

Part A: Thesis

**No Way to Escape: A Crime Fiction**

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

My thesis is an interconnected collection of short stories that experiment with form to capture the uncertainty of life in South Africa. Set mostly in Makhanda, Dryhoek (uMzimkhulu) and Durban, these stories focus on young people who are dealing with poverty, violence, inequality, and the challenges that come with technology and fast development.

A central theme running through my stories is criminality. I look at it from different angles - the people who are affected by it, the ones who commit it, and the justice system that tries to deal with it. I want to show the real people behind the crime statistics and challenge the simple ways the media often talks about crime. I also explore the contradictions in the system itself, where the institutions meant to enforce justice are connected to crime because of South Africa's history of colonialism and apartheid. Some of the stories also ask questions about what crime really means when people are trapped in cycles of poverty and violence.

To show this divided and unequal world, I use different experimental forms that break the usual rules and laws of storytelling. I use approaches like short fragments, very short stories, lists, diary entries, and fiction presented as letters. While some of the stories are based on my experience as a journalist and are realistic, others explore ghost stories, horror, and fantastic fiction to capture the strangeness of South Africa today. I also play around with different narrators and perspectives to show many sides of the story.

I take inspiration from other writers in my style. Peter Markus' use of wordplay and repeated words to show dark themes and strong emotions, like in his book *We Make Mud*, influenced me. Kristine Ong Muslim and Kristina Ehin also inspired me with their experimental forms in dystopian and surreal worlds. Lastly, Brian Allen Carr's fragmented novel, *The Last Horror Novel in the History of the World* inspired me with its strange descriptions and imagery of an unravelling world.

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## **The night is still young**

The night is still young.

It is a busy evening on Sani Street in Joza.

People are singing and dancing.

The street has been turned into a one-stop.

What they call umphelandaba - all matters are discussed and resolved here.

I jump out of Mahindra, and the driver asks for his way.

They let him pass.

Ungubani, they ask me who are you?

I stand in front of them and hold my camera with my right hand. I start with a vibrating voice: I am Toto, the journalist. I am from Durban, originally from eMzimkulu in a place called Dryhoek -

I don't finish.

A man interrupts. Jumps in front of the crowd. Says, Mr Journalist, why are you here?

I am here because I love people. I want to find out what you are doing. Is it a celebration?

Stop it with so many questions, Mr Journalist. This is Makhanda. Look around you and see. There's nothing much that we are doing. Nothing to do. Nothing to be done. And so we are celebrating. We are celebrating Saturday night. We are activating the spirit of Makhanda, the left-handed. Our hands are empty. We have nothing left. No money left.

The other's chorus in:

No struggle left.

No left left.

So we are trying to forget all the issues that Makhanda is currently facing.

No water...

No electricity...

No food on the table...

Children are asking for R2 to buy the killing and addictive sweets they sell around here...

This is a good time to forget my friend.

To forget about all these problems.

To forget the history that gave birth to them.

To forget the politician who created them.

To forget the people who voted for the politicians.

To forget that we are those people.

The man laughs then introduces himself. I am Hendricks.

Hendricks, can you take us a picture, my friend?

Yes, but I need to get permission from the rest of the group.

No, no, my friend. You don't have to. I am consenting on their behalf.

He smiles, revealing a wide gap between his teeth.

I take a position.

They strike a pause.

I capture the picture.

Hendricks in the centre. The others crowded behind him. His mouth is peeled into a wide grin, revealing the gap in his teeth. The gap is echoed in the hole torn in his t-shirt. The holes in the eyes of the hungry men and drug addicted children. The holes in the tarmac.

I don't like it. The potholes in Sani Street have destroyed my picture.

Hendricks stares into the screen of my DSLR camera. He nods his approval. He likes it. He wants to know if I will make him famous. Then he asks if I will make the pothole famous too.

The crowd laughs.

I laugh.

Hendricks says, Sani Street in this Picture is like all the streets around Makhanda. You must know this location by heart to drive fast in this location. People love donkeys here. It is an efficient mode of transportation. No need to change tires every two weeks like a driver.

## The tavern dance floor

The dance floor is busy like every other day when those who enjoy drinks that make knees heavy are paid.

The alcohol percentage is too heavy for trying to dance to the sound of the DJ and their faces are splashed with sweat.

Turn to the right!

Turn to the left!

Everyone is struggling to follow the DJ's aerobic instructions.

The crab walk is the only directing that gets those who have given up their stability due to their alcohol consumption moving in the right direction.

They leave the floor walking like crabs.

Heavy heads.

Sometimes it seems like only their hands stay upright, claspings drinks with that heavy alcohol, balled into fists that explode in fights in eMaTarven.

The lady carrying brutal fruit starts to scream, lamenting the pain that her boyfriend makes her suffer. Lamenting how her boyfriend, u MaBhiza, hurt her heart.

Oh, her heartfelt pain is no longer barrable.

It is too heavy for Lady May to keep quiet about it anymore.

The boyfriend made her pregnant, leaving her to raise a child alone as an unemployed single parent. How cruel is the world we live in?

The lady does not seem as if she is enjoying having heavy knees.

Every Friday, she drinks and cries.

Cries about all her pain.

Pain that her boyfriend has caused her. Unbearable pain.

Pain that her child is causing her by not appreciating the effort that her mother is putting in to raise her alone in the absence of the Father, who denied the child even after the DNA test pointed to the Father without a single missing percentage.

So painful for the poor child. The child was denied by the father.

The drink is not friendly to this lady. Like the husband, it makes her cry.

I am watching this lady, and I am asking myself, Should I keep pouring you a Black Label?

Are you not going to make her cry even more, Mr Black Label?

Every time I ask these questions, my throat becomes drier, and I keep drinking.

There is no way that you can just stop drinking kwaMazithanqaze.

Most people come to this tavern to drink.

They raise their hands above their heads and say, "Drinks on me, everybody."

Free drinks. Free drinks because the team that the rich and kind guy supports just scored a goal.

Oh God, who can say no to free drinks?

In KwaMazithanqaze it rains free booze, and people get heavy knees without even spending a cent.

This is not a good thing, though, as most people cry. I also cry when I see some beautiful ladies crying or when a brother is crying.

I just cry to say you are not alone. I just cry to say you are not alone, and you are not the only one who is drunk here. I cry to say I am also drunk bro; take it easy.

All these reasons are drunk.

They are drunk reasons.

They crabwalk across your brain.

Turn to the right!

Turn to the left!

Fall down.

They are no better than the fools who can't control themselves and start misusing everything that is at their disposal.

These fools start by showering everybody who is inside the tavern with a beer.

You are in trouble if you complain about their behaviour and the general bad culture of drunkenness. They simply make you dirt with blood.

If you dare say, "Stop it. I don't like what you are doing," they will do it even more.

You better shut up.

Let them wash you with all kinds of alcohol and fake a smile when they turn to read your reaction.

They are looking for trouble.

They want someone who will say, "Hey, you drunkards, stop this nonsense."

If you dare challenge their practice, John, you will bleed, boss.

You will be admitted to the nearby hospital.

They don't hesitate to return the bottle of beer to its simplest form as they smash it into pieces.

The glass fragments catch the light.

The light refracts.

It spins.

And the next thing it lights everywhere.

The ambulances and police van sirens overpower the song the DJ is playing.

The floor is red.

The man who asked the question is assisted by the paramedics. They take him to hospital.

The police arrest the guy who delivered the beating for assaulting an innocent man. They take him by ambulance to the holding cells. They hold him then they assault him because they can't stand the alcohol, just like the lady who cries, because alcohol takes control of the drunkard.

I leave KwaMazithanqaze very confused, with a lot of questions haunting me.

I ask myself:

Why do people still drink alcohol if it makes them cry and burn with such violent anger that they can't control themselves?

I make a list:

Stress.

Addiction.

Boredom due to unemployment.

The main roots of our alcohol problem. I wonder if we'll ever be able to drink alcohol for enjoyment and not to heal our broken souls or addiction due to binge drinking, which is born from stress, addiction, boredom.

There will be a solution one day.

People will use alcohol in the right manner.

It's not the way I am using it. I drink alcohol to forget my problems, and to be drunk is a bonus.

## The exchange

The business of the sisters is booming.

They stand next to the road with their thighs acting as streetlights to every that passes Gwele Road, where they have opened a market.

Lord have mercy.

The load is too much for the unemployed.

No money to buy bread or even cents to buy chappies.

My sisters have accepted the situation as it is. They know that unemployment is a disease that is going to be with us for some time in this country.

They have escaped the crippling poverty, yet they are still judged.

Their business slogan is "We carry gold, and we make use of it."

The man is carrying the book of the lord, which is just ordinary, just like any other book.

"Forgive them, oh load, they don't know what they are doing. Oh, little sinners."

He prays.

These ladies know exactly what they are doing.

In the absence of help for their suffering, they use what they have. The gold that they are selling as per their slogan.

I am tempted to buy and support these ladies, but the praying man is not stopping with the prayer.

He prays and includes some law in the prayer.

I don't want to break the law. I want to participate in the exchange but not break the law.

I am not a lawbreaker. Not a breaker of anything. I don't like destroying things and causing any trouble, especially when it comes to laws and rules. I breach no law. I break no rules.

I live a clean life. If I am guilty of any crime, I want to live a clean life.

The man prays and speaks.

"James 1:15 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Stay clear of sexual immorality."

This Bab'umfundisi is definitely reading my mind.

How does he know that I am tempted? He mentions the sexual immorality to push me away from the temptation.

I pray.

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom comes. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

This is not ending. More intervention is needed from my side as I am very tempted by the exchange.

Everyone wants to own gold.

Everyone wants to touch gold.

Everyone wants to smell gold.

Everyone wants to be given gold.

Everyone wants to be gold and have a share of gold.

My thoughts are so deceptive. They are telling me that everyone wants this from gold. Everyone wants that from gold.

This praying man in front of the selling ladies is going nowhere. I think he is waiting for me to leave.

I am not going anywhere; I am saying to myself.

This man responds to my thoughts.

He is a prophet.

He says, "The statutory provisions under review are contained in the Sexual Offences Act 23 of 1957 (the Sexual Offences Act) is not yet Uhuru for the exchange of the gold you are carrying."

This hits me to the core.

It breaks me down.

I can't afford lawyers. I don't have money to even draft a will that will bequeath my assets to my younger sisters should I die.

The act is mentioned in this prayer of Madala.

I am not a law person, and I am not that smart to interpret the act.

I take my bags and leave the gold market. I go straight to my place without even looking back to the market of the judged buyers. The judged buyers who buy from the sinful sellers. The sellers of the gold. The ladies who know real entrepreneurship.

They use what they have, and every cent that goes their direction is already profit.

I leave the spot.

I walk straight home.

I walk away, free from engaging in the exchange. I walk away free from committing a crime that is easily avoidable. I walk away from troubles. I am a free man. Free from committing a crime.

Thanks to the praying man. Thanks to the man who reminded me I can pray to overcome trouble.

I will always say this prayer. I will pray to overcome challenges.

I am a Christian, but I will never allow indoctrination to kill me. The sellers of gold, I believe, are also Christian, but poverty is the sponsor of their business. I will never allow suffering. I will never allow indoctrination; you will slap me, and I will slap back. I am that Christian. The new generation.

Lord forgives those who run away from suffering, amen. Lord understands that the load is too much hallelujah.

## **The Struggle To Add Two And Two**

It is a busy day in our class, just like every Thursday. A lot of crime is committed inside this classroom. The teacher flogs everyone with a fresh stick that leaves marks written, "You will not make it to grade 12, you little crook."

I read the marks on my skin.

I am not good with numbers. I struggle to add two and two.

The following day is Friday. This worst recidivist teacher will flog me again if I don't submit my homework. She is a recidivist because she is not allowed to beat us. Teachers are not allowed to beat learners. Not anymore. Not in our democracy. Learners can beat teachers. I can see it happening on television. The government is enjoying the vice versa.

I started doing the homework. I struggle, and five minutes later, I realise it is time to start cooking supper as it is loadshedding in twenty minutes at seven o'clock.

I turn the stove on. I start with my pots, and I practised the giraffing I would need the following day. If you don't know what giraffing is, it's because you probably didn't get a government education. You went to a Model C school, or Private.

On the exam day, I get zero out of a hundred. My mother blames the overcrowding in my classroom - a hundred learners. She complains that she attended the same school twenty-five years ago and she knows the size of the classroom. She blames the government for corruption and not building a proper school that will make us focus on the teacher when she is teaching, not the goats that we see through the holes in the walls of our classroom.

On the exam day I do the giraffing - I make my neck long and try to spot the answers from the next learner. The teacher sees my giraffe neck. She shouts at me to put my head down. I hear nothing during lessons in my classroom. I am praying for ten o'clock so I can get a proper meal of the day from the school feeding skeem. My uncle's R350 from the government is not enough to buy us more groceries that allow me to eat before I go to school.

The teachers are complaining about most of us in grade five. They say to me and my peers, we are very unruly. They aren't teaching but gossiping machines. The bell rings: it is break time and the first meal of the day for myself and many other learners in my school.

## **An Eye for an Eye**

The eyes of the wise cop see beyond closed doors.

They walk over bridges to reach the truth buried behind every crime committed. Committed intentionally or unintentionally. Evidence diluted by deceptive traces that might point in the wrong direction. Evidence contaminated.

The marble eyes are looking. They shift through evidence bags and scan faces. They know that evidence is left after every crime.

The witness colours of the wise cop's eyes come in twisted spirals and carry secrets. They whisper in the wise cop's ears.

The scoundrel is shaken by the marble eyes.

The marble eyes of the wise cop are coloured with witness colours that say yes, we saw you.

They stare into the soul of the shaken rascal man.

The man tries to run away from the wise cop.

The marble eyes whisper, Follow him. He is the one. He is responsible for the unemployed youth of Makhanda. No questions about this.

The wise cop runs after the suspect.

The wise cop runs and runs.

Two steps running.

Three steps crawling.

Four minutes resting.

Will this man ever catch these crooks?

The chase comes to a hat.

The man has no clear motive, the wise cop declares.

The wise cop suddenly been stuck blind? Has he slipped on the shades of corruption and infamy that blur the dots connected by the marble eyes to the guilty man?

Is the wise cop not so wise so as to say no thank you to bribes?

Is the wise cop no longer wise?

They say cops only earn R10 a month. Imagine R10. Their integrity is challenged. Their honesty is compromised by the extra few rands that they receive when they completely forget who killed the dead lady whose case is under investigation.

The extra rands from the man who is rated the best performer in this murder flush everything. They flush out colour. They flush vision. Theory flush wisdom.

The wise cop loses his marbles.

The once wise now mad cop accepts the extra rands and justice becomes blind.

Will we ever see justice?

The witness colours of the marble eyes are yearning for truth.

Witness colour Hazel is saying, even if you take his money; the fact remains.

Witness colour Amber is saying, no matter what, it is still a murder.

Witness colour Gray is saying, I refuse to act blind.

Witness colour Green is saying, no matter what, you know the truth.

Witness Colour Brown is saying, money won't change the truth.

Witness Colour Blue is saying, you can still be a wise cop and refuse bribes to lie.

A new visitor comes to the house of the corrupt cop.

She has eyes the colour of agate.

The new visitor introduces herself as guilty-conscious.

This new visitor takes a knife and gives it to the corrupt cop.

The corrupt cop takes the knife and points it to his right eye.

The visitor says, I am guilty conscience; if your right eye causes you to fall, pluck it out and cast it from you.

The corrupt cop is reminded that illicit practices lead to suffering.

The cop plucks out one eye.

The visitor says, I am guilty conscience; if your left eye causes you to fall, pluck it out and cast it from you.

The cop plucks the second eye and blood runs down his face like tears.

The corrupt cop tastes metal and salt.

His world has turned dark.

The corrupt cop is now known as the blind cop, who lost his marble eyes to bribes.

The marble eyes take no bribes.

They roll down the streets of Makhanda.

They roll into potholes and get swallowed by donkeys.

The potholes can hold a hundred marbles because the money meant to fix them has been stolen.

The donkeys roam the streets because there is no food in the township.

The food has been stolen.

The streets are nothing but rubbish, but dust.

Children play with the marbles in the dusty streets.

Maybe one day they will see justice.

