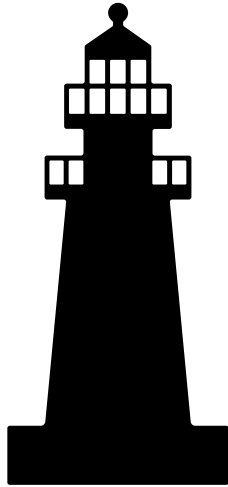


The Port of Elizabeth



Written by

Ssen Krad

The Port of Elizabeth

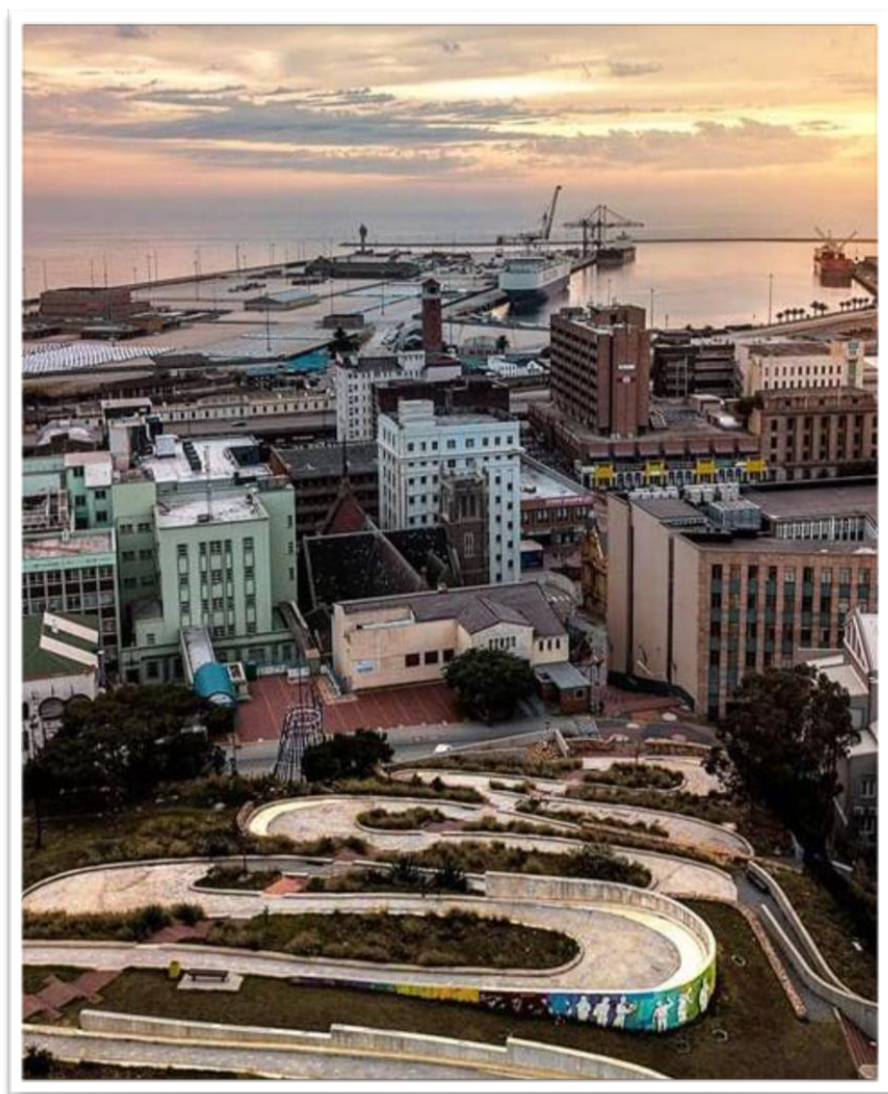
The Fragmented Series:
Volume I



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Sindisa Masiza



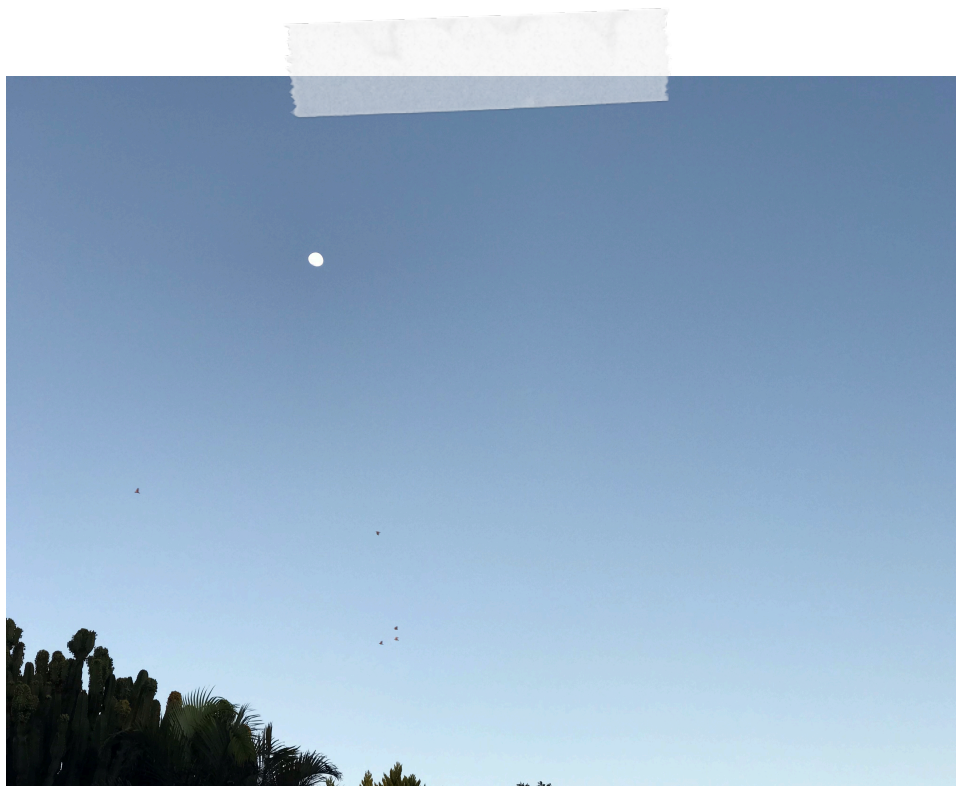
“Destruction is only made possible by creation.”

Prologue

This short story was inspired by the prolific events surrounding the crisis of Gender Based Violence in South Africa. South Africa as we know it is the rape capital of the world with an estimated 40% rape probability for women during their lifetime. It is also estimated that only 14% of the perpetrators will be convicted.

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I

Franklin Mertens University



“Murderer’s deserve no mercy...”

‘Crap. Crap.’

“Z, what are you doing in there? We’re going to be late. You know how Prof. Mndai is when you’re late...we’ll literally never hear the end of it,” said a young lady stressing outside the bathroom stall that her friend was in.

“Okay, I’ll be out in a minute, Khanya,” answered the young lady squatting on the toilet seat.

“Oh okay. Do you need anything?” asked Khanya with a dash of sympathy in her voice as soon as she caught on to what she thought her friend was alluding to.

“No, I’ll be fine thanks, I’m just gonna need like two minutes or so, you can leave without me if you want...”

“Nah it’s no problem, wena girl. I’ll be right outside,” said Khanya as she reluctantly vacated the ladies’ bathroom.

“Will do,” answered the vicenarian girl who was fighting back her tears with a pregnancy test clutched tightly in her hand.

