JUST LIKE HOME

BY

PIETER-DIRK UYS
PIETER-DIRK UYS was born in Cape Town in 1945 of Afrikaner-Jewish parentage, thus he ‘belongs to both chosen people.’ After graduating from the University of Cape Town Drama School he attended the London Film School. On his return to South Africa in 1973 he joined the original Space Theatre in Cape Town where over a decade he became noted for his independent-minded scripts. A quick worker, Uys managed to outwit censorship controls with some two dozen works, including *Selle Ou Storie* (1974), *Karnaval* (1974) and *Die Van Aardes van Grootoort* (1977), which became one of the longest running plays in South African theatre history. Three of his scripts (in Anglicised versions) are published by Penguin as *Paradise is Closing Down and Other Plays* (1989).

Uys has alternated production of his straight plays with writing – and usually appearing in – his own cabarets and revues. A collection of his early humour, *No One’s Died Laughing*, was published by Penguin in 1986. One of these shows, *Adapt or Dye*, which played in updated versions through most of the 80s, saw the arrival and development of his female character, Evita Bezuidenhout – the National Party ambassador to the fictitious ‘homeland’ of Bapetikosweti. With Evita and her family he has performed over 2500 times to people of all colours and cultures, always in ‘non-racial’ venues, throughout South Africa. Uys has also toured as South Africa’s equivalent of Dame Edna Everage in the U.K., Canada, Australia, Holland and Germany, opening with her at the Edinburgh Festival in the same week as *Just Like Home* in 1989. Spinoffs of his satirical entertainment include feature films, videos, two documentaries for the BBC and Evita’s biography, *A Part Hate, A Part Love* (1990). Many of Uys’s sayings have entered the vernacular, a language which he is uniquely able to reflect and exploit.

*Just Like Home* was written in 1988 as a vehicle for the remarkable Cape Town actress, Shaleen Surtie-Richards, who played the role of Cathy throughout the work’s run and to considerable acclaim in South Africa and abroad. The programme included this note:

‘You always have a perfect picture of somewhere you thought you were once happy – and you probably were in between hours of worrying. Somewhere it’s always perfect and quiet and warm, because you’re not there. Maybe because it doesn’t even exist.’

The play’s first ‘home’ was the ironically named The Laager Theatre at the Market, redecorated for the occasion – fittingly so, as Uys’s *Van Aardes* had originally opened the venue a dozen years before.

Reaction to *Just Like Home* has in general been highly favourable at home and abroad. During the King’s Head run Irving Wardle’s review was typical:

‘Uys’s play and production represent a notable triumph of Common humanity over lacerating experience. He knows the political crimes that have made these people what they are. He knows the landscape of exile, where identities are propped up by reliving the past to the extent of play-acting. His theatrical achievement is to bring these rancorously self-encapsulated victims out into the fresh air, and to place their obsessive melodramas in the wider context of comedy . . . .’
CHARACTERS

CATHY SEPTEMBER, a Cape Coloured woman who has lived in London for twelve years.

HECTOR PRINCE, a young white South African exile who is an actor.

GUPTA, an Indian man who runs the restaurant where Cathy worked and lives in the room above.

TREVOR JURIES, a young Coloured man from Cape Town just arrived illegally in the U.K.

The setting is Cathy’s small flat in London NW1, autumn in the late 1980s.

JUST LIKE HOME opened in The Laager at the Market Theatre, Johannesburg, on 7 March 1989, an independent P D Uys Production, directed by the author, with the following cast:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Actor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CATHY</td>
<td>Shaleen Surtie-Richards</td>
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<tr>
<td>HECTOR</td>
<td>Robert Finlayson</td>
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<tr>
<td>GUPTA</td>
<td>Royston Stoffels</td>
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<tr>
<td>TREVOR</td>
<td>Paul Savage</td>
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The production was presented at the Edinburgh Festival in August of that year, followed by a run at the King’s Head, Islington, during October-November. A return season began at the Market in May 1990, redirected by Lynne Maree, with Shaleen Surtie-Richards and Russell Copley (Hector), Kurt Egelhof (Gupta) and Soli Philander (Trevor).

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P.D. Uys Productions
PO Box 175
Darling 7345
ACT ONE

CATHY is sitting in a chair with her back to us. She is gagged. Her hands are bound. There is a pillowcase over her head.

HECTOR plays a character here: an Afrikaner policeman grilling her.

HECTOR: ‘Black bastard! Four innocent people you killed! A little girl whose birthday was going to be tomorrow, won’t be having candles on her cake because she’s lying in the mortuary in little pieces – because of you, you terrorist animal!

(Cathy mumbles. Squirms. He whips off the pillowcase.)

Shut up when I’m talking to you! Two old ladies were out buying food for their cat and an old dog called Rambo, who will now not be fed or stroked ever again, because of you, you communist murderer!

(More grunts from Cathy.)

Shit man, one more attempt to escape and it will be the end of you, I promise. Okay. Okay. Okay. Then there was also the dead black man splattered in so many bits and pieces against the toothpaste adverts in the supermarket, that not even when they scraped him off that Colgate smile, will he fill an ice cream cone, and that’s all thanks to you. Your own people, not just us! You’re not just a bastard, you’re a fucking stupid bastard!

(She squirms.)

Ja, it was lucky for you most of the white kids who were usually playing the computer games in the Valhalla Arcade was on Sunset Beach windsurfing. It was lucky for you most of the schoolkids that are usually there buying sweets from the shop were not buying sweets at the shop because they were on school holidays. Why are you so
lucky? Are you aware of your blessings? Are you grateful? I can’t hear you, you ungrateful piece of black rubbish!

(He ‘hits’ her.)

Because without your incredible luck you’d be even more guilty of mass murder, not just the cold-blooded massacre of three innocent white citizens and one unemployed black! How old are you? Hey? . . .

(He falters.)

Is that right?

(Checks his script on the sofa.)

Ja. (Reads) ‘How old are you? Sixteen? Do you have many friends?

(He changes his tactics to smooth and intimate.)

Do you have many friends? Did they help you place that bomb? Trust me. I won’t even remember their names. We’ll just refer to them as anonymous associates. Hey? Ja, man, we’ll tell the court it was their influence on you, a child. Sixteen? Maybe fifteen? You can trust me . . . ?’ Then you spit at me.

(She struggles and grunts.)

Oh . . .

(He undoes her gag.)

CATHY: I’m suffocating!

(She spits and gasps for breath.)

Sis man, that rag tastes like Brasso! God, you know, I suffer from asthma, man! Untie my hands! You’re stopping the blood from getting to my heart! This is damn ridiculous . . . .

(He unties her hands.)

HECTOR: ‘You fucking little terrorist . . . .’

CATHY: No, come on man, Hector man! This language is too terrible! All those f-words in a row! Who speaks like this?

HECTOR: Police.

CATHY: Not on my television.
HECTOR: This is a white security policeman torturing a black suspect.

CATHY: Well, I’ve never heard language like that.

(She goes off to the bedroom.)

HECTOR: Then you’re lucky.

(She returns with an armful of clothing. Sorts the clothes as she talks.)

CATHY: I’ve been here in the U.K. for over twelve years, my boy, and I’ve never heard any policeman say things like that!

HECTOR: Police here are different.

CATHY: Sis, man, you call this a good part?

HECTOR: Later my character puts electrodes on the kid’s you-know-what . . . .

CATHY: No details, Hector, I’ve heard enough.

HECTOR: But the torture makes him reveal the real suspects.

CATHY: And what are these suspects suspected of doing?

HECTOR: I don’t know.

CATHY: If you don’t know what happens in the story, how can you play a part?

HECTOR: This is my only big scene with dialogue.

CATHY: Horrible.

(Pause. HECTOR waits for her opinion. She packs the boxes.)
HECTOR: So what do you think?

CATHY: You sound just like a Boer.

HECTOR: Good. The director’s Welsh and needs some background input from me.

CATHY: Too heavy with the Rrrrr’s.

HECTOR: I agree, but the dialect coach demands heavy Rrrrr’s.

CATHY: What’s that?

HECTOR: He helps me with the Afrikaans accent. Here. Listen, he’s doing it on a cassette for me.

(He puts the walkman earphones onto her head. She listens with growing distaste. She speaks loudly.)

CATHY: People here make a decent living teaching actors who speak good English to do horrible South African? I should get the job.

HECTOR: It’s a very competitive business.

CATHY: (loudly). Where’s this dialogue coach from?

HECTOR: Blackpool.

CATHY: (loudly). A black man from Johannesburg?

HECTOR: No, he’s British!

CATHY: Ja, that’s why the Rrrr’s are too heavy.

(Hands him back the walkman.)

But Hector love, you know the right sound.
HECTOR: I can’t remember.

CATHY: You heard enough of it in the Army.

HECTOR: Only for a couple of months.

CATHY: You need this British dialect man to remind you of the horrible sounds that made you run away from home? And then he gets it wrong!

HECTOR: There are very few British actors who can do a good South African accent.

CATHY: Ja, I’m telling you, man, too heavy with the Rrrrr’s.

HECTOR: It really pisses me off when they do all these TV plays and films about South Africa and they can’t even get the accent right.

CATHY: At least their facts are right, Hector. No one here just wants a lesson in the South African accent.

HECTOR: And I thought you never watched TV films about South Africa?

CATHY: That’s right, because I find the phony Afrikaans accent too ridiculous. Come, help me with these boxes.

HECTOR: I got a letter from a friend in Cape Town this morning. Crazy . . . all these cuttings . . . the ANC flag flying over the City Hall, marches, a new era. Says it’s like the Berlin Wall coming down . . . crazy. He sent me this cassette. Listen . . . you’ll crrrrryyyy . . .

CATHY: I’ll put all the things for you to take home to your flat in these boxes.

HECTOR: Don’t you want to hear something ‘rrreally South Effrrrrrican?
CATHY: You know I can’t stand Boeremusiek!
(She holds up the gag he used on her.)
No sis man, Hector man, how could you put this horrible Brasso rag over my mouth? Go put it in the little broom cupboard in the kitchen where you found it!
(He takes it and exits. Enters during following: She moves boxes around. Packs clothes.)
The last time I watched a film about South Africa was over twelve years ago. I was still working for the Sharps. We were in Belsize Park; just moved into that flat. New carpets were down and the mess was just horrible. Then Mrs Sharp organises a dinner party for other South African exiles, my dear, and I have to suddenly make bobotie ‘like you used to make back in Cape Town, Cathy’ – we never once had bobotie in all those years I worked for the Sharps in Cape Town – always some fancy French or Italian or Chinese food. But now suddenly everybody’s here as a so-called refugee who nearly brought down the government back home – nearly, but not quite, you know? I never thought I’d meet so many people here who fought apartheid there. Pity they didn’t stay at home and do it properly.

(HECTOR is listening to his walkman.)

HECTOR: This tape is amazing . . . .

CATHY: So anyway, here they come, all these exiles looking as if they’d just come from the hairdresser in Sea Point and eating my Afrikaans bobotie, like it was manna from the promised land – and the whole flat is such a mess, still covered in little white threads from the new carpet.
As true as God, that night I could’ve killed Barbara Sharp.
(She sits on her over-full suitcase but can’t close it.)
Then someone switched on the TV because there was this documentary film about the Cape. God, Hector, and there was Table Mountain and us coloured people in Adderley Street selling flowers and all talking like my family and friends and hell, it made me so upset.
HECTOR: (loudly). You really want to be homesick?

