Police refused saying that all his calls and messages on his mobile were being scrutinised by the IT Department of the police. "We have every reason to believe that the murder of Miss Arnaud was planned and somebody was paid to do the dirty job on behalf of your family".

In a very calm and poised voice, Muna Dumi, talked about Human Rights and his right to be able to make at least one telephone call. To which the Commissioner of Police replied that he could use the landline of the police station but in the presence of the IT Police Officer. Muna Dumi told the Commissioner of Police that it was a call to Namibia and he was prepared to pay for the call. As he

spoke in his own language the CP nor the IT Police Officer could understand a word of what he was saying. After the call the CP said "I hope you are getting a good lawyer."

"There is no point in getting a good lawyer as this is a case about racial discrimination. The whole world will soon know what you are doing. Anyway, I know there are over ten journalists from Namibia who are waiting to get the green light to come and interview you....."

Without waiting for Muna Dumi to finish his phrase, the CP and his colleagues started to slap and kick him. The CP asked one of his officers to make Dumi sit on a chair. The officer pulled his hands very roughly at the back of the chair and tied his hands while two other officers chained his feet to the legs of the chair.

His son could no longer witness this violence and said: "You are messing up with the wrong people. You will regret it. Better stop with your nonsense."

The CP and the Police Officers became wild with anger and took out Thabo handcuffs, asked him to stand, they stripped off all his clothes, asked him to walk in front of them as if they were getting an orgasm seeing this well build man who looked like a star walked naked in front of them. When they have had enough, they searched in his intimate part.

One police officer seemed to enjoy himself putting his finger in the anus of Thabo. He enjoyed himself so much that he started to put one finger in and out, followed by another finger until his penis became hard under his uniform. His face showed pleasure and had to rush to the bathroom so as not wet his uniform with sperm. Thabo thought the police officer would sodomise him but fortunately for Thabo he stopped at three fingers and had to rush fast to the bathroom.

After the anus ordeal Thabo was chained to the chair. Three police officers slapped and kicked him so hard that blood kept oozing from his nose and mouth, his eyes were all swollen and his eyebrows cut. "This will give you a lesson, never contradict the authorities in Mauritius. You think you are in your savage country where everything is permitted. This is Mauritius and not Africa. Do not tell us we are messing with the wrong people. We know what we are doing."

"Are you going to talk now? Or do you want more beating? We have all our time. You better talk. Tell us the truth. Just tell us how this lethal poison got into the body of Miss Arnaud. Who did you pay to do your dirty job or did you do it yourself?" The CP questioned.

Aziza Dumi and her daughter could no longer bear watching the beating and kicking and started to shout on top of their voices. With a very angry voice the CP said: "You want to be stripped naked too. A female police officer will gladly do that. You better be careful as it will not be only a body search but we will search your intimate parts as well."

Without listening to the CP, Aziza Dumi said: "Stop all your violence on my husband and my son right now. You will regret it. I am warning you. You are making a serious mistake. You are giving a bad name to your country. Soon this whole affair will be international news if it has not gone worldwide already. My husband is a lawyer of international reputation. He is the best-known lawyer that the whole of Africa has produced. He is an expert on human rights."

The CP replied: "You bitch stay quiet or else you will undergo the same treatment as your husband and your son. And stop lying. We know you come from a poor family in an unknown region of Namibia and your husband is a drug dealer. This is how you got all this money to stay in a five-

star hotel and travel by first class to come to Mauritius. You are prepared to do anything to fill your pockets. You have blood on your hands. You have even used your son to get Miss Arnaud's heritage. You are an accomplice in this horrible murder. Fortunately for you we are still debating on capital punishment."

In the early morning of the next day, a well-dressed Black African man in his three-piece outfit, white shirt and colourful silk tie entered the station and asked for the CP. He was told that the CP was very busy and he should have taken an appointment. "I have just arrived from Namibia and I am here straight from the airport. I am a very good friend of the Dumis family and would like to talk to the Commissioner of Police. This is an urgent matter. Please tell the CP that I apologise for not taking an appointment but being given the seriousness and the urgency of the matter I did not have time to take an appointment. Everything has happened so fast," the black man said.

"You better wait here, I will talk to the CP to find out if he can receive you."

He waited for over one hour looking at all the dirtiness in the waiting room of the station. Papers full of dust were stacked everywhere even on the floor. The drawers of the rusty filing cabinet were half open. A police officer kicked the drawers to close them and they opened again. People were coming and going as if they were in an open market looking for cheap vegetables. Some of them came to make complaints. There was only one police officer at the desk to put entries in the book. From time to time he had to ask his colleague for spelling help until his colleague told him to write in Creole. A well-dressed man in a beige suit entered the station. All officers looked at him jumping the queue. One said "eta dokter la sa" (eh it is the doctor). His manners were so rude that they did not dare to ask him to join the queue.

The officer at the counter asked him: "What are your complaints today doctor?"

Clearly, he was a habitual of the police station. He started with a long list of complaints and wanted to make sure that the proper entries were made in English. He complained about three of his neighbours. One was building a house and this was causing him lots of inconvenience. His brand-new BMW was getting dirty due to the cement debris on the street. Over and above the workers were playing their radio too loud and this was disturbing him. The second complaint was about his neighbour who had two dogs. The barking of the dogs prevented him to rest during the day and even at night. Once he even had to wake up and threw fire crackers at the dogs. The third complaint was on his Chinese neighbour. The neighbour invited her friends in the evening to play Mah-jong. The sound of the tiles on the board disturbed him a lot. The Police Officer took all the complaints and asked him to sign the log book. He refused on the ground that it did not make sense as there were too many mistakes in his statement. He started correcting the mistakes one by one before agreeing to sign the log book. He then asked when action would be taken. A Police Officer said "do not worry doctor it will be easy this time since you are complaining about your neighbours and you all live in the same street. We will send two officers to talk to your neighbours and make an entry in the book."

The Black Man saw a woman running into the station with her nightdress torn, blood coming out from her mouth, she was holding one arm with the other as if the arm was broken. In a nasty voice the police officer said: "How dare you come to the station dressed like that. This is not a brothel but a police station?" The desolate woman replied: "I had to run away from him he was beating me so violently, there was no time to even think of putting a dress on. Please help me. He will kill me. Please help my daughters who are in the house. He wanted to rape one of them, I

interfered and this is why he started beating me. The Child Protection Unit needs to know what is happening to my children in the hands of their own biological father. One of them has just given birth and he fathered that child. Now he wants to rape the second daughter who is only nine years old. On the advice of his family and my own family who have asked me not to make any complaint, I have remained quiet. But, now, I can no longer bear all this violence. Please, please help me. Please help my children." She was then taken away by a female police officer into a private room.

After one long hour wait, the police who went to see the CP regarding receiving the African man came back. Without any excuse for this long wait, let alone giving him a chair to sit down, he said: "Consider yourself lucky, the CP has agreed to receive you. Follow me."

He went into the big office of the CP.

Perched on his big mahogany table, the CP was waiting for him.

In one corner of the room there was a large conference table and 10 chairs made of the same materials. On the other side of the room there were four leather sofas with a coffee table in the middle. At the far end of the room near the door there was a hallway side board with a coffee machine, a kettle, a tray with glasses and cups. There were also ceramic containers for tea, coffee, sugar and biscuits. Next to the side board sat a cocktail fridge.

The man went towards the CP to shake hand with him. The CP did not even bother to give his hand and must have said to himself: "How can I shake hand with a black man!" And yet the CP was not white himself but the colour of café latte. The CP rubbed his hands together so that the man opposite him could see that he was not prepared to shake hand with him. The man asked for permission to sit down. To which the CP replied "As you can see, I am very busy at the moment, if you won't take long there is no need for you to sit down." Then on second thought he questioned: "Are you their lawyer?"

"Who do you mean by 'their'? If you mean the Dumi family, No. I am not their lawyer but a very good friend of the family.

"What are you doing here then, the Dumis are in deep shit. It is not a friend that they need but the best lawyer in the world. Let me tell you, if they are found guilty, which I think they will, they will be sentenced for life. We have every reason to believe that either they committed the crime themselves or paid somebody to do the dirty job. Fortunately for them. Part of the sentence will be in a Mauritian prison and the rest will be in Namibia according to a Protocol signed by our Government and your Government. But I have heard that it's better to die in a Mauritian prison than staying in your filthy and overcrowded prison."

The man kindly asked again: "May I sit down, please? Is it possible for you to ask your police officers to leave the room so that we can have a private conversation?"

In an angry voice the CP replied: "You are not here to give me orders; you can talk in front of my officers. We are not a corrupt country like yours. We believe in transparency."

"If you say so, I do not have any problem. I do not want to embarrass you. I do not want you to lose face in front of your officers", was the reply.

"Arrogant language does not work with me. Go on. Say what you have to say. I am very busy and I do not have my whole day to spend with you."

In his best Oxford English, the African man said. "You are doing a big mistake and this can cost you your job."

Big loud laugh from the CP. "Do I take it that you are making a joke?"

"No Sir, this is not a joke. I am talking very seriously. My best friend and his family are in your cells. Sorry to repeat myself. You are making a big mistake. This can cost you your job."

"This is the biggest joke I have ever heard in my life. But go on, tell me why you are here since you are not their lawyer."

"News travel as the speed of lightening nowadays. Let me read the headlines of what the Namibian and the international media are saying on this case," the African man said.

"Mauritius condemns Namibian family before hearing"; " Well known Namibian Family convicted for Murder"; "Condemnation based on race in Paradise Island"; "Paradise Island turns hell for bridegroom"; "Professionals of international reputation from Cambridge and Harvard convicted of murder"; "Racial discrimination at its peak"; "Renowned international lawyer behind bars"; "UN Peace worker behind bars"; "Human Rights Violation"; "UN Peace Envoy jailed in Mauritius". "Do you want me to read more!" the man said.

The CP did not reply but the man went on to say: "Mr Dumi does not need a lawyer. He is the best criminal lawyer that the best University of the World has produced. He travels a lot not only to defend the most difficult cases but to give lectures on criminology. He has never lost a single case. Mr Dumi has the solid reputation of being somebody who does not budge an inch on his principle. He has the unique power to reach thousands of people including the media in just hours due to his reputation."

As for Mrs Dumi, the man continued with his discourse: "Mrs Dumi works for UN Women as a Champion on gender equality and is acclaimed all over the world. She is known for her papers in international journals on gender-based violence, gender justice and human rights. Furthermore, she runs a shelter for people with bi-polar problems. Her shelter is so popular that she has residents from all over the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries. Parents in some countries are ashamed of their sick children and prefer to send them to Mrs Dumi. There are quite a few Mauritians in her shelter which is called "Love, Care and Cure (LCC)".

The CP tried to interrupt him. "No, let me go on please. Mr Dumi keeps up to date in the field of criminology. He studies crimes in all its perspective and focuses on the causes, effects, and social impact. He is good at analysing and determining why a crime has been committed and to find ways to predict, deter, and prevent further criminal behaviour. He has solved the most difficult cases. He works on a voluntary basis for an NGO called "Prevent and not Criminalise (PAC) which brings together men and women from the civil society; lawyers; the private sector and NGOs working with the vulnerable and prisoners. The findings, the results and the monitoring of PAC is a model which is being used all over the world. In Namibia due to PAC, crimes and violence are declining drastically."

The Namibian man was shocked that the CP has never heard of PAC and LCC let alone the name Dummi.

He then went on to say "Mr Dummi can, not only, defend the charges you have put on him and his family but can help you with your investigation to find the true criminal. He is a graduate from the Institute of Criminology of the University of Cambridge, UK which has a worldwide reputation for excellence in both research and teaching. Mr Dummi is a leader in his field and was awarded numerous prestigious international awards. In view of his academic excellence on his research on equality of opportunity; a proactive and an inclusive approach to equality, he works very hard for all under-represented groups, promotes an inclusive culture and diversity. Discrimination based on sex, gender identity and race are his personal battle. You have more to gain from Mr Dummi than putting him and his family behind bars and beating them to death."

The man then took out an envelope from his brief case, opened it and showed the CP a few pictures of Mr Dummi at work.

He then added: "As a criminal investigator, Mr Dummi is the right person to help you unravel the mystery of this young lady getting murdered on the day of her wedding. You have put the wrong persons behind bars. Furthermore, although Thabo, Mr Dummi's son, had major problems to be accepted in an enterprise that employs only white people, he showed what he is worth in his job. Fortunately, the Company appointed him on the basis of his qualification. Interview the Company and you will see how through Thabo the Company is now flourishing and has opened branches all over Europe."

