

**GOING
DOWN GORGEOUS**

a one-person kugel cantata

by
PIETER-DIRK UYS

PROLOGUE

PDU:

What I want to celebrate tonight is being South African. My father Hannes Uys was an Afrikaner; my mother Helga Bassel was a German Jew. So that makes me a Jewish Afrikaner! At least I belong to both chosen people.

I've spent most of my time illuminating the Calvinist Afrikaner side of me through Mrs Evita Bezuidenhout. Tonight I want to move to the left: Ms Nowell Fine. She started more or less the same time as Evita did – 1978. Nowell Fine: the liberal white South African. Member of the PFP and the DP. Jewish African Princess.

Kugel. Now a rare and protected species – the white ones. There are many black kugels, some called Felecia, others called Dali.

So share with me the saga of Nowell Fine. Going Down Gorgeous. From 1981 to the years beyond 2000 – a typical South African who was loudly left while secretly voting right, and who believed she was right because everyone else had to be wrong.

In order to play a successful kugel, I need three things. Shoes, hair and mouth. I didn't learn much during my 54 years: can't surf the sea or the Internet, can't spell or play the trombone, but I can put on lipstick without a mirror! Eat your heart out Nataniel!

Rewind your minds to 1981.

Take it away, **DORIS DAY!**

(DORIS DAY sings between each episode. During this PDU dresses into Nowell in full view of the audience, each outfit depicting her in a stage of her life and reflecting the fashion of the time. Also to be as practical as possible for easy addition on stage.)

1981

NOWELL: Nimrod? Now where's that damn garden boy! Nimrod? Careful with those flowers! They're flowers, Nimrod, OK? Not weeds! Weeds you pull out; flowers you leave in. Not visa versa! No, leave those weeds; they're medicinal muti!

Oh howzit Dolls?

I'm absolutely finished, I swear to God. If I don't lose 2 kilos by Monday, I'll platz on the spot! Ever since I had my kids – it's never been the same. It's all just too much for a white woman. Anyway, I've just been to the hairdresser! Hey, there's this fantastic new guy in the Main Road? He frizzed my hair, freaked me out, blew my mind, ripped me off and all for under R40! An absolute bargain, hey? And with my latest facelift and boobjob, here I am, the Dolly Parton of Fresnaye! Well, nearly.

Anyway

I'm so glad you could pop in your 1981 tax deductible contributions to the 'Help Our Suppressed Blacks Charity' of which I am the Chairperson. Yes no well OK fine

Oh my God, Nimrod not that bush! It's my yesterday today and . . . oh fuck there goes tomorrow!

Listen, just have some more champagne, while I have an urgent word to my gardener. Oh, and while you're about it, have a look at those annual Black Sash reports on malnutrition in the Transkei! Look at those pictures? Dolls, it's enough to make you throw up the caviar all of the paté! Those blacks are so thin. They don't eat for days! How do they do it!!! Nimrod? Nimrod! Now where is that black so-and-so? Garden Boys . . . sorry, Pastoral Plurals! They're so unreliable! They squat all over South Africa, and then when you offer them a decent job, all you get is damn cheek! They expect everything, including a decent wage! Ungrateful!

Nimrod? Madam's calling!

Oops! Oh, there you are under the bush! No man, sis Nimrod, don't give Madam such a fright! You merge with the shadows! Now listen,

did you weed the lawn? OK, you wed the lawn. Did you polish the oak trees? Scrub the patio? See to Madam's Mercedes? Master's Audi? Master Selwyn's Golf?

'Yes-madam-no-madam!' Nimrod! Don't be so submissive! Madam won't beat you. Madam will kill you with kindness. There, Nimrod, off your knees. I'm on your side, true's God. Remember, boy, Madam is a liberal! Shame, one has to be so patient, so careful. After the Nats won this 1981 election? What that damn PW Botha and his terrible Government puts them through. I mean: Pass Books, Apartheid, separate development, laws; it never ends! Look, I'm all for integration. I won't mind living next to Blacks. I swear to God. Although on second thoughts, this suburb is so expensive, I doubt if any kaffir could ever afford to live here!

Here he comes; change the subject. I don't want us to talk politics in front of the schwartze! What is it now, Nimrod? No, Nimrod, get off your knees. Stand erect and show your manhood! No, Nimrod, put it away! That's a very naughty thing to do! Naughty natives! Mmmmmmm Outstanding!

So what's it now? Are you hungry? Didn't Dora feed? That maid! Shame, Nimrod yum-yum? Don't worry, Madam will see to everything. Salieri? Leave something on the plate for Nimrod, there's a good Afghan. OK Nimrod, now don't dawdle over your Epol, or Madam will be very crossy-crossy.

Adapt or die! God knows we try, God knows we try! My husband Herbert and I are absolutely crazy about South Africa, I swear to God. But now that we've got most of our money out, we might as well emigrate. I mean there are two things we can't stand about South Africa: apartheid and the blacks!

Is that the time! I'm late for the gynie! OK bye doll. Listen, next week, we'll do Sun City. There's a new sex show on! 'The Postman always comes twice!' OK Nimrod, Madam's ready.

Now listen, today Madam is going to play 'Lady Chatterley' and you are the young virile naked game keeper! Now no rough black hands on Madam's fair white skin today, Nimrod. I know yesterday we played 'Rhodesia Rhodesia' – so then it was OK. But today Madam is a truly

Victorian lady, so please wear your nice rubber garden gloves at all times.

Right. Madam is going to hide in the Jacuzzi. Close your eyes and count till 10, if you can. And Nimrod, if you cheat or peep, or not do exactly as I say, I'll just pick up the phone and report you directly to the police! You know what they do to cheeky blacks like you? You'll be on a bus back to the Transkei to starve before you can squat, boy.

I'll always say it over and over: I hate apartheid! But thank God for the System!

DORIS DAY SINGS:

AS PDU DRESSES INTO NOWELL 1985

1985

NOWELL: I'm in a state of shock, I swear! My husband and I just watched PW Botha's Rubicon Speech on TV? It's the end for us now, I swear to God! The end in English and Afrikaans. And my horoscope in Fair Lady told me 15 August 1985 would be a good year? Goodbye Rand! Dora? Dora! Now where is that maid!

Dora? Are the kids ready for supper? Kids? Are you ready for supper? OK kids, get into the car!

Dora? Take the dogs! Get them some Kentucky Fried Chicken, they love it! Those dogs really freak me out! But that's what you get when you cross a Rottweiler with an Alsatian: at last you get a white neighbourhood!

Oh Dora? Don't take the Master's Mercedes or my BMW! Take your shopping Honda! And Dora, see that the kid's don't have too many Irish coffees! I don't want my kids spoilt!

