

The Saga Continueth

Shane Kidd

Friday 21st May, 2004

It is the dawn of time. Somewhere on the African savanna (the cradle of mankind) sits the one of the sons of Lucy, Lucy who has so recently taken her first upright steps and who is the mother of us all. Lucy's son squats in this tinder dry savanna and out of boredom; frustration or pure curiosity strikes two rocks together. Behold, fire man's first tool is invented. Our ancestors seek warmth beside it and use its light to protect themselves from the terrors of the night. They hunt with it, cook their meals and in the evenings tell story's beside its warming glow. With the invention of this basic tool mankind will one day send men to the moon and space ships to explore the universe. Through the ages the secrets of fire are handed down from father to son, mother to daughter.

Fast forward to the present day; in a back water banana republic somewhere in the deepest darkest Africa. Chinamasa the Minister of Lawlessness and Disorder and Didimus Mutasa the Minister of Corruption, stalwarts of the illustrious ZANU (PF) party have just had their inflated egos and bums bruised in an encounter with that arch fiend Bennett. They decide to wreak their vengeance, by hatching a cunning plan with Knight who is the local factotum of the ZANU (PF) party in Chimanimani, Bennett's constituency. The plan is stunning in its brilliance and concept. Using the latest technology, matches and diesel, they will send their avenging hordes to destroy the MDC offices with fire.

At about 7pm Maguta arrives at my gate with the news that the avenging hoard has set fire to the office. I'm never that motivated in the evening so it takes me 45 minutes to get my act together drive down there. The avenging hoard have set fire to a wooded kitchen at the back of the MDC offices and poured diesel under the front door in order to set the concrete floor ablaze. Hey what can I say I didn't hire these fools?

In the interim Birgit phones the police and reports the matter to the current Fool in Charge Inspector Ruzvidzo he says he will attend immediately. Needless to say that's the last we see or hear of him. I really don't know why we even bother reporting anything to them; they are nothing more than oxygen thieves. If you dressed up a bunch of logs in police uniform they would be more useful. At least the collective IQ would be higher.

In the interest of journalistic integrity we need to qualify the phrase "avenging horde". The horde consists of Lazarus who has a room temperature IQ and is one of Mwale's CIO sidekicks and his retarded mate Tawanda. As we approach the office to put out the fire they start throwing rocks at us from the dark. I sit there trading insults with them for a while, then I got bored and I wander off to find some reinforcement just in case they had more people hidden in the dark. I returned in about 20 minutes by which time the valiant defenders of Chinamasa and Mutasa's honour and fearless soldiers of the ZANU (PF) had departed. We put out the fire and the evening's entertainment come to an end. Total damage inflicted - the top 3 lines of timber on the wooden kitchen are burnt. The most serious injury of the evening is self inflicted. I manage to find my thumb with a hammer whilst repairing some broken boards on the fence. If I lose at golf tomorrow I will definitely sue someone.

Beneath the ludicrousness of this event is an underlying seriousness that needs to be examined. Chinamasa and Mutasa are men of power in this strange government of ours. They make day to day decisions that affect the lives and future of all Zimbabweans. They are held in esteem by our neighbour and are greeted with honour wherever they go. They hatch their cunning plan to burn down the MDC office and through the good offices of Knight they hire these two retards. The retards in question with the help of **diesel** and **matches**, **fail** to burn down a **wooden** building.

Now to the nub of the matter, in the press you often hear the phrase "you don't need to be a rocket scientist". But let's be honest if you're going to hire someone to commit arson the only qualifications they need are the ability to walk upright without dragging their knuckles on the ground and a parent who has taught them one of the fundamental lesson of existence. The question, if Chinamasa and Mutasa have

failed in their ineptitude to accomplish this basic task then what qualifies them and their ilk to govern this back water banana republic.

Wednesday 26th May, 2004

Well I've disappeared up the mountains for 6 days with Doug, Garth and crew. Why Garth loves the mountain trips in the middle of winter is beyond human understanding. Well I suppose we all have to tolerate our friends little idiosyncrasies and perversities. God knows what Mel has to put up with.

In my absence Birgit holds the keys to the fort and is responsible for looking after our various fire hazards which we so gleefully call property in this absurd country of ours.

