

# **SOME MOTHERS' SONS**

**By  
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## About the play

*Some Mother's Sons* juxtaposes the experiences of two friends, Vusi Mataboge and Braam Visser – each in a cells twenty years apart in South Africa. These periods are inter-spliced with each other so that the style of the play is not realistic but rather one that facilitates quick changes between the two periods.

Costume changes are minimal, perhaps one item of clothing to indicate the different periods each time.

The play explores the themes of violence – how violence affects people – and how they respond as individuals. The violence of apartheid is juxtaposed to the violent criminality of post-apartheid South Africa, with supplementary themes such as the law versus justice and the death penalty being brought into focus.

The play takes its name from a recurrent theme in the play i.e. that the violence being experienced by the male characters affects those close to them, particularly their mothers. This is not a play about apartheid and criminal statistics; it's a play about real people, about some mothers' sons.

## Characters

**Vusi Mataboge** is about twenty-seven when he is detained as a community and union activist. He goes on to become a top human rights lawyer and businessman.

**Braam Visser** is 3-4 years younger than Vusi. He is from an Afrikaans family, and is a young lawyer in the first half of the play.

## Set

Depending on the style chosen by the director, the set should be as simple as possible, certainly not a realistic set. It could be set in a cage or in two cages.

When Vusi acts as the storyteller, speaking into a tape recorder, he could be seated at a table outside the cage/s, perhaps, in a smaller cage.

**Vusi:** *(talking into a tape recorder)* I don't know why he did it. But there's one recurring image in my mind. I wake up at night and it's him....

*Spotlight comes up on Braam.*

**Braam:** I hope you never have to do it, Vusi.

*Spotlight fades on Braam.*

**Vusi:** I eat. I cook dinner. I drive to work. I try to work, but over and over again, he's there.....

*Spotlight comes up on Braam again.*

**Braam:** I hope you never have to do it, Vusi.

*Spotlight fades on Braam.*

**Vusi:** I blame myself. Of course I'm to blame. I should have seen it coming, Mrs Khumalo, but...you know how it is. We're so busy. Working. Keeping clients happy. Making money. Chasing the next deal. We don't see how those who are even close to us are hurting....

*Spotlight comes up on Braam.*

**Braam:** What would you have done, Vusi? If you were in my position?

*Lights go down on Braam and Vusi. In the darkness, there are three shots; first one, then another relatively quickly afterwards, then a young man's scream of fear and then a third shot after 5 or 6 seconds.*

*Lights come up on Braam and Vusi in a police cell. It is 24 hours after Braam has shot three guys. Braam's shirt is still showing the signs of dry blood stains. They've already exchanged greetings.*

**Vusi:** I brought you some clean clothes.

**Braam:** Thanks.

**Vusi:** Are you able to wash?

**Braam:** They have a basin.

**Vusi:** You're comfortable?

**Braam:** It's not exactly *The Holiday Inn*.

**Vusi:** We're working on getting you out on bail. It looks like they'll set it at R100 000.

**Braam:** (*incredulously*) What?

**Vusi:** Remember Themba Mogau?

**Braam:** The Black Lawyers Association heavy?

**Vusi:** He's handling your case. I suspect he thinks he can make his reputation with this one.

**Braam:** Good for him.

**Vusi:** This one suits his politics. White Afrikaner in the dock. Black victims. And the white guy's history doesn't matter. Or that he himself was a victim.

**Braam:** Politics and justice. Who knows where the one begins and the other ends?

**Vusi:** He's been seduced by all the media coverage you've been getting. He'd like to bask in some of that.

**Braam:** Why so much?

**Vusi:** Mogau's arguing that you killed two people, and badly wounded a third. He says it's likely you'll go after the third to finish him off, since he's the one who allegedly pulled the trigger. So we're offering R75 000. We think he'll settle for a hundred. There'll also be some other bail conditions like...some form of house arrest, surrendering your passport....The firm will stand surety for you to show that we believe that you'll be a good guy once you're out on bail.

**Braam:** And *do* you believe that?

**Vusi:** The whole truth?

**Braam:** Nothing but...!

**Vusi:** We don't know....I don't know, Braam. We're all still in a state of shock. This is like out of the movies. It's not supposed to happen to us.

**Braam:** I'm sorry.

**Vusi:** For what?

**Braam:** For letting it happen to you.

**Vusi:** You sorry for what you've done?

**Braam:** Why don't you just walk away?

**Vusi:** Do you have *any* remorse, Braam?

**Braam:** Vusi, you don't have to do this.

**Vusi:** No, no. I want to do this. But I want to know...

**Braam:** What?

**Vusi:** If you've got rid of your demons.

**Braam:** What's that supposed to mean?

**Vusi:** If we get you out on bail...

**Braam:** ...will I be a nice guy?

**Vusi:** Yeah.

**Braam:** I don't know.

**Vusi:** You don't know?

**Braam:** No.

**Vusi:** So where does that leave us?

**Braam:** Why are you doing this Vusi?

**Vusi:** Because I want to.

**Braam:** It's an open and shut case. I shot three guys. Two of them are dead. I'm guilty. You shouldn't be wasting your time with this. It was premeditated, planned and executed.

**Vusi:** Executed...you say that without irony.

**Braam:** I'm sorry, Vusi. I'm not thinking straight....

**Vusi:** You obviously shoot straight!

**Braam:** (*quietly*) You're mad at me....

**Vusi:** I'm sorry. I know I should be more supportive....

**Braam:** No, you don't have to be. What I did was wrong. That's why you shouldn't have to be here. If the firm wants to be involved, let them send one of the junior lawyers....

**Vusi:** I'm not doing this as a lawyer. I'm doing this as a friend.

**Braam:** As a friend, I'm saying you shouldn't be wasting your time with this.

**Vusi:** That's for me to decide.

**Braam:** Fine. But if I were you, I'd walk away from this.

**Vusi:** No, you wouldn't.

**Braam:** So what's this? Payback time? Because I once helped you....? You don't have to, Vusi. I appreciate it. Really. But you don't have to.

**Vusi:** Look. Let's cut the crap. I'm your lawyer whether you like it or not. And I'm your friend, okay? Not for this or that reason. I'm your friend. Period. Just accept that. And I'm going to handle this, okay?

**Braam:** Okay.

**Vusi:** So, will you be a good guy if we get you out on bail?

**Braam:** You asking as my lawyer, or as my friend?

**Vusi:** Both.

**Braam:** As my lawyer, take whatever answer you think you need. As my friend, don't put up any of the hundred grand yourself. I can't guarantee the investment.

**Vusi:** Braam....

**Braam:** Just walk away Vusi. I won't hold it against you.

**Vusi:** Braam...! Just...cool it, okay?

**Braam:** Okay....

**Vusi:** Just get it into your head that I'm not walking away from this!

**Braam:** Okay...

**Vusi:** Stop telling me to walk away, 'cos it's not going to happen.

**Braam:** Okay, okay....calm down. (*Beat*) Do you want a cigarette?

**Vusi:** You know I don't smoke...

**Braam:** I know. I was just trying to make conversation....

**Vusi:** (*sighs*) Where'd you get the gun.

**Braam:** I bought it.

**Vusi:** When?

**Braam:** One, two years ago...

**Vusi:** It's been licensed in your name for nearly three years.

**Braam:** (*shrugs*) That long.

**Vusi:** You refused to carry a gun during your conscription. You signed the office petition for a society free of guns.

