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The United States of Southern Africa in the Year 2100: Hope for an African Future
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Year 2100 minus 88 years and counting....

It is five minutes to midnight on New Year's Eve at the end of the last day of the 21st century. In Dar es Salaam, one of the wealthiest cities in the United States of Southern Africa (USSA), revellers from across the region have travelled on the Trans-Africa high-speed train network to witness the arrival of the new century at a massive fireworks display and international gathering in East Africa's 'harbour of peace'. Wearing a variety of light, thermo-regulated fabrics in bright fashionable colors in the thick, humid air, party-goers and families mill around in droves at its popular waterfront which overlooks the Indian Ocean, its warm waters an ancient conduit of inter-continental trade. Dignitaries include the prime minister of China, diplomats from IndiaStan, the European Federation and Amerinada as well as the UN Secretary-General. The reason for their high-profile visit, hosted by the ageing President of USSA, Mr. Nelson Bandigwa, is that the city has been chosen as a UN Beacon of Progress for the first year of the 22nd Century. As the fireworks leap suddenly into the sky at the stroke of midnight, the President smiles to himself and then quietly sheds a tear.

He had been born in 2022, the year in which the Southern African Development Community (SADC) became a confederation to govern the blossoming regional common market which had been spearheaded by South Africa and its neighbours. In his youth he had watched his region gradually unite as many of its nations benefited from increased intra-Africa trade and infrastructure development, including construction of extensive rail networks, large-scale hydro-electric schemes in Zambia near the famed Victoria Falls and on the banks of the mighty Congo, the world's deepest and third largest river. While the world passed from the Industrial Era to a new eco-scientific era after Peak Oil, Africa literally became a hotbed of solar energy technology. The shift from a fossil fuel based economy to a lower energy order based on renewable supplies from nature suited Africa well because it gradually reduced the need for violent conflict over decreasing resources. Nevertheless, periodic struggles over water broke out as well as on-going conflicts with radical Islamic and environmental groups using terror. In the wake of the new energy order, an epoch of greater general peace evolved in Africa.

President Bandigwa looked into the sky and continued to watch the fireworks through glazed eyes. Tonight, his heart felt full of years and memories of a century which had witnessed the creation of USSA and the rise of three new global super-powers, namely China, Brazil and India (later India-Stan after the unification with Pakistan following a tragic nuclear confrontation in 2028). More importantly, the advent of the third millennium had been Africa's time to arrive at the centre of the world stage by mid-century. Its progress had taken a long and painful journey characterized by waves of development, such as its Consumer Revolution and Youth Bulge of 2000-2015, its era of big infrastructure building, urbanization and regional integration of 2005-2035 and Africa's own Green Revolution from 2015-2030.

Demographically, there had been migrations to his region of Northern peoples, who had become victims of fuel-poverty in the aftermath of the decline of the fossil fuel based global economy, all looking for warmer climes to escape harsh winters in a period of escalating energy prices and diminishing fuel supplies. In addition, there had been immigrations of peoples from the over-populated East, especially from demographically-skewed China, resulting in millions of Asian settlers on the continent, a significant portion of which intermarried with local Africans to produce a new race of Sino-Africans. This had created an African urban melting-pot leading to increased diversity and cultural dynamism. Yet the tight-knit extended family traditions of Africa were preserved throughout this time of accelerating growth and cultural diversification. As a former professor of history, Bandigwa believed the biggest catalyst for the rise of his region to power had been its science-inspired Knowledge Renaissance of 2020-2050. In this time, the number of universities, colleges and technikons in the territory had more than trebled. He was especially proud of USSA's growing reputation for its leadership in such fields as solar energy, hydro-electricity, agriculture, food science, astronomy and archaeology. His nation had developed new systems of long-term underground disposal of low-level nuclear waste in wildernesses created by climate-change induced drought, paving the way for safer deployment of nuclear power. The Southern African Space Agency (SASA) had produced several astronauts who had worked on international space stations and one of whom had been chosen for a mission of the Global Space Agency (GSA) to test the viability of establishing a human settlement in caves of Mars where water had been discovered.

Throughout his lifetime, the United States of Southern Africa had been a leader in one of the world's biggest businesses, namely tourism, in particular, eco-tourism, archeo-tourism, and the wildly popular sport of non-lethal hunting using sedation darts instead of live ammunition. Johannesburg's Museum of Crime had become a world class tourist attraction. In addition, building on the work of the Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu and Bill Gates foundations spread out across the region and on his peoples' in-born spirit of *Ubuntu* and their widespread religious ethos, USSA had become widely respected for its expertise in conflict resolution and the practice of racial and religious harmony.

President Bandigwa's tear at midnight had been an expression, more than anything else, of pride, the overcoming of historical humiliations which once had haunted his continent.