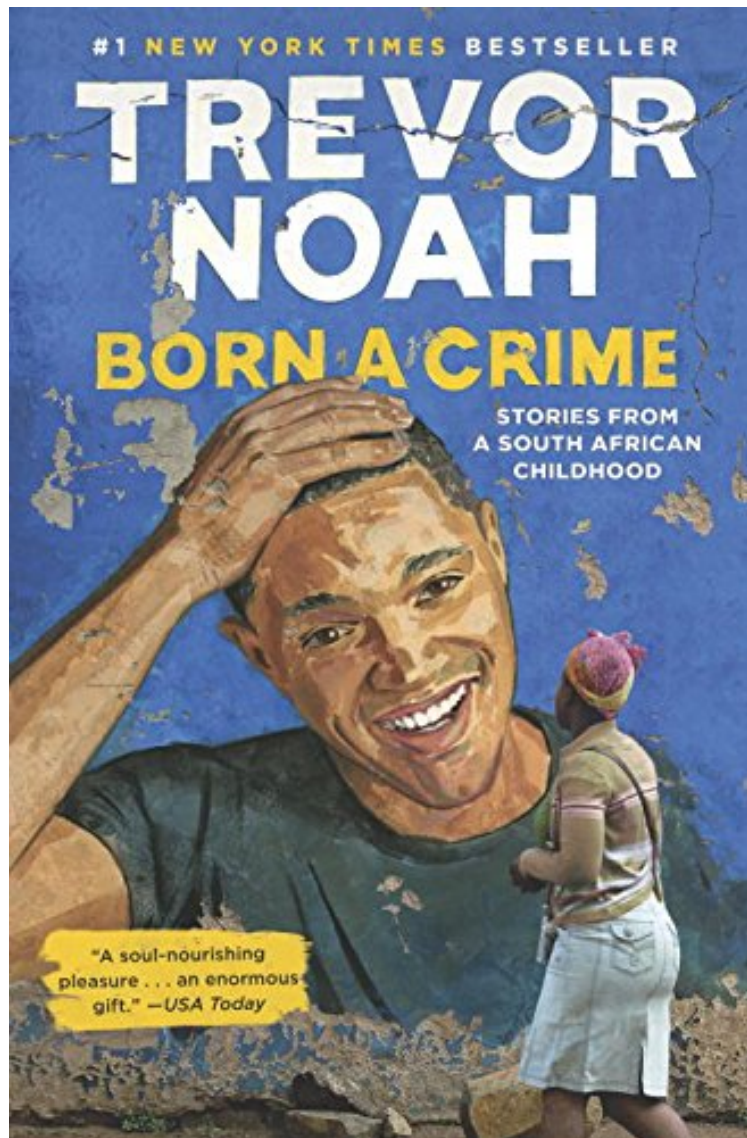


Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood

Trevor Noah

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#446 in Books Trevor Noah 2016-11-15 2016-11-15 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.53 x 1.01 x 6.34l, .0 #File Name: 0399588175304 pages Born a Crime Stories from a South African Childhood | File size: 24.Mb

Trevor Noah : Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood:

724 of 758 people found the following review helpful. A TreasureBy BeeI am generally a pretty critical reader, and it's almost embarrassing to write such a glowing review, but I can say without reservation that this book is a treasure.

(And no, I am not a friend of the family. I haven't even watched him on The Daily Show, although I'll probably start to

watch now.) Trevor Noah is a superb storyteller, and this memoir is his eloquent and touching account of growing up as the mixed race child of a single mother, living in poverty in deeply racist and sexist South Africa. He provides an inside look at a life very different from what almost anyone has experienced (due to his unusual ethnicity and upbringing), yet it is easy to relate to him and fascinating to read his stories. The book reads like a novel, but it is so much more affecting because it is true. Reminiscent of *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls, it is a superbly written story of a perceptive and resilient child thriving in very difficult circumstances, and it beautifully captures these circumstances seen through the eyes of a child. Trevor's mother taught him to use humor to help cope with life, and he learned that lesson well. Despite having good reasons for feeling self-pity and resentment, Trevor had a knack for finding the humor in even the most difficult circumstances. Not forced, jokey humor, but just a low-key appreciation for the weirdness of life. As I turned the last page, I smiled at the ending, which was perfect, but I also felt sad that the story ended. I want to know what happened next. I hope he will write a sequel.

