

ONE FLEW OUT

- Speech delivered by Mike Mathabela at Kaizer Nyatumba's book launch, Johannesburg

It happened 34 years ago. A tiny wasp ambled into a ragged school staff-room at a village in Mpumalanga. He softly asked to speak to one of us – a BA graduate teacher who was highly respected by us mere matriculated “private”/”temporary”/”unqualified” teachers. This teacher, who due to the media presence here shall remain anonymous, refused to accompany this tiny wasp outside and demanded “What do you want?”

The tiny wasp blurted out his reason for being there: “Sir, I’ve come to ask you to please stay away from my girlfriend, So-and so!” He then walked out. The girlfriend shall also remain so-and-so, courtesy of the media presence here. We were stunned! This tiny wasp, hereinafter to be referred to as either Kaizer or Little Brother, was soft-spoken, dignified, showed no fear of the corporal punishment which might come his way later - and, mark my words, we dished out corporal punishment real hard during those days! Such courage at such a tender age: I was immediately smitten.

When later I discovered the true identity, beyond just the name, of the native girl who had caused all the trouble, I was shocked. She was no match for Gugu in the beauty stakes - even at your current age, Gugs! (Which age shall also remain anonymous, courtesy of the media presence here).

Thus began my admiration for Kaizer. I was drawn closer to the unassuming young man by the impeccable values he displayed: honesty, frankness, integrity and courage. He has never changed those values to this day. But, he didn't come alone to our friendship – they came as a package: him and the

affable Adonis. They were inseparable. And so, for the remainder of the year we did many respectable things together – reading a lot, writing a lot and doing theatre a lot! I addressed them as my Little Brothers and they called me Big Brother. It felt good.

Something happened which deeply embarrassed me in that year. To encourage the learners to debate, we had formed a debating team as teachers, for which I was the show-stopper. One day we debated the senior learners' team which Kaizer led. I was his English teacher; so all the English he knows, he learnt from me! My team naturally trounced Kaizer's team, but Kaizer was voted the best speaker of the day by the ignoble adjudicators! Ahead of me – his teacher! Of course, in my defence later, I told all and sundry that I had not really prepared for the debate.

To this day I choose to stick to that defence. After the debate, Adonis, that gentlest of souls, agreed with my defence as he tried to cheer me up.

Adonis, Kaizer and I had always aspired to be writers. A few years later, Kaizer published his 1st book – beating me to it again. And then he published his 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6thOooooooh! I couldn't keep up with him. I was still at zero books. It is then that I conspired with my beautiful wife, Tiro. We conceived a genius daughter who, at only 17, published her 1st book, *Girl-child Woman*. Now, there's your match, Little Brother! *Yeka ukuqinela abantu abadala*. I daresay one of these two will one day win us the Nobel Prize in Literature. Move over, Patrick Modiano.

Now, the day Adonis was brutally murdered, Kaizer again displayed the same courage I had witnessed years back in that dingy staff-room. No tears, absolute dignity, a painful calmness, a deadpan boldness. Only his soft voice betrayed

his deep pain. It is a lingering pain to this day. He began to courageously pursue the murderers to bring them to justice. To this day, he is still pursuing them. They are having sleepless nights. I'm sure, like Jesus' crucifiers, they are also lamenting "We have never crucified someone like this before!"

It all lies documented in this great book, *Incomplete Without My Brother, Adonis* – my Little Brother's 7th book.

Now, Little Brother, one flew out of the nest. But thank you, for the tiny steps- which are at times bold and sometimes faltering – which we have taken and continue to take together as friends and brothers in this life! Thank you for walking this journey with me.

Come, come, Little Brother, I need to hug you. Please let us show him our love with our feet. Tomorrow is your birthday, your age too shall remain anonymous for the same obvious reasons; and tomorrow should also have been Adonis's birthday. As you were inseparable, we will prematurely sing a Happy Birthday to both of you, without calling you by name.

Thank You.