

COMRADE BABBLE

A POLITICAL SATIRE

written and directed by
ALLAN KOLSKI HORWITZ

featuring
PETER BUTLER &
LEBOHANG MOTAUNG



INTIMATE THEATRE

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CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF FREEDOM   Leading Partner

31 OCT – 9 NOV '14

COMRADE BABBLE

BY

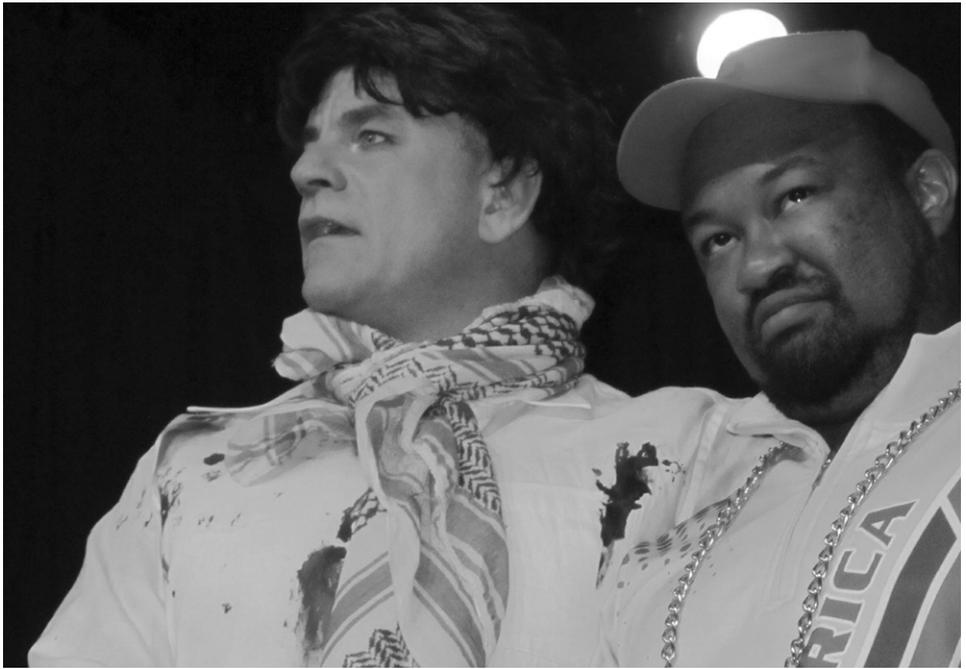
ALLAN KOLSKI HORWITZ

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BABBLE and PROF (Johannesburg production)



BABBLE and BHUNGA (Johannesburg production)



BUTCH (Cape Town production)



BABBLE and WILHELMINA (Cape Town production)

Program notes

The phenomenon of Brett Kebble, who perpetrated the biggest corporate fraud in South Africa's history and was then mysteriously killed in 2005 (in what appears to have been an 'assisted suicide') is a microcosm of the major fault lines in the New South Africa as well as being an exploration of key universal archetypes. His life and its final moments provide the basis for the play.

Kebble, an articulate, charismatic but paranoid figure, styled himself as an entrepreneur who would overhaul ownership in the stagnant White-controlled mining industry. He promised to do so by bringing in Black partners, expanding existing mines as well giving marginal ones a new life. Together with his father, an experienced mine manager, he took control of Johannesburg Consolidated Investments (JCI), Barney Barnato's old company, as well as Rand Gold, and proceeded over ten years to create and direct over seventy other companies in the mining sector. However, to achieve his objectives he practiced political patronage on a grand scale, buying influence by subsidizing the appetites of numerous Black political figures, including revered ex-Robben Islanders and a new crop of Youth League leaders. At the same time he cultivated a life of extreme affluence, owning corporate jets, five mansions, a fleet of luxury cars and collections of highly valuable watches and art works. However, Kebble's downfall, when the Revenue Service and the Justice department finally unraveled his fraud, was swift and merciless. And when he refused to negotiate a "deal" (as it would have entailed spending some time in jail), it seems he orchestrated his own death.

The play opens with Kebble/Babble's return from the dead in order to present the 'truth of his life' in the face of numerous books and articles which have painted him as a "profiteer and manipulative pirate". It examines him from different perspectives as reflected in his dealings with a group of five other characters – free-ranging portraits of people (or composites of people) who were actually involved with Kebble. As a form of morality tableau with strong satiric influences, it unfolds through a parade of the various forms of corruption which marked Kebble/Babble's rise to eminence; an advance enabled by his skill in influencing (and corrupting) key individuals and interest groups.