The man was shocked by the ignorance of the CP and asked: "Let me ask you one question Mr the Commissioner of Police. Have you sincerely never heard of the Dummi family? Surely the Mauritian media must have talked about him. He has so much coverage in the international media, be it the BBC, the CNN or France 24 to mention only a few."

The CP looked at him straight in the eyes and said: "Who do you think you are kidding. Do you think I will accept all your lies? You are just like them!!!"

The Namibian man replied: "I find this odd as Mr Dummi has made headlines in international media with all the sensitive cases he has won. You do have an international page in your local media? Don't you? How come the media does not cover what is making news in the world? With a click of the mouse you can have pages and pages on the Dummi family. I am not bluffing. I am talking about facts that can be checked. Why don't you ask some help from Google? You only have to type the name Dummi and you will see scores of pages on him and his wife as well as articles and reports that they have both written for international organisations and the media."

Now the CP started to feel embarrassed and did not know what to reply. "My computer has not been working for quite some time now. Anyway, we do not have internet facilities in the police station. "

The police officer who was standing near the CP said something in his ear. The CP then said: "The media is bad in Mauritius. They only talk and write on sensational news where women have been raped, murdered or using women as sex objects."

By then the CP's composition has changed completely. He turned blue and said: "What do you suggest then?"

At the same time the telephone rang. When he heard the voice of the person at the other side of the line, he stood up and saluted. He listened carefully and started to stammer: "Yes...yes, oh yes, Prime Minister. Yes, yes, yes, Sir, I am very sorry. I apologise sincerely. I am releasing them immediately. Yes, of course, I will telephone your Secretary to take an appointment with you. A Disciplinary Committee, you said, Sir. Yes, yes, I will prepare my case."

He moved from his desk and asked a police officer and the African man to accompany him. He ordered the police officer to open all the cells.

Horror! The dirtiness of these cells was unbelievable. The blood that oozed out from the mouths and noses of father and son were dried on their faces and on the floor. The faces of Muna and Thabo Dumis were swollen. Their lips were cut. Their backs had marks of being beaten with a thick belt and the buckle had torn their flesh. The stale bread and the mug of black tea that the Dumis had been given for breakfast remained on the hard-concrete bench which also served as bed. They had a thin cover full of holes and dusts to cover themselves at night. Thabo's young sister peed in her wedding outfit as they were not allowed to go out to the toilet. They were given a bucket to do their personal things but Thembi did not know how to pee in the bucket. The faces of the family were no longer black but grey with all the dirt and under sleeping. They were like zombies in a horror film.

The Police Officer on very conciliatory tone said: "You are free. There are no charges against you. We will give you all your personal belongings and you can go home."

They all came out and held each other with tears pouring down their cheeks. "Oh! Careful mum, do not hold me so tight. It is hurting everywhere," Thabo told his mum.

"I am so sorry son. Your face is all swollen. Your back has really been slashed. Let me try to put your shirt on."

Very gently the mother tried to put on the shirt of her son.

Muna Dumis told his wife: "This is hell in paradise. In our wildest dream we would never have thought that we would encounter this kind of experience for our first visit in a country which has a reputation of being of a paradise. A country which is making worldwide advertisements to attract tourists. We came for the wedding of our son and instead of rejoicing we ended up in prison, chained, beaten up and stripped search. Our son has lost the love of his life on the very day he was supposed to celebrate his wedding. He will carry this experience to his death bed. We have never done anything wrong in our lives. On the contrary we have helped hundreds of people with their court cases for free and you dear wife, you have worked so hard for women. We are human rights fighters. We will fight and we will win. At the end of the day it will be Mauritius that will be the loser and will unfortunately have a bad reputation worldwide. We are all shattered but I am now making a solemn promise to my son and my family that I will see to it that truth comes to light."

The CP apologised profusely to the Dumis family and begged Muna Dumis to talk to the Prime Minister on his behalf. "I have a family with three children. My wife does not do any paid job. My children go to a private school. What will happen to them if I lose my job? I am the pride of my community being the first person to have reached such a high-level job. When I was appointed, my family, my friends and my community at large were so happy that they organised a grand party for me in a hotel."

Muna Duménil replied: "I am very sorry, Sir. You talked a lot about democracy and transparency. I come from a democratic country. I am a lawyer of international reputation; I will certainly not do such a thing. What you are asking me is tantamount to corruption. If your Prime Minister wants to put a commission on enquiry on this matter this is his prerogative. I understand that he is also Minister of Internal Affairs and the police force falls under him. For my part as a professional and being given that I am a Criminal Lawyer as well as a Criminal Investigator I always attempt to solve murder and crimes. I identify and have suspects detained in the hopes of preventing future criminal activity but not in protecting high profile people who do not know how the justice system works. Let me tell you, Sir, that to be able to accomplish these various responsibilities, I do not just put people in jail. I have a whole team of investigators who try to uncover facts about particular cases before taking actions. To accomplish my goals, people are not put in prison without trial but I look for evidence from a crime scene, perform surveillance, and conduct interviews and searches."

"My investigators carefully examine the crime scene to collect evidence such as clothing samples, weapons and fingerprints and report to me," Duménil explained.

He then went on to explain how his team worked: "The evidence gathered is then delivered to a laboratory for intensive studies and experimentation. Among the many tasks delivered by the crime investigator laboratory technician, these enforcement professionals must also determine ballistics information by performing firearm evaluations and confirming identities through the extraction of DNA samples from clothing and other samples that they may deem fit for analysis."

"Those crime scene investigators who write and issue reports based on the evidence gathered will frequently appear in courts as expert witnesses. These individuals will possess expertise in a specific field. The opinions of an expert witness are viewed as influential testimony in a court hearing. All evidences are helped to build his/her case and are analysed before I go to court. But here, in your country you just put people in jail without any trial and if people are black it means that they are criminals. I always thought that Mauritius was the most democratic country in the Southern African Development Community. Now I realise I was wrong."

The CP did not know how to respond. He was bewildered by what Mr Duménil had told him. He tried to talk but words did not come out from his mouth.

In a condescending tone Muna Duménil said: "On a humanitarian level, I am prepared to offer my services for free if this can help with the case. Do not forget that my son has been victimised more than twice. He lost the person closest to his heart. He was put in jail without mentioning the stripping and the body search. Your officers seemed to enjoy putting their fingers in his anus."

"I do not know how it works in Mauritius. But you can ask the Attorney General, the Director of Public Prosecutions or even the Prime Minister if they would agree that I form part of the investigating team. Just give them my name and they will know my credentials. They might even tell you that I have not lost a single case I was directly or indirectly involved with. Furthermore, without boasting, my reputation follows me everywhere I go."

"If the authorities agree, I have my own idea who to interrogate including the Arnaud family and people working for them."

The face of the CP turned purple. "This is a well-known reputed white family and we do not want the whole white families to turn against us. They form part of the elite who control the economy of this country. Let me ask for advice before I give you a reply."

Mr Dumis agreed and said: "Who knows they were after all against this relationship? My son did not tell me the whole story but by the tone of his voice during our telephone conversations, I could guess that this white family did not make life easy for him. Do not worry, I can assure you that I will also cross examine my own son."

On hearing this Mrs Dumis was appalled "How can you do that? He is innocent. He was madly in love with Frances. He left his country to come here as his love for Frances was stronger than his love for Namibia. Now you want to question him on this horrible crime? In what world are we living, Muna?"

Muna replied that: "I will make all the effort I possibly can. Thabo is my son but justice must be seen to be done. If he is guilty then he must pay for his crime and be condemned."

Apart from Thabo who preferred not to accompany his parents, the Dumis family left the police station in the company of their good friend and went to their five-star hotel.

"You do not want to come with us son? We think you need all the support that we can give you. You have been through hell and there is no point for you to go back to your flat and stay on your own. I have taken a big suite for your mother, your sister and I. You can sleep in the lounge," the caring dad said.

With a lump in his throat, Thabo replied "I will be fine. I have a very good friend who is a medical Doctor. I can call him and ask him to put some dressings on all these bruises. I will also ask him for a prescription for some relaxants or even better I can ask him to stay overnight. He can sleep in the spare bed room and attend to me if need be. He is so good and caring. I am sure he will not refuse."

[Back to contents](#)

Chapter 9

THABO IN HIS FLAT

Thabo was in such a pitiful physical and emotional state that he told the CP he was not in a position to take a taxi and if a police car could leave him at the gate of the Arnaud. A police officer who had finished with his shift agreed to give Thabo a lift.

Thabo did not even knock at the door of the Arnaud but instead took his car and went straight to his flat. He drove very slowly with lots of difficulties.

He could not believe his eyes when he saw the state in which his flat was. He called security and asked for some help in changing the mattress and rearranged the flat.

The Security Officer was very embarrassed and said "I am very sorry Mr Thabo. I was panicked when I saw the police. They raised their voices and showed me their search warrant and said they could put me in jail if I refused to open your door. I had to let them in but I did not know they would do such a mess. The flat is now upside down. Please accept my condolences on the death of Mademoiselle Frances. I have known you for quite some time now, Mr Thabo. I know your

generosity, your love and how you care for people and I sincerely think that the police made a big mistake in putting you to jail.”

The Security Officer did his best to put the flat back in order and changed the mattress to a new one that was in the store downstairs. Thabo could not help the security man and instead pulled a chair and watched him putting the flat back in a liveable condition.

Thabo managed to take a shower and changed his clothes. He put all his wedding outfits in the bin. He telephoned his friend. He told him he had an emergency and needed his urgent help.

“Oh! Thabo! I am so sorry. I was appalled when my parents telephoned me to tell me about this horrific news. The South African media also gave extensive coverage in their evening bulletin. They even showed the pictures of the house of the Arnauks as well as your family being arrested by the police. I thought I was living a nightmare when I saw the news. I tried to get hold of you but your telephone was switched off. I am on my way back from the airport. Let me go home and take my medical kit. You know you can always count on me, Thabo,” was the response of Cedric on the telephone.

It did not take Cedric long to reach Thabo’s flat. He got the shock of his life when he saw his friend without his shirt on. “Oh! My God. What have they done to you? It looks like you have been whipped like they used to do during slavery. These people are monsters. You are still bleeding. By now you should be on your honeymoon enjoying the mountains in your home country and not mourning for your beloved. I am so sorry Thabo.”

Thabo cringed when Cedric tried to attend to the cuts on his back. “I know it hurts. I will be careful. Unfortunately, I will have to make a few stiches in one or two places. The police have no right to slash people like that. You must sue them.”

With lots of care and attention Cedric put some ointment on Thabo’s face and in all the places where he was hurt. “Fortunately, your face is intact although there are quite a few blood clots here and there. Let me put one or two stiches on your eye brows. It will not take long to heal. Do you have an ice pack?”

Cedric then went to the kitchen and came back with the ice pack and a mug. “Let me put the ice pack on your cheeks. It will help to bring the swelling down. Please try to drink this nice cup of hot chocolate, it will help you to rest. I will leave you some pain killers and a few relaxants to help you sleep. You should be fine after a good night sleep. I will call on you tomorrow during lunch time.”

With tears in his eyes, Thabo asked Cedric to stay with him. “Please stay with me Cedric. You can have the spare bed room. This is the first time in my life that I am not in control of myself. I feel so weak that I cannot stand on my feet. As you can see, I am trembling like a leaf. At least I know there is somebody in the flat if something happens to me.”

Cedric kindly refused saying that he was just back from the airport and had urgent things to attend to.

Thabo locked the door after Cedric’s departure. He had a few sips of the chocolate, drank the pain killers and the relaxants and tried to sleep. He dreamt that Frances was drowning in the pool on the University campus. He threw a stick at her and asked her to hold to the stick but Frances could

not and kept on saying. "Please, Thabo, I do not want to die. Save me." He then jumped into the pool and held Frances in his arms. He placed the body by the side of the pond and called for help. He did mouth to mouth with her but there was no response. The ambulance came and took Frances away.

In another scene he was in court. He was accused of pushing Frances in the pond and his father was defending him. He kept on shouting "No! Sir. I did not do that. I loved her. She was the only woman I have known in my whole life."

At a certain point the nightmares seemed so real that he called his mother at the hotel. His dad replied to the telephone and said "Do not worry son. I will ask the hotel to get a taxi for me and will spend the rest of the night with you."

As soon as he heard the bell ringing, Thabo opened the door and fell in the arms of his dad. "Oh dad. What have I done to get this kind of punishment? I dreamt I was on the cross and Mr and Mrs Arnaud were hitting nails in my hands and my feet. I was like Jesus Christ on the cross and the blood from my nailed hands and feet was dripping on the floor. Some people kneeled near my feet and drank the blood."

"Do not worry son, I will sleep with you and look after you until morning."