Friday 28th May, 2004

Birgit's trying times, the return of the horde

The weak winter sun raises on yet another day in paradise. Word has gone round that there is to be yet another demonstration at MDC office by Mrs Knight and her Party of Thugs; whites were advised to stay at home. At about 10am Birgit hears loud noises, the banging of metal and breaking glass etc from the village. Birgit thinks the show has obviously begun and trying times are at hand. At about 11.45am Birgit hears the shouting and toy toying of demonstrators as they march up the street in their 100's toward the house. The rent a mob that has been collected by Dombera's 3 farm vehicles, so thoughtfully organised by Doderia Mataruse (spelling?) Mike Bialy's farm manager, he must be proud of her. The Dombera trucks had collected people from Rathmore Dombera and Zimpala. So nice of these neighbourly institutions to supply their labour to this noble cause and let's be honest it's not like they lost a days pay or anything. The rent a mob are bolstered by a hard core of war vets from Roy's farm, Mrs Knights hired thugs from the village and soldiers dressed in civilian clothes. The rent a mob arrived outside the gate singing and chanting, they proceeded to throw rocks at the house breaking roofing tiles widows etc. Birgit was alone upstairs and managed to make a few calls to the outside world asking for help. She eventually got it down to the fine art of SMS'ing the words **HELP** to embassies, Roy and anyone else in a position to be of assistance and believe me with our experience over the last 4 years there's not many embassies and international human rights organisations that she doesn't know. By this time rent mob had broken down the gate and swarmed into the yard surrounding the house. The police station is only 300 meters across the valley and we can hear everything that happens there so they sure as hell knew what was happening at the house They were now singing and dancing on the verandah, throwing furniture around. They then forced open the verandah doors and invaded the house. Birgit figures its time to confront them and slowly and calmly walks down the stairs and addresses the crowd.

"What is the reason, why you break into my house like this" she asks. One of the head fools by the name of Jiri from Rtahmore says

"we want you and your husband to come down to 'our new office' and explain why you gave it to the MDC."

"My husband is not here he's away on business and I'm here to give you all the answers you want - lets start." Birgit did not want them to know that I was up the mountains in case they left a reception committee at base camp when I came down.

"Why did you give the offices to the MDC?"

Birgit replied "one day you will know it and understand."

The mob wanted to know where I was so Birgit took them around the house and upstairs to show them that I wasn't there. Those less interested in politics were simply breaking things and raiding the pantry and refrigerator for food. Undoubtedly some wise heads in the crowd had taken note of ZANU (PF)'s track record of promising food and money for taking part in rent a mob activities and then not paying up later.

Fool 1 decides its time to show off his bravery. He gets into Birgit's face and starts shouting "I can kill you, I will kill you. Your ancestors have stolen our land. Look what they have done to me. You must go back to

Britain where you belong." At this stage Fool 2 who obviously has some local knowledge tells him that "Mrs Kidd, she is from Finland"

"I am the 1st Finn to come to Zimbabwe I have no ancestors here." Birgit interjects helpfully.

Fool 1. "Where is this country called Finland, is it next to Austria?"

Birgit "Try a little further north between Sweden and Russia"

Fool 1. "Ah so you have been to Russia. What did you see there?"

Birgit "Plenty of Russians"

Fool 1 "Oh!"

Fool 2 "This is your house where are your guns"

Birgit "I have lived my life without guns and still I am without them."

Once they were satisfied that I wasn't there, they then abducted Brigit and forced her out of the house. Brigit asked if all the people could go and she would come down to the office by car with one of their representatives and explain what they wanted to know. They rejected this and forced her to march in front of the sing chanting and jeering crowd all they way down to the MDC office. As she was leaving the gate she was forced to carry a ZANU (PF) flag. When Brigit arrived at the office there was the remaining half of rent a mob to greet her.

As the rent a mob was coming through the gate, Moses one of our employees was making good his escape over the back fence. He went straight up to Mary Jo's house and asked her to get the police because Brigit's life was in danger. Mary Jo drove straight to the police station to report the incident the situation to the 2 duty officers, one man one woman. She explained that Brigit's life was in danger and that she would take the police there now in her car. The 2 officers retreated into the back room of the charge office where a heated debate ensues about who is going to draw the short straw and make a decision.

After about 15 minutes Mary Jo gets upset and shouts at them that this is a life threatening situation and she wants action NOW! The officer's again retreat to the back room, the subject of discussion is now, who is going to draw the short straw and actually go with Mary Jo. The loser, the policeman comes out with a petulant look on his face. Why in this unjust world should he be the one to perform the job he is paid to do because of the uniform he wears. He is very reluctant to get in to a car with a white woman perhaps "fear of tainting by association" is his major concern. But the handy "ah we have no transport" excuse is nullified by Mary Jo sitting at the wheel of her car. The policeman in his own limited way is rather cunning. He asks Mary Jo to drop him off at the corner before our house. Now the person who guesses correctly if he managed to navigate from the corner to Brigit's house without getting lost will win \$5 or a cigar. Competition entries must be in before the 6th of June.

By this time the police station is getting snowed under with phone calls from Amnesty International, the Finnish Embassy, and the US embassy all wanting to know what the situation with Brigit Kidd is. The blithe response is "I know nothing"

The office had somewhat changed in appearance since the day before. The words NEW ZANU (PF) OFFICE was painted on the walls, along with a not very flattering simian type picture of Mugabe, obviously executed by a stalwart of the finger school of painting and art. What can I say he's not a particularly flattering subject to start off with? The windows and doors were smashed, the surrounding wooden fencing and wooden buildings at the back had been torn down and were burning merrily. The counters and display cabinets were smashed and a couple of display fridges were smashed into a 1000 pieces. The ashes from the smoking fire inside stained the walls where that, which could be burnt, was.