By way of an over-arching conclusion (embodying a moral), his empire's collapse and his final humiliation do ostensibly offer an indication that even the most powerful will eventually be brought to account.

The first performance of COMRADE BABBLE took place at the Catalina Theatre, Durban on 13 January 2012 with the following cast:

BABBLE/BUTCH DERATTI/UMSHINI DE BOOM	David James
BHUNGA/PROFESSOR/WILHELMINA	Lebohang Motaung

A second production took place later that year with the same cast directed by Albie Michaels.

A third production, like the first, was directed by Allan Kolski Horwitz in 2013 with the following cast:

BABBLE/BUTCH DERATTI/UMSHINI DE BOOM	Peter Butler
BHUNGA/PROFESSOR/WILHELMINA	Lebohang Motaung

CHARACTERS

Mephistopheles Medici Babble – a white man dressed in a white shirt and black pants (bankrupt tycoon)

Buti Bhunga – a black man dressed in a judicial robe (public prosecutor)

Professor Ndlovu – a black man wearing a hip hop flat cap, a Bafana Bafana top, white track suit pants and sneakers (Youth League leader)

Butch Deratti – a white man dressed as a Mafia spiv (gangster)

Wilhelmina Randridge – a black man dressed (flamboyantly) as a woman; he/she carries a boom box (artiste)

Umshini de Boom – a white man dressed in a sleeveless top and military fatigues (assassin)

SETTING

A double car-seat is placed to one side. Several human size figures (made of wire or of plastic) are placed in different places on stage. One of the figures, dressed in a red-stained white shirt and black pants, is placed on the car seat. Perched on each of the other figures is a different item of headgear: a safari helmet, a woman's straw hat, a jester's hat, a Zionist Church (ZCC) peaked hat, a kaffiyeh and a skull cap. There are also brightly-colored bits of 'jewelry' hanging from the pegs and a long Pinnochio style nose.

The characters make use of the figures to illustrate points, treating them (where appropriate) as people with whom they interact and as lifeless mannequins.

Scene 1

Blackout. Seven gun shots ring out.

VOICE: This is your leading news breaker, Station Overload. Late last night the billionaire mining tycoon Mephistopheles Medici Babble was found gunned down on a suburban road off the M1 near Birdhaven. Mr Babble was found in his favourite Mercedes sedan. He had sustained several bullet wounds to the upper body. Business and political leaders have expressed their shock though over the past few months it was reported that Mr Babble was under financial pressure and the subject of scrutiny for alleged irregularities. At this stage no suspects have been identified. The deceased leaves behind a wife and four children. And now to international news ...

A gong sounds three times. Lights slowly up. Babble rises up zombie-like from behind the car seat.

BABBLE: *[Mumbling to himself.]* Easy does it... I'll be right as rain... nothing to it... I'll show 'em... *[Becomes aware of the audience, his speech is still disjointed but becomes progressively more audible, understandable; at different points he lapses back into zombie-like speech and mannerisms; he is alternately arrogant and ingratiating.]* Ah, you've arrived! Wonderful! So pleased you could make it. We're all such busy people, all of us chasing, chasing... now you've come to hear about something profound, something that will make a real difference to your life. *[Slight pause.]* Money. I mean, real money. How do you make it? You borrow. You never use your own, right? You get some suckers to put in. Then you buy cheap with the borrowed money. And then you buy out the bastards who lent you the money. Of course, you sell at the right time. You must always know when to buy and when to sell... at the right time. Leveraging, we call it leveraging. *[Claps his hands.]* Ha, ha! Pioneer, patriot, wealth creator... that's what you called me. Philanthropist, art patron, political facilitator – year after year, article after article! *[Lurches again.]* Easy, easy... I'll be right as rain... no one going to keep me down... no one! Indeed, ladies and gentlemen, you are assembled here tonight because you need to finally know the truth about the phenomenon that was me, Mephistopheles Medici Babble. Yes, finally... *[Talks very excitedly.]* Of course you know who prints the 'Newspaper of Record', who writes the history books, who fills in the Book of Life. Why, it's the one who signs the cheques, the one who can phone the Chief in the middle of the night. That's right, it's the smartest. But I have been robbed of my rightful place in history. The jealous have spread lies about my colossal achievements, invented vile names. No doubt the skeptics among you will ask who can apply objectivity, yes, ob-jec-ti-vity, to his own life? Who can reach high enough to have a bird's eye view? And they are correct – most cannot. But I... I have soared. I have been up there where everything is absolutely clear. *[Pause.]* Now let's not

pretend. You know a lot about me already. Bloody press was more than interested in my goings on. And at first they got it right. But, you make the slightest slip, you start to tip, and they give you the treatment, those dark forces and their pale emperors. [*Pause. Sits down on the car seat next to the mannequin.*] Mud. You ever handled mud? Scooped it up, let it ooze through your fingers. Ever done that with your eyes closed, sun on your face, not a thought in your head but the feel of that slow ooze, that slimy, warm squelch? That kind of mud is a treasure for the one they all laughed off as a boy, a fat boy.