345 of 366 people found the following review helpful. Comedy out of Tragedy By Nancy Adair B M My decision to request *Born a Crime* has nothing to do with star power or fandom. I have to admit I have never seen Trevor Noah on the Daily Show. I requested this book when I learned it was about Trevor Noah's childhood in Apartheid South Africa. I started reading my ebook galley as soon as I was approved. I have to love a guy who finds comedy in tragedy and who gleefully spins yarns about experiences that would keep most of us in therapy for a lifetime. There is a genius in comedy that allows us to encounter devastating truths through the protective lens of laughter. The heroine of the book is Noah's mother, a feisty lady with a solid rock faith, a gal who snubs her nose at things that don't make sense. She makes mistakes, but always out of love. She takes huge risks but somehow Jesus is always there to catch her mid-fall. Noah was "naughty as s****" and a challenge to raise, but never hateful or mean. He learned to navigate Apartheid society's complex system that divided people in to three groups: black, white, and colored. How one was categorized was senseless. Japanese were put into the 'white' slot but Chinese into the 'colored'. "The genius of Apartheid was convincing people who were the overwhelming majority to turn on each other. Apart hate, is what it was." Noah was 'colored' with a 'black' Xhosa African mother and a 'white' Swiss father, his very existence implicating his parent's crime. Had the police discovered them, his parents would be sent to jail and Noah sent to an orphanage. He spent much of his life hidden away, indoors. His parents could not be seen together with him, and his mother had to even pretend he was not her child. Noah was "colored by complexion but not by culture." He spoke multiple languages, Xhosa and Zulu and Afrikaans, and English, could fit into most groups, but felt affiliated to black culture. The book is a series of episodic tales, thoughtfully constructed, saving the climax of his family history until the end of the book, after we have come to know and understand them. "I saw the futility of violence, the cycle that just repeats itself, the damage that's inflicted on people that they in turn inflict on others. I saw, more than anything, that relationships are not sustained by violence, but by love." The book is funny but is more than a diversive read, it enlarges our understanding of the world. Noah offers an understanding of South African history, colonialism, and Apartheid that is engaging and relevant. He shares the important things he learned and offers them to us. We should listen. We should learn.

205 of 219 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful Captivating...you should read this By T. Brown Wow...I started this book yesterday and could not put it down. As a new mom myself, I read most of it on my Kindle while either nursing or holding my son, which was fitting as this is such a tribute to his mom. As a long time viewer of the Daily Show, I started watching as Trevor took over from Jon Stewart and while I've always thought he does a good job, I had no idea the depth of character and experiences that were below the surface of those cute dimples! As is fitting to the Daily Show atmosphere, Trevor discusses difficult topics like race often, but I don't think I will ever watch a segment the same way again after reading his descriptions of what it was like to grow up under and during the fall of apartheid. And I keep thinking back to some of his impassioned pieces prior to the election with a whole new appreciation. But this review shouldn't be about his celebrity on the Daily Show. It stands alone as a remarkable memoir and a completely engaging story that will appeal to anyone who's felt like an outsider. He is a wonderful story teller, finding the right balance between relaying his experiences, weaving in the social atmosphere around it and doing it in such a way that even as an American reader, I was able to visualize the communities he was describing in rich detail. Additionally, he was able to explain aspects of a post apartheid world that not only clarify the plight of South Africans today but also shed light on some of the challenges we are facing here in the US. He has a unique perspective and a wonderful voice that I hope to hear more of in the future.