## A Life Written On a Face

Her face tells me she's old.  
But I know she's not old. She has lived only for 30 years and yet, still.  
She has wrinkles. Wrinkles. Wrinkles. Wrinkles.  
Lines cutting her face.

A life etches into skin.

This is my aunt, not my grandmother.  
Her wrinkles are a result of many things.  
They have nothing to do with genetics.  
Nothing to do with sun exposure.

Despite every line drawn on her face, she's beautiful to me. Her wrinkles are beautiful.  
Her wrinkles are admirable. They represent her life. All her sacrifices.

Each line has a story.

Like reading a book.

I tell her I love her wrinkles.

She shakes her head. Says, No, I'm too young for this. It is an indication of my struggles.

Too much struggle.

The struggle to live.

To make life.

The struggle of this country.

Our struggle.

It goes back to this.

She started to work when she was thirteen. Only thirteen, can you imagine?

Her father was shot dead during the unrest of 1993 - only moments away from the start of democracy. After his death, she was forced to support herself.

She started work then. She earned R5. She earned R5 for each and every 25 litres of water that she fetched for the shop owners of Kwa Mandisa.

She stares into the distance. Images from her childhood seem to flash in her eyes. The weight of the bucket. The distance from the shop to the tap. From the tap to the shop. The balancing act of not spilling.

"Isn't that child labour?"

“When will I get a chance to play like other children?”

“When will I be free?”

She's addressing all these questions to me in the present. But her mind is back in the past. Her mind is still carrying that bucket. Its weight etched into her face.

Her face ripples. It has furrows made from water. Like a river.

Yo Auntie. I have no answer. No way of giving her back her childhood. I cannot carry the bucket for her.

It is no easier now.

My aunt has been unemployed for 10 years.

Every month, she queues for her grant at social services. Every month she counts the rands and cents. How is she expected to get by on R350? She clicks her tongue. Every day she worries. Everyday the worry cuts a new line into her face.

So many lines.

So many wrinkles.

She asks me which do I think is better: to slave for a master or to do nothing?

I don't know how to answer.

She says, at least in the old days, water came out the tap. Now it is dry. I must buy even that.

We both fall silent.

I look at my hands then back up at her face.

I try to think of something to say to make her laugh.

When she laughs, her face lifts.

But I can't find anything funny in this moment.

## The trolley guy

It is a black Monday. Nothing seems to be kind to me. The way I drank the alcohol yesterday tells me that I did not think about this imperfect Monday. I created this Monday. I am the father of all the suffering. I can't be deducted from my knees and my head. It is such a bad Monday. After a good boozy Sunday. Today, it is something else.

The unfriendly Monday

The bad day of the week to be alive. A lousy day to still have to complete last week's activities.

Hangover.

I am bhabhalazed!

My head is spinning around, and my backpack is pulling me down.

Down to the ground.

I start walking like a toddler with my knees bent. I am bent. A little bit bent. A bent bit. A bent stick. Bent to breaking point.

I hear the sound as I walk down Somerset toward Victoria Girls High School from the side of Saint Andrews College.

Hoots and sirens of ambulances.

Ambulances run to save lives, and taxis run to secure the rand and make extra cash for imali yesokisi.

The extra cash that omageza makes when they are not supposed to be taking passengers, they steal and keep it in their socks so that the taxi owners do not take it. These drivers are trying to make a living as well. In the taxi industry, I hear there are no bonuses, but drivers get bonuses.

They make their own bonuses.

They make imali yesokisi—the socks money.

I'm trying so hard. I am trying so hard to reach my destination at Rhodes University at the Faculty of Education in front of Grey Street. I feel like I'm no longer walking, but trawling. I walk with my heavy head and knees bent and look around. I look around for a good Samaritan who can carry my head for me and take care of my backpack with my special project for my NQF level 9 qualification.

That's Masters, my bro.

I have no wonder why my bag is so heavy it carries a big qualification that will make me a master educator.



I asked him to carry my backpack with his trolley.

He doesn't say a thing. He points to the trolley to say I can put my whole attire and workinside. Everything that I need as a student is in my backpack. The USB with all my research, together with data that I have collected for my research, is stored in my laptop. On this dark Monday, my plan was to back up all the data I have on my student account so as not to lose it even if I lost my USB and Laptop.

Little did I know that I was walking with a walking devil with black and greyish fongkong Nike heels. The swoosh is the mark of the devil. The devil wears Nike. The devil wears a kind face and a smile.

I put my backpack on the trolley, and the guy seems so happy to be assisting a struggling human.

I walk behind this kind boy.

I tell him not to rush.

The boy says nothing, but his feet are telling me that I am losing my stuff.

I tell him to slow down. The boy starts running.

Running with my things. I shout and order him to stop. He starts running faster and I start screaming for somebody to stop the trolley boy. He is running with my stuff!

He is running even faster, but I can still see him because the road is straight and a bit steep and he lifts his feet up, and the trolley carries him and my bag. His dead feet tell me that I ordered the tsotsi to take my stuff and sell it for R100 to buy weed.

I scream until he reaches Grey Street and turns to the left.

He runs with my bag. He runs with my life. He runs with my sanity. s.

The boy runs with my civilised self. I end up speaking Fanagalo and swearing at him. Vimba lo bullshit! Vimba lo mthakathi! Vimba lo Satan!

The white guy passing me didn't understand what I was saying, otherwise, he might have helped me on my black Monday.

It is frustration that speaks on my behalf. In my voice. I lost voice in this event. I lost my composure. My composition. I lost my Masters. I lost my title. I lost the special effort that I put into being a master.

I will see this boy one day.

I will still remember his outfit. It was a red T-shirt inscribed with Be Careful on the back, but I didn't pay much attention to the warning. It was this big red T-shirt and black trousers with holes.

I'm a dropout because of this devil Makhanda.

I am busy currently. I am running after my master's and my true self. The boy will end in the kraal of the lawbreakers and thieves. Such a little devil that I mistook to be a good guy taught me a lifetime lesson. So much more than my Masters.

## The mother of crime

Crime is a permanent disease in South Africa.

Every person in this country is afflicted.

Every person, infected.

Crime can be cured only if opportunities are created for the vulnerable members of our societies.

Uncle Z stole R200 from Kuhle's bag.

Everyone wanted to understand why Uncle Z would steal money from a kind person like Kuhle.

People were now arguing about this whole issue.

This was a topic of interest between Cesare Lombroso and Robert King Merton.

Lombroso: you can tell when you see a criminal.

Merton: There is no such. How can you tell that a person is a criminal without investigating and finding results that will tell that Mr A is a criminal, he or she stole Kuhle's money?

Captain Lombroso is not a blood descendant of Cesare Lombroso, but we'll call him such because he has inherited his beliefs.

Captain Lombroso is a product of the old apartheid regime. He is criminal in this respect but because of truth and reconciliation he is guilty of no crime.

He claims Uncle Z is guilty because of the colour of his skin and the features of his face. Uncle Z has an expressive face, manual dexterity, and small, wandering eyes.

Captain Lombroso judges him accordingly.

Merton is not really Merton but we'll call him such to illustrate the point. Merton understands the law. He tutors Law 101 at a nearby college.

Merton: Instead of blaming Uncle Z, don't you think it's better to look at the causes that forced him to steal Kuhle's money? For now, you are just accusing an innocent man.

Lombroso: Innocent? I know when I see a criminal. I know when I see a thief and a murderer. They were born criminals. Their faces are telling in most cases. Let me prove my point to you, Merton.

Boys, bring that man here.

Lombroso fetches a sjambok from the back of his van. Since when do police carry sjamboks? There is no time to ask this because the policeman is already using it. He lifts his arm and brings it down full force on the defenceless Uncle Z. Z buckles under its force and releases a series of screams. The screams alert the community and everyone inside Kwa Nkosi spaza comes out to see what is happening. People gather but no one dares intervene. Lombroso is infamous in the township. So they watch as Uncle is beaten. Are they criminal?

Finally, Lombroso turns his whip on them, cracking it in the air and commanding them to disperse. It is no longer illegal for black people to gather but no one was prepared to risk it, so they break up, exchanging whispers as they wander home. The normally vibrant atmosphere of the spaza is dismantled and Dryhoek is so quiet after this.

The only sound is Uncle Z begging for mercy.

Uncle Z: I took the money lombrr!!!

I wanted to buy groceries Lombrr!!!

I have no food Lombrr. Mmmmhh...

I did not want to do any harm to anyone. I wanted to buy some food.

I wanted some rice and chicken. Fresh meat. I wanted to buy...

Lombroso: shut up! You don't afford chicken; you eat cabbage. You don't afford cabbage; you drink water and pray for your situation.

Merton: You are being unfair, Lombroso. The man was hungry. You know what.... Let me tell you this. Social factors, such as lack of income or lack of quality education, drive individuals to commit crimes. If Uncle Z was working, I assure you he would not steal Kuhle's money. If there was no unemployment, Zithulele would find a job and buy food using his own money if there are no opportunities given to individuals to earn their own money and buy what they want. They will steal money and get what they need. It is simply as that and Zithulele is a good example of this.

This was a convincing point by Merton, but Lombroso, as a cop and a product of the old regime, didn't care. All he can hear is the whizz of a sjambok. His ears are even deaf to screams. If he can't hear screams, how will he ever hear the soft spoken Merton?

Lombroso insists that they keep Uncle Z behind bars. He calls in for assistance and commands the two constables that arrive on the scene to put Uncle Z in the back of the van.

The Lombroso and Merton debate is as old as seminal justice.

History tells us Merton won.

The streets teach us something else.

## Dear Minista of Police

Greetings

Dear Minista of Police

My friend was arrested bee-coz the Police claimed that he stole sugar.

Minister I am just confused. I am dip in the dark when it comes to this matter. Just give me light minister. What constitutes a crime in Durban? What makes taking sugar a crime?

What differentiates stealing from taking? Who makes these crazy rules? The issue that the Police must focus on is the issue of hijack. A man just lost his car bee-coz of the car hijackers in Isipingo. I think it is time to let innocent people live their life freely. The Police must focus more on human traffic not on sweetie petty crimes about sugar and cane. That is child play. The man allegedly accused of killing and raping the late Nobantu is gallivanting freely on the streets of uMlazi. Gwele Road is no longer the same. Durban has become a crime-free zone.

What makes taking stealing?

Stealing taking?

There is a problem between the two.

I thank you Minister.

Kind regards

## Who killed the man?

The man is dead. Who killed the man? No one knows who killed the man. People at the scene look confused. Even the dead man lying on the ground facing the sky looks confused. The man is dead. The scene has been secured by the investigators. The scene has been secured so that evidence isn't contaminated.

After assessing the situation, the police investigator files a report saying there's nothing suspicious. The cause of the death is natural.

No one is convinced by the report of the investigator.

Not the bystanders. Not the man who is dead and lying on the ground. Nor the man in black who is the chief witness. The man in black says, take some baby steps, Mr Investigator. The truth will be revealed by your patience, the man in black adds. This man, who is still breathing unlike the deadman, is convinced that the dead man was killed by someone or something.

He believes that the dead man was killed by a man wearing a mask. "I say the dead man was not killed by a man wearing a mask."

The man in black thinks maybe it was Abotikoloshe that attacked the dead man.

I tell him that it is normal for a man to die.

He asks me if I know the witches of Dryhoek?

He tells me that they work overtime.

They attended university to train to become the best witches ABATHAKATHI

This black man has a big mouth.

I ask him who is the famous witch in our area?

He says your Gogo is an expert.

He says my Gogo rides a sweeping broom like a bike.

I tell him it is a crime to accuse someone of witchcraft without having evidence that they practise it.

He tells me I will be surprised when the well-known Sangoma u Maqoma comes.

He says the bones of uMaqoma speak no lies.

He says the bones will point to my Gogo.

I laugh.

I tell this man that he could have been arrested for all these allegations if my Gogo was still alive.

The hearse finally comes to take the dead man. The dead man is taken to the KwaNodada, a famous mortuary in Dryhoek.

The man in black and I continue with our ways.

## Quagmire

To be a policeman is not an easy job.

It is a pain.

It is a profession that most men and women are forced into.

No way to escape.

No way to escape the pain that comes with ranks.

You go to our South African Police Services and find senior police officials doing nothing.

You do not have to respect me as a person but the rank that I am holding.

*As a constable, I am abused.*

I am a junior member, and the rank gives my seniors some powers to exploit me.

I am reminded about the quagmire of these ranks every time I challenge the lazy and the police who sleep at work.

My seniors.

Are we not employed by the same employer?

No answers for the stepchild, who is ill-behaving for asking relevant questions turned upside down.

Irrelevant as they are taken as undermining the rank.

Is the rank so important than serving the purpose of a policeman?

Protecting the vulnerable.

Protecting the woman cowering under a gun pointed by an abusive man.

*I am a Sergeant, and my seniors don't take me as their colleague.*

They gave birth to me.

The quagmire of ranks gives them the power to do as they like with me.

A citizen from Dryhoek is calling, and he needs agent assistance from the police. I am willing to help. I am helping. I am taking the car keys to drive to the member. I don't keep car keys as a junior member unless I am given the keys by my seniors. I ask for the car keys. I tell him all the reasons for requesting the car keys. I tell my seniors about the importance of having to drive to the complainant as soon as possible. Instead, I am sent to buy drinks by my seniors. The seniors don't see the urgency in assisting the dying lady. It is the quagmire that lets them behave this way.

Can we get rid of these ranks?

As the police, we are not serving the community because of these ranks.

Some police officials become parents to junior members. Their colleagues.

They no longer do what they are supposed to do.

They send their juniors.

South African Police Service gets a lot of service complaints due to the quagmire.

I am not complaining.

If I complain, my seniors will tell me to comply and complain later.

South Africa is a country with many quagmires.

The corrupt government officials.

The lazy police.

The road with potholes to a crime-free South Africa.

The drivers that are taking us to a crime-free South Africa are driving at a lower speed and are so worried about their cars being damaged by the potholes.

*I am a Warrant. I won't speak bad about my seniors as a non-commissioned officer.*

I am not going to say a bad word about the commissioned officers.

The captains and other senior commissioned officers.

I have to respect the quagmire.

I have to respect the rank.

The rank will never make me a child.

I am made into a child because of the quagmire.

I am still saying this with full attention: I must be heard by my seniors. Those in charge must kill the quagmire. Without the quagmire the police force will run smoothly.

It will run to help a dying woman.

Run to catch a criminal.

I am a police officer. I am mired, stuck in a bad situation in the ranks within SAPS.

A pain.

A rank.

A quagmire.

## Ways to Die in Mzansi

It is going to happen.

It might not happen today, but the day is on the calendar.

You are going to die.

The question is, how.

Please select from the list provided:

1. Sex with more than one person in Mzansi will kill you. It will chop your masoshomzimba down into pieces, and the nurses will say HIV.
2. "uMzambiya" will make your knees weak, roast your liver dry, and send you to heaven.
3. Shebeen's are visited by criminals carrying pistols. Shoot, shoot, shoot and shoot you.
4. Driving recklessly will take you straight to your ancestors and never reach the planned destination.
5. Drifting off while cooking with a Cadac stove due to load-shedding will make you a braaid meat and you will be part of your supper.
6. Borrowing money from unscrupulous mashonisas will enslave then kill you. They'll bleed your wallet dry, then suck your blood.
7. Nyaope or whoonga will swiftly spiral your life into living hell then dead hell.
8. Joining a township gang can result in a grim fate. You'll be caught in a world of violence and
9. Engaging in criminal activities and getting caught by an enraged community can lead to mob justice.
10. Tampering with electrical connections to bypass load-shedding often ends in frisson.

**January 1, 2023**

Victim impact Statement

South African Government vs. John Zulu

Spokane County Cause No: 09-1-00321-5

Honourable Judge,

The action of the South African Government has greatly affected my life as a voter. Since I voted for the ruling party, ANC, I have been unemployed. I am constantly afraid that DA is partly NA, and it will break a promise and injure me again. I am no longer able to trust politicians like I did before. My children are also afraid of EFF. They do not want to vote for a different political party because they fear that they will be betraying Nelson Mandela. He used to fight for freedom and was part of the ANC, and now my children fear that they will be voting against him if they make 2024 our 1994 since the ANC is not different from the apartheid government, the National Party, not DA and Not EFF.

