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Writing Sample

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Poetry and prose. "Poem trapped", "Hiatus, When Realities Hate Us", "Womankind", "Sorry for the Story", "Marked", "Heart of Gold", "Atomic Love Attack", "The Value of X", "When You Touched Me", and "Spirit" (extract).

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Legodial SEGANABENG**Poetry and prose****Poem Trapped**

I wake up with pulsating green rage
Kick the blankets, take my pen and attack my page
Pen pours crimson venom across the white surface
Paper shrinks from acidic bite, leaving a tattered and wrinkled space
My blood boils, nerves pump and it itches in every bone
Head pounds and lips burn for the microphone
From my stomach rises scalding bile
I pant and wheeze, though I haven't walked a mile
Fists slam the hard concrete wall
Like an animal body feels trapped in a kraal
A poem captured and bound inside
Punching and kicking to break free and leap outside...

Hiatus, When Realities Hate Us

Must be an abyss, that in which tonight I fall
Wounds gushing blood, as yet again I fail
For many suns and moons now, attempting to call
With dreary exertions but to no avail
Reduced I am, shrunken to a cringing, wizened poetaster
When met only with the dissonant voicemail
A nimrod, I may seem to be, or perhaps a scathed protester
Must be my uncouthness that augured this toil and moil
Now here we are in a mournful hiatus
My taciturnity has caused, ergo, a seismic disturbance
Cui bono now, darling, when realities hate us?
Today well-nigh impossible to sip even a pint of your utterance
To whom shall I avow my sincere feelings in this grim hiatus?
As now I meet, in total defeat, my eventual quietus

Womankind

*Woman you're the pillar of the nation
On your hands rests all creations*

You see, I'm a man who's been around in this world
For decades and centuries and millenniums of years
I every part of the world; north, south, east, west and centre
In every nation, in every race; Black, White, Chinese, Indian, blue, red or yellow
And it's the womb of woman that brings around mankind, womankind

Wooman, they say you're made from a man's rib
But I think you made a man's rib
For surely sometimes I think god is a She
Because you're the hand that moulded and raised every single one of them
From the preacher man who lies to you
That you have to die to get a pie in the sky
To a sleek politician who belittles and demeans you
Regardless of the many votes you throw into his ballot box
You see, when it's equal opportunities you're looking for
Rise in shine in your Queendom
Forward ever, backward never
Progress empress, progress princess
Go on lioness, go on

Woman I cherish you in any way ; shape or form, colour or religion
Whether girl, lady or woman, young or old
You see, you carried us for nine long months
A heavy load in your belly, subjected to excruciating pains, excruciating pains
Only to bring life into this world – mankind, womankind

If only man can see, if only man can understand
They would not throw stones at your glass house
For when it shatters, it cannot be rebuilt

Sorry for the Story

You were supposed to be my wife
and that could have saved my life
It's you that I should be kissing
and now, sadly, it's you that I'm missing

It may sound like a sorry anthology
But you don't have to accept my apology
All I need is for you to hear my words
I just don't want to tell it to the birds
I promised to be always there for you
Especially in times when you feel blue
I had sworn to always make you smell a red rose
But instead all I gave you was a bleeding nose
Damn me!

To you I have never been man enough
But you always stood so tough
Even when I made your days so rough

Dear, I'm really sorry for the story
I'm sorry for the things that I did to you,
And the things I never did for you
I'm sorry for the trauma that I made you go through

I'm sorry for the times when I left you out in the cold
When I was supposed to be there for you to hold

See you gave me all you got
And yes we could have tied the knot
But I messed it up by being such a bull
I complete, certified, award-winning fool
I didn't know what I got till it's gone
Now its darkness and I'll never see dawn
It's not easy for me to hit the sack
That's why I'm crying for you to come back
Teardrops on the strings of my guitar
With the thoughts of you being so far
I miss the days I used to sing you Bon Jovi's Bed of Roses
Oh, what a feeling it still imposes

Dear, I'm really sorry for the story
I'm sorry for the things that I did to you,
And the things I never did for you
I'm sorry for the trauma that I made you go through
I'm sorry for the times when I left you out in the cold
When I was supposed to be there for you to hold