BHUNGA: [*Seated in the audience.*] That's right – fat boy with a bully for a brother. Fat boy who preferred books to rugby...

BABBLE: [*In shock.*] Bhunga!

BHUNGA: Fat boy who had a father who mined gold and called him a ninny...

BABBLE: Now, now, sir...

BHUNGA: Night after night while bully brother was snoring, Fat Boy emptied the cookie jar with a thudding heart and the soft hands of a pianist.

BABBLE: Pianist, yes, but...

BHUNGA: [*Stands. Addresses the audience.*] He learnt to play not just the piano but some very tricky games with some very questionable instruments.

BABBLE: Now wait a minute! Don't go too far,

BHUNGA: [*Mounting the stage.*] The day you could order anyone about is over. As for your story, you think you can tell it all by yourself? [*To the audience.*] Please, don't think I'm denying you the right to hear both sides. What I will not allow is his monopolizing the stage to sell you a pack of lies.

BABBLE: Lies? [*To the audience.*] Did I invite you for lies? [*To BHUNGA.*] Please, let's have no unpleasantness. Can I ask my learned friend to kindly return to his seat?

BHUNGA: The seat of justice? Exactly.

BABBLE: Mr. Bhunga, these good people have come here precisely because they know you've been feeding them a diet of falsehoods.

BHUNGA: For ten years I watched you in action. [*To the audience.*] His death wasn't enough – the stench of what he did still lingers. Yes, I've been standing guard...

BABBLE: You and your type hounded me out of my companies and destroyed the mother of all Empowerment deals. And now you want to besmirch my memory and strip my family of the little that's left. [*To the audience.*] That hurts the most.

BHUNGA: Your family... yes, the poor family you've made a fool of. As for the 'little' that's left, I hope that's the case. But I seem to recall that you took out a rather substantial insurance policy just weeks before your unfortunate 'accident'.

BABBLE: What do you mean?

BHUNGA: And how much did you stash off shore? Are there more paintings from your private collection hidden away? A missing corporate jet? Another little palace somewhere, apart from the five we know of? And the watches? Talk, Comrade! What else have we missed? [*Slight pause.*] Dammit, you owe millions but you've stashed away millions. And it's my job to find them.

BABBLE: That is a travesty of the truth! I tried to build this country. I believed in investment, in creating jobs, in everything that Madiba and the Movement stand for. And once I've shared the truth with these kind folk, they'll realize how I've been maligned – and support me against piranha like yourself.

BHUNGA: Piranha are South American fishies, amigo. Get your continents right. Of course, we're sharp-toothed. We have to be. We can't let rot like you keep infecting the public.

BABBLE: You'll do anything to keep me down – even countenance murder.

BHUNGA: Murder!

BABBLE: Yes!

BHUNGA: So that's what it was? [*To the audience.*] Do you know what I had to contend with? The conspiracies, the double-dealing. The... but I don't want to talk about that now. Not yet. First I want to ...

BABBLE: Don't 'first' me! I... I... asked you to leave the stage.

BHUNGA: Leave? Alright! [*Turns as if to leave, then abruptly faces BABBLE again.*] Why did you bring Madiba into this? You want trouble? He may have made some mistakes but he's still a hero.

BABBLE: I helped him where I could.

BHUNGA: [*Smiles.*] Yes, that mansion... I mean, *house*, in Houghton, it wasn't one of your companies that first bought it for him, hey? Back in... But no, I won't go down that road.

BABBLE: Yes, go down that road. [*Gestures to the theatre exit/aisle. To the audience.*] My apologies for this intrusion! [*Slight pause.*] I stood up to the old farts who have run mining in this country for a hundred years. I told them it was right and proper and historically necessary for us to help develop a class of black tycoons but all they would say is "You want to mess with such fellows, well, my boy, you'll get an assegai up the arse!"

BHUNGA: *[To the audience.]* He might have enjoyed that.