Thabo was relieved. He curled like a foetus and slept on the large chest of his dad. He was nevertheless agitated in his sleep. He woke up before his dad and with some difficulty he made coffee. They sat together in the kitchen. He asked his dad what was his interpretation of this dream on Jesus Christ.

"What can I tell you son. May be the death of Frances is to show to the world how discrimination is still rife. Maybe you are a black Jesus trying to make the blind see. Who knows? There are so many explanations to your dream. May be these people were drinking your blood to purify their souls. When Jesus came on earth, he disturbed quite a few people. He was a freedom fighter. He helped thousands of people who were on the margins of society. He fought for the poor and the vulnerable people. May be this is your karma; it is like that of Jesus Christ. Your relationship with Frances is built on solid rock. You have climbed mountains and have built a solid foundation for other people to follow. The death of Frances will help you to grow even more and make people realise that we are all human beings with our own rights and dignity."

The dad went on to say: "Let me see if I can remember Psalm 62 from the Bible which is reminding me a lot of what is happening to you. I might make a few mistakes but please bear with me." With a poised and suave voice, he said: "*For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken. How long will all of you attack a man to batter him, like a leaning wall, a tottering fence? They only plan to thrust him down from his high position. They take pleasure in falsehood. They bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse. Those of low estate are but a breath; those of high estate are a delusion; Put no trust in extortion; set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, set not your heart on them. O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For you will render to a man according to his work.*"

"Thank you, dad. Although you gave me a Bible, I had never opened it. I will try now, may be this will sooth my pains."

Thabo stood up slowly but felt dizzy. He had to hold the kitchen table and had lots of difficulty to walk. He wanted to drive his dad back to his hotel. "No, son, you are not in a state to drive. You are still in so much emotional and physical pain. You better stay in bed and get your friend to come over to attend to you. These dressings must be changed. He might even advise you to go to the clinic or the hospital. I will call the hotel and ask them to send me a taxi."

On these notes, Muna Dumi left his son.

Chapter 10

FUNERAL

After the autopsy was done and a full report of the findings given to the police with copy to the family, the hospital signed all documents and told the Arnauds that they could take possession of Frances body.

Instead of taking the body home, Mrs Arnaud sought the services of a Funeral Director. The Funeral Director came to the morgue of the hospital in the company of Mr and Mrs Arnaud.

With tears in her eyes, Mrs Arnaud told the Funeral Director: "Please, take our baby to your funeral home and see to it that she looks like a bride ready to get married. We want the best for our only child. We want people to remember her as the most beautiful girl on this earth. We want to celebrate her beauty, her kindness and her intelligence. We want a unique ceremony that will always be remembered by family and friends."

The Funeral home did a beautiful job with Frances. They put back her wedding dress, gave her a discreet makeup with champagne colour lipstick and put the wedding shoes on. A beautiful bouquet of white orchids which looked like the one that Frances was supposed to carry for her wedding was put on her chest between her two crossed hands.

The wedding guests were informed that they could attend the funeral ceremony and were kindly asked to go directly to the chapel where the wedding was supposed to be celebrated. The same priest who was going to officiate the wedding did the funeral mass. Four ladies dressed in white slowly walked by the side of the wheeled casket which remained opened so that the bereaved could see the face of Frances one last time.

Mr and Mrs Arnaud followed the casket while Thabo, his parents and the guests from Namibia sat at the far end of the church. The Namibian ladies looked grand in their colourful African traditional outfits and their imposing head dresses.

Police officers and the Central Investigation Officers dressed in civil outfits stood near the gate of the chapel.

Journalists from the local as well as international media tried to get into the church but were stopped by the police. They were like vultures waiting for their preys. They all wanted to have first-hand news. They stood on the steps of the chapel and tried to interview people who were entering the chapel. Finally, one of the deacons talked to them and very kindly said: "This is a place of worship. We are not celebrating but grieving for a loved one; please do have some compassion for the family and those in this chapel? Please, ladies and gentlemen, act as professionals. It is most unethical to stop people who are grieving to interview them."

Instead of going back, some journalists waited on the steps of the chapel while others went back to their audio-visual transport so that they could do live reporting. They named the persons that they could identify, talked about the outfits of the women and especially the Namibian women. They described the casket in great details without having seen it. They talked about Thabo and even said that he fainted from time to time and had to be held by his mother and father.

Candles and white orchids were placed in front of the alter where the open casket was placed.

Four young musicians which were very good friends to Frances and Thabo played Requiem, the choral masterpiece of Mozart.

The musicians were supposed to perform at the wedding as well as at the reception. They changed their repertoire into that of Mozart. They wanted the swansong of Mozart to be the swansong of Frances. A piece shrouded in mystery and so magnificently played on their violin, cello, guitar and organ that they stirred the whole audience emotionally. Some of the people had to take out their handkerchiefs.

The priest made a short speech on Frances. There was not much he could say as Frances rarely went to the church. He then read Palm 51 and asked the audience to recite with him. "Please take the Bible which is in front of you and read the following with me:"

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightiest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar."

The priest then invited those who wanted to say a few words on Frances to come to the altar.

To the surprise of everybody, instead of the close family and friends, two black ladies in their most stunning outfits stood up and went slowly to the altar.

The youngest one kindly asked the violinist to give her the violin while the elderly one who looked like a big African mama of a stout corpulence went to the organ. They started to play Candle in the Wind by Elton John. The stout woman started to sing by changing the lyrics to suit Frances and Thabo. She sang the love of Frances and Thabo and some of the words were: "What Frances and Thabo have enjoyed cannot ever be lost. Thabo is weeping and is grieving for his loss but we ask him to cherish the great moments spent with Frances."

The whole chapel vibrated by the most powerful singing voice of the elderly lady mixed with the mezza soprano voice of the young violinist. Their voices resonated the whole chapel. Some people could not hold their tears.

After the song, the ladies went back to their place and two deacons put the lid on the casket. The four ladies in white sealed the casket.

The priest asked the audience to stand up and to pray:

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom comes. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

The priest sprinkled the casket with holy water and a crucifix was placed on it. The priest then said "May the soul of Frances and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace."

While the casket was wheeled back to the hearse, the two Namibian ladies stood by the aisle of the church and in a smooth voice they sang Go in Peace by Sarah Hart:

*"There will be no more darkness
There is no more night, no more night
There will be no more sadness
Only joy and light, joy and light
Lift your eyes beyond the hills
And see the dawn
There is beautiful mercy
In the arms of the holy one*

*Go in peace, God be with you
Go in peace, be at rest
With the saints and the angels
Now you are free
Go in peace
See the Father is waiting
With a robe of white, purest white
Go and feast at his table
With the bread of life, bread of life
Lift your heart, rejoice and sing
For you are home
Home at last and forever
In the arms of the holy one
Go in peace, God be with you
Go in peace, be at rest
With the saints and the angels
Now you are free
Go in peace
Go in peace, God be with you
Go in peace, be at rest
With the saints and the angels
Now you are free
Now you are free
Go in peace
Go in peace*

The two singers, Ntombi and Zora, were known internationally as the Aretha Franklin of Southern African. They had a great repertoire for any occasions be it wedding, funeral mass or international events. They had won several prizes and were acclaimed all over the world. But those in the church, apart from the Namibians, did not know them until they heard these golden voices and started to ask questions.

The hearse followed by the cars of close family and friends went to the cemetery for the burial. The police had no control over the media at the cemetery. They were all over the place, taking sounds and filming in all directions. The priest once again made a short prayer and sprinkled holy water on the casket. Thabo was the only one to put a white orchid on the casket with a note saying "I will always love you my darling. Rest in peace." before the casket was put in the grave.

Chapter 11

THE LEGAL TEAM

On the advice of the Prime Minister, the authorities at high level agreed that Mr Muna Dumi formed part of the legal team. The Arnauuds, on the other hand, had their own lawyers and on top of that they said that two highly reputed lawyers from France had been asked to help with the investigation. They were persuaded that Thabo and the Dumi family had something to do with the murder being given that Frances had written her testament.

A panel of high-level jurists including former judges was constituted under the coordinative leadership of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP).

On the advice of the DPP all members of the panel unanimously agreed that it would be better to talk to the media before starting the investigation to prevent any trial by the press.

A press conference was called. After welcoming the media, the DPP presented all members of the legal team and explained: "This is a very high-profile case where the names of two great personalities are involved. Mr Muna Duménil, a lawyer of international reputation and the Arnaud family who is among the families who control the economy of Mauritius. Trial by the press is the last thing we want. There has already been enough harm done by the press, so ladies and gentlemen of the media, I advise you to be careful with your reporting. Please do not write anything without verification. As far as possible name your sources. We are here to collaborate with you so better get proper information from us rather than listening to hearsay."

The first task of the panel was to draw a list of people for interrogation starting with Ms Myriam Kendall as she needed to return to her country on professional business.

"All the products taken from Ms Kendall's room have been analysed by the forensic laboratory. They are under lock and key in my office." The CP told the panel and went on to say: "There is a full report attached to the bags in which the cosmetics were put. I have not read the full report but the resume says that all the products are genuine and no poisonous elements have been found in them. The Forensic Doctor with my officers went back to search the hotel room of Ms Kendall and they could not find anything compromising."

The panel then decided that the objection to departure on Ms Kendall should be waived.

The other suspects on the list included all those who worked for the Arnaud family. People who helped Frances to get dressed as well as the florists.

"The flowers were sent to be analysed and no lethal poison was found," said the CP who was doing his best to show his professionalism.

The DPP promised that he would leave no stone unturned in trying to get all evidence and went further in saying that if need be, he would get help from experts in Offender and Criminal Profiling to help with suspect identification be it racial, sexual, political, or otherwise.

Mr Duménil suggested, and, it was unanimously agreed that an expert on racial profiling formed part of the team. As this was new to Mauritius, Mr Duménil agreed to look for somebody from abroad. He explained: "This is also a case of discrimination against a black man. The findings from the forensic laboratory and the racial profiling will be of utmost importance in the court of law. We also need a report on the offender profiling. All suspects will have to undergo an offender profiling to know their psychological profile."

"DNA profiling or DNA fingerprinting and DNA testing process is of utmost importance to the case" said the DPP before adding: "We need to identify all those who are close to the Arnaud family as well as all colleagues and friends of Mr Thabo Duménil. It is important to interrogate them all."

It was agreed that police officers would interview Thabo's colleagues at the place of work. "We can ask the CEO for a private room and interview his colleagues one by one," one of the police officers said.

[Back to contents](#)

Chapter 12

THE MAID

The investigation team divided themselves in groups for on the ground investigation before deciding whether to take suspects to the police station for further questioning.

Two Central Investigation Officers, the Assistant Commissioner of Police and two police officers accompanied by Mr Dumitru went to the house of the maid very early on Sunday morning. Rita, the maid, got the shock of her life, when from her window she saw police officers in uniforms walking towards her house.

She quickly closed the window curtains although there was not much to close as it was full of holes. She also closed the windows and the door of the house.

Mr Dumitru could not believe his eyes while walking in the yard full of mud. He had to turn the hem of his trousers. He took his handkerchief, placed it over his nose and mouth. He was stumbling in the mud. The smell around him was so strong and disgusting that at one point he thought he would vomit.

There were all sorts of rubbish all over the place although there was a large municipal bin in a corner of the yard. Plastic bags, soiled nappies, rotten food could be found all over the place.

A naked and fragile boy of approximately four years was squatting in a corner. His nose was running with yellow thick mucus. He was shitting on the ground and a dog was watching him as if waiting for him to finish so that he could eat the shit.

A man with vicious eyes sat under a banyan tree with a cigarette in his mouth. He watched the investigation team and with his finger directed them to the door of the house.

The house was in such a shabby state that with one knock the door opened.

Rita, who was holding a baby on her hip started to scream as soon as she saw the men. "I have nothing to do with the murder of Mademoiselle. I worked on that day. When I left Mademoiselle Frances was all dressed up and ready to go to church for her wedding."

A five-year-old girl was playing with a plastic telephone on the floor. She was talking to the telephone and beating it. "You have to listen to your mama." She kept on saying before dragging the telephone and said "Now go and sit near your brother in the yard and think about all the harm you have done to me and the baby. No! Go and sit near the dog." The girl was using the telephone as a doll. Muna Dumitru very kindly touched the girl's cheek and in a soft voice said "This is not a doll baby. Why don't you use your telephone to dial somebody?"

"I do not have a doll. My brother and I got this telephone from Santa Claus. My mother's telephone is not like that. She does not have to dial. She just touches the screen and she talks. I, therefore, use my telephone as a doll and at times I also use it as a dog", the little girl replied.