**Braam:** Yeah. Sure.

**Vusi:** And you've been a closet gun-carrier for two-and-a-half years?

**Braam:** You must be disappointed...

**Vusi:** Confused. I'm confused.

**Braam:** You remember the first time they broke into our house? Renee and I laughed it off as our contribution to contemporary dinner talk. You know...all dinner conversations start with "What will you have to drink" followed by the latest domestic crime stories.

**Vusi:** The next time it happened, you took the insurance money and went to Bali.

**Braam:** Exactly. But the third time...when they broke in while we were asleep, and this after we put up high walls and everything, that really got to us. We were scared, Vusi. Really scared. We sold at a great loss, and moved into a safer neighbourhood. And that's when I bought the gun. When Renee fell pregnant, she wanted us to move to Cape Town. We thought it would be safer...she wanted to be closer to her family. But I couldn't go. You know... the company was doing well, we were expanding...

**Vusi:** Do you regret it?

**Braam:** Of course. If we had moved to Cape Town, none of this would probably have happened.

**Vusi:** I meant the shootings.

**Braam:** The shootings? Do I regret the shootings?

**Vusi:** Yes.

**Braam:** (*gets increasingly excited*) Do I regret shooting those bastards? Are you kidding?

**Vusi:** You don't feel *any* remorse?

**Braam:** You already asked me that.

**Vusi:** And you didn't answer.

**Braam:** Will they reduce my sentence if I did? Is that it?

**Vusi:** I just want to know.

**Braam:** You want me to act like I'm sorry?

**Vusi:** Only if you are....

**Braam:** You want me to put on a song and dance? To impress the judge? To make him feel sorry for me? I'll show remorse, Vusi. I'll weep! I'll cry! I'll drown the judge in tears if you want. But it won't be for those bastards. Because you know what Vusi? I don't feeling a fucking thing!



**Vusi:** Don't become like them, Vusi!

**Braam:** Is that what I used to tell you?

**Vusi:** Don't let them take way your heart....

**Braam:** Sure. I remember saying that.

**Vusi:** When they take your heart....

**Braam:** .... they take your soul...

**Vusi:** And so you too...become nothing more than a beast.

*Music. Lights fade on Braam and Vusi. Lights come up on Vusi speaking into the tape recorder again.*

**Vusi:** If you had a crystal ball twenty years ago when we first met, and you told me this would have happened, I'd have laughed at you. *(Lights fade on Vusi and continue on as a recording or in the dark. Lights come up on Braam twenty years ago. He's in a holding cell, carrying a briefcase, waiting for Vusi to be brought in as a detainee. He's pacing up and down)* Braam? He would never do something like this. Not the Braam I met then.

*Vusi enters, having suffered pretty intense torture over the last few days. He is highly suspicious of Braam. Braam is visibly shocked to see how Vusi looks.*

**Braam:** *puts out his hand to shake Vusi's hand* Hello, I'm..... *(Vusi spits at his hand, and turns away from him. Braam gets the message, but is confused, almost naive)* What was that for? *(Vusi doesn't answer)*. I'm here to help you! *(Vusi still doesn't respond)* I can understand why you don't want to talk to me. *(Pause)* Actually, I can't understand. I want to get you out of this place. *(There is no response from Vusi. Pause)* Who did that? To your face? *(Pause, with Vusi still not responding)* Why won't you talk? *(Beat)* Look, they said I only have 20 minutes. If you don't have anything to say, I can go....*(still no response from Vusi)*. Okay, I'm sorry you feel this way. *(packs up his briefcase)* I won't waste any more of your time. *(gets up and turns to leave)*

**Vusi:** *(still looking at audience, not at Braam)* What's your name, white boy?

**Braam:** Braam.

**Vusi:** Braam who?

**Braam:** Visser.

**Vusi:** Bram Fischer?

**Braam:** No. Visser.

**Vusi:** You're no relation.....

**Braam:** He was Fischer. I'm Visser.

**Vusi:** Were you named after him?

**Braam:** I doubt it.

**Vusi:** But maybe?

**Braam:** My father's a dominee. He wouldn't have supported....

**Vusi:** Say no more.

**Braam:** Braam's a family name. My grandfather's called Braam. His father. My Father. And me.

**Vusi:** You're making it hard for me to trust you.

**Braam:** By being honest?

**Vusi:** What do you want?

**Braam:** I want to help you.

**Vusi:** How old are you?

**Braam:** Twenty-four.

**Vusi:** And what makes you think you can help me, white (*then emphasizes*) boy?

**Braam:** I'm a lawyer...well, I'm still doing my articles.

*Braam sits down at the table again and puts his briefcase on the table, and his jacket over the back of the chair.*

**Vusi:** You have a cigarette?

**Braam:** Sure. *(takes out a packet of cigarettes and a lighter)* You can keep the packet.

**Vusi:** *(eyeing him suspiciously)* Thanks.

**Braam:** You probably need them more than I do. *(Braam says as much of the following as he needs to until the action described below starts)*. If there's anything else you need...I can't promise anything, but I'll try to get it to you. First prize would be to get you out of course.

*Vusi gets up – from after Braam's first sentence above - and walking behind Braam, takes Braam's jacket and quickly covers Braam's face from behind with the jacket, pulling it tightly over his face, making it difficult for him to breathe. Braam struggles for breath and fights to take the jacket off from around his face. Braam falls to the ground, and Vusi climbs onto his back, still clutching the jacket over Braam's head. Eventually, Braam frees himself, and gasps for breath.*

**Braam:** *(still breathing heavily, sitting on the ground)* What was that about?

**Vusi:** You're one of them!

**Braam:** One of who?

**Vusi:** They beat me up, torture me, and when they get nothing, they send you in. To play the part of the good cop. *(adopting a sugary style of speech)* "I'm here to help you". "Keep the packet of cigarettes".

**Braam:** You think I'm a cop?

**Vusi:** *(at the table, close to Braam's briefcase)* You are a cop!

**Braam:** I'm a lawyer, not a cop!

**Vusi:** Then how did you get in here?

**Braam:** I know it must be difficult for you to trust...

*Vusi grabs Braam's briefcase and opens it.*

**Braam:** Hey!

*Vusi empties the briefcase.*

**Braam:** What do you think you're doing?

*Vusi scrummages through the papers and stationery and finds a business card.*

**Vusi:** Braam Visser. Matthews, De Klerk and Pretorius. Attorneys-at-law.

*Vusi is ambivalent, but becomes more suspicious as it is the firm at which his mother works. He circles Braam, interrogating him to determine his credentials.*

**Braam:** Are you satisfied now?

**Vusi:** How long have you been working there?

**Braam:** Ten months.

**Vusi:** What's the address?

**Braam:** Posbus 563....

**Vusi:** The street address....!

**Braam:** 327 Commissioner Street, Third Floor.

**Vusi:** What's the colour of the building?

**Braam:** Light green.

**Vusi:** Inside?

**Braam:** Creamish.....

**Vusi:** What's the name of the receptionist?

**Braam:** Marie. Why are you asking all these questions?

**Vusi:** How do I know you haven't made this business card...

**Braam:** Why....

**Vusi:** To make me think you really are a lawyer coming to help me.

**Braam:** I am....!

**Vusi:** Then I tell you things, and later it comes out that you're one of them!

**Braam:** (*slightly exasperated*) I'm not one of them....

**Vusi:** What's the name of the tea lady?

**Braam:** (*sighs*) Sylvia....

(*Pause*)

**Vusi:** How old is she?

**Braam:** (*thinks*) Probably early sixties.

**Vusi:** How long has she worked at the firm?

**Braam:** I don't know.

**Vusi:** How long has the firm being going?

**Braam:** Twenty-five years.

**Vusi:** How long have the partners been with the firm?

**Braam:** Mr De Klerk and Mr Pretorius started the firm. Mr Matthews joined them ten years ago.

**Vusi:** What's your mother's name?

**Braam:** Why?

**Vusi:** Just tell me.

**Braam:** Anna.

**Vusi:** What do you call her.

**Braam:** Ma....

**Vusi:** Not Anna?

**Braam:** She's my mother.

**Vusi:** Sylvia who?

**Braam:** Sylvia....?

**Vusi:** The tea lady...what's her surname.

**Braam:** Mataboge. Mrs Mataboge....

**Vusi:** She's my mother.

**Braam:** I know.

**Vusi:** She could be your mother. And you call her Sylvia? Is that because she's just the tea lady, white boy?

**Braam:** I'm sorry, Mr Mataboge...

**Vusi:** So now you're showing *me* some respect?

**Braam:** Everyone calls her Sylvia....

**Vusi:** Sylvia - the tea lady - has been there from the start. Long before Matthews. Before you were even born. She's still the tea lady.

