

The Last Stop

“Good day, sir,” the lady greeted. Her face was all white. She had put something on her face. Maybe it was a ‘colourmine’ for rash or pimples.

There was no answer from Macko.

“Sir, help me with change, please,” she said.

Again, there was still no response from Macko. But his eyes were right looking into the retinas of the lady. “I am going home!” shouted the lady. She dropped the big bag she was carrying. She waved her hands in front of Macko’s eyes. He did not blink. Is this man alive? Other passengers had turned and were staring.

A male voice broke the silence, “Sister, we are going without you, it is getting late! We are going home!” Those were the words of the driver of the taxi who was taking passengers from Qwaqwa to Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal.

“Sir, we are going home! I need some change. Please give me those two ten Rands. Here is a twenty Rand note in exchange.” She handed it to Macko.

He did not reply. He kept clasping his ten Rand notes. Suddenly his eyes blinked. His eyes struck the big bag belonging to the lady. He did not say anything but his eyes were caught by something moving in the bag.

“What is that?” Macko asked pointing his finger to a big bag.

“We are going home! It is late!” The lady aggressively took the money out of Macko’s hand and put her twenty Rand note in Macko’s hands. Macko felt itchy. Macko looked at the lady’s face and felt a cold flush spread through his body. His hands had started to shake. He kept hearing, “We are going home!” The words looped in his mind.

“I am not going with you,” Macko said, surprising even himself with the force of his voice, the anger contained in it.

“I didn’t ask you to, thanks for the change.” She took one ten Rand to some boys who had helped her to carry the bag to the rank. One of them was holding a pint of yellowish something, like a glue. The lady picked up her bag and ran to the taxi. She was in the taxi. The engine roared and the taxi turned into the exit.

Macko could feel the sweat running down his face. His shirt

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was wet. It clung to his body. He shook his head and felt a stab of pain, brought his hands up and held it. He squeezed his temples. His breathing slowed. He looked around the rank. Some people were staring at him, some not. In his head the words kept playing: “We are going home! We are going home! We are going home!”