When they stopped in front of the office Brigit was handed a broom by Fool 2 and told to start cleaning the new ZANU (PF) office.

Birgit said there was no problem, this was her property and she used to clean it every day when she ran the bottle store. Meanwhile, the crowd stood around chanting and jeering passing insults and threats and Brigit was forced to clean it again and again. Once the office was cleaned to their satisfaction, Brigit was

marched outside and forced to sit on the ground and wait for the organisers to arrive, whilst the mob continued singing and chanting. "Down with Bennett, down with Kidd down with David Mudengwe, down with MDC". Whilst waiting various people in the crowd were threatening her telling her that they were going to kill her and she should go back to Britain in a coffin.

One of our neighbours was reliably informed by Doderia Mataruse the manger of Dombera that the demonstrations would not take too long. Because, we (Mrs Knight and Doderai) have organised a camera crew from ZTV and they have to be back in Mutare before dark. Why are they afraid of the bogeyman?

Whilst sitting there 3 Dombera trucks accompanied by Mrs Knight (my, haven't Dombera management been busy little bees in pursuit of the noble cause) and another one arrived with more people from Ngangu and Mashongwe and David Mudengwe who had also been abducted from his home. David was forced out of the truck and told to stand next to Birgit. With the arrival of Mrs Knight and her pet thugs Lazarus, Brighton and Sylvester the crowd turned vicious and violent as she pumped them up. Her pet thugs are all ex side kicks of Mwale. Lazarus, Brighton and Sylvester then started attacking David for no reason hitting him and head butting him in the face. Actually that's a stupid thing to say. ZANU (PF) have never needed a reason for violence, it's always been their 1st choice of strategy. Birgit tried to intervene and help David but was pulled back and held. They then stripped him of his shirt and there was an MDC tee shirt under that so they attacked him again giving him another beating and stripped the tee shirt off his body.

One of the soldiers dressed in civilian clothes (Birgit has seen him around the village before in uniform) approached her and said "let's see if you have an MDC tee shirt on under your blouse"

Birgit pointed her finger at his face and said. "Don't you dare," that was enough to send him scurrying for cover. God aren't they brave. This all continued with David in agony, his face and body swollen from the repeated beating.

The ZTV crew and 2 reporters eventually arrived at 3.30pm and they started the cameras rolling. At this stage someone told David to leave and he escaped. Is it possible that this was done to protect our delicate viewers from the abhorrent sight of blood? Or is ZANU (PF) afraid to show the world what violent little animals they really are.

Birgit thought her turn was next but they stopped her leaving and told her that she was going to be interviewed. A group of people then started to escort her toward the hotel. As they reached the corner she was stopped again and the 2 ZTV reporters approached her. They wanted to know her name and then they asked her.

Q: What did she think of Bennett's display in parliament?

A: Birgit said that is was an unfortunate incident but she could understand how Roy felt. He and his family had been harassed for 4 years his employees killed, beaten, raped everything that he owned had been stolen by the state and through all this Chinamasa the minister of Law and Order had sat and done nothing. Obviously there's a point when anyone will burn their fuses.

Q: What did she think of the violent attack on the white farmer in Odzi? He eventually shot and killed one of his attackers in self defence after asking the police for 3 consecutive days for assistance and getting none.

A: Birgit said she didn't know what the situation was, so no comment.

Q: What did she think of the situation in Chimanimani?

A: The only way that things would get better in Chimanimani was when people who really care about the people, the MDC, where in power.

So ended Birgit's ordeal and as she wrote in the police report the saddest thing was watching the community, ham strung by fear of ZANU (PF), turn and beat one of their own. And throughout the day there was no police presence, they were all hiding away in their little police station on the hill, so much for law and order. God willing what goes around comes around. When Birgit returned home she found Celia

the ridgeback dying. One of the rent a mob had given her poison meat. Birgit forced milk down her throat and managed to induce vomiting. Celia now faces her own long hard battle.

So ends another day in the land of peace and plenty where according to Mugabe we have so much food that we are choking on it. Well we are choking on something but I doubt it will be food.

Saturday 29th May, 2004

At 8am Birgit goes to the police station to report the incident. The desk officer said she had to report it to the Fool in Charge, Inspector Ruzvidzo. When Birgit asked to see him she was told that he was in Chipinge and would only be back between 10 and 12 pm. She then asked to speak to the 2nd in command. Someone by the name of Gonda came through and said that he couldn't take the statement either and she should await the return of the Fool in Charge Ruzvidzo.

Birgit returns at 10am find that the Fool in Charge has still not returned. The desk officer makes the excuse that the Fool in Charge's vehicle is not reliable and he might only be back at 5pm.

Birgit returns at 5pm and he's still not around. Birgit is then assured that he will be there at 8am on Sunday.

Birgit returns on Sunday and wonder of wonders, the Fool in Charge Ruzvidzo is actually present. Birgit goes through to his office and sits down.

She says "Before we start can I ask you a question? Can you tell me, if anyone white or black is in danger in your village, will you do something to help?"