The six men started to search the house. There was nothing much in terms of furniture except for two iron framed small beds covered with pieces of foam and covered with used flowery bedsheets; a cupboard that stood on three legs with a few bricks underneath to make it stand properly. There was a television set on a chest of drawers. One of the police officers started to open the drawers. He had to be careful as all the drawers were wobbly. He found some branded cosmetics and lipsticks in one of them. The other drawers were used to keep the clothing of Rita and the children. The policeman took everything out and put on the bed.

They tried to go into the kitchen but only two of them could go in as there was hardly any space to move around. The kitchen was so dirty that their boots were sticking on the floor. They found an old fridge, a gas cooker on a dirty old table covered with grease, some cutlery and a few pans. The pans had changed colour and were dark on the outside. They opened the pantry and saw a few dented tins, packets of pulses and rice. Little insects were coming out from the packets of some of the dried ingredients. The man also found some chipped branded mugs and plates in the cupboard.

"Do you eat expired food? Where did you get all these branded mugs and plates? How come you have Chanel and Yves St. Laurent cosmetics? Did you steal them from Mrs Arnaud? questioned one of the investigators.

"No, Sir, Madame gave me the tinned food and the pulses. She even insulted me before giving me the mugs and plates. She told me that I have chipped them purposely and they are no use to her. I did not respond. She knew that I worked only for Mademoiselle and could not have chipped her crockeries. As for the cosmetics, Mademoiselle gave them to me. She even gave me a few new lipsticks as well as she did not like the colour. Unfortunately, you cannot question her."

With a lump in her throat, Rita said: "Mademoiselle was a good person. She was always giving me beautiful things. When she travelled abroad, she brought gifts for me and some clothes for the children. She never threw away her old shoes and dresses like Madame but gave them to me. She very often bought biscuits, chocolates and cakes for me to take home for the children. She was a good person and I enjoyed working for her. She trusted me so much that she never locked her wardrobes and drawers. I was the one who was cleaning her room. I will miss her. Such a good person. Who could have done that to her?"

"You are a born actress, Rita. How can you tell all these lies? We do not believe in crocodile tears. You want us to believe that you got all these branded goods as gifts. You want us to believe that you are not involved in the murder of your boss. You are the only one who knows the inside out of her apartment. Are you taking us for a ride? So sorry, we have to take you to the station for questioning. If we are not satisfied you will be put in a police cell until you spit out how Miss Arnaud was murdered. We have specialised machines to know if you are lying or not."

"Where is your husband? Where does he work? We need to talk to him as well. He might also be involved in this murder. "

"My husband works at the high security prison."

"You mean your husband is a prison officer? How can a prison officer live in such an appalling condition with so much dirt around? OK, we will talk to the Commissioner of Prison so that he gets permission to come to the police station."

"You will not be able to do that, Sir."

"Why? You think you know better than us now."

"No, Sir. My husband has been in prison since the birth of my son. I do not even have the right to visit nor communicate with him. One of my neighbours who lives next door and who was his prison mate for a couple of years told me that since he was behaving well in prison, he has started to work in the garden."

"If your husband has been in prison for quite some time. How come you have a baby on your hip? You must be a loose woman. How many men do you have in your lives? We need to interrogate them as well."

"No, Sir. I have never had any sexual relationship with men."

"But this baby did not come to your front door by herself. Yes, indeed you are a born actress. After all the things you have stolen from the Arnolds, you now want us to believe that you got pregnant in the absence of your husband without sleeping with men? These men must have paid you. Do not worry we will get you to tell us the names of all the men who have been sleeping with you. But meanwhile you have to accompany us to the police station."

Rita started to sob. "I cannot leave my children on their own. They will be in danger with my father."

"You mean the man sitting in the yard is the grandfather of these children. How come he allowed men to come in the house and have sex with his own daughter?"

Rita broke down and started to cry loudly and made convulsive gasps.

"All this hullabaloo because you want us to believe you!"

"No, Sir, the man sitting under the tree in the yard is the father and the grandfather of my baby. He raped me quite a few times. He raped me even when I was pregnant with his own child. He kept a butcher's knife under his bed and whenever I struggled and refused to have sex with him, he tore my clothes and threatened to kill me with the knife. He opened my legs apart and did his thing. Once all was over, he left me on the bed crying. I felt so soiled. I woke up took a shower and looked at my angels sleeping in the cot."

"Why do you stay with him?"

"He is the one paying for the rent and part of the food. My salary is not enough to feed my children and soon my daughter will have to go to school."

"What about your mother?"

"My mother left the house when I became pregnant from my father. She said that she could not bear this as this would bring too much shame in the family. What family? She was the one who was supposed to protect me and she let me down. My father started to rape me when my husband went to prison. I was in my own house but with a husband in prison I could not pay the rent and came to live with my parents. My mother was out working when my father raped me for the first time. On her return I told her how my father was rough to me and how I had to struggle and he tore my clothes and spread my legs apart. I asked my mother to take me to the police but

she refused saying what has happened between four walls must remain between four walls. She even added that my father was a good man and I must have tempted him into having sex with me. She warned me to stay quiet otherwise she would put a complaint to the police saying that I was the one who forced my father to have sex with me in the absence of my husband. Not only that, she added that she would throw me out of the house and I will be on my own doing the streets."

The investigators, especially, Mr Dumis showed sympathy to Rita. The Deputy Commissioner of Police said: "OK then, do not leave the house. We are reporting the case to the social workers and tell them about the urgency of the matter. They will keep us informed and once they have taken the children in safe custody, we will come back and take you to the police station for questioning."

The police then went in the backyard. The clothes that were hanging on the line looked as dirty as unwashed clothes. One of the police officers went to the police car and came back with a pickaxe. He started digging the muddy grounds.

Muna Dumis asked: "Why are you doing this?"

"You can never know the drugs that Rita's husband has planted may have multiplied with Rita's help," was the answer.

But the ground was so muddy that he gave up and said that he would ask the Municipal Council to do the work.

They then all left the site walking in potholes and getting their shoes full of mud. Before entering into the police cars, the investigation team had a discussion among themselves.

Mr Dumis said: "This is your country. I am only here as an adviser. I refuse to be involved into taking the girl to the police station. We cannot even put any provisional charge on her. There is not any proof that she is involved in the murder. The girl has too much on her plate to pay somebody to do this crime or to get the illicit drug that was injected to Miss Arnaud. Maybe we should question the father although I wonder if he has something to do with the murder. Apart from raping her daughter, sitting down under that tree and smoking he does not seem to have other interests. As for the husband he has been too long in a high security prison to really know the outside world and pay something to do this dirty job. Nevertheless, I suggest that we ask permission from the Commissioner of Prison to question him. We must know more about his gang and talk to the gang leader. These people can have great connections and have no problems in getting illicit drugs not only on the local market but overseas."

The DCP insisted that Rita should be further questioned at the police station or even stay one night in a prison cell to make her talk.

"I am here as an adviser and have no right to influence your decision although I believe this is a bad decision," was the answer of Muna Dumis.

[Back to contents](#)

Chapter 13

DEPARTURE

Muna Dumi went back to his hotel to meet his wife and daughter and helped them with their suitcases for their departure to Namibia on the next day.

"I do not know how long this case will take Aziza but I am determined to find the true murderer and to wash the reputation of my son. The whole Mauritian nation must know that it is not because we are black, we are criminals. Thembi, my princess, so sorry, papa will not be able to return back with you but I promise to be home as soon as possible."

The Commissioner of Police proposed to give his personal car with driver to take the family to the airport but Muna Dumi refused. "We will take a taxi and go through the proper channel. We do not want any VIP treatment although my family is travelling by first class. The only favour that I will ask you is to make sure that the custom officers do not do any body search on my wife and daughter. They can search the luggage if they so wish. My family has been traumatised enough at the police station and I do not want them to go through unnecessary sufferings a second time."

The hotel booked a taxi. The whole family, except Thabo, went to the airport.

With tears in her eyes Aziza Dumi told her husband "Be careful. I do not trust these people. I never thought that they could do so much harm. We came here for the wedding of our son and through him we were supposed to have another daughter. Instead we went through hell in what we thought was paradise. I know now the real meaning of hell in paradise. Please do tell Thabo to be careful and look after himself. Talk to his friend, the Doctor, to make sure that all his bruises are properly healed. And if necessary, ask him to go to a clinic."

"Do not worry Aziza. I will look after him. I might even go and stay with him instead of staying at the hotel. Once the case is over, I will return home by the first flight. I have urgent cases where the lives of innocent human beings are at stake. It is my priority to help these people. As soon as I return home I will have to go to the United Nations for an international meeting and to discuss the case of climate change migrants from Mozambique and other countries. I must make sure that they are accepted in their countries of adoption."

He explained to his wife that he was also on the case of a few children who turned into soldiers and fought on the front line. "Aziza, this and using women as a weapon of war are the most heart-wrenching problems close to our heart and must be dealt with urgently. "

He then told his wife that he was on a case of a little boy who told him how he stood on the side of the road and constantly shifting his heavy AK-47 from shoulder to shoulder as the weapon was too heavy for him. "This one boy represents a society that has failed its citizens. He is the offspring of a state of failure and intense conflict; the destruction of schools; the manipulation of families; the exploitation of desperate need. My heart breaks when I interview these children from Eastern and Central Africa. Countless children serve in the militias but we are doing what we can."

"I know, you too have plenty on your plate with all your cases of female genital mutilation. I wish you plenty of success. I do not have to tell you that you can count on me for any legal help."

Muna and Aziza hugged each other tightly. The father raised his daughter. "Dad, I am a big girl now. Please do not do that. People are looking at us. Can't you see you are making me blush."

"You will always remain my baby" was the reply.

On these words Muna Dumé turned on his heels without looking back.

Once in the hotel he packed his bags and checked out. He took a taxi and went straight to his son's flat.

Thabo behaved like a small boy when he saw his dad at his doorstep. He hugged him but not too tightly as he was still in pain. "Oh dad! I am so happy that you will be staying with me. I cannot stay on my own. These nightmares are haunting me. Every single night I feel the presence of Frances by my side and when I wake up, she is gone. I sometimes dreamt people were beating me and blood was oozing out but when I looked at my bed sheets, they were clean."

"Do not worry son. You have been through hell. Nature will do its work and you will get over it. The sooner you go to work the better. You need to meet your friends and colleagues. As for me I will help the best I can. Once this mystery is solved, I will have to go home and defend all these people who cannot pay lawyers but need my help. The sooner you stand on your legs the better for everybody especially me and your mother."

Chapter 14

PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister was putting pressure on the Commissioner of Police who did not know on which foot to dance.

"I am doing my best Prime Minister. We have questioned the maid and she will have to come to the station for a lie detector test. We believe she is a born actress. She might have something to do with the murder but is behaving like an innocent person. We have also asked for permission with the Commissioner of Prison to question the husband of the maid. Apparently, he was in a criminal gang working in the North of Mauritius. They have done lots of damages in private bungalows and in night clubs. They were involved in crimes, drugs and prostitution."

In a very authoritative voice, the Prime Minister said: "Commissioner of Police, listen to me. I am not asking who you are interviewing or the method and process of your work. I want a name. The sooner you give me a name the better it will be for you. I want to know who has murdered Miss Arnaud. This is causing lots of political and economic turmoil on the national and international front. Maybe I should remind you that the Arnaud family is among the richest white people in this country. Please also remember that Mr Dumé is a Human Rights lawyer of international reputation while his wife is a well-known gender activist and has helped many survivors of FGM, sexual violence and rape. I want a name and I order you to find one soonest."

With these words he banged the telephone on the nose of the CP and called his Senior Adviser to his office.

"Please organise a press conference with only one item: the murder of Miss Arnaud. There is too much outcry going on. I have to put people's mind at rest especially the white community and people in the private sector."

An urgent press conference was convened. The Prime Minister with his advisers and Senior Ministers sat at a long table in the Conference Hall of the Prime Minister's Office. All media including social media with their media badges on sat on chairs facing the Prime Minister. The television with a full crew arrived over 45 minutes before the press conference to place their cameras in the different angles of the room.

The lawyers of the Arnaud family including their French lawyers were among those in the audience. They got special permission from the PMO's office to attend the press conference.

The Prime Minister started his press conference by saying: "Good afternoon members of the media. I appreciate that you have responded to the press conference at such a short notice and in your busy schedule. I would also like to thank the lawyers of the Arnaud family who are in the audience. I believe two of them are from France and are helping the local lawyers with the case. As you can see, we also have the full investigation team including the Commissioner of Police and staff of the Central Investigation Division in the audience. I have personally asked Mr Dumitru to give his expert guidance with the enquiry. I do not have to tell you that he is Human Rights Lawyer of international reputation and has solved and won many cases concerning human rights as well as crime cases. He has agreed to help for free. He wants to help not only the Arnaud family but his distressed son. Thank you Mr Dumitru."