Oh My God, I'm absolutely finished!

What would I do without Dora? Ever since she's got her own driver's licence, Dora's taken such a weight off my shoulders. She now drives the kids to dinner every night. Aren't I a lucky mother? All I have to make for supper are 4 reservations.

And anyway, most of the steakhouses in Sea Point are sort-of multi-racial and don't care who comes as long as they pay, which means Dora can also eat at the same table with the kids. Except suddenly she's gone vegetarian! No meat! Just eats vegetables and salads! So much for cannibals in Africa!

It reminds me of a joke my husband Herbert told the other day. He says in the homeland casino of Sun City they now play a South African version of Russian Roulette. It seems the white man goes to bed with three black girls, and one of them turns out to be a cannibal!

I also don't understand it, I swear to God.

Shame, Herbert can't tell a joke! You won't believe what he said to me the other night.

He said: "Nowell? Are you asleep?"

I said no.

He said: “ So then why do you always keep your eyes closed while we have sex?”

I said: “Herbert, God forbid I should ever see you enjoying yourself!”

No sense of humour at all. Hang on, I must do my mouth

I swear to God, that is the longest my mouth has been closed since 1984. Which reminds me of a George Orwell nightmare I had last night! Did I have a nightmare last night? I can't tell you! I'll tell you!

I dreamt those AWB neo-nazi's took over the SA government and banned all us liberals to the Moon. The Moon? Oh no, that place has got no atmosphere! Do you like my hands? I got them from my ma. You won't believe how many people stop me at the hairdresser, or the supermarket, or the gynie and say: “Nowell Fine? What do you do to keep your hands so nice and soft and smooth?” Nothing.

Of course Herbert never relaxes like me. He's always wheeling and dealing, either with the banned ANC on the one hand, or the hated Government on the other! Anything to try to beat those damn sanctions. Anything just to get our money out of the country! And now this Rubicon Speech! I swear to God, if I knew the road to the airport was safe, I'd emigrate! But where would we emigrate to?

Which country out there could offer us the standard of living to which we have become so accustomed? Israel? Oh do me a favour! I'm already in the frying pan; I don't intend jumping into the fire! Australia? Please! Final proof that there's death after life! Herbert went to look at New Zealand, but it was closed.

And London is out. My friend Thalia lives there now, and she says it's impossible to get a nice cheap clean reliable maid in London. So give me Cape Town any day. I'd rather be killed in my own bed, than have to get up and make it myself!

Anyway, I don't want to talk about politics! I just want to say, if it wasn't for Dora, I'd have a nervous breakdown on the spot, I swear to God! That girl is so outstanding. We've had her since she was R20 a month!

So, things being what they are today, I said to my husband: “Listen doll, if we can't get our money out of the country, let's invest it here in

South Africa. Help some poor downtrodden black. You never know one day . . .?” And so, let me tell you something outstanding.

Herbert and me have decided to build Dora her own little house in Khayelitsha! No, it’s a bargain. Ever since those blacks started throwing stones in the townships, you don’t even have to buy bricks! It’ll be a nice kosher little pad, with a nice patio where she can entertain. There’s even place for a pool, but Herbert said: “Wait with the pool already! Rome was not build in one day!” Of course Herbert would know.

Anyway, she’ll have a Jacuzzi in the bedroom and a bidet in the bathroom where she can wash her hair. A sunken lounge like in Dynasty. And a nice spare room for her family

Can’t say I’m mad about that family trampling mud and muck all over the wall-to-wall carpets, but they seem to have a very close family thing going among blacks, hey? God, it’s revolting!

Anyway, we had the whole place burglar-barred and burglar-proofed, so if a kaffir so as much touches the front gate, he’ll be locked up without trial before you can whisper “Free Mandela”!

Well no actually doll, they don’t yet have real electricity in the black townships as such. Just in visible places that appear on TV news, like where the Tutus live and Winnie hides. Whatever else you see is just for show. Wires hanging from ceilings; holes in the streets. With all the burnt-out cars around, it could so easily be a scene from Beirut! Anyway Herbert has put a nice portable generator in for Dora, so that she can have all the nice things: hairdryer, Fax, TV, microwave, deepfreeze – you know, the usual.

And there’s the whole point!

If things go from worse to worst here in South Africa and we liberals can’t get out of this damn country, because of sanctions, or civil war, or God knows what other fucking catastrophe is waiting around the next corner! And if we whites are then forced to hand over everything to a black majority government, my husband and me will just move into our new house in Khayelitsha!

Not only will we have a Jacuzzi, a bidet, a patio, a sunken lounge and a microwave, but also a nice spare room for the maid!

What would we do without Dora?

Look, I don't mind the blacks killing each other, as long as they leave
my maid and my garden boy alone!

Outstanding!

Right, now I'm ready for bed!

DORIS DAY SINGS:

AS PDU DRESSES INTO NOWELL 1994

1994

NOWELL: These pills give me such a terrible taste in my mouth! I take pills to sleep and pills to wake and then pills to remind me to take more pills, by which time I've forgotten what pill I've taken and therefore take more of the wrong pills and end up with such a terrible taste in my mouth.

What day is it? Why do I have a feeling it's important? If the Election is coming on the 27 April and that's 42 days away, today must be . . . ?
Oh shit, I'm late for the ANC meeting!

(ON THE PHONE)

Hello howzit?

Hello howzit?

Is that the ANC? Ay-en-see!

I want to speak to Dora in Fundraising! OK Comrade, I'll hold. Ja, awethu to you too. Sayibona Nomsa, where's Dora? Well, tell her to get off the other phone! Tell her, it's her madam here!

Dora? I overslept! It's those new pills. I know I was supposed to be at the Fundraising Meeting at 11! What's the time now? 2.00! Not so bad for African Time!

Dora, you know me . . . I'm terrible in the morning! You weren't my maid for 17 years . . .

19 years? Suddenly you've learnt to count already! Really? I never! That's a lie! I never paid you R20 a month? I can't remember! Anyway how could you get by on R20 a month . . .

Oh my God, my favourite earrings from Poland! I've always wondered what happened to them! Did you sell them? How much did you get for them? Is that all? Dora you were robbed!

No, of course I'm not angry.

Look, if you didn't steal from me as my trusted maid, you'll certainly going to steal from me as my democratically-elected government!

That's a joke, Dora. Lighten up, doll. It's 1994. You're in charge now, so develop a sense of humour. Learn from us Jews: we call it bittere

gelachte. OK, I'll get in the kombi right now, if it's not yet been recycled as a taxi!

Amandla! Viva! La Cucuracha!

