



# DIVERSITY FRIDAY

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For some time I have felt like visiting Oom Andries ... maybe he needed some company, or maybe I needed some advice – whatever the case may be, I went to see him in this week and I took my colleagues with me.

When we arrived, Oom Andries was sitting on the stoep in his polished geelhout rocking chair, smoking his pipe – on the floor next to him was his veldskoene. What was odd was that these 'vellies' of Oom Andries were about a size 14 (if ever there is such a size) and I knew for a fact that he wore a size 7, or at least a size 9 shoe. He surely saw me staring at the shoes and my confusion must have been written all over my face because, just then, he spoke: "Seun, ek het hiemie vellies by die baas van die plaas gekry." I noticed the pride in his tone and I understood then that no form of criticism could stop him from wearing his oversized shoes. After a moment of silence I looked up at him and said, "Môre Oom Andries" and he responded, "Ja, watis di!" His response contained a flavour of negativity and I knew that I would have to treat lightly today (but by now I also knew exactly how to deal with all of Oom Andries' moods). After a lot of 'mooi praatjies' en 'gesoebat' en 'gesmeek', Oom Andries dropped his guard and decided to be nice to me so we talked a little bit about the history of Africa and, more particularly, of Africa Day. I asked him to give us some insight, or one of his brilliant poems about the matter and after bragging about all his knowledge and experience gained through years of hard labour in this country, and all of the beautiful poems he has written about Namaqualand and the Karoo, he started reciting this poem about Africa – rocking side to side, his old chair creaking ever so softly now and again – he was speaking with so much emotion:

*"Ja, Afrika, my land; ek is lief vir jou. Droogtes en hongersnede;  
Kraaië vlieg, daar is dood.*

*Ja, Afrika, my land; ek is lief vir jou.*

*Swingels kraak, Dapper en Stapper draf. Disselboom lê swaar op  
die draghout. Kloutjies klap op die droë Karoo paaie. Ja, Afrika, my  
land; ek is lief vir jou.*

*Boeta en Sas sit met boekpense, honger en weet nie wat om te eet  
nie. Son sak en nagte is koud; 'n ander nag onder die sterre. Ja,  
Afrika, my land; ek is lief vir jou.*

*Baas, ek soek werk; Nee Outa, ek het nie. Mies het niks vir vrou en  
kinders nie. Gaan 'n bietjie vorentoe, seker is daar iets, trane in die  
oë help niks.*

*Ja, Afrika, my land; ek is lief vir jou.*

*Bakoor, dood in die pad; vleis vanaand by die uitspanning. Goor  
maag en maag werkens; op en af vir die hele nag.*

*Ja, Afrika, my land; ek is lief vir jou.*

*Namakwa daisies, wit en pers blomme. Vaal mossies en duifies vlieg  
op en af. Groot berge met watervalle, kranse en Adoons op en weg.*

*Ja, Afrika, my land; ek is lief vir jou.*

*Boeta bid vir die vleis: 'Dankie liebe Jesus vir die vlot bakoor, en  
ook die tlokvig met die dorings. My maag moet nie werk nie, Amen.'*

*Stout en ondankbaar. Ja, Afrika, my land; ek is lief vir jou.*

*Steenbokke, Springbokke en Koedoes; Meerkatte en Rooikatte en  
Akkedjse en miere. Warmte en koue. Ja, Afrika, dié is my land en  
ek is lief vir jou.*

*Afrika, ek is lief vir jou..."*

When he finished we were all too emotional to speak and we couldn't listen to any other poems, so I thanked him for sharing his moving poem with us.

"By elke huis hier op Jakkalsdraai is daar probleme, probleme, probleme!" He told us about all the people in each family; how they were all different and he emphasized the role of each person, even us, in keeping our families together.

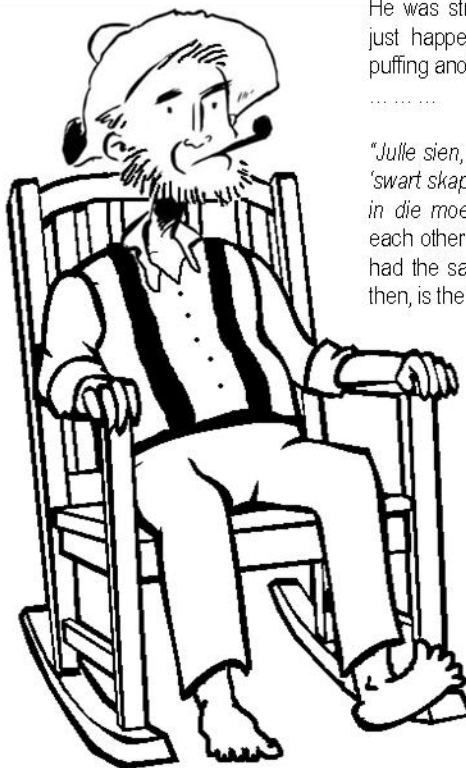
"Dit maak tog nie saak watse tipe probleem jy het nie, jy moet altyd vir 'n oplossing soek. 'n Probleem wat nie opgelos word nie raak 'n sweer, en 'n sweer raak 'n kanker. En van kanker kom 'double manix', en van 'double manix', 'ring the post', en van 'ring the post' ... hemel toe. Ons, in Afrika, moet self onse probleme oplos en as ons dit nie gaan doen nie gaan ons wragtag doodgaan... Afrika en Suid Afrika!"

Whilst he was continuing talking about problems and resolutions, there was something like a thunderstorm going on inside the house. Antie Sanna went on about how his grant of last month, from Social Development, mysteriously vanished in the 'dorp'. She said that, he said that he couldn't find his way to the farm – "hy het sy pad huis toe bleikbaar verloor as gevolg van die 'Ghost of Kalmstok'." The month before that, according to Antie Sanna, "sy fiets was te vinnig, toe waai die fiets uit sy sak uit. And this month "die mannetjies in die dorp het die helfte van die geld gevat!" Antie Sanna clearly was not impressed with all Oom Andries' stories, which conveniently changed at every occasion.

Back to Oom Andries ... who's story we had missed half way through, by the way, due to the commotion Antie Sanna had caused...

He was still speaking, as if nothing had just happened; staring at the sky and puffing another cloud of smoke into the air

"Julle sien, in elke familie is daar maar 'n 'swart skapie'. Iemand wat maar net altyd in die moeilikheid is..." We all looked at each other with grins on our faces; we all had the same thought just then ... Who, then, is the 'black sheep' in this case ...



*May we all, like Oom Andries, say: "My Afrika, my land; ek is lief vir jou!"*