

## CHAPTER 1

# FORCED REMOVALS

**L**osasaneng, known as '*Dishenting*', or Tin City by its residents, is a village where a shrewd diamond smuggler was born and bred in the better part of 1960 and became a multimillionaire before the anniversary of two and a half years of his existence. This penurious tiny village is sandwiched between South Africa's two provinces, the North West and the Northern Cape, respectively. The families of Sebe's, Kagiso's, Mokae's, Kola's, Modisaotsile's, Kwenamore's, Choche's, and Lenyibi's were the first to arrive and reside in the late 1950s before an influx of other families. The former six families, except for Choche and Lenyibi, resided in the southern part, while the last two occupied the northern part of the village. The rest of the land was a dense forest with a vast accumulation of thorn trees, a mountain on the northern part, and a small stream encircling and separating the village into south and north

and proceeding west to form a boundary between Gataote and Kameelput villages, respectively. Back then, there were no structures save the towering iconic Anglican Church building, which served dual purposes: a primary school and a place of worship and devotion. The residents then depended on livestock farming as the only means of livelihood and survival. Samuel Setlhabi (brother to my mother), who later became an ordained priest of the Anglican Church, and Jacob Digoamaje were the only teachers of that era. In the late '70s and early '80s, the lives of Losasaneng people upgraded and drifted from barefaced poverty to the golden age era. Economic prosperity came to the fore after the discovery of diamond mines. This positive move was a relief from joblessness. The young and old men found employment as cheap labourers earning chickenfeed. The mines were an advantage to job seekers because of their reasonable distance—no more than 80 kilometres west of Losasaneng. The mineworkers were neither less concerned nor bothered by the pittance of R15 per week. The concentration was focused elsewhere, on 'diamonds'. The majority of residents were apolitical in the political landscape of the country. One cannot pinpoint a specific political party that could claim to have overwhelming support and following. No political party can convincingly argue it has made effective and efficient progress. The focus of the residents and nearby villages

relied on two related features: ‘money’ and ‘wealth’. For every household, the acquisition of diamonds and money was the mainstay and focus point. Every family strived to acquire those materials, forgetting that money answers all things but is not everything. In those ancient times, if you were not a teacher or a miner, at least be a part of the inner circle of diamond smuggling—wherein your family was accorded recognition and prestige. Individuals valued working in the mines as a dignified and glamorous job.

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Though villagers had no interest in politics, two individuals stand out and are worth mentioning: Jacob Bopalamo and Mitta Seperepere, AKA Goeieman (they were not permanent residents of the village; their families’ lineage was somewhat linked to residents of Losasaneng). The former was a resident through a *Stem Saam* scam. The type of business he was pursuing will be expressed in the upcoming chapters. They were both dedicated cadres and loyal to their then-banned political parties, in stark contrast to the current ‘*Bo mabina go tsholwa*’—those who sing for supper and fight for positions to loot and steal state resources, appearing in yellow ANC T-shirts with their fists raised in the air and shouting slogans. The duet were members of the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan African Congress (PAC) of Azania, respectively. PAC was an offshoot