CATHY: Not homesick; just angry – me, standing in the door to the kitchen with my apron on in London England, and the Master and Madam and their fancy expat pals watching our old hometown and bitching about the good times they had making money there and then making such horrible comments about those they left behind. Superior like they were never part of it once. Hector, I’m telling you, I heard the cock crow three times!

HECTOR: A wildlife film?

CATHY: Unplug your blerrie brains and listen to me! *(She pulls off his earphones.)*

I’m telling you, man: there it was – Langa and Soweto and the schoolkids marching in 76.

HECTOR: Before my time.

CATHY: Oh no, I know your date of birth, my boy? You can’t fool me. Capricorn!

HECTOR: 1976?

CATHY: You were still at school.

HECTOR: I remember the teachers’ fear – first time I saw a grown-up frightened. We heard the blacks would come and panga us to pieces in the classroom!

CATHY: How terrible for you children.

HECTOR: Listen, we planned to put a trail of 20c pieces on the ground to lead them to old Hellcat Hewitt the maths teacher, so that his throat would definitely be cut . . . .
CATHY: Shame.

HECTOR: . . . . . he was an old bugger, Hellcat Hewitt.

CATHY: Anyway, so I made up my mind then and there: why must I sit here and be forced to watch terrible things happening there? Remember the good things, Cathy, I said to myself. So I did and I’m much healthier for it.

HECTOR: I still wish you’d stay and watch me in this! We can have bobotie and Cape wine!

CATHY: And I must sit here and eat my dinner and watch you put electrical gadgets on a boy’s testicles? No sis man, Hector man, I’ll just vomit.

HECTOR: But I won’t be phony! Cathy, I can give it all that stuff of real life! I’ve been there, Cathy, I know!

CATHY: Shame Hector, did they do that to you too?

HECTOR: ‘Okay you fucking black bitch – up against the wall, this is a raid!’

(He pushes her against the sofa.)

CATHY: Hey hey hey, listen here, for your information I’m not a black bitch! I’m a coloured person! And I’m sorry, man, I just don’t like this part, really I don’t . . . .

(A loud knocking on the door.)

Now see what you’ve done . . . .

(Calls down to passage.)

It’s okay, Gupta, my door’s open . . . .

(GUPTA enters concerned.)
GUPTA: And what is going on down here?

CATHY: The boy is just acting for me . . . .

(She exits to bedroom. GUPTA comes into the room.)

GUPTA: That is not the sort of language one wants to encourage in this area, Hector Prince. Black people also live here. You must choose your insults more carefully. ‘Fucking black bitch against the wall’ – with apologies to Cathleen – is not the sort of investment towards a peaceful weekend.

HECTOR: It’s only for a TV film, Gupta!

GUPTA: Violence resides in this neighbourhood in the guise of calm. It needs only one of those words to spark the dried bush of racial war. You should know that, coming from a racist state.

HECTOR: Gupta, I will not be drawn into another pointless argument about my roots. So please don’t waste your breath trying to provoke me.

(He plugs in his walkman and listens.)

GUPTA: Provoke? My goodness me, how you make me laugh. You call my friend and colleague here a ‘fucking black bitch’ with respect, Cathleen – and you then announce that I am the one who provokes? This is typical of your race, Hector Prince. So used to being the overlord that any mild form of criticism is regarded as provocation.

(CATHY has re-entered, sorting things.)

CATHY: He can’t hear with all that in his head. Stop it now, Gupta, you two always fight. Not today, please!

GUPTA: Oh yes, Cathleen . . . today is a special day.
CATHY: Good. I’ve found all the spices for the bobotie: the djirra, barishap and koljanna. Will you take them with you to the Taj Mahal?

(She exits off to the kitchen. GUPTA moves in on HECTOR who sits, pages through a stack of magazines.)

GUPTA: You might be pleased to hear, which I’m sure you can, that your racist Afrikaan dish called ‘bobotie’ is now legitimately on the menu of a decent Indian Eating Establishment in Northwest London. You may inform your superiors that your infiltration of our very respected cuisine has been successful.

HECTOR: It’s not that Cathy is a great cook, Gupta, or that her bobotie is world-famous in North London. What really bugs you is the fact that she is an independent woman. It’s a hard pill to swallow for an old chauvinist snob like yourself.

GUPTA: Your verbal sticks and stones will not silence me, my young friend. Experience is my guiding light, compassion my compass.

(CATHY enters with a small packet.)

CATHY: Stop fighting now. Here Gupta. Keep it dry. I looked all over for these ingredients and found some in Nottinghill Gate. Still, it doesn’t even smell like the stuff from Rashid’s little shop. Shame . . . .

HECTOR: Wonderful smell . . . What’s happened to Rashid?

GUPTA: Thatcher’s Britain finally caught up with Rashid. A Safeway Supermarket came and ate his curry shop up. Besides, Rashid was pining too much and went back to Uganda.

HECTOR: And tomorrow there’ll be another Idi Amin and Rashid will be back here knocking on our door.
GUPTA: He will not knock on your door, be assured. He will be welcome to knock on mine.

CATHY: No more fighting, you two! Gupta, you want some cool drink? Hector brought me some fancy little farewell cakes from Harrods.

GUPTA: I am not hot, Cathleen.

CATHY: The cool drink’s not cold, man.

(*She exits to the kitchen. GUPTA sits. Glances across out of the window.*)

GUPTA: This so-called Indian Summer is neither Indian nor Summer; so English, so quaint. Now why don’t they call it an English Autumn, which it is – but no: Indian Summer – which is isn’t.

HECTOR: Who teach you English, Gupta?

GUPTA: Who taught you English, Afrikaan!

(*CATHY enters with cooldrink.*)

CATHY: Gupta!

GUPTA: Yes, yes, Cathleen, I must prepare to go to the restaurant now.

HECTOR: It will be strange there without you, Cathy.

GUPTA: My goodness me, yes – we’ve all got so accustomed to you being there.

CATHY: Now don’t gang up on me, you two. We said: today we wouldn’t get depressed and tearful and damn pathetic. Life goes on and so do I. Gupta, you want Hector to help you upstairs with your box now?
GUPTA: But you’ve already given me your television.

CATHY: Ag, it’s just a few things of mine I thought you might like. The rest is going to charity.

GUPTA: Surely, this is too much? Thank you, but I’m still trying to find space up in my room. Let me do that first.

HECTOR: You couldn’t swing a cat in your room, Gupta. Rather let’s give this stuff to those people living under the bridge.

CATHY: Yes, those poor homeless people, shame.

GUPTA: White people.

HECTOR: But really, you could get quite a lot for these things if you put an ad in the local paper, Cathy.

CATHY: Now don’t complain: I’ve left you my nice kettle and my radio cassette player.

HECTOR: My walkman does it all.

GUPTA: Also makes tea?

HECTOR: They’re working at it. We’ve got a kettle at the flat, Cathy.

CATHY: What else can I give you, love?

(He looks around at her things.)

HECTOR: Nothing . . . really.

CATHY: Take the kettle, man! See which one makes the best tea – mine or yours.
HECTOR: Okay, I’ll take yours. I don’t think those white people under the bridge have enough plugs, Gupta.

GUPTA: And then you could get a lot of money for the kettle you reject if you put an ad in the local paper.

(He exits on a triumphant note.)

HECTOR: I won’t be provoked.

(CATHY laughs. She is busy packing a cardboard box.)

CATHY: Cardboard never changes, hey? When me and my sister Eileen were your age, we had to put everything we owned in cardboard boxes. Cardboard boxes piled up on the pavement outside; cardboard boxes being loaded into old Beasley’s wagon, still drawn by his half-dead horses, Milly and Grace. Most of the familiar places round us were already rubble. But my pa kept saying: ‘I know those whites. They will never throw us out of our home.’ But they did. So out we and our boxes went into the suburbs. Unpacked the boxes. Then the Law came and ate up our new neighbourhood and back came old Beasley, this time with an old truck.

HECTOR: And Milly and Grace?

CATHY: Dogmeat by now, shame. Back went the boxes and there trekked the September family and its cardboard treasures – over the sanddunes of the Cape Flats. Then luckily someone died in Athlone: out with the cardboard coffin, in with the cardboard boxes, up with the cardboard dividers, making one room four. Yes, that’s where the family still is. In a half-cardboard house with an outside brick lavatory.

HECTOR: And it’s all my fault!
CATHY: Silly boy. The point I’m making is right here: cardboard boxes. Every time I move, the boxes seem to get less, but the belongings get more. Hey Hector, what do you think happens in those cardboard boxes when we switch off the lights?

*(She laughs with him. A coughing fit. He slaps her on the back gently.)*

*(Pause.)*

HECTOR: What about my Courtroom Scene?

CATHY: No hell man, I’ve got things to do. Go upstairs and get Gupta to help you.

HECTOR: How can I say all those things to him?

CATHY: You can say them to me, but not to him? How come?

HECTOR: You’re more understanding. He’s . . . . Indian.

CATHY: He was young like you back in India. He also left home because he was disgusted with the way things were going there. Ask him about his understanding.

HECTOR: Oh please, what happened in India makes South Africa look like a picnic.

*(He tries to close her bulging suitcase.)*

CATHY: You go and tell him that.

HECTOR: And then he constantly points a finger at me!

CATHY: You two are like a cat and a wild dog . . . . Will you be wearing SAP uniform again?
HECTOR: Depends on when it’s set.

CATHY: Khaki? Camouflage?

HECTOR: It’s happening now.

CATHY: Blue.

HECTOR: Not camouflage?

CATHY: Police blue, man. Anyone who watches TV will tell you that.

HECTOR: Which, of course, you never watch.

CATHY: No, I never watch.

(Pause.)

They jump on you when you’re not ready to run. Usually at the end of the News, just after you’ve seen the Princess of Wales wearing something new and gorgeous – God, I love those girls – and you’re still smiling at the Queen Mother, when suddenly Table Mountain, tin shacks and the young policemen in blue. Young. Pretty. Like you.

HECTOR: I wonder if I should dye my hair for this part . . . .

CATHY: Polite young Christian cops from good homes, brought up to love God and their neighbour, but not in the same church. Fat white Boere boys. By that time I’m ice-cold all over. . . .

HECTOR: Those Boere boys eat too much red meat.

CATHY: . . . can’t even remember if it was the Princess of Wales . . . .

HECTOR: . . . drink too much beer . . . .

CATHY: . . . or the Duchess of York that made me so happy.
HECTOR: Fat arses, fat bellies.

CATHY: Not all Boere boys. Some like you, more English than the Brits.

HECTOR: I’m not fat . . . .

CATHY: Boere boys beating left and right with their quirts like they’re trying to put out a fire. I even once recognised the street where we eventually grew up in Athlone . . . barricades over the road . . . where our dog Phyllis used to sleep in the sun and stop the bus. The trees looked so big on TV. We never thought they’d grow in that sandy earth, what with the wind always blowing them skew. But on the TV they looked strong and full of life. Even the houses. But I couldn’t make them out properly. The camera was running and wobbling along the pavement after some kids, they were throwing stones and rolling burning tyres at the police. Young young kids and young young cops. God, that rioting must’ve messed up so many pretty little gardens, with kids jumping over the walls to hide from other kids among the dahlias and the honeysuckle. And who would’ve thought they would grow in the sand?

But walls don’t keep out violence: boots and blood there among the sweet peas and the Christmas roses. Hell, it broke my heart.

(Pause.)

HECTOR: You’ll miss London, Cathy.

CATHY: I’ll miss my friends. And my kettle.

HECTOR: I still don’t understand how you can go back.