‘You’re an idiot, Zanele! How am I going to tell my parents? This can’t be happening,’ she thought ruefully.

After glancing at the two lines on the pregnancy stick for the umpteenth time, she wiped her tears and began composing herself before she left the bathroom stall she had camped in for the past fifteen minutes.

‘Should probably keep this with me, I can’t let anyone see me throwing it away,’ Zanele thought instinctively as she slipped the pregnancy test into her backpack.

For some strange reason, she felt her heart beating faster as she got ready to leave her hiding place and face the world.

“Just breathe,” she whispered to herself as she slung her backpack over her shoulder and walked out of the bathroom stall.

“Oh my goodness, Z, you’re here!” exclaimed an overly excited first-year.

“Yeah...I needed to use the bathroom...” said Zanele, not quite sure of what to make of the young girl that had overzealously said her name.

“How do you feel about your interview this Friday!”

“Well, okay I guess,” said Zanele as she cautiously approached the sink to wash her hands, still unsure on how to appropriately react to her doting fan.

“Sorry. I’m Amanda,” said the girl as she extended her arm out to shake Zanele’s hand.

“Sorry,” said Zanele with an awkward smile as she showed Amanda her wet hands before waddling over to the dryer.

“Oh, my bad,” said Amanda with a quiet shout and a picture of embarrassment painted over her face, as her voice competed with the hand dryer Z was using.

“Nice talking to you, Amanda,” said Zanele before she left Amanda speechless in the ladies’ lavatory.

“Okay, Z! And you definitely have my vote!” she shouted behind Zanele.