BABBLE: To think what I endured to promote change! *[Slight pause.To BHUNGA.]*
Now where are your *other* heroes today? After having learnt an awful lot breaking rocks on the Island with an ancient ghostly rabble of exiled chiefs, sheikhs and other imperial lepers, what are they up to?

BHUNGA: That was no holiday camp. On the Island they gave up everything for the People.

BABBLE: Of course they did! *[Whispers to the audience.]* But when I danced in with Lil' Miss Opportunity, they were only too happy to take her arm, and waltz away with a packet of sweeties.

BHUNGA: I heard that. *[Slight pause.]* So you admit to the *sweeties*?

BABBLE: Sir, tolerant as I am my patience is being exceeded. Kindly return to your seat!

BHUNGA: *[Slight pause]*. Alright, I'll sit, for a while, but where I choose, and then I'll let you hang yourself. Go on, Babble – babble! *[Walks back on stage. Sits on the car-seat. To the audience.]* Let's hear him. It may be almost as entertaining as the drama of his last few hours.

BABBLE: *[To the audience.]* You all knew about my proposal to reopen old mines. And my exploration of West Africa. That's right, me, a White African *[BHUNGA pushes the sun helmet along the floor to land at BABBLE's feet.]*, no longer a colonial, now developing the continent with patriotic Black African entrepreneurs. Of course I took risks, but considered ones. Growth, as we know, only comes with individual effort. And that effort deserves to be rewarded. *[Pause.]* Is there anyone here who believes otherwise? Of course not! We all know that those who take the trouble to invest their time, their energy and their money, deserve a healthy return.

BHUNGA: *Return* what you stole! Your achievement was to sucker a few investment *specialists*, not to mention accountants of no account.

BABBLE: Ah, being called to account... When I was a child I loved to take communion with my grandmother. We would get up early and walk to church.

BHUNGA: Did you hear me?

BABBLE: It was very relaxing to be with my grandma.

BHUNGA: Babble, did you hear what I said?

BABBLE: She was the only one who listened to my piano playing. She saw that I was gifted and that music truly lifted my soul.

BHUNGA: Enough already! [*Stands.*] I think I'll read out the charge sheet so our friends here can get more of the specifics. Let me see... You controlled some eighty odd companies but almost all of them were shells. You sold shares you knew were worthless. You had a fetish for luxury watches. [*Takes out a watch with a very long chain from his pocket. Dangles it before BABBLE.*]

BABBLE: Of course I loved watches! [*Grabs the watch while BHUNGA holds the chain. A tussle ensues between them for control; each tugs at the chain.*] Who doesn't tremble at the thought of conquering time. Those Rolexus, those Breitlins – they define time, knock it into micro-time, nano-time. Then you can fit more into your day, more into each moment, because on your arm is the precise heartbeat of the universe. [*Pause.*] Envy, brother! Don't let it consume you! Just because you weren't on the receiving end of my generosity doesn't mean you have the right to condemn it. I saved so many of your heroes from hardship... in the nick of time.

BHUNGA: You wormed your way into the belly of the Movement and laid your maggots.

BABBLE: I met many, but selected just those I could see had the guts and the vision to really go places...

BHUNGA: Places you wanted them to go, places that suited your schemes.

BABBLE: I lifted them out of the trauma of financial hardship and gave them hope.

BHUNGA: Hope for a quick buck – provided they could deliver on your needs.

BABBLE: I asked nothing of them but good sense, loyalty and friendship.

BHUNGA: [*Pulls the chain out of BABBLE's hands.*] What *did* you give the Youth League leaders?

BABBLE: The whole world knows what I gave them! [*To the audience.*] And why? Because I believe in the youth of this country, in their right to a bright future.

BHUNGA: You gave them sports cars, rooms in your mansion for whoring, an endless supply of booze...

BABBLE: 'Booze'? You never have a drink? Not even a little tippie with your buddies on Saturdays when the soccer's on? [*Shakes his head.*] Don't lie, Bhunga. Ours is a country that appreciates its liquor. We're not namby pamby teetotalers.

BHUNGA: No, we're not namby-pambies. We're connoisseurs who spend thousands on the best of wines. Especially you, Comrade.