You left without saying goodbye
But I will always sing you a lullaby
Tunes sourced right from the core of my heart
Wishing I could take us right to the start
Where emotions were entwined in mutual feelings
Feelings that blew us to the ceilings
Times when I would wake up in the morning
At the smell of your delicious food
Now this little heart can't take it that you're gone for good
In the air still lingers the scent of your perfume
Lady! Without you this heart and soul cannot perform

Dear, we used to be such great lovers
Now I'm standing in front of this blank canvas
Paint brushes trying to recall the memories
But it comes only with the agonies
My brushes only paint in vain
And all they can paint is pain
Brushes only paint in vain
And all they can paint is pain

Marked

They say they want to sever my tongue
Fling a rope around my neck and let me hang
Or maybe like Lumumba they'll dissolve me in acid
But their threats I don't take as I remain placid
To the gallows they want to send me

For in their evil hearts they believe I'm too free
They label me a scoundrel whose mind is unfit
And that on my grave they will spit
My writings they condemn as insanity posing as poetry
In the world they say I don't belong, let alone in the cemetery
They say my thoughts and utterances are poison to the masses
And so they scatter all my classes
Like vampires my blood they yearn to spill
As they subterfuge as messengers doing God' will
But on their faces I see the mark of the beast
And on my soul and those of my people they want to feast
But I say to hell with them!
To hell with them and fff...fff...fff... (fuck'em)!

Heart of Gold

God, my God, created I in Thy image
And in Thy image, you, He created
Your beauty, my queen, resembles Him
I, your king, trod in Thy light
You and I exalt Thy Name
And rejoice under His showers of blessings
Behold, let not earthly threats shake your
Heart of gold
For God, our God, is on our side.

Atomic Love Attack

Here I am, again, reminiscing about the past
The past I so want to place behind me
Bury, sixty feet
But thoughts of you infest my mind
Like a virus
A virus that eats at my flesh and sucks my soul
I'm reduced to a lump of hopelessness
And a bowl of ridicule I've become
Wasted
Wasted were the times I spent with you
The pleasures I've tasted in you have turned sour and bitter
Like a serpent you had sneaked into my life
Briefly
Yet beautifully
And blinded me with your infatuation
Now like a mist you've drifted away
You reaped out my heart and stashed it in your right ribcage
Two hearts, you now have
And here I am, again, reminiscing about the past
Swaying and reeling with a hollow chest

Feeling like a Hiroshima
Suffocating with the repercussions of an atomic love attack...

The Value of X

The axe chop came without any warning whatsoever
Pronouncing him yet another axe victim
Ex-soldier, ex-lover, ex-husband
Extricated and considered extraterrestrial
Expelled and flung into the explosive world of extreme expenses
Experiencing exploitations and explorations
Through expeditions against which he felt exhausted
His own expressions
Threatened to extinguish his very existence

Nails dig deeper to exhume and extract without exception
An exact explanation of this extraordinary exhibition of these extravagant axes
Excellent!
It's an extra examination extended right from those excommunicated exercises
Exotic yeah they are
He turns around feeling the exigency
Lethargic as he is
Exuberance is but a dream
Maybe for someone else
Not an ex-officio in exile
Threatened with execution
Minds alike facing extinction instead of expansion

They say he exasperates them
Although they cannot explain
So they call him expatriate
Feeling so excited that they can finally exchange him without any excuse
They know he excels
Something they cannot extol
Accused and facing a number of charges
They consider him explicit, excrement, exasperating,
Etcetera, etcetera
He just have to sit down
Solve the equation and find the value of X

When You Touched Me

Though I suck when it comes to keeping in touch
Recurrent thoughts of you invade my mind so much
Remember that touch of your hand on my bare skin?
Well, the corollary is intense, as from your touch I still spin

Spirit
(extract from stioy)

The deserted lone cabin stands forlornly amid a dense jungle of old, dry and gnarled *mophane* trees. A thick, physical silence hangs in the air. Sparrows shriek an ostinato of dissonant notes. A shudder creeps through my flesh. I'm amazed by this unexpected emotion. I was here earlier on, just an hour ago, and didn't feel this way, though I'm not exactly the same way I was an hour earlier. I look around, conscious of the weight under my boots as they crunch on dry leaves. The environment feels and looks spooky. I'm not supposed to feel this way. Something must be amiss with me. The wooden shack and the gloomy trees are all weather-beaten, like relics from an old time in history. It's been many years since I've last been here. It doesn't look like my place anymore. It doesn't look like what used to be my resort.

