GREGORY GRIMMES

Gregory was born on 1 September 1939 to his adoring parents, Laura and Billy Grimmes in a maternity hospital in Johannesburg. It was an auspicious day because it was the start of World War Two. The Grimmes were a very patriotic family. Billy said to Laura, “My two brothers and I have decided to join up. You will be quite alright with your parents and mine. Pray for us.” And he kissed her and his newborn son, packed his goods and enlisted. General Smuts became Prime Minister and South Africa officially entered the war against Hitler and the Axis on the sixth of the month. The Grimmes brothers fought in North Africa as drivers of tanks. All went well for a time but one scorching day as they drove up to Cairo, German planes appeared and blew up all the tanks heading there.

Laura was devastated as she listened to the news with her parents. She burst into tears, crying uncontrollably. A sad memorial was held for the brothers and a plaque in their honour was erected on the church wall near the pulpit. It was the first of many. Laura was a resourceful, pretty woman. She placed an ad in The Star which read,

“Husband wanted for a pretty, young widow with small son. Must be over fifty so he can’t be called up and have a good job so he can support us. I promise I will be a good, faithful, loving and Christian wife.” John Fields read this with interest. “Just what I need,” he said to himself. “I am a lonely farmer with acres of oranges. I am a billionaire. I need a companion. She sounds just right.” Laura came and they married the same day. Gregory had an adoring stepfather and a stepbrother and stepsister. They were much older with their own families and helped to run the farm.

The marriage turned out to be a love match and they were both very happy. One day John said to Laura, “My darling Laura, I want to adopt Gregory. I love him dearly.” “That would be wonderful, my darling John. “And I have something to tell you; I am expecting a baby in six months.” “Oh! Amazing!” he exclaimed. “I’ll call Doctor Cotton and ask for his recommendation of a specialist to deliver the baby.” And he kissed her passionately. They invited John’s sons, wives and families for a celebration lunch the next day. “I wonder what this is about?” Paul asked Penny. “I bet

Laura is pregnant," said Jenny to Peter. "They walk around the farm kissing each other not caring a bit about all the labourers staring at them! I suppose we had better wear our finery. I'll go shopping this afternoon for something suitable for us." "And I will get the builders to enlarge our dressing rooms," replied Paul with a laugh, "And the children will all want something new, so I had better get going," said Penny. Penny and Jenny called their chauffeurs and went shopping. As they shopped at Exclusive Clothes with personal assistants, the chauffeurs carried the parcels to their cars.

It was a lovely sunny day as the families drove to the Big House. The conservatory was filled with flowers from the garden. Gregory sat gurgling in his pram and John and Laura welcomed their guests with warm kisses and handshakes. Sitting on sofas and chairs, John stood up to speak. "I have two great announcements to make. I am adopting Gregory, and we are expecting a baby girl in six months." Everyone clapped and said, "Marvellous! What will you call her?" "Clarissa" answered Laura. "Let's go to the dining room.

Best Catering will be serving us, I know you will all enjoy what we have chosen."

Clarissa, whom they shortened to Clara, was a healthy pretty baby. Gregory loved her, and as she grew, he showed her his favourite toys, asked to push her pram when nanny Joan took her for walks on the farm. "That's a pig, Clara," said Gregory, "it's a dirty animal. It stinks. But it will be nice to eat one day!" To which Clara replied, "Oh." "I will show you the animals I like best." And he led the way to the stables and into an enclosed field. Two ponies trotted up to the fence. "Give me the carrots, Joan please," he said. They gobbled them up crunching noisily. "Daddy says he will give us a pony when I turn five and will teach us how to ride them." "Here comes your Uncle Paul with your cousin Ned," said Joan. "Hello, Uncle Paul!" shouted Gregory, "Can I play with Ned? He promised to take me to play in the stream and have yummy biscuits at your house afterwards." "Ok" he replied, "but Ned must take care of you." And so on most mornings this happened, except on Sundays when they all went to church in the nearby Anglican evangelical church,

the cousins to Sunday School, Gregory and Clara to the creche so they wouldn't disturb the service, and the adults to sing in the choir or sit in the church and hear Father Andrew continue his series of sermons on God's plan for everyone.

The Fields loved to travel and having two small children did not deter them. "I'm longing to go to London, go shopping, see shows, and stay at the Savoy," said Laura. "I will book our flights now," said John, "The children will love it, seeing the guards parading outside Buckingham Palace, feeding the ducks in Saint James' Park, and going on the Tube." "Yes! They will," exclaimed Laura, "and when we want to do things ourselves like visiting Tate Modern and having lunch in the restaurant on top, Nanny can take them in the double stroller along the Thames across the bridge and they can watch the Carousel and the London Eye. And eat meringues on the other side and walk along the Thames. They will have a lovely time, and we will have a babysitter when we go out in the evenings," added John. Two weeks later they were

boarding British Airways First Class, John having bought all the seats and they had the cabin to themselves.