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER The compelling, inspiring, and comically sublime story of one man's coming-of-age, set during the twilight of apartheid and the tumultuous days of freedom that followed **NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY** Michiko Kakutani, New York Times Newsday Esquire NPR Booklist Trevor Noah's unlikely path from apartheid South Africa to the desk of *The Daily Show* began with a criminal act: his birth. Trevor was born to a white Swiss father and a black Xhosa mother at a time when such a union was punishable by five years in prison. Living proof of his parents' indiscretion, Trevor was kept mostly indoors for the earliest years of his life, bound by the extreme and often absurd measures his mother took to hide him from a government that could, at any moment, steal him away. Finally liberated by the end of South Africa's tyrannical white rule, Trevor and his

mother set forth on a grand adventure, living openly and freely and embracing the opportunities won by a centuries-long struggle. Born a Crime is the story of a mischievous young boy who grows into a restless young man as he struggles to find himself in a world where he was never supposed to exist. It is also the story of that young mans relationship with his fearless, rebellious, and fervently religious motherhis teammate, a woman determined to save her son from the cycle of poverty, violence, and abuse that would ultimately threaten her own life. The stories collected here are by turns hilarious, dramatic, and deeply affecting. Whether subsisting on caterpillars for dinner during hard times, being thrown from a moving car during an attempted kidnapping, or just trying to survive the life-and-death pitfalls of dating in high school, Trevor illuminates his curious world with an incisive wit and unflinching honesty. His stories weave together to form a moving and searingly funny portrait of a boy making his way through a damaged world in a dangerous time, armed only with a keen sense of humor and a mothers unconventional, unconditional love.Praise for Born a Crime [A] compelling new memoir . . . By turns alarming, sad and funny, [Trevor Noahs] book provides a harrowing look, through the prism of Mr. Noahs family, at life in South Africa under apartheid. . . . Born a Crime is not just an unnerving account of growing up in South Africa under apartheid, but a love letter to the authors remarkable mother.Michiko Kakutani, The New York Times [An] unforgettable memoir.Parade What makes Born a Crime such a soul-nourishing pleasure, even with all its darker edges and perilous turns, is reading Noah recount in brisk, warmly conversational prose how he learned to negotiate his way through the bullying and ostracism. . . . What also helped was having a mother like Patricia Nombuyiselo Noah. . . . Consider Born a Crime another such gift to herand an enormous gift to the rest of us.USA Today [Noah] thrives with the help of his astonishingly fearless mother. . . . Their fierce bond makes this story soar.People[Noahs] electrifying memoir sparkles with funny stories . . . and his candid and compassionate essays deepen our perception of the complexities of race, gender, and class.Booklist (starred review)A gritty memoir . . . studded with insight and provocative social criticism . . . with flashes of brilliant storytelling and acute observations.Kirkus Reviews

