DOLLY

Dolly was born in Johannesburg in 1937, two years before World War Two. She was just Dolly – not Dorothy or Dorothea, and her surname was Baxtor. Because her father had joined the army as an engineer to fight Hitler in North Africa, she had little memory of him, although her mother showed her a photo of her seated on a motorbike with her father. During the war, she lived with her grandmother in a large house in Rosebank. Next door to their house, there was a block of flats where Madame Pierre lived with her two daughters Monu and Nanette who were the same age as Dolly. One day Madame Pierre came and asked Grandmother Jane if her daughters could play with Dolly and learn to speak English. The trouble was, Dolly learnt French! Madame Pierre was very cross and moved to another building.

Dolly remembered some things about her stay with Grandmother Jane. Every day the butcher boy arrived on his bicycle with the meat grandmother had ordered the day before and went back with the next day's order. He stopped in front of Dolly and said, "Next time I will catch you and make you into sausages!" Dolly was terrified and hid in the house until she was certain he had gone! An old man came every day to work in their garden. At teatime he sat on the ground leaning against the wall of the house. He pulled out a flask of tea and a delicious slice of his wife's homemade fruit cake. Dolly went and stood in front of him until he smiled and offered her a piece. She sat down next to him, ate and chatted. Often her cousin Sam came round – he was fourteen and still at school, and grandmother's best friends, old Mr and Mrs James. "Sing us a song!" they said to Dolly who sang "I love gin, and I love rum! I tell you what, we had lots of fun! Hahaha, you and me, little brown jug how I love thee!" They all roared with laughter and Dolly was very pleased and sang it again. They all stayed to listen Churchill on the radio. He was their hero. "Be quiet please!" said Grandmother to

Dolly who loved to talk. “We will fight them on the sea, we will fight them on the land, and we will never surrender!” exclaimed Churchill. One day Dolly was walking with Nanny Sue, and they passed a house with a large front garden. A young woman was running around it and screaming, “John! John!” Her husband, a sailor, had just died when his ship was sunk in the sea off France.

Dolly was six when her daddy came back from the war. It was an exciting time because he bought a pretty, double storied house with a beautiful garden. But most of all, she soon had a baby brother called Stephen. “Can I wash him, Mummy?” she asked. “Let me carry him, please,” she begged. “Why can’t I give him a chocolate?” she asked. She had started school and was reading, writing and doing arithmetic. Dolly was bright, top of the class and very popular. She was musical and loved ballet and piano lessons. The years flew by, and Stephen started school the same year as Dolly went to high school. She ended that part of her life being elected as Head Girl and passing matric with distinctions in seven subjects. Daddy, Mummy and Stephen were so proud of her, and they all went to the Zoo Lake Restaurant to celebrate.

Dolly had decided to become a doctor. She continued to live at home. She had grown up to be a very pretty woman, blue eyed with long blonde curling hair. She had friends of both sexes and many admirers. However, Dolly rebuffed them all. She was waiting for Mr Right. After her internship, she was employed in a private hospital. One morning, doing her rounds she met Timothy Blake, a neurosurgeon. “Hello,” he said. “I’m Timothy.” He shook her hand, looking into her eyes, and they both fell immediately in love. Their engagement was not long, and they had a beautiful wedding in Trinity Chapel. They spent an idyllic honeymoon in Japan. On their

return, Timothy bought a forever home in Rosebank. When Dolly's honeymoon pregnancy was confirmed, she resigned from the hospital. Both Dolly and Tim were confirmed Christians. Dolly used her days to help in the church, caring for old pensioners and visiting and treating sick church members. The great day arrived, and Susie was born. She was a beautiful, healthy baby, and Dolly spent all her time caring for her. There was never a baby with as many clothes, toys and books as Susie. Two years later, identical twins Jamey and Johney were born. Their family was now complete, and Tim and Dolly were grateful.

When Dolly was fifty, and all three children qualified doctors, she was sitting in the sun next to the pool. Rosie, the maid, came and said, "You have two visitors, Ma'am." Dolly went inside and found a policeman and policewoman standing in the lounge. "What's happened?" she asked fearing the worst. "I'm sorry to bring you such bad news," said the policeman, "but your husband was involved in an accident with a drunk driver and was killed." Dolly collapsed on to the carpet crying uncontrollably. "Are there any children?" the policewoman asked Rosie. "Yes," she answered. "I will give you their cell numbers. Susie and the twins came running to find Dolly on the carpet and crying, "Timothy! Timothy!" They called Father Andrew, the Rector of their church, put her to bed, and gave her a sedative. The memorial service was planned with the shocked and saddened children and, on the day it took place, there was not an empty pew. Dolly had managed to write a eulogy about Tim. When she started to read it, she fell to the floor. Then Susie, and the twins put their arms around her and after a while Dolly stood up and read her eulogy to her one and only true love. There was not a dry eye in the church.

Father Andrew did much to comfort her, and Dolly found that listening to Mozart's great Requiem Mass soothed her anguished spirit. She listened to it all day for three months, took a sedative and slept until morning. Father Andrew said to Dolly one day when he thought she was able to think beyond her loss, "I conduct many funerals every week but am unable to follow up on them. These people need counselling. One young woman is carrying her husband's baby which is due in a month." "Oh, how very sad!" exclaimed Dolly. "Of course I will!" To her surprise, she found she had a gift for doing it. One day, as she read her Bible before setting off, she had a very strong conviction that God was calling her to fulltime ministry, and she spent much time over the next few days praying about it. When assured that it was God's will for her, she applied to the Anglican Seminary, was accepted and studied for four years. She accepted the call as Rector of Trinity Chapel, Soweto. It was a poor church, and very grateful that God had sent them a Rector who did not need to be paid. Over the next twelve years, Trinity Chapel grew and prospered under Dolly's ministry. On one glorious Sunday, Susie, Jamey and Johney, and Rector Andrew witnessed her installation as Bishop of Soweto.