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Iron Horse to Nelspruit

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The train was packed to capacity
As it chugged out of the Durban Station.
My dear parents bid us an emotional farewell
And faded into the background.
Tears welled up in my sister's eyes
As we sat in the coupet.
The beginning of an epic journey.
Our tickets archived in the safety of my recesses.
White Masters suspiciously inspecting individual tickets
And would-be cheaters relentlessly flung out at the next station.

The velvet sky was dotted with sporadic stars
While the gracious 'lamp of heaven'
Unblanketed the darkness drawn by the Iron Horse.
Mathibela High School, our last port of call.
A mountain conquered via knowledge.

Each station whisked past us like time had stood still.
Like the River Nile greeting each country
As she magnanimously supplies the source of life
Before retiring to the mighty Atlantic Ocean.
Away from the concrete jungle,
Through a tunnel of life and greeting the wide open fields.
Dawn broke like a breath of fresh air.
Trees danced in the mild breeze as the train laboured tirelessly.
Away from the mad rush of small towns and cities.
Into the tranquillity of Nature awakening from a deep slumber.

Warned about vendors spiking drinks,
The temptation was great as the heat was fierce.
Our reserves depleted but patience was exercised.

Park Station at last in the small hours of the morning.
We moved humbly and vigilantly to the ticket office.
A marathon wait for the 5 o' clock Nelspruit train.
Fizzy drinks and sandwiches on the run.

Closely watched by a few curious onlookers.
We guarded our luggage with gusto.
The two tickets meticulously stored in my wallet
And deeply deposited into my trouser pocket.
We responded to the whistle that signalled
The arrival of the Nelspruit Iron Horse.
It engulfed all the passengers on the platform
As a Hoover machine on a filthy carpet.

Quite unbeknown to my unstreetwise self,
I rapidly aped the hurried movements of the passengers
And secured a vantage seat near the window.
Departing Park Station, I quickly dipped my hand
Into my pocket and to my stark horror,
I was a victim of pick-pocketing.

My wallet gone,
Our reserves of money gone,
Our tickets gone,
Our journey would be curtailed at the next station,
Petrified!
Some of the passengers looked at my sudden bewilderment
And never fathomed my sudden change of countenance.
Most of them, barely scraping a living
And trapped in abject poverty,
Could not have lent a helping hand.

Lo; and behold!
'Amazing Grace, how sweet the song,
Saving a wretch like me'.
Our colleague, Rufus Magkato was a god-send.
He purchased fresh tickets for us
As we settled for our long and arduous journey at night.

Nelspruit Station jumped up at us as we alighted
And caught a taxi to Meadowbank Estate in Graskop.