The ruling party has also had a deep negative financial impact on South Africa. As they take the state money to educate their children overseas, we have been unable to fix the potholes and broken bridges in Grahamstown, and this breaks my heart. Although the R350 grant for unemployed people has been able to help unemployed people to buy toiletries, they are not able to buy food. I am a victim. I have toiletries, but I am hungry, and I have no job. These politicians of the ruling party, when they were campaigning, they promised us job creation, and as a voter, I am a victim. This R350 of Crime Victim compensation is not working.

People should not be able to commit crimes like this and get away with it. The emotional and financial impact will be felt for years to come if voters are still able to trust easily without looking at the causes of their sicknesses and suffering.

The ruling party needs to spend at least ten years in prison for this crime. I know this is not the first time the party has committed a felony, and it's time for the party to be held accountable for its actions.

Very truly Yours,

John Zulu

## The Rainbow Nation

It is alleged that Zama and Kamvelihle took Nolitha's money.

In fact, it is alleged they stole it.

R50 000.

Each got R25 000.

You might think, they found their pot of gold under the rainbow.

But this pot is not enough to solve their problems.

You see their problems are rainbow nation problems.

Which is to say they are black problems, caused by what some refer to as the "white problem."

Even with this pot of gold in their pockets, Zama and Kamvelihle are black, and hence poor and broke and broken in their bodies.

Ironically, their black problems come in a myriad of colours.

Zama's RED demands R4000 to be satisfied.

Zama's ORANGE demands R3600.

Zama's YELLOW demands R3650.

Zama's GREEN demands R4000.

Zama's BLUE is feeling blue and therefore demands R8000.

Zama's INDIGO demands R2800.

Zama's VIOLET is afflicted by violence and demands R4000.

Do the maths yourself because Zama is a product of Bantu education - another black problem, caused by the white problem.

Kamvelihle's colours are worse.

His RED is so bloody and wounded that it demands the whole R25 000.

ORANGE got nothing but was prepared to smile to receive a lousy R50.

YELLOW got nothing but was going to smile to get a share of R200 from the R25 000.

GREEN got nothing but was going to kiss Kamvelihle if he bought her some NikNaks for R10, but no NikNaks from the R25 000 was left.

BLUE got nothing because Red took all the money and, as the dangerous guy in the spectrum no one dared question this.

INDIGO got nothing and is not impressed -as she claims, some people are greedy.

VIOLET got nothing but still tries to keep believing in the abundant wealth awaiting her in heaven (where everything is white).

## Prisoner's Dilemma

The alleged brothers Zama and Kamvelihle are kept in prison.

The allegations are that they stole money.

These allegations are serious.

These allegations can never let a man walk free.

These allegations take a man's freedom and put a man in the corner of Waainek Prison.

The alleged crime is being investigated.

The two men are placed in different cells in Waainek Prison.

The investigator makes an offer to these prisoners.

The issue becomes a prisoner's dilemma.

The investigator says, "You become a state witness. I let you go free."

The prisoner scratches his head.

The investigator says the same thing to the other suspect.

The prisoner rubs his stomach.

The prisoners are both concerned with getting the shortest prison sentence.

Each must decide whether to confess without knowing his partner's decision.

Both prisoners, however, know the consequences of their decisions:

(1) if both confess, both go to jail for five years.

(2) if neither confesses, both go to jail for one year (for carrying concealed weapons)

(3) if one confesses and the man allegedly accused does not, the confessor goes free (for turning state's evidence), and the silent one goes to jail for 20 years.

Unfortunately for these two young men, they decided to confess. They get themselves five years sentence for their two lines sentences saying, "Yes, we did."

"Yes, we took R25 000."

None of them gets 20 years.

None of them gets a 1-year sentence.

Is this true justice?

## **If I can borrow a word**

"I have a lot to say, but I don't have words to say it."

I felt like the lady was running away from telling the truth about what happened between her and her boyfriend.

The boyfriend was shot dead in her presence.

The murderers are not known.

The police do not know who killed the dead man covered in white plastic.

The evidence is clearly covered by the lost words of the girlfriend of this dead man.

The girlfriend is not talking.

They say she is still shocked and still processing the shooting - rr rr rr doo doo doo.

I am the only one who doesn't understand this whole situation.

I am asking this lady, "Madam, you can describe the person that shot your boyfriend based on what you saw.

You don't have to think. You have to tell us what you saw.

You can say you saw a colourless man with round-shaped eyes wearing a tracksuit."

Jesus, the lady repeats my words.

Everyone is laughing.

This could be me taking the matter too seriously, but someone is dead here, and justice must be served.

I say to this lady, "Madam, you must speak now, or you are somehow responsible, and the investigation will reveal every covered truth under your lost words."

The woman is not impressed with me.

She responds that she is out of words and can't clearly describe the man who shot her boyfriend. She says, "if only I could borrow words, I could describe the man."

I lend her mine.

I say, "I killed my boyfriend," and I ask her to repeat after me, and she says, "NO."

Clearly, she has words to say about what happened.

The police call me to order and ask me to be professional and think about secondary victimisation and ask me to stop with my conclusion until the investigation to be undertaken points to the right murder.

The lady only knows who was with her when the shooting took place. The person with the lady, while the shooting took place in Langelihle, was at Phumlani when the shooting occurred.

There is no arrest at the moment.

Most drug dealers, murderers and even serial killers have never been imprisoned, even for visiting their colleagues with the same careers who failed to wipe all traces that got them in the zoo of those who killed poor innocent beings. This is South Africa; after all, even innocent beings sleep in prison sometimes because of the mistakes of the men in uniform. This time around, the person responsible for killing the dead man will go to prison. He will earn his deadly award.

I am the new man of service.

## Judgement Day

The voices are many within the judge's head. One is telling him he is a good man. A man of law. That justice is done when he lays charges against a criminal. When he raises the red flags of criminality. He delivers his judgement wearing the long black gown in the magistrate court. Everyone stands and salutes him. Inside the magistrate court, they address him as "MY LORD."

He walks with his chest out, like an angel is pulling his shoulders up. He greets no one. He is focused on his duties.

He dismisses some cases. Not enough evidence means he can't play God and be the judge. He gives a new date when there is not enough evidence.

I sit in the magistrate court and observe every movement. When he comes in, everyone stands. I'm not too fond of all of this pompous pomp.

The power dynamic and the small rituals of the court are not my thing. I like the profession but not the rules. A lot is happening in that court. Why must I stand if the judge comes in?

It is the same story in Court A and Court B. There is all this standing when the presiding judge comes in.

Judges are humans. They have committed crimes. They will die and will be judged like the people they set alight when they decide they must be taken into custody.

Likhona is not an innocent man, but he is a judge. That's his profession. He has committed crimes but he knows the law has its own laws. The law has its own language. Likhona has tasted sin. The sweet, dryish powder that Makhambule uses to make her coffee. They say someone stole the sugar. He says he took the sweet white, dryish powder.

Different sames.

Same differences.

That's my friend. A citizen of my beloved country. A country that picks a criminal and makes him a president. A country with lawyers that takes bribes. A country without justice. Enemies of Sister Justice lead this country. They make no effort to keep her alive. They suffocate her. They kill her, bury her and then contaminate the evidence. Not even a single person knows about her death. The lady called Sister Justice. The judge knows. The judge is given everything to make a ruling. In his head, there is a big palaver, a wahala, the clash of the masses.

I can hear the voices within the judge's head.

Let him go! Let him go! Let him go!

Justice must be served! Justice must be served! Justice! Just...

It is a clash of the voices. The judge is looking at the prominent man who is accused of stealing millions of rands to build the RDP houses for the homeless people of my beloved country. The voices within the judge are telling him not to lay charges against the prominent politician. The judge looks

confused, and I can scan his head straight to his brain. Pieces of his brain are bumping each other. Other pieces are saying, "You can get millions if you can let this man walk free." Other pieces of his brain say, "Justice must be equally served to the rich and the poorer."

I am reading his mind and listening to the voices within his head. I am convinced that he wants a share of the missing money.

The voices deliberate in his head like this is Judge Judy and they are the jury. But there is no jury in this country. Here the judge is judge and jury.

The politicians hire a spin doctor who spins lies in the judges head. They hire a kwaito artist to make a song that sings their praises. The judge is an old man so he doesn't listen to kwaito. They hire a gospel musician - yes they're also for sale.

The judge listens to all these voices at night. They slide into his dreams. They keep him awake. The judge needs medication to sleep. The medication costs money. The judge wakes up with a heavy head. The robes of justice have become heavy. They fit him poorly. He needs a fancy car and a driver to get to the court on time.

He arrives late.

The people wait.

I wait.

The people rise when he enters.

I rise.

Sister Justice does not rise. She has been buried.

The judge clears his throat to get rid of the bad taste he has in his mouth. It is the taste of dry, whitish powder.

The ruling is coming...

Not right away.

Not in the right way.

The ruling is out, and we mourn the death of Sister Justice. The prominent politician walks free to perform some fraudulent activities that will bring him to the podium in front of the judge again, but in the absence of the Sister Justice that we are mourning, the prominent politician will walk free.

Long walk to justice. It is so difficult to resurrect Sister Justice. There is no ethical practice within the criminal justice system. Rand is the deciding matter. Not the evidence. The deciding factor is not the scales of justice. It is the bank balance.

## The Founder of Babylonian Empire

King Hammurabi, the man of the highest order

The man is known for his Code. The Code of Hammurabi

The Hammurabi Code encapsulates 282 legal codes. The legal codes of the king were inscribed on a basalt stele.

Not the codex of the olden days but the basalt stele.

The king made means to take control of his people.

If Zikhona hates her husband and says to him, "Thou art not my husband," they may throw her into the river."

If Kuzai says to his wife, "Thou art not my wife, he shall pay her one-half a mana of silver."

This is not a crime for South Africans.

It is divorce left, right, centre. People have choices. Choices to choose. It is like people are running after a divorce status. The king of the highest order wouldn't allow this under his empire. I admire his leadership.

I sing 222 legal codes, and I leave the 60 that I don't remember, which is the 60 of his legal codes that I have unknowingly breached.

I admire the king of the highest order and his legal codes.

In my country, everything is hunky-dory; even the man of the highest order commits a crime. If you do wrong, you can't point wrong.

My point is not about Zikhona and Kuzai but about the king of the highest legal codes. Suppose we can wake up with our King Hammurabi in a country heading to a fire that will burn and destroy it. We will be celebrating our destination with King Hammurabi in paradise today.

Not to scare you, but King Hammurabi is known for his famous Code, an eye for an eye.

In big words, they say "lex talionis."

The big demolition of crime in a country that is crowded with criminals.

Hammurabi dealt with criminality in many ways.

In the law of retribution, Kuzai would be made to hate his criminal behaviour and pray not to offend again.

The law of retribution is a form of retaliatory justice commonly associated with the saying "an eye for an eye."

Under this system, if Kuzai broke the bone of one of his equals, his own bone would be broken in return.

Capital crimes, meanwhile, were often met with their own unique and grisly death penalties.

If Zikhona and her son were caught committing incest, they would be burned to death.

If Zikhona and Kuzai conspired to murder their spouses, both were impaled.

Even a relatively minor crime could earn the offender a horrific fate. For example, if a son hit his father, the Code demanded the boy's hands be "hewn off."

In South Africa, criminals are rewarded with hotel experience in prison with less rehabilitation. If Hammurabi was the minister of justice in South Africa, we would be singing the 282 legal codes of his highness; even the dogs would know that it is the greatest offence to burk me in their laws.

Not to tell you a fairytale, but the history that made Babylon a crime-free society under the reigns of King Hammurabi.

Under King Hammurabi's reign, crime was dealt with in many ways.

For crimes that could not be proven or disproven with hard evidence (such as claims of sorcery), the Code allowed for a "trial by ordeal"—an unusual practice where the accused was placed in a potentially deadly situation as a way of determining innocence.

The Code ordered that if an accused man jumps into the river and drowns, his accuser "shall take possession of his house."

If the gods spared the man and allowed him to escape unhurt, the accuser would be executed, and the man who jumped in the river would receive his house.

South Africa was going to be a crime-free society as I was going to be a trained jumper and accused all the corrupt members in my community of crimes they didn't commit so I could get all their processions under my name.

## Trouble picks the vulnerable

Trouble is attracted to the young and poor. It wanders around every town and finds the vulnerable boys sitting around in different spots.

Next to the ATM. Next to the franchises. In the spaza shop doors. In subways. They've got millions of smiles and hard hearts.

They smile at you. The vulnerable can still smile to soften your heart. To make it hard for you to say no when they ask for 2 bucks.

They have red eyes like they were crying all day, but their eyes are red because of the smoke of weed.

They walk like they've got heavy heads.

No, they don't. Their heads are not heavy; they carry the sins of the drug dealers who sell highly addictive drugs that take control of the smoker and become a slave with no control.

They sit next to the ATM and hear the sound of the ATM grr.

They smile at the Makhulu and greet her. They ask for 2 bucks.

They get nothing.

They follow the same mama and use force. They snatch her bag and run, struggling to keep their heads straight. The smoke of weed is too heavy for them to keep their heads straight.

The money is gone. How is this mama going to get through the month now? Crime happens in the eyes of the fat policeman.

The policeman with a big belly and the gun strapped just below it does nothing. Not even shooting in the air to give a warning.

The Makhulu screams to save her pension income.

In her pink purse, there's social grant money to buy groceries for her family. One of the boys who snatched the purse is her grandchild.

The boy comes home late, looking for something to eat.

He is hungry.

He forgot about what happened earlier in town.

The Makhulu calls the police. The boy is taken into custody. He gets no help there but a criminal record. Prisons are full and no longer places of rehabilitation.

Inside the cells, they rape him.

They break him.

They draw a painful picture that creates more hatred and anger for this boy.

The prison wardens, just like the police who saw the money taken away from the Makhulu, do nothing about the situation of the boy. They laugh about it.

The police know ibhakhwaphi le shandis. The police know the places where they produce these drugs. They do nothing about it.

Our society is sick.

Sick and going straight to the grave.

The systems that are in place are not working.

The best way to prevent all of this is to be proactive and come up with good remedies that our society needs. The actual pills that will give relief to the wounds of the country.

Remedies that will stop the policeman from stealing the drugs he has just confiscated.

Stop taking bribes not to lock up an offender.

Maybe a fat payment for the policeman can help.

A friend of mine visits the police to discuss the outbreak of crime. They point him with a gun and show him the gates. The policeman says, "Your fancy theories mean nothing out on the street. What some smart professor in Europe writes makes no sense here".

European theories in South Africa. European theories are effective in South Africa or in other countries. Crime is a universal issue in most cases.

Serious intervention is needed.

Something more than carrying a gun is needed to prevent and combat the new disease that is breaking in our country.

I don't blame the police but the involvement of politicians in the recruitment of police officials. The physical strength of a policeman needs some theory, but they kicked my friend out with his ideas.

A pain that I cannot deal with.

## Cable theft

The people are sabotaging themselves. The paras use every opportunity they get to make money. Money to buy their energy boosters. Their pills for surviving addiction. They make the community suffer.

Eskom starts with his famous operation. The operation makes the nation dark.

The paras join the operation and take the cables down in extension 4. In the neighbouring extension, when the light comes back, children scream.

"ubuyile umbani," power is back.

The parents are shocked to see that the power is off for an extra hour. They call Eskom. Eskom doesn't pick up phones. It is after hours. They wait for the power to be back in the next hour. The power doesn't come.

They don't realise that they are without cables. The street boys took them down. They can't stand the on and off anymore. They can't stand their addiction. They can't survive their addiction. They need to get rid of heavy heads. They need to feed their demons. Demons are rooted in many social ills. Drugs. Unemployment. Corruption of second-hand dealers who buy these cables for their own benefit.

The boys now waste no time. They wait for no man. They make quick cash and leave many residents of extension 4 crying in the dark.

I approached Eskom and told them about the issue. They promise to address the issue. I ask them to switch the power off for 8 minutes and switch it on after to get abafana bezinyokanyoka and the guys who take our cables in the dark.

They laugh and tell me that people will die. I tell them we will be left with fewer criminals and fewer problems. They call me names. They insult me. They say I am heartless.

I take my bags and leave. We, as residents of extension 4, are without electricity.

No cables. If we are trying to be part of the solution to our problems as a nation, we are blocked because some people within our government are benefiting from the dark practices of criminals.

In South Africa, there is a black sheep in every department. Even if my father is a black sheep of the government department, it doesn't help. He proves my point.