I step towards the structure, my boots snapping brittle twigs. Keys jingle as I scoop them from my pocket. They echo like graveyard chimes. Almost cautiously, I turn the key, hearing the rusted mechanism unlatching. Earlier on, an hour ago, I didn't have a key. Thinking about it now, I realise I didn't need a key. I push the door. It squeals open. A network of cobwebs criss-crosses the interior of the shack, glimmering from the dusty light that squeezes in through the tiny window at the back. A chorus of squeaking sounds is followed quickly by a flutter of wings flapping. I duck as a swarm of bats scurry over my head and out through the door into the woods. I can feel my heart racing. This is an awkward and frightening feeling. It's a new sensation to me. The back of my hand wipes perspiration off my brow. Steady yourself, man! A voice whips through my mind. "The heck are you afraid of?" the voice cracks, only louder this time. It echoes in the small interior of the shack. "This is *your* house." Somehow I'm not unnerved by this voice, as if it's normal to hear a voice without a source.

I walk through the cobwebs into my house, wooden floor creaking. I must have gained a lot of weight. I don't remember ever causing the floor to creak just by walking on it. My boots leave marks on the dusty floor. There's a smell of mildew, mould and bat droppings. I look around. The walls are papered with copies of poems and songs I wrote years ago, on which many generations of flies have interpolated new notes. My acoustic guitar still hangs at the corner, right where I had left it, but now caged in spider webs, rusty strings dangling. I place the palm of my hand on its peeling body. A fleeting vibration surges into my hand and shoots up my arm in tiny waves. I briskly step back from the guitar. What was that? I look at my hand. Nothing. I look at the guitar on the wall. Nothing. Maybe it was a mistake. Maybe I shouldn't have gone out an hour earlier. I walk towards the desk and around it to the rocking chair I had once upon a time cherished. Slowly and cautiously I wedge myself into the chair, suspecting it might break under my weight. It doesn't.

Stuck on the wall opposite the desk is a full length mirror. It's now freckled with cracks, but it's still wholly there. Back then, once upon a time, I used to watch myself on this mirror as I worked at my desk. Constantly I'd lift my eyes from the laptop computer and glance at the mirror. I couldn't get enough of the brightness in my eyes when I was writing. I would brush my hand along the bare skin of my scalp. I had always kept my head clean-shaven. My wife liked to joke about it when she kissed me on the scalp. She said it felt like kissing a baby's bottom. I hated that joke, but I'd laugh, nonetheless. Both my wife and I knew I couldn't let my hair grow because I was starting to go bald, slowly turning into a hedgehog. Sooner or later, I'd be bald as a coot. Friends would make fun of me I knew. So I resorted to the razor blade and kept my head shining all the time, indeed like a baby's bottom.

Now as I sit at my desk, I glance at the cracked mirror on the wall and gape in surprise. I stare at my reflected image in bewilderment. A stranger is sitting at my desk. That man in the mirror is not me. I've never seen him before. He doesn't have any of my physical characteristics. His hair is disheveled and thick, not quite an afro, but pretty much shaggy. He has a blemished, plump face lined on the sides with bushes of beard. His eyes are dead, dark marbles that lack the charisma of my eyes. I blink. The man blinks with me. I can see his paunchy belly through the faded grey oversize t-shirt he is wearing. He is

wearing a black leather jacket over the t-shirt, through which his beefy biceps are evident. I don't look like that. I lift my hand to my head and touch my hair – well, his hair. Technically these are his hands and his hair. This is *his* body. I feel awkward about this; even though I know I'm not supposed to be feeling anything. It's a mistake that I went out an hour ago. I should have stayed here. It's this very mirror that had made me go out.