The fool in Charge replies "yes"

"Then where were you on Friday when reports were being made by people and over the phone about the situation in the village"

"I was not here."

"2nd question. When you're away, do your subordinates have instructions to help those who are being abducted and beaten?"

"Yes of course."

"Then why wasn't there a single policeman in the village on Friday despite the fact that your police station was aware of what was happening."

"Ahh I do not know." They don't call him the Fool in Charge for nothing.

Birgit then tried to make her statement. He told her to go to the reception and see the desk officer to start writing her statement. Now why wasn't she allowed to do this on Saturday? This took 2 hours. When she handed her written statement to the officer behind the desk he said it was going to be typed. Birgit said fine she would wait to sign the typed copy.

"Sorry but we don't have anyone to type it." Birgit said fine, could she see the Fool in Charge. Apparently not, he had gone to church. Isn't it amazing how evil and incompetence clothes itself in the piety of the church on Sunday. Mwale was of the same ilk. Fine, she would come back in the afternoon to see if it was ready. The only thing she did succeed in doing was getting the docket number RRB 0176723.

Birgit returned 2pm and the statement was still not typed. In some ways you have to feel sorry for the police. Their endless quest to find new and original excuses in order to avoid shouldering the responsibility of their office and doing their duty must be really draining and a strain on the nerves. Birgit said she would return in Monday at 8am.

Birgit returned on Monday and was told that she had to see the Fool in Charge. He took her into his office. Birgit asked if the statement had been typed. He said no, he had been reading it and there were some questions that he wanted to ask her. At this time Mupfuriwa the slimy little 2IC entered the office. He's a hang over from the Chagugudza and Mwale regime and we've had various run in's with him in the past.

Ruzvidzo then asked "Did you give your property to MDC or is it leased and why did you give it to the MDC?" Birgit told him that it was legally leased to the MDC. Ruzvidzo then wanted to know "Why did you close down the bottle store."

Birgit explained that his predecessor, Inspector Chagugudza had eventually got the Ministry of Health to close down the Bottle store because he had failed on 8 previous occasions to close down the MDC office stationed at the back of the Bottle store that we were renting to Roy. So Birgit decided that if the police were going to harass us then we might as well rent the entire building to Roy to use as an MDC office. This latest attempt to wreck the MDC office was simply the last in a long line of attempts and like all previous attempts it would fail as well. We would reopen the MDC office again.

Ruzvidzo then told Birgit she needed a lawyer to get back the bottle store because she hadn't changed the legal status from bottle store to office. When he was asked when he was going to something about the ZANU (PF) thugs occupying the building illegally he said he could nothing, after all he was only a policeman and the official representative of Law and Order in Chimanimani?

Birgit said the case is already in the hands of the lawyer and then asked, after the court decision would he do anything to assist in evicting the ZANU (PF) thugs. Ruzvidzo gave a smirk but no answer.

I eventually get off the mountains at 3 to find that Birgit has had a fun weekend without me.

The one person I'm really hacked off with is Roy Bennett for starting this whole mess by pushing Chinamasa on to his arse. He should have at the very least kicked him in the head or the nuts and hospitalised the arsehole.

Sunday 6th June, 2004

Days of our lives.

I fear that there's a rather dreadful soap by the same name, but then our lives are turning into a rather dreadful soap so perhaps the title merits consideration. Well Birgit had a fun week in Harare catching up with politicians, diplomats and the like. As one would expect, not very productive but at least diverting.

We returned for a quiet weekend at the house and to gird our loins for Monday. On Sunday we had had a meeting with a couple of MDC activists and told them of our plan for Monday. The plan was very simple. At 10 am on Monday we would go to the police, hand over Birgit's statement and a letter from the lawyer telling them they had to take action against the people illegally occupying the property and then with or without the police, we would walk down to the MDC office, evict those occupying our property and start repainting it. We briefed these activists (all MDC officials) as a courtesy; after all it's their office we're trying to reopen, on the off chance that they might wish to offer moral support. Actually, in the interest of journalistic integrity, the word activist needs to be reconsidered. It implies positive forward movement and thought. Is there such a word as sedimentary-ist, low lying, immobile, incapable of thought or action? Being a bit of a cynic I thought it was a waste of breath but Birgit was insistent.

Sunday evening was surprisingly restful in spite of thoughts of possible assault by the war vets or imprisonment by the police on the morrow.

Monday 7th June, 2004

Early morning, started by notifying various people of our intentions and giving them warning orders. We then drove up to the police station where we handed in Birgit's statement and the letter from the lawyer to Assistant Inspector Mupfuriwa. It appears that Inspector Ruzvidzo had once again honoured us with his absence. It appears he only attends the Police Station on Sundays so that he can go to church. When we asked Mupfuriwa what he was going to do he said "nothing, the incident is still under investigation." This is ZANU (PF) / Police Code for we are doing sod all and intend to do it with conviction and determination.