The PM went on to say "As you know we have very sophisticated equipment in Mauritius now and we can do DNA testing. We have just bought a lie detector machine which will help in the investigation. I have been told by the Commissioner of Police that the maid is in a police cell for further interrogation and her husband who is in prison will also be questioned. Before being put to jail the husband of the maid was operating in a criminal gang involved with crimes, drugs and prostitution. With the approval of the Commissioner of Prison, the CP and his team will also go to the high security prison to interview the maid's husband."

"I have called this press conference because I want you to rest assured that we are doing everything to uncover this mystery. We do not want the media to do any trial by the press nor giving false news to the population. I am very sorry to say that at this stage of the enquiry we do not have concrete information of who may have committed this crime. All people who were involved with the preparation of the wedding including the florists and the lady who helped Miss Arnaud with her makeup and getting dressed have been questioned. The flowers as well as the makeup were sent to the forensic laboratory and nothing was found in them. The only person that we have and we think can help in the enquiry is Rita, the maid. She has been working for Miss Arnaud for a long time and knows the inside out of Miss Arnaud's apartment."

The journalists started to ask questions. The response of the Prime Minister was "at this stage of the enquiry there is nothing much we can tell you. I am very sorry and under my instructions, the Commissioner of Police and his staff have been asked not to give any interview to the media. We are doing everything humanly possible in this case and I promise the population that the mystery will be solved very fast. We have a good judiciary system. Our DPP is known for his fairness. Our Central Investigation Department is very efficient. Our Forensic Laboratory has state of the art equipment. All I can say is that as soon as we have more information, I will call another press conference and you will be the first to know. I repeat it, I do not want any trial by the press. We have seen enough of that in the past. People have even committed suicide because of a bad press. Victims have turned into perpetrators and the other way around by the media. Please show some respect for the Dumitru and the Arnaud family and be careful of the pictures you use in your articles.

There are also children involved. I am advising the Ombudsperson for children to see to it that action is taken if the pictures of the children of the maid are shown in the media.”

With these words the PM thanked the media and those present. He left the room followed by his advisers and his staff.

The journalists were taken aback as they could not ask any questions but instead got a lecture on ethics and journalism. They turned to Mr Duménil who replied: “I am very sorry. I am also a victim in this affair. My son has lost his future wife. The treatment my family and I got in the police cells are unbelievable. My son will be left with physical and emotional scars for life. But I have nevertheless agreed to help with the case in view of my background and wide experience. I am here as an adviser on the request of your Prime Minister. There is nothing more I can say to the media.....”

Before Muna Duménil could finish his sentence, one of the French lawyers pushed him and stepped in front of him and said: “We really cannot understand how these black people especially the man, Thabo, is not in jail. We have every reason to believe that he is guilty and we will prove it. We have seen receipts of all the branded gifts including that of a pair of diamond cufflinks that the lady gave him. We also had the opportunity of reading the testament done by Miss Frances Arnaud. We cannot comprehend how the lady could have signed such a legal piece of document if not by force.”

“You mean that Thabo Duménil pretended that he loved Frances Arnaud and the lady was so madly in love that she agreed to do anything for him?” One of the journalists asked.

“Yes, of course. This is our understanding of the matter and this is what we will prove in court,” was the reply.

Among a few of the headlines in the media the next day were: “the rich and the poor”; “poverty versus money”; “where is social justice?” “Democracy at stake”; “Black and White – who will win.” “Did Thabo Duménil really love Frances Arnaud?”

There was a whole page on Rita, the maid, with a picture showing her handcuffed and going into the police van.

One article with the title “Know more about Rita” started with a by line: “Children taken away by social workers” and the article went on to say “The poor maid Rita has been placed in police custody without any proof. Her children have been taken away from her. The sin of Rita is that she is poor. The Prime Minister said he needed a name urgently and Rita was an easy name to find. It is so easy to put the blame on somebody who cannot defend herself nor have the money to pay a lawyer.”

[Back to contents](#)

Chapter 15

RITA

Rita was thrown in a dirty police cell. She got the same treatment that the Duménil family got when they were in prison. A female police officer did a body search and even looked into her vagina and anus with a torch. Rita cried with pain. "We need to know if you do not hide drugs in your private parts", the officer said.

The police asked her questions on her husband and where he hid the stolen goods. To which Rita replied "the police came to my house. They searched everything and could see for themselves that apart from clothes and food there was nothing else to be found."

"It is not for you to tell us what the police found or did not find. Stop being arrogant. This kind of behaviour will worsen your case." The Lady police officer told Rita.

With a lump in her throat, Rita asked about her children. "Your children are in a safe and clean place. They have been put in a shelter for children and are getting the best possible treatment. As a matter of fact, they are getting a better treatment than when they were with you. They are clean and are being fed properly. The investigating team took their birth certificates when they searched your house and the shelter is making arrangements so that they go to school. We are making arrangements so that the baby is declared. We understand it is a case of rape but we will see to it that she is declared under your name", replied the police officer.

Rita then went through the lie detector. The results were shown to the CP who did not know what to do as he thought Rita was his chance. The pressure of the investigation as well as going through a disciplinary committee to be convened by the Prime Minister was taking a toll on him. Although he had doubts on Rita being the murderer, he asked his team to twist Rita's arms and make her say what they wanted to hear. The team manipulated Rita by asking complicated questions. They rephrased their questions to confuse her. They tried to put words in her mouth. They threatened her and wanted her to say that she had something, even indirectly, to do with the murder. They asked her questions on her relationship with Mademoiselle Arnaud. The conversation that they had when there were only the two of them. The team played with Rita's sentiments especially of her children being without a father and now without a mother. They even told her that they would be lenient and would talk in her favour for a favourable sentence. Rita stuck to her guns and was consistent and clear in her answers.

The next day the investigation team went to the high security prison to interview Rita's husband. They did not get any result there either as the Commissioner of Prison confirmed that prisoners under his responsibility did not have any mobile phones and were watched 24 over 24. The CP added "Bruno has been working hard in the prison. He followed literacy courses by an expert who came to the prison once a week. He got good reports and has even written a few poems in Creole. His behaviour has been really exemplary and we gave him the chance not only to work in the garden but to help his fellow prison mates with their homework and their creative writing in Creole."

The CP told the team how Bruno had done a fantastic job with the garden. "With the help of other prisoners, Bruno has done miracles. We have stopped buying vegetables. The prisoners eat what

they grow. Bruno has also helped with a small farm where the prisoners get fresh chicken and eggs for their consumption.”

With a cheeky smile, the CP added “we will soon compete with the market in the region as we can put a stand outside the prison and start selling vegetables, chicken and eggs. Our farm is a model, in fact it is a recipe for rehabilitation.”

The investigation team listened with great interest how Bruno was put in charge of a small band in prison. “One day I heard him singing. I did not realise he had such a beautiful voice. I asked him if he could play the guitar and if he would like to form a small band in prison. He immediately agreed. I have asked for permission to buy a guitar and a musical keyboard and once a week the band has a one-hour session singing and playing. I believe in rehabilitation. I want to make sure that when the prisoners leave here, they will have a job, be able to integrate into society and accepted in their community and their environment.”

“Did he talk about his wife?” questioned Muna Dumi.

“Yes, he often cried saying how much he misses his wife and his children. He said that his wife has done secondary education and taught him how to read and write. He did not know how to write his own name before meeting his wife. Apparently, his wife did her best to help him change and to stop with all the underground work he was doing but he did not listen. He kept on telling his wife that it was easy money and the family could have a better life. Visits are not allowed in the high security prison and inmates are not allowed to write to their families. I am seriously thinking of sending him to the general prison where he will be able to have visits and correspond with his wife. I feel he is too emotionally disturbed by not seeing his wife and children. At least at the general prison he will be able to connect with them. He can also be a mentor to the prisoners at the general prison. I mean teaching them gardening and setting up of a musical group. I will see how this goes. Once he is well settled at the central prison, I have plans for him to go to the newly built complex which is like a half way home. We have six apartments with two bed rooms each, a living room with attached bathroom and toilet and a kitchen. He will be able to do his own cooking and do house hold chores. This will prepare him to go back to his family life.”

“May we talk to him,” Muna Dumi kindly asked.

“As this is an exceptional case and it is tea time, I am prepared to do the necessary.”

Bruno, a well-built man with very short African type curly hair and dark skin came to the room accompanied by a Prison Officer. He did not have any chains attached to his ankles or his wrists. He looked well-groomed in his prison uniform. His features were like that of an Afro-American star. He was barefoot. He sat quietly on a chair next to the Commissioner of Prison.

Muna Dumi with his hands behind his back walked along the room. He took a few minutes of deep thinking then started to question Bruno.

“First of all, let me congratulate you. From what I have heard you have done really well and will soon be transferred to the central prison where you will be able to have the visits of your wife and children. But tell us more about your wife. What kind of woman is she?”

With a lump in his throat, Bruno replied: “One of my friends threw a party as he wanted me to meet a nice-looking girl. I did not have any girlfriend at that time and age was creeping. I was 30

years old. Two girls joined the party and my friend introduced me to Brigitte. He talked to me softly in my ears and told me that Brigitte was not married and he felt that Brigitte was the right partner for me. He made me sit by the side of Brigitte. The party was real fun. We all had a good time. He even told Brigitte that I was the perfect match for her. But instead of dancing with Brigitte my eyes were set on Rita. As soon as I saw Rita, I felt like both our hearts were stitched together. I immediately knew she was the girl I would like to spend my life with. We talked all night. We took an appointment to meet after work the next day and the day after and it went on and on like that. One day during our encounter I gave Rita a ring and told her that I wanted to marry her. She was taken aback and thought it was a bit fast. I insisted and she agreed. We organised a simple wedding with only Rita's parents, my parents and two witnesses. We could not afford to have a big wedding. Furthermore, Rita's mother was dead against this relationship. She said that her daughter had passed her School Certificate while I had not been to school. But I was a good manual worker. I did all sorts of repairs in people's houses."

Bruno explained how Rita had to work in a factory due to discrimination. "Rita was working in a factory making jeans for export. She should have got an office job but as you know discrimination is rife in this country. Although Rita has the most beautiful features I have ever seen, she is dark in colour and has got African curly hair like me. She passed all the written examinations for jobs in the Government but when it came to the actual interview, she was told that she was not fit the job. This is how Rita joined the factory."

"We were a happy family", Bruno said with some regrets on his face. "We rented a small house and were really happy. When Rita got pregnant with our first child, I advised her not to work. When the boy turned one, a girl was born. Our friends envied our happy family until this fatal day when one of my friends asked me to help him with a job and he would pay me well. I did not know what kind of job it was until I saw his dexterity in breaking people's houses and started stealing. I soon joined his gang. It was an easy job with good money. Furthermore, I knew lots of these houses since I have been doing repairs in them. Rita implored me to stop with this life and she even said that she was prepared to change job or work overtime. She advised me to be the home maker and she would be the breadwinner."

"I agreed to be the homemaker and Rita the breadwinner." Bruno said with a smile on his face. "Yes, we broke stereotype and people sneered at us. Rita looked for another job. Miss Frances Arnaud was looking for a maid. Rita went for the interview and got the job. It is a well-paid job and I know she gets on well with Mademoiselle who likes her. But I was getting bored staying in the house looking after the children and doing household chores. My friends came to visit me and slowly they started to bring drugs and alcohol in the house. We started to enjoy ourselves. As we needed more money because of the children, I soon found myself in the gang stealing and doing drug business."

With tears in his eyes Bruno said "Look where I am now. I know my wife could not pay for our rented house with two small children to feed. She went to stay with her family. I miss my wife and children so much. I regret what I have done and would so much like to see my family and return back to my normal life."

The Commissioner of Prison patted Bruno and his shoulder and asked the prison officer to take Bruno back to his cell.

A high official from the CCID then told the Commissioner of Prison that Rita was in prison. "She is the only one who knows the apartment of Miss Frances Arnaud inside out and we have every reason to believe she has something to do with the murder. Bruno has confirmed just now that Rita is a bright girl. Maybe she is still in touch with Bruno's gang. Who knows?"

The officer went on to explain about Rita's baby. "Rita was raped quite a few times by her own father. Her father is now the father and grandfather of the baby. The baby has no birth certificate. The social workers have decided to put her in a shelter for babies and small children. The Attorney General is taking necessary action so that the baby gets her birth certificate. The shelter is also making arrangements so that the other two children are sent to school. I suggest you find ways and means of letting Bruno know what has happened to Rita, the more so that he knows that his family will have the right to visit him when he goes to the general prison."

