She peered out the window and saw the extremely depressing sight. The ancient soil looked like the lines on an old woman’s face, a face that had seen a million years. I guess the land and it cracks had seen a million year too. Each crack told a different story and one day it would tell ours. One of sadness, greed and desperation.

We are in desperate drought the smell of dead mutton and cattle hung in the air. All there is, is death and dying. The death of our livelihood and the dying of our spirit and willing to go on.

It hasn’t rained in years the smell of fresh rain on hot soil is just a faded memory in the back of her head but on she prays to live again.

“Alice,” her mother calls, “dinners ready.”

Alice rush down the creaking staircase and slips on the bottom step and lands roughly on her butt. Och ! How she all always forgets about that lose step. Her mother has cooked the last roosters tonight because there would not be anymore chicks in the spring what a sad through. How everyone loved those spring morning when you’d find ten new editions to the chicken coop. But this would be no more as they no longer have the cash flow to be able to feed ten more little mouths.

“Alice do you mind getting the water out of the fridge?” calls in an impatient voice. What is taking the girl so long her mother thinks to herself.

Alice’s mother is a small woman with jet black hair with a couple of specks of silver here and there. In proportion to her size her mother, personality is six foot tall and so much love to give. She always makes time for children as well as keeping the house under control the farm in order and still having time to volunteer down at the old people’s home. But as the drought worsens she has started to lose things a bit. She no longer has time for the old people and the farm is going downhill fast, her husband losing the will to go on with his growing depression. No food in the cupboards or fridge and no money in the jar to buy groceries. The last of the rosters eaten next it would have to be the chickens and after that the pet rabbit but what then would they have to start eating roadkill because bullets for rifle are too expensive.
Her husband stomps into the kitchen akubra covering over his receding hair line a look of anguish and desperation on his face and musky smell of tobacco lurking in the air. He must have finished of his last cigarettes not knowing when the next one would come. He plonked himself hard down on a chair around the table the roster wafting up to his nostrils. His face grim he still hasn’t received a reply from the application he sent off so they could get compensation for the drought but the conniving ministers had not replied. They didn’t give a damn about us the people of the land in which their wealth came from. All those suit wearing hypocrites cared about was how much money was in their deep ass pockets. Not about the people who made this country.

Alice’s dad had had enough of it. Enough of the smell of dead mutton. The cracks of the sun stroked earth. Enough of dead rosters and not having enough on your dinner plate.

He was a failure. As a farmer. As a husband, as a father and as a man. It took too much to get up in the morning and get out of bed just to be welcomed by the last flock of sheep dead. He could take in no more.

After he had eaten the last of the roster he went out to the tool shed this is where he did all his though thinking. This is where he came when his father had died and then when his daughter was born. This is where he made all his big decisions and perhaps the last. Everything was coming to an end as he unlocked the cabinet the brass lock playing tricks with his fingers how frustrating it was. He pulled at the door hard, it was jammed, but with another fierce pull it opened to reveal it dusty contains, a few cartridges fell to the floor. And there is was what he wanted. The thing that would bring all this to an end like it did so many other things. The slowly loaded it up and rose to barrel to his head and then just like that gon

Ring, ring, ring, ring. Alice ran to the phone and as usual stumbled on the bottom step. Ran down the hall to the phone. Picks up the phone breathlessly.

“Hello?”
“This is the minister of agriculture speaking, may I please speak to Robert Murray?’’ the man on
the end of the phone line replied in a formal voice.

“Um........he’s not here at the moment may I take a message?’’ Alice asked in a voice that
sounds so small compared to the man.

“Just tell him I rang and that he has got the grant and to ring and finalise the account in which
he would like the money deposited. Thank-you and good-day.’’ And the man was gone.

Alice was filled with joy. How this would change everything her farther would finally be happy.
Alice couldn’t wait to tell him to see that long forgotten smile flash across his face. She ran
down the path, gravel crunching under her boots. She entered the tool shed.....

“Dad, Dad!”she called but stopped still as stone with the second word. There he was, cold, on
the floor, blood seeping from his head. DEAD!