CATHY: Things are different now.

HECTOR: You reckon?
CATHY: Your cuttings say so.

HECTOR: You don’t believe all that propaganda.

CATHY: Let’s rather listen to that tape you got from home.

HECTOR: No, no, don’t hide in the walkman! I can’t imagine after twelve years here in the Real World, why you would volunteer to go back to that... . . . cage!

CATHY: All right, I’ll listen to your Courtroom Scene. Just don’t call me names. And no more f-words!

HECTOR: You’re free, Cathy! You belong here now. You’re happy! You’re mad!

CATHY: None of that is in this script.

HECTOR: Do you know, after three years, I still wake up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat.

CATHY: Say Johnny-Jimmy-Lancelot . . . .

HECTOR: I’m back in Detention Barracks and that staff sergeant with the moustache . . . .

CATHY: Handelbars Hesselton?

HECTOR: You remember? He comes for me because I refuse to use a rifle on kids. So I shoot the fucker in his eye . . . .

CATHY: Ag no, shame man . . . .

HECTOR: . . . . but no human blood comes out, except thick spurts of red stinking . . . .

HECTOR: . . . . and I run, slipping and sliding in the slime and it’s like running slow-motion over wet corpses. And I get to the airport and the plane’s ready to go and I hand in my passport – but it’s not a real passport.

CATHY: What then?

HECTOR: It’s that little book of recipes from the Cape you gave me.

CATHY: My bobotie strikes again.

HECTOR: And I’m trapped, Cathy . . . I’m trapped by their laughter and the beatings and every time I just blink my eyes a gun goes off and another child falls crippled . . . .

CATHY: A nightmare.

HECTOR: . . . . and here you are wanting to leave this and go back to that?

CATHY: Not that!

HECTOR: Giving up!

CATHY: I gave it up over twelve years ago. Now I want it back.

HECTOR: But why?

CATHY: It’s my home!

HECTOR: This is your home!

CATHY: The mountains, the city, the Afrikaans language, the hatred and the hope: the whole blerrie catastrophe. Look! These British cardboard boxes didn’t hold sunshine and fresh air. They’re not full of the smell of apples and smoked snoek . . . .
HECTOR: . . . and petrol bombs!

CATHY: These nice little British boxes are all so polite, so decent and full of fair play. Not like our Boere boxes: full of skiet, skop and donner.

HECTOR: Yes. There they kill you with guns!

CATHY: And here I’ll be killed with kindness. It’s a long time since I’ve heard the dogs barking at me. I miss that too.

HECTOR: Well, I think you’re out of your cottonpickin’ mind.

CATHY: Listen here, Hector Prince. You’re standing in line for political asylum in Britain, because they tortured you in the South African Army. And the only parts you can get here are playing South African policemen and soldiers, who do to others like you say they did to you – and you call me out of my cottonpicking mind? Let’s point no loaded fingers around here, my boy.

(He has lit up a cigarette.)

And don’t smoke!

HECTOR: I won’t spill the ash!

CATHY: You want to smoke, you go outside. Like always. This is still a smokeless zone!

HECTOR: (in Italian accent). Katherina September, sometimes you’re a Fascist!

(He exits.)

CATHY: And sometimes, you’re a blerrie fool!

HECTOR: (off). I heard that!

(CATHY takes a packet of money -- £10 notes -- out of her airline travelbag and sorts it on the table.)
CATHY: This is for a dishwasher for my sister Eileen. This is for a down payment on a little place of my own. And this is to take us all out to a Welcome Home Cathy celebration at the Goldfinger Lounge. Wonder if that place still exists . . . hell, we had such a jol there in the old days . . . at the Goldfinger Lounge . . . .

(There is an altercation outside in the hallway.)

GUPTA: (off). No, no – not so close to where I live and breathe. You can smoke in the street and in the rest of the world where you think you’re in charge, but not here!

HECTOR: (off). They’re my lungs, Gupta!

(He enters with his cigarette.)

God, that man’s starting on me again!

(Gupta enters.)

GUPTA: No, no, I’m not starting; I started when I met you three years ago. My air is here, Hector Prince. I pay for it. I like it clean and smokefree. What you people do to the ozone layer I cannot control, but this layer is mine. Why do you let this boy smoke on my staircase, Cathleen?

CATHY: Also my staircase, Gupta, until tomorrow. Hector, go and smoke in the sun outside, man!

(He exits.)

HECTOR: Fascista!

GUPTA: Now what does that mean? Coming from one of them?

CATHY: He’s struggling here, because he wouldn’t become one of them!
GUPTA: You mean, ran away from a fully-laden table with five-star room service? Well, my instinct still warns me, Cathleen, that boy could be spying for their Embassy.

CATHY: Not that nonsense again! Who would now spy on me?

GUPTA: I would not allow even a caged South African bird in my room in case it carried a bug.

CATHY: Gupta, you’re a suspicious old bugger!

(She laughs. He has discovered all her money on the table.)

GUPTA: And all this money lying naked? Are you senile now, Cathleen September? Did I not educate you over the years to protect your cash safely in the bank?

CATHY: Ja, which I did, but today I closed my account and withdrew all my money for tomorrow.

GUPTA: Unpractical and careless in my eyes.

CATHY: But in my eyes my money looks so good and real, all piled up and close enough for me to stroke it.

GUPTA: But why did you not organise travellers cheques? That is the grown-up way to do it.

CATHY: Maybe, but when it comes to money, I’m still a child.

GUPTA: And if you get robbed?

CATHY: Who? You? Hector?

GUPTA: Your savings, dear Cathleen. The future.
CATHY: Ja, for each of these £10 notes, I get over R40 there. Hell, I’m going home to Athlone a rich lady.

GUPTA: Not if the thief gets here first.

CATHY: Ag, stop fussing, man! You’re worse than a nagging husband.

GUPTA: That is the nicest thing you could accuse me of.

(He studies the cakes keenly.)
Ah, some lovely little cakes . . . .

CATHY: Ja, shame, I’ll really miss Hector with his damn cigarettes and his funny opinions. He helped me to relax. Some old horrible habits die hard. Sometimes when it would slip out, he would say in his actor’s way: ‘And who’s your Master?’

GUPTA: To have to call that boy Master?

CATHY: That very first time he wandered into the Taj Mahal and ordered my curry, and then specially came ‘backstage’ as he called it, to compliment the cook – and there I stood all hot and sweaty and he said right out: ‘Which part of Cape Town are you from?’ as if you couldn’t tell from just looking at me, and all I heard myself say was, ‘Ag Master, I want to go home . . . .’ We both cried. Shame.

GUPTA: Emotion in the kitchen is never good for the food.

(Peeps at the cakes, hinting.)
A nice little chocolate one in the corner here.

CATHY: Dearie me, I hadn’t cried once here in the Northern Hemisphere. I was happy that Hector Prince made me cry, at last, from my heart.

GUPTA: We all know your curry makes all types weep, Cathleen.
CATHY: Maybe it was the curry. Ja, let’s be English about it, Gupta. No emotion. Just a stiff... what’s it?

GUPTA: Stiff upper lip, yes. Discipline, self-control.

CATHY: My God, with a stiff upper lip all the Brits should sound like Cape Coloureds without teeth! 'Ja, jou ma se ma se ma...'

(They laugh at her demonstration.)
With a stiff upper lip you can have a little chocolate cake if you want one, hey!

(Pause.)

GUPTA: Cathleen, just now when you referred to me as a nagging husband... .

CATHY: You’re a fusspot.

GUPTA: A fusspot, yes; but like a nagging husband? Surely not.

CATHY: No, not like a nagging husband. I lied. Just a blerrie fusspot!

GUPTA: Ah. All lies are bad, Cathleen.

CATHY: Now don’t nag, Gupta. Sometimes a small lie can be of great help.

(Pause.)

GUPTA: So, you say you’re happy about going home?

CATHY: I’ve never been happier in my life.

(Pause.)

No, really, I’m fine.

(Pause.)

GUPTA: So am I.
CATHY: Yes, you look happy.

(Pause.)

GUPTA: It’s been six years, Cathleen.

CATHY: Over six.

GUPTA: Such dear and close companions.
CATHY: No man Gupta, man.

GUPTA: I will always be grateful to you. You found me that room upstairs.
CATHY: No man, it’s okay Gupta.

GUPTA: Every day working together and me living just a headspace above you.

HECTOR: (off). Smokeless Zone comin’ in!

(HECTOR enters.)

HECTOR: Satisfied? I blew all my smoke into your neighbour’s letterbox.

CATHY: Hector, for God’s sake just act out something.

HECTOR: Gupta, this TV play I’m doing might interest you.

GUPTA: Highly unlikely. Cathleen, I must go to work now.

CATHY: Oh, yes, but . . . .

GUPTA: I’ll be back again at four.

CATHY: Just in time for tea.
GUPTA: Ah and some of the little cakes?

CATHY: But have that little chocolate cake, man!

HECTOR: It’s an incredibly powerful courtroom scene.

CATHY: We can have tea and as many of the chocolate cakes as you like, Gupta. For old times sake.

GUPTA: I hate old times.

HECTOR: It’ll only take a few minutes.

GUPTA: What is it this time? Another Afrikaan policeman?

CATHY: Yes, he does it very well.

HECTOR: This time it’s a very complex character, Gupta.

GUPTA: Nice change from the last effort.

HECTOR: The one about Namibia? That sergeant was just a simple psychopath.

GUPTA: While this one is of course a complex psychopath?

HECTOR: Give me some feedback on the Namibian play. You saw it?

GUPTA: Cathleen invited me to watch it with her.

HECTOR: It’s so difficult for me to be objective.

GUPTA: That, I thought, was the problem.

(Pause.)
HECTOR: I won’t let him provoke me. I’ll just come through the door like on page 40.

*(Puts the script in GUPTA’S lap. He exits to passage.)*

GUPTA: There is still so much left unsaid between us, Cathleen.

CATHY: God, if you make me cry here and now, I’ll never stop and I want to look like a person when I get to Cape Town tomorrow, not a wet old Kleenex.

GUPTA: You know what I want to say and cannot . . . .

HECTOR: *(off).* Are you ready?

CATHY: Please, let the boy show off a bit. Help me to forget just for a minute, why I so much want to stay here near you . . . .

HECTOR: *(off).* Someone read the first line!

GUPTA: *(reads).* ‘The Court will Rise.’ What nonsense is this?

CATHY: We rise, Gupta. Okay Hector, we’re up!

*(HECTOR enters, acting accordingly. They watch him amazed. He then explains.)*

HECTOR: There’s been an interdict against the Minister of Law and Order. Allegations against me of torture and the assault of young schoolkids in detention, you know, the usual.

GUPTA: The usual, yes.

HECTOR: I’m handcuffed and I’m shoved into the dock. Okay, Gupta, read the Prosecutor.

GUPTA: With pleasure.
HECTOR: Cathy, be the high school student. He’s seventeen.

CATHY: Bit young for me . . . . ‘Sipho Molifi’?

GUPTA: I think we should really have a heart to heart talk before you get onto your aeroplane, Cathleen.

CATHY: Read, Gupta!

GUPTA: *(reads).* ‘Sipho Molifi? You say you were interrogated by the accused for six days, beaten and made to do lengthy physical exercises? Please speak up . . . ’ Who speaks now?

CATHY: Hang on, man, I’m trying to see where I must read . . . *(Reads)* ‘They asked me why I had told the doctor that they assaulted me. That man . . . ’ *That Man?* *(HECTOR indicates himself.)* ‘That Man, he slapped me on my face . . . ’

HECTOR: ‘Not true!’