(END OF PHONECALL)

God, If I ever thought my little Xhosa maid would be where she is today, I would've paid her R300 a week! You've got to laugh, hey? Isn't that what we all talked about at dinner parties in the bad old days? How after the bloody Revolution, the maid would become the madam? And here we are and what's really changed? The only difference is that your maid's probably sitting at the table with you now, wearing one of your favourite outfits! Politically we're post-menstrual as opposed to premenstrual? No, we're bleeding 24 hours a day and no tampon of democracy seems to help.

And what do we talk about round dinner tables now? Besides where to get the cheapest tins of tuna to stack in the garage! A crash course in how to survive!

Last night we exchanged tips on how to deal with the problems of stone throwing on the N2 on the way to DF Malan Airport. Very simple: stay in the fast lane, drive like hell and don't stop for anyone in distress, even a nun with a broken leg! Drive over the bitch! And wear a crash helmet in the car! Over the main course we discussed how to survive restaurant robberies in Johannesburg: you know, when those shmucks run in with their AK47's just after you've had your crayfish cocktail? And force you to lie on the floor with a soggy chip up your nostril? Firstly, don't make jokes; no wisecracks. Also don't wear any jewellery in Joburg, especially not on pierced ears. The ears go with the loot! Take some cash so as not to irritate the robbers. And keep a condom handy just in case they understand English . . .

The as far as foiling car highjackings? Slow down at a red robot but don't stop! Keep your windows closed, all the doors locked. Blowup Rottweiler on the back seat going woof woof woof! Tin of DOOM on the front seat.

The crime and violence is one thing. The other thing we're all really worried about is this proposed wealth tax! I suppose it makes sense, considering we've got so much and they've got so little, in spite of

what we've allowed them to steal and sell. I even said it to Dora the other day. I said I'm prepared to voluntarily contribute 15% of Herbert's assets. But who will gather this tax and decide how to spend the money?

Don't tell me these new politicians haven't learnt all the lessons from the past government to know what to steal, how to tax and when to run? And, as irony will have it, after all those years in exile and/or jail, they will win the coming election and toyi-toyi up to the Union Buildings, only to find the National Kitty empty! Just a half-full bottle of Pik's 10-year old and a warped LP of Mimi singing Die Stem!

How do I look?

That's one decision I made when I joined the ANC. I said: "Nowell Fine, you see that each time you go to an ANC meeting, you go dressed to kill!"

It feels like yesterday, hey? 1991, when Madiba was freed and the ANC made legal? Three and a half years ago! I went down the road to Bantry Bay to the first ANC meeting that was held in the Cohen's double-garage. I went with Dora just to see who all those terrorists were. My God, all the garden boys from the neighbourhood? Even our latest Nimrod! And the local Anglican priest! I always suspected he was a closet queen; not a closet democrat!

Anyway, I wanted them all to see me with a black just to show that I was on their side. And Dora was perfect! So there and then I joined provisionally and temporarily as an interim member of the ANC. Then Dora started doing all sorts of work for the local ANC office, sorting application forms and all those envelopes with donations from Denmark. Our Rottweiler ate the envelopes! Hope they weren't important.

So eventually her room in the yard was so cluttered, we moved her into the spare room of the Big House and turned her outside room into an office. Which turned out to be great for our dinner parties. No longer do we have to hire some black stage managers from the Nico Malan as token guests. We now just introduce Dora as our best friend and she also knows how to serve a soufflé!

One day I was driving her to the ANC office and we saw one of the returned exiles. What's his name? God they all look alike! High up in the ANC, big comrade, big Mercedes, small brain?

Anyway I said: "I'm Nowell Fine, you might have heard of me? I was in the Struggle. PFP! DP! Black Sash! I bathed black babies in the 80s! Dora said they never bothered to bath black babies; they just had new ones! But I bathed a black baby for democracy! Don't you have anything for me to do in the organisation? PR? Something outstanding?"

All he said was: "Sorry. Too old. Too white." But then Dora told me how much I was worth, and who I knew! I got the job! Nowell Fine, Chief Fundraiser for the ANC in the Western Cape!

You'll be amazed how easy it is, especially in these days closer to the election. So many of my friends want out! But can't get their houses or antiques sold in time. So I arrange for them to go to Sun City for the weekend. While they're away, there is a burglary! The house is cleaned out! They come back from Sun City and go oi oi oi. They claim the massive insurance in off-shore bonds and go to California for a permanent holiday.

Meanwhile we sell all their antiques to some returned exile who can afford to buy all the eurocentric shit they're accustomed to at vastly inflated prices!

The ANC is so impressed with me, I got a nice T-shirt from Mbeki: "Jesus raised Lazarus; Nowell Fine raises Funds!"

Now have I got everything? Filofax, lipstick, other lipstick, lipgloss, keys, gun . . . Oh, I nearly forgot the crash helmet! It's probably in the car! Listen if you think I look like drek in a turban, you should see me with a crash helmet on the turban! Anything to survive! I'm ready for the New South Africa!

Nkosi sikele - moi!

DORIS DAY SINGS:

AS PDU DRESSES INTO NOWELL 1995

1995

NOWELL: Oh my God, I've got such a hangover. When will I learn! Yesterday's ANC Woman's League meeting celebrating the first year in government for the ANC? When will I learn not to mix Chardonnay and kaffirbeer!

And I don't even enjoy going to these meetings! I never know what to wear! At least in the old SA you wore something no one could afford. Now they say I must go ethnic! I said: I'm sorry, I'm Jewish. If I go ethnic I look like Barbra Streisand or The Nanny!

Dora! Now where is that potential voter! Dora! Can you believe it? Dora's really taking democracy to heart. She's on a go-slow. Won't do washing or the cleaning; just lies in bed all day eating chokkies and watching TV! She's become so white!

And this after everything I've done for that girl. When I found out she was a Xhosa, I learnt Xhosa! For three years, every Wednesday between 4 and 7 behind the garage with the garden boy, I learnt Xhosa. The clicks nearly paralysed my tongue, but I did it. And the day I knew enough Xhosa to go up to Dora and say: howzit Dora, she answers in Zulu!

Why am I always the last one to know what is going on in my own house?

Then, on top of it all, I can't find my garden boy: is he in jail, in parliament, or dead? Now they tell me he's in therapy. This is not good for my garden!

Then my husband's just phoned me to say that our Construction Company has been banned from putting through tenders to build houses for the RDP! Banned, because of 'affirmative action'.

'Affirmative action'? Wake me when it's over! What 'affirmative action', for God's sake? It seems our board of directors is too white! Yes, it's me and my husband! Have you ever heard something so racist in all your life?

