

BLACK TALES

UMTHAKATI (THE WITCH)

by

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PILOT - SCRIPT EXTRACT

FROM THE BLACK TALES TITLE SEQUENCE, WE --

FADE IN

EXT. SANGOMA/HOST VILLAGE - DAY

The solitary figure of our SANGOMA HOST stands on the periphery of his village looking out over --

THE VALLEY of 1000 hills. We HEAR his warm, gravelly V.O. deliver the introduction, and tonight's tale.

As he narrates, we TRACK our HOST through the village past animal HORNS & SKULLS adorning the entrance to each thatched HUT he passes. There appears to be no one else in the village. He stoops and enters one of the HUTS.

INT. SANGOMA HOST HUT - DAY

Through the haze of smoke, we see our SANGOMA HOST now seated cross-legged on a mat, performing a 'muti' ritual. In Zulu he continues the narration that introduces this Tale.

SANGOMA/HOST

(Subtitled Zulu)

In our culture, many believe in the existence of a bad spirit Dwarf, which sometimes assumes the corpse of a deceased person. It does this by driving a nail into the skull of the corpse and entering the head. Once it achieves this it also cuts the tongue of the body it occupies to prevent it from telling others of its unwelcome host. In this state, the Dwarf spirit is known as uMkhovu...

As he speaks, he collects the bones and shells in a calabash.

SANGOMA/HOST

..it uses its new vehicle to dispel uMthakathi - magic that bewitches. But this power can also occupy and exploit the bodies of the living. As THEMBA SIWELA, an artist from Zululand has experienced, there are many ways to dispel black magic...
...on the Dark Continent.

He throws the bones, and they fall into a shape that vaguely resembles the first shot --

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. KWA MASHU TOWNSHIP - DAY

A dust road splits the frame, flanked by green fields. We PAN to a contrasting image: The TOWNSHIP of Kwa Mashu.

CLOSER - TOWNSHIP

A solitary figure sits on a hill overlooking the location, drawing in a notepad. This is THEMBA, cartoonist and teller of this Tale.

CLOSE ON - NOTEPAD

Ancient GLYPHS, images of UMKHOVU. THEMBA is sketching his own interpretation of this mythical entity.

THEMBA

(VO)

I live in Kwa Mashu, although I sometimes stay with family who live two hours away in the rural area's of Bergville & Bethani in the Drakensberg. Kwa Mashu used to be a violent township, but these days' things are calmer.

CUT TO

INT. DARK CONTINENT STUDIO - DAY

THEMBA is delivering his testimony ON CAMERA.

THEMBA

It happened just over eight years ago, it was a cold morning in July or August...

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. KWA MASHU WIDE ESTABLISHING - DAWN

LEGEND: EIGHT YEARS EARLIER

INT. THEMBA'S BEDROOM - DAY

We TRACK personal items, settle on sleeping THEMBA.

THEMBA

(VO)

...I was about nineteen then, and
at home sleeping when I heard the
noise that woke me up at five o
clock in the morning.

THEMBA stirs and sits up. From outside, MURMERS of distressed
VOICES can be heard.

Themba gets out of bed, drapes a blanket over his shoulders,
goes to the window and looks out onto the township street.

POV - THEMBA

Streams of concerned looking TOWNSHIP FOLK are gathering,
moving towards a common point of interest.

THEMBA

(VO)

There were crowds of people
on the road outside my house.
Some were talking loudly. Excited
or scared.

THEMBA drops the blanket and moves out of frame. We HOLD on
the commotion coming from outside.

THEMBA

(VO)

I got dressed and went to see what
was happening.

EXT. KWA MASHU/THEMBA'S HOME - DAY

THEMBA exits his home pulling on a sweatshirt, brushing
sleep and dreadlocks from his eyes. He joins the human flow
converging on the hill at the end of his road.

EXT. KWA MASHU/CURSED HOUSE - DAY

A CROWD amassed and staring intently at something O/S.
THEMBA appears among them.

THEMBA

(VO)

I pushed through the crowd, which had gathered outside the house of one of my neighbors. What I saw was too amazing to believe, and it was frightening. As a boy growing up I had heard of this, but it was the first time I had seen it with my own eyes.

A young boy aged about twelve standing in the yard, frozen like a statue. His face still etched with wide-eyed horror from the condition that has seized him. We drift down to his hands and see that he is clutching something in each fist.

THEMBA

(VO)

In each clenched fist he clutched plastic bags, containing muti..

The crowds are numbed into silence by the sight of the ghastly, pained expression on the boy's face.

INT. DARK CONTINENT STUDIO - DAY

THEMBA

The entire community had come to witness the incident and immediately they deduced what had happened. There is a belief among us that if you bury and plant muti on the property of your neighbour, it will induce a curse on them...

EXT. KWA MASHU/CURSED HOUSE - DAY

From the muti in the boy's hands, we tilt up to the front door, slightly ajar.

THEMBA

(VO)

However, if the person you are cursing exits their home midway through the ritual, it will turn the curser to stone...

CUT TO

SUPPORTING INTERVIEWS:

From specialists in supernatural / paranormal studies.
Specifically, African Occult. These INTERVIEWS inter-cut
the entire Tale.

CUT TO

EXT. KWA MASHU/THEMBA'S HOME - DAY

As the realization dawns on the TOWNSFOLK, they begin to
react with a mixture of fear, repulsion and anger. One of
the TOWNSHIP WOMEN steps forward.

TOWNSHIP WOMAN #1

(Zulu)
Stone the boy.

INT. DARK CONTINENT STUDIO - DAY

THEMBA

... and some began to gather up
rocks and throw them at him. This
must've jarred the boy out of his
catatonia, because he revived and
looked around directly at us. Then,
someone approached him and asked
him..

EXT. KWA MASHU - DAY

A Xhosa TOWNSHIP MAN is kneeling before the boy, probing him
for information.

TOWNSHIP MAN #1

Ungubani Igama lakho? (What is your name?)

THANDO

Thando.

TOWNSHIP MAN#1

Who sent you?

THANDO

Grandma Nyanga.

TOWNSHIP MAN#1

How long has she made you do this?

THANDO

Three or four years.

TOWNSHIP WOMAN#1
Which houses have you cursed?

THEMBA
(VO)
The boy told them of the houses his
Grandmother had sent him to...

The community growl at the mention of each home.

INT. DARK CONTINENT STUDIO - DAY

THEMBA
... every home he mentioned had
befallen some Tragedy.

EXT. KWA MASHU - DAY

TOWNSHIP WOMAN #2
We will take you to Grandma Nyanga
she must explain.

TOWNSHIP FOLK collar the boy and scuff him off in the
direction of the house. We HOLD on THEMBA, bewildered
and fascinated.

TO BE CONTINUED