GUPTA: ‘Silence in Court! Proceed!’

CATHY: Proceed? Oh me . . . . ‘He threatened to kill my parents and to kill me. He said they would cut a policeman’s neck with a bottle and that they will say it is me who did it . . . ’

HECTOR: ‘Lies!’

GUPTA: ‘Silence in Court! Proceed!’ Is this all I say?

HECTOR: Shhhhh.

CATHY: ‘They kicked me and slapped me and swore at me continuously.’ All those f-words, I’m sure.
GUPTA: No f-words in my court. Proceed, Cathleen!

HECTOR: Don’t wreck it now, Gupta.

CATHY: Okay, okay. ‘On the sixth day, they put a sack over my head and prodded me with a rod. I did not see it, but it induced a sharp intense pain. I was screaming.’ This they do to a child?

GUPTA: Yes, this is one of the ways in which it is done.

HECTOR: And when I wanted to put a silly old pillowcase over your head, you thought I was joking?

GUPTA: It could’ve been far worse in real life.

HECTOR: How come you seem to know all about methods of torture, Gupta?

GUPTA: I am aware of anything my fellow man could use against me to make me betray myself. And so because I cannot be astonished by evil, I am relatively protected against its surprises. But let me drag myself away from this ‘stimulating entertainment.’ Mere hungry mortals wait at the Taj Mahal with their Visa cards, to make our landlords’ dreams come true.

HECTOR: Anyway, I don’t have much to do in this scene – just look shocked and innocent.

CATHY: How can you be innocent after all they said you did?

HECTOR: But that’s the whole point.

GUPTA: He is not innocent.

CATHY: They let you go free?
HECTOR: Good twist, hey?

GUPTA: Who is having the last laugh here?

HECTOR: It’s not a comedy.

GUPTA: You flee the culture of death and bring its infection to your adopted cradle of freedom? Decent people also live here and we don’t want to have to watch you play out your guilt on our television all the time. Do you see the trauma of my country being publicly flayed open for the commercials to enliven?

HECTOR: Yes. 'Passage to India', 'Jewel in the Crown'?

GUPTA: I said: my country, not their colony.

HECTOR: God Gupta, I don’t choose the flavour of the month. Yesterday it was India. Today it’s South Africa. Tomorrow, who knows? I’m not going to waste my luck. Lots of work around, and with my British passport coming through any day from now . . .

GUPTA: Yes, something I was content to wait fourteen years for!

HECTOR: I’m on the shortlist.

GUPTA: But of course, you’re young and clever.

HECTOR: Thank you.

CATHY: Don’t start again, you two.

GUPTA: You’re outwardly healthy. You can speak their language. Sound like one of them. Even pretend you are one of them. That’s what they like, Hector Prince.
CATHY: Don’t tease the boy.

GUPTA: Oh yes, and you’re nice and white.

HECTOR: And you think that helps?

GUPTA: Unquestionably.

CATHY: Shame on you, Gupta!

GUPTA: No, shame on you, both of you. Your last day in the relatively normal decent society and you play-act death and lies and torture!

HECTOR: She’s helping me with my work!

GUPTA: How much is study and how much nostalgia?

(He exits.)

(Pause.)

HECTOR: He doesn’t like whites.

CATHY: Come on. Right from that first day when you asked to meet me at the Taj Mahal the two of you have . . . .

HECTOR: He just tolerates me, but with an edge of contempt all the time.

CATHY: Well, I’ve never seen contempt.

HECTOR: I can’t help my roots.

CATHY: Nor can he.

HECTOR: So why does he hold apartheid against me?
CATHY: Hector love, we don’t hold you responsible.

HECTOR: I go out of my way to treat him like a decent human being and then he gives me his superior attitude.

CATHY: It’s just his way.

HECTOR: From him of all people!

CATHY: Gupta is a highly-born man from a very good family.

HECTOR: You’re joking. He’s got such a fucking chip on his shoulder.

CATHY: He came here with nothing . . . .

HECTOR: A whole packet of chips.

CATHY: . . . . not even a trade.

HECTOR: Fish and chips!

CATHY: He worked his way up from the waiter to managing a whole restaurant.

HECTOR: Call him whatever makes him happy.

(CATHY wants to answer, but doesn’t. Busies herself packing.)

CATHY: My two brollies and my woollies. I won’t need them from tomorrow.

HECTOR: He wouldn’t allow me backstage to see you that first time.

CATHY: Hey hey hey! House rules: no customers in the kitchen!

HECTOR: He was bloody cheeky for a waiter!
CATHY: Tell the people under the bridge I put all my old TV magazines and *Woman’s Own* in this box in case someone wants them.

HECTOR: I hate being held responsible for what those Afrikaner bastards are doing to South Africa!

CATHY: Look through my cassettes in case you fancy some.

HECTOR: If I had my way, I’d raise a liberation army. Hey, you’ve got the latest Sting!

CATHY: God, I love that boy.

HECTOR: Can I have it?

*(She nods. He sorts through the cassettes.)*

I’d raise a liberation army, like during the Spanish Civil War. Have you heard of it?

CATHY: Ja, Hector, we saw the film together.

HECTOR: Now there was passion and commitment. Jesus Christ!

CATHY: What’s it?

HECTOR: The Madonna Concert! Ladysmith Black Mambazo? Any excuse for a party, hey Cathy?

CATHY: Oh, but the rhythm is still in my blood, Master Hector.

HECTOR: ‘Master Hector’ again? Or just practising for where you’re going.

CATHY: Hey, I’m going home as me, not as a maid, okay?

*(Pause.)*

HECTOR: You know I didn’t mean it like that, Cathy.
(Pause.)

CATHY: So, you’re marching to Pretoria?

HECTOR: Yes, imagine hundreds of thousands of exiles marching through Africa, with Miriam Makeba singing and Hugh Masekela playing his trumpet.

CATHY: All going home like me.

HECTOR: To build a future for everyone.

CATHY: Ja, like me! Well, let me know when you come, and I’ll organise some cool drink and fancy little cakes. But no bobotie!

HECTOR: We’ll fight those Nazi fuckers on the steps of their Voortrekker Monument!

CATHY: All those f-words again! Help yourself to some cool drink.

HECTOR: Revenge will be sweet . . . and all this money?

CATHY: Hey, hey, hey – don’t scratch in my things, man Hector man!

HECTOR: Cathy, are you crazy to leave cash lying around here like this?

CATHY: I hid it away; you’re leaving it lying around!

HECTOR: Anyone could steal it.

CATHY: Not just anyone comes to visit me. Mmmm, considering how long it took to save, it’s not a fortune. My doctor’s bills were more hungry than I thought.
HECTOR: That’s what the National Health is for. Free treatment for your asthma!

CATHY: For the Brits, yes.

HECTOR: Take what you can, while you can – everyone does.

(He sees the SAA travelbag.)

You’re not flying back SAA, are you?

CATHY: They gave me that bag for free!

HECTOR: After boycotting Outspan oranges and Grannie Smith apples for twelve years, you now go back in the belly of the beast?

CATHY: I’m going back to where the beast lives, so who cares how! On SAA I’ll get a taste of Afrikaans, sort of being part of it before actually being there. They say the service is good.

HECTOR: But you know how well British Airways will treat you.

CATHY: We came over on BA in ’77. My first trip on a plane; I nearly died with nerves. This big Jumbo jet with me and the kids at the back.

HECTOR: And Master and Madam in the front?

CATHY: You pay for the seat, you choose where you sit.

HECTOR: Typical.

CATHY: Practical. The kids were impossible. So I slipped some of Madam’s valium in the orange juice and we all slept like logs, missing all the excitement of flying over Africa. The next day here at Heathrow, skoon valium-bedonnerd, suddenly there’s this fashion parade on that rubber belt, with everyone clapping hands as my pink underclothes and
my squashed hat went round and round, all hanging out of my broken suitcase. I was so embarrassed.

HECTOR: A hat? You?

CATHY: Of course, my family said I must have a hat, in case I have tea with the Queen.

HECTOR: Hats are optional.

CATHY: Promise you won’t laugh.

HECTOR: I won’t laugh.

CATHY: Promise!

HECTOR: Cathy, I swear!

CATHY: Okay.

(She exits. Then reappears wearing a hat and a funfur. Poses. He hoots with delight.)

No sis man, you swore! You can laugh, but I’m going to arrive in Cape Town wearing my hat and my funfur from Miss Selfridges.

HECTOR: In the Cape Town weather?

CATHY: Even if I melt from the heat, it’s worth it. Just to see the expression on their faces. Aunty Cathy looking like Joanie Collins.

(Pause.)

I still get postcards from the Sharp Kids. They say their new maid is not a patch on me. Anyway they all hated the weather here.

HECTOR: Those fucking white liberals!
CATHY: . . . you must admit, though, the weather here is funny. The sky is always so low. Not natural. Gupta says it’s the pollution and something to do with the ouzo layer.

HECTOR: Ozone layer, Cathy. Ouza is a Greek drink . . . .

CATHY: I know that now, God Hector, I was trying to make a little joke. I’m so depressed man – look around you.

HECTOR: You wasted all these years saving up to go home after those rich Yids dumped you here.

CATHY: . . . I must say, they make you feel very at home here, the English.

HECTOR: It’s the only place to be.

CATHY: Ja, until you’ve dropped your defences and really feel yourself at home. Then they politely remind you that you’re not ‘actually’ and that you’ll never be ‘really’ . . . .

HECTOR: Well, nothing would make me go back.

CATHY: How can you, after all those anti-South African things you said here?

HECTOR: I just told people what happened to me. I’m a political refugee, not a tourist.

CATHY: No, tourists don’t so easily get passports!

(Pause. He is offended.)

But those terrible things I read in your script.

HECTOR: And you didn’t believe me when I told you what they did to me?

CATHY: Well, I still can’t understand it. All that hatred – and for what?
HECTOR: But that’s what’s so good about being here, Cathy. Here it’s life you worry about, not death!

(Her front door bell rings.)

CATHY: Who’s this now?
HECTOR: All the friends coming to say 'so long'?

CATHY: You’ve been. Go and see. Maybe it’s not for me.
(He exits.)
God, I don’t have enough cool drinks.
(She puts her hat on the table. Sees the script, opens it and reads.)
‘They ordered me to remove my shoes and then stamped on my toes with the heels of their boots. They knocked my head against the wall . . . my nose bled . . .’ No sis, man, I don’t like this part.

(HECTOR enters.)

HECTOR: Cathy?

CATHY: Hey?

HECTOR: It’s for you.

(TREVOR JURIES enters. Small rucksack, rolled blanket. He’s been travelling.)

TREVOR: It’s me, Aunty Cathy.

(Pause. Cathy is horrified.)

CATHY: My God, what happened! What happened??

(Blackout.)

END OF ACT ONE
(The action continues.)

TREVOR: It’s me, Aunty Cathy.

(Pause. Cathy is horrified.)

CATHY: My God, what happened!

TREVOR: I’ll come back later . . . .

CATHY: No, no . . . Trevor? Trevor, why are you here? Let me look at you properly! My God Trevor, I would never have recognised you.

TREVOR: We sent you a photo.

CATHY: Three years ago! You were only so big and look at you now? Trevor, is it really you?

(She hugs him hard.)

TREVOR: It’s me, Aunty Cathy. Who’s this?

HECTOR: Hector Prince.

CATHY: He’s the actor.