**Braam:** I didn't know....

**Vusi:** How's Anna?

*Braam doesn't respond.*

**Vusi:** Are you deaf, white boy? How's Anna?

**Braam:** Okay Mr Mataboge, you've made your point.

**Vusi:** Tell me how's Anna. That's all.

**Braam:** (*Pause*) Mr Mataboge, you can call her Anna. You can call her Mrs Visser. You can call her Ma...call her what you want. But unlike you, Mr Mataboge, I don't have a mother to worry about me. My mother's dead.

*Vusi is visibly shocked. His attitude changes a little towards Braam.*

**Vusi:** Oh...

**Braam:** Breast cancer...

**Vusi:** I'm...sorry.

**Braam:** It's okay.

**Vusi:** You're too young...not to have a mother.

**Braam:** (*sensing an opening*) Your mother's too young not to have her son.

**Vusi:** (*quietly, his bravado and distrust having dissipated*) How is she?

**Braam:** She's worried about you.

**Vusi:** Whatever you do, you're not going to tell her what they're doing to me here.

**Braam:** Mr Mataboge....

**Vusi:** Just promise me....

**Braam:** Your mother's not naïve.

**Vusi:** Just promise me, dammit!

**Braam:** Your mother sent me because she *knows* what they're doing to you. She doesn't want me to come back and tell her that you're doing fine. She wants me to come back and tell her that I'm going to get you out of her!

**Vusi:** Well, you're *not* going to get me out of here, so you'll *have* to tell her that I'm fine.

**Braam:** Mr Mataboge...

**Vusi:** Braam, Braam, Braam...listen to me. My mother had four sons.

**Braam:** Simphiwe, Malusi, Mpho and you....

**Vusi:** (*a little taken aback that Braam knows this*) After my father.... disappeared, she gave everything for us. So that we could be something in this sick country! I don't want her to be worrying about me.

**Braam:** Mr Mataboge, I understand that you don't want your mother to be upset. But believe me...she knows.

**Vusi:** How?

**Braam:** I don't know. She reads newspapers...

**Vusi:** My mother's illiterate.

**Braam:** She's your mother! She knows when one of her children needs her! I'm here because of her.

**Vusi:** She asked you to come?

**Braam:** After they detained you last week, she asked the partners to do something for you. But they said they couldn't.

**Vusi:** Why?

**Braam:** It doesn't matter.

**Vusi:** *(more insistent)* Why?

**Braam:** *(reluctantly)* They thought it would upset some of their clients if they got involved with you.

**Vusi:** Bastards!

**Braam:** I saw your mother crying yesterday. I asked her what was wrong. She told me about you. And that's why I'm here.

**Vusi:** Why are you here?

**Braam:** To try to get you out of here.

**Vusi:** Just now you were *going* to get me out of here. Now you're only going to *try*....*(laughs)*

**Braam:** I didn't mean it like that. English isn't my first language.

**Vusi:** Neither is it mine. *(Pause, then, in Sotho)* This lamb wants to rescue a sheep from the wolves.

**Braam:** *(in Sotho too)* Sometimes the lamb has the heart of a lion.

**Vusi:** Jy praat my taal...

**Braam:** Don't underestimate this lamb, Mr Mataboge.

**Vusi:** Where I come from...we have lots of young lions. I'm not used to lambs.

**Braam:** Mr Mataboge, I don't know you. But I know your mother. I'm doing this for her. *(Pause)* And for me.



**Vusi:** What's in it for you?

*Beat.*

**Vusi:** What's in it for you? Money?

**Braam:** *(Beat)* My mother died when I was twelve. But from my first memory till I left home, I was reared by Phumi. *(registers the discussion they had about Vusi's mother's surname)* Mrs Khumalo.

**Vusi:** *(smiles)* And you learned Sotho from her...

**Braam:** When I saw your mother crying, it reminded me of Phumi. Once...she left us for a week, and we had to be looked after by our ouma. No-one would tell us where she had been. Only years later, I found out that she had gone to bury her only child. I know it may sound naïve to you, but since then, I've always been aware that black people have lives too. I couldn't see your mother's tears, and not get involved, Mr Mataboge.

**Vusi:** Vusi. My name's Vusi.

*Vusi extends his hand to Braam. Braam shakes it and says....*

**Braam:** Your mother asked me to tell you that your brothers are all fine.

*Vusi displays a hint of emotion. He nods his head in acknowledgement of Braam's reassurance about his brothers.*

**Vusi:** *(trying to pull himself together)* You want to help me?

**Braam:** Yes.

**Vusi:** Do you have a gun?

**Braam:** How will having a gun help you?

**Vusi:** When they come to open up for you to go, I'll shoot my way out of the police station.

**Braam:** Vusi, with all due respect....

**Vusi:** You have a car parked nearby?

**Braam:** You wouldn't get very far...

**Vusi:** *(grabs Braam by the scruff of his neck, points his finger at his head as if it's a gun. Braam goes along with it as if a hostage, but talks to Vusi all the time)* I could take you hostage. Hold the gun to your head, and demand that they let me go, or I'll shoot you.

**Braam:** This is South Africa...it's not the movies.

**Vusi:** They wouldn't want to lose a favourite son.

**Braam:** They'll get in snipers who'll take you out before you get out the door.

**Vusi:** Well, then *(releasing Braam)*...I'll keep the gun.

**Braam:** For what?

**Vusi:** For the next time Van Jaarsveld and Basson take me into that room. When they lock the door behind them and grin in anticipation of what they will do to me, nothing will give me greater pleasure than to pull out the gun, and shoot those evil bastards.

**Braam:** Then they would have succeeded.

**Vusi:** No they wouldn't! Because *their* brains will be splattered all over the wall.

**Braam:** But they would have made you a monster. You would have become like them.

**Vusi:** *(pointing to his left cheek)* Have you seen what they've done to this cheek? And when I turned the other cheek, look what they did here *(points to his swollen eye)*.

**Braam:** They have brutalized your body. Don't let them do that to your spirit. Don't let them take away your humanity.

**Vusi:** This is war, Braam. They have declared war...I have a right to defend myself.

**Braam:** And what then? You'll have the pleasure of blowing their brains out, and what then? You'll never get out of here alive.

**Vusi:** They told me that a comrade of mine left here two days ago.

**Braam:** See? It's possible....

**Vusi:** He left in a box....

**Braam:** What do you mean?

**Vusi:** He slipped on a bar of soap. He hit his head against the wall. Thirty-seven times. Then he hung himself by his shoelaces. I'll be lucky to get out of here alive anyway!