And then to put the cherry on the cake . . . no, that sounds too Eurocentric . . . to put the mopaniworm on the putupap, I come back

from my holiday in Plett to find out we've got squatters on the front lawn! On the lawn I imported from California! Me! After everything I did for the Struggle!

I went down to them this morning and said very civilly and in their own language: 'Sayibona. I'm Comrade Madam from the big house.' I said: 'I just want you squatters to know that we are all on your side. We all know you were promised so many things before the last election: houses, cars, jobs, hope! And here you are still living in cardboard boxes like garbage!'

Well my dear, life's a bitch! We just want you to know that we think it's a damn disgrace and we're all very very sorry, OK?

But you can't have a squatter camp on my doorstep! I said: "Look, it's not that I'm against squatters. Some of my best friends have squatters!" I said: "It's just that when my mother died, she left me this piece of land in her will, and if my mother finds out that there are kaffirs squatting on her land, she'd platz on the spot!"

I tried to negotiate with them like any other normal South African; I wrote out a cheque. They didn't know what it was. I waved a new R200 note at them; they just waved back. I tried to give them my new digital watch but they'd already taken it last week! I said: 'please understand, I'll help you move! I'll find you another place to live! In someone else's backyard! Just get the fuck off my land!'

Oh God, I mustn't raise my voice with a hangover! I can feel the reverberations through all my tubes! Maybe that's why my silicone's gone sour. I'm having a nervous breakdown in front of my very eyes! I just can't calm down. Nothing helps. Aromatherapy makes me sneeze. Valium's a joke, even the Rottweiler spits it out. All I'm left with is Prozac. But how many Prozac's can I take in an hour? So call me old-fashioned.

When I'm stressed out like now, I just fall back on an old therapy that's helped me through traumas for the last 30 years. Two husbands, four children, 24 maids, 43 Nimrods and the menopause. And it's simply sitting down like now and putting on loads of makeup! So forgive me: I can't think straight until I see a real mouth!

Better

So where was I? Oh yes, schlepping around the cardboard boxes trying to blend in! I didn't even speak English properly. I didn't want them to accuse me of Eurocentricity, or racism or – God forbid – class! I was so politically-correct in my conversation with those squatters, that half the time I didn't know what the hell I was talking about! Then suddenly I had an absolute brainwave. In my own brain!

I remembered my husband's phone call, telling me that our company letterhead was too white for business. And so I said: 'Hello, squatters, listen? Comrade Madam is going to make you an offer you can't refuse! I will give you a big car, white chauffeur, mansion, maid, pool, Jacuzzi, servants, pets, aromatherapy, hydro. Health and Racquet Club three times a week! All you have to do is become Managing Director of our company! OK? You don't even have to know how to read or write – we'll do it for you! All you have to be is Managing Director. Be black, be beautiful, be on time once a week and leave all the boring financial details to us. OK?

Not so fast. This is a democracy. They must now also consult each other; negotiate with each other. Find a forum, a quorum, a shmorum! I'm having a nervous breakdown!

I said: 'you're driving me crazy! I've got to be at the hairdresser!' I said: 'here's my spare cell phone with my number. Once you've decided what sort of car you want, give me a call. If my maid Dora answers, don't talk. Just breathe heavily with intent!'

No, Dora must be frightened off to the townships! She wants to be Managing Director, and she can read and write! And that's our fault! She makes me so nervous I can't even remember her cell phone number! No, I'm going to give her a piece of my mind!

(PHONECALL)

Sayibona Dora? Yes, it's Madam, how did you know? Yes, Dora, Madam upstairs. No, I don't want you to get out of bed! Stay stay, go slow and zei Gesundt!

I just want you to know, has the chauffeur gone down to the garage? Please fax down to the garage and tell Philimon to bring the new Mercedes to the front. Oh, when was that stolen? Then send up the 4 X 4 – no one steals that! I first drive over the bastards. I want to go down

to the squatters. No, Dora, I'm not negotiating anything. Look, I'm a member of the ANC now – I don't bend over backwards anymore. I just have old clothes for them. Not your size doll! Yes, I'm wearing my ANC colours, so no one will highjack the car.

Yes, Dora, Madam's got the gun and condoms in her bag as always!

I'm on my way! Tell Philimon I'll be down in 10 seconds! Don't be so cheeky, Dora . . . I don't understand that language, Dora, you're being unconstitutional!

(END OF PHONECALL)

You see what I mean? The blacks have taken over!!

Good news and bad news.

The bad news is: the shit's hitting the fan.

The good news is: the fan's not working!

DORIS DAY SINGS:

AS PDU GETS INTO NOWELL 1997

1997

NOWELL: Oh my God, I look like Winnie! “It’s a pack of lies! It’s ludicrous! Poppycock! The concoction of a cabal! And I’m very very sorry!” No, I won’t get away with that like she did! I can’t believe it! I’ve been summonsed to appear in front of the Truth Commission! Why me? What do I know about truth; I’m just a normal South African!

Dora! Where is that potential voter! Dora, please come and help me choose a nice outfit! I don’t know how to wear it!

And it’s not just a Truth Commission like Winnie had. This is the special Amnesty Commission! I said: I don’t need amnesty; just alimony!

Can you believe it! I’m divorced! I went to the 100 Club Lunch last year to hear Buthelezi talk. A long talk! When I got home Herbert had moved out and in with his young secretary. May the new sex kill him! An Amnesty Commission? Am I in trouble, I said? I’m a member of the ANC. Don’t we get a blanket amnesty or something?

No, it’s got something to do with a former garden boy who worked for us in the 80s. Called Nimrod! Firstly I don’t remember the 80s. Total blank. And secondly how should I remember that Nimrod? All our garden boys were called Nimrod! Now I’m supposed to give him some character reference? I hope it’s not the other way round, with him giving me marks out of ten! I’m so sick of this democracy. In order to get a bank overdraft I now need a letter of reference from the maid and the garden boy!

So I phoned Herbert. “Do you remember a Nimrod that was a terrorist?”

“They were all terrorists,” he said.

Then we knew. That Nimrod that weeded the law and smoked the weeds? I remember saying: “Herbert, look at the way that boy weeds the garden! He’s a damn terrorist!” Now suddenly he wants amnesty as a “freedom fighter”?

Do me a favour!

I wonder what he did in the Struggle in order to need amnesty? Put a bomb in a bar and kill innocent kids like Robert MacBride did? Run into a church with an AK47 and shoot up people praying like those APLA men did? Put a tyre round someone's neck and burn them alive like Winnie said they should do?

Well, if he did any of those 'politically-motivated crimes', he'll get his amnesty and a nice job in the Government!