TREVOR: You acting now, Aunty Cathy?

CATHY: No man, Trevor, this boy is the actor; I’m still just me. Hector, this is my sister Eileen’s oldest boy, Trevor.

HECTOR: Hi.

(Holds out his hand, but TREVOR has turned to her.)
CATHY: God, let me sit down . . .

TREVOR: I phoned the number Ma still had for you.

CATHY: The Taj Mahal Restaurant probably.

TREVOR: I can’t talk into those answering machines.

HECTOR: Cathy doesn’t work there anymore.

CATHY: The doctor says I mustn’t stand all day.

TREVOR: Still in the kitchen, hey Aunty Cathy?

(Pause.)

CATHY: Hector love, do you fancy a cigarette?

HECTOR: No.

CATHY: Then go and smoke it outside.

HECTOR: Oh. Yes.

(HECTOR exits.)

TREVOR: Who’s he?

CATHY: My friend.

(Pause.)

So how are you, Trevor?

TREVOR: Okay, Aunty Cathy.

CATHY: You’ve really grown up.
TREVOR: Ja.

(Pause.)

CATHY: How’s Eileen?

TREVOR: Ma’s okay, Aunty Cathy.

CATHY: And your Pa? Is his heart better?

TREVOR: His heart’s okay, Aunty Cathy.

CATHY: So everything’s okay?

(Pause. She glances at his bag and blanket.)

You brought the good weather with you.

TREVOR: It’s horrible outside.

CATHY: That’s called good weather here.

TREVOR: Not like home.

CATHY: You’ll get used to it.

TREVOR: I don’t care about the weather, Aunty Cathy.

CATHY: Well, you won’t get a suntan here, that’s for sure.

TREVOR: That’s not what I came for.

CATHY: No, I don’t suppose it is.

(Pause. He looks around.)

TREVOR: Looks like someone’s moving.
CATHY: Isn’t your school still busy at this time of the year, Trevor?

TREVOR: I thought this place would be bigger, you know.

CATHY: Or have the school terms changed?

TREVOR: Just one bedroom?

(He looks down the passage.)

CATHY: This is your last year at school, Trevor?

TREVOR: I failed last year, Aunty Cathy.

CATHY: Not like you to fail.

TREVOR: We all failed.

CATHY: The whole class failed?

TREVOR: It was a boycott.

CATHY: So when the time came to write exams . . . .

TREVOR: There were no exams.

CATHY: I remember.

TREVOR: Ma wrote?

CATHY: Here I see everything you do on TV. How could you allow yourself to fail, just in reach of your education?

TREVOR: Hell, Aunt Cathy, you sound just like Ma.
CATHY: And what did Eileen say? I can't imagine she was pleased.

TREVOR: It’s all more important that just being pleased or not pleased.

CATHY: I can’t see my sister or your father just letting you throw away your education and come here for a holiday! Or did you force them into agreeing not to give you a damn good hiding!

TREVOR: Don’t come to me with words like that, man Aunty Cathy!

CATHY: So what are you doing here when you should be at school?

TREVOR: I thought you’d have a bigger place.

CATHY: Then why don’t you just make my day and ask me for a bed to sleep in, because you’ve run six thousand miles away from home, and the first stop is old Aunty Cathy in London NW1!

TREVOR: I don’t know anyone else here.

CATHY: Then talk to me, Trevor, and do it quickly and truthfully, or else I go down the hallway and phone Eileen in Athlone: 010.27.21.654.3321. Some explaining needs to be done.

(She starts off.)

TREVOR: Don’t phone!

CATHY: Then talk.

TREVOR: It’s a long story.
CATHY: It’s also a long way. Do they know where you are?
(He shakes his head.)
They don’t know where you are? For God’s sake, Trevor, look around you – where am I going to put you up?

TREVOR: I’m not fussy, Aunty Cathy.

CATHY: There’s no room for you, and besides . . . .

TREVOR: Back home we sometimes slept four to a room, or have you forgotten those times?

CATHY: No, I haven’t forgotten, and so let me remind you that this is not back home! You could’ve phoned, dropped me a card – anything! Why all this mystery?
(Pause.)
Show me your passport.

TREVOR: I don’t have a South African passport.

(HECTOR enters.)

HECTOR: I’ve smoked two; I’ll get lung cancer if I have another cigarette.

CATHY: And when did you arrive?

TREVOR: This morning.

HECTOR: SAA?

TREVOR: Can we go out and talk, Aunty Cathy?

CATHY: Talk here. Hector is my friend. Hector, it seems this boy has run away from home!
HECTOR: You too? You’re joking!

TREVOR: Why?

HECTOR: And they always thought running away from home was to the next town, not another hemisphere. Good for you! I first tried to get a job as an airline steward to get out, but they just turned me down. Said my qualifications were too good – a kak old B.A. Drama from the University of Cape Town.

TREVOR: Cape Town?

HECTOR: Originally, then I did two months in the Army.

TREVOR: Ah, another one dodging the call-up?

HECTOR: Political exile. It’s okay, we’re on the same side.

TREVOR: How come?

(Pause.)

HECTOR: Because of what they did to me in the Army. Eh....., ask Cathy. I’m anti-apartheid, aren’t I, Cathy?

TREVOR: ‘Anti-apartheid?’ Hell, I wish I’d thought of that – when my parents were treated like shit by you whites; when your family and friends aimed their guns at my family and friends and fired – even then I wasn’t ‘anti-apartheid’; I was just scared, man, fucking terrified!

HECTOR: Your aunt doesn’t like those words.

CATHY: No, talk Trevor!

TREVOR: No, I’m just saying: it’s easy for him here.
HECTOR: Really?

TREVOR: You can stand in front of the Embassy with a banner and then go for a safe beer. Where I come from, where he came from, banners mean jail, blood not beer.

HECTOR: I'd say it must be hard work having to act up a good riot for every TV camera that points your way.

TREVOR: Where've you been sleeping, whitey? There are no TV cameras around anymore!

HECTOR: Shame.

CATHY: But we still see those things here on the News.

HECTOR: That’s old footage.

TREVOR: When did you leave?

HECTOR: Just after the State of Emergency.

TREVOR: Shame, you missed all the fun in the townships. You left when the fighting was still only up in Angola and Namibia?

HECTOR: That had a lot to do with my leaving.

TREVOR: But you were never forced into the townships with a gun in your hand, hunting down kids your own age?

HECTOR: My conscience forced me to leave!

TREVOR: Kids with stones in their hands!

HECTOR: Oh please, grenades in their hands!
CATHY: Let’s have some cool drink . . .

TREVOR: Ja, five million potential soldiers with two dozen handgrenades? Wake up, Liberal!

HECTOR: I won’t be provoked.

TREVOR: Now the lid is just being screwed down, it’s being soldered tight! And just when you whiteys think we have now way of letting of steam – bang! Bang!

CATHY: Bang?

TREVOR: Bang!

CATHY: What goes bang?

TREVOR: Bang!

CATHY: The Boere go bang? The world goes bang?

TREVOR: Bang! The next step is ground-to-air missiles. Take out a few domestic airbuses carrying fatcat civil servants to another committee meeting.

HECTOR: That’s an old movie, Trevor.

TREVOR: Then some house-burning raids into your nice white suburbs to remind you people of democracy.

HECTOR: Yesterday’s war. You can fight your battles at home now. It’s all over.

TREVOR: What’s all over?

HECTOR: There’s a new South Africa.
TREVOR: Oh yes? Do we all now have the vote?

HECTOR: Hey?

TREVOR: The vote? Equal education? Can I live where I like?

HECTOR: No, but . . . .

TREVOR: No buts. We suffer, you suffer. We die, you die.

HECTOR: Fifty years of Beirut.

TREVOR: Victims and victors.

HECTOR: Me and you.

TREVOR: Or you and me. Anything can happen when there’s equality in hatred and violence.

CATHY: No more! God, what a horrible picture.

TREVOR: A true picture, Cathy!

CATHY: Ag rubbish man. How come Hector’s parents in Rondebosch say things is now fine? And I’m Aunty Cathy to you, my boy!

HECTOR: Cathy, my parents wouldn’t notice the world nuked from their verandah.

TREVOR: No, Hector’s folks are right: Rondebosch is fine. It’s us who must change their minds.

HECTOR: Oh, so you’ll still go and chop up my parents, Trevor?

TREVOR: Not now that I’ve met you, no. I’ll get one of the others to do it!
HECTOR: Equality for all?

TREVOR: Equality in all!

(Pause.)

HECTOR: Jesus! It’s that . . . passion that I miss! That madness!

CATHY: It’s pathetic!

HECTOR: You really make me want to go back, you know that? It’s crazy.

TREVOR: Crazy people come back all the time. I’ll give you a week there.

HECTOR: Hang on, I’m not the one who’s leaving.

TREVOR: They won’t arrest you for running away from the Army and telling the world all the usual shit that makes people’s mouths water for more.

HECTOR: I won’t give them a chance to catch me.

TREVOR: Because they’ll ignore you. Or worse, now they’ll welcome you back at the airport like a long-lost son of the Volk. You were confused, they’ll say. Dankie Oom, you’ll say.

HECTOR: Never!

TREVOR: Dankie Oom, you’ll say! And you’ll enter meekly into the new Laager with happy tears in your eyes, smell South African cigarettes in the air, hear Afrikaans make you feel safe and important. You’ll see no more ‘Whites Only’ signs at the airport.

C ATHY: Really?
TREVOR: Not good for business. You’ll think, ‘Gee whiz, it’s not as bad as they said in London.’

CATHY: Not if most of the signs are gone!

TREVOR: You’ll be on your favourite open beach within days suntanning somewhere with blacks and coloureds too, because ‘Gee whiz, it’s not half as bad as they make out in the world.’

CATHY: Are all the beaches really open now, Trevor?

TREVOR: ‘Gee whiz, what was the problem anyway,’ you’ll think.

CATHY: I wonder if my asthma will get worse out there.

TREVOR: Go home, Hector. And if you can, after just one week, look at yourself in the mirror and say: ‘I once had a conscience.’

HECTOR: I still have a conscience!

TREVOR: If you can say that, we’ll see you back here in ten days.

CATHY: So, where does your ma think you are?

TREVOR: It’s not special not to know where your child is.

CATHY: So Eileen thinks you’re in jail! Shame on you, Trevor.

TREVOR: Ma thinks I’m dead.

CATHY: Oh, now you’re just a ghost, Mr Trevor Juries?

TREVOR: It’s the best that way.
CATHY: I’m going to phone her right now, I’m cross – and believe me when
I’m cross, I’m cross!
(She exits.)

TREVOR: The police leave her alone now.
(Pause.)
They don’t wake her up three and four times a night looking for me . . .
(CATHY re-enters slowly, listening.)
Pa had another heart attack because of that. Now at last the shock is
over.

CATHY: But you’re alive . . . .

TREVOR: They can sleep at night now. They have a hero for a son.

CATHY: A dead hero?

TREVOR: I’ll tell them differently when the time’s right.

CATHY: She’s your mother!

TREVOR: Everyone is in danger out there!

CATHY: I don’t understand.

TREVOR: Aunty Cathy, you remember the Brandon family, with the three boys?
Never mind . . . . the oldest boy was chased down the streets one night
by vigilantes . . . .

HECTOR: Blacks collaborating with the System.

CATHY: I know, I know.
TREVOR: He ran to his parents’ house. The door was locked. He cried and screamed and banged on the door, begging for them to open. But they didn’t.

CATHY: His parents?

TREVOR: They had to protect the other children in the house.