[A] compelling new memoir . . . By turns alarming, sad and funny, [Trevor Noahs] book provides a harrowing look, through the prism of Mr. Noahs family, at life in South Africa under apartheid. . . . In the end, Born a Crime is not just an unnerving account of growing up in South Africa under apartheid, but a love letter to the authors remarkable mother.Michiko Kakutani, The New York Times [An] unforgettable memoir.ParadeYoud be hard-pressed to find a comics origin story better than the one Trevor Noah serves up in Born a Crime. . . . [He] developed his aptitude for witty truth telling [and]every hardscrabble memory of helping his mother scrape together money for food, gas, school fees, and rent, or barely surviving the temper of his stepfather, Abel, reveals the anxious wellsprings of the comedians ambition and success. If there is harvest in spite of blight, the saying goes, one does not credit the blight-but Noah does manage to wring brilliant comedy from it.O: The Oprah Magazine What makes Born a Crime such a soul-nourishing pleasure, even with all its darker edges and perilous turns, is reading Noah recount in brisk, warmly conversational prose how he learned to negotiate his way through the bullying and ostracism. . . . What also helped was having a mother like Patricia Nombuyiselo Noah. . . . Consider Born a Crime another such gift to herand an enormous gift to the rest of us.USA Today [Noah] thrives with the help of his astonishingly fearless mother. . . . Their fierce bond makes this story soar.People This isn't your average comic-writes-a-memoir: Its a unique look at a man who is a product of his cultureand a nuanced look at a part of the world whose people have known dark times easily pushed aside.Refinery29 Noahs memoir is extraordinary . . . essential reading on every level. Its hard to imagine anyone else doing a finer job of it.The Seattle TimesPowerful prose . . . told through stories and vignettes that are sharply observed, deftly conveyed and consistently candid. Growing organically from them is an affecting investigation of identity, ethnicity, language, masculinity, nationality and, most of all, humanityall issues that the election of Donald Trump in the United States shows are foremost in minds and hearts everywhere. . . . What the reader gleans are the insights that made Noah the thoughtful, observant, empathic man who wrote Born a Crime. . . . Here is a level-headed man, forged by remarkable and shocking life incidents, who is quietly determined and who knows where home and the heart lie. Would this unique story have been published had it been about someone not a celebrity of the planet? Possibly not, and to the detriment of potential readers, because this is a warm and very human story of the type that we will need to survive the Trump presidencys imminent freezing of humane values.Mail Guardian (South Africa) [Noahs] story of survivingand thrivingis mind-blowing.Cosmopolitan A gifted storyteller, able to deftly lace his poignant tales with amusing irony.Entertainment Weekly Noah has a real tale to tell, and he tells it well. . . . Among the many virtues of Born a Crime is a frank and telling portrait of life in South Africa during the 1980s and 90s. . . . Born a Crime offers Americans a second introduction to Trevor Noah, and he makes a real impression.Newsday An affecting memoir, Born a Crime [is] a love letter to his mother.The Washington PostWitty and revealing . . . Noahs story is the story of modern South Africa; though he enjoyed some privileges of the regions slow Westernization, his formative years were shaped by poverty, injustice, and violence. Noah is quick with a disarming joke, and he skillfully integrates the parallel narratives via interstitial asides between chapters. . . . Perhaps the most harrowing tales are those of his abusive stepfather, which form the books final act (and which Noah cleverly foreshadows throughout earlier chapters), but equally prominent are the laugh-out-loud yarns about going to the prom,