“You okay?” asked Khanya as Zanele walked out of the restroom looking a bit puzzled.

“Ye—yeah...I’m fine.”

“And that?” asked Khanya as she raised one of her eyebrows in disapproval as Amanda walked out of the restroom.

“No clue. Let’s get going,” said Zanele with an obvious sense of hastiness.

“How far are you with your critique of the judiciary system?” asked Khanya.

“Not far enough, there’s just so much going on with my campaign at the moment, I just haven’t had time to sit down and focus on anything school-related,” said Zanele, sounding overwhelmed as the words fell out of her mouth.

“Just don’t forget that you’re a student as well,” said Khanya.

“Right. Like I need to be reminded of that,” stated Zanele as they neared the lecture hall they were headed to.

“Woah, what’s gotten into you? I’m just trying to help.”

“I know, I’m sorry, I’m just under a lot of pressure right now,” said Zanele in an attempt to explain herself as they walked into their lecture venue.

“It’s okay, I was just saying...” said Khanya.

Then right before Zanele was about to respond to her, a deep husky voice interrupted her would-be statement.

“The one and only Z!”

Khanya winked at Zanele and gently rubbed her arm.

“I’ll see you at the chambers after class,” she said before she left her to go and join another group of girls within the lecture hall.

“Z, didn’t you hear me call you?” asked the tall, dark-skinned man as he opened his arms and gestured for a hug.

The smell of his light cologne brought some of Z’s more anxious thoughts to rest as she found herself comforted by his soothing and seductive touch.

“Unjani?” asked Ajax.

“Hey, I’m fine. I’ve just been feeling a little lightheaded lately,” lied Zanele.

“Then sit down, babe. You shouldn’t be standing then. Do you need me to get you some water or something?” asked Ajax as he gestured his girlfriend to the nearest seat, before taking the seat next to her.

“No, I’m fine. Really,” responded Zanele as she placed her bag close to her leg.

“Z, this is not the time to act tough. Say the word and I’ll snap my fingers and cancel this lecture for you,” said Ajax as he raised his hand and pressed his thumb against his middle finger, his soft smile exposing his deep dimples.

Zanele let out a giggle in response.

“To be honest, the best thing you could do for me is help me finish this stupid critique, are you done already?”

“Well yeah, but I pay a man to do all my assignments...” said Ajax with a straight look on his face.

“Right,” laughed Zanele, assuming his statement was a joke. “Babe, you know I try to finish my assignments same day, I was finished weeks ago. Which is why I don’t mind helping you finish yours this afternoon,” said Ajax, reuniting himself with his charming smile.

“You’re the best, you know that? I still don’t know how you find the energy or the time to do the work of a spokesman and a master student. It’s like there’s two of you,” said Zanele with a sense of unbelief.

“You’re dating a genius kaloku. These are things you should be accustomed to,” said Ajax, humorously adopting a plummy accent towards the second half of his sentence.

Zanele let out another giggle as Ajax leaned in to kiss her on the cheek.

“Plus, I’m not running for SRC President, so there’s that too...” sympathised Ajax as he placed one of Zanele’s braids behind her ear.

‘At least,’ she thought. ‘I feel a little peace of mind now that I’ve spoken to him...I just don’t know how I’m going to break the news to him...’ she thought regretfully as she looked around the open-spaced lecture hall and distracted herself in the small chatter of student conversation.

Overall, there were probably around thirty students in the two hundred seater, (twenty-six of which were women) making up what was ultimately one of the largest master classes in the university.

“Where’s the Prof?” asked Zanele.

“You mean Thor?” responded Ajax with an uncharacteristic cackle.

“No, I mean Professor Mndai,” corrected Zanele with a sly smile she was trying to restrict to the corner of her mouth.

“I don’t know, running around being the god of thunder I guess,” said Ajax, repeating his mockery.

“Stop! You know she doesn’t like that name,” said Zanele, struggling to conceal her laughter.

“You know how she got that name, right?” asked Ajax as his eyes lit up at the prospect of retelling the story.

“Of course I know, you tell me every time—” began Zanele before Ajax cut her off.

“She hit one of her lecturers with a hammer when she was still a student!” howled Ajax.

“Wasn't that because he tried to make a move on her? And where did she even get the hammer, Ayanda? Don't you think the story's a bit far-fetched?” asked Z as her humour replaced itself with a newfound sense of scepticism.

“Well, there she is, why don't you go ask her?” whispered Ajax as the Professor walked into the lecture hall and hurried down one of the aisles leading to the front of the venue.

The murmurs of conversation going on around the large room quickly settled as soon as the Professor took off her heels and threw them under the front desk, next to the podium.