We are without cables. We lost connection from one pole to the other.

We are just independent poles with no connection.

## A good crime

Success is a celebrated thing in most communities. In the farms you'll hear the grannies ululating if someone is getting married. Praising the man who paid I lobola for intombi ka MaMzizi. Some celebrate with their honest hearts.

They actually feel no pain about the bride prize. The others start being creative and start punishing the man who just became a husband. They attack him with lightning at night. They are shooting him with lightning, shaking his heart with thunderstorms and leaving no evidence that might point to them. The creative grannies.

Ezilalini, they say to tell is to commit a crime. To win is to kill someone. The Makhulus and Mkhulus, who use a broom as a mode of transport, start attacking you for getting a job. They die if someone wins. I am the Sangoma with ancestors who never died. They tell me all this and warn me about certain individuals in my family and community.

I feel like all these are threats. I laugh about all of this. I think this is a result of the social media trend and the "woo-woo" challenge.

The "woo woo" challenge is the sound of the Owl. The black community associates Owl with witchcraft.

I laugh about it all.

I didn't say a thing. Not even a prayer. I just laughed. I laughed because this is news to me. News that became an experience when the creative Gogo's of the community started attacking me for my winnings.

I still tell everyone about my winnings. The good crimes I commit to empower myself. I tell them to attack me. Jealousy is a breathing animal living within many humans.

They clap for me during the day. At night, they strike me with a flash of lightning. I have just told them that I am buying a car. They kill my whole side. They put me in a state where I cannot drive a car. They take away all that happiness.

I think about all of this.

I thought things about witchcraft only happened in *The Crucible*, a book I was reading in my childhood. The Sangoma is called to investigate the cause of my stroke.

The results of the investigation of the Sangoma reveal no individual. Not even the neighbour that is always a suspect of the fly practice.

**BHULA MNGOMA BHULA!**

I think all my sickness is due to natural causes, but my sister insists that witches make a victim think like me.

## Food fraud

The country is at risk. Beans, but not the actual beans

Lucrative frauds diluting honey with cheap sugar syrup

Passing off methanol as vodka

Mixing inferior rice with premium basmati

Switching cheap fish such as catfish with expensive alternatives like haddock.

Catfishing the buyer to believe that the taste is the same as the original food.

Killing of a hungry and broke nation running away from the high-priced food that forces the pensioner to run to the less-priced food.

The gangs commit a deceptive act of changing food, and this is riskier than corrupting the food chain.

Criminal gangs have ventured into food fraud.

Gangs are attracted by products with high value but low volume. Low life benefits. One bite means minus one day of one's life. Two bites are even worse. Meeting the grave halfway and chewing your days into death. What to eat?

Criminal gangs moved into food fraud to sell low-priced food with high volume where economies of scale dictate that if the gang shave a penny of a product and sells millions of products, they can double the profit and send many innocent people to graves in their early years.

What can we do as a nation?

Not eat because if we buy the actual rice at a high price, we won't afford to buy the actual beans to eat with the rice.

Should we eat rice with no beans or eat to graves in our early years?

We are a hungry nation.

We are a broke nation with a high price of eggs.

## Mo·dus op·e·ran·di

She's a grown woman with some silly habits.

She is so powerful as a grown woman. It is so easy to fall for her words and her tricks. She's got the master key to open the head, go straight to the brain and, start diluting the brain and get access to the mind.

I don't know how she manages to do all of this, but she does get access to the mind through her tricks.

This MaGogo walks around town in Makhanda and does some acting. She's a good actress.

She asks for money. I call her a soft crook. She uses no knife to take as many rands as she wants from one's wallet with a loose zip and soft heart.

She makes her victims fall for her Gender-based Violence story. Her operation.

She is smart, but she forgets. She's old. Her mind is no longer as sharp as mine. She tricked me once, and I fell for her tricks. She got R100 bucks from me.

I was not weak. It was a blind week for me. I wasn't curious as usual besides all this. This old tsotsi was wearing a doek and an apron with a long skirt. She's of dignity.

I met her in front of Frontier Hotel on Bathurst Street. I was in a hurry. I was following, and I was like, Go! Go! Gogo.

I overtake her. I have no pains in my knees. It is only the pain in my heart because of what she does.

"My boy" she calls me.

Her voice was shaking, and I found myself shaking. I was shaking for no reason because I didn't know her story.

I keep walking. I don't entertain her.

I tell her I am not the boy that she's calling.

I feel the urge to look back to this old lady after I took a few steps of ignorance trying to reach my destination without any delays, but my destination was delayed.

"Yes, you my child," she said.

Aibo Gogo I am also not from this town. If you're looking for direction, you better ask someone else because you're not getting anything from me in that regard. A conversation in my head.

Hello Gogo!

I wear a fake smile and try to make the Gogo comfortable so she can ask me a question so that I can say no to whatever request with a smile. It's a good trick to keep your name in good books. Books of Heaven or whatever books you can think of.

"My child" she calls me.

Yes, Gogo, I respond!

Oh my silly lord, why don't you come to my rescue and take this lord to another saint that can do an honest job and assist this old MaKhulu because I am not going to do the right thing as I am rushing to my interview at the Makana Municipality and I am left with 40 minutes, and I just want to be there before 10:00 am so they can see how desperate I am about the communication officer post that I applied for. A long conversation in my head.

The Gogo doesn't notice that my focus is not on her. Not at all. I am waiting to hear about something related to direction, so I can say I don't know. Unfortunately, it was not about directions.

I still remember what this Makhulu said to me.

"My husband, he beats me, calls me names."

Huh! A disbelief that Gogo is not talking about direction. I expected her to ask for directions as she was carrying a big bag like someone who just arrived in town.

She says, "Almost every day, I took my bags and left our house."

Oh, marn Makhulu I found myself saying. I am falling for the trick of this witch that I saw again this year and narrating the exact story to me.

It is her modus operandi to dilute people's minds and make them pay for listening to her lies.

I meet her now in Somerset near the police barracks where I stay as a police officer.

I don't let her finish with her story.

I tell her straight.

Makhulu! This is not 2022. I am no longer a bari, and I was never one. I didn't know you last year. Today is not your lucky day because I will undress all the masks you're wearing so that people can see your true colours, your modus operandi.

I told her that I saw her doing the same thing on TikTok. She was trending. She got good bucks from a guy called Kuzai. I tell her to stop. My delivery guy arrived with my order, and I started telling him about the operation bakhuthuze of this MaGogo.

I warn Gogo, and I ask her to stop with her tricks and be honest with people because GBV is a serious issue. She didn't even provide a doctor's appointment to prove me wrong. I don't force her. I just let her go. God has plans for her as she is about to reach her day. She's old phela.

The guy seems to understand the situation of this silly old lady.

"She is old and might be surprised that maybe no one is working in her house, and she can't work for herself, as you can see, so she does all of this out of desperation." The guy says to me.

I had to think about all this in a country with a high rate of unemployment.

This moment of Makhulu reminded me that our society is very sick and is not surviving the sickness but going straight to the graveyard. This whole experience with the delivery guy reminded me of the day I met Makhulu last year when I attended my job interview for the post of communication officer that I didn't get.

One of the questions that the panel asked me was how much I was paying to get the post. I was broke at that time, and I didn't have money to impress the panel to give me the post, so I was not employed. I was so disappointed that day, and I think that's why MaKhulu's case is still rewindable with full details in my head. I am going straight to the grave with the memories of the day I first met UMakhulu.

## The bin of sinners

The building is very secure, with cameras everywhere. Eyeing every move that the sinners are making inside this old building, locked with a very big padlock and with burglars on every window and every door.

The padlocks are there to constrain the movement of the people inside. The level of constraint suggests that if the doors were suddenly thrown open, the inhabitants would flee " the bin" to enjoy freedom on the outside.

The bin has a lot of trash that has been disposed of after the judgement day.

The trash is very unpleasant with some marks on it.

Rape! Rape! Rape! This is a warning that Kuzai did something bad, and they threw him inside the bin of sinners.

Case 21/11/2023-Kuzai-guilty. They throw him in the bin of sinners and mark him with a special orange cloth.

Police officers take Kuzai as instructed and put him in the old bin of sinners.

Kuzai raped his sister not once, not twice, but more than twice. The number is big. It is so big it's unbelievable. The bin's walls are too high for him to jump out of it. He made the bin that way. Show no mercy for him. Kuzai regrets nothing about his actions. He has found similar trash in the bin that did worse things on Earth.

He deserves his ugly self-made bin.

Murder! Murder! Murder! This is a warning Siphos did something bad, and they threw him inside the bin of sinners.

Case 22/11/2023-Siphos-guilty. They throw him in the bin of sinners and mark him with a special orange cloth of sinners. Be careless with the keys of the bin, so careless that you lose them - my silent instruction to the Police Officers who took Siphos to put him in the bin of sinners. I wouldn't care, even if they lost the key. Manslaughter deserves a khiyile khiyile situation and hayi lovula so that the man that kills is never out of the bin. The bin will do justice and kill the guilty man for killing.

Siphos killed his brother, fighting for a girlfriend.

Theft! Theft! Theft! This is a warning. Nokuzola finds it easy to break into a house that is left open.

Case 23/11/2023-Nokuzola-guilty. They threw her in the bin of sinners for stealing her sister's clothes to attend an illegal mass gathering about service delivery in Makhanda. They attacked the councillor and hanged him in a tree, where the Police Officials saved him from his deadly punishment.

Nokuzola is a recidivist; she steals the shoes of the councillor and wears them in court and receives a double sentence for stealing her sister's clothes and the shoes of the councillor that she left barefooted hanging in a tree.

The bin is piled higher and higher. Nothing is recycled from this bin except the crimes. They are repeated and repeated by different sinners.

Rape! Rape! Rape!

Murder! Murder! Murder!

Theft! Theft! Theft!

Rape! Rape! Rape!

Theft! Theft! Theft!

Rape! Rape! Rape!

Murder! Murder! Murder!

Theft! Theft! Theft!

## The Absence of Light

The absence of light.

Loadshedding.

The streets are dark. The absence of light has become something normal. The abnormal, normal situation of living without the lights because there is no power. Mirrors in my walls could be reflecting myself in the presence of the light.

Having the light and seeing myself in the mirrors on walls is something that comes as a surprise. Two minutes, we have electricity. Three minutes we have load-shedding.

Light is such a blessing. Light gives me the power to see. Lights give me the power to confirm.

Today is a lucky day. There is light. I read a few scenes from Have You Seen Zandile by Gcina Mhlophe. I am just taking advantage of the light to entertain myself with a hard-copy book. Instead of reading from the screen of my cell phone.

I do the reading for a few minutes.

I get sleepy. I am so eager to get going, but the sleepiness is pressing.

I succumb. I go to my bedroom. I undress my current outfit to get into my pyjamas.

Surprisingly, I get to read my body.

The revised version of my skin that I never see in the absence of light.

I have scars on my skin. Big scars that I wasn't aware of. These scars on my body reflect the realities of the absence of light.

Darkness!

I see darkness in the scars. I've been assaulted by strangers in the absence of light. I wasn't aware of my scars. I wasn't aware of my suffering. My suffering is just like the brother who lost his cell phone during load-shedding.

He suffered because he was doing something against darkness. Against the absence of light. They point at him with a gun and took his phone.

They did the same to me.

They assaulted me and turned my body into a diary. They wrote history and the crimes that happen in darkness.

Dark crimes.

After dark crimes.

Black crimes.

Crime fictions.

Like words typed on paper.

I read my body and see the bad things that come with the absence of light.

Bad things are happening in darkness.

Things will get worse if there will be load shedding in the upcoming years.

I see killings happening repeatedly in the absence of the light.

I see human trafficking in the absence of the light.

I see many lawbreakers coming out like ghosts in the darkness to commit crimes and take advantage of the absence of the light.

Issues that my fellow brothers and sisters face are speaking. Dark omens. Foreboding omens. Loadshedding omens. They are telling me that all bad things are happening because of the absence of the light.

We need light.

Eskom give us light.

## Thunders

In most cases, it should be given to the well-deserving companies to provide their services.

Thunders are sold in my beautiful country.

South Africa.

They are given to those who know the power of the brown envelope.

No procedures.

No screening.

The smell of the rand in the brown envelope makes a man win thunder in South Africa.

A company facing liquidation can win thunder if the owners use the brown envelope.

Not the muthi that Nkabinde sells to activate one's luck, but the smell of one rand can make a businessperson win a thunder.

They say money talks.

But here it thunders.

## The MKO

The "MKO" is a simple abbreviation of the "most knowledgeable other."

Rob, my friend, is called the MKO amongst my friends.

It is a blessing to have a friend like him. He is a condom for all diseases. All types of problems. He is the master protector.

The master protector owns a set of spectacles. Funny false claim. They say he is clever because he wears spectacles. They claim that he gets 100 per cent in all his mathematics and physics tests. Somewhat true.

However, this is a stereotype because MKO is doing philosophy and has mastered it. He gets the 90s and is always ready to argue.

How did my friend end up in the police van?

Yes, the MKO.

He is very much aware and knows the law. I don't want to mention the basic laws.

This time around, he was so unlucky to be caught by the police while going back home from the Groove.

Surely, he was speaking English and arguing with the police.

"You know you can do better than this and leave me to go home to sleep.... there are serious criminals...."

If I was there, I would have said, "They are stealing food parcels. They are selling tenders." To defend my friend.

I know he was not wearing a mask and breached the Disaster Management Act: regulations of COVID 19...

He would justify his behaviour by saying "it doesn't matter because we are all going to die one day. Vaccinated or not. Wearing a mask or not. Our dying day can be today or tomorrow, just like how we came to this corrupt world."

I went to check on him in prison, and the police told me I couldn't get inside because of the restrictions.

I told the police that I was told that my friend had been arrested.

They ask for his name, and the prison clerk checks for me, and he says, "

Nikho Msenti was arrested because of breaching the COVID-19 regulations. He was roaming around after 21:00, the curfew time, as you know the situation in this ugly 2021."

"Thank you." I responded.

The clerk killed my mood. The police should be arresting serious criminals, not people who commit petty crimes.

My aunt, who is a police officer, says we never appreciate the work that the police do because most of us are criminals and guilty in most cases.

The MKO could have run, man. He knew what would happen when the police stopped the van and called him.

Called him to come.

I could have said, let's run, if I was with him.

I was going to say never look back, keep running.

Run, run, run!

I could hear the tip tap of his footsteps in my head. He was not running.

He could have run. If they shot him dead, it would be his day, as he always said. He could have known. He is MKO for a reason. To know things.

Maybe he ran, but he is not the best runner.

I will hear from him after prison time.

## Master crime

I saw a man crying in the charge office at the Durban Station Police Station.

The police asked him what was happening. He tells them that his wife assaulted him. The police officers want to assist the man with a face washed with tears by opening a case to save him from his wife.

But the man doesn't want his wife to be arrested.

I am observing this from my seat as I am queuing to open a case against a brother who assaulted my sister when he was drunk.

He explains to the police that the lady who assaulted him is the mother of his child.

I say to myself this brother is like my sister. He doesn't know what is happening. He doesn't know anything about Gender Based Violence, but his girlfriend has sharp teeth. She bites him.

Yet he cries to save her.

Just like my sister cries to save him.

Their partners bite them in the eyes.

They can't see what is happening.

They are too blind to see the crime.

They are too blind to see their swollen arms.

Swollen legs, bums, cheeks, thighs, and bleeding hearts.

This is not a matter to laugh about. People are dying, saving their gangster love spiced with fists to solve problems.

Hello victim.

GBV is bigger than the tears and the laughter. .

It kills him and makes her cry.

It kills her and makes him cry.

There's always pain, death and tears in its presence.

It is an act of violence that requires a sharp response.

Scissors and knives to cut it into small pieces.

Victims and offenders are failing to talk about it, and they call it love.

Experts call it a terrible crime. Police are always ready to take out the teeth of girlfriends who bite their girlfriends and girlfriends who bite their boyfriends as they die in the name of love.

## Three little petty crimes children commit.

### 1. Messing up the pronunciation of my name.

Calling me something I am not. It is messing up my identity. Most children in my community are guilty of this. I tell them to call me Malume but they still prefer to call me by the names they call me. They call me Kusai, and I am Kuzai. I tell them that I would have laid charges against them if messing up my name was considered a crime in a country with no hope. They seem clueless about breaking rules. They are growing up in a country that enforces no rules. I see these little criminals will grow and become the best in the industry of law breakers. A profession that no one picks as a career, but it starts with little things like messing up with my name or seeing a politician as a role model in South Africa.