One hour ago I arrived here, in this lone shack of mine, without a sound, without a movement. Literally. I don't even remember opening the door. I had walked on this same wooden floor and didn't make any creaking sounds. I touched the walls, the guitar, the ceiling. It was like the touch of air. There were no footprints on the thick layer of dust that had accumulated on the floor. I was light. I came around the desk and sat on this very chair. Then I lifted my eyes to the mirror on the wall. There was nothing there but the pattern of cracks on the mirror. I looked closer, just to make certain. The only reflection there was of the desk, the chair and the wall behind. I looked at my hands and touched my arms, then my face. Another revelation; I couldn't see or feel my physical self. I dropped my eyes from the mirror to the desk in front of me. The notepads and the pencils were still there on the desk – a sign that no one had ever stepped in here; that no one had tampered with my writing resort. How come they didn't give it away after my burial? They gave away everything. Oh yes, I remembered. It's because of the will. I stated it in my will. I had stated what they should do and not do with my things. I opened one of the notepads. The once clean-white papers have turned rusty brown with age. I picked the pencil and started scribbling lines. *Dear Sophia*, I started. A thought struck my mind. Will they ever believe? The living. Will they ever believe my story? As I wrote, I kept glancing up and the blank mirror kind of bothered me. How then will I deliver this letter if at all I'm invisible? I stared into the mirror for many minutes, thinking. Then it dawned on me.

"I'm not invisible," I spoke out loud for the first time, almost shocked by the clarity of my voice. "I don't have a body. I'm a spirit." This discovery didn't in anyway surprise me. I knew very well that I'm a dead man – a dead man now writing letters to the living. A spirit too can think. In fact, though it's not known to the living, the material body is just a lump of cells, nothing more. It's the spirit-soul that carries the life. As I wrote a letter to my wife Sophia, I could remember the last time I saw her.

I had watched her as she cried at my funeral. There were only a few people. Some were shedding tears and some were not. I watched the proceedings of my funeral with keen interest. I thought it funny that people could gather just to shed tears over the demise of a physical body. But then again, humans are uninformed. My wife was dressed in black, looking beautiful as ever. I don't have children. This fact still makes me believe that I failed my wife. I spent too much time with my writing projects, sleeping at the cabin I built in our farm. This was the place where I wrote poems and composed music. Above all these, I used this secluded place for penning manuscript that never turned into novels.

My manuscripts had been rejected repeatedly. But I continued to write, anyway, hoping that one day I'd get a publishing deal. That hope ended when my car lost balance and veered off the road on a hairpin bend. It spun several times, crashing on the rocky ground and ultimately smashing on a tree. The fuel tank blasted. When the paramedics arrived, I wasn't only dead. I was cooked beyond recognition. Of course I had taken a few bottles of lager, but I wasn't that drunk, really. My wife arrived at the morgue a few minutes later, spilling rivers of tears. It was the DNA test that casted off her doubts that the barbecued piece of flesh lying in a mortuary shelve was indeed her husband.

During the burial I watched my casket go down the grave. I wasn't in there. A roasted body of what used to house my soul lay there in the coffin. My family was there, and my friends too. This wasn't the kind of burial I had wanted for myself. I was supposed to be buried a wealthy, bestselling author in Africa. CEO's of my publishing houses should have been there at my funeral. My fans, my readers, bookstore owners and inspired academics and university students should have thronged my burial. But I died early, unpublished and poor.

Tshidi didn't go to my funeral. That was fine with me. But like my wife Sophia, Tshidi cried bitterly for me. She cried in secret because she was my little secret. Tshidi and I had a secret affair. Looking down at her as she cried herself to sleep every night, I started to believe that perhaps Tshidi truly loved me. She is much younger than Sophia. We had great times together, Tshidi and I. Constantly I'd take her with me to my hovel in the bush. She was an inspiration to the poems and songs I wrote. Tshidi also helped me put to test the music I composed. I'd play the guitar and she'd sing the lyrics. She wasn't a gifted vocalist, but she had the passion. She had always urged me to go to studios and record my music. I wasn't ready for that. My energies were still focused on the manuscripts. Perhaps if I had published a first novel, then I could have considered recoding an album.

"Baby, you play so well," Tshidi would say every time I strummed my guitar. My death must have shocked her. Given the chance, I know she could have come to my funeral. But Tshidi respected my wife. Even as a spirit hovering over physical environs, I could tell that my wife had never caught wind of my illicit affair with Tshidi. Sophia had proven her love to me in many ways. Marriage didn't diminish what we had when we first met. It was Sophia who noticed my talent in writing. She urged me on, encouraging me. Rejection after rejection, Sophia cuddled me and told me that one day; the world will know who the master storyteller is. I believed her. When I quit my job at the shoe factory, Sophia continued to support me. Occasionally I contributed to local newspapers as a freelancer, but the income wasn't good, and very irregular. Sophia sustained me.