And to think he worked in my garden in the 80s! I was so exposed in the 80s. I had no guns, no rottweiler! Just a poodle with a bad breath! God, I hope this wasn't one of the Nimrods I did it with! Listen we never slept together; we did it standing up. I drew the line: careful Madam's hair, madam's lipstick, madam's make-up. Just put it in and I'll walk towards you? Now, man, I'm joking!

Anyway I said to Dora: what must I do? Should I say something in Xhosa? She says there's not enough time to learn.

Then she tells me to ask her new boyfriend, Siphso. I said: I've never liked your boyfriends! No, says Dora – he's her cousin from Nigeria? Oh Dora, do me a favour! I know a local cocaine-dealer when I see one in my kitchen, eating my gefilte fish!

God, he's so black! Because he makes me feel so white! Very political. Never smiles. Hates whites. Makes me feel terrible. Calls me a European Settler. I said, sorry Comrade, I'm no settler; I was born in Sea Point by caesarean!

Everything about me is Eurocentric, he says. My language, my art, my culture. The Struggle has no place for Eurocentric imperialist colonialist racists!

I said: oh really? If it's all too Eurocentric for your liking Siphso, give back the Mercedes Benz you highjacked last week. Kick off the Gucci shoes. Take off the Pierre Cardin suit. Spit out the false teeth! Flush the coke down the loo! Get back into the tree and swing by your tail, Siphso!

Next time I see him, I'll say: true's God, you win. I'm Eurocentric and a settler. So I'm going back to Europe. But I'm taking the electricity with me! Anyway, Dora tells me that Siphso says the one person the Truth Commission must expose, is Nelson Mandela. I said, for God's

sake, leave him alone. Nelson Mandela's all we whites have got between us and the refugee camp!

No, Sipho says Nelson Mandela is an imposter! He's not real. I said, for God's sake, look at the man! 27 years in a lime quarry and jails, he comes out half blind, half-deaf, TB, half a prostrate! No wife! How more real can you get?

No, Sipho says the Nelson Mandela we call Madiba is not the real Mandela, because the real Nelson Mandela died in jail in 1980!

I said, really? I never read that in the Citizen? No, says Sipho, no one knew that Mandela has died because he was a banned person, no one knew he was alive either. But President P W Botha knew and his generals knew.

So they got some fancy Jewish plastic surgeon over from Sea Point, you know, someone who wanted to keep his son out of the Army. So he goes over to Robben Island and chooses four tall middle-aged blacks who look like Sidney Poitier and gives them plastic surgery to get them to look like what he thought Nelson Mandela would look like. But no one knew what Mandela looked like because his picture was also banned. All they had to work from was an old anti-apartheid t-shirt from a rally in Trafalgar Square! I said, Sipho, you're losing me here, you're losing me! I saw Nelson Mandela come out of jail! I saw with my own eyes on TV!

Yes, says Sipho, Nelson Mandela comes out of jail! And what is the first thing he does? Does he pick up the ANC banner and lead the blacks to victory? No, he speaks Afrikaans.

Does he demand that FW de Klerk and PW Botha be jailed as war criminals? No, he forms a government with them!

Who does he go and have tea with? Mrs Verwoerd!

He wears the No 6 Springbok Rugby Jersey!

He sings Die Stem van Suid-Afrika!

Nelson Mandela comes out of 27 years in jail a reformed Afrikaner Nationalist!

Except, of course, no one would ever say that, because he's The Great Nelson Mandela.

No one except Winnie Mandela.

But she's not saying much because she has quite a few skeletons in her closet, some very small.

So they made a deal with Winnie. They said: if you keep quiet about the ones we've done, we'll keep quiet about those you've done.

But Winnie can't sleep with an imposter, so that's why she's now divorced Nelson Mandela.

I said, Siphos, I swear to God! This is the biggest kak I've ever heard! Stop spreading these rumours about Nelson Mandela's health. You know how the financial markets react? Mandela poeps and the rand vanishes!

Anyway, don't you realise that we whites are all terrified to death what will happen to us after Nelson Mandela dies?

No, says Siphos, Nelson Mandela won't die. Because there are five Mandela clones waiting in the closet!

DORIS DAY SINGS:

WHILE PDU GETS INTO NOWELL 1998

1998

NOWELL: Please don't say a word. Don't say a word! If I hear another "Amandla! Awethu!" I'll platz on the spot!

I'm absolutely f-i-n-i-s-h-e-d!

Dora? I'm back! How far are you?

I've just got back from Robben Island! And not as an inmate. Listen, please, if I was an inmate, I'd be standing here a fat cat politician, with a Nobel-prize in one hand and an Oscar in the other!

Forget.

I went as a normal everyday member of the public. A tourist! You know, one of the 1.4 million of us still paying taxes in this democracy of 37 million potential criminals?

So you know how I felt, seeing where all my taxpayers money is going! It's not going into Health, Welfare or Education! It's all going into the preservation of Robben Island.

Why? Because Robben Island is becoming quote a monument to the struggle for democracy unquote. Oh wake me when it's over! For what a monument! What about us? Where's our monument? For us white liberals who stayed here when everyone else ran overseas? Us white liberals who treated our servants like decent human beings in spite of the fact that they behaved like kaffirs? What about us?

And what is Robben Island? We're talking prime real estate here. Can you imagine the billions we could get if we sold Robben Island? Get Pam Golding to sell it to Michael Jackson! He could turn it into a human rights crèche.

And then we'd have enough money to build those million houses, heal the million people, educate the million kids. Even put a symphony orchestra into every township. Do you get my drift?

And that's the truth! But don't tell anyone I'm telling the Truth! I'm a member of the ANC. If they find out I tell the Truth, they chuck me out of the party!

Dora, hurry up! I don't want to be late because of you!

So I go to the Waterfront at 5 am. To stand in line for tickets to go to Robben Island! A queue? Me? Sorry, doll, I don't stand in queues! Eventually I say to the man selling tickets: "Excuse me? Oi! Why am I standing in a queue?"

He stands up; now I see his t-shirt: I WAS ON ROBBEN ISLAND 1976 – 85 . . . salaam salaam.

"Comrade," I say, "why am I standing in a queue?"

He says: "If you whites want to go to Robben Island you must first suffer, baby, suffer!"

Thank you very much! After everything I did in the Struggle. I suffered! Sunburn, south easter, a seagull shat in my hair, seasick! What a schlep! Eventually we get to the Island: single file among the penguins and old warders. Cauliflower ears and broken noses, all wearing t-shirts saying I WAS NICE TO NELSON. And on the back: AND THAT'S WHY I'VE GOT AMNESTY – SO WHEEEE.