"Oh, my God. I cannot believe that. He will be devastated. He loves his wife so much. I will seek for a professional advice on how to break the news to him. He might need psychological support. What a shame! He has made so much progress that I do not want him to fall in the pit again," the Commissioner of Prison replied.

A full report on Bruno was given to the CP. The murder file was getting bigger and bigger with no results.

Rita did only two nights in prison. On the third day when the police opened her cell, they found Rita's body on the concrete floor. Rita hanged herself with her bedsheet. She tied the bedsheet around her neck, climbed on a chair and attached the sheet to a hook on the ceiling before pushing the chair.

The officers tried to reanimate her but it was too late. Her body was cold. They called for the police crime expert to examine the body and to confirm the time of death. The expert did a small report with the title "death by hanging".

The police were in a dilemma not knowing what to do with the body. One of them said "Rita has no family. She has been rejected by her mother. Her father has raped her several times. Her husband is in prison." They called the office of the Attorney General for advice regarding the funeral.

The advice of the Attorney General was to wash the body, put a decent dress on Rita. The Attorney General added that he would ask the Commissioner of Prison to tell Bruno about this tragedy and to ask for his views regarding the funeral.

While taking out Rita's prison dress so that she could be washed, a prison warden found a piece of paper in Rita's pocket.

One of the guards felt very embarrassed and explained how the paper landed in Rita's pocket. "I gave her the paper and a pencil. She implored me with tears in her eyes to give her the paper and a pencil. I felt sorry for her. I did not even know that she could write. I thought she wanted to make a small drawing for her children."

Rita's farewell note said: "I am innocent. I would never have touched a single hair on Mademoiselle's head. She loved me and I loved her. She trusted me and even confided to me on how much she was in love with Mr Thabo and was having problems with her family. I have helped

Mr Thabo to get inside the house during the absence of Mr and Mrs Arnaud. Even in my wildest dream I could never have hurt Mademoiselle and now I am being accused of murdering her. I am poor and will never be able to afford a lawyer. My children have been taken away from me. What do I have now? Do I keep on living under the same roof with the man, my own father, who raped me nearly every night? How do I deal with a husband who will never accept my little baby girl who is not his? Would he believe me when I tell him that my father raped me.? Will he not say the same thing that my mother said? That it was my fault. God please protect my children. Let them know that their mother was an honest woman who loved them to bits.”

News travelled fast. The journalists got inside information. All print media was full with articles on Rita. One or two media showed her picture while others did a sketch of her. Titles read “Rita, the maid, found hanged in her police cell”; “Rita could not bear her children taken away from her”; “Rita preferred to die rather than facing justice”; “Provisional charge leading to death”; “What will happen to the children?”

There was only one opinion piece entitled “Sufferings” that blamed the media. “Rita will never be able to tell the population how she was a good mother and cared for her three small children. She will not see her children grow. Her children will never be able to go to her for advice. Rita hanged herself due to social pressure as well as her treatment from the police. Women sell. The sad, the negative and the macabre stories on women sell even more. Can’t there be any compassion for Rita? Can’t the media have any sympathy for Rita’s children? Was there need to put her pictures in the media? Had Rita been a rich person would she have got the same treatment at the police station? When the children grow up, they will want to know what has happened and the truth will come out. She took away her own life because of all the pressure but not because she was involved in a murder.”

On the advice of the Attorney General a small prayer was held in a small room of the prison. The Priest where Rita went to church agreed to do the prayer. Bruno, accompanied by two prison officers, was present for the prayer. Bruna cried his heart out seeing his wife in her coffin. “I cannot believe it is you my princess. Please forgive me. This would never have happened if I was with you and having a decent life. All I can do now is to promise you that I will start afresh. I have learnt quite a lot of trade in the prison. I will put them into practice. I know the children have been sent to shelters but I will fight tooth and nail so that they are given back to me. I will declare the baby and give her my name. I will go in a place where people do not know us and make sure that nobody knows that the father of the baby is also the grandfather.”

A prison officer held Bruno and told him that it was time to close the coffin. “Let me look at her one last time!” Bruno bent on the coffin and kissed his wife’s lips. He was allowed to go to the cemetery so that he could put the first handful of soil on the coffin.

Rita’s mother and father were informed about the death of their daughter but they did not attend the funeral.

[Back to contents](#)

Chapter 16

INVESTIGATION

On the advice of Muna Dumi, the investigation team agreed to take an appointment with the CEO of the Company where Thabo worked. He suggested that the staff be interviewed. "But we are talking about your son here. Do you really want to do that? You want his colleagues to give us information on him? We really do not comprehend you Mr Dumi." One of the police officers said.

"I did say I will leave no stone unturned until this mystery is unravelled. Thabo is my son. I love him and will always do. I am in your country for the wedding of my son but instead all I have seen are sufferings of people. I even attended two funerals. We must know my son's relationship with his colleagues. Once this is done, we must also know the relationship of Miss Frances Arnaud with her employees, partners and those who worked for her. They both made a good reputation in their work. The Company's profit doubled when Miss Arnaud took over from her father. The Company is now on the stock market and they have branches in quite a few countries. People are not always happy when they see others thrive. We must get first hand inside information. As for my son I need to get an idea what his colleagues and his boss think of him. I understand he is the only black person working in his company and there have been some raising of eyebrows when he got his last promotion."

An appointment was taken with the CEO of Thabo's company who agreed to put the Conference Room at the disposal of the investigation team. He also agreed that his staff would be given permission to be interviewed by the police.

The investigation team decided to spend a whole day at Thabo's company and unanimously agreed that all staff starting with the CEO would be interrogated. The CEO agreed and said that he would like to be the first one and if he could start at 7.30 a.m. due to his heavy schedule.

The CEO was questioned on Thabo's work, his professionalism, his friends, his social relationships. "I can only vouch on his professionalism. When the Board interviewed him for this high-profile job, we had no doubts on the added value that he would bring to the company. After another two rounds of interview, he was appointed. He did his work with diligence with no margin for error. He did so well that the Company which was on the verge of closing down doubled its profits. We owe Thabo our gratitude for what he has done to the company. As for his friends, all I can tell you is that at the beginning they were not happy to have a black person as a colleague. After a few months they found in Thabo a good friend and somebody they could turn to for professional and personal advice. Thabo became their confidant. Regarding his social activities outside the office, I really cannot say much as I do not socialise with my staff."

The Assistant of the CEO gave the same reply as the CEO. "His intellectual prowess cannot be questioned. I have never seen such a meticulous person. Such a hard worker".

The staff were then called one by one and they all said how they connected well with Thabo and he was indeed a friend whom they could trust.

One of them said. "He was so excited to be getting married. He apologised that he could not invite us. He told us that his parents and friends were coming from Namibia for the wedding. He showed us the pictures of his late fiancé in the company of his sister, his father and his mother. They all looked so happy in the pictures Thabo showed us."

Another colleague said "When his fiancé was travelling abroad, we sometimes went for a drink in a pub where there was a live orchestra on Friday nights. Thabo enjoyed good music. Once or twice he even asked the group if he could join them by singing and playing the guitar. What a suave voice! He looked like a real professional."

According to his colleagues, Thabo mixed really well with people in the pub.

"Did he mix with people outside your group? Were there ladies there? Did his late fiancé ever accompanied him to that pub?" asked Mr Duménil.

"Yes, as we said he mixed with everybody. It was not a pub only for male. In fact, there was a good mixture of male and female with a great diversity of cultures and ethnicity. Some guys came with their girlfriends or the other way around but Thabo only came when his late fiancé was outside the country. I have never seen him mixing with girls in the pub," was the reply of one of Thabo's colleagues.

The next day the Commissioner of Police telephoned Mr Arnaud for an appointment and he refused. "I can give you the telephone numbers of my lawyers. There are two from France and two works in Mauritius. I refuse to talk to you. The more so that the father of the one who is suspected to have murdered my daughter forms part of the team."

The Commissioner of Police was taken aback. "This is a routine investigation, Mr Arnaud. We are only going to ask you a few simple questions on your staff. You can ask your lawyers to be present."

The investigation team went to the Arnolds' residence after having obtained an appointment at 10.00 am the next day. They were received in the lounge.

A white fox terrier sat at the foot of a well-groomed Mrs Arnaud who had just returned from the hairdresser. Her shoes matched her linen pink dress and she wore lipstick of the same colour.

Mr Arnaud wore a three-piece outfit over a white shirt with diamond cufflinks. He kept his pipe in his mouth while welcoming the investigation team.

The four lawyers were already sitting on the black leather armchairs when Mr Arnaud invited the investigation team to their seats.

As soon as they were all seated, a maid in a dark blue dress, a white apron and a white cap brought a tray of Royal Doulton China cups and crisp white napkins. Another maid in the same accoutrement followed her with a teapot; a coffee pot and biscuits in a Royal Doulton China plate. "Leave them on the side table, these gentlemen will help themselves." Mrs Arnaud told the maids.

Apart from the four lawyers and the Commissioner of Police, the other three members of the investigation team kindly refused to have something to drink or eat. They were then offered water which they refused.

"We are here today because we want to know a bit more about your staff and visitors who used to come to your house, Mr and Mrs Arnaud", the Commissioner of Police said.

"Who we invite to our place is a private matter and we are not going to reply to this question. As for our staff we can tell you that we have two maids, a gardener and a watchman," replied Mr Arnaud.

"Did they have access to Miss Frances room? What about visitors who came to see Miss Frances?" one of the investigation team added.

In an annoyed voice, Mrs Arnaud said: "Listen, our daughter was an independent young lady. She had her own keys to get into the house and to go to her apartment. She had her own maid and our staff were not allowed to go into her apartment. We know her maid, Rita, was very close to her. We have been told by the other maids that the boy Thabo used to meet Frances in her room when we were not at home. Rita used to show him in."

One of the French lawyers looked at Mr Dumis straight in the eyes and said: "We have every reason to believe this is why Rita hanged herself up in the police cell. She surely was an accomplice in this horrible crime. We will prove, in court, that your son too has something to do with the murder Dumis. Just you wait."

In a soft voice Muna Dumis replied: "We can see that Mr and Mrs Arnaud have a great legal team. Two works in France and two works in Mauritius. I do not doubt their professionalism. But let me tell you that I will see to it that justice is seen to be done. We cannot point our fingers at people either dead or alive until they are proven guilty."

"We will see you in court and we hope that you will not be the one who will defend your son, Dumis," the other French Lawyer said.

"I have my own set of rules and my own ethics, I will certainly not do something like that. Furthermore, you were at the press conference of the Prime Minister and must have heard that I have been asked by him to act as an adviser. I should now be at the United Nations for different meetings and to discuss important world issues where the lives of people are at stake. I chose to remain in this country because of my children. Yes, my children. In our culture since Frances had a civil marriage with my son, I considered her to be my daughter. Not only Frances lost her life but the life of my son has been broken," was the reply.

On these words Muna Dumis stood up, bowed at everybody and took to the door. They all followed him.

Back at the office of the CP, one of the investigators wrote a report which was added to the thick file on the case. The CP did not know on which foot to dance. He was at a complete loss and told Mr Dumis, "You have lost a daughter. Your son is in emotional turmoil. You are here without your family doing your best to help. The only person that we thought could have helped with this mystery has committed suicide. And I might soon lose my job. What do we do?"

"I really do not know what to tell you. In my career as a lawyer I have never seen that. A girl with no enemy. A boy, my own son, who too has no enemy except that the parents of the girl hate him because of the colour of his skin. They were not happy with this wedding. Maybe we should probe more on this side. I will ask my son to come to the station so that we can question him."

"You will do that Mr Dumis? Your own son who has lost the love of his life?"

"Yes, as I said, I will move heaven and earth to solve this mystery. May be somebody else was in love with Frances Arnaud and did not want this wedding to take place. Who knows?"

After a few days, a fragile Thabo entered the office of the Commissioner of Police and sat on the opposite side of the table facing five investigation officers including the Commissioner of police and his own father.

The CP felt a bit embarrassed but opened the interview. "Apart from your colleagues at the office, do you have any close friends?"

"No! My closest friend was my former fiancé."

"When your fiancé was abroad on business, what did you do with your spare time?"

"My work was so demanding that I did not have much time left. Very often I stayed in my flat working. On Friday evenings I sometimes went to the pub with my colleagues."

"Have you ever been overseas while your former fiancé was not in Mauritius?"

With a lump in his throat, Thabo said: "Yes, quite a few times I joined her in countries where she was working. We even visited my parents a couple of times when Frances was on business in Namibia. She loved the country. We even thought of moving there as the opposition with her parents was becoming daunting. She had high respect for my parents. They were like her mum and dad. She bathed into the Namibian culture and traditions. She even wore the traditional dress when she was there. She used to discuss a lot with my mum and dad on their human rights work. I still remember how she said she envied my parents. She said she was doing the wrong job as she would have loved to help people. My mum and Amal Clooney were her models. We also spent long weekends in Mozambique and Seychelles and enjoyed the beaches there. These are the souvenirs that I will cherish until the end of my life. I have a few videos and pictures that I can show you. In fact, we did our honeymoon before the wedding."