Now I'm dead. Perhaps the notion that I'm dead might give wrong connotations. Only my body had succumbed. But me, the spirit-soul, the non-physical part that makes up a person, still lives. After my physical death, I haven't seen the gates of heaven. Or hell. Well, there is something of that sort I think, but I won't dwell into that now. When I think back to the days of my physical life, I can virtually count the sins I committed. I drank alcohol, smoked cigarette and sometimes a bit of pot. I didn't do drugs. I didn't steal. I never killed, well, other humans I mean. Chickens and goats I killed. But that was for consumption. I lied only when necessary. I surely respected my parents. Well, yes, the big sin: I fornicated with Tshidi, and maybe a couple or three other girls before her. Today as a spirit I know that these sins, from smoking to killing animals to fornicating, translated into what I am today – an itinerant spirit. For many years I hovered haphazardly across the universes, from planet to planet, seeking refuge. I found none. Now I'm back to my old corporeal environment, though only in spiritual form.

I had finished writing a letter to Sophia and stared at the cracks on the mirror. I was still concerned by the idea of being invisible to the mirror. Standing up, I sucked the letter into my spirit self and walked back to the centre of the room. It felt more like floating than walking. I focused and pinned my thoughts into the centre of the realms, drawing electrons of spiritual energies. The room lit up, as though a beam was shining down on it. Although the door and the window were all closed, a strong wind ruffled from nowhere, fluttering the papers stuck on the wall. Sheets from the notepad on the desk scattered about, blowing forcefully across the room. The guitar banged against the wall. The rocking chair oscillated on its rusty mechanisms. The mirror cracked some more, spreading tiny deltas across the fading surface devoid of original lustre.

Suddenly I was looking down on creation; on the little town and the streets that my body used to walk. In the spiritual realms of disembodied souls, there are no limitations. I can be everywhere at the same time. So as I was zooming over the town, I was looking for what used to be my home, I was looking for Sophia's place. It's been many years. She must have moved. But this is a small town. It's a small country. It's a small world and a small universe. No place is out of a spirit's reach. I found Sophia's place in less than a minute of hovering over the town. It was a different house. I would learn later on that after my death, my wife Sophia mourned for nearly two years. Now she was living in this house with another man, my successor, her husband. It's a fairly okay house. I could sense that Sophia is still very much the bread winner – the good-hearted darling Sophia.

As I hovered over the house, I saw their car enter through the gate. It's quite a smart car, better

than what I used to drive – that wreckage that took my life. Sophia and her husband stepped out of the car, followed by two kids, a boy older than the girl, perhaps eleven or so. Damn, I've been away for a very long time. She looked happy and I became happy for her too. But I felt a slight tinge of jealousy at her husband. Save for having evidently grown, Sophia hadn't changed much. She was a bit hefty now, in an okay way. She unlocked the door and entered into the house, children following behind with an excited chatter. The man was examining something on the tyre of the car. Invisible, I drifted into the house, following Sophia and the children. The paper on which I had written the letter is not spiritual, so I had to conceal it from their view, lest it raised their suspicion. In normal circumstances, a paper can be blown about by the wind, carried around by a whirlwind to any place, but it can't rationally enter through the door of a house and navigate the rooms with the precision of a remote controlled drone. So I had to be smart. As I wafted into the house, I blew the paper up and stuck it on the ceiling, hiding it beneath the blades of stationary fan. Then I looked around. Indeed it was a different house. The furniture and everything were different from what we used to have. She wanted to let go of my memories, I presumed. She wanted to move on with her life. I breezed into other rooms within the house, just checking the taste and drinking in the views.

"Danny," Sophia called and the small boy answered. "Check if the bedroom windows are closed. There's a wind blowing through."

I stopped midair, gawking down at Sophia who was looking at the huge windows of the living room. They were closed.

"They are closed, mum!" the boy shouted from one of the rooms.

"Okay baby, thank you. It must have been my imagination."