This was the first of many trips. When Gregory and Clara were older, they went to China, walked on the Great Wall, to America where they visited all the museums in Washington DC. “The very best was the Museum of the Bible,” Gregory said, and they all agreed. It was a long holiday of several months in which Daddy hired a car and they toured America, going to Yellowstone National Park in the north, seeing bears with babies as it was spring, and crisscrossing America until they reached the south and spent a week in a hotel in Disneyland as they saw all the sites, took rides on them and they all had a fabulous time. “I liked shaking Mickey Mouse’s hand,” said Clara. “I liked going on the riverboat,” said Gregory. And Jane said, “I love my job.”

Time passed quickly. They visited Australia, South America, India and Alaska. Back at home they went to Cape Town

and rode the cable cars to the top of Table Mountain and visited the beautiful winelands. They flew to the Kruger National Park – and then it was time for Gregory to go to the private Church School in the village with his older cousins.

Gregory was outgoing, very bright and popular. He excelled at all sports and his parents were very proud of him. Clara was also bright, a very sweet girl who had one special friend called Mary. After leaving school she married Mary's big brother, Luke, who was a doctor in the village. Daddy built them a lovely house in the village and Gregory soon became a proud uncle of Melinda and spoilt her, showering her with toys when he visited Clara.

One day, after Gregory had graduated cum laude from Oxford University's Law Faculty, he spoke to his parents. "I love you dearly," he said. "You are my wonderful parents and always will be, but I am haunted by a desire to know more about my real father. Mum, can you tell me where his parents or your in-laws live?" "Yes, I can," she answered, "but you will find when I left to come to Dad, I did not tell

them where I was or what I was doing, so that is why they never visited us. I will give you their addresses now." "I wish you well in your quest," said Dad giving him a hug.

The next day Gregory drove to his grandparents' middleclass home in Linden, Johannesburg. He rang the doorbell. "Hello," he said to the stout woman who answered. "Are you my grandmother?" he asked. "Certainly not!" she replied as she shut the door. Gregory knocked again. "Did my grandparents live here?" "I don't know – I bought this house on auction. The couple who owned it died in a car accident." And she shut the door.

Gregory drove to his mother' in-law's house only to find it had been demolished and a new house was being built on the site. "Please can you tell me the address of the new owners?" he asked the foreman. "Yes," he replied, "they live in number 10 Picadilly Mansions Oxford Road." "Thanks," said Gregory, and got in his car and drove there. There was no reply when he rang the doorbell. He stood on the

balcony for a while looking at the garages and large house with an enclosed garden filled with flowers, trees and circled by a path. A small girl was riding her bike round and round at top speed. The man next door came out and said to Gregory, “They have gone on holiday. Will be back in two weeks.” Gregory went home feeling disappointed and frustrated, where in the world could they have gone?

When Jim and Jenny Grimes had decided to leave South Africa and emigrate to America, it was because their sons had always wanted to do this. They packed carefully taking pictures of their sons and some of their prized possessions like the cup for tennis that Billy had won, the maths certificate of Alan at school and the lyrics Percy had written. They settled in Princeton, rented an apartment and a small shop on Main Street.

One day his best friend from school, Nathan Holloway, phoned. “Hello Greg,” he said, “I haven’t seen you for ages. I’m a professor of maths at Princeton University, do come

over and I can show you all the sights." "Sounds just what I need," he answered, "My parents have been saying I should travel – I've been a bit depressed lately, trying to find my birth grandparents and having no luck at all. I'll catch the first flight I can get on – so wait for my call. I'll be staying at the Princeton Inn." "Great," said Nathan.

In a couple of days, Gregory arrived. "Super to see you, Greg," said Nathan. "Likewise, Nat," Greg responded. "There's a great tearoom nearby," Nat continued, "just opened and the wife cooks the most delicious cakes. I like her Swiss roll filled with cream and pieces of pineapple and covered in chocolate sauce. Here's the tearoom." Amazed and stunned Greg looked up and saw the sign, GRIMMES SOUTH AFRICAN TEAROOM. "These are the people I have been looking for – my Mum's in-laws!" he exclaimed. The woman led them to their table. It was the last one. Customers were chattering and eating huge slices of cake. "Madame," said Gregory. I have something to tell you which will surprise you. It's very good news. When Laura your daughter-in-law disappeared, she told no one where she

was going or why. She advertised for a husband who would be kind to her and her baby son. My father responded. To cut a long story short, they married, and my father adopted me. He is a very rich farmer. I love him dearly, he has been so good to us, but I really wanted to find out about my birth father. Are you and your husband those Grimmes?" "Yes, we are!" she exclaimed and burst into tears. Her husband came running, "What's up?" he asked putting his arms around her. Between her sobs, she managed to tell him why she was sobbing and then he started to sob and they fainted and fell on the floor knocking the table over as they fell. Gregory called an ambulance, and the doctor said. "No visitors for three days."

That evening Gregory phoned his father. "I've found the family," he said, "but I haven't found out which of the three brothers my father could be." "Laura speak to Gregory," Dad said handing her his cell. "Hello Mum," said Gregory, "Why didn't you tell me who my father was when I was so miserable?" "Because I wanted you to only have one father who has loved you like a real son." "But when I left, I told

you that you would always be my true parents!” he exclaimed. “Which of the three sons is my father?” “Billy.” she replied.