and the differences between White Church and Black Church. Publishers Weekly (starred review)[A] substantial collection of staggering personal essays . . . Incisive, funny, and vivid, these true tales are anchored to his portrait of his courageous, rebellious, and religious mother who defied racially restrictive laws to secure an education and a career for herself and to have a child with a white Swiss/German even though sex between whites and blacks was illegal. . . . [Trevor Noah's] electrifying memoir sparkles with funny stories . . . and his candid and compassionate essays deepen our perception of the complexities of race, gender, and class. Booklist (starred review) A gritty memoir . . . studded with insight and provocative social criticism . . . with flashes of brilliant storytelling and acute observations. Kirkus sAbout the Author Trevor Noah is a comedian from South Africa. From the eBook edition. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. 1Run Sometimes in big Hollywood movies they'll have these crazy chase scenes where somebody jumps or gets thrown from a moving car. The person hits the ground and rolls for a bit. Then they come to a stop and pop up and dust themselves off, like it was no big deal. Whenever I see that I think, That's rubbish. Getting thrown out of a moving car hurts way worse than that. I was nine years old when my mother threw me out of a moving car. It happened on a Sunday. I know it was on a Sunday because we were coming home from church, and every Sunday in my childhood meant church. We never missed church. My mother was and still is a deeply religious woman. Very Christian. Like indigenous peoples around the world, black South Africans adopted the religion of our colonizers. By adopt I mean it was forced on us. The white man was quite stern with the native. You need to pray to Jesus, he said. Jesus will save you. To which the native replied, Well, we do need to be saved saved from you, but that's beside the point. So let's give this Jesus thing a shot. My whole family is religious, but where my mother was Team Jesus all the way, my grandmother balanced her Christian faith with the traditional Xhosa beliefs she'd grown up with, communicating with the spirits of our ancestors. For a long time I didn't understand why so many black people had abandoned their indigenous faith for Christianity. But the more we went to church and the longer I sat in those pews the more I learned about how Christianity works: If you're Native American and you pray to the wolves, you're a savage. If you're African and you pray to your ancestors, you're a primitive. But when white people pray to a guy who turns water into wine, well, that's just common sense. My childhood involved church, or some form of church, at least four nights a week. Tuesday night was the prayer meeting. Wednesday night was Bible study. Thursday night was Youth church. Friday and Saturday we had off. (Time to sin!) Then on Sunday we went to church. Three churches, to be precise. The reason we went to three churches was because my mom said each church gave her something different. The first church offered jubilant praise of the Lord. The second church offered deep analysis of the scripture, which my mom loved. The third church offered passion and catharsis; it was a place where you truly felt the presence of the Holy Spirit inside you. Completely by coincidence, as we moved back and forth among these churches, I noticed that each one had its own distinct racial makeup: Jubilant church was mixed church. Analytical church was white church. And passionate, cathartic church, that was black church. Mixed church was Rhema Bible Church. Rhema was one of those huge, supermodern, suburban megachurches. The pastor, Ray McCauley, was an ex-bodybuilder with a big smile and the personality of a cheerleader. Pastor Ray had competed in the 1974 Mr. Universe competition. He placed third. The winner that year was Arnold Schwarzenegger. Every week, Ray would be up onstage working really hard to make Jesus cool. There was arena-style seating and a rock band jamming out with the latest Christian contemporary pop. Everyone sang along, and if you didn't know the words that was okay because they were all right up there on the Jumbotron for you. It was Christian karaoke, basically. I always had a blast at mixed church. White church was Rosebank Union in Sandton, a very white and wealthy part of Johannesburg. I loved white church because I didn't actually have to go to the main service. My mom would go to that, and I would go to the youth side, to Sunday school. In Sunday school we got to read cool stories. Noah and the flood was obviously a favorite; I had a personal stake there. But I also loved the stories about Moses parting the Red Sea, David slaying Goliath, Jesus whipping the money changers in the temple. I grew up in a home with very little exposure to popular culture. Boyz II Men were not allowed in my mother's house. Songs about some guy grinding on a girl all night long? No, no, no. That was forbidden. I'd hear the other kids at school singing End of the Road, and I'd have no clue what was going on. I knew of these Boyz II Men, but I didn't really know who they were. The only music I knew was from church: soaring, uplifting songs praising Jesus. It was the same with movies. My mom didn't want my mind polluted by movies with sex and violence. So the Bible was my action movie. Samson was my superhero. He was my He-Man. A guy beating a thousand people to death with the jawbone of a donkey? That's pretty badass. Eventually you get to Paul writing letters to the Ephesians and it loses the plot, but the Old Testament and the Gospels? I could quote you anything from those pages, chapter and verse. There were Bible games and quizzes every week at white church, and I kicked everyone's ass. Then there was black church. There was always some kind of black church service going on somewhere, and we tried them all. In the township, that typically meant an outdoor, tent-revival-style church. We usually went to my grandmother's church, an old-school Methodist congregation, five hundred African grannies in blue-and-white blouses, clutching their Bibles and patiently burning in the hot African sun. Black church was rough, I won't lie. No air-conditioning. No lyrics up on Jumbotrons. And it lasted forever, three or four hours at least, which confused me because white church was only like an hour in and out, thanks for coming. But at black church I would sit there for what felt like an eternity, trying to figure out why time moved so slowly. Is it possible for time to actually stop? If so, why does it stop at black church

and not at white church? I eventually decided black people needed more time with Jesus because we suffered more. Im here to fill up on my blessings for the week, my mother used to say. The more time we spent at church, she reckoned, the more blessings we accrued, like a Starbucks Rewards Card. Black church had one saving grace. If I could make it to the third or fourth hour Id get to watch the pastor cast demons out of people. People possessed by demons would start running up and down the aisles like madmen, screaming in tongues. The ushers would tackle them, like bouncers at a club, and hold them down for the pastor. The pastor would grab their heads and violently shake them back and forth, shouting, I cast out this spirit in the name of Jesus! Some pastors were more violent than others, but