**Braam:** You mustn't give up hope....

**Vusi:** I won't give them the pleasure of killing me. I'll save the last bullet for myself. Two of them for one of me.

**Braam:** I can get you out of here.

**Vusi:** (*laughs*) Have you got anyone out of detention before?

**Braam:** No, but....

**Vusi:** Do you know why they have detention? To keep people like me off the streets. They have closed every hole in the law to stop even great lawyers from getting people like me out. What makes you think you can do it?

**Braam:** Vusi, it may make you an overnight hero to kill Van Jaarsveld and Basson. And then to kill yourself. What pleasure will that bring to your mother?

**Vusi:** There are many mothers like her...who have lost sons.

*Lights fade on this scene. There's the theme of the recurring three shots again. Music. The lights come up on Vusi and Braam in Braam's cell twenty years later, picking up the conversation they were having earlier..*

**Vusi:** Don't become like them, Vusi!

**Braam:** Is that what I used to tell you?

**Vusi:** Don't let them take way your heart....

**Braam:** Sure. I remember saying that.

**Vusi:** When they take your heart....

**Braam:** .... they take your soul...

**Vusi:** And so you too...become nothing more than a beast.

**Braam:** So I was wrong! So I lied to you! So I didn't know what the fuck I was talking about back then. Maybe you should have gone and joined MK. And come back, and pumped Van Jaarsveld full of bullets. Till he bled like a sieve....

**Vusi:** And then?

**Braam:** I don't know.... You would have felt better.

**Vusi:** I feel fine. I feel especially good for not having killed anybody.

**Braam:** Oh bullshit, Vusi! You would have come back. Like all the ANC cadres who came back after years of planting bombs. Killing policemen. Taking out informers. And you'd have been a hero. You would be in parliament, or a diplomat in some foreign embassy. Not exactly un-adjusted!

**Vusi:** Or maybe I could have come back like one of the kids you shot. Drafted into the new army. Downsized. Retrenched. Unskilled. And all I knew...was how to use a gun.

**Braam:** (*shrugs his shoulders*) My heart bleeds, Vusi.

**Vusi:** You shot them in cold blood.

**Braam:** (*ironically*) Yes, your honour....

**Vusi:** And you feel nothing.

**Braam:** No, your honour....

**Vusi:** It leaves you cold....

**Braam:** No Vusi! I know what you're trying to do. It's not the same thing! It's not a Jimmy Kruger-Biko thing.

**Vusi:** They were human beings....

**Braam:** They were murderers!

**Vusi:** So it's okay to go around shooting murderers.

**Braam:** I'm not saying what I did was right....

**Vusi:** You've set us back, Braam. Three years. Maybe more. We're trying to build respect for the rule of law. Respect for human rights. Respect for life. And then you go...and betray us.

**Braam:** Betray?

**Vusi:** I'll bet that every Dick, Tom and Siphos is saying to himself, if a top human rights lawyer can do this, why should we restrain ourselves?

**Braam:** You want to know what betrayal is?

**Vusi:** All vigilantes have now found themselves a patron saint. Braam Charles Bronson Visser!

**Braam:** Vusi, is this what we were struggling for? To be held hostage by thugs? Rapists? Murderers? Out of apartheid's frying pan, into crime's fire! What does it take to feel safe nowadays? Become a cabinet minister, with legions of bodyguards? Maybe Dick, Tom and Siphos *are* the betrayed. Betrayed by politicians! By incompetent police! By the law!

**Vusi:** I don't believe I'm hearing this!

**Braam:** Yes, I know....

**Vusi:** You sat on the technical committee....

**Braam:** ...that helped to redraft our bail and other laws in terms of our Bill of Rights. I know. But I now also know what it's like to be a victim of a criminal let out on bail. I know what it means to grieve for a loved one, killed in cold blood! Senselessly!

**Vusi:** You're no better than the kangaroo courts in the townships...

**Braam:** Have you asked yourself why....

**Vusi:** No better than the mobs who take the law into their own hands...!

**Braam:** People are frustrated...

**Vusi:** No better than the murderers you killed.

**Braam:** Vusi...don't....

**Vusi:** How are we going to build respect for the rule of law?

**Braam:** (*explodes, angrily*) Don't speak to me about the law, Vusi. Speak to me about justice!

**Vusi:** We're lawyers, Braam. We seek justice through the law. That's what the law is for....

**Braam:** Come on Vusi! You know as well as I do that justice is not always served by the law! How many people who are as guilty as sin get off scot free, because they have good lawyers?

**Vusi:** That's the way it works, Braam.

**Braam:** How many times have you and I got people freed even though we knew they were guilty?

**Vusi:** That's the system. That's the rule of law!

**Braam:** Do you wonder why people take the law into their own hands?

**Vusi:** You're emotional Braam...maybe we should change the subject...

**Braam:** Of course I'm emotional! You know the statistics, Vusi! 20 000 murders a year, and less than 15% convictions. Thousands of children and women raped every year, and less than 10% of the perpetrators are brought to book. We've got a great constitution! Fantastic laws to protect everyone. Just no fucking justice!

**Vusi:** So what are you suggesting? That all victims go out and arm themselves? And hunt down all criminals and kill them? Feed the anarchy?

**Braam:** I'm suggesting nothing.

**Vusi:** But you already have. You've sent out a signal. You shot three guys. And where? In a courtroom!

**Braam:** They were standing in the dock...

**Vusi:** And you shot them.

**Braam:** One minute, they were waving and smiling at their families...

**Vusi:** And the next minute, you shot them!

**Braam:** I resented them. Like they had no cares in the world....

**Vusi:** Then, bang! Bang! Bang!

*Beat. The three shots are heard again.*

**Braam:** All rise in court, the orderly said.

**Vusi:** And before the judge could make his appearance, you shot them!

**Braam:** Yes, I shot them.

**Vusi:** In cold blood.

*Shot.*

**Braam:** Yes!

**Vusi:** At point blank!

*Shot.*

**Braam:** Yes!

**Vusi:** Their brains on the wall!

*Shot.*

**Braam:** Yes!

**Vusi:** Their blood on your face, your hands, your clothes....

**Braam:** Yes! Yes! Yes!

**Vusi:** And you felt nothing!

**Braam:** Yes! No! I felt nothing!

**Vusi:** Ten seconds.

**Braam:** That's all it took....

**Vusi:** Ten seconds to end two lives, and nearly a third.

**Braam:** That about makes it square.

**Vusi:** Arsehole! You're such an arsehole!

**Braam:** I know. But I've never felt this good.

*Beat, beat.*

**Vusi:** I've been having these screaming matches with you. In my head. Nothing as polite as this.

**Braam:** So, take the gloves off.

**Vusi:** (*ironically*) Of course. You're the tough guy.

**Braam:** Don't feel sorry for me.

**Vusi:** Right! You don't need sympathy. Not mine or anyone else's.

**Braam:** Say what you want to say, Vusi....

**Vusi:** Sure! You can handle it. (*Pause. He bangs his fist into a wall*) I am so pissed off with you....Why Braam? Why? Why didn't you say something to me? To anyone? Why didn't you let us know what was on your mind? What you were thinking! Feeling! No! You're Mr Do-it-yourself! And what happens? You mess up everything! Everything! Your career! Your life! Friendships! Not to mention the human rights agenda! This wasn't spur-of-the-moment stuff! This was premeditated, cold-blooded murder! Were you afraid we might talk you out of it? Damn right we would have! I would have strapped you down if I had to! I've been there Braam! I've been on the brink! If anybody knows about anger, about hate, about revenge, it's me! I've been there, man! And you helped to pull me back. Why didn't you give me the same chance!