"Did your former fiancé had any girl friend or any ex-boyfriend who were against this wedding," the CP asked.

"No, I do not think so. There was no secret between Frances and me. She would have told me. We fell in love since we first met at the University and have never been able to live without each other. My parents know how much I suffered when I was without Frances in Namibia. I left a country that I love, my fantastic parents, my little sister who is like my daughter, a well-paid job that I liked to come to your country because of my love for Frances. And now I have lost her."

"Did you know that Miss Frances Arnaud made a testament so that you are the sole beneficiary of her heritage?"

"Certainly not! And I do not want any of Frances money although I know that she earned all this money through her own hard labour. I have not seen the testament but if this is true, with the legal help of my father I intend to declare this testament null and void. If this is not possible, then her heritage can go to the needy. Why not? May be create a Trust on the name of Frances Arnaud! She would love to see that wherever she is. She had such a big heart. I have been with her visiting shelters. The homeless children cried in her arms. She bathed the babies, gave them their bottles and put them to sleep. Once a month she used to ask me to accompany her to a shelter for homeless children. She did a car boot full of shopping. At the shelter we both put our

aprons. Cooked for the children and ate with them. We gave them the best food and gave them more than they could eat. The rest was put in containers for the week and there was enough shopping to cater for over two weeks. These were the small contributions that we enjoyed giving to these homeless children. Frances was a fantastic cook. I learnt how to cook by being her sous-chef."

"Was there any adult at the shelter that became close to you and visited Miss Arnaud in her apartment," a policeman asked.

"Not that I know of. Anyway, Frances would have told me. We did not have any secrets for each other", Thabo replied.

At this stage of the questioning and to the surprise of everybody Mr Duménil said that he would like to take over.

"Thabo, I am here at the request of the Prime Minister to advise on this important case. Your fiancé has been murdered. You are now emotionally disturbed. The lawyers of the Arnolds think you have something to do with the murder. Rita took her own life as she could not bear the pressure. I will ask you a few questions not as your father but as an adviser working on this case. I want you to be as honest as possible and to tell me the truth and nothing but the truth. Is this clear?"

"Yes Sir"

"Now, tell me a bit about your friends?"

"I do not have much time to make friends. I have only my colleagues at the office. My only friend was the love of my life, Frances. As I said I even used to join her when she was on mission overseas but sometimes due to pressure of work or constraint in getting holidays I could not," replied Thabo

"Your colleagues told me that you used to go to a pub on Friday evenings when Frances was not in Mauritius?"

"Yes, I enjoy good music and the pub has a fantastic band. I used to go there when Frances was on business overseas and I could not join her. I especially enjoyed watching the band play, had one or two beers with my colleagues and returned to my flat. I want to put on record that I have never had a relationship with anybody there."

Mr Duménil then asked: "Your colleagues also told us that you used to play the guitar and sing with the band. Did you not make friends with the people in the group? Did you not invite them to your flat? Did you not talk about your relationship with Frances? Did you not invite them to your wedding?"

"No, dad. Sorry, no Sir, no Mr Duménil. My colleagues have never been to my flat. I can assure you that I have never invited anybody apart from Frances to my flat."

"Surely, somebody must have connected with you at the pub or offered you one or two drinks."

"Apart from my colleagues, I did talk to one or two people in the pub as well as the musicians. But I never became close to anybody."

"Will it be possible to meet the people you met in the pub as well as the musicians? We need to talk to them as well," insisted Mr Dumi.

"Yes Sir, I believe this should not be a problem. It can be done before they start their programme at the pub. When do you want me to organise this?"

"Shall we say in two days' time. The sooner the better."

"We are Wednesday today. I will arrange that for Friday evening. Is this OK with you, Sir?"

After two days, the investigation team went to the pub. A high-class place with small round tables sitting four. At least six high chairs in front of the bar which had a wide variety of wine and beers from all countries of the world. The three barmen seemed to know their clients. They knew what to serve them and had small talks with them.

The investigation team was given a small room at the back of the pub. All the five members of the band were interviewed together. They were a jolly group of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They presented themselves. The lead guitarist was a creole looking type girl with curly hair while the other guitarist was a chap of mixed race; the drummer looked like an Indian young boy; the lead singer was a white man and the one on the piano keyboard was a Chinese girl. They all said how they connected with Thabo and talked about how good he was as a singer and a musician. One of them said: "We have been discussing among ourselves and got the impression that Thabo must have followed courses in music to be such a good artist. We enjoyed having him with us."

"Did he come to the pub on his own?" one of the investigators asked.

"Yes, but he joined the table of his friends from his office. They used to join two tables together or sat at the far left of the pub where the sitting capacity is bigger."

"Were there any girls in their group?"

"No, it was only a group of men. When we asked Thabo if he had any girlfriend, he said that he was at the pub to drown his sadness as his girlfriend was on mission abroad. He spoke very highly of his girlfriend and even apologised that he could not invite us for the wedding."

"Do other people from the pub joined them?" Mr Dumi questioned.

"Sometimes. The group was so cheerful and Thabo played and sang so well that it was difficult for some people to resist the temptation of talking to Thabo," replied the lead singer.

One of the investigators asked if they could meet the people Thabo connected with.

"Yes, they should be here any minute. I am sure one of the barmen or the manager can arrange for you to meet them," answered the lead singer.

While waiting for the Manager of the pub, Muna Dumi offered the investigation team a glass of Namibian beer and said "So sorry guys, we are here to work and I cannot offer you a strong drink. I am offering a non-alcoholic Namibian beer."

The Manager entered the room, shook hands with all of them and asked them to accompany him to his office. By then the pub started to fill up. He went out to ask the band of five to show him the guys who connected with Thabo.

Two white guys wearing branded t-shirts, jeans and sneakers accompanied the Manager in the small office.

"Sorry to disturb you gentlemen but we have a few questions to ask you." Mr Dumisaid.

"No problem, go ahead. What would you like to know?", they both replied.

"Can you please give us your names, addresses and tell us what was your connection with Thabo Dumisaid?"

"My name is David Bell. I live in the North of Mauritius. I am an engineer by profession but interested in many social issues including climate change. Thabo and I had lots in common regarding state-of-the-art technologies; the global economy; the environment; neo liberalism; white supremacies and racism. I have invited Thabo to my place once or twice and we have been discussing throughout the night."

"Are you married?" asked one of the investigators.

"No!"

"Do you have a girlfriend and if yes do you live together." Mr Dumisaid

"No! I do not have a girlfriend and I do not invite girls to come to my house," was the reply.

The other white guy looked very much like Leonardo DiCaprio. Impressive looking chap with blond hair falling to his neck. He kept pushing the mesh falling on his forehead back in place. He told the investigation team: "Thabo was such a great singer and a guitar player that we all wanted to talk to him after his performance. Soon I became his good friend and he even invited me to his flat once or twice. This is how I met his girlfriend."

"You certainly must have heard that Thabo's fiancé is no more. We are here to know a bit more about Thabo's relationships outside the office. Can you please tell us what is your profession? And please give us your name and address," said one of the investigators.

"I am a medical doctor and I live down the road from Thabo. My name is Cedric Martin."

"OK! Now I get it. So, Doctor, you are the one who nursed Thabo when he was badly beaten up by the police? I am ever so grateful that you looked after my son so well, Dr Martin."

The police officers felt so embarrassed hearing what happened to Thabo at the police cell that they all bent their heads and looked on the floor.

"Yes, Sir. I will explain how I helped Thabo with all his injuries. I was on my way to my house from the airport when I got this urgent telephone call from Thabo. I attended a regional conference in South Africa where I had to present a paper. Thabo could hardly talk and said he was badly hurt and if I could come to see him urgently. I thought he had an accident. I told him that I had just come back from overseas and was on my way home; but told him to wait a bit so that I could pick up my medical kit. When I saw Thabo, I could not believe my eyes. I was

devastated. I looked at him and said that this could not be an accident. He had bruises all over his face, his arms and his legs. He had a black eye, blood was oozing on his cheek, his arms and on his legs. He could hardly stand on his feet. He then told me that the police did that to him. I could not understand and told him that the police are supposed to protect people and not treat them worse than animals. He had tears in his eyes and he told me that his parents too got this bad treatment from the police. He felt more for his little sister named Thembi. I even advised him to go to the Human Rights Commission as soon as he could stand on his feet. I got the impression that he was like a piece of meat that the police were tearing apart so that each of them could get their share. I gave him the first emergency treatment and told him that I would accompany him to a clinic but he refused. He asked me to stay with him as he was so traumatised and was suffering too much. He said I could sleep in his spare bedroom. But I could not as I had other engagements having returned to Mauritius on that same day."

"You must be very close to him if he asked you to stay with him." Mr Duménil asked

"Yes, we became good friends. As I said I have been to his place once or twice. Once I had dinner with Thabo and his former fiancé. They cooked a delicious dinner and we spent a fantastic evening together. In fact, I was among the rare persons he met at the pub who was invited to the wedding."

"Did you accept the wedding invitation?"

"Unfortunately, I could not as I had already accepted this regional workshop and I had this important paper to present."

"What was the theme of your paper?"

"My paper was on medical cannabis as well as the harm of synthetic drugs. My presentation was followed by a discussion and participants were put in groups to come up with the way forward on these two subjects."

"Dr Martin, you seem to be the only person in this pub who was that close to Thabo, I am sure you can give us more information on other persons in the pub with whom Thabo used to connect. We would like to know if he met with other girls in the pub. May be, we should find an appropriate place to probe further into this discussion. If you do not mind, I would like to ask the Commissioner of Police to request you to come with us to the police station. Please note that this will be a routine interview and it will not be long. I believe it is better if we do the interview in an official place rather than in a pub." Mr Duménil explained.

"I am fine with that. This is the most horrific case I have heard in my career. I know how Thabo was devastated and I would like to do everything that I possibly can to help you find the person or persons involved in this ignominious crime."

With these words Dr Martin followed the investigation team in his sports car.

As soon as they sat down in the conference room of the police station, the Commissioner of Police got a call.

"Yes Mr Arnaud. What can I do for you? Your four lawyers want to interrogate Thabo Duménil in front of his dad. Mr Duménil is here with me. Let me ask him."

He covered the mouth piece with his hand and asked Mr Duménil if he was agreeable to meet with the lawyers of Mr Arnaud."

"Certainly not. Tell him that if he still thinks that Thabo Duménil has something to do with the murder, we better meet in court. He can rest assured that I am not the one who will be defending Thabo Duménil."

The CP reported back to Mr Arnaud and the conversation was put to an end.

"I am so sorry Dr Martin. We can proceed now. Tell me a bit more about your relationship with Thabo. How often did you meet him? How many times have you met his former fiancé?" the CP asked.

"We met each time he came to the pub. He did not come with his fiancé. He said he was at the pub because he did not want to stay on his own as his fiancé was on business abroad."

Muna Duménil was bewildered. He could not understand why his son did not tell him about his two friends with whom he seemed quite close and Dr Martin was even invited to the wedding.

He, nevertheless continued with the interrogation: "When we talked in the pub you said you were devastated to see the state in which Thabo was. Why devastated?"

"Yes, it broke my heart to see him with all these bruises."

"But as a Doctor, this cannot be the first time you have to care for people who are sick, who are injured or who are badly hurt. Why devastated? Why was your heart broken?"

"Because Thabo is my friend and will always be."

"Have you even been to Miss Frances flat?"

"No, I have never been to Miss Frances' flat, per se."

"What do you mean by per se? asked Mr Duménil.

"I have been to the residence of the Arnolds twice. Mr Arnaud called me for a home visit as his wife had a bad allergy with all the digging that was being done in his region. I gave Mrs Arnaud a prescription. The second time he called me for himself. He injured his knuckles and they were bleeding. I asked him if he had punched somebody and he said that he had hurt himself while punching on a door which he had problems to open."

"Did you tell Miss Frances or Thabo that you have been to the residence of the Arnolds?"

"No! I did not want to worry Miss Frances with the medical problems of her parents. As for Thabo I knew he was not in the good books of the Arnolds and did not want to let him know that I had been there."

Mr Duménil then said that he was done with Dr Martin and if the Commissioner of Police had further questions. As the investigation team did not have any questions, Dr Martin took leave from them.

The investigation team had a discussion among themselves and Mr Duménil advised that the Passport and Immigration Office be contacted as well as the organisers of the regional conference to see if

Dr Cedric Martin did in fact attend the workshop. He also advised that the police did a search in the house of Dr Martin.

