THE SIMONS

The Simons lived in a house with a small garden in front in a road leading from the beach to the cable car that ascended to the top of Table Mountain. Their house was much like those of their neighbours – a central door with large windows on either side, a red tiled roof and a large chimney for winters in Cape Town were very cold and wet.

They were very friendly with many of their neighbours and the children, when small, ran in and out of each other's homes as if they were their own. The Simons had two sets of twins which they named Simon One, Simon Two, Simon Three and Simon Four – much to the amazement of their neighbours.

One Saturday when they were eating pizzas in the sunny garden, a portly middle-aged man opened the gate. "Good afternoon," he said. "I am Stanley Forbes, and I have something to tell Mr and Mrs Simon privately." "Certainly, follow me," said Daddy leading the way into the lounge. "Mrs Simons," Mr Forbes said, "You are the sole heir of Miss Peabody, your aunt." "Oh!" exclaimed Mummy. "I suppose she left me her Willow Pattern plates I always admired." "A great deal more than that," replied Mr Forbes smiling genially at her. "Miss Peabody was a very wealthy woman. She used to sell little garments she made and invested

every penny of it." He handed Mummy the will and left after refusing a cup of coffee. "I must get back to the office," he said, "Got a client coming."

"Come here my darling children," called Mummy. They rushed in. "What's up?" yelled Simon One. They all took after their father being tall, handsome, with blonde hair and sparkling blue eyes. "We are going to The President hotel for lunch to celebrate. Mummy has just inherited a fortune!" replied Daddy. "Tell me what you all would like over lunch. You had better change into your best casual clothes, The President will have many wealthy people dining on the terrace."

And what a lunch it was! Daddy toasted Mummy with a bottle of the most expensive champagne and the boys with Cola tonics and lemonade. There was much excited talk about Mummy's newfound wealth. "I don't want anything," said Simon One. "I have everything I want, just give me ten thousand Rand." "I want a keyboard so I can learn to play the piano," said Simon Two. Simon Three said, "I want the best rugby ball money can buy." And Simon Four said, "I want a presentation box of all Shakespear's works." And Daddy said, "I want us to go to church and give thanks for all this wealth and ask God for guidance on how it will be spent." And they all agreed. And Mummy said, "First of all. I will tithe it to our Lord." And everyone agreed.

Mummy said, “My wish is for a new house! I am so excited. It will be lovely to have a new house - one that’s big, furnished, has a swimming pool and a garden big enough to have stables for six horses and good accommodation for all the servants we shall need.” “What a wonderful wish!” exclaimed Daddy. “Where shall we look for such a house?” “Camp’s Bay!” shouted the boys. And the next day they found just the perfect house some way up the slopes of the mountain with views stretching down to the suburb and across the bay so they could see the beach and people surfing in the bright blue sea.

The house was very modern, and double volumed in the open plan living room. It was furnished with soft greys and blue curtains, sofas and armchairs. The side facing the sea was of glass, and on the lower level, sliding doors opened on to a wide beautifully gardened terrace with a large table and chairs seating twelve, as the Simons were a very sociable family. During the week, the boys attended a private boys’ school. The family continued to worship in the Baptist Church in Sea Point.

The years flew by. The family spent much time with their horses and became expert riders competing in local gymkhanas and receiving many gold rosettes. The Simon boys matriculated with distinctions in four subjects and

enrolled in the University of Cape Town, known as UCT. Everything seemed too good to be true, and, of course, it was Simon One had opted to major in History and World Religions. Simon Two in Medicine, Simon Three in Law and Simon Four in Art. He was already a proficient artist in water colours, and sculpture. He sold his works when there was a market day at Sea Point. Many students envied their wealth. They all had Porches, good looks and charming manners. Girls flocked to them like bees to a honey pot. They dated numerous girls but never found Miss Right. “Edna talks too much! I can’t stand her!” exclaimed Simon One. “Sylvia is a real dumb blonde,” said Simon Two. “Jenny is too brainy. It’s facts and figures nonstop,” complained Simon Three and Simon Four said, “Marigold can’t kiss.” Of course, all this dating over weekends left no time for church. “They have left the light in which they were born and followed the demons of dark,” Mummy sorrowfully said. They went to the minster of the Baptist church in Sea Point and asked him to form a prayer group for their sons. “Yes,” he said - “that’s a great idea. We shall meet every Sunday in the church.” So, while the young men went their merry way, the church prayed fervently.