### 2. Stealing sugar to get a taste of a lollipop when there is no kind adult to offer sweets to the poor little kids.

The sugar stealers you see on the streets with sugary moustaches, and you ask them if they stole sugar, they say SUGAR? They pretend to know nothing about such powder, and they get away with it even though the evidence is decorating their faces. The tsotsi toddlers say they know nothing about sugar. They confuse it with the other white powder that drives most of the youth into madness. You start with one white powder and that leads to the next white powder. Sugar, sweet stuff. A spoonful makes the medicine go down. A spoonful makes the kids go down. Sugar daddies for sugar babies. Sugar and spice and all things nice.

### 3. Crying.

These little kids are crying for no reason. I don't like their silly behaviour. I tell them that I should be beating them up so they should cry for a reason. In the morning, they cry. In the afternoon, they cry. In the evening, they cry. I try to understand if they enjoy screaming and making a terrible noise, but I realise that they are crying for their lovely country that is being messed up by the old Madalas that are earning millions for destroying the country in the name of running it. Oh, rest in peace my South Africa. Toddlers can't stand the pain any more, so they cry. I now cry with them. The only thing that I do is crying. Screaming.

## Silent night

The nation is a dark nation. It is without lights.

Streetlights are off. Kitchens are lit by fire from the fireplace where uMakoti is cooking supper for the family.

The smell of the chicken skew is undeniable.

The smell of the skew shakes everyone around the fireplace. Utatazala is hungry. His stomach is even complaining. There is a heavy fight in his stomach between witches who strike each other with thunderstorms.

Our world is so different from the world of uTatazala's stomach. The nation is loadshedded, and I can hear everything that is happening within Tatazala's stomach.

He looks so unbothered.

He can see that I am only looking at his stomach. Not anywhere else. Only in his stomach. The stomach of many possibilities. The thunderstorm stomach.

I can hear a thunderstorm sound whenever one strikes the other one.

When he opens his dry mouth wide, I can see that there is something painful happening within his stomach.

One witch is striking the other witch with some lightening.

At this moment, my eyes are owl-wide open.

My main focus is his stomach, which is making noise. Our outside world is so quiet. Amapiano and Qgom are quiet. The radios are off. It's load-shedding O'clock.

The outside world is very silent. No noise. Not even a single sound.

Another trembling sound from his stomach.

I change my position and look at his face, stomach, and face again.

I am bothered by his stomach. He can tell that I am bothered.

"Hunger," he says.

His situation is not pleasing.

He explains that the last time he had a proper meal was before the world was visited by covid 19. A month ago.

"Things have changed, my child; oil is expensive, and my grant can't buy enough groceries."

The darkness in her statement dilutes my happiness with anger and sadness.

The grandpa is visiting his daughter-in-law so he can get supper for the night and be able to take his medication.

This is all sad.

The Makoti put more firewood into the fire to make the skew ready in a few minutes.

The skew followed the instructions of the wood and the plan of the Makoti, and within a few minutes, the skew was ready.

All the angry demons in his stomach became so quiet.

No one was striking the other one after he finished his supper. His dry lips are shining like he owns lipstick. They were a desert dry before he had his supper.

I am not strong enough for this encounter.

To this day, I am having bad dreams. I dream about soldiers killing each other, people dying of hunger, or covid 19.

So much unrest in my dreams.

So much suffering in my dreams.

The night is so silent. The only night that is loud is the night in my dreams. It is the night within his stomach.

So much suffering.

I drink sleeping pills to calm my situation just like he does to calm his fighting witches within his stomach.

I don't win.

I am not winning. My dreams are still bad up to this day. If I do not see fighting soldiers, I am running to save my life in my dreams.

The night is not so quiet in my head.

## The Boy

Everyone celebrated the new member of the family. The parents named him Siphoh; many called him Gift if they felt comfortable saying Siphoh in English.

When the boy was born, his parents used to say, "This one will be a medical doctor and help patients in our community."

After 20 years, when the new member was celebrated, the boy completed high school and started university studies. He studied Journalism and Media Studies at the University of KwaZulu Natal.

He always went to Johannesburg to relax during holidays and care for his sick mother, who was living with his dad in their home in Soweto.

He had big eyes, and his aunt used to say wena, you're the perfect gossip machine. Journalism suits you well, and you can easily spot news from a distance. However, I would have appreciated it if you were a math and science pro so that you would help your mom with her moody lungs.

They would laugh at this joke and forget about his mother, who was promising not to make it through to the following year.

It was his parent's dream for him to be a medical doctor. He wanted to be something different. Something that didn't make his parents happy. To be an author has been red-flagged by the uMamzo Thuli and Papa Sticks.

The boy always told the aunt and the parents, "I'll be an academic doctor and not just a doctor; I'll be the one that heals even the ones that are not aware of their sickness."

Aunt always asked many questions, and the boy would respond by saying, "Zondiwe, the process will be easy. My aunt, the process will be through the process of a pen and paper, and those who are sick and need my assistance will be a fan of many bookshops."

This ambitious boy has been charismatic and very special to Zondiwe.

Zondiwe cruised around the streets of Soweto when the boy was doing his character search for his unpublished book titled, "Boys in Aprons."

Having impelesi and someone who enjoys going with the boy became a norm as they enjoyed laughing at people they regarded as perfect characters for the book.

"Siphoh play God and create that one." At this time, Zondiwe is pointing directly at the people walking down Nculu Street.

Which One? Siphoh would ask the aunt with his eyes wide open.

"The one with red sneakers, Siphoh, and you can name him Patrick." They would laugh and momentarily forget about the mother and her sickness.

Patrick was a well-known drunkard in Nculu Street.

It was after many hours of this that they had a car crash because they were too careless to look back when the car was moving forward and entering the famous T junction of accidents.

It was not a big thing, but the process of searching led them to an accident, and it was a simple act of the boy being shown the girl wearing a short skirt by Zondiwe.

The next thing, the windscreen was torn from the Black Toyota Corolla, and it was stuck in the middle of the T junction.

This was the result of reckless driving.

Sipho was frightened and kept saying, "I can't die and leave my mom."

"She needs me."

Sipho lost it. He lost his mind with little bruises, and the aunt had nothing, not even a mini mark to testify she was in a car accident.

The aunt had the courage to console Sipho.

"Sipho, my boy, you won't die."

The ambulance siren made things worse. Sipho started screaming. Sipho was taken to the hospital.

On the way to the hospital, Sipho asked for a second chance.

Sipho fought for his life, and once the situation was manageable, he was discharged from Albert Luthuli Hospital on the 6 of March 2018 and was taken back home. The craziness left him after three hours. It was not a permanent thing.

The aunt kept telling the parents about the accident, and they were not happy at all, and they said, "So Zondiwe, we always knew what is right for our boy. You took him to the streets, and he agreed because he is not so disciplined like the students who are doing Medicine and you hardly see them on the streets."

Zondiwe felt bad about what was being said. Still, she assured the parents that the boy would return and they believed her as the mother hadn't seen Sipho's situation at the hospital. The father hadn't gone either, he refused to go to see someone doing nothing but a character search, moving all around Johannesburg until he found the most interesting people turn into characters.

"At least now he can't move around, and he doesn't really need to, as he will find the best characters inside the hospital. He will find the Dr character and I want him to play that character in reality. Not this madness of a writer and an author."

"What is that even?"

"We can all be authors, I believe. We all have papers, pens, and stories to tell, and Sipho can do all this as a hobby."

“Stop it sbari. The boy will come back; he is in the right place now, has been taken care of, and appreciates the effort of the healthcare workers and the hospital just because he doesn't want to do their job.”

And indeed, the boy came back just like his aunt said, like he had never been hospitalised and greeted everyone, rushing to his mother's bedroom as the argument between the father and the aunt happened in the messy kitchen where Zondiwe was delayed washing dishes by the father.

“I told you that the boy would come back, sbari, and we will check the car out of the garage and keep searching for good characters for my amazing author.”

“Mom, I will write a best-selling book and take care of your situation.”

The mother was happy to see her son alive and seemed to approve of the boy wanting to be the author and enjoy the freedom of writing about all the injustices that people cannot talk about.

The mother was heard in the kitchen saying, "Sipho, the bestselling author."

## Someone is Knocking

Rustling of leaves, it is a windy night. I am in the dark, trying to figure out what is happening. The absence of light comes with fear!

Dark.

Semi dark.

Pitch dark.

Pitch black.

The sound is becoming clear, and it sounds like a leaf is falling into the ocean.

I am trying to focus, but I am scared.

You know, at night in the darkness, when the ghosts leave their places, you can't focus.

Finally, someone is at my door.

Yay! I've been waiting for Godot.

No! No! No! No! Knock.

I am actually feeling scared.

I know because I can feel the breeze brushing my skin under my blanket.

My two eyes are wide open just to see who is knocking.

No knock!

No. Not leaving my bed!

Do you know sometimes it frightens me...? When you say my name, and I can't see you, it is actually a crime that is not forgiven.

It's the same story even when you knock, but I can't see you.

I don't believe in magic, like a child, and ghosts, like a peasant, but I feel haunted.

This all doesn't make sense to me. So don't tell me you're also confused. That's part of our existence as humans.

Do you think the world will make sense one day?

I mean ismasdat lapetelez for you, 13.56.65

Now I know what a ghost is, and yet I still want to survive this world that keeps trying to destroy me.

I still hope to see Godot when I hear that knock again, just like the Bible readers believe that God will come and save the world one day. As they say "we believe", every

Sunday.

So said.

So sad!

Amen!

## The night out

It is now a norm that we go out as students every Friday to see friends from other places. This is where most of us lose the most valuable things. Some lose their virginity in the toilets, and others lose their lives at the round table filled with bottles of alcohol with high percentages.

We worry not. We don't want to deviate from what we do every Friday.

We don't want to miss the moment we toast and say, "We have survived the terrible week."

Everyone raises their glasses above their heads when it is this moment. It doesn't matter how heavy the glass of whiskey is; everyone wants to be part of the group that toasts to having survived the week.

My friends and I are survivors.

We escape tricky situations.

We have a special shield that protects us from the bullets that they play with eMaTarven. Cheers to our survival. I think that's why we keep going to taverns every Friday to grab a drink and wet our dry throats. Sniffing all the dust off the roads of Makhanda demands something wet and hot to fuel the organs.

There was a Friday that I will never forget when three guys came to our table and took out their cell phones. I thought they were playing. They told me straight that they were done with tossing the dice, and they forcefully took my phone when I was still busy updating my status to inform my media family about my current drink.

It is what we do nowadays. It is tough for us to let a day pass without interacting with our social media family. We live in a digital world, and we are digital kids. We are so connected to our screens. I don't blame myself for not noticing that these demanders were serious about taking our cell phones.

I responded according to their will when the dark guy with big hands gave me a hot slap on my right cheek. I had a temporary stroke.

My friend and I call the stroke that I had the "slap stroke" or the "man-made stroke". I gave my phone to these crooks, and I told myself that I would never go back to a tavern again. I was lying to myself because I was toasting as usual with other toasters the Friday after the incident.

There were other serious events where people were shot dead in front of me in these unsafe spaces of alcohol, and I told myself that I would never drink alcohol, but I tell this story dizzy with heavy red eyes and shaking knees.

I am in an unbalanced state. I am trying to understand every situation that I have been through in these places. I am trying to balance and count the numbers that I have said, I am never getting inside these dangerous places with good music that blocks the eyes, blinds the mind and makes a victim forget about the terrible traumas of yesterday.

I never thought that I would be telling the story of eNyobeni as a fairytale today, but it is something that I survived, and I was shot in my leg.

Out of the incident, I found myself in a wheelchair. Others get to go to heaven because of loving alcohol. The magic liquid. Something that you can't resist once it enters and communes with your body. It is very manipulative. It can make the body feel light and free of pain, but it takes the mind of the drinker away.

It is a drunk story. It is very disturbing and bothersome to people who know nothing about alcohol. They always ask me why I keep going to KwaSatan.

I tell them it's where I get to toast and lift a glass above my head. Something that I don't do with my parents, but I do with the grandfathers and grandmothers that I meet EmaTarven. They are so kind. They buy young stars some drinks.

In this corrupt world, they call them sugar daddies.

The internet tells it better than me if you wish to know what a sugar daddy is. It is a word to sugar-coat a criminal practice.

I guess these sugar daddies do sugar-dating with our young sisters. At least that's the impression that I get from the stories that jealous boyfriends share about the old kind guys.

There is nothing sweet about sugar daddies.

They are dark and bitter like the black beer in the taverns.

We swallow bitterness and call it sweet.

That is the secret power of alcohol.

I'll drink to that.

## The human robot

The man is dead. The family is crying. The family is crying, just like every family does when someone dies.

Babunyanga is celebrating a new arrival in his little dark room, where he makes and keeps his human robots.

Umkhovu.

A human-robot is made from a person who has been laid to rest as a dead man, but the man laid to rest is still alive. The man has been bewitched to do the witches' evil bidding.

The family of the dead man laid the shadow of their brother, thinking they had laid their lovely man to rest.

The man has been turned into an animal. An animal that does the witches' evil bidding.

The man is enslaved to do what Babunyanga wants. If Babunyanga wants a man dead, he will give instructions to the human robot. Umkhovu.

Umkhovu does not get tired.

Babunyanga tells umkhovu to kill. uMkhovu does so without asking any questions, even if the person who must be killed is one of his family members. He does so laughing if the instruction is that he must laugh when he kills the said person.

It is the power of umuthi that uBabunyanga mixes to make the human robot.

The human-robot has a human body just like every normal human being. The only notable feature of the human robot is the nail on his forehead that uBabunyanga has inserted. The nail touches the brain of the human-robot and makes him do everything that uBabunyanga wants.

uBabunyanga uses the whistle to call his robots.

The man who left his wife alone to raise his children. He has been turned into a human robot. Something that can run the whole day without getting tired.

He has been turned into a slave by the power of umuthi.

I am not uBabunyanga, but my elders tell me about these things. They tell me about iMikhovu. They tell me about uBabunyanga.

They tell me how a man becomes uMkhovu. My elders are very knowledgeable about these evil stories. You might think they are a fairytale. No, they are not.

They show me families that have iMikhovu in my hometown. They tell me that I must be careful of going to those families.

They tell me that I must learn to pray.

You would believe that my grandmother was once uMkhovu but never died. She's been around for a while and claims that she has seen iMikhovu with her naked eyes.

Makhulu tells me that she sees her late husband working in her neighbour's house in her dreams. This is a big issue, and I don't tell people about these little silly stories that my grandmother tells me so that I can stay away from suspicious neighbours.

She tells me how her husband passed away. Something unbelievable.

Her husband, uTaMkhulu, was bitten by a dog. He was then taken to hospital because the pain of the wound was unbearable. My grandmother told me that it was not a big wound. She says it was not something that could kill a human. Not a strong man like uTamkhulu, her husband.

I look straight into her teary eyes when she tells me the story of the death of my grandfather.

She says when uTamkhulu passed away. She was sitting next to him as it was visiting hours in the hospital. My uMakhulu tells me that uTaMkhulu when he died, he was talking.

She tells me that uTamkhulu said, "I will be back, my love; I am taking a walk with uNkabinde."

uNkabinde is the problematic nyanga in our community - when he is around, you can smell his herbs even from a distance.

uMaKhulu tells me that she knows that her husband is in the dark room where this evil magician turns people into robots.

uMaKhulu always asks me to pray before I go to sleep because she believes that prayer can save me from many things.

It can save me from becoming a human robot.

It can save me from being marked with a nail on my forehead.

It can save me from the power of umuthi.

I still pray.

I pray the prayer that uMaKhulu taught me.

AmaHubo 23:1-6.

UJehova ungumalusi wami.

She tells me that uBabunyanga is an expert at what he does. The police won't do anything to him.

The only thing that can protect me from being made a human robot is prayer.

I am praying to save my life. I am praying for extended days on this cruel earth. I am praying to see uBabuNyanga when he comes for me.

You better pray, my friend, to save your life from the devil. He is walking around looking for potential robots.

## The Corrupt Pastor

I am a new detective in the South African Police Services, and we do operations. Searching for drugs and many other things.