**Braam:** (*his attitude changes as a result of the last speech, now engaging Vusi*) I don't know. Because....

**Vusi:** Because what?

**Braam:** Because...because I had to do it.

**Vusi:** You *had* to shoot those three guys!

**Braam:** Yes.

**Vusi:** Why? Was it in your horoscope that morning? "You will shoot three guys today". What happened to Braam, the pacifist I once knew?



**Braam:** He doesn't exist anymore.

*Lights fade on Braam and Vusi. Music. Spotlight comes up and fades on Braam for each of the next three sequences.*

**Braam:** What would you have done Vusi?

*Lights fade. Shot is heard. Lights come up.*

**Braam:** What would you have done if you were in my position?

*Lights fade. Shot is heard. Lights come up.*

**Braam:** I hope you never have to do it, Vusi.

*Lights fade. Shot is heard.*

*Music. Lights come up on Braam and Vusi in Braam's cell, twenty years ago.*

**Braam:** Vusi, it may make you an overnight hero to kill Van Jaarsveld and Basson. And then to kill yourself. What pleasure will that bring to your mother?

**Vusi:** There are many mothers like her...who have lost sons.

**Braam:** And what would they rather have? The knowledge that their sons died as heroes, or to have their sons?

**Vusi:** No war is won without sacrifice.

**Braam:** And after the war is won?

**Vusi:** This war is going to take some time....

**Braam:** But it will end. Things can't go on like this.

**Vusi:** That's what we're fighting for...

**Braam:** Don't you want to be there when it ends?

**Vusi:** Braam, you have lived all of your life in the shelter of apartheid. You know what it's like to move around freely, to go to the school of your choice, get the job that you want. I know nothing of that. I cannot even begin to imagine...freedom. But I know that I'm prepared to give everything to get there.

**Braam:** You have what very few others have. A university degree.

**Vusi:** So?

**Braam:** There are different ways to fight for your freedom. Imagine what a difference you could make as a...

**Vusi:** As a what? What does a black man with a degree become? A teacher?

**Braam:** I was going to say lawyer.

**Vusi:** Lawyer?

**Braam:** Use the system against itself.

**Vusi:** Braam, you don't know what you are talking about. You talk to me like I'm white. It doesn't happen in my world like it happens in yours.

**Braam:** It may be more difficult for you now, but think of the future. The country is going to need skilled professionals. Black professionals. Doctors, accountants, engineers, lawyers...

**Vusi:** Braam, I appreciate what you're trying to do. But it's not going to happen.

**Braam:** Your mother would like you to become a lawyer.

**Vusi:** Don't, Braam! Don't...!

**Braam:** I'm just telling you what she says.

**Vusi:** You're trying to press my buttons.

**Braam:** Your mother has dreams for you.

**Vusi:** There are things that are bigger than our individual dreams.

**Braam:** What shall I tell her?

**Vusi:** Tell her that I'm fine....

**Braam:** And when you return home in a box?

**Vusi:** I left home in a box....

**Braam:** You've lost me....

**Vusi:** *(suddenly changes tack, remembering why he's there)* Ask my mother to make contact with Malusi. He's probably in hiding.

**Braam:** And?

**Vusi:** Tell him to find out which one was the impimpi.

**Braam:** I don't know what you are talking about.

**Vusi:** Someone told the police how to find me. Only three people knew. That was my brother and two other comrades. But one of those two is an impimpi.

**Braam:** What makes you think that?

**Vusi:** The security police were looking for me...

**Braam:** Why?

**Vusi:** *(slightly irritated)* I don't know...they felt lonely. They needed some company....

**Braam:** Okay, okay.

**Vusi:** We agreed that it was safer for me to get out of the townships and live in a safe house in the suburbs.

**Braam:** Who agreed?

**Vusi:** Braam, get it into your head...I'm not going to tell you. It doesn't matter who....

**Braam:** Vusi, I'm your lawyer....

**Vusi:** Who appointed you?

**Braam:** If I'm going to get you out of here, I need to know things.

**Vusi:** Have you read the emergency regulations? Have you read the Suppression of Communism Act? Are you familiar with 180-day detention?

**Braam:** Yes....

**Vusi:** Then you should know there is no chance of getting me out of here....

**Braam:** People said I had no chance of getting *in* here. They said “have you read the emergency regulations? Have you read the Suppression of Communism Act? Are you familiar with 180-day detention without trial. No-one held in terms of these acts gets to see a lawyer!”

**Vusi:** So how did you get in?

**Braam:** My father was at university with Le Grange. And he sometimes goes to my father’s church when he’s in Germiston. I asked him to phone Le Grange to allow me to see you.

**Vusi:** (*a bit gob-smacked*) He phoned Le Grange?

**Braam:** Le Grange wasn’t very keen.

**Vusi:** Okay, I think it’s better if you go now.

**Braam:** What do you mean?

**Vusi:** Your father just phoned the Minister of Police?

**Braam:** Yes...

**Vusi:** I don’t want to be associated with anyone who’s so close to that...that criminal bastard!

**Braam:** Vusi....

**Vusi:** (*pushes Braam towards the door*) Just go Braam.

**Braam:** Vusi, please...

**Vusi:** What will I tell my comrades? I got out because my lawyer phoned the Minister of Police...“Hello Oom, it’s Braam here. Please let my detainee go, asseblief oom”.

**Braam:** Does it matter how you get out?

**Vusi:** My comrades will think I’ve made a deal as an informer...

**Braam:** Use the system against itself, Vusi!

**Vusi:** I'd rather die than become an informer...

**Braam:** I'm not suggesting that...If I get in here because I speak Afrikaans, because my father knows Le Grange, and I get you out so you can do whatever you need to do, surely that's better than your sitting here...getting beaten up everyday?

**Vusi:** Use the system against itself...that's what collaborators say. Work from within. And before you know it, they're all living the high life, working the system for themselves, not against it.

**Braam:** Everyday, there are teachers subverting apartheid education. Everyday, lawyers defend their clients against apartheid's laws using those laws. People in the system resisting the system.

**Vusi:** Everyday, doctors visit detainees who are brutally tortured, and say that they found nothing wrong with them...

**Braam:** Of course there are some who do that. Many even! But we're not all the same, Vusi. Just because I'm white doesn't mean I'm one of them. Just because I'm Afrikaans doesn't mean I vote Nat.

**Vusi:** Everyday, when they beat me, they're doing it to preserve your way of life. It doesn't matter if you don't vote for them. If you don't support all they do. You benefit from it all.

**Braam:** (*exasperated*) So what do you want me to do? Leave the country?

**Vusi:** It's easy for you to talk. You're white.

**Braam:** What colour was the informer?

*Vusi doesn't say anything. But his face registers the blow of Braam's question. There is a tense silence for a while.*

**Vusi:** Make contact with my brother, please.

**Braam:** (*beginning to remonstrate*) Vusi...

**Vusi:** You said you want to help...

**Braam:** That's why I'm here.

**Vusi:** Then get a message to Malusi.

**Braam:** To say what?

**Vusi:** Tell him to find out who the informer was.

**Braam:** And then?

**Vusi:** They must do what we do to informers.

**Braam:** I'm a lawyer, Vusi. Don't ask me to do something illegal.

**Vusi:** You don't have to do anything. Just give this message to my brother.

**Braam:** What will happen to the informer?

*Vusi just smiles. He doesn't answer.*

**Braam:** Will they kill him? *(Pause)* Will they put a tyre around his neck, douse him with petrol and set him alight? Is that how you're going to deal with this?