Moving in slow motion now, I floated to the master bedroom, sucking the letter along with me and left it on the carpet, where she'd see it easily. When I exited the house, the man was crouched by the tyre of the car with a pressure gauge in his hands. I didn't like what I was going to do next, but I had to do it nonetheless. I *needed* this man's physical self, though only for a while. Possessing a human body comes with dismal aftermaths for the human. It's quite sad that two souls can't stir one body. One soul, a stronger one, has to take over. When the host soul is chased out of its body, it can never come back to it. It will enter the spirit realms and wait to be born again in a new body. The intelligent humans call this process 'transmigration of the soul'. This new body may be anything, from a grass plant in the wild, the miniature insect or an animal to another human body. But the waiting period sometimes becomes too long before a soul can be given legitimate body. I'm still waiting. I have no clue what my body will be in my next material life. Now as I contemplated possessing this man's body, I knew that my action was tantamount to killing him. But since the soul doesn't die, he will merely smoke out into the realms and await his next new life.

He gasped and momentarily froze, as though he was having a heart attack. His hands became stiff on the pressure gauge. His eyes closed as two souls briefly battled for the body. It was an easy win for me, the perpetrator spirit. I drove his soul away into the nothingness. He was now just as good as the air that circulated inside the tyre of his car.

I opened *my* eyes, threw the pressure measure on the ground, adjusted my black leather jacket and walked into the house. I was now housed in a material body. Sophia was in the kitchen, packing the food in the fridge. I went into *our* bedroom. The paper on the floor was still there. I stepped over it and looked around. I pulled open drawers and cupboards, rummaging through.

"What are you looking for?"

I stopped dead. What should I say? I forced a smile. I looked at her and I could tell from her look that my smile lacked mirth. What if I speak and the voice that comes out is that of her dead, writer husband? I thought. She'll freak out.

"What's wrong, Ben? Are you okay?"

I stared at her.

"Babe?" she said.

"I'm okay, angel." I said, relieved to hear a strange voice coming from my mouth. "I'm looking

for the keys to the farm house.” I watched her reaction. She laughed.

“You are too forgetful these days. You are the one who hung it on the key rail in the storeroom.”

“Oh, of course. Thanks for reminding me,” I said and smiled.

I walked out of the room. The kids were watching television in the living room.

“Dad?” said the girl. I didn’t know her name. I stopped, not sure how to answer.

“You promised to help me with my drawing.”

“I haven’t forgotten, darling. I’ll be back to help you in a while.”

“Thanks, dad!” the girl said.

The storeroom was behind the house. I came out of it with the bunch of keys and stepped into the car. Sophia came running out of the house as I sparked the engine into life.

“Ben! You know you are not supposed to go to the farm house. It’s off out limits,” she shouted. I launched the car into reverse and pressed the accelerator. The car shot out of the gate.

“Ben!”

Now here I am, staring at the stranger in the mirror. I don’t like Ben’s fleshy body with the bushy beard and shaggy hair. But most of all, I don’t like the chubby face and the pot belly. I stand up from the chair and examine Ben’s face, my face. What did Sophia see in me? I scold at my body, Ben’s body. Her previous husband was better looking. That writer husband of hers had striking looks. He even had a beautiful, young girlfriend. Thinking about Tshidi makes me wonder where she is. I pull out a plank on the floor and expose a padlocked latch. It’s a door to a secret vault beneath the floor. One of the keys in the bunch opens the door. Piles of my completed manuscripts lay undisturbed inside, bound and intact. I take them out one by one and put them on the desk. *The Endless Road, Fruit of Betrayal, Secret, Soldiers in Fire, The Calling, Sunset Blood, Love Me Not and Thieving Legacy and Other Stories*. They are nine in total – a mixture of romance, thriller and adventure. Nine, well written manuscripts! All rejected. After I died, newspapers printed the headline; *Self-proclaimed Writer Dies in Car Crash*. I’ve seen them and read them all. In some articles I was referred to as a loner who had found asylum in writing and alcohol. The papers mocked me. They made fun of my wife’s miserable condition. Some papers claimed that I was a nascent writer who wasn’t skilled enough to attract publication. This character assassination dented my wife, Sophia, because she knew better.

I’m outside the cabin now, walking towards the parked car. Darkness has crept over the earth, spreading layers in the sky the colour of crude black molasses. I swerve the car onto the road and push the accelerator, heading toward town. As I approach the hairpin bend on which my life had ended, I burn the fuel even more. That tree is still there, bulky and robust. They had not cut it, the imbeciles! Enraged, I drive straight into it, my foot pressed hard on the accelerator pedal. Bang!