- BABBLE: Why you such a self-hating Black? Why do you try to drag down men and women of colour who succeed?
- BHUNGA: Don't try and make a fool of me like you did with the others.
- BABBLE: Fools... mockery... [To the audience.] Have you ever felt that fire, that crazy feeling when you're about to clinch a deal? That tightening in the guts when the bastard sitting opposite you is about to sign and you know you've run rings round him. [To BHUNGA.] At least some of your leaders realized that to be part of the future you have to pass on the past. [Replaces the sun helmet.] Yes, I admire them for their courage, Mister Buti Bhunga-Bhunga, Bhunga-Bhunga ...
- BHUNGA: Don't take liberties with my name – you know it's just Bhunga.
- BABBLE: Come now, what's an extra 'Bhunga' between friends? Always buzzing around... isn't that what your name means? [Slight pause.] Ah, the thrill of the deal... why, it's almost as *stimulating* as having a...
- BHUNGA: I don't want to know, you pervert.
- BABBLE: Perversion, my learned friend, is an art that someone as unsophisticated as you will never master. [To the audience.] The main thing about money isn't how you make it, but what you do with it.
- BHUNGA: And what *did* you do with it?
- BABBLE: I reached so high.
- BHUNGA: [To the audience.] Yes, but then over a period of three months he was booted off his throne and cut off from the slush funds that made him irresistible to so many. No matter what his spin doctors said they couldn't put up a big enough smoke screen.
- BABBLE: [To the audience.] Things did get a little stuck but there has been no ending, not a proper and just one, that is. Why do you think I've come back? You can't imagine what it's like down there. It's... it's unbearable!
- BHUNGA: [To the audience.] He and so many like him. Instead of serving the common good, they turn their 'good fortune' into vast *private* fortunes.
- BABBLE: Ha, 'The Wheel of Fortune'! How very poetic, Your Excellency! You wax lyrical for a servant of the Law.
- BHUNGA: Yes, I am a *servant* of the Law, and a proud one at that. Strange to think you were once a practitioner. You did your articles under the direction of some smart arse, didn't you? Every morning the two of you would sit on the slopes of Devil's Peak and plot.

BABBLE: Really! Has 'planning' now become 'plotting'?

BHUNGA: Your fraud has left tens of thousands without jobs.

BABBLE: I kept mines going even when they weren't economically viable, I paid wages to thousands of men when it made no financial sense. I don't come from wealth. When I was a kid we moved around all the time. My dad was chasing jobs all over the country.

BHUNGA: A simple mine captain...

BABBLE: Yes!

BHUNGA: But with your help he became a director of more companies than he could count.

BABBLE: Yes!

BHUNGA: What an achievement! Pity he had to wait in line to see you at your office – you were so happy to keep his company. Yes, you kept him waiting for hours. *[Pause.]* Pity he thought you a sissy.

BABBLE: Who told you that? My damn brother?

BHUNGA: That one never did spare you. *[To the audience.]* Come on, show a little sympathy for Comrade Sissy Mephistopheles. Give him a clap for standing the sight of his insufferable brother. *[Slight pause. To BABBLE.]* In celebration of your undoubted triumphs why don't you try this on? *[Points to the Pinnochio nose.]*

BABBLE: And why not? School plays forever. *[Puts on the Pinnochio nose; dances in marionette fashion.]*

BHUNGA: Speaking of 'play acting', what was the name of that rent boy? The one you always selected at a certain 'establishment'.

BABBLE: How dare you?

BHUNGA: You liked to treat him. A new shirt, a Ferrari...

BABBLE: Shut up!

BHUNGA: It was quite a joke among your mafiosi.

BABBLE: I thought you had a little more class.

BHUNGA: Tell us how you found the time for all these diversions. I mean you were running from boardroom to bordello, and back again.

BABBLE: I had to spend a good deal of time on the road, I was always so busy. But God knows my dear wife was understanding. And the children.

BHUNGA: Yes, the loving family that supported your odyssey from rat hole to princely mansion – and back to rat hole.

BABBLE: [*Removes Pinnocchio nose.To the audience.*] I miss them so much. Especially the little one. You know she was burnt all over, she fell into a bath of boiling water. Poor thing, she's been through a terrible time. [*To BHUNGA.*] Be careful, just be careful!

BHUNGA: Yes, they *were* pretty amazing – to have stomached your lies, your disappearances, your tantrums, your infidelities.

BABBLE: What do you know of the instincts and needs of an exceptional man? Do you know how much energy I had? How much energy I needed? How much effort it took to control dozens of busybodies and make sure they turned a blind eye to certain... [*Whispers to the audience.*] You have to make the right people feel very important. Let them lick the dull stone and taste the salt before you gild it and top it with honey.