**Vusi:** My comrades will deal with it in the way they think best.

**Braam:** How can people do that kind of thing to other people?

**Vusi:** Spoken like a true white man.

**Braam:** This is not a white thing or a black thing, Vusi. It's a human thing. We're brutalizing our humanity. How can you stand there as people are being set alight? How can you just watch as they cry and burn to death and do nothing? How can you let children see all these things? We're creating a generation of young people for whom life is cheap. For whom it will mean nothing to take the life of another human being. That cannot be good for the future, Vusi.

**Vusi:** So what must our people do? When they are faced with tanks and guns and deaths in detention? How are people supposed to defend themselves? If all they have are sticks and stones and tyres and matches, they will use it. What right does anyone have to stop them?

**Braam:** Our future society is going to reap the whirlwind of this violence...

**Vusi:** We'll deal with it then....

**Braam:** I just hope it doesn't get worse.

**Vusi:** What can be worse than what we're going through now Braam? White people are sheltered from the violence, but everyday, every single day, black people experience violence of some sort or another. What can be worse than that?

**Braam:** I hope you're right, Vusi. I hope you're right.

**Vusi:** Braam, let me tell you something. I was on my way to a safe house. There was going to be a mass funeral that day. Thirteen people had been killed in protests. But the police were looking for me and other comrades. They had surrounded the township so we couldn't get out. They were going door to door. We came up with the idea that I would get into a coffin, and the hearse would transport me out of the township to the suburbs. But they knew. Somehow, they knew. They stopped every hearse and opened every coffin to make sure the person inside was dead. That's how they found me last Saturday. And they brought me here. They've promised me that now that I've had practice, they will oblige and let me leave here in a coffin.

**Braam:** I can understand why you're angry....

**Vusi:** I was sold out. By a comrade. That's been greater mental torture for me than anything else they've thrown at me. I've been betrayed by one of my closest comrades. You wouldn't have any idea of what that means.

**Braam:** How can you be sure?

**Vusi:** I just don't know which one.

**Braam:** Maybe the police found out in some other way.

**Vusi:** The last ten days...every day...I thought I was going to die.

**Braam:** How will Malusi find out which one betrayed you?

**Vusi:** He must be stopped. Before he does this to anyone else.

**Braam:** It will be impossible for the person to get a fair trial.

**Vusi:** So many comrades have lost their lives because of informers.

**Braam:** You may kill the wrong person.

**Vusi:** It will send out a strong message...!

**Braam:** Vusi, the government has used the death penalty to get rid of many of your comrades. How can you be doing the same?

**Vusi:** This is war. People die in a war.

**Braam:** What about that person's mother?

**Vusi:** What about the mothers of all the children whom he has sold out? What about their wives, husbands, children....?

**Braam:** You can't just take the law into your own hands....

**Vusi:** If I were there, I'd do it myself.

**Braam:** You hate too much.....

**Vusi:** I hurt too much.

**Braam:** Let me help you.

**Vusi:** Help me by giving this message to my brother.

**Braam:** I cannot be party to the death of a human being.

**Vusi:** Please...he's party to the death of many others. Stop him before more die!

**Braam:** I refuse to own a gun. I joined the campaign to abolish the death penalty when I was a student. I avoided active military service by doing legal work in the navy. I believe in the sanctity of life. Please do not ask me to do that.

**Vusi:** Then how are you going to help me?

**Braam:** *(picking up the briefcase and opening a false bottom)* I don't have a gun. *(whispering as if someone is listening)*. But I have a camera and a tape recorder.

**Vusi:** The tools of the informer....

**Braam:** Maybe, but also possibly the tools of your freedom.

**Vusi:** How will they help?



**Braam:** If you're right and we can't get you out in terms of the law, we'll get you out through public pressure. People will be shocked when they see photos of you...

**Vusi:** Where do you live, Braam? Don't you know there are laws out there preventing newspapers from publishing such things?

**Braam:** I'll find a way.

**Vusi:** (*with some sarcasm*) You'll get daddy to phone the editor of Rapport? (*Pause*) Braam, do you really think white people are going to be interested in a black detainee? They'll think I'm getting what I deserve.

**Braam:** I'm talking international pressure. Imagine what will happen if we circulate photos of you and recordings of what they've been doing to you around the world...

**Vusi:** You'll get me killed!

**Braam:** You say they're going to kill you anyway.

**Vusi:** This is one way of making sure....!

**Braam:** No. It will be exactly the opposite. The only way to make sure that you live, is to put you in the public spotlight. The more publicity we give you, the less likely it is that anything will happen to you.

**Vusi:** They'll bring in a doctor who'll say I'm fine.

**Braam:** We'll demand an independent doctor's opinion.

**Vusi:** It's too dangerous....

**Braam:** What's the alternative? They'll torture you anyway.

**Vusi:** I don't want to be a hero.

**Braam:** It's not about being a hero....

**Vusi:** If I get out...many of my comrades will still be in this position. I'd rather stay with them....

**Braam:** Vusi, that may be very noble, but it will do nothing for your comrades! If *you* get out, it will open up the gates for your friends too...!

**Vusi:** (quieter) You think so?

**Braam:** What do you have to lose?

*Vusi paces around the cell, thinking of how to respond.*

**Vusi:** What do you want to know?

**Braam:** (switching on the tape recorder) Tell me everything that they've done to you. Start at the beginning...when they found you in the coffin.

*Vusi is seated at the table talking into the tape recorder. Braam takes a photo of him, surreptitiously in case anyone walks in on them.*

*Music, lights fade on this scene. They come up on Vusi talking into the tape.*

**Vusi:** (smiles) It's funny. Talking to you...talking into this tape. The tool of the informer, I think I said. But he was right. It was the tool of my freedom. He managed to get us all over the newspapers, international radio....They were embarrassed into letting us go. Not that it helped him of course. He got fired. But yes, that's when I first heard about you. uMama Khumalo. It's strange that we've never met. And yet, I feel I know you. I've never been to New Zealand. When Braam told me that you had gone with his sister's family to look after their kids over there, I felt a real sadness...in him. But he understood. You had no more of your own family here. And there was a chance to live more freely over there.... Who would ever have thought that it would come to this?

*Lights fade and come up on Vusi and Braam again, picking up on their earlier conversation after Braam's arrest.*

**Braam:** I'll never forget Van Jaarsveld's words as he led you in. "Look, Rambo's been fighting with the AZAPO detainees again. But they really *moered* him this time!" Did he *really* expect me to believe that? I wonder what he's doing now. Probably farming with an early retirement package. (Beat) You bumped into him at the World Cup Rugby Final....

**Vusi:** With his two sons. About twelve and fourteen, but both already had fully-developed policeman ears. (cups his hands behind his ears, to make them stand out more). They were all carrying new South African flags. I said "Hey Captain, its nice to see we're on the same side at last".

**Braam:** He didn't recognize you....

**Vusi:** Not at first. So I said, "Captain, its me, Rambo". And he said "Which one?" Eventually he made the connection. Then it was like we were old buddies. He told me how he had been following my career in the papers, how proud he was that he knew this famous lawyer. I was one of his boys. Like we were now all rich and famous for having passed through his correctional school.

**Braam:** Bastard!

**Vusi:** Then I said, "I don't suppose you'll be supporting a team called the 'All Blacks', Captain". He told me that we'd *always* been on the same side. And that he'd *never* supported apartheid.

**Braam:** (*ironically*) Of course.

**Vusi:** He was just doing his job as a security policeman. I said "Ja, Captain. I still have the scars to show just how well you did your job".

