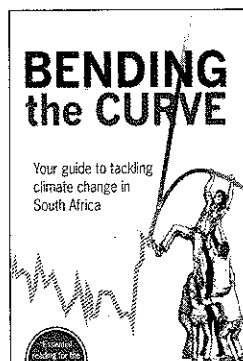


ENVIRONMENT

Bending the Curve: Your guide to tackling climate change in South Africa

Edited by Robert Zipplies (Africa Geographic, R195)

With contributions from 24 local experts, *Bending the Curve* is full of advice for making South Africa a 'greener' place. There are chapters for the parent, the home owner, the business, the farmer, the investor, plus sections on waste disposal and 'green' foods. It's never easy to trust a book with corporate sponsors, and this one has five, including Eskom – but that has not prevented criticism of the state-owned electricity supplier. A list of 'Resources' at the end of each chapter gives good pointers for further reading. Invest in this for potential South African solutions but for a broader perspective, read *Heat*, by George Monbiot, often quoted here.

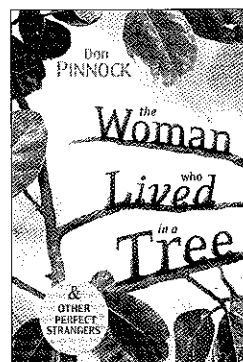


PEOPLE

The Woman Who Lived in a Tree & Other Perfect Strangers

by Don Pinnock (Jacana Media, R145)

The woman is map-maker Veronica Roodt; her treehouse, which she occasionally shared with a leopard, was in the wilds of Botswana's Moremi Game Reserve. Veronica's extraordinary story is one of 37 gathered from *Getaway* magazine in this collection celebrating adventurous Africans. The book might fall under the 'human interest' genre of journalism, but *Getaway* editor Don Pinnock has carved his own niche: interesting humans. There's explorer Kingsley Holgate; the elephant whisperer who rescued the animals of Baghdad Zoo; the farmer's daughter who trekked across Antarctica to the South Pole; and many more. Pinnock has an eye for the weird and the wonderful, with that rare ability in a travel writer to step back and let his characters do the talking. All are inspirational.

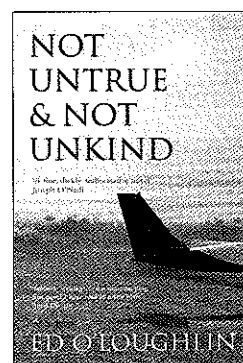


FICTION

Not Untrue and Not Unkind

by Ed O'Loughlin (Penguin, R200)

The suspenseful story about foreign correspondents in Africa opens with the discovery of a dead man's dossier in Dublin. For Owen Simmons, it triggers memories of days as a freelance stringer in the Congo and Rwanda. This is the debut novel by Ed O'Loughlin, who was based in Johannesburg, reporting for *The Irish Times* and others, in the 1990s. He joins the ranks of journalists whose tales of Africa reek of catharsis. We've had the furious satire of Michael Holman's *Last Orders at Harrods*, the powerful history of Aidan Hartley's *The Zanzibar Chest*, and now this compelling tale of the lives and loves of reporters and photographers. Tension builds slowly but sinks its hooks in about half-way. I enjoyed it.

**FRESH OUT** Arabic English Visual Bilingual Dictionary (DK, R130)

Ideal for business travellers, with pictures aiding understanding and retention of information • Cool Spaces for Kids, by Sam Scarborough (Hamlyn, R220) Tips on turning the home into a child-friendly sanctuary from a Cape Town interior designer and decorator • Hayibo! (Jacana, R160) A round-up of the 'best of' the South African fake news satirical website. Top stuff, with one problem: facts can be funnier than fiction, making attempts to lampoon leaders – certain youth leaders, for example – redundant.

About the Author

Roger Smith is a screenwriter, but a movie was the last thing on his mind when he wrote his first novel, *Mixed Blood*, a crime-thriller set in Cape Town.

'A screenwriter is first and foremost a collaborator and the film, not the screenplay, is the finished piece. What I love about writing novels is that, for better or worse, the book is mine.'

But someone thought it'd make a great movie. In March, it was announced New York's GreeneStreet Films had optioned *Mixed Blood*, with Samuel L Jackson attached to star and negotiations underway for Phillip Noyce (*Catch a Fire*) to direct.

Mixed Blood's central character is an American bank robber on the run; Jackson would play Disaster Zondi, a Zulu detective.

'Zondi is cool, sophisticated and smart,' Roger says. 'A perfect Samuel L. Jackson character.'

The plot came to him after seeing a TV news report about a couple who had robbed banks in the US and been hiding out in Cape Town. 'This story made me think: "what if?" What if a man with a past, a man on the run – Jack Burn – brings his family to Cape Town, seduced by those images of mountains and beaches and freedom? What if they are building new lives for themselves when they are confronted by a random act of violence – a collision between the Cape Flats and privileged Cape Town – that hooks them into the world of (psychopathic cop) Rudi Barnard and (ex-con watchman) Benny Mongrel and Disaster Zondi?'

Roger grew up in Johannesburg, where he was a founder member of South Africa's first non-racial film co-op in the 1980s, but in the late 1990s moved to Cape Town, where he fell in love with a woman who grew up on the Cape Flats. 'The true stories she told me and the world she introduced me to changed my view of Cape Town forever,' he says. It was her brother – another product of South African violence, a man in his 30s who had spent a total of two years out of jail since age 14 – who inspired the Benny character.