The Commissioner of Police turned purple. "We certainly cannot do that! Dr Martin is a well reputed doctor. He is well known in Mauritius and abroad. You have heard yourself how he said he presented a paper at this conference. We cannot rub more salt on the wound. There will be an uproar in the white community. They will say that we are against them. As you are aware Mr Arnaud is among the few white families who control the economy of this country. He has lost his only child and is still mourning and now you want us to search the house of a well-known white Doctor. No! Mr Duménil I am not prepared to do that."

"Why don't you take advice from the Prime Minister or the DPP? We are doing everything we possibly can to solve this mystery. We have interviewed the parents in front of their lawyers. Why can't we now search the house of the only person whom Thabo met in the pub and who was invited for his wedding?" Mr Duménil enquired.

With a trembling voice the CP said that he was afraid to talk to the Prime Minister but "being given that the file is getting bigger and bigger with no results, maybe you are right. I thought my chance was Rita, the maid. We have lost her. I know your reputation, Mr Duménil. I trust you. I will contact the District Court Magistrate so that we get a search warrant."

Muna Duménil reached Thabo's flat quite late that night. He bought some Chinese take away and prepared the table to eat with his son. Thabo saw that his dad was very perplexed and could hardly eat. "What is the matter dad? Has the mystery been unravelled? Why do you look so odd?"

"Why did you lie to me, son?"

"Me lying to you! I never did something like that. You know I will never lie to you. I trust you too much to do that," was Thabo's response.

"You did not tell me that you were that close to Dr Martin and even invited him to your wedding."

"Oh! I am so sorry. I really apologise. I am still not in control of myself. Yes, I should have told you."

The next day, Muna Duménil asked the Commissioner of Police to ask Thabo Duménil to come to the police station for another interrogation.

Now, it was the turn of the CP to be confused. "Why do you want to ask your son to come to the station Mr Duménil? We have already questioned him."

"I have a few questions to ask him and I want to be transparent about it."

Thabo arrived at the police station just before lunch and his dad started to question him.

"Why did you not tell us that you were a good friend with Dr Martin and Mr Bell? We have interrogated them both and they confirmed that they became good friends with you."

Thabo apologised and said that in all his turmoil he forgot to mention Martin and Bell.

"David Bell even said that he has lots in common with you on great issues such as the global economy, climate change and racism. Furthermore, he told us that he does not go out with girls. He even said that he has invited you to his place."

Thabo just mumbled and did not know what to reply.

In an angry voice, Mr Dumi said. "These are very important information that you did not tell us Mr Thabo. As for Dr Martin he even said he had dinner with you and Frances once or twice and was invited to the wedding."

Thabo apologised profusely and said "Yes, Sir. I really do not know what to say. I know this is important information that I should have told you. But in all my turmoil and thinking only about Frances, I was out of my mind and forgot to mention my relationships with David and Cedric."

"Apart from being their friends. Did you have any sexual relationship with them?" Mr Dumi said to the surprise of everybody in the room.

"No! I am not gay and I have never had a relationship with neither Cedric or David. I was so disturbed that the only thing that was on my mind was the death of Frances. How in such a short period of time my whole life was in complete shamble. I was even thinking if I would ever be able to reconstruct my life without Frances. I am very sorry and I apologise again that I did not mention Cedric and David. Cedric looked after my injuries when I was beaten up by Mr Arnaud and his cronies and he kept it as a secret from Frances. Apart from Frances, David was the only person I could discuss major world and political issues. I have always had a very healthy relationship with both of them with no sexual implication." Thabo replied with welled eyes.

Muna Dumi then asked the CP if he had any questions to which the latter replied in the negative. But he asked Thabo to make himself available in case the police might need him for further questioning.

During the same day that Thabo was interviewed at the police station, two police officers went to Dr Martin's residence. They knocked at the door. Dr Martin opened the door but refused to let them in saying that he had already been interrogated by the police. The two police officers insisted and showed him the search warrant.

"I cannot let you in as I need to get legal advice first. Give me some time to contact my lawyers." Dr Martin told the officers in a very angry and loud voice.

"You can let us in while you contact your lawyer," one of the officers told him.

They put on their gloves and started to search his surgery. They took all his medication and medical appliances.

"You certainly cannot do that. How will I work? Dr Martin questioned.

"They will be sent to the forensic laboratory and once the forensic doctor has examined everything, they will be returned to you. Do not worry. We are writing down all the items that we are taking in your house", one police officer replied.

They then searched the bedroom and bathroom. They took all his toiletries. They found an album with a beautiful cover on his bedside table. They put the album in their black bag.

"You have no right to take my album. This is very personal," Dr Martin said.

They apologised and explained that the police needed to probe further into his relationships and the album was of importance.

A few days after the search in his house, Dr Martin got a telephone call from the CP asking him to come to the police station and that he could be accompanied with his lawyers if he so wished.

A self-assured Dr Martin accompanied by two lawyers entered the conference room of the Commissioner of Police. They were invited to sit down. On the other side of conference table sat the CP, his Assistant, a Forensic Doctor, the two police officers who searched the house of Dr Martin and Muna Duménil.

One of Dr Martin's lawyers said that he would like the whole interrogation to be recorded to which the CP agreed.

The floor was then given to the Forensic Doctor. "Can you please, tell us Dr Martin, how come you have illicit drugs among your medicines."

"I certainly do not have illicit drugs. The drugs you have taken from my surgery are for my patients and some of them are for my patients suffering from cancer or are terminally ill."

"But we did find a lethal drug among your medicines. One of them is very much the same as that which was used on Miss Frances Arnaud and it contains Midazolam."

"This does not mean that I killed Miss Frances. I am a very good friend of Thabo and was invited for the wedding and moreover I was not in Mauritius when this tragedy happened. I use Midazolam as an anaesthesiology for some patients heading for surgery. This prevents them from getting too nervous. In some cases, I administer the midazolam first before the aesthetic is done."

The CP took over and asked Dr Martin "Can you give us an explanation of all these pictures of Thabo Duménil in your album?"

"As I told you, we became very good friends. He was such a great performer that I took his pictures and put it in my album. Is there anything wrong with that?"

"No, there is nothing wrong with that," Mr Duménil said before adding, "After his release from the police cell, the first person that my son contacted was you, Dr Martin. You did see him quite urgently and gave him a good treatment for which I am grateful. Did my son asked you to stay with him as he was in such a terrible state. Is this true, Dr Martin?"

"Yes, it is."

"Are you gay Dr Martin? Did you have an affair with Thabo?"

"I object to this question", said one of the lawyers. "You have no right to ask this kind of question to my client. No! my client is not gay and, in our environment, we condemn same sex relationship. We are against LGBTI. These people are immoral and must be put in jail."

To the surprise of everybody and even more the lawyers, he said, "Yes, I am gay". In fact, I saw Thabo for the first time at a Pride March. I appreciated the way he was talking and sympathising with the gay people and thought he was gay."

He went on to say, "I could not take my eyes away from him. I did everything that I possibly could so that I could see him again until one day I saw him performing in the pub."

"Do you have a partner?" Muna Dumi asked.

"Yes, I had a long-time partner named Thando. He is a Namibian and works in South Africa. We met regularly and even decided to get married and adopt a child. Our model were all the married gays and lesbians who have children. Elton John became our role model. We found gay couples so stable. Their children go to school and they do not suffer any harassment or discrimination. In fact, I was thinking of moving to South Africa where the Constitution is a model and same sex marriage is legal. Thando and I even discussed about the possibility of creating a foundation to help LGBTI who suffer discrimination from their parents and society. We wanted to build a shelter to give a safe and peaceful place for the LGBTI community who were rejected by family and friends. But all this was shattered when I saw Thabo. I told my partner about my love for Thabo. He could not accept that I was leaving him. I had to go to South Africa to talk to him. We both went through counselling. Unfortunately, even counselling did not work for Thando. He went through a bad depression and is still under treatment. I really feel bad about this but my love for Thabo was stronger."

Apart from Muna Dumi, everybody in the room got a shock and did not know what to say.

After a few minutes Muna Dumi said: "Did it not cross your mind that Thabo did not want any gay relationship with you? You should have gone back to your partner when you saw how Thabo was in love with Frances?"

"I could not get Thabo out of my mind." Dr Cedric replied. "I went to the pub every Friday night so that I could see him. He was not there every Friday but I was so excited when I saw him. I still remember how one night after his performance I hugged him tight. I kissed him on the cheeks but missed one cheek and my kiss touched his mouth. I have been dreaming about this kiss all the time."

Dr Martin explained that he thought Thabo might have helped him to do his coming out. "My parents and my community are dead against LGBTI. They treat gay people as mentally sick who should be put in a psychiatric hospital. My parents, my friends and my surroundings keep on saying that gay people are the ones who are spreading HIV and AIDS in Mauritius. I could not talk to any of my friends in Mauritius. I thought with Thabo things would be easier. He is such a good person and knows how to talk to people."

At this point of the interrogation, Dr Martin started to sob. "As I said, the first time I saw Thabo my heart went for him. I thought I would get over it but my love for him became stronger and stronger. I gave Thabo all sorts of signs to show him that I was in love with him but he took it as a great friendship. He knew I was taking his pictures and did not say anything. But the way he was talking about the love of his life, I knew I did not have any chance. He loved Frances to bits and even introduced her to me. I was devastated. My heart was broken."

"What did you do? Dr Martin", Mr Dumi asked as he was sobbing so much that nobody could understand what he was saying.

The Commissioner of Police got a call from the Passport and Immigration Office. He took the call in his office.

He came back to the interrogation room and said: "You are a liar, Dr Martin."

"You have no right to tell my client that he is a liar," one of the lawyers said.

"Yes, I insist your client is a liar. According to his passport that we took in his house, we knew that Dr Martin did not travel recently which meant he was in Mauritius when Miss Frances died. The call I have just received from the Passport Office confirmed that Dr Martin has not been travelling recently. We wanted to double check in case he has two passports as the one we took in his house showed that he did not travel. I am very sorry to insist that your client is a liar. We, furthermore, contacted the Medical Council of South Africa. They told us that although they know Dr Martin as a great professional who has presented quite a few papers in their different forums, there was no workshop during this time."

Dr Martin was in total stupefaction and did not know what to say. "I apologise for having lied on my travel to South Africa. But I want you all to know that I am in love with Thabo. My community is against LGBTI. They use cultural, traditional and religious values to persecute gay people. My gay friends have suffered discrimination, harassment and bad treatments that have often led to extreme violence. Two of them have committed suicide as they could not bear the pressure. There is no protection in Mauritius for LGBTI. Same sex marriage is illegal. It is only now that these oppression and injustice against LGBTI are being denounced. I thought Thabo would be my salvation to do my coming out. I even broke my relationship with my Namibian partner as I was so much in love with Thabo."

"Yes, we appreciate what you are saying Dr Martin. I have myself defended quite a few gays and lesbians in my career. I still remember the case of a lesbian who was raped by a gang. They took turn to rape her. They slit her intimate part and her face. She did not survive as she suffered too much injury. I helped the parents to find the criminals. They were brought to court and charged with murder. But, why did you lie? Why did you say that you were in South Africa when you were not," insisted Mr Duménil

Dr Martin started to cry loudly. They all felt sorry for him and the CP gave him a glass of water.

The questioning went on during the whole day with one break when some sandwiches and tea were put on the table.

Dr Martin had only one sip of water. He could not eat anything. At a certain point in the early evening he started to tremble and his eyes were full of tears. He swallowed his saliva and said: "I cannot bear this any longer."

"If not, then tell us the truth, Dr Martin." The CP told him.

Dr Martin stayed quiet for a few minutes. He asked for some water which he swallowed very slowly and if the water was blocking his throat. OK, I am now ready. I will tell you the truth. My love for Thabo made me become like a mad person when he invited me for his wedding. I made all sorts of plans in my head on how to prevent this wedding."

"So, you are the one who did an injection of Midazolam to Miss Frances Arnaud." The Forensic Doctor said.

"No, no."

"Enough lies. For once, tell us the truth Dr Martin," insisted the Forensic Doctor.

"I mean yes, yes. I only wanted Frances to have a long sleep so that she could not go to church. This would have prevented the wedding. But in my haste, I must have put too much Midazolam in the syringe." Dr Martin started to make loud convulsive sob. He could not control himself.

With all the sobbing, the investigation team could hardly hear what he was saying and made him repeat himself.

"I can assure you that I did not want to kill her. I love Thabo too much to do something like that. I did not want the wedding to take place. I had no intention of killing Frances."

He kept on repeating that he did not want the wedding to take place a few times before falling on the floor.

[Back to contents](#)