Eventually we get to Section B – where they all spent so much time in solitary. Very depressing: Nelson's cell, Sisulu's cell, Sobukwe's cell, Tokyo's cell. I don't want to be a spoilsport, but I've got a nose for renovation. The whole thing is just too too too Revolutionary Roccocco ala Schindler's List! And the emotion? Even the Japanese are in tears! You'd swear this was Disneyland!

Eventually we get to the souvenir shop: called the Hard Rock Café. I got this kaftan with Madiba's face on it. A scarf with the flag for Dora. Pair of sunglasses that Winnie left behind. A nice toilet roll with PW Botha's face all over it!

Then it's time to go back by boat. By now we're bonding. I mean, we've been through it together. So we're swapping e-mail addresses, singing protest songs: We shall Overcome, Nkosi Sikele Afrika, How much is the doggie in the window . . . you know, the usual.

We get back to the Waterfront? Chaos! PAGAD's having a peaceful demonstration – blood and Muslims everywhere?

Then the three hours traffic jam and now I'm here at home in my flat in Bantry Bay and it feels as if I've been on the Island for 20 years without the promise of a presidency or a quick divorce!

Dora! Come now, we must go!

Of course, you realise the United Nations has put Robben Island on a par with Auschwitz and Hiroshima. Well, I'm not so sure. I've never heard of anyone who spent 20 years at Auschwitz. And as far as I know, no one came out of Hiroshima and became President.

What is the ANC doing with their most potent symbol. Leave Robben Island alone; let it live in the eye of the beholder!

But oh no, any excuse to make a quick buck. All those dinner parties on Robben Island for anyone who will cough up quarter of a million rand! Crazy! I've never heard of Jews having Barmitzvahs at Auschwitz! But then maybe ANC doesn't stand for African National Congress; maybe it stands for A Nice Cheque. Let's face it; we've got the best government money can buy! Maybe it all just shows how bad things were supposed to be, when they weren't so bad at all. I mean if Robben Island was really so terrible, how come everyone survived? A whole Government! And they can't wait to get back in.

But no, I'm glad I went! Everyone should go. Look, they won't make a Schindler's List based on Robben Island, just simply everyone was busy writing books and getting honorary degrees, no one bothered to make a list. And there won't be another Sarafina set on Robben Island because the Department of Health and Racquet is bankrupt. So Robben Island will just remain what it is – everything for everyone. Like democracy.

Oh God, this is not me! But Dora says, this is what all Xhosa virgins look like! Dora? Hurry up, we must get to the airport in time. Qantas Airlines hates people to be late.

Can't believe I'll be back in Australia tomorrow with my kids. They're doing very well there, but really are so homesick for South Africa. So I'm bringing them the perfect present: the Maid, Dora!

And there I'll be over the weekend surrounded by all the doctors and dentists and vets, all wanting to know how terrible things are in South Africa. From me who was on Robben Island.

They'll never believe me in Perth. What can I tell them? That Robben Island has become a joke? No, I'll tell them what they want to hear. "Dolls," I'll say, "Robben Island was worse than Auschwitz. Makes Hiroshima look like a sick joke – I swear to God!"

DORIS DAY SINGS:

AS PDU GETS INTO NOWELL 1999

1999

NOWELL: As true's God, if I hear the word democracy again, I'm going to have a nervous breakdown on the spot. I mean, how long must I stand in a queue in order to be able to vote on 2nd June?

It started three months ago when I had to replace my blue ID book with a green ID book. One with a barcode! I said I have a barcode in my passport. No, they said, you must have a barcode in your new ID book. Mandela is very sentimental. He was behind bars for 27 years; now he wants the bars in your book!

For five days I stood in the queue! Three of those days I was in the wrong queue. And when I get to the desk they say it's too late to get the green book, but they will give me a nice certificate saying that my green book is on its way and so I will be able to register.

So I leave the building and my handbag gets stolen. Back in the queue! Then into another queue to register. Then they say go and check the voter's roll to make sure you're on it, because you never know. So back into a queue I go. As true's God, I'm not on the roll in Johannesburg; I'm on the roll in Umtata! So I have to queue up to deregister and then queue up to reregister!

And now my ID book comes and look: there's a black man in my book! So now I'm back in this queue in order to get him out of my book and me back in my book. Oh wake me when it's over! Why are they making it so complicated? All I want to do is vote in this second democratic election! And I know whom to vote for. I'm one of the few. So many people don't want to vote! Most don't know whom to vote for. I know. My maid told me.

She said: 'Madam, whom are you going to vote for?'

I said: 'I'm not going to vote! I'm sick of it. Being taken advantage of as a white liberal. Paying the township debt. The crime, the violence, the corruption. This democracy is a joke; I'm not interested!'

So she said: 'If you don't vote for the ANC, madam, I leave you. You'll have no maid!'

So I'll vote ANC. Rather a good maid than a good government, that's what I say.

Yesterday I stood here and nearly died of boredom and who should be standing in front of me? Someone I new! Can you believe it. Forty million people and the one in the queue I know is the last person in the world I need to see. Such a Portuguese kugel. A compulsive emigrant. From Lourenco Marques to Beira to Luanda to Windhoek to South Joburg.

I can't remember her name, but everyone's heard the story. You know, the woman who keeps all her keys on the same bunch: car keys, house keys, gate keys, alarm lock keys, keys to unlock the cupboard to get the keys to unlock the door to get to the keys that unlock the garage? All on one bunch! That's her! I mean, she puts her keys in her sling bag and dislocates her shoulder! Anyway who even keeps their spare keys in Johannesburg. My spare keys are with my daughter in Boston! Schmuck. Spends her days lying next to her pool without a top on. At her age? Disgusting. No wonder there are so many crimes against women. There she is tantalising the black garden boys. The trees around her property are full of garden boys being tantalised!

Then on top of it she's a snob. When she has a dinner party, she doesn't order flowers from the florist like any normal hostess. Oh no, she has to go out onto the sidewalk and cut roses hanging over her security wall onto the pavement. The black women hate it; their velcro gets caught in the thorns. Anyway, she needs roses for her dinner table, so she puts her top back on, takes the shears, grabs her sling bag and goes out onto the sidewalk. Nobody around. OK. Then the security door slams shut. But she's got her keys in the bag? Wrong! No keys! The bag's as light as her brain!

So there she is in the street at six o'clock in the evening in her underwear without a stitch of makeup and her hair looks like drek. She's on the verge of a platz! After ten minutes the garden boy from next door gets back from the shebeen as pissed as a fart. She calls to him: Oi Boy! He throws stones at her thinking she's a burglar!