BHUNGA: [*To the audience.*] I know most of you thought he was a wonder, a new breed of tycoon. You even gave him the trappings of a state funeral, flew the flag at half mast, wrapped him in the national colours. [*Pause.*] It was only when you found yourselves swindled that you questioned his flair.

BABBLE: Stop insulting my guests! Show respect! That's the mark of civilization. [*Puts on the kaffiyeh.*] Out in the desert, survival is dependent on hospitality and honour. [*Playing with the kaffiyah.*] Ooh, I like this... Babble of Arabia...

BHUNGA: Stop play acting, you...

BABBLE: Yes, I can act. To do what I did, I had to. I could keep more balls in the air than two teams of rugger buggers.

BHUNGA: A deadly web, Comrade Spiderham. [*Slight pause.*] This time I am going. Quite apart from you, I can see I'll make no progress with this lot... [*Pointing at the audience.*]... they're holding tight to their illusions. [*Leaves the stage and starts walking down the aisle towards the exit.*] You're allowing this country to go down the drain because you all want to be in on the action, and the action is rotten. [*Exits.*]

Scene 2

BABBLE: There goes the epitome of Black piety. Thank God, there aren't too many of him around though lately there are a few that stand out in the public service. [*Picks out a person in the audience, addresses him/her directly.*] I mean I tried my damndest to find solid Black partners who were serious about uplifting the masses. Doesn't my track record speak for itself? Doesn't it? [*Stops as he notices*

the ZCC hat. Takes off the kaffiyah and puts on the ZCC hat.] Now this certainly takes me back... when we lived in Brakpan we had a garden boy who was in the Zionist Church. I think Philemon was his name. He used to stick up for me when my brother was pushing me around, 'making a man out of me'. Ja, that Philemon saved my skin more than once. Wonder what he'd say if he saw me now? [*PROF enters at the back of the theatre singing "My mother was a kitchen girl..."*]

PROF: [*Advancing down the aisle. Speaks with an American accent.*] Yo, your hero was a ZCC gardener!

BABBLE: What? Who's that?

PROF: That's a safe bet. You prefer your darkies simple and superstitious.

BABBLE: Professor! What are you doing here? Who told you about this gathering?

PROF: [*Mounts the stage.*] That's a secret. [*Slight pause.*] Sorry if I'm late.

BABBLE: No, don't apologize. It's actually perfect timing. I was just about to start the show when that thug Bhunga pitched up and cut me short. I'd hardly got going when he jumped up and started heckling me, making out that I was this scumbag. I mean who the hell does he think I am? For that matter who does he think he is?

PROF: You said it, bro! But don't worry yourself. He's history.

BABBLE: What do you mean?

PROF: Man, he got the chop, he's past tense.

BABBLE: Right now? Where did it happen? He was here just a... wait... you... you organized it?

PROF: Whaddaya you think? You think we gonna stand around and let a nigga like that give you the heat? No, we don't stand for shit like that – not me and the brothers.

BABBLE: I hope you didn't kill him! I just wanted him roughed up enough to back off.

PROF: I can read your thoughts, bro. And you whisper real loud. [*Laughing.*] Comrade Prosecutor Bhunga just got a visit from Police Intelligence. I asked them to take him away for a little questioning while you're here addressing these very important opinion makers. You see, we finally got through to the Vice Prez – he's also got beef with Bhunga. Dere's elements want him out. Dey say he bin too open with his dependencies. You dig? And now dey wanna nail him. Shit, Comrade Bhunga in de wrong camp, man – I mean, we got proof he was a CIA spy, a System man, a motherfuckin' tool of the Boers.

BABBLE: I wish you would stop this fake American accent, Prof. [*Takes off the ZCC hat and puts on the peaked hip hop cap.*] It's almost as fake as me wearing this.

PROF: Come on, what's with you, bro? Me and my Yankee cousins are like this. [*Holds up two fingers pressed together.*] Yo, dem Yankee bitches are hot for me, and I'm like hot for dem. [*Takes the cap off BABBLE, puts it on his head.*] Now, don't dis look right? Where's de Chivas? I'm thirsty.

BABBLE: You're always too damn thirsty. And cut the 'bitches' talk. [*Takes the hip hop off BHUNGA and puts it on his head.*]

PROF: Why? You never used to be like this. Hell, man, you wuz so generous in understanding a man's needs. But then we done you plenty good turns, me and de brothers. [*Takes the cap back.*]

BABBLE: Good turns, yes. Except for the ones when you went behind my back and brought in other investors.

PROF: Bullshit!