CATHY: Protecting children from other children?

HECTOR: Did they get him?

TREVOR: His parents and brothers and sisters listened as they hacked him to pieces –

(\textit{She tries to get up. He holds her.})

- blood against the front door, under the carpet in the hall.

CATHY: I don’t want to hear anymore.

TREVOR: It turns out the vigilantes had made a mistake.

HECTOR: Killed the wrong victim!

CATHY: I don’t want to hear about the Brandon family! I want to know what this has to do with my family!

TREVOR: They’ll all live longer out there if they think I’m already dead!

(\textit{Pause.})

CATHY: Not even a postcard to help her along?

TREVOR: That’s why you must help me, Aunty Cathy.

CATHY: Why didn’t Eileen tell me anything?
TREVOR: I’ve got to get involved from here, help organise things for the Struggle there.

HECTOR: I’ll help you! That’s the thing about living here. You’re free to make up your own mind, form your own opinions.

TREVOR: I’ve got opinions.

HECTOR: And, what’s more, you’ll have a chance to find out the truth about what is happening in South Africa.

TREVOR: I know, I’ve just come from there!

HECTOR: The Real Truth!

CATHY: It makes my stomach turn to hear all this.

TREVOR: It’s war, Aunty Cathy!

CATHY: Ja? And once the comrades have killed all the collaborators and the vigilantes have killed all the radicals, who will remain to throw a party?

TREVOR: I want to stay here with you, Aunty Cathy.

CATHY: You want to bring your revolution into my home?

TREVOR: You’ve lost your touch!

CATHY: No, I’ve learnt to touch! That’s why I’m here and not there! I could’ve gone back – the Sharps offered me a ticket, Hector, but I said no. I wanted to take my chances here on square one with everyone else. Everyone has a chance here, Trevor; we can all sink or swim!
HECTOR: God, Cathy, there’s a woman in 10 Downing Street who would pay you to repeat that on the BBC.

TREVOR: Those fucking Sharps! Don’t pretend they’re your friends!

CATHY: Yes! The Sharps showed me that there was a world outside my kitchen! They took me to Covent Garden and let me watch an opera in Italian. They showed me the races at Ascot – where I did wear my silly hat, Hector, and no one laughed! And even when I lost £5 on some silly horse that fell over its own feet, Dr Sharp replaced it that very night!

TREVOR: They could afford it!

CATHY: And every time there was a birthday in Athlone, they let me phone and say hello to you and your sisters and your ma and pa and talk over six thousand miles for as long as I liked. So don’t you shout your slogans against my friends!

HECTOR: And when you go back now, will they still be your friends?

CATHY: Who knows. I’m not too proud to go and say hello.

TREVOR: Go back? What do you mean: go back?

CATHY: Go back.

TREVOR: Go back where?

(Pause.)

HECTOR: Yes, Cathy’s going back.

(Pause.)
TREVOR: You’re joking! Aunt Cathy? Tell me you’re joking!

CATHY: No joke, Trevor. I’m going back to Cape Town tomorrow and there’s nothing you can say that will stop me. Nothing!

TREVOR: Why?

CATHY: Why what?

TREVOR: Why are you going back to South Africa?

CATHY: Because.

TREVOR: What sort of answer is that?

CATHY: Because I have no answer!

(She has a severe asthma attack. HECTOR hands her her pump. She sucks at it. Calms down.)

Sometimes . . . it’s like I can’t breathe . . . . a tightness in my chest . . . a banging, like my heart is being chased into my ears . . . There’s a pain, then I panic.

TREVOR: Get some pills from the doctor.

CATHY: I’m not sick! It’s just, like you, I also have a story to tell of a mad struggle, a war – but it’s all in here.

(She points to her head.)

I switch on all the lights and the TV and the radio to make it go away but it’s still here. I try to find an ordinary name for this terrible Fear. So I call it ‘Johnny’, ‘Jimmy’ or ‘Lancelot’ . . . . anything ordinary, other than Fear. Then I’m able to handle it, like any old Johnny, Jimmy or Lancelot.

TREVOR: You going back, I can’t believe it.
HECTOR: Swopping Johnny, Jimmy and Lancelot for Jannie, Pietie and Stoffel.

CATHY: Believe it, Trevor, it’s a fact. I’ve got my ticket in my bag – there’s my bag. I’ve been sitting here on my own for too long, watching as the gutters of the Cape run red on the TV. I’m so scared I’ll go home one day in a cardboard coffin with no windows to show me my mountain and my sea . . .

(She is overcome.)

(Pause.)

TREVOR: So what do I do now? What happens to me? Where do I sleep? How do I eat? It took me seven months to get here.

HECTOR: Seven months? How?

TREVOR: I don’t know. It’s crazy. We hid from security police near Port Elizabeth and then got chased across the country towards Botswana, but couldn’t find a safe place in through the fences. Then Joburg and the Northern Transvaal. There were roadblocks everywhere. It was impossible to get into Mozambique. Then this crazy idea: formed an ‘ethnic’ popgroup with some white students who got us false papers and we just drove across the Limpopo into Zimbabwe. Crazy.

HECTOR: Crazy.

TREVOR: Then the horrible mix-up at the refugee houses outside Harare – thousands of our people saying they’re waiting to go home, once the Boere finally retreat into their madness.

HECTOR: That’s crazy.

TREVOR: Then Lusaka: tough grillings by the ANC, knowing there were spies among us working for the Boere. They took us in an open truck through jungle, then in an old aeroplane from Zaire. There were big
tropical storms. Then we were in Ghana. Mosquitoes everywhere. I got sick. My friends were taken off somewhere else. And always, everywhere, those colour posters of dead blacks and fat whites watching rugby. Seven months of hell, Aunty Cathy, but it was okay, because I knew there was a place here for me, and a person!

CATHY: So, your revolution now depends on me.

TREVOR: How can you do this to us?

CATHY: Us? Welcome to the Planet Earth, Trevor Juries. Normal life, my boy, is also full of surprises. Hector, find me that spare toilet roll in Gupta’s box. I want to blow my nose.

(He does. She blows her nose.)

I'll cry in the Southern Hemisphere. Facts: You have no papers, no money, no education, no bed, nothing.

TREVOR: No family.

CATHY: Wait till I go tomorrow, before you break my heart with that excuse. Hector, can you help this boy with some warm English clothes for this Indian summer?

HECTOR: I should have something that fits at the flat.

CATHY: Trevor, when last did you eat?

TREVOR: Lusaka.

CATHY: Hector, I’ve packed up the kitchen. Look in Gupta’s box for the Post Toasties.

TREVOR: Ag no man, Aunty Cathy, Post Toasties is for children.

HECTOR: And there’s no milk.
TREVOR: And there’s no milk!

CATHY: Bleddy fussy too. Do you like Indian food?

TREVOR: I’m not mad about it.

HECTOR: What about a hamburger?

TREVOR: That I like. With chips.

CATHY: Just chips? What about ice cream and chocolates and jellybabies? Trevor, for a freedom fighter who so misses his war, thank God you’ve still got a schoolchild’s taste in junkfood. Okay, I’ll get you a hamburger. Wait here.

(She puts on her outside shoes, gets her bag. HECTOR is also ready to go with her. She stops him.)

. . . . . . .Both of you.

(She exits.)

(The moment she leaves HECTOR takes out his cigarettes. TREVOR helps himself to two. Drinks water from the jug, splashes water over his face and neck. Looks around the room.)

TREVOR: Kak little room.

HECTOR: It faces the sun.

TREVOR: What does that mean? What sun? Where is the sun?

HECTOR: Somewhere out there.

(TREVOR looks out of the window.)

TREVOR: And this window looks out on another window. Hey, whites living next door.
HECTOR: It’s not exceptional here.

(Pause.)

Give yourself time to get used to your freedom, Trevor.

TREVOR: How can I get used to something I never had?

HECTOR: It took me forever and now that I realise what freedom is, it nearly frightens me to death.

TREVOR: Never mind, you can always run back to Cape Town when you flop here.

HECTOR: My agent’s put me up for some good parts in a TV series and a film.

TREVOR: Go back home, man Hector. You can play Hamlet and be a star. The mother in the township who’s just buried her children won’t have time to sit and listen to your ‘to be or not to be’ – but then that’s not the question.

(Lifts clothes out of boxes.)

Books, magazines, belongings – all this kak!

(Throws them on the floor.)

HECTOR: A lot has changed in seven months, Trevor. Why don’t you just phone your parents and tell them you’re safe?

TREVOR: Why don’t you go and fuck yourself, whitey!

(HECTOR replaces the things in the box. TREVOR finds his walkman.)

This yours?

(HECTOR nods. TREVOR listens.)

What’s this tape?

HECTOR: It was sent to me from Cape Town. To make me homesick, I suppose.

(Pause.)
TREVOR: Is this what I think it is? 

(Laughs and takes off earphones.)
You’re stupid, listening to this.

(He looks into Cathy’s travelbag and sees the money.)
(Pause. Then he is aware that HECTOR is watching him. Pages through the script.)
What’s all this marked in yellow?

HECTOR: My character. It’s a good part.

TREVOR: Why have I never heard of you? ‘Hector Prince’?

HECTOR: My name was Henry King, but there’s another Henry King in the profession so I had to change it.

TREVOR: I also never heard of Henry King!

HECTOR: This part may be my big break.

TREVOR: Hector Prince’s Big Break? How do you remember all this?

HECTOR: Study.

TREVOR: Study this? (He reads.) ‘Black bastard. Four innocent people you killed?’ Don’t tell me you’re studying to play a Boer!

HECTOR: It’s a very complex character.

TREVOR: ‘Black bastard . . .’ Is that what they get you to say? (Then says in recognisable character.) ‘Black bastard!’ (He reads.) ‘There was also a dead black man, splattered in so many bloody bits against the toothpaste adverts in the supermarket, that not even when they scrape him off that Colgate smile will he fill . . .’ hey . . . ‘will he fill an icecream cone’? (He laughs.)
HECTOR: That’s what happened. It’s based on fact.

TREVOR: Oh, you’ve seen someone’s ‘bloody bits’ fill an icecream cone?

HECTOR: The violence is the issue.

TREVOR: The violence is the issue? Yes of course.

HECTOR: It’s all centred round the Trial. This scene is just the start.

TREVOR: And what do you do to this Black Bastard?

HECTOR: He dies.

TREVOR: That’s useful. Okay, show me how you do it?

(Pause.)

HECTOR: Hey?

TREVOR: Maybe it’s something I can also do. I played the drums in that band. Quite fancy myself as one.

HECTOR: As one what?

TREVOR: A fucking actor, man Hector!

HECTOR: Okay.

TREVOR: So okay. I’m now also an actor!

HECTOR: Let’s set this chair here. We’ll need some rope.

TREVOR: You can hang yourself by your underpants.
HECTOR: Just to tie your hands. I don’t want to mess with Cathy’s things. 
(Looks around the boxes.)

TREVOR: Use electrical cord.

HECTOR: There’s a Brasso rag in the broom cupboard. Now you sit here. Keep the script to check my lines.

TREVOR: What’s my name in the play?

HECTOR: It’s . . . ’Sipho Molifi.’

TREVOR: Based on fact.

HECTOR: It seems he was in the crowd when the police cameras video’d him with a wooden AK-47 in his hands.

TREVOR: Part of his costume.

HECTOR: He was guilty of murder by association, or something.

TREVOR: Guilty of watching?

HECTOR: I don’t know . . . look, it’s really the Interrogation Scene that’s important. Page 8.