Eventually she takes off her top. Her tits drop to her knees. Now he recognises her! She says: 'I'm the lady that lives here! Please climb over the wall and set off the alarm!' At least then the security company will come and unlock for her! He doesn't want to. He's scared of the dogs. No, she says, the dogs all died yesterday! Lying bitch! So this poor schmuck scrambles over the high security wall, tearing his clothes on the barbed wire and ending up hanging 2 feet from the ground on the other side with the three men eating rottweilers trying to chew him from the face in!

The noise attracts the neighbours from watching TV. They now come to their windows and see the black man hanging from the wall. They start shooting at him. Thank God they're so drunk, they can't shoot straight. One of their bullets hits the panic button at the pool. Thank God. Now all the alarms go off! At least the security firm knows there's a problem. They take 40 minutes to get there by the way. They find a half-naked white woman in her underwear huddled under a rose branch, and see a black garden boy being licked by the dogs; they shoot the black in self defence. Now his employer next door is suing her for a fortune for the damage done to his garden, because his excellent garden boy is now another crime statistic! Oi!

Anyway I didn't let on that I knew the whole story. I just said: 'Howzit?'

She said: 'Whozit?'

I said: 'It's me.'

I said: 'So what are you doing here?'

She said: 'Don't ask. I'm sick of it. This damn democracy. I'm sick of the crime and the corruption and the violence and the townships being subsidised by me because they don't pay their electricity and water! I'm going back to Portugal!'

'The last resort!' I said. 'Don't keep all your keys on the same bunch when you're in Portugal. You might be mugged in Lisbon by an African refugee!'

Well, no, I didn't say that, but I should've.

‘So what are you doing in this queue?’ I said, ‘Also getting your ID book?’

She says: ‘ID, schmeidee, I’m getting my new passport. The old one was stolen.’

‘A passport? You’re in this queue for a passport?’

‘Yes, already for 3 days.’

‘You’re in the wrong queue!’

DORIS DAY SINGS:

AS PDU DRESSES INTO NOWELL 2005

2005

NOWELL: Dora! Dora?

In the old days when I called Dora, my maid came running. Now I call Dora? Nothing. She's in Parliament! Oh my God, I'm absolutely finished! I don't mind doing the housework, but it's the shopping that freaks me out! It was so simple: Dora would go with the mobile and ring me from the delicatessen counter and I could choose my kosher foods. Now I have to stand in a queue and most of the choices are halaal! Oi!

Anyway.

(LOOKS IN THE PLASTIC BAG)

Look at this? I have to take spare Spar bags because we now have to pay for our supermarket plastic. Something to do with pollution or drugs or terrorists. I don't know. Ten years ago I went shopping carrying a Gucci Bag. Now I carry a spare Spar! That puts our democracy in a nutshell: in 1994, we paid for condoms and got the plastic bag free. Today it's the other way round!

Well to hell with politics. My hands are full with my new baby. No, it's true: I've adopted a little black AIDS orphan! Yes, yes, they keep saying to me: Nowell, don't call him that. Babies born of parents who died of AIDS don't necessarily have AIDS. Okay, doll, I believe you, but I'm not taking chances.

(PUTS ON RUBBER GLOVES)

His name is Siphon-Mervyn Fine and he's black black black and beautiful. Anyway I'm so sick and tired of all my friends moaning: 'Nowell. In ten years we will have 5 million AIDS orphans!' Well, no, we'll have 4,999,999 because I've taken one!

Don't think it was easy. First of all, I had to pretend to be younger. I've been taking the anti-wrinkle HRT for the last year anyway, and the Botox seemed to help, except it sort of slipped and now I've got three tits. Let's not go there. My dear, I can only say thank God for our constitution, because now anything is possible. Child Welfare do a

good job, but do me a favour! They're like the Spanish Inquisition! Questions about everything in my life.

'Mrs Fine? Are you married? Single? A widow? Were you a good mother to your three kids?' I thought: oh no, I can't go there! If I tell them about my family, they won't allow me to adopt a cat! So I said: 'Careful. I'm a minority protected by the Constitution.'

They said: 'What? You're still married?'

I said: I'm a lesbian. Hello?!

It worked! Treated me with kid gloves. I was inspired to say that by two girls I met also waiting for a baby and they were lesbians. I said: 'Who will be the father?' They said: 'Both of us.' 'And the mother?' I asked. Both! Oi, don't tell me what you do in bed!

So now I'm the old lesbian mother of an adopted black AIDS orphan. Thank God my mother is dead. And my horrible racist homophobic Auntie Sharon! Child Welfare said they're not keen to put black kids in a white home. I blew my top.

'Excuse me,' I said, 'I've never had a white home. I've been everything else: pastel in the 70s, yellows in the 80s and blues and greens in the 90s, but never white!'

'Mrs Fine? What culture will you bring your child up in?'

Isn't it obvious? Gucci! Lacroix! I've always been crazy about anything black as long as it matches!

Anyway, my political background is impeccable.

In the 1960s I was arrested once in a Black Sash protest against apartheid.

In the 70s I was tear gassed by mistake in Cape Town while I was at the travel agent.

In the 80s I was hit on the head by an empty beer can at one of Helen Suzman's PFP rallies.

I could say to Child Welfare: As true's God, I've really suffered. I've always been anti-apartheid in word and deed. Treated my garden boys like decent human beings and took no end of cheek from my maids . . .
. my domestic supervisors.

It was hell, but I was glad I did.

Then came the cherry on the cake. They have my file right there: Nowell Fine.

‘So what religion will you be raising him?’

You’re asking me what religion? Sh-a-l-o-m??

No, my son Sipho-Mervyn Fine will choose his own faith one day. But I had him circumcised but that’s got nothing to do with being Jewish. It’s practical. I don’t want my 18 year old son to have to stand in a queue at some sangoma-witchdoctors hut to be circumcised as tradition demands. With the sangoma inside, pissed as a fart with one rusty blade which he uses to cut into all the men.

How that HIV virus will leapfrog from one to the other? Anyway there’s really nothing to worry about because I took Sipho-Mervyn Fine to have an HIV test. And his little blood test was fine. HIV-positive.

No, that sounds good, but it’s bad. Positive is bad. Negative is good. Or is it the other way round. What the hell, I’ll just keep the rubber gloves on and get a matching hat and bag?

I’m so proud of my son. I have a teeshirt that says: I’m the mother and he’s the son?

Yesterday I sat with Sipho-Mervyn waiting for the bank to open. Everyone kept staring. A red-faced white man said: ‘So Grannie, your daughter’s been pumping the garden boy?’

Pig!

Never mind that my daughter’s living in London and that her garden boy is a sexy Bosnian refugee and I think she did pump him!

Then an Afrikaans woman sat next to me and nudged me and winked horribly and whispered: ‘Are the black men as big as they say?’