I then told him that we were going down to the office peacefully but if we were attacked we would defend ourselves and that we would no longer be intimidated by the Police, CIO, ZANU (PF), and warvets. The CIO, represented by Shinge and co, who were lounging around on the rocks in the sun in the background, (reminiscent of lizards but not as intelligent) decided to add their 2 cents worth. This mostly consisted of "Fuck off you dirty whites, fuck off back to Britain" and other deep intellectual thoughts along this line. You can see why they are called an intelligence organisation.

We then drove down to the village, dropped our car behind CAFT so it wouldn't be stoned and walked into the village and down to the MDC office. On the way we stopped off and bought some paint and a paintbrush. I went to the wall and started painting over the ZANU (PF) signs and the rather unedifying picture of Mugabe. Birgit went around the back and confronted the 3 remaining warvets telling them to get off her property, weren't they ashamed of themselves, look at the destruction they had wrought, they had 2 minutes to leave or else. Or else what, I still have no idea? One of the warvets reached for his machete but Birgit's dreaded finger came out and pointed at him, followed by that magic phrase "don't you dare, just move out and go dig your own land." That seemed to be as much as they could take, so they grabbed their blankets and maize and made a hurried departure. Moral support in the form of Maguta, Freddy and Nelson, MDC employees who man the office, were there but at a safe distance (a safe distance can be defined as any distance sufficient to give them a head start in the sprint for cover in the event of danger). Helping to reclaim their property and stand up for their rights is obviously not in their job description.

We spent the next 3 hours doing a rudimentary repaint with white paint; there was no paint of any colour except white available in any of the village stores. I'm sure that in a country where Mugabe vilifies whites there must be some deep and philosophical message buried in that. We then went in search of shoe polish in the market to redo the MDC signs. Maguta (MDC) eventually appeared with a small can of blue paint borrowed a friend from somewhere. He then retreated to a safe distance. With this we started to repaint the signs MDC OFFICE and NO MORE FEAR on all the available walls. Whilst we were industriously painting, Shinge and co from the CIO kept driving past with a most put-upon look on their faces, their petulant lower lips all a quiver. At about 2pm all was quiet and we departed for Mutare. We had to go and sign the affidavits at the lawyer's office to get an eviction order from the courts. It's really a waste of time because the police will not act anyway. Bit of an irony, Roy was busy departing for elsewhere on Monday when I returned from the mountains so I asked him for some MDC support of a few good men (other than lawyers) to help me get the bottle store back. He said he didn't know of any and I would have to find them for myself. Isn't it funny that the only one good man I could come up with was Birgit?

Spent the evening with George and Jane in Mutare

Tuesday 8th June, 2004

1st thing in the morning it's shopping to get \$2,000,000 worth of hardware to fix up the office - mostly paint and nails - there's no point in doing anything about the widows, they will only be smashed later on in the year as election fever grips us. Then we get a phone call from Maguta. The warvets have reorganized and about 10 of them have occupied the property during the night. This morning there are more of them industriously painting ZANU (PF) slogans all over the place? Actually if you think about it they probably trace them. I don't think any of them actually have the brains or the literacy to actually spell coherent sentences. Not that I'm much better - the spell checker has waved its white flag in capitulation and now refuses to acknowledge me.

So here we go again. I get hold of Roy to tell him Birgit and I will be wading into the fray on Wednesday. Tell you the truth I'm a bit reluctant, Wednesday is golf day and I can see no point in ruining a perfectly good day. Roy is of the opinion that we should wait for the court eviction order. When are the politicians going to realise that they will not win votes in the courts. It's their constituencies that count and that is where the fight will take place. Birgit wants to stop at the MDC office in Mutare to talk to the guys and ask them what they intend to do. I'm not really that interested but use the occasion to vent a bit of spleen.

Doug asked me today why we do what we do. I rather glibly replied "we each have to draw our own line and make our own stand." But that's not really the answer. Birgit for her part is still a true believer in the MDC and the justice of its cause, but even her faith has been sorely tested and is somewhat jaded at this stage of the game. The MDC's public apathy has done nothing to bolster their image of leadership or their moral authority as fighters of the good fight. As for me, I think they are a bunch of plonkers. Somewhere along the way they formed the idea that their cause could best be won in the courts and the forum of international opinion. They lost sight of the fact that as an opposition party beset on all sides by a corrupt and repressive regime, the thing that they should have done was lived in their constituency, setting a moral example to people on how to live with dignity, pride and without fear under this murderous govt. The only reason I support them is because Mugabe and his thugs tell me I can't and keep trying to intimidate us. I'll be bugged if I'll be told what I can and can't do in my own country. But there is more to it than that. While we were at the MDC office in Mutare this morning, 3 Chipinge woman came in. 1 of them was an MDC councilor in Chipinge. All 3 have just had their homes burnt and destroyed in what the Govt and diplomats euphemistically call electioneering. The councilwoman was one of those who attended all my trails in Chipinge a couple of years ago as a show of support. When Birgit told her what we had done Monday it brought a smile to her face and a little hope. Somebody was actually doing something instead of taking about doing something. Whilst we were repainting the MDC office in Chimanimani, men and woman walk past smiled and said "well done, thank you." Maybe these are the people that are worth fighting for, if someone can show them that they can stand up for their rights then perhaps some day they will and will lead others to do the same. God knows the MDC hasn't set much of an example. Enough of my pious and maudlin waffling, back to the present.