We start with our three-day planned Operation Shanela, and in the first two days, we get nothing in our search.

On the third day, go to church and we pray. We pray for results in our searches. God answers our prayers but not in the way you imagine. After the service we follow the preacher. We do not follow his preaching, his words but the man, we follow him out the hall that pretends to be a church. It is not easy to follow him as he drives a fast car. Why does a man of God need such a fast car? We follow the fast car and we get into a lab where drug dealers are manufacturing cocaine.

It was a win for our Zone 4 Police Stations as most people have been asking, "IBHAKWAPH'ILESHANDIS?" the famous question that every drug-addicted person answers.

We prayed and we got results.

We got drugs.

We got dealers.

We have the stuff that corrupts the minds of many young people in the name of zooming into the world of dizziness and forgetting some stressors in a country full of stressors.

It is a pain and a scissor that cuts my heart into pieces to tell you that the people who are dealers and manufacturers of the dangerous powders are also your pastors. They preach until their mouths go dry, but they are the worst sinners wearing white coats to cover their dark, rotten sins.

They worship God, but they are going to hell as they do hell, as they forget what they preach. It is the act of not practising what they preach that will send them straight to hell.

It is our discovery that left me with burning questions.

I am asking myself whom to trust.

Whom to believe.

The pastor or the criminal.

Who is the worst criminal between the man who knows the word of God and the guy who steals cell phones?

## Locard's Exchange Principle

He touches her.

She refuses.

He inserts himself.

She cries.

He pulls up his pants and leaves.

She lies on the bed.

She clutches her stomach and sobs.

She stands on shaky legs.

She cleans herself in the bathroom.

She goes to the police.

She waits in the queue.

In front of her there are men.

Behind her there are men.

The men all look like him.

She bites her lip to stop herself crying.

The police ask her what happened.

The police are men.

She explains he forced himself on her.

Some forced moves.

She recalls the moves.

It was forward and backward.

Like laban moves.

The police call this process a rape.

They ask for forensic evidence.

They ask to check her.

She gives them permission to examine her.

They find nothing.

She tells the police that she could still smell him on her. She took a bath.

They tell her that good rape victims are dirty victims.

Locard says: Forensic science holds that an offender will bring something to a crime scene and will leave with something from the crime scene.

The police advise her that if someone touches her again, she should rather come to them dirty.

She leaves.

His smell stays with her.

She bathes and bathes but the smell clings.

She wonders what is clean and what is dirty.

What gets washed away and what stays?

## **Locard's Exchange Principle 2**

He touches you.

He leaves something in your skin.

It can be anything.

It can be his beard.

His semen.

She kisses you.

She leaves something in that contact.

It can be anything.

It can be her hair.

Her lipstick.

Her fingerprints.

## The Bucket List

It is not a simple thing for those who are not familiar with it. It is not like the vowels A E I O U. Does the bucket list have a physical form or any structure or something of some sort like my Samsung Galaxy? Can I open the gallery on my phone, go to images, and point the bucket list there?

Not even. Not even when Abracadabra favours me. HAHHAHAH!

The bucket list is a beautiful soft object without a physical form or structure. The bucket list lives in one's mind.

Dead bodies do not have a bucket list.

Living people without hopes of achieving something during their lifetime do not have this beautiful soft object called a bucket list.

The bucket list is not a well-known thing. People seem to know things that they can see and touch but not the bucket list.

Like the caterpillar's metamorphosis in the cocoon, it was clear that the bucket list is not well-known.

It was me and this beautiful sisi with big earrings. Me and this beautiful lady were talking about a lot of things. This sisi seemed to love food, and I could tell through the way she was chewing gum.

"I want to cook steamed bread and chicken this coming Sunday," she said.

"After eating this as my supper, or should I say Sunday kos with my family, I want to have a lot of biscuits with Coca-Cola," she said.

I was so excited to hear about these listings from Sisi's bucket list.

I responded, "Your bucket list is almost full for this week neh."

I expected Zikhona to respond with what she has on her bucket list or what she regards as something on her bucket list.

Did you say a bucket? She asked.

What is a bucket list? She asked, pressing the question even harder.

You must be kidding me, Toto! At this age, you are still talking about buckets?

Hay marn!

Get over that mentality! Get over the bucket list! Or bucket whatsoever! Otherwise, you'll be stuck in one place forever.

This lady is full of surprises because she didn't stop even.

I was like, huh, my lady.

She said at this age, we don't store water in buckets. We just twist the tap clockwise to get water and close the tap anticlockwise compared to the process of buying and carrying the bucket, and even finding a space to place it is also a struggle.

She stopped me when I was about to speak.

"Don't even try to justify your level of thinking or your reasons for owning a bucket list. Toto, you need to update your thinking just like you do when you update your WhatsApp," she said.

Was I like WhatsApp with you, lady? This is the mistake I made when I meant to say what's up with you, lady?

This made me realise that being judgemental sometimes is not a good thing. We all make mistakes, and the excellent proof is that Zikhona confused a bucket list with what she used to keep her water.

This lady did not want anything to do with the bucket list. The funny thing is that she owns one. She owns one because these are her words.

"I want to cook steamed bread and chicken this coming Sunday," she said.

"After eating this as my supper, or should I say Sunday kos with my family, I want to have a lot of biscuits with Coca-Cola." she said.

I so wish I could tell Zikhona that the bucket list that I was referring to is a number of experiences or achievements that everyone hopes to achieve before God ends their lives on

this beautiful and corrupt earth.

My now updated bucket list is to tell Zikhona that a bucket list is not used to store water.

Not to tell is a crime.

Not a crime to be committed by me.

Zikhona, a bucket list, is a beautiful soft object without a physical form or structure.

Goodbye sisi!

## Boys in Aprons

Unbothered, they wear aprons like their mothers. If you see them, you would swear they are imitating their mothers or their aunties.

If you ask them about their outfit, they will not hesitate to tell you that they are honouring their grandmothers who wore aprons and long skirts with doeks on their heads.

These boys cross-dress to honour their late grandmothers and leave their sisters in skin jeans. Their practice is so impressive they go around the market selling things like zest, sweets and corn.

Umbila! Umbila!, they shout to call upon those who want to buy. They call those who want to buy zests, sweets or corns. They give a signal to those who want to buy what is hidden under their beautiful aprons.

If you look at them with an innocent eye, you won't tell that these two boys are doing the devil's work. They carry millions hidden under aprons.

They have no tables like most of the people who own street vendors in the market. They justify that by saying they want to meet everyone in the market and entertain everyone through how they dress.

These two boys are very smart; they have a history to tell and a way to preserve some of the things they admire about their grandmothers. Everywhere they pass, they leave almost everyone laughing. Laughing at their outfit.

Laughing at their stories.

Laughing because of their inspiration or laughing because of the fourth zest that is hidden under the aprons that they sell to young boys in the market.

You won't tell that these boys are selling drugs unless you can smell them when they pass. I can't smell them, but because I have been in the market for too long, I have seen them pull up their aprons, take out some whitish powder, and exchange it with young boys who have built their homes in the market. They sleep in the market and do everything in the market.

I thought the jokes of the boys in aprons were tiring; I never laughed when they told me their jokes. I would smile and nod to show that I am impressed by their stories. I didn't want to lose my energy to their stories. I did not know that they have an energy kill. Something that is not in the eyes of the public. Something that only smells for those who know it.

The only jokes that I mostly laughed at were the ones I watched on TikTok using the free WIFI of eThekweni Municipality. The only service that they offer. There is no better housing for people at uMlazi, but I still appreciated it because it saved me from buying expensive data and airtime. Everything is expensive in our days. So if you need money, you end up doing some crazy stuff if you don't get a proper job. You end up going around selling drugs and praying not to be noticed by those who enforce the law only when it will benefit them. Even the police sell drugs to make some extra cash, but they get away with it. They never get arrested because they think they are above the law. Their practice is just a pain to see.

In the market, I get to see a lot of things.

During festive seasons, the police conduct planned operations. They are also given search warrants to conduct stop-and-searches around town.

I notice the high visibility of the police in the market, and everyone is busy like every other day in the market. I did not pay much attention to the police until they came to me and showed me a search warrant, and they asked to search me. I worry not, and I appreciated their approach on that Friday. It was my first time ever to see such a friendly officer. The only thing that I didn't like was their dog that sniffed me.

The police continued with their search. I followed them with my eyes. The boys in aprons have been scarce lately. I just noticed.

After two hours, I see them going with the police.

I saw them early in their aprons, but now I see them going with the police. They are not wearing their aprons. They have been undressed by the police. Most people are surprised to see the boys going with the police. I am surprised but not too surprised because I have been suspicious after seeing the stuff they hide under their aprons.

I think they have been sniffed by the police dog, and it reported that they are carrying some dangerous powder. The police didn't hesitate to undress the boys. Each boy was carrying a plastic with some white powder packed in small clear plastic that you can see through.

The boys are undressed, people are saying in the market.

Boys in aprons hide drugs in their aprons, and their Gogos hide their bodies to preserve their dignity as grown people.

It is a drug burst in the market. People are shocked by the mark. I am not surprised as I am such an observant person. It is something that I noticed some time ago that everywhere that these boys pass, they leave most people sleeping with their backs and facing the sky. Laughing to the silent jokes that the white powder whispers in their eyes.

The market is never the same without the boys in aprons. They did some devil work with some entertainment. The boys in aprons left many boys lying with their backs in the market, and they stopped chasing after our mothers and asking for R1 for a moment when they were high after taking the white powder.

## The Gates of The Prison

Lombroso, a multifaceted scholar who looked at virtually every aspect of lives, minds, bodies, attitudes, words, lifestyles, and behaviours of criminal offenders in hopes of finding the definitive cause of crime.

Lombroso, a very funny man.

He would go around looking at our brother's faces and if they look a bit ugly. Our brothers would be in trouble.

Lombroso would say look at this one.

Pointing at brother Sipho, because he has a big hawk-like nose and bloodshot eyes. Poor brother Sipho.

The next thing the police van will come to take the brother that God did not favour or flavour with the spice of creation when he was being made.

My Gogo, who is a fan of marriage, will make some crazy comments about brother Sipho claiming that he was born out of wedlock.

Sipho is so unlucky because he was born out of wedlock, and now, he is suffering because of his mother's sins, his mother who seduced my son to sleep with her.

Oh Sipho!

Oh, the poor child born out of wedlock.

Everything about him is not going accordingly. According to his plans. According to his wishes. He wanted to have married parents. He wanted to be free from the depressing thoughts that worried him every day. The desire to be ugly and depressed arrested Sipho.

Sipho assaulted his sister some years back when the sister said you look ugly and depressed, brother Sipho.

Everything happened so fast when the brother started beating the sister.

The brother was taken into custody, and the sister was taken to hospital.

The sister came back alive from the hospital, and the brother returned with a criminal record.

The brother is struggling.

The brother is now a former prisoner, meaning an ex-inmate.

The brother is now a former prisoner meaning an ex-inmate done with rehabilitation and aware of his wrongdoing and sometimes not willing to re-offend or break the law or any rules.

The brother is now an ex-inmate and unemployed.

The brother is now an ex-inmate and sees a job advertisement.

The brother is now an ex-inmate and applies for the job. The man realises they are looking for a man without a criminal record. The man with a criminal record still applies to this job because this man needs money to survive.

The sister has forgiven the brother, but the stigma that was born because the brother was told that he is ugly and depressed, blocking the brother from getting the gold from the mines.

Who was wrong?

The sister or the brother?

Lombroso is smiling because he says actions speak louder than words, and Brother Siphos will enter prison.

Visiting or arrested.

Lombroso and Gogo will never like Brother Siphos.

## Prisons Can Make a Criminal

The lesson is about to start, and the time is half past one in the afternoon on a cold Tuesday.

The next period is the criminology tutorial, and we are about to unpack recidivism and submit our first draft essays for minor comments.

I took my bag and went straight to the tutorial venue. A gigantic grin spread across our tutor's face and his eyes lit up as he was ready to read our essays about "Prisons can kill and make a criminal."

It's a crazy complex topic.

Things got even worse when I heard Lombroso arguing with ZwiLakhe about criminality and they are both stubborn.

Lombroso said, "You can see a criminal through their physical features such as bloodshot eyes, wandering eyes, and big hawk-like nose."

Lombroso was unpacking the features of a murderer to ZwiLakhe.

ZwiLakhe responded very dismissively, "You must be crazy, Lombroso."

In all of this, I ended up taking sides, and my silent response to this argument was:

HAHAHAH!

Funny Cesare.

Funny Lombroso.

My silent participation in this was motivated by many reasons, as I believe that systems and our society create criminality. I was judging Lombroso, and I was like, really, Uncle? Really

Lombroso?

These two got me thinking, and I am not taking sides, but there is still a long way to go to kill criminality because Cesare Lombroso suggests that criminality is inherited and that some people are born criminals.

Something whispered in my ears. Khaphela Ku, late, you have to go. You must GO!

I revised my piece of writing marked as "bide one's time" as it was a developing piece.

I found myself reading as I went to the tutorial venue.

The making and killing of prisoners is the child of a criminal record, a lifelong stigma that leads to recidivism. Recidivism is a nice word to those unfamiliar with criminology, the study of crime. I almost forgot recidivism means to re-offend.

Repeat.

Rekill.

Rerape.

Rekill... Rekill... Rekill...

Doing it as a norm.

And become a serial killer if you rekill and rekill again and again like you are slaughtering chickens, crazy offender. Isn't it cruel to kill or slaughter some chickens?

This is a crazy task and a topic for another day, back to business.

A man is a former prisoner, meaning an ex-inmate.

A man is a former prisoner, meaning an ex-inmate done with rehabilitation, aware of their wrongdoing, and sometimes unwilling to re-offend or break the law or any rules.

A man is an ex-inmate and unemployed.

A man is an ex-inmate and sees a job advertisement.

A man is an ex-inmate and applies for the job. The man realises they are looking for a man without a criminal record. The man with a criminal record still applies to this job because this man needs money to survive.

Prison killed this man with a criminal record because there are no job offers for people with a criminal record, the lifelong stigma.

The man with a criminal record needs money and asks grandma, and grandma says, "I have no rands for an ex-inmate". The man gets desperate and steals twenty rands from Gogo's purse because the Gogo refused to give this man money, and the job advertisement clearly

states that there is no job for people with criminal records.

What happens to this man?

One, this man re-offends because of the stigma that comes after being a prisoner; in this way, prison kills this man.

Two, prison killed this man after all the efforts of making this man go through rehabilitation and making this man aware of his wrongdoing.

Thinking about all this, I told my friend that prisons should work with factories that will hire ex-inmate after serving their time behind bars.

There's this burning question about what could be the solution to criminality because there are good and bad sides to everything; prisons can kill and make criminals.

## **Telling the story of my past love is not 1/2/3**

To tell is to write.

To write is to tell. To love is to fall in a trap and be a prison of your own affection.

My overwhelming pain over a lost lover has prevented me from writing about our bond and its demise.

Telling stories about my romantic relationship is not easy to tell.

I run out of words.

I struggle to begin, and I reach no destination when the theme concerns my past love life.

I could not write about my previous broken relationship.

My overwhelming sorrow over a lost lover does not simplify me, but it breaks me into pieces.

My overwhelming sorrow over a lost lover has prevented me from writing about our relationship.

Maybe it is not a task I should take upon myself as I used to have a partner.

To tell about my relationship is not 1/2/3.

My overwhelming pain over a lost lover has prevented me from writing about our bond and its demise.

I want to reminisce about my past love.

I want to perpetuate my beloved in a song.

I still can't let go of my past love.

I have tried writing a song about my past love.

I struggled to begin.

I have a lot to say about my past relationship.

I don't know where to start.

There is no order to talk about this broken affair.

I have a lot on my mind.

All is well in my mind.

All is well and orderly in my mind.

I can't find the right order to talk about her and the broken affair.

I have told you everything you need to know about my past relationship,

The highs and lows of it.

My past lover is well articulative and can tell it better than I.

I'm giving her the power to talk about our past relationship.

Discovering gold

The unusually becomes usual sometimes.

Recycling is the new business I started doing as I wanted to do a business that is environmentally friendly.

Picking the tins of stinking rotten fish wasn't an ideal business to do.

The smell was very demotivating.

It was better than stealing and smelling the gates of prisons.