BABBLE: Like that deal in Congo. You went to the bloody minister of Land Development and offered him the jet I'd given you in return for a bigger slice for yourselves. [*Takes the cap back.*]

PROF: Non-sense! Who told you this shit, man?

BABBLE: What does it matter? [*Pause.*] It was Butch.

PROF: Yo! You believe dat cheap ass gangster? Dat man's got no politics.

BABBLE: [*Smiles.*] Why, he's got plenty of politics. [*Slight pause.*] But let's rather talk about Elephant, the most... the biggest... the mother of all Empowerment Deals! Why didn't you hang in there? Everything would have come right.

PROF: Man, you got it wrong. We gave you de Black Face but de bankerman turned it gray. [*Takes the cap back.*]

BABBLE: [*To the audience.*] Ag, how rude of me! I should have introduced my good friend here at the start. Professor Ndlovu is a comrade of note. A rising star of the Youth League, a real rough diamond... [*Clearing his throat.*] Always at the service of the youth of this country. Always aware of his fiduciary duty, you know, always accountable for every cent. Always reporting back and then getting a mandate for the next step. And needless to say, we have always gotten on.

PROF: Definitely! Who's the man?

BABBLE: You de Man! I did some things well, and you did other things *better*.

PROF: [*In a Rasta accent.*] Yeah, mon. Dey call dat 'division of de labour'. You see me bin reading dem books you gave me. I bin burying me poor little curly head in dem white man's books.

BABBLE: Oh, my God – he's now doing Jamaican.

PROF: An me tell you, since den I and I bin doing bizness like nobody's bizness. Come rain or shine, lil' ole Professor bin doing bizness just like Selassie On High said: O ye Chillen of Afrika, hit dem streets and buy out Babylon. Me was de star, man. Me was king.

BABBLE: What's wrong with just being Shangaan?

PROF: [*Returns to American accent.*] Nothing, man. Pity you told Lungi I was a has-been. You said I had my dick in my eyes and couldn't see straight.

BABBLE: Well... that was...

PROF: You acted bad, man – after all I done for you.

BABBLE: You got the car you wanted, and cases of...

PROF: Bling, dat's all bling, man.

BABBLE: Bl...ing!

PROF: Yeah, I need cash for my old age. You think you the only one with family to look after?

BABBLE: I took care of my children alright. You've never paid a penny in maintenance all your life. How many garnishing orders were served on you at my place?

PROF: Dose weren't my kids. De bitches was just looking for easy airtime. Dey knew I was workin' hard and savin' and dey wanted a piece of de pie.

BABBLE: [*Turns away.*] Stupid dickhead... [*Slight pause.*] Anyway, you didn't come here to insult me, did you?

PROF: Fact is – I didn't know you wuz around. I was just passin' by but someone sent me in.

BABBLE: Someone? Who?

PROF: Guess. We wuz just talking about him. [*Smiling.*] Mr Butch Deratti.

BABBLE: Are you telling me Butch is outside?

PROF: Dat man is a liar. And a thief. But he wants to see you.

BABBLE: [*Grimly.*] Well, Butch... Why doesn't he come in? He knows I'm here.

PROF: He wants to... clarify...

BABBLE: Yes, he'd better. The two timing bastard.

PROF: ... a few things regarding the last operation.

BABBLE: Right! I'll step out for a few minutes and sort him out. [*Claps his hands.*]

In the meanwhile you stay here. Tell them a few stories, you know, reminisce...
[*Exits.*]

PROF: Move your butt, chief. [*Sings "My father was a garden boy..." Laughs. Switches to a working-class Black South African accent.*] Did I really sound like an American? Took me ages to learn the lingo, man. I used to sing along, you know, in front of the mirror. And my homeboy, Izwelethu, he and I used to get the DVD's, man, one after the other and check the style. Now Babble always used to hum a tune to himself when a deal was buzzing. Meant he had something up his sleeve. Not that he didn't teach us how to play. It was 'willing teacher, willing learner'. You got something useful to teach us, something that will bring in the bucks, we gonna listen, we gonna sit on your lap and lap it up. But I never really sat on Babble's lap! Not me! Ha, ha! You think we don't know about *interest* – bank interest, self interest – and what side the bread is buttered? Maqabane, we know how to make interest so interesting the sweetest bantwana start popping up at your elbow. And you better believe we know exactly how to use a Mephistopheles Medici Babble. [*Slight pause.*] Ha! He coughed up plenty. Why sell out cheap to the umlungus? Anyway, I was on the road to nowhere when this majita who lives next door says there's plenty opportunity in the League. League? What league? The soccer league or the cricket league? No, no, he says, it's the real top league if you want to help yourself – and if you want to help abasebenzi. Help? In what way can I help anybody? He grabs my arm. No, man, don't be like that, baba! Open your mind to opportunity like the Prez says. Step out. Go to a meeting or two and take the wax out your ears. Amagents are serious. They know time is not on our side. The umlungus are cashing in and amaChina and amaKhulu are robbing us blind. [*BUTCH enters behind PROF.*] I mean, you heard the Prez say we need to nationalize. Amandla! We need to take back the land and the mines. We must stop being patient. [*Slight pause.*] I mean, who's supposed to be driving the fancy cars? [*Sings "My mother was a kitchen girl..."*]

