

Tekst 4

De volgende tekst is het begin van hoofdstuk 1 uit de roman The Mission Song, van John le Carré.

My name is Bruno Salvador. My friends call me Salvo, so do my enemies. Contrary to what anybody may tell you, I am a citizen in good standing of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, and by profession a top interpreter of Swahili and the lesser-known but widely spoken languages of the Eastern Congo, formerly under Belgian rule, hence my mastery of French, a further arrow in my professional quiver. I am a familiar face around the London law courts both civil and criminal, and in regular demand at conferences on Third World matters, see my glowing references from many of our nation's finest corporate names. Due to my special skills I have also been called upon to do my patriotic duty on a confidential basis by a government department whose existence is routinely denied. I have never been in trouble, I pay my taxes regularly, have a healthy credit rating and am the owner of a well-conducted bank account. Those are cast-iron facts that no amount of bureaucratic manipulation can alter, however hard they try.

In six years of honest labour in the world of commerce I have applied my services - be it by way of cautiously phrased conference calls or discreet meetings in neutral cities on the European continent - to the creative adjustment of oil, gold, diamond, mineral and other commodity prices, not to mention the diversion of many millions of dollars from the prying eyes of the world's shareholders into slush funds as far removed as Panama, Budapest and Singapore. Ask me whether, in facilitating these transactions, I felt obliged to consult my conscience and you will receive the emphatic answer, 'No.' The code of your top interpreter is sacrosanct. He is not hired to indulge his scruples. He is pledged to his employer in the same manner as a soldier is pledged to the flag. In deference to the world's unfortunates, however, it is also my practice to make myself available on a pro bono basis to London hospitals, prisons and the immigration authorities despite the fact that the remuneration in such cases is peanuts.

I am on the voters' list at number 17, Norfolk Mansions, Prince of Wales Drive, Battersea, South London, a desirable freehold property of which I am the minority co-owner together with my legal wife Penelope - never call her Penny - an upper-echelon Oxbridge journalist four years my senior and, at the age of thirty-two, a rising star in the firmament of a mass-market British tabloid capable of swaying millions. Penelope's father is the senior partner of a blue-chip City law firm and her mother a major force in her local Conservative Party. We married five years ago on the strength of a mutual physical attraction, plus the understanding that she would get pregnant as soon as her career permitted, owing to my desire to create a stable nuclear family complete with mother along conventional British lines. The convenient moment has not, however, presented itself, due to her rapid rise within the paper and other factors.

Our union was not in all regards orthodox. Penelope was the elder daughter of an all-white Surrey family in high professional standing, while Bruno Salvador, alias Salvo, was the natural son of a bog Irish Roman Catholic missionary and a Congolese village woman whose name has vanished for ever in the ravages of war and time. I was born, to be precise, behind the locked doors of a Carmelite convent in the town of Kisangani, or Stanleyville as was, being delivered by nuns who had vowed to keep their mouths shut, which to anybody but me sounds funny, surreal or plain invented. But to me it's a

biological reality, as it would be for you if at the age of ten you had sat at your saintly father's bedside in a Mission house in the lush green highlands of South Kivu in the Eastern Congo, listening to him sobbing his heart out half in Norman French and half in Ulsterman's English, with the equatorial rain pounding like elephant feet on the green tin roof and the tears pouring down his fever-hollowed cheeks so fast you'd think the whole of Nature had come indoors to join the fun. Ask a Westerner where Kivu is, he will shake his head in ignorance and smile. Ask an African and he will tell you, 'Paradise,' for such it is: a Central African land of misted lakes and volcanic mountains, emerald pastureland, luscious fruit groves and similar.

In his seventieth and last year of life my father's principal worry was whether he had enslaved more souls than he had liberated. The Vatican's African missionaries, according to him, were caught in a perpetual cleft stick between what they owed to life and what they owed to Rome, and I was part of what he owed to life, however much his spiritual Brothers might resent me. We buried him in the Swahili language, which was what he'd asked for, but when it fell to me to read 'The Lord is my Shepherd' at his graveside, I gave him my very own rendering in Shi, his favourite among all the languages of the Eastern Congo for its vigour and flexibility.

Illegitimate sons-in-law of mixed race do not merge naturally into the social fabric of wealthy Surrey, and Penelope's parents were no exception to this time-honoured truism. In a favourable light, I used to tell myself when I was growing up, I look more suntanned Irish than mid-brown Afro, plus my hair is straight not crinkly, which goes a long way if you're assimilating. But that never fooled Penelope's mother or her fellow wives at the golf club, her worst nightmare being that her daughter would produce an all-black grandchild on her watch, which may have accounted for Penelope's reluctance to put matters to the test, although in retrospect I am not totally convinced of this, part of her motive in marrying me being to shock her mother and upstage her younger sister.

Tekst 4 De volgende tekst...

- 4p **8** Geef van elk van de volgende beweringen aan of deze wel of niet in overeenstemming is met de inhoud van de passage.
- 1 Bruno heeft vijanden gemaakt doordat hij als tolk met kop en schouders boven de anderen uitsteekt.
 - 2 Bruno is zich ervan bewust dat hij als tolk bij dubieuze zaken wordt betrokken.
 - 3 Bruno heeft zich onrechtmatig verrijkt aan internationale transacties waarbij hij als tolk betrokken was.
 - 4 Bruno doet aan liefdadige activiteiten als tegenwicht voor zijn professionele activiteiten.
 - 5 Bruno heeft ondanks voortdurende conflicten met zijn snobistische schoonfamilie nog steeds vertrouwen in zijn huwelijk.
 - 6 Bruno heeft traumatische herinneringen aan zijn vroege jaren in een nonnenklooster in Afrika.
 - 7 Bruno's vader had gemengde gevoelens ten opzichte van zijn zoon.
 - 8 Penelope kon haar moeder er niet van overtuigen dat Bruno voor een westerling kon doorgaan.
- Noteer het nummer van elke bewering, gevolgd door "wel" of "niet".