Simon One graduated with honours in History and World Religions. “I’m an Atheist,” he told his parents. Mummy sobbed, “I’m devastated,” Daddy asked, “Is he blind? Can’t he see the splendour of God’s Creation?”

Simon Two became a neurosurgeon. The nurses found him fascinating, and he dated six beauties – he had no time for, or interest in- plain or ugly girls. After a short courtship he married Mary, a beautiful redhead with sparkling green eyes, Daddy and Mummy were over the moon. They were married in the Baptist Church in Sea Point, had a reception afterwards at The President Hotel and flew to London for their honeymoon. They were blissfully happy on the surface for some months, and then Jane, Mary's best friend, told her she had seen Simon Two with a girl in the pub last night and they were kissing and cuddling while they drank champagne. Mary said sorrowfully, "He has not come home some nights, so I feared this. Thank God that we have no children. I shall start divorce proceedings tomorrow." Mummy and Daddy went to Mary to comfort her, and Daddy said, "We are ashamed of our son."

Simon Three studied Law. Like his two brothers, he graduated Cum Laude, did his internship and opened his own practice in a smart business block in the centre of Cape Town. The waiting room in his office had magnificent views over the harbour, filled with cargo ships, small craft and a six-story cruise ship in the city for two days. The view stretched out to sea and as far as Robben Island. Simon Three had decorated it in a minimalist way, no pictures on the walls, no curtains at the windows which stretched from floor to ceiling, a white marble floor, and comfortable armchairs of soft white leather. Molly, the receptionist, sat

behind a white birch desk. All her files, wills and ongoing cases were behind a door in the white wall. It needed a remote to open it which was locked in Molly's desk.

Simon Three was not an atheist or a womanizer – much to his parents' delight. What then, was Simon Three's failure? He loved money. And all day long he dealt with it as he did the last will and testaments of old clients. It was too much for him, and when old Miss Flowers left all her wealth to the CAT FOUNDATION, he changed it to himself when she left. He easily copied her simple signature. The result of this was ten years in jail, and his ability to practise Law withdrawn for life. His parents were devastated but they loved him and continued to pray for their three sons.

And was Simon Four perfect? No, of course not. He was intelligent and read voraciously things that interested him. His parents were at their wits end. He did nothing but read new books he bought each week and munch bags of chips, sweets and huge slices of cake that he bought with his allowance. "I will fix him," said Mummy. "He is a fat lazy slob." "Yes," agreed Daddy, "Do that, my dear."

At teatime, as Simon stared greedily at the chocolate cake, Mummy said to him, "None for you, Simon Four, you must earn it." "What do you mean, I must earn it?" "Daddy and I expect you to bring us coffee and rusks when we wake up in

the mornings, if you oversleep and fail to do it, there will be no tea and cakes when we have it. We are sick and tired of you doing nothing all day. You have become a big fat slob." Simon Four was shocked. "Me? a big fat slob?" "Look in the mirror" answered Daddy.

Simon Four tried very hard and his parents were delighted and proud of him. "He's no longer a fat slob," remarked Daddy. "Simon Four," said Mummy "as you like cakes so much go and learn how to bake them from Cook." In next to no time, Simon Four had designed and baked his first cake. It was a sticky apple upside down cake. "Simply delicious," said Mummy cutting another slice for them all. Daddy said, "I have an idea. Why don't we buy a shop in Sea Point for Simon Four? I am sure it will be very popular." Customers liked the pretty cafe which Mummy had furnished - and they drooled over Simon Four's cakes. He opened franchises all over Cape Town and soon became very wealthy. He tithed his profits to the Lord's work. Many missions were grateful, and his parents thanked the Lord that one son had turned out so well. It encouraged them to pray for their other three sons.