I was determined to do a business that would do justice to our beautiful land in a place where people use bins to store water because tomorrow, there will be no water.

That is Makhanda with never-ending water woes.

No water in Howieson's Poort.

No water in Settlers dam.

It is a sunny day, and I am busy picking the tins.

My lady is busy saying the work that you are doing is driving me bananas.

I always responded to her by saying, Because of this business that I am doing, I will be able to buy you bananas.

The more I picked the tins, the more the smell from the dumping sites became unbearable.

I was about to discover something that made me wonder if I still wanted to pick trash.

This was something glittery and very valuable in terms of rands and dollars. Something that whispered seductive words to my bank account.

I was determined to keep going, as I wanted to finish this illegal dumping site in one day or two.

I dug deeper as some dead tins were buried in the soil as usual.

Dig deep and make sure you leave no stone unturned. It was my mind telling me not to stop.

The sweating was ill-behaving. Every time I tried to ignore the sweat, it targeted

my eyes.

Nearly lost sight even before I saw something big, glittery, precious, and worthy of dollars. It was because of the sweat that went straight to my eyes. Such bad behaviour from my sweat.

God, can you make me dry, please?

It was when I was thinking twice when I saw something shining under the few tins that I was planning to sort it out the following day.

I was attracted to the shining thing.

I unpacked my bag and started digging again, it was not a crime so I dug.

I was so shocked to come to my precious discovery.

A golide.

My mind took a trip to Gqeberha and left me in Makhanda, but in that process of my mind leaving me behind, I took my golide inside my bag and wildly walked to my place, laughing

with tears.

Thanks, my lucky angel. It is a great discovery!

## Roadblock

Every Friday, the Police from Kulati SAPS , extension 6, conduct a roadblock at Rhini Junction.

Every Friday, from 10:00 AM until 12:00 PM they are there.

They come with their vans and dogs and bellies that bulge over their uniform pants.

Often, they kill two birds with one stone and invite other departments to collaborate.

Today its immigration officers from the Home Affairs Department who demand identity documents for every citizen stopped by the traffics.

Today is the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 2023.

Today is not a good day for Mr Kuzai.

Why, you ask?

Why? Well because Mr K is stopped by the traffic officers in the presence of the immigration officers.

They ask him, "Mhlekezzi uyaphi."

He doesn't understand. Mr only speaks Chichewa, the language of Malawi.

But even before he opened his mouth, I could tell from a distance that this Mr is a Mr from Malawi. You see, I heard the song that he was playing from his white truck - the big boy u Code 14.

It was Black Missionaries, and the song title was "Ndamusowa."

A beautiful song about a guy missing his girlfriend.

I wonder if Mr Kuzai has a girl back in Malawi who he is missing.

I, for my part, have none.

Maybe if, like Mr K, I had a girl at home, I wouldn't be here?

Like many others, I have made it a habit of coming to the junction to observe the stop and search.

It's our very own live true crime series that airs every weekend.

For my part, I don't come to watch the traffic police - who are mostly just here to solicit "cool drinks." Nor do I come to observe the misery of those apprehended - who are more victims than criminals in this real life drama.

Me, I come for the dogs.

Canine.

K9 unit.

Police dogs.

Unlike the police, these police dogs are super smart, with a real nose for justice. I myself have a big passion rooted in my heart for the work of justice. In another life, in another country, I'd be a leading investigator.

It was this passion that sent me to the junction on this particular day.

This passion that I shared with the K9s.

These dogs really know their weed. You'd swear they smoke it.

Right now they're barking at Mr.

The dogs say, this Mr was smoking weed, and he smells of weed.

They bark and say let us go inside Warrant Officer.

Finally the Mr Warrant Officer unleashes them. The first dog has a good sniff then returns and says, I told you to let us go inside. Look what I got. Marijuana.

The dog drops the package and the Warrant Officer picks it up. He weighs his options. But it is not a crime since the dagga is less than 10 grams.

Plus the man doesn't look like he has any "cool drinks."

So the officer sighs and returns the weed to Mr K. .

But Mr isn't off the hook yet. Having escaped the noses of the dogs and the clutches of the police, he now faces immigration. The Immigration officers change the gear. They ask for his identity document.

The man doesn't have an ID.

It is a big issue.

They say, it is a crime to come to South Africa by climbing on a crocodile Mr... What is your name?

The man with dry lips and red eyes painted by the situation responds, Kuzai.

He is shaking, and I can see from eyes that his heart has turned into a jukebox that plays only sad songs. The immigration officer asks, Is that your nickname or your official name? I am asking because it is difficult to know since you are not providing us with your identification.

My official name.

Okay, call the owner of the truck to come and take it. The police will take you into custody until you are able to provide us with your identification or if the courts say we should release you Kuzai...Kuzai right? .....Huh?

I say, don't cry Kuzai.

I say, they are now taking you back home, my friend.

They are taking you back to your girlfriend.

Remember the song?

But this is a crime drama and not a love story.

Aibo Kuzai is having none of it. Kuzai is making his escape.

He has become a springbok.

The police watch him run.

The police say, stop him!

He is running in my direction. Are they speaking with me? I am not police. But I do have a passion for justice. But what is justice here? Should Mr Kuzai stay here illegally, driving his truck and listening to his sad songs and dreaming of his girlfriend? Should he be deported? What must I do? Should I catch him?

My moral dilemma is solved by a manhole - real, not metaphorical even though this whole country is a metaphorical manhole and we have become a manhole humanity.

The manhole takes Kuzai by surprise. Bam! He kisses the ground.

Poor Kuzai.

The police take him and put him inside the van, and they go with him to the manhole where they throw the lawbreakers and sinners.

The police are done now.

The immigration officers are done now.

Mr Kuzai is done for.

It is a very bad day for Mr Kuzai.

A black Friday for him.

## Death be not proud

A beautiful enemy.

Yes, a beautiful enemy because it's the beauty that who are victims fall for.

This beautiful enemy came to my father wearing a beautiful black dress.

He fell in love and followed.

Sipho, my father's friend tells me that it was love at first sight, and my father was madly in love and approached u Nozibele.

On this day his love for me died. His mind passed away. Our relationship became history. I couldn't believe it. My father stopped sending money to my mother. My father forgot about us, his children. Who never gave birth to me and my three sisters.

This new love made me a new street kid who never married anyone.

This man was a new man. He was in heaven. He left the world we live in. He forgot about everything that belonged to him. He left his house. He moved in with uNozibele.

Sipho is telling me that uNozibele told my father never to send us money again.

Money to buy sweets and chips.

Money to buy groceries.

My sisters are now selling it. In my community, they call them prostitutes - at least to those who don't use their service. Those that do just say Jezebel.

I am left wondering. Left saying, mmmmh, sweeties. I wonder if my father will bring me some sweets today? Lucky if he does because I will be standing here like this, and my father would say, Hey, Lucky, I have a surprise for you. Close your eyes and open your mouth...

Sipho is telling me that I'm lucky for having sweet dreams while not sleeping. He says I'm never getting money from my foolish father.

Cheating is a crime.

My mother is left a widow, but our father is still alive. Her husband is busy with another woman, uNozibele.

Cheating is a crime. Cheating is a sinful practice, and all those who cheat must die. My father's friend told me that if this were the reality, I'd be left with no parents. You see, it seems they have both been committing this cheating crime. My mother goes inside the pink flat. Sipho tells me about my mother.

Sipho: after ten years of marriage with your father. Your mother saw her soulmate. U bro sticks. She never showed interest in your father again after her newborn love, which turned four years today. Your father's newly found love is turning two years old today. You can just count and do your investigation to tell who started inviting problems into your home.

Sipho tells me all of this rubbish. He looks very disappointed. He tells me I can ask people from kwaZitulo, where my parents used to drink uMshovalale.

uMshovalale is a home-brewed beer sold to people illegally and people in my place sell this thing. You get your two litres for only ten bucks. The two litres knock you down within 30 minutes. You lose your balance, and you lose your mind.

People in Dryhoek love this beer, and my parents are also victims and slaves of this brewery umvovo wamampela.

My mother started this cheating with a man in a black suit. He is a man in his 60s when you look at him. He is 47, and they tell me he is the same age as my father. He is not more handsome than my father. He is just a worse sinner than my father. He approached a married woman mentally disturbed by uMshovalale, and that's how he got my mother.

My mother started doing silly things with this man in a black suit. If you know my parents u Patrick and Lindsay, you know this man in a black suit. Their matter is the talk of the town in uMzimkhulu.

The right way to prove a point is to link all of this to uNozibele, because I'm never mentioning the man in black suit in my home. Never my beloved sisters and brothers. The name is not coming with me.

## Timber

My bedroom doesn't have a ceiling board.

I can see all the suspects—no time to hide.

I can see who is who based on how they hold the structure of my roof.

I can tell that the one facing North is Cedar.

The other one facing South is Redwood.

The one in the West is Pine.

The other one on the East side of the roof is Spruce.

It is hard to see the wood for all these trees, so I ask, but who took my wallet among all these guys? None of the woods knows where my wallet is. I am thinking of getting a jigsaw and starting working on them, but I don't want to lose the structure of my beautifully built house with a butterfly roof design.

I ask them who has taken my wallet.

I say, boys, where's my wallet?

They all say they don't know the culprit.

I tell them I will set them alight, and they look unbothered they know if I set them alight, I will have to reroof my house.

They know this, oh timbers.

I had money to buy bread in my wallet. Money to hire a private investigator to investigate my missing wallet. This wouldn't be the case if my wallet wasn't missing. There wasn't going to be a need to hire a private investigator as nothing would be missing.

Not even my wallet.

I look under the pillow in my single bed. There is nothing.

I look under the washing basket. There is no wallet.

I look inside the pocket of the trouser that I was wearing. There is nothing. There is no wallet.

I look at Baxakile my little white dog. She tells me that she doesn't know.

I silently say to her, how can you let criminals steal my wallet, my little girl?

I answer myself by saying you should be more responsible, my boy. I point at myself as I stand in front of the mirror.

I am about to accuse everyone who entered my bedroom and chose to sleep since I am no longer going to the groove at 37 on the high street, where every person goes on a Friday in Makhanda.

I sleep.

I wake up.

I start looking for my wallet again.

Something tells me to check in my other bags now.

I check my suitcase. There is no wallet.

I check my laptop bag. There is no wallet.

I check my casual backpack. I find my wallet.

I am angry at myself for wasting my time. The wallet is laughing at me and is obviously saying I got you grandpa.

I am not a grandpa.

I am just forgetful.

I tell everyone I got my wallet.

## **Justice-Whip-Whip-Whip**

The forum calls itself abahlali baseNKANINI.

You'll feel the heat if you commit a crime in their community. They shoot to kill my friend. They call the police only after panel beating you into a disorderly pulp that leaves your eyes partially closed.

They serve their justice.

Crime doesn't usually take place eNkanini.

The leaders there use retributive justice.

They punish to set an example. They call the community if they catch someone stealing.

The other day, a guy was caught robbing a shop, and they beat him and asked him to sing these lines, "I will never steal again."

They make a video of the man singing this.

The video goes viral and so retributive justice is redistributed.

I approach this forum, and I ask them why they approach crime in such a violent way, and they tell me, "We have our own way of healing sick criminals."

I say to them you can always call the police.

They say, "We have got the best medication that works fast and is better than the services that the police can offer us."

They keep on pointing at the sjambok every time they answer me.

This made me realise that retributive justice is a way of restoring order in a forceful manner.

Restorative justice is just like rewarding criminals for committing crimes.

eNkanini, you steal, and the citizens give you sjambok and call the police later.

I tracked down the man that I saw abahlali beating. I asked him if he would steal again, and he answered, "I will never again."

I am saying retributive justice is the fastest way to restore our sick and broken society.

Lizwi doesn't agree with me. It was his brother that was beaten up by the forum. The good news is that he respects people's stuff. He is no longer taking it without permission. Fingers cut short.

The man is now part of the forum and gives pep talks there when they talk about the bad things of committing a crime.

Sjambok is the way. If you are still confused about all of this, go and play with abahlali baseNkanini.

You'll understand this whole story better than I do.

## **To kill a fly**

No one has been identified as responsible for killing my sister. People are talking outside. People are telling me that my sister was killed by her friend. Her friend killed her. Her friend killed my sister.

She stabbed her with a knife.

They went out for drinks. They got enough alcohol. They enjoyed drinking. Drinking for hours without running out of alcohol.

They decided to take their alcohol home with them. They took the problems with different flavours with them.

Their blood was diluted with the percentage of alcohol that they were consuming.

I heard from my sister's neighbour that my sister had been away for a few days and her curtains were closed.

Closed for a full week.

I started looking. Looking in places. Different places. Places that made me look crazy. I went to shebeens. Never thought about a mortuary. I go to her friend. To ask about my sister.

She was last seen with her friend.

She is her best friend.

I thought she was sleeping out at her friend's place. I called her.

She didn't respond.

I called her.

The phone rang but no one picked up

I called her.

The phone was off.

I started the investigation.

I visited her friend. I ask her "Where is my sister?"

She said, "I haven't seen my friend for a while."

Yes, she meant my sister. Her friend.

I saw a stain, possibly a red liquid that had dried. Blood? I took a sample to run some tests at the lab.

The results shook me.

The results did not give me what I was looking for.

The results took me by surprise.

The results were drunk. The red liquid like blood got the machine drunk.

The machine got dizzy and gave crazy results like the girl who got dizzy and decided to stab my sister straight to heaven at an early age.

In her twenties.

Alcohol made her friend into her own murder.

I couldn't smell anything when I was in her friend's apartment. There was a sign.

A sign that told me, "Hey man, there is a dead human in this apartment."

I am sure that my sister was crying under the tiled floor where she was buried in uMhlanga rocks.

The sign was dancing on top of the grave of my sister when I visited her best friend to find out the whereabouts of my sister.

The sign was saying, "I can smell her. She is under this floor."

I was so ignorant.

But I was clever enough to go to the police to report my missing sister.

I told the police that my friend said that she was last seen gallivanting and dancing with her friend in their favourite tavern and she was never seen again.

She went missing.

I told the police that I saw a red dry liquid like blood in my sister's friend's apartment when I went there.

I told the police I didn't want to ruin my relationship with my sister's friend since she was more than a friend to my sister but a family member or a family friend if I can say.

The police were smart enough to listen to my story.

They took their van with a dog.

They asked me to accompany them to my friend's place.

Upon our arrival my sister's friend was shocked that I had called the police on her.

They explained that they were trying to assist me find my sister and thought as her friend, she would be a good source to guide them.

They were right.

My sister was inside the apartment.

The officer that was holding the dog let it go.

He whispered to it without my sister's friend noticing.

The police officer said, "search."

He spoke to the dog.

He let the dog go inside the apartment. The friend of my sister didn't want this dog in her apartment. The police officer said, "you don't have to worry about Black. He is just like a human. He took a deep bath before we came to your house."

The lady who is a friend to my sister looked worried but let the dog play around.

Within a minute the dog started barking.

The police officer ran to it.

It was barking to indicate a spot.

The police officer said "My sister you are not safe, we have to dig here."

The fly told me earlier on that there was something where the dog was barking but I was too dumb to notice.

The friend of my sister started complaining and suggested that the police come later after she had organised a new tiler but the officers didn't take this suggestion. They said they will take care of everything.

I said thanks to the drunk dry red liquid like blood that was signalling a positive outcome so that the results came out drunk.

The police started digging.

The fly buzzed around my head. It's buzz rung like the pitch of a police siren in my head. The fly was now part of the digging operation. Operation SHANELA.

I watched this whole process.

There came my sister in her white dirty dress with black high heels.

She entered heaven walking with high heels.

The police covered my dead sister with white plastic and forced me to leave the room while they finished.

I overheard them saying my sister's friend would have to answer.

One officer accompanied me, blocking me from seeing the scene.

I will have to pause at this point as I do not know how things unfolded after they put my sister in that white plastic.

We buried my sister.

I have learned that if you kill someone you must also kill a fly as they speak and tell who is responsible for the murder.

The person searching for the victim must just listen to the fly for the right answers.

## The stains

The boy was born pure white with no stains. His parents welcomed him to the world. They celebrated his arrival.

He was such an innocent boy.

Born without knowing all the bad stains that stick to bold and solid colours.

The parents take care of the boy. They raise him, and he becomes a big boy.