Coming over Skyline we received a message to avoid the village. Mutezo's gentlemen of leisure were running around trying to cause strife. They ambushed Hennie midmorning outside the MDC office by putting a ladder across the road. As Hennie stopped the car they surrounded him and tried to take the keys out of the car. Hennie thinking quickly, reversed and then drove forward around the ladder causing the fools to scatter. There was a bit of banging on the car but no serious damage was done. When he got home and reported it to the police they denied all knowledge of any disturbances in the village. Just after Ngangu, Moses one of my employees waved me down and told me to go around the village to the house, not through it.

When we arrived at the house, Maguta was there to brief us. Munacho Mutezo the ZANU (PF) Chimanimani candidate for next year's elections had his nose put out of joint when he heard we had repainted the MDC office and his highly paid warvets had deserted when faced with Birgit's fearsome finger. He stormed up to Chimanimani this morning where he spent a good deal of time screaming at Mrs Knight in the ZANU (PF) office before coming down to the MDC office to address his fresh batch of troops with the new plan of action. The Kidd's seem to be his central problem, apparently we are to be kidnapped and then "disappeared"! There were suggestions made that we should 1st be made to work in the gold fields of Rusitu to earn Mutezo money before our demise. You're never quite sure how serious to take these arsehole threats but one thing's for sure, we're not running away.

Afternoon interlude; at about 4pm we get a call. The masses are on their way up to the house. Well that definitely gets the adrenaline pumping.

We get rid of Point our 80 plus year old gardener . He walks out the gate with a look of disgust on his face. Perhaps it was one of his more lucid moments. He hasn't done a stroke of work since he joined us 10 years ago and spends the majority of the day talking to the trees or the bushes, whichever catches his fancy. He's one of Birgit's charity cases and quite frankly we've never really expected him to work. His day is divided into 2 parts. The 1st part of his day consists of Point rambling up and down outside the kitchen mumbling to himself. The volume of noise is directly proportional to how late Birgit is in producing this morning tea and sandwiches. On those mornings when there are unavoidable and prolonged delays the volume of his muttering increases drastically and there are pointed glares and comments passed at the kitchen window. The rest of the day is spent talking to the trees and deciding what to take home with him. Please understand, he's not a thief, he simply regards everything within the confines of the fence as belonging to him. If we wish to leave anything outside then we have to get Peter, our other employee, to explain to him loudly and repetitively in Shona that it is ours and he is not to take it. Once it's being

designated as ours then there's no problem and it's safe. If we fail to take these elementary precautions and something goes missing, then we have no one to blame but ourselves. To be fair he does occasionally bring things back that are broken for me to repair.

Anyway, back to the adrenaline rush. Peter and Moses are told the situation and are told to make their own decisions. Peter decided to take up a post on the verandah. Birgit starts to hit the phones. I go up to the gate to wait. Moses is at a loose end. I suggest that if he's got nothing better to do then perhaps can go through the bush beside the road and see if there is actually anyone coming. Moses goes off and I sit down to wait and think. 10 minutes later Moses comes back saying it's a false alarm. Great, Birgit gets on the phone and starts telling people to relax.

The evening is not yet over. Birgit's crowning moment of glory is yet to come. At about 6.00pm Birgit gets a call from the Finnish Embassy in Maputo, Mozambique. Who then proceeds to respectfully but determinedly shit on her from a dizzy height for having the temerity to stand for her rights?

"Don't you understand you are risking your life, you are in a very dangerous position? These people in Zimbabwe have no concept of law and order. There are many people with court orders who haven't got their property back. What you are doing is playing with fire. You had better move to Harare **now!**"

Birgit told her home was in Chimanimani and she wouldn't leave because some one had to stay and stand up for her rights.

"What I recommend is for you to move out of the place now!"

Birgit thanked him for being one of the many callers on Friday the 28th.

"That doesn't help, they can't read any high court orders and they don't talk to us when we phone or they lie. The only thing that I can do is take your remains back to Finland. I hope that you and Shane take my advice and move to Harare while you are still alive."

Birgit thanked him. Of course, he had no idea were she would live in Harare or what she would do for money. The strange thing is no one with any brains believes that some foreign power will come in and rescue foreign nationals. The only thing that people expect or want is ever increasing pressure on Mugabe and his thugs. When someone is arrested, beaten or abducted all those calls coming into the police station make the police aware that the outside world knows that they are colluding with ZANU (PF) and they are working in the dark. There is nothing that dictatorships fear more, than having their evil little schemes exposed to the light of day. He probably fears the embarrassment of having a dead Finn on his hands.

You can imagine it the scene in an English diplomatic setting, over cigars and a whisky in the drawing room in the evening.