**Braam:** Did he ever apply for amnesty?

**Vusi:** I don't know. And you know what? I don't particularly care.

**Braam:** (*surprised*) Really? He could have *killed* you.

**Vusi:** I used to fantasise about taking revenge against Van Jaarsveld. Like if I ever met him in the street, I would push him in front of a bus. Or just... throttle him with my bare hands. Maybe I would throw a petrol bomb into his car. What if I kidnapped his children? And tortured them. Like he tortured so many mothers' sons. (*laughs at the thought*) It became an obsession. And it got to me. I became this post-detention cliché, swinging from irrational anger to pathetic self-pity. I was afraid to sleep because of the nightmares. When I *did* sleep, I used to wake up in a sweat. I spent a lot of time in counselling.

**Braam:** I know.

**Vusi:** Of course you know. You arranged it. And paid for a lot of it.

**Braam:** (*a bit embarrassed*) I didn't mean to raise that...

**Vusi:** No, no...I'll always be grateful to you. *You* got me out of detention. *You* persuaded me that violence was not the answer. *You* got me a scholarship to study law in Britain. And who got me a job at the Legal Resource Centre? *You!*

**Braam:** And look where you are today.

**Vusi:** And look where *you* are today.

**Braam:** Ja. History certainly has a sense of humour

*Awkward pause.*

**Braam:** Thanks for coming...I didn't expect you to.

**Vusi:** Why not?

**Braam:** You've got the interviews to be a judge coming up in two weeks. I didn't think you'd want to be associated with...this.

**Vusi:** That wouldn't have been a problem...

**Braam:** Wouldn't have? What do you mean "wouldn't have been a problem"? Is there a problem?

**Vusi:** I've withdrawn my application.

**Braam:** You've what?

**Vusi:** I'm not going to be interviewed for a position as judge...

**Braam:** Why?

**Vusi:** It's not the right time.

**Braam:** There are people with less experience than you, less qualifications than you...serving on the bench.

**Vusi:** There's plenty of time. I'm still young.

**Braam:** When did you decide...this?

**Vusi:** Bongji and I have been doing the sums. We're not going to come out on a judge's salary.

**Braam:** Are you serious?

**Vusi:** I'll have to give up my various directorships and our company's doing well at the moment, Braam. So being a judge will entail a huge loss of income.

**Braam:** The country needs your legal brain, Vusi.

**Vusi:** Well, the country's going to have to do without me, at least till my kids are done with their education. *(Pause)* Not much chance of your getting appointed as a judge after the stunt you've just pulled.

**Braam:** *(laughs with a tinge of bitterness)* There wasn't much chance of me being appointed anyway. I've already been turned down twice.

**Vusi:** Well, we do need to change the demographics of the judiciary....

**Braam:** I know, I know.....

**Vusi:** And we need competent judges, of course.

**Braam:** Just not white, Afrikaans, male ones right now....

**Vusi:** Your time would have come, Braam. You're still young....

**Braam:** Spilt milk, Vusi...no point in crying.

*Beat*

**Vusi:** I brought you some clean clothes.

**Braam:** Thanks.

**Vusi:** Are you able to wash?

**Braam:** They have a basin.

**Vusi:** You're comfortable?

**Braam:** It's not exactly *The Holiday Inn*.

*Lights fade. Music. Three shots. Spotlight comes up on Braam.*

**Braam:** What would you have done Vusi?

*Lights fade. Shot is heard. Lights come up.*

**Braam:** What would you have done if you were in my position?

*Lights fade. Shot is heard. Lights come up.*

**Braam:** I hope you never have to do it, Vusi.

*Lights fade. Shot is heard.*

**Vusi:** What happened to Braam, the pacifist I once knew?

**Braam:** He doesn't exist anymore.

**Vusi:** Really? Since when?

**Braam:** Since.... (*changes his mind, goes off on another tack*) I'm scared, Vusi. I'm more scared of living than of dying. I've never felt so helpless. Never. So out of control of my life. Everytime I see a black person, I think, "is he a hijacker, a mugger? Does he have a gun?" It wasn't like that. I'm becoming a racist. *After apartheid!* I see it happening to me! And it angers me! It angers me that I cannot do anything about it! What kind of life is this? The pacifist? He's dead. The non-racist? He's dying. The human rights lawyer? He's just...committed suicide.

**Vusi:** Listen to yourself, Braam.

**Braam:** What do you hear?

**Vusi:** You've become this pathetic little victim. Like all those victims of "the system" who think life owes them something.

**Braam:** (*quietly*) What would you have done, Vusi?

**Vusi:** Me?

**Braam:** What would *you* have done?

**Vusi:** What do you mean?

**Braam:** If you were me...

**Vusi:** What would I have done?

**Braam:** If you were in my position...

**Vusi:** What do you want me to say...that I would have shot three people in cold blood?

**Braam:** What would you do if Bongi and your three kids were threatened?

**Vusi:** Braam....

**Braam:** What would you do, Vusi?

**Vusi:** We're not talking about me....

**Braam:** But I want to know.

**Vusi:** Why?

**Braam:** Because you're sitting in judgment over me....

**Vusi:** *(defensively)* I'm not!

**Braam:** What would you do Vusi, and God forbid that this should ever happen to you...

**Vusi:** Stop this Braam! *(tries to walk away, but Braam follows him unrelenting)*

**Braam:** What would you do if some thug shot Bongi...

**Vusi:** Braam!

**Braam:** In cold blood....

**Vusi:** Okay, Braam, you've made your point....

**Braam:** What if they shot Bongi *and* one of your children...Lindiwe, your youngest.

**Vusi:** Braam, that's enough!

**Braam:** What would you do Vusi?

*Vusi is visibly upset as he is forced to think about this.*

**Vusi:** I don't know...

**Braam:** Would you just stand by and watch?

**Vusi:** I said I don't know...

**Braam:** Would you let the law take its course?

**Vusi:** I believe in the law.

**Braam:** And what if the bastards were caught and let out on bail? A bail law that you drafted that made it easier for them to get bail? How would you feel about that Vusi?

**Vusi:** Innocent until proven guilty. Even alleged murderers have rights.

**Braam:** Tell that to the people they've murdered!

**Vusi:** Braam....

**Braam:** And how would you feel if the bastards are caught again after having the done the same to someone else's wife? Someone else's sister? Someone else's daughter? Some mother's son?

*Tense silence.*

**Braam:** *(Pause)* I hope you never have to do it Vusi.

**Vusi:** Do what?

**Braam:** Bury your wife and unborn child.

*Music. Lights fade on this scene. There are three shots again. During the next sequence, Braam and Vusi tell their respective stories, juxtaposing their experiences to each other.*

**Vusi:** They took me to John Vorster Square. Van Jaarsveld and Erasmus were waiting for me on the tenth floor. They told me they were detaining me in terms of the emergency regulations. And then they brought me here...They were drinking beer and laughing about some guy whose body they had burned after they'd braaied meat on the fire. I think it was to make me nervous. When we got here, Van Jaarsveld said I should sit but as I sat down, they pulled the chair away, and I fell and hit the back of my head against the chair. They thought it was very funny. Botha said shame, I haven't had anything to drink yet. He said I could have a beer. I thought they were going to poison me so I declined, but he forced a bottle into my mouth. It was piss. Then they made me stand...on one leg. Every time I put down the other leg or fell down, they hit me with...it



felt like a wet piece of canvas....behind my head. Which would make me fall over again.

**Braam:** I know what I did was wrong. I know it contradicts everything I ever stood for. Everything I believe in. But I had to do something. For eight months, I've been plagued by guilt, tortured by how things might have been different if only we had moved to Cape Town, if only we had done this or that! Then, when they arrested those bastards, I felt that justice would be done, and somehow, this great burden would be lifted. But then, they all got out on bail of R500. Five months later, all three of them are back in court, charged with another hijacking. I couldn't let them get away with it, Vusi. I couldn't. This wasn't about some nameless statistics. This was about my wife. My son.