I said: ‘Luvey it’s a democracy. Spend R20 and find out for yourself!’

The worst was the black woman in the green outfit. She looked so smart. Elegant. I thought: as true’s God, I used to look like that 20 years ago. She with a Gucci Bag! Me with the spare Spar!

‘You white liberals make me sick! You first vote for apartheid and then buy our babies!’

I said: Excuse me! No money changed hands!

'Take him back to the black township where he belongs! Take him
back to Soweto!'

So I did, home to Soweto!

Soweto-Extension.

We now live there.

We used to call it Downtown Johannesburg!

DORIS DAY SINGS:

AS PDU DRESSES AS NOWELL IN THE FUTURE

THE FUTURE

NOWELL Oh my God, I think I broke a nail. I don't believe it! It's been with me since 1993. I still had that nail welded on in the confusing days of CODESA 1, 2 and to be continued? When we were stacking tins of tuna in the garage? Expecting the worst! And none of us could get into Canada because we were too old! Or into the UK because of our rand being where it was then? Thank God the Australians took anything that moved!

I remember not being able to take out my money. So I went to see my cousin Cyril, the only plastic surgeon still operating in South Africa. I said: "Cyril doll, I have 4 million rand trapped in the Nedbank. Do a plastic surgery job on me worth 4 million. New nose, new lips, new cheekbones, new tits, new everything." So he did. And look at me now? He turned out to be a vet! Schmuck!

Anyway Herbert's finally remarried. She's young enough to laugh at his funeral. They're in San Diego USA, picking up really bad American accents and probably HIV, knowing her!

My kids are doing well in Australia. I couldn't stand it. Too many Vietnamese and Orientals! God man, look at me. I am an African! I should die an exile! Even Dora fled after a year. Remember my domestic supervisor? An aborigine fell in love with her. Pursued her! She said: no way, I'm Xhosa. I don't want to mix my genes with an abo! Hey Verwoerd, are you listening! So she came back. And now Dora's a Deputy Minister in the Government! From Maid to Minister! Not bad for someone who still can't spell the word 'catastrophe'!

So, do you like my new place? It's nice being here in the Waterfront! It really cost a fortune! First I had to put down a million rand just to get on the V & A List! Then I had to wait forever to get the place built. But now here I am, in the year 2000. I can't get used to that: 2000. Not an overdraft; a date! Anyway Dora pulled some strings for me and got me this condo on the waterfront. I can look out of my window and see the fish float by. The ones that died of nuclear poisoning since the Koeberg Power Station fell into the sea.

Last year's 1999 Election? So many things have changed since Mandela went. Shame. Hope Thabo Mbeki's enjoying his exile in Greece. But let's not moan: we've still got a President called Mandela. Never know what she's got up her sleeve. But then if we are to control this terrible violence and crime and killing, maybe we now need a President who understands those things!

No, this is nice, far away from the electrical wires on the walls, the watchtowers and those guard dogs! I swear there are now a million of us whites huddled together here in the Waterfront Ghetto, determined not to be the last to switch off the harbour lights. Because CNN won't stay to take that last snap! But I'm so excited! I've discovered I've got a green finger. That helps a lot in a land obsessed with black and white, you might ask? But suddenly my pot plants seem to like me and grow and bloom! And I thought they were plastic!

Well dolls, I've just planted a tree! It's only so big and it came in a small pot, but they said in the year 2017 it will be big enough to sit under! In 2026 they said you could hang a swing off the branches! And in 2040 you can build a tree house! I said: "Thank you very much, I'm not a monkey!" My garden is smaller than my persian cats' sandbox in the old days when Herbert and me had all those hundreds of acres in Constantia.

But what more do I want?

A place for my tv, my video, my satellite dish, my internet computer, my exercise bike, my mirror, my hairdryer, my microwave, my piano. Oh, you can never live without a grand piano. Where else can you put all those framed photos of your life.

You as a baby at the Sea Point Pavilion. With your parents in Hermanus. With your brothers; Muizenberg Beach. At school in Green Point. At university in Cape Town. Your engagement to Selwyn Bernstein. Your subsequent wedding to Herbert Fine. Your first baby. Second baby. Third baby. Barmitzvahs. Matric dances. Lauren's wedding. You and your first grandchild. Pictures of you and Mandela at all those fundraising dinners. Picture of you and Dora at the opening of Parliament. Picture of you in your garden now. Just you.

I'm getting rid of all the old memories. I don't want to look back. Especially not here in Cape Town. You look back and you fall and they steal your handbag! I've got lots of fabulous new friends here. They love me. Invite me out to every time the Symphony Orchestra plays at the Hard Rock Café or there's a Toerien play on at Planet Hollywood.

All my old buddies are somewhere else of course. Canada, USA, Australia, UK, New Zealand, France, Switzerland, Paris. But we e-mail. Actually, it's better than having them around! You just switch off! No, next door is a Russian couple. He was big in the mafia in Moscow before they were brought here. Then across there the Nigerian. Big in drugs! Just lost his wife!

Behind lives a relative of Mobuto. Big in arms. I've even got a Muslim friend at no 876. Big in Manenberg. He says he will protect me in the Holy War against whites PAGAD is planning for Christmas. But they're usually too pissed to do anything!

No, doll, you don't seem to understand. It's OK. I'm OK! I've now got choice! That's what we fought the Struggle for: freedom of choice! My tree! Either I can marry my Nigerian drug lord under it, or sit in the tree house and look at the 2024 Olympics, or when all else fails, hang myself from the branches with my Gucci belt!

Choice! That's the basis for democracy. And our democracy is working very well because no one is happy. The moment one person is happy, someone else is exploited. So we're all feeling equally shit! How do I look? Is this colour good for the Nigerian? Hope it doesn't come off on the sheets. But then I can remember what a Nimrod taught me in 1980. Do it standing!

I'll ask Dora. She always comes for tea on a Tuesday. What a business. The Deputy-Minister arriving with bodyguards and sirens, in a Mercedes like I drove in the 80s. Wearing the Peter Soldatos clothes I wore in the 70s. Streaking her hair like I did in the 90s. My Dora, a negative of my positive!

And she gets out of the car and says: Howzit Doll!, what can an old kugel answer? But Sayibona Comrade!

Listen, I've been, I've seen, I've done!

I've even got the t-shirt in all eleven official languages! "South African
– come hell and/or high water!"
Lachaim!

EPILOGUE

PDU: Can't help hearing the voice of the kugel who stopped me in the foyer after a show one night and said: "Pieter-Dirk Uys, I don't know why you keep doing that character Nowell Fine, because I don't know anyone who talks like that, I swear to God!"