When Mary divorced Simon One, he married Vanessa, then he divorced her because he had fallen in love with Jenny, a redhaired young woman with a curvaceous figure. But it appeared he had no luck in marriage. "Go back to Mary, she has not married again, is a true Chistian, and pray that she may consider marrying you again," said Mummy. "Our

prayer group has been praying this would happen for years," remarked Daddy. Simon One went and bought a bunch of red roses, drove to the house he had shared with Mary, and rang the doorbell. She opened the door. "Hi Simon One, come in," she said. He stared at the lounge - nothing had been altered. "I bought some roses for you, Mary, red ones. I have come to say how sorry I am for all the grief I caused you. Please will you give me a second chance? I love you very much." "I will give you my verdict after a month," she replied. "But you must come to church with me on Sundays and to Bible Study on Wednesday evenings. Thank you for the beautiful roses. Please pick me up for church tomorrow." She opened the door and let him out.

Mummy and Daddy were sitting in the congregation and were delighted to see Simon One and Mary walk in together. Reverend Green was in fine form. He preached an impassioned sermon on John 3:16 and 17: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through him, might be saved." He made an altar call and Simon One responded and walked up to the front. Reverend Green prayed for him, and Daddy stood up and exclaimed, "Praise the Lord! Our son who was lost is found." And after the service Mary, crying for joy, said, "The verdict is in. It is, yes."

Simon Two was now a successful neurosurgeon happily married with two beautiful twins called Lulu and Amy. They were three years old and the delight of their doting grandparents who spoilt them rotten. Life seemed too good to be true. And, of course, it was.

Lulu and Amy got Chickenpox, then German Measles despite having been vaccinated against it, then Measles, then Whooping Cough. Apparently, their immune systems were severely compromised, and they would probably die. “Only a miracle will save them,” sobbed Grandmother.” We must form a prayer group for us and our whole family and friends in the church,” said Grandfather. “Our God is a God of miracles.” They prayed and fasted for a week, and their prayers were answered.

Simon Three sat in his cell, thinking about what he would do on his release. He had been an exemplary inmate and had accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour. The Governor had come into his cell that morning. “Prisoner 456, I am releasing you four years early. Goodluck in your future life.” The great day dawned, and Simon was greeted outside by Daddy and Mummy who hugged him tightly and said, “So wonderful to have our darling son home.” And Daddy hugged him and said, “Everyone is at Simon Four’s waiting to celebrate your release.”

The first purchase Simon Three made was to buy a black and white Collie pedigree. She was an adorable puppy and became a one-man dog. She would not let anyone, even Daddy and Mummy, touch her. Imagine his surprise when coming out of BOOKS, he found the chained Lady Jane slobbering over a young woman who was sitting on the pavement and stroking her. “She’s never done that before,” he remarked with a smile. “I have one just like her at home. Her name’s Lady,” said the young woman. “This one’s Lady Jane. Would you like a cup of coffee? My brother has a café nearby – it is very popular,” Simon Three asked. “Thanks. That will be nice. My name is Sandy and I’m a vet.” “My name is Simon Three and I have just been released from prison. I was a lawyer and falsified a will, so I was sentenced to ten years in prison. While I was there, I wrote a best-seller called MY DAUGHTER IN LOVE.” “Oh!” She exclaimed, “I loved it. Do you intend to write some more?” “You bet!” He answered. And that was their introduction which over delicious eclairs became the start of their courtship. “I live in Fish Hoek. My practice is there, and I am an Anglican Lay Minister in Saint Margaret’s Anglican Church.” “The Lord’s name be praised!” exclaimed Simon Three. “He has been so good and gracious to me. He has brought good out of evil!”