**Vusi:** They threw questions at me. Where was I going in that coffin? Where were the guns? And the limpet mines? There was that bomb blast at the Pretoria military base two weeks ago. They said I was involved. They picked on me and some of my comrades because things were getting hot for them. They said we were behind the strikes that led to the 13 people being killed last week. And then the bomb blast happened, and they needed to find the bombers quickly. They couldn't have bombers striking in the heart of Pretoria and getting away with it. And they thought that they could kill two birds with one stone. If they detain me, eventually, they have to let me go. But if they could pin me to a bombing, they could put me away for a very long time or better, they could hang me. They want me to sign a confession that I planted the bombs.

**Braam:** You know what the post-mortem said....The foetus had been shot through the neck. (*angrily, emotionally*) It wasn't just a foetus anymore. It was a six-month old, living creature! They *must* have seen that she was pregnant. But it didn't matter to them! They shot her in the stomach area, twice, and in the chest.

*Three shots.*

**Braam:** Why? Why? For a BMW convertible? What did she do? Did she plead with them not to shoot her? I can't imagine that she tried to resist. I go over and over it in my mind. She's about to pull into the driveway, waiting for the automatic gates to open. These three guys appear from nowhere, with guns. Did she scream? Did they panic? Did they just callously blow her away? I'll never know. All I know is that she's dead. She's dead. And the child we were looking so forward to having....

**Vusi:** They took me to a field I've never been to before. They made me dig a hole at a particular spot. I thought this was it. I thought they were making me dig my own grave. About three feet down, I hit a crate. It was full of AK-47s, grenades and limpet mines. They took photos of me standing next the crate. They want me to state that I took them to that field and pointed out this arms cache....They take it in shifts. *(becomes increasingly emotional as he tells the following)* They wouldn't let me go to the toilet. I've pissed and shat in my pants...they let me take a shower for the first time this morning. Once when I pleaded with them, they took me to the toilet but then they forced my head into the bowl and flushed the loo...I thought I was going to drown. Like when they put a canvas bag around my head and tightened it around my neck so I couldn't breathe and blacked out. I woke up with Botha pissing into my face. Last night they had a new trick. They all put their guns to my head, and pulled the trigger...*(close to tears)*

*Three shots.*

**Vusi:** *(breaks down)* They pulled the triggers....and then they laughed. They laughed and laughed while I cried. *(Pause)* I don't want to die...I don't want to die....Get me out of here. Please.....

*Musical interlude. Scene switches to Braam, and Vusi is back with him as his lawyer. Braam continues to tell the story in the same light as before, but when Vusi is ready, the whole scene is lit.*

**Braam:** I campaigned for the abolition of the death penalty. So I know I'm supposed to feel guilty about having taken human life. I know that two wrongs don't make a right. I know that even murderers are human beings, and that they have a right to a fair trial. I know all that! So I've tried over and over to replay the shootings in my mind. To see if they would conjure up any emotion. But there's just a numbness. I try...I try hard to feel something. But all I see are their three faces distorted with absolute terror as I'm about to shoot them. I keep waiting for remorse to hit me. For regret and shame to swallow me up like quicksand. But nothing. Nothing. Just calm. The last two nights are the first in eight months that I've been able to sleep through without medication.

**Vusi:** You just talk okay?

**Braam:** *(teasingly)* So now you're my shrink.

**Vusi:** No. Still just your friend.

**Braam:** You remember when Renee fell pregnant just after we were married? It came at such a bad time....I was quite keen that we have the child, but Renee wasn't.

**Vusi:** She had an abortion.

**Braam:** Hey, I'm a human rights lawyer, right? It was her decision, as a woman. Years later, we both felt ready for kids. And I was looking forward to catching up on having the child I could have had earlier. Yet all the time in the back of my mind, I had this thought that maybe there was this moral universe, and that all these aborted fetuses would get together and exact revenge on us by sending a kid with twelve fingers, or with no head or with some other deformity. I never for one moment thought that their revenge would be this wretched.

**Vusi:** You should've gone for professional help, Braam

**Braam:** I know.

**Vusi:** You bottled this all up inside, till it exploded.

**Braam:** (*Pause*) I don't know how you did it, Vusi.

**Vusi:** What?

**Braam:** How you got rid of your demons after what they did to you.

**Vusi:** Time and distance, Braam. Time and distance. Life goes on.

**Braam:** Yeah.

**Vusi:** (*awkwardly*) I never told you....

**Braam:** What?

**Vusi:** I never told anyone....

**Braam:** What are you talking about?

**Vusi:** The impimpi...

**Braam:** The one who told the cops where to find you?

**Vusi:** It wasn't one of my two comrades....

**Braam:** You told me that one of them...was necklaced...

**Vusi:** Yes...and it wasn't him. (*Pause*) It was my brother.

**Braam:** Malusi?

**Vusi:** My own brother....

**Braam:** Why?

**Vusi:** I don't know...torture, fear, the love of money...

**Braam:** Shit, Vusi...!

**Vusi:** I had to learn to forgive him. He was my brother....I had to. But it also meant that I could never go to the TRC and point fingers at Van Jaarsveld, Basson, Botha. I will never understand. Life's not fair, is it? Vuyani...the one who was necklaced...had a young daughter. Every month Malusi pays R6 000 into her account. And the same amount into Vuyani's father's account. His mother died soon after he was killed. Broken heart....

**Braam:** I'm glad my mother's not alive...

**Vusi:** Oh, I nearly forgot. We've received scores of messages for you.

*Vusi opens his briefcase, and takes out a pile of messages.*

**Braam:** For me?

**Vusi:** (*giving messages to Braam*) People out there think you're a hero.

**Braam:** It's so weird...not knowing what's happening outside.

**Vusi:** You haven't seen any newspapers?

**Braam:** No.

**Vusi:** You've made headlines in all of them. You're the subject of every talk radio show.

**Braam:** (*he has been looking through the faxes while Vusi has been speaking*) Here's a fax from The Campaign for the Death Penalty inviting me to become a patron. Can you believe this?

**Vusi:** What?

**Braam:** There's a marriage proposal! From a Khubeka Maloi.

**Vusi:** Some women are desperate.

**Braam:** Her husband was killed in a hijacking three years ago. *(quietly)*  
Oh, wow.

**Vusi:** Another one?

**Braam:** *(reads)* God be with you, my son. I am praying for you.

**Vusi:** Your dad?

**Braam:** My mom. Mrs Phumi Khumalo. *(taking out a scan of the foetus from his pocket, gives it to Vusi)* This is a scan of my child. This is all I have left. *(Vusi puts his arm around him)* We knew it was a boy. We were going to call him Thabo...A gift of life....

**Vusi:** Thabo. As in Thabo Makhanye. He's the one who's struggling for his life under police guard in hospital.

**Braam:** *(softly)* A Thabo for a Thabo....

*Lights fade to black. Music. Spotlight comes up on Vusi speaking into the tape recorder.*

**Vusi:** Over and over again, Umama Khumalo, it's like he's standing in front of me...I hope you never have to do it, Vusi. What would you have done? If you were in my position, what would you have done? I don't know. I really don't know.

I got a call from the police station about three hours later. I should have known! I should've done something! *(Beat)* They took away his belt and his shoelaces. But he hung himself with his shirt. I should've done something. *(Beat)* The waste of it all...The sheer waste of it all

*Music. Fade to black.*