TREVOR: Guilty of pretending.

HECTOR: You’re in solitary confinement.

TREVOR: For how long?

HECTOR: About a week.

TREVOR: You lose track of time in solitary.
HECTOR: That’s a good point, I’ll tell the director.

TREVOR: Guilty of acting.

HECTOR: You’ve been beaten and given shock treatment, yes . . . suffocation: pushing your head under water . . .

TREVOR: No man, Hector man – how can I act and pretend my arms are tied and then hold a script in my hand? Can’t you remember ‘black bastard’?

HECTOR: I should by now.

(HECTOR takes the bin off. TREVOR rearranges the furniture, clearing the centre of the room. Sets the chair. Sits in it. He remembers.)

TREVOR: ‘Take off your shoes . . .’
But Mr Swanepoel?
‘Off with your shoes, boy . . . that’s right. Now your T-shirt . . . illegal to have that slogan on your T-shirt, but never mind . . . take off your jeans . . .’
But Mr Swanepoel . . .!
‘It’s just me and you. We’ll sort all this out before the medics come and check if I’m treating you well. You feeling fine, hey? Hey?’
Ja Mr Swanepoel.
‘Good. Now take of your things, black bastard.’

(HECTOR enters with the Brasso rag.)

HECTOR: I really don’t think we’ll need to go this far.

TREVOR: ‘It’s just me and you . . . you and me . . .’
HECTOR: Hang on, you don’t do anything yet.

(He ‘pretends to tie TREVOR’S hands.)

Right . . . ‘Black bastard! Four innocent people you killed. A little girl who’s having her birthday tomorrow, won’t be having candles on her cake, because she’s lying in the mortuary in little pieces, because of you, you terrorist animal!’ Now squirm.

TREVOR: Why?

HECTOR: Maybe you’re trying to get free. I need you to squirm so that I can say my next line which is: ‘Shut up when I’m talking to you!’

TREVOR: But ‘Shut up’ means I’m trying to talk; stop squirming means I’m trying to squirm.

HECTOR: Oh . . . eh . . . well, pretend you’ve got a gag on. Then squirm and grunt or whatever.

(He prepares himself:)

‘Black bastard . . . talk talk talk . . . little candles on her cake . . . I’ll cut to the end of the scene, you terrorist animal!’ Now!

(TREVOR squirms and grunts.)

Great! ‘Shut up when I’m talking to you! Two old ladies were out buying food for their cat and an old dog called Rambo who will now not be fed or stroked . . . (TREVOR starts laughing.) . . . stroked ever again because of you, you communist madman!’ No man, Trevor, come on – this is serious.

TREVOR: Rambo?

HECTOR: It’s in the script!

TREVOR: What a load of shit, man. Kak!

(He takes a box and throws it at HECTOR.)

Rambo? Here, hold this . . .
HECTOR: But . . .

TREVOR: No man, stretch out your arms and balance the box. (HECTOR does tentatively). Okay. ‘Black bastard! Four innocent people you killed!’

HECTOR: Go on, that’s the feeling I’m looking for.

TREVOR: Shut up, Boy! Just hold the box up nice and steady.

HECTOR: It’s quite heavy.

TREVOR: But then you’re used to heavy labour, black bastard. Pain just happens in a brain, and if you have no brain, you have no pain.

HECTOR: You try holding this.

TREVOR: Shut up when I’m talking to you!

(Pushes him down into a squatting position.)

Down. One Sound and I’ll fill your mouth properly!

(He moves to the table in search of a gag. Hovers around the travel bag but doesn’t open it. Finds CATHY’S hat on the table. Picks it up.)

Two white girls were driving their car from their home to the bioscope to see a nice movie, when a stone hit their windscreen and one girl was blinded and the other is still in a coma. I wonder what it must feel like to see the light one second and never again the next?

(He takes out the hatpin and crouches close to HECTOR.)

Nasty people around who would take this pretty hatpin and slide it into your open eye like a warm fork into jelly.

(HECTOR winces and closes his eyes tight.)

HECTOR: Please man, I have a thing about my eyes.
TREVOR: Me too. You peep and I’ll pop them!

(Pause.)

Open your eyes.

HECTOR: No.

TREVOR: Open your eyes man, Hector man . . .

(He does. TREVOR waves with his fingers.)

Hello Hector . . .

HECTOR: Jesus, don’t get so carried away! The script says blindfolded, not blinded!

(He puts the box down and rubs his arms.)

It’s like being in the Army again . . .

TREVOR: Okay.

HECTOR: What?

TREVOR: We’ll stick to your script . . .

(He uses a red scarf of CATHY’S as a blindfold.)

HECTOR: It’s all right.

TREVOR: Yes, it’s fine, your director will be so impressed.

(Ties the blindfold.)

Now sit in the chair . .

.(But he moves the chair away. HECTOR sits and falls on the floor.)

HECTOR: Jesus!

TREVOR: You fell off the chair!

HECTOR: There is no fucking chair!
TREVOR: Let’s pretend there’s a chair. Okay?
(Slowly HECTOR takes his position again.)
You want to hold the box as well?

HECTOR: No.

TREVOR: Nice and comfy?

HECTOR: Yes!

TREVOR: Good. Because we’ve got all the time in the world.
(Pause. He sits. Eats a cookie. Eventually HECTOR looks round in the silence. Stands up straight.)
We’ll just sit around!
(TREVOR goes to the travel bag. But again he doesn’t open the zip where the money is. Eventually):

HECTOR: I can’t anymore.

(TREVOR goes to him and gives him a little push.)

TREVOR: Then don’t.

(HECTOR falls back in the chair.)

HECTOR: I don’t want to do this anymore.

TREVOR: What sort of an actor are you?
(Pause. TREVOR moves away from the chair. HECTOR sits. TREVOR uses a belt of CATHY’S and ties his hands at the back of the chair.)
All right, we’ll go back to your script.

HECTOR: Okay, but no fooling around this time, Trevor.
TREVOR: Back to page 8.

(HECTOR is tied. TREVOR pulls his T-shirt up over his head.)

HECTOR: Hey . . . no man, don’t fuck up my T-shirt.

(TREVOR gags him with the red scarf over the T-shirt. HECTOR struggles, but TREVOR holds him down.)

TREVOR: I’m waiting patiently for you to say your lines . . . whatever comes to mind . . .

(HECTOR struggles. Held down.)

Pollution? What do you think of pollution? I love nature, walking in the veld, smelling the fresh air, feeling God around. Not like in here – stinks of kaffir in here! Fresh flowers and the sounds of nature: birds and bees and the sea – and God. No dirt, like where you live. Where you make noise. Where you pollute! God and me? We hate plastic bottles and tins and bags left by you who should know better . . . you collectors of garbage and cleaners of drains. Like your mother who smells like garbage and stinks like drains – who bows and scrapes and says: ‘Ja Master.’ I’m Master, she’s Rubbish! Your ma! Now, do we make her mad . . .

(He takes out a cigarette and trails it over HECTOR’S bare chest.)

. . . or do you tell us everything and everyone will be happy. Your ma will be happy to carry out my garbage and you will be happy to clean my drains and I will be happy to walk with God in nature – and forget about this dirt and stink and kak!

(He ‘stubs’ out the cigarette and stamps on HECTOR’S foot. HECTOR screams and struggles up, still tied to the chair.)

Hell sorry man Hector, I meant to pretend that . . .

(HECTOR is pushed down so that his head goes into the bin with water.)

. . . just pretend it’s better. You got to trust me. It’s just me and you. You and me. We’re on the same side, remember . . .

(HECTOR comes up for air.)
HECTOR: Jesus . . . are you fucking mad . . .

TREVOR: Will I be a good actor?

HECTOR: . . . suffocating . . .

TREVOR: You’re not very good.

HECTOR: Okay okay you’ve . . . you’ve made your point . . .

TREVOR: But it’s all on page 8.

HECTOR: Okay, it’s obviously not right in the script. I’ll tell the director to check the torture.

TREVOR: You think this is torture?

HECTOR: This is torture!

TREVOR: This is just chatting, man! You want me to show you torture?

HECTOR: No!

TREVOR: But then you know what it’s really like . . . after what they did to you?

HECTOR: After what they did to me . . . yes . . .

TREVOR: And that wasn’t pretending, like now?

HECTOR: No . . . No! Untie my hands!

(TREVOR unties him.)

(Pause.)

TREVOR: ‘Cut to the exterior.’
HECTOR: That means the scene is over!

TREVOR: ‘He dies offscreen. Cut to exterior.’

(Pause. HECTOR puts on his shoes. Suddenly the doorbell rings repeatedly. TREVOR reacts tensely.)

HECTOR: Relax man . . . .

CATHY: (off). Come and help me here, for God’s sake.

(HECTOR exits. Pause. TREVOR goes to the travel bag and takes the money. Hides it on himself.)

(off). Careful . . . .

(She enters with GUPTA and HECTOR. They are helping GUPTA whose clothes are bloody. There is a bandage/CATHY’S scarf across his eyes.)

And what’s been going on here?

TREVOR: Page 8 of Hector’s play.

GUPTA: You have visitors . . . ?

CATHY: No man, my nephew. I’ll tell you later. Trevor, here’s your hamburger. Sit down, Gupta.

(TREVOR takes it and eats hungrily. HECTOR and CATHY help GUPTA onto the sofa.)

GUPTA: Ah, the nephew from Cape Town? Welcome to this blessed shrine of hospitality . . . .

CATHY: Shut up, man. It was those damn football hooligans again.

TREVOR: Just looks like a knife cut to me.
CATHY: Shame, Gupta . . .

HECTOR: Can you see, Gupta?

GUPTA: As always more than you could imagine.

HECTOR: He sounds fine!

CATHY: Shame, Gupta, they also smashed the window, with the name of the restaurant gone. Thank God it was lunchtime.

HECTOR: Luckily no one there as usual.

GUPTA: Please do not discuss me like you would a pigeon run over by a bus.

CATHY: Shame, Gupta.

GUPTA: I never know what you mean when you say it, Cathleen. You see a small child laughing, you say ‘shame’; you see a starving kitten, you say ‘shame’; you see a car smash, ‘shame’.

CATHY: But shame, Gupta, your face.

GUPTA: My arm is bruised and my head is rather painful. But I’m sure my eyes are not affected, in spite of the fact that they went for my glasses first and smashed them onto my nose.

CATHY: Your nose?

GUPTA: That is the issue, Cathleen, is the nose broken?

(They look.)

CATHY: Hector, what do you think?
HECTOR: I’ve got my flatmate’s car here. Let’s get him to Casualty.

GUPTA: It would really sadden me if it were broken, as I really like my nose. Not like you who had his nose remodelled on the National Health Service.

CATHY: Since when?

HECTOR: Listen to that crap! He sounds fine!

CATHY: But what did your nose look like before this?

HECTOR: Skew.

CATHY: Not yours. Man, his! Hey, Gupta? *(She peers under the bandage.)*

God, it looks like the same nose to me.

HECTOR: Did you phone the police?

CATHY: The police?

GUPTA: No, no, it’s not that serious.

CATHY: Ag no, it’s not serious, it’s just a cut.

HECTOR: A cut? The man needs stitches. Compensation! The window is insured, phone the police!

TREvor: Do you think the police would arrest a gang of white skollies because an Asian immigrant and a Coloured tourist complain of assault?

CATHY: I’m not a tourist.

HECTOR: The police here protect people.
TREVOR: Maybe on TV.

CATHY: We don't want to cause any trouble.