“Don't even ask me WHY I wear those bloody things. It's the torture I go through to make my calves pop,” said the Professor with an emphatic sigh, drawing laughs from the small crowd of students gathered before her.

“They always pop no matter what you wear ma'am, you've got legs for days!” shouted Khanya from the middle row.

“Thanks, Khanya but you still can't get an extension on your upcoming test. But I appreciate the compliment and the email you sent last night,” exposed the Professor.

“Prof! That was supposed to be private,” said Khanya embarrassedly.

“Oops. Well, I'm sure you can trust your classmates not to tell anyone, Khanya. Now! Let's get started with the lecture. Glad to see you could make it on time today, Mr Ayanda.”

“I always make it on time, ma’am,” said Ajax with a flash of arrogance.

“Yeah...but usually on your time, not mine,” said the Professor with a hint of resentment towards the good-looking young man.

“It’s not like you were early...” Ajax mumbled inaudibly.

“I’m sorry, what was that?” asked the Professor.

“Nothing,” responded Ajax as he awkwardly cleared his throat, surprised at how the Professor could hear his rumblings from what was essentially the back seats of the lecture hall.

“Lack of candour is a terrible trait for a lawyer to have, Mr Ayanda.”

Ajax scoffed at her remark with disdain and shook his head. ‘There’s no way she could have heard me...’ he thought.

"Guess what, class? I've just been hit with a stroke of inspiration this Monday morning to add in an extra assignment for you guys, due for the end of the week. A ten thousand word essay based on how important the ethics of honesty are for a practising lawyer," said the Professor with a smile.

The whole lecture room immediately burst into sighs and shuffles of disapproval upon hearing the news.

“Now, now guys. Let’s all take into account that you have Mr Ajax to blame.”

“Sorry ma’am but we’re master students. And this is a Criminal Law class, you can’t just add random things to the curriculum,” protested Ajax.

“Oh, you bet your fade I can! Because I just did! You want to fight me on it, Ayanda?” challenged the Professor in a bout of anger, silencing the lecture room with her resolve as she did so.

Ajax puckered his bottom lip to mask his frustration and silently shook his head.

“Good. Now let me begin my mandatory lecture,” said the Professor before she put some slides up on the interactive board and began teaching.

After an hour of relentlessly pontificating about the subject of criminal law, Thandi glanced at the buzzing alarm on her digital watch. An internal sigh of relief escaped her being as she realised that it was time to dismiss the class.

“Okay, guys time’s up! Now please don’t forget what I said! I want both your critique on the justice system and your written essay on ethical values for lawyers handed in by the end of the week. Let me remind you that failure to do so will result in me keeping you here for another year! You can all leave now,” she said with an unmistakable slice of spite in her voice.

The students silently got up and walked out of the lecture room, looking downtrodden by the fact that the Professor had added to their already unbearable workload.

Thandi immediately took out her phone and began incessantly dialling a number as the last of her students vacated the lecture venue.

“Dammit, Asanda, just respond! It’s me, Thandeka, you know, the sister that gives a shit about you!” shouted Thandeka in a controlled whisper towards her phone’s mic as soon as she heard the call automatically go into voicemail.

“Dammit, it’s like she pisses me off on purpose!” she cursed, grinding her back teeth in frustration as she ended the call.

‘You know what? That’s it,’ she thought as she took out her heels from under the front desk and put them on before rushing out of the lecture room.

“Ma’am!” shouted a first-year from within the university halls. ‘Oh goodness me, not this boy again!’

“What do you want Lonwabo?” she asked in an irritated tone of voice.

“Ma’am, I’m having my book launch in a month and a half and I was wondering—”

“Boy, don’t you understand the concept of rejection! I didn’t respond to your stupid email asking me to keynote, so why would I agree in person?” asked Thandeka, appearing put off by Lonwabo’s approach.

“Because you’re one of the main characters in my short story ma’am...and I thought—”

“Well, you thought wrong! And you better not use my name in anything derogatory...”

“Ma’am, I would never. I have the utmost respect for you...”

“Shut up. Just send me the book and I’ll check for myself. I’m having a bad day so I won’t discuss this now, but best believe I’m reading through every page before you release that thing!” said the Professor as she stormed off towards the parking lot.

“I was counting on that...” smiled Lonwabo, knowing she had taken the bait.

‘Everyone wants to be a bloody author these days...he better not waste my time with this stupid novel of his. Gosh, I’m gonna have to sift through that thing like I’m making bread for The Passover just to make sure he doesn’t say anything dumb about me...stupid writers...we’d be better off

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