Scene 3

BUTCH steps forward, grinning madly. When speaking to Prof he uses a fake Italian accent.

PROF: That was quick!

BUTCH: Well done, me boy. [*Hands PROF an envelope.*] I finished with Mephistopheles. [*To the AUDIENCE.*] I'm here to share with you a few secrets that are maybe not so secret. [*Laughs. Slight pause.*] He's having a little chat with Happy.

PROF: Happy?

BUTCH: Si, si. Happy Happy.

PROF: You serious? I thought he was under guard in hospital.

BUTCH: His kidneys are finito but he'll live.

PROF: Well, done! Well, done! The press made such a fuss when Naidoo got parole I thought it would be real trouble to get Happy out of jail.

BUTCH: My boy, there's nothing we can't get done. And you? I hear only good things. You going for deputy minister?

PROF: True, me and the homeboys are chowing very, very nice. But hey, you also doing well. You won in the end. It was tricky but you pulled it off.

BUTCH: Cross my lines – you end up with an *assisted suicide*.

PROF: Hey, that was top shit, man. And then you destroyed Happy, and got away with that too.

BUTCH: Sh...

PROF: And now to show you're absolutely, totally, in every fucking respect, unconditionally de Boss, you get him out of jail.

BUTCH: Quiet now!

PROF: Haai Baba, we got to give it up for you! [*To the audience.*] Let's all give it up for Butch Deratti Ngwenya, King of the Swamp! Ngwenya... the croc, man. That's your clan name, bro. You one of the family – sharp, sharp... [*Opens his mouth and taps his teeth.*] Chicken, steak, prawns, anything else you put on the plate... Shake on it, Baba! [*Tries to do a hi-5 with BUTCH.*] Don't you know how to shake with a brother?

BUTCH: Hey, shut the fuck up! I'm not a bambino.

PROF: Kid? No, *youth*, man. *Youth*.

BUTCH: And what is the maximum age these days to be a *youth*? I hear you changing your constitution so at forty you can still become... whaddaya-call-it...

PROF: An office bearer? That's bullshit, man. Thirty-five's the limit, thirty-five and not a day more.

BUTCH: Really? Your Mister Mashaba's a rather mature looking thirty-five. And that signorina, er... Nomsa, the one with the big arse, she's definitely...

PROF: Hey, bro – there's five Nomsa's with big arses. You gotta grade them...small, medium, large...

BUTCH: I'll leave that to you.

PROF: Whaddaya mean? There's plenty umlungus that likes mpundus. You people got plenty women on the *extra large*.

BUTCH: [*Looking at his watch.*] Shit, Happy taking his time.

PROF: No, it's Meph what got plenty to say to him. I mean, you were the *connection* but you kept him from meeting Sidney while you played your game. Makes sense, bro. After all, that's how you made your...

BUTCH: [*Laughs.*] How do you know about that?

PROF: Meph complained to me. He said he was pissed off that Bhunga's investigation wasn't being squashed by Happy – considering the bucks he moved your way to make it happen.

BUTCH: Basta! We all had a cosy dinner. Man, dey talked about de Struggle days. You know how Mephistopheles fancied himself as de messiah of you lot. Now I'm not in de business of making and breaking chiefs of police. I keep everybody smiling – especially Happy.

PROF: Yo, you testified against the dude in open court! You turned state's evidence to save your fucking skin. How low can you get!

BUTCH: I can go lower.

PROF: Yeah, the lower you go, the more skirts you can look up.

BUTCH: Happy hang himself. He got de shakes from all dose single malts. [*To the audience.*] We discuss every fucking detail before hand, but in de box he start talking kak.

PROF: [*To the audience.*] You should have been at court. Butch turned up every day with a fresh shave and a smile while Happy looked like a hobo.