"I say Gerald old boy, dastardly bad luck one of your nationals dying like that"

"Yes terribly bad form, it's not like we don't have enough work on hands at the moment with packing for the summer hols."

"We had a similar case last year, lots of paper work. The really terrible part is asking the local boys all those embarrassing questions with stepping on to many toes."

"One would hope that if people are silly enough to make victims of themselves, they could at least do it at a different time of year. It's dreadfully inconvenient and very inconsiderate of her."

One wonders what the Finnish version of this conversation is. Who ever it was at the embassy obviously relent later. Birgit had a phone call from a secretary who had been instructed to phone her on a regular basis to ensure that she was okay. Birgit said relax she would let them know when things went pear shaped.

The good news is that I've just been watching the news and there's a cold front moving up from South Africa. We are not going to do any thing about the MDC Office until Monday. That will let Mutezo's tame war vets camp outside and freeze their arses off for a few more days. You see life is full of little joys; all

you have to do is look for them. To cap it all I get to play golf tomorrow instead of painting the bloody office.

Another bit of good news is that Short Wave Africa is reporting tonight that we took back the MDC office. Technically not true at this stage but at least it will give some of the benighted people in this district of Chimanimani something to be cheerful about.

Wednesday 9th June, 2004

Allah Akabar god is great; I woke up this morning to gray and overcast skies and delightful drop in temperature. Mutezo's boys and girls are about to start freezing their butts off. Had a game of golf with Mike this afternoon lost my money gracefully, got thoroughly wet, cold and miserable and lost my balls in the mist. But if the Scott's can do it so can I.

Saturday 12th June, 2004

Well the rest of the week has been relatively uneventful. On Wednesday night after golf we had intruders in the yard. The dogs went wild and barked for about an hour. I couldn't see anything but Celia was sporting a cut from a machete on the top of her back leg on Thursday morning. Poor Celia, 1st poison now the machete, she really has been in the wars for the last 2 weeks.

Nonie's daughter Acacia went down with malaria and was very sick in the Chipinge Clinic for 3 days. They had to put her on a quinine drip. She is now back in the village and recovering.

On Friday I went around to Allen's for a game of backgammon at about 12 o'clock. I managed to humiliate him 3 games to none. Mike Durkin arrived so we had a drink and then one thing lead to another and I eventually got out of there at 5.30pm. Mike and I spent most of the afternoon discussing politics in what I felt was an intelligent fashion. With the benefit of hindsight and the throbbing of my head this morning I'm no longer sure just how intelligent the conversation was. The one thing I do know was that I'm definitely a more fortunate man than Mike. I drove most of the way to my bed. When I left he was still going strong, but he has a 2 ½ hour walk back to Beedale in the most inclement weather.

The lawyers have the papers in the high court and will ask them for an emergency interdict. They are running around today trying to serve papers on Mrs Knight and her band of fools. The lawyer's secretary phoned me up yesterday and asked me if she faxed them to me would I serve the papers. I was game but Trust Manda the lawyer phoned me up later to say that he was organising a Messenger of the Court instead. He felt that it was a bit off sides to ask me to do it. Regardless of what happens I'll be back at the office painting it again on Monday.

Monday 14th June, 2004

Hi ho, hi ho
It's off to paint we go
Da, da, da
Dee dee, dee
Hi ho, hi ho

Apologies to Snow White and her seven compatriots of restrictive growth. Yes, off we march again down to the MDC office to yet again claim our constitutional rights to rent our property to any legal institution and to support the political party of our choice. We will have to wrest these rights from that evil trio ZANU (PF), the warvets, and apathy. We are followed by thousands of flag waving MDC supporters all loudly advocating their right to chose. Naaah, this is Zimbabwe I think not, this is a volunteer's exercise and volunteers are decidedly short on the ground; rather like snowballs in hell. Alas it's only the gruesome twosome Birgit and I.

At the office we meet 2 gentlemen of leisure, Gusha and his war vet mate. They set about telling us the property no longer belongs to us, it is now owned by the warvets and ZANU (PF). Birgit points out that it's still legally ours and in view of the fact that it's a commercial property in the middle the village and not a farm, ZANU hasn't figured out a legal way of stealing it yet. Hey, give them time, anything is possible in wonderland. This raises an appreciable chuckle from the gathering crowd of interested onlookers. It's a small village and we seek our entertainment where we can. Normally at one another's expense. Birgit attempts to debate the intricacies of politics with these heavy weight intellectuals. In response she gets grunts and "eeeh go back to Britain you white bitch." I recognise a lost cause when I see it and carry on painting over the warvet and ZANU (PF) slogans. Birgit's attempt to find out why they are so afraid of 2 people standing up for their political rights continues and the crowd who are laughing at the warvets isn't doing their dignity any good. The war vets are claiming that Harawa, the head of the local RDC, in a meeting with the local ZANU (PF) district committee says Birgit no longer owns the building and we must go with them to speak to him. I tell them to piss off.