His next book is another Cape Town thriller, *Wake Up Dead*, due out in 2010. He's now working on his third novel. See www.rogersmithbooks.com.

Mixed Blood

Roger Smith's debut thriller, *Mixed Blood*, is a white-knuckled race against time, ripping readers out of postcard-pretty Cape Town and thrusting them into its seedy underbelly. In this extract, Zulu detective Disaster Zondi clashes with corrupt cop Rudi Barnard

Special Investigator Disaster Zondi sat in the interview room at Bellwood South Police HQ, waiting for Rudi Barnard, who was twenty minutes late. Zondi showed no sign of impatience or irritation. He spent the time rereading the file on Barnard. The file was as fat as the cop whose photograph stared up at him.

Disaster Zondi, despite the ridicule his name attracted, flat-out refused to change it. He wore the name, given to him by his illiterate Zulu parents, as a badge of pride. Every time he was mocked, it had made him stronger. Reminded him that he had dragged himself by his fingernails from a life of rural poverty and deprivation. He had won a bursary, earned a degree in criminology, and now answered only to the minister of safety and security. Few people laughed to his face now that power, like an invisible cloak, had settled upon him.

Rudi Barnard and Disaster Zondi were perfect opposites, bookends in the struggle of good versus evil. Barnard was obese. Zondi was trim and athletic. Barnard believed in the power of God. Zondi believed in the power of Justice. Barnard was a glutton, a junk-food junkie. Zondi ate sparingly and was fastidious about what he consumed. Barnard had little interest in sex. Zondi was the owner of roiling passions that continually threatened to upset his equilibrium, but he suppressed and controlled them through sheer force of will.

The nearest Zondi got to a religious notion was the image he had of himself as an inquisitor, riding out through the battlefields of corruption in contemporary South Africa. There was one absolute about Zondi: he could not be bought. He had dealt with men in a much grander league than Rudi Barnard. Politicians and tycoons. He had been offered millions, which he had rejected without pause. He had been offered power and position. These held no appeal.

He had been offered women: wives, daughters, mistresses, the bodies of female miscreants themselves. These offers had been more difficult to resist. He had been forced to dig deep into his resolve. But he had stood

firm. He had resisted. Disaster Zondi believed that the police were the bulwark, the thin blue line that stood between society and anarchy. His mission in life was to weed out the bad cops merrily enriching themselves off the back of South Africa's miracle of transformation.

Zondi was well aware that Rudi Barnard was a dinosaur who'd somehow managed to escape the ice age of apartheid's end. He had carved out a fiefdom for himself here in Cape Town, murdering and extorting out on the lawless Cape Flats. It was extraordinary that he had got away with it as long as he had. Well, his time had come. Special Investigator Zondi was here to bring an end to the reign of Rudi Barnard.

The door opened, and the massively fat cop wheezed his way in.

Zondi saw the little eyes, like cigarette burns in a pigskin sofa, scanning his dark features, white shirt, and Roberto Cavalli suit.

He saw that Barnard didn't recognize him. Why would he? The last time Zondi had seen Barnard, through a veil of pain and blood, had been nearly twenty years ago. He had been just another faceless black kid.

Zondi rose and extended a perfectly manicured hand.

"Disaster Zondi," he said.

Disaster Zondi sat in a coffee shop on the ocean, not far from the Waterfront, drinking a poor excuse for a cappuccino. Too much foam, not enough kick.

He spooned some excess foam into his saucer, but when he lifted the cup to his lips some of the froth came dangerously close to dripping onto his silk shirt. He replaced the cup in its saucer and pushed it away.

It was dark now, and he was the only customer left

in the coffee shop. The staff were circling like vultures, eager to get rid of him.

After the interview with Barnard, Zondi had suppressed the urge to rush back to his hotel and take a shower. The man's stink had nearly taken his breath away. No mere body odor, it was something far more toxic, fetid. Sulfurous. From nowhere a memory came to him, from his Anglican mission school upbringing, that the Devil had a foul stench, like sulfur. Of course Zondi no longer believed in the Devil. Or God.

But still.

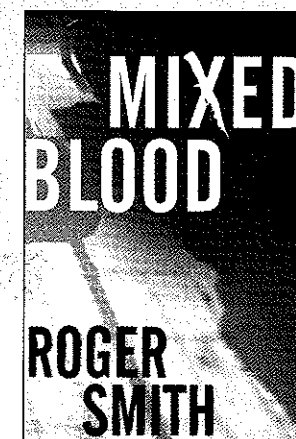
He hadn't expected to be as disturbed by the encounter as he was. He had kept it deliberately short, just fired a shot across the fat man's bows. Let him know that Zondi was on to him. The proximity to Barnard had come close to thawing Zondi's cool, the layer of permafrost he kept between himself and the world. He told himself he was letting this get personal. He needed to slow down. Detach himself.

Keep his focus.

He had escaped. Bellwood South HQ and driven his rental BMW back toward the city as the sun set over the ocean, the last rays painting Table Mountain gold. Cape Town putting on its show. Even the pall of smoke from the blaze on Lion's Head couldn't mute the splendor. Cape Town offended Zondi. Its languid slowness and devotion to sun worship, wine tasting,

and the deification of its natural beauty struck him as decadent and fatuous. Like a woman obsessed with nothing but her appearance. This place didn't even look like Africa. It was like a bit of Europe transplanted onto a mountainous peninsula that stuck out toward the South Pole like it was giving it the finger. Even the climate was Mediterranean.

And it was the only sub-Saharan city where a black man was in the minority.



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