GUPTA: It could've been much worse.

CATHY: Ja, and then the police come and find you here with the wrong papers and then what?

GUPTA: Oh my goodness yes.

HECTOR: You say they were the same kids who sprayed those slogans on the walls last week?

(He covers GUPTA with a dressing gown from the box and CATHY’S funfur. GUPTA is shivering.)

CATHY: Those little buggers. God, they need a damn good hiding!

GUPTA: I know where they live.

CATHY: That little racist with the red hair? He’s the one who sprayed the yellow star on the restaurant’s door.

HECTOR: So who said the Taj Mahal isn’t Jewish!

CATHY: How must he know the difference? Hate is hate!

GUPTA: Paki go home! Paki go home! And I’m not even from Pakistan!

(He laughs but winces.)

Oh but it is very painful.

HECTOR: I’ll drive you to the Hospital, Gupta.

GUPTA: No, no I’ll be fine, after I’ve had some tea.
CATHY: Man, forget about the tea. Take the cakes with you.

(Holds the cakebox, but he doesn't react.)

For God's sake, Gupta, don't be so pigheaded!

(Hands TREVOR the cakebox.)

Then pop into the chemist on the corner. Mr Golan will fix you up.
I've closed my account there, but take some of this.

(She goes to the travel bag and her money. TREVOR is very uncomfortable.)

GUPTA: The mob, as you well know, Trevor, is always led by the obvious, the loud, the crass.

HECTOR: Even in this free country!

CATHY: God, I can't find anything in this mess.

(She looks through the travel bag.)

GUPTA: This is what you must find here, Trevor. An alternative to beating a man, because you have lost – be it a soccer match or the right to vote; or because he is black or Asian or white; or because you have ants in your pants, like your Aunty Cathleen.

CATHY: Where the hell did I put it?

(She goes to the boxes and searches.)

HECTOR: Yes, Gupta, and education is a pretty dependable condom against the disease of racism.

GUPTA: Very good. I wonder who said that?

HECTOR: You did.

CATHY: This is ridiculous, but Cathy, stay calm.

HECTOR: What is it?
CATHY: Nothing man, nothing. You two, go up to Gupta’s room.

GUPTA: I can go.

CATHY: No, you can’t! Get his pyjamas and his spare pair of glasses.

TREVOR: Hector can go.

CATHY: Both go! And when you get back from the chemist, we’ll sort out where you’re going to sleep and how you finish school.

TREVOR: Like hell.

CATHY: Ja, like hell, and then we phone your ma and tell her you’re safe. Now move!

TREVOR: Shit man, already she’s nagging me like a mother.

(He exits to kitchen.)

(HECTOR realises her money is gone and comes to her at the travel bag.)

CATHY: And what are you waiting for?

(HECTOR exits quickly to outside.)

GUPTA: Children are such a blessing.

CATHY: To those who don’t have them.

GUPTA: How would I have been now, surrounded by a child? It’s not been my obsession, you realise, Cathleen. No, that fulfilment I neglected in my all-consuming passion to fit quietly into this strange society. But then is this a decent world in which to eventually unleash a child? Cathleen. (CATHY is looking around the boxes.) Where are you, Cathleen?
CATHY: I’m here, Gupta. I’m listening.

GUPTA: I remember how we as children still played with the bricks and window frames that littered the ground outside our old home in the valley near Chandigarh. Our lives were wrecked, our houses burnt, our elders shedding tears of anger, even hatred, but we didn’t have the time to understand their pain. It was an adventure for us.

CATHY: Oh God.......

GUPTA: We only saw the excitement.

CATHY: ....what am I going to do?

GUPTA: Be like a child, Cathleen. Just see the fun. Those hooligans did us a favour.

CATHY: Oh God, what am I going to do?

(She takes the travel bag and sits next to him on the sofa. She unpacks the bag and carefully sifts through her magazine, her Stephen King novel, the Wet Ones, the track suit, the scarf . TREVOR appears and watches her.)

GUPTA: The landlords have decided to convert the Taj Mahal into a wine bar on continental lines.

CATHY: Oh yes?

GUPTA: Yes, young Swedish barmaids with ‘continental lines.’ A little joke, Cathleen.

CATHY: I’m laughing, Gupta.

GUPTA: No place there for an old fool like me.
CATHY: Shame.

GUPTA: Shame again? Maybe. But some good friends have promised me a prospect or two.

CATHY: That’s what I love about you, Gupta. Your crazy dangerous optimism.

GUPTA: I’m glad, Cathleen. That small lie will be a great help to me.

CATHY: It’s the truth. Cross my heart and hope to die.

GUPTA: Cross your cheques and hope to live! It would be such a pleasure to assist you in paying the rent on this flat and contributing to the boy’s education – if you decided to stay, Cathleen.

(Pause. She takes his hand. TREVOR has second thoughts about the money but HECTOR enters before he can give it back. )

CATHY: This room faces the sun, you know.

HECTOR: I’ve brought your toothbrush and your pyjamas.

GUPTA: I will not go to the hospital! Never!

HECTOR: Calm down, Gupta! Listen, my flatmates have gone to the country for the weekend. You’re welcome to stay over at my place for a day or two. Till you feel better.

(Pause. GUPTA gently touches his hand on his shoulder.)

GUPTA: You are inviting me to stay at your home?

HECTOR: If you like.
GUPTA: What an extraordinary and wonderful gesture, Hector. But I’ll take a raincheck on that. My health is fine. And besides, I prefer my own room.

(CATHY gives a deep sigh and puts down the travel bag.)
Cathleen? Cathy? What is it?

CATHY: There’s something I have to ask you boys.

HECTOR: Before you do, Cathy.....

TREVOR: Here.

(He quickly slips money into the cookiebox on table.)

HECTOR: We put it in the cookiebox.

TREVOR: It was me.

HECTOR: Yes, it was Trevor’s idea. To keep it safe.

CATHY: In the cookiebox?

(TREVOR goes to CATHY.)

TREVOR: It was a lot of money . . . I was hungry . . . I didn’t want you to go.

(Pause. CATHY hands TREVOR the cookiebox.)
There’s only one left . . . .

GUPTA: Only one left?

TREVOR: Who’s going to have this last one?

GUPTA: Eh . . . you must.

TREVOR: Don’t you like chocolate?
GUPTA: No, no, I cannot bear chocolate.

TREVOR: Ja. Chocolate is for children.

CATHY: Oh yes? Then I’ll have it!
(She breaks the cookie in two. Eats a piece. Then breaks the remaining piece in two: gives a piece to TREVOR, a piece to GUPTA. Holds up the empty little cakebox.)
Another damn box for my collection.
(Tosses it with the others.)
Trevor, take Gupta’s arm. For God’s sake, the man’s in a bad way.

GUPTA: Only by Olympic standards!

(TREVOR and HECTOR help GUPTA up.)

HECTOR: See you outside.
(TREVOR and GUPTA exit. CATHY stands shocked and upset.)
Say Johnny Jimmy Lancelot, Johnny . . . .

(She breaks down. HECTOR puts his arms round her. Pause.)
Trevor. . . . .

HECTOR: He’s a good kid. Give him time. He’s also mad . . . .

CATHY: It runs in the family. I’m also worried about Gupta. He’s so frightened of hospitals. What if he dies?

HECTOR: No one is going to die.

CATHY: How do you know?
HECTOR: Just . . . because!
(Pause.)
Cathy, there’s something I must tell you . . . .

CATHY: You don’t have to. Just thanks for sorting it all out.

HECTOR: Couldn’t imagine Gupta moving in with a ‘fascist’ like me.

CATHY: That’s not what I meant.
(Pause.)

HECTOR: Remember those things I said about what happened to me in the Army?

CATHY: The reasons why you’re getting asylum here?

HECTOR: It wasn’t that terrible. Bad yes, but not that terrible.

CATHY: I’m glad you’re here safely, Hector, and not forgotten in some prison there.

HECTOR: There it seems the only respectable place to be.
(Pause.)
I’ll write to you.

CATHY: Just think of me once in a while.

HECTOR: ‘Once in a blue moon’?

CATHY: On the beach in sunglasses and a big hat, sipping ice-cold cooldrink and eating fancy little cakes.

(Pause. He hands her his walkman.)
HECTOR: Take it and play it on the plane. Home’s only twelve cassettes away.

CATHY: But your special tape’s still in it.

HECTOR: Ja, play it before you leave.

CATHY: You know I can’t stand Boeremusiek!

(He kisses her goodbye. Takes his carrier bag, packs his cassettes, etc., and exits.)

You’ve left your kettle . . .

(Pause. She picks it up slowly.)

Maybe I’ll just hang onto it for a while . . . Ag no sis man, look at my fancy hat . . . Shame . . .

(She pushes out the dents and puts it on firmly. Goes back to the money and counts it in three little piles:)


Gupta . . . Hector . . . Trevor . . . Ja never mind, Cathy September, you’ll relax in the Southern Hemisphere one day, when you retire.

(Puts on her overall.)

Now let’s get this place back to normal.

(Takes the walkman and puts on the earphones.)

Hector Prince, if this is terrible Boeremusiek that makes me cry with longing, I’ll go and hang myself in the lavatory.

(She picks up a box. Stops and listens.)

What’s this? I know this sound? I can smell it . . . the salt, the foam . . . the seaweed, the seagulls . . . the wind from the bay . . .

(We hear the sounds of sea on rocks, gulls.)

. . . it’s . . . it’s just like . . .

(The sea crashes on the rocks. She laughs with delight. The sun shines on her face.)

THE END OF THE PLAY

-----------------oOo----------------
GLOSSARY

aandag attention
baas boss
bioscope cinema
bladdy, blerrie bloody
bliksem bastard, to mess up someone
bobotie baked savoury mince dish
boetie little brother
bokkie sweetie-pie
cherry girlfriend
china friend, pal
deurmekaar mixed-up
doos cunt, spoilsport, behaving like an arsehole
dop a tot, a drink
dwaal lost
Egoli, Joëys, Joburg Johannesburg
eina ouch
ek sé I say, I’m telling you
gat arsehole, hole in the road
goeters, goede things
goffel slang for coloured tart
gogga insect
hardegat hard-arsed
Here, Jirra, Yere Lord, God
hou you bek keep your trap shut
indaba conference, your problem
ja yes
jammie car
jislaaik, yislaaik! Heavens!
jol joke, a celebration
jong fellow, youth
kaalgat bare-arsed, naked
kak shit, rubbish
kif good, all right
klaar finished, over
klap hit, strike
kop head
kraal corral
laager fortified enclosure
lahnie, larney white, boss, stuck up
lekker nice, fine
maat mate
man, manne guy(s)
moegoe dumbcluck, backvelder
moer hit, fuck up
moffie male homosexual
mooi nice, attractive
ou, ouk, oke, ouen, outie chap, fellow, person
panga machete
pasop be careful
poephol  arsehole, idiot
poeslap  sanitary napkin
pozzy  place, hideout
robot  traffic light
sat  full, sufficient
score  give
shame  exclamation of sympathy
shebeen  drinking den
sies, sis  exclamation of dislike
skeef  crooked
skelm  rascal
skinner  gossip
skollie  delinquent
skop  kick
skrik  fright
skyf  cigarette
sluk  swallow
smaak  like, enjoy
sommer  just, rather
suka  go away!
sukkel  struggle
tee£  bitch
troepies  army conscripts
tune  tell
vasbyt  hang on, hang in there
voetsek  get lost
waai  go
zol  cigarette, smoke

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