The boy starts seeing the world differently from his parents. The parents start noticing some bad and dark stains from the boy. They warn him and give him advice about how to get rid of the stains.

The boy doesn't care what his parents are saying to him. He enjoys the stains.

He is arrogant. He is no longer manageable. He deals with his problems. In his own ways. He tells his parents that he will be white again. He will wash himself when he feels like there is a need to do so.

His parents are now always complaining about him. He is no longer that boy. The lovely, innocent young boy that every elderly praised in his community. He received many blessings. No blessings come his way now. It is only cursed by the people that he points with a knife in town.

He doesn't care about anyone. He even steals from his neighbours. He sells the furniture from his home. They blame him for his bad behaviour. He is a bad boy once seen as a king by many people in Makhanda. Things happened. The world corrupted him, and he was introduced to drugs by his friends, whom he was warned about by his parents.

I also don't want my parents to choose friends for me because I didn't choose friends for them, and I want the type of people who have the same interests.

They say, "Birds Of The Same Feather Flock Together."

I don't choose my friends; it is something that just happens automatically. There is a connection between me and them. I do most of the things with my friends, but I know what is right and wrong. I know the difference between black and white, and I play away from trouble even if my friends sometimes seek out trouble.

I am not comparing myself with anyone.

Not with my friends, not with the boy.

I am just saying that it is not friends that make us become bad. It is a stage that comes to all of us in our life. Expectedly or unexpectedly.

It is like death. Death of a bright future when it happens to people like the boy. His parents planned everything for the boy. There is money they put aside for him to attend varsity after finishing basic education. He doesn't care about school. The only thing that he does is play rough in the streets. Attacking people. Attacking people to give him money is a bad remedy that is saluted by his addiction.

He regrets every bad action that he commits when he needs money to buy cocaine. They call him Maqhaq hazela because he shakes when his addiction calls for immediate attendance. He goes crazy. He loses it. He loses his mind and cries like a baby. He breaks things. He shakes and breaks.

He breaks his parent's hearts. He has been arrested several times for assaulting his mother, who used to breastfeed him and change his nappies. It is the cruellest thing that a child can do to their own parents or even to other human beings.

Mother kicks him out of her house, but he never goes. He can't afford to stay away from his home, yet he destroys everything that is good in his home.

His mother opens a case against him, and they serve him with a protection order restricting him from entering his home.

Where will he ever go?

Even his parents fight about the boy.

The mother blames the father for not keeping the child away from the streets.

The father blames the mother for not taking the child to church when he was still young.

All this between the parents becomes a big problem and a big fight that they cannot run away from.

I ask myself if it is actually about what the father did or did not do.

I ask myself if it is actually about what the mother did or did not do.

This all is very disturbing.

The boy doesn't care about the well-being of his parents. He has been in prison more than once. His dark stains are more than one. His strains spread. He has an assault stain, GBV stain, breach of protection order and many other bad stains that I know about him. He is just a bad guy.

He is a bad guy. His father once gave him a whip, calling him to good behaviour. Whipping him to be a good boy again. The father gave up on this. The boy is damaged. There is a demon that controls the boy. The boy has been taken to rehab more than once but he's still a slave of his addiction. He still does all the bad things that he used to do before he attended rehab.

It is only because he still has access to the farm of the killing plant they sell him to serve his addiction. The farm is illegal but still produces a lot of harvest, and the police do not care about all this. All that they love to do is drive around with the state's vehicle shopping lists and do their personal stuff. Not attending to complaints. Not serving communities in need.

The issue of the boy is bigger than parenting. It is bigger than me. It is bigger than the understanding of the parents of the disappointed parents of the boy. They prepared everything for their child, but they couldn't save their child.

The mother prays to save her son, but it is rehab that is needed to make the boy white and pure again with no stains. The father calls the police to shut down all the labs where they manufacture and cook the drugs that snatched the innocent boy away from his parents and turned him into a druggie.

I tell this story with tears in my eyes, and I am trying to make sense of all this, but my mind reminds me that the world is upside down, so there is no use trying to understand it.

The Khuzwayo family will find peace, and Khulani will wash his stains and be an innocent boy again.

## The Corrupt Cop

The corrupt cop wears his full uniform just like every cop does when on duty. Warrant Lamla doesn't mess with anyone, but he is a dikkop. He is just a big head cop who doesn't care about anyone else, only his own pocket.

He's got no successes under his name. He last had success when he was still a constable in his early years in the police. He last wrote arrested in his pocketbook when he was still a constable.

He spends most of his time in taverns, drinking while on duty. No one ever notices. He is a liquor officer at uMlazi J section. He goes to all the taverns around uMlazi doing compliance inspections. He will find underage boys inside most of the tavern. He will say nothing, but he will ask for his bottle of whisky or some few bucks so that he can write all in order when he is rating that particular tavern that knows nothing about compliance.

He is a happy man.

He gets every bottle that he wants from the tavern owners. They dilute his brain with expensive alcohol and tell him not to pay attention to many problems. He does exactly that. He forgets that he made a pledge that he will always do what is right.

He always does compliance on Thursdays. There is this particular Thursday where he met his old friend that he last saw when they were still in college. They meet KwaMazithanqaze, a popular tavern that follows no rules. They just give him a bottle of brandy or whisky so that he can write everything in order in the checklist of his compliance.

He grabs his bottle and opens it immediately, something he doesn't usually do. He wants to celebrate his union with his college friend. He doesn't pay much attention to all the people around him or the cameras. He acts like he owns most of the taverns around uMlazi.

They drink with their friends. Captain Mdlambila. They toast to their survival as they are about to exit the service of the police without having any challenges.

He drinks like he is off duty, like his friend. He is the only one wearing a uniform. A lady takes some pictures while they drink. The lady is stealing the snaps, and no one is noticing. I am enjoying my water in my sober state, but I am waiting for an invitation to join the table with the most expensive bottle of the day.

Everyone praises the liquor officer for buying such an expensive bottle for his old friend. I only know this because I have been in the tavern for a while, waiting for some magic to happen, and nothing happens.

I get no taste of the expensive bottle. I call it the expensive bottle because it is not a popular drink for ordinary people like me. I can't afford such alcohol. My budget does not extend. This bottle is very expensive. It's more than I could pay - even for a necessary item like a cell phone.

I tease Warrant Lamla. I call him a corrupt cop.

Things didn't end well for me. He points at me with his gun and tells me to futsek. No one gave me a definition of futsek, but I did futsek because I didn't want to meet my ancestors at 20.

Afterwards I felt bad for insulting an old man like Warrant Lamla. I didn't mean to. I was just pulling his leg, and he took it personally. He took it personally because I found out later the following week that he was corrupt indeed.

The lady who was in the tavern as well on the day of the reunion between Warrant Lamla and Captain Mdlambila was a journalist who had been reporting on police corruption. The lady is a good journalist, but I didn't know her until then when she published an article about Warrant Lamla. The lady is an investigative journalist; she knows her story. She only pushes stories after she has completed her intense research on a subject and after she has gathered all the facts.

The lady journalist turns a cop into a prisoner. Things didn't end well for the liquor officer. He got suspended at work, with there is a slim chance he will get his job again.

Zilandele Police Station called most of the people who were in that tavern for interrogation. I was interrogated. I had nothing to hide because my misfortune of being kicked out of that tavern gave me a good statement.

I gave my statement without any fear or worries. I told the police that interrogated me straight that I did see Warrant Lamla having some drinks, but I didn't pay attention to what they were drinking, and I left early. I was in my sober state, so I am sure of what I am saying. I was released, and I never mentioned anything about being pointed at with a firearm. I felt like it was just an exploitative act of a policeman towards me as a harmless man in this harmful country with corrupt people.

I did not say a thing about being pointed with a gun because the pictures that the journalist published gave every detail about the story, and I did not want to say anything that might lead them to want me to go and testify against a corrupt man that they would release and might to come and fight with me.

I knew that the bottle would do justice for me unless the police were allowed to drink alcohol while on duty.

Warrant Lamla is now a toothless dog with no gun and a police uniform. The country we live in can be a better state if we can have more investigative journalists.

## The street kids

They know no boundaries. They ask for money. You give them. They don't stop. They ask for bread. You give them; they don't stop.

Suppose you're concerned, man, just like me. You ask yourself what these kids want. You can't give the correct answer even if you try to write down the list of the things they want. The following day, it will be a different story.

When you pass by them, they look at you. The way they look at you. You would swear they are looking for their parents in your plastic bags with your groceries. They are just trying to see what is inside the plastic so they can ask for it if you don't give them the R2 that they will ask you for.

They are the SARS of the streets. Taxing everyone that is carrying some plastic. These kids stay in the streets. They have bigger problems. They survive the nights sleeping in the streets without any protection from their parents.

I stopped feeling sorry for them when they snatched away my plastic with clothes that I bought for Christmas. Everyone was laughing about this matter.

Street SARS did me wrong.

These street kids eat what people give them and use the R2 they get to buy some drugs.

Street kids need no toys to play with, they need money. They need drugs to play with. They mean serious business. You run away from being taxed by them. You must make means to survive the streets. I give them what they want, and I try to friendzone them to be on the safe side, but they still look for what I got in my plastic bags and ask for their endless list as well.

Surviving the streets for most of these kids is very difficult, but most of them choose to stay in the streets because there are situations that they cannot stand in their homes.

Their fathers abandoned them.

Their mothers are drinking alcohol.

Their Uncles play uncomfortable games with them.

Others didn't want to listen to their own parents and left for the streets.

Their matter is serious.

It is a reflection of a sick society without proper medication to help the situation. Our municipalities are quiet about all this. They should be building shelters where they can lock these young people in and help them based on their situations.

Our nation is dead.

Issues of tax are becoming serious. Street taxers show no mercy. They tax everyone who is carrying a plastic bag. They tax a working man and a man with no job. They listen to no stories. They ask for something, and you give them nothing. Your day is coming.

For every plastic bag of the groceries that I buy, I save a few rands to give to the young people who stay in my streets. In every country, it is criminal not to submit a tax return when it is due. I pay R2 for every plastic bag that I carry.

## The Search Warrant

A search warrant is like a magic spell. It can open doors, justify home invasion, it can reveal the contents of locked filing cabinets and pop the locks on a suitcase. A search warrant can even lift skirts. It is a peeping tom. A piece of authorization by the state to go and check under the skirt of a woman. Whether the woman is happy or not the process proceeds. What interest does the state have with what's under the skirts of women? Are even the most private parts of our life policed?

The search warrant pulls up a woman's skirt and asks, "What is underneath your skirt?"

It says, "This skirt is very long. What are you hiding under it?"

uMaNdlovu, in justifying her choice for choosing a long skirt, responds, "I am very old for wearing short skirts."

The police officials say we want to see. They present her with a piece of paper authorising them to go and search what is underneath her skirt.

They want to see if the impimpi that told them that uMaNdlovu is selling drugs to the boys sleeping on the streets in Somerset is true or a lie.

MaNdlovu stares at the search warrant. She sees the official state signature.

She asks, "What business is it of the President that's under my skirt?"

The police ignore her question. They use the search warrant to pull her skirt up and down. They use it to turn her house into an untidy zone.

The search warrant has become a Peeping Tom. It is a sexual harasser. It is a vandal. The search warrant is criminal.

The police do not arrest the search warrant. They want to arrest MaNdlovu but first they need evidence.

MaNdlovu protests, "Hey you, when are you going to stop with this nonsense?"

The police officials say, "We've got a search warrant so better be patient with us and let us do our job so we can leave you early."

"Fuck your search warrant."

One police official says, "shut up MaNdlovu, your behaviour is not acceptable Mama."

MaNdlovu doesn't care.

"In my zone I will do as I like," MaPolisa speaks with authority, just like how their Minister addresses the police.

The police continue their search. The power of the search warrant faces off against the power of an angry township woman.

Who wins?

Despite the impimpi and the search warrant, the police officials find nothing, only the plastics that tell them that uMaNdlovu is somehow guilty of turning the boys in the streets dizzy and unruly when they need money to feed their demons fed by their addiction to drugs.

The police officials leave uMaNdlovu.

One police officer is frustrated.

He says, “drugs, DRUGS MaNdlovu, Drugs are killing our nation, Mama.”

As soon as MaDlovu’s floor is clear of police boots she gets rid of the plastics that nearly got her in the kraal of sinners and she jumps high and kiss the sky for defeating the purpose of the search warrant and ugly spies who direct the police to go to her house in Tantyi to search for drugs.

Every time the police arrive at her place she tells them that she only sells fruits and veggies.

As displayed in her shop.

“KwaMaNdlovu fresh fruits and veggies.”

## The Madman

The madman is going around ranting at the sky.

He is speaking but I do not know with whom.

This is why they call him a madman.

But I wonder if it's maybe sane to speak to the sky and mad to think the heavens can't hear us.

I am listening, trying to understand everything that the man says.

I stop and give my ears to his stories.

He says this and that.

I look at him and smile. He speaks some sense.

I am trying to understand what is going on with his mind.

I approach him but he starts at my proximity and heads off, his head bowed, as if he's now taking to the ground.

I suspect that his head is like a theatre, and each day is a performance in his head.

Tata!!!

I call him.

Tata is unbothered. Tata does not respond.

He carries on with his narration.

Yes, I killed him. I killed him! If I didn't kill him. He was going to kill me.

I approach again, and again, he runs away.

I ask him for his name. The madman is not giving his name.

I am thinking about my investigation. I am trying to understand what justice means in a country where the institutes meant to uphold it are themselves criminal.

Tata was already running in the streets even before I was born. I believe he might have some answers. Problem is he is mad.

Still I pursue him.

My desperation is taking my mind away.

The injustice of this country has taken everyone's mind away.

So I, clearly a madman, am running around after this madman trying to understand a country gone mad.

Who is the madman here?

## Box

I would love to believe that I'm free like everyone else.

Not even sure if they are free as humans.

I constantly find myself inside the box of my thoughts.

The final thought about this is that humans as thinking animals are not free.

So I am not either.

Free.

We are constantly boxing with our minds that keep reminding us about our failures.

We as people battle to let our grey and dark past slide.

We are struggling to find our way to our freedom.

We are struggling to find our way out of the dark box.

We are not free.

We have brains.

It is a human engine placed inside the head.

It is responsible for consciousness, memory and thoughts.

We have memories of our late loved ones stored in the human engine.

We are encased in a box of our own thoughts.

Bad or good.

It is thinking that puts us behind the locked doors of Redman Castle.

It is thinking that makes us cry.

It is our good memories that make us smile.

It is the human engine that puts us in our unique boxes with dark colours.

We are locked inside these boxes with locks that have missing keys.

Locks with no keys will keep us inside dark boxes forever.

Life of living with a brain puts one in a position of a stressed shoe with no partner.

Under my mother's bed.

The shoe is so lonely without its partner, and it looks sad.

Yet there is a piece of art of a beautiful family of stones with beautiful smiles.

It is a family.

I found myself praying to God.

God, can you make the Shoemaker make a partner for the lonely shoe.

Amen.

It was a morning prayer, but the lines were in favour of the lonely shoe.

Arms unfolded, and I forgot to ask God to protect me from witchcraft, and I keep dreaming about seashells.

In my dreams, they appear as humans.

They speak.

They smile.

They cry.

These shells are so me, but they overwork me.

I cannot stop thinking about them.

The man in a black suit.

Ready to be captured by the cameras and lie in front of the nation.

He has nothing to lose, so he spins a bullshit story about the money under the mattress in phala phala farm.

All the oumas and oupas in ANC shirts say it is okay to say nothing about the millions stashed under the mattress.

We are swimming and about to drown in shit as a nation.

Phalaza Ramaphosa is lying.

Sies, it is fucking disgusting.

The issue is pressing Mr. President.

The nation is frozen images waiting for your address about the unbankable moolah man of law.

The Collapse of Democracy.

The collapsed Eskom.

The smell that comes out from the pothole and donkey restaurant in the high street is better, than the never coming promised service delivery.

Long walk to service delivery.

Potholes and donkeys are a perfect combination.

The potholes even inspire the nation to name their businesses.

Pity for the car drivers; there's only one way to make it home.

It is through the wounded roads with un-patchable scars.

The doctors trusted by the fooled voters are criminals.

All they do is steal from the load shedded nation.

It is hard for them to see that they are being fooled without the lights on.

Phalaza Ramaphosa is lying.