An African in civilian clothes approaches the two war vets and speaks to them. He then asks us what we are doing. He introduces himself as Police Inspector Mapinda (not sure of spelling) from Mutare. We explain to him that its our property and we are painting out the warvet and ZANU (PF) slogans and repainting it as the MDC office because that is who we lease it too. He says it's fine for us to paint out the war vet and ZANU (PF) slogans but we must not paint MDC office on the wall. We ask him, why, is it illegal? He shrugs his shoulders and says "I can do nothing for you" and walks off to take up observer status. Birgit and I look at each other with an amazed look. After 4 years of endless harassment by the police and CIO, why on earth would he expect us to think that we would look to the police to uphold the law and protect our rights?

I use the step ladder to climb on to the veranda roof and start painting the wall above it. On cue a CIO truck arrives with Mrs. Knight's Crew of thugs and warvets, about nine in number. One of them grabs the ladder and starts taking it away so I jump down from the roof to reclaim the ladder and get next to Birgit. Chenjeria's son throws the ladder at me and Brighton comes in swinging and the battle commences.

It's at times like this that I get really upset living in an unequal society. I have 6 people attacking me and Birgit has 3 people attacking her. In a truly egalitarian society it would have been 50/50, roll on equal rights for woman. Let's be honest, I'm no Rambo and went down fairly rapidly but I did get a few good punches and kicks in (god bless steel capped boots). I then concentrated on protecting my head with my arms to the best of my ability, while kicking out with those wonderful steel capped boots. Then followed what seemed to be a couple of minutes of being kicked by Brighton and co; whilst those who had encountered the boots and found them not to their liking attacked me with rocks - 'you know the larger 2 handed variety' from a safer distance.

At this stage things were getting a bit blurry. Birgit meanwhile was contending with her own problems. Birgit 1st of all tried to get behind me. Lazarus and 2 others then attacked her with rocks. She received multiple blows to the head and shoulders but managed to stay on her feet. Then they attacked her with rocks and she received multiple blows to the head and shoulders but managed to stay on her feet. It appears the warranty on her "fearsome fingers" had run out. She really needs to have a talk to God about that - it should either work or not work. This crap about 3 confrontations or 3000 miles whichever comes 1st is not acceptable. Birgit tried to find refuge in the garage kiosk with Lazarus and co following behind and continuing to attack her. By this stage Birgit was bleeding profusely from her head wound and was blinded by blood. Her left shoulder had also been dislocated and that arm was hanging uselessly by her side. Rachel managed to get her into her office and then out to her car. Rachel and Birgit then headed for the clinic in Chipinge.

Meanwhile I was still doing my impression of road kill with flailing legs. Pete intervenes and Brighton and crew back off me. I see Birgit departing in the car with Rachel so I turn around and go back to the office to taunt Brighton and the war vets who are busy repainting their signs. They are less than pleased to see me but now keep their distance. No shit, they are copying the slogans from pieces of paper. I told you the arsehole couldn't read. The attack on Birgit has changed the mood of the crowd and they know it. The ironic thing is that the defenders of liberty and justice the Mdfleeee (oops I seem to have dropped a

consonant) have high tailed it long ago. I now sit around talking constitutional rights with people who can't even spell ZANU without cribbing. I know it's a pointless exercise but the only reason that I'm doing it is to show them that they can beat me but they can't make me fear them. It's also raising some banter from the crowd which is aimed at them and not to their liking. There's the normal diatribe of "go back to Britain" and "we will kill you" etc. After about 20 minutes one of them tells me I'm going to have to sit there all day so I tell him to f*** off and walk off in the direction of council offices. Brigit has the car and the house keys with her so I'm a bit up the creek in that direction.

I get to Harawa's offices where I'm about as welcome as a plague carrier and start giving him a hard time, about who the hell he thinks he is telling the warvets that Brigit doesn't own the bottle store anymore. To tell you the truth my heart isn't really in it. The adrenalin is wearing off and the shock is starting to set in and I'm feeling decidedly woozy. I manage to commandeer Harawa's chair and phone. I phone Hennie and ask him to come and collect me. In the interim I amuse myself by spreading blood around his office. The body was way past walking mode and was telling the ego to sod off. It wasn't the ego that had just been stomped and the body had the casting vote and the ribs are unanimously behind it. Hennie arrives and we go to his house. I get loaded up on painkillers from Pat and Hennie. I manage to get hold of Roy on Queenie's cell phone and tell him that Brigit's on the way to hospital, I will be following shortly and that the MDC are a bunch of bloody wankers. I've always found that venting spleen is a wonderful reliever of stress and pain. Then Doug came around, has a giggle and calls me stupid (what are friends for) and then hauled me off to Chipinge clinic to join Brigit.

The net result: Brigit had 16 stiches in the head and a dislocated shoulder. I was a lot luckier, no stitches just badly bruised ribs and upper body and some cuts and lacerations. One bright moment; some reporter from VOA was on the phone to Brigit and asked her what she was going to do for protection in future. Brigit replied that she would wear a hardhat in future. The rest of the week has been taken up with hospital, lawyers and doctors.

See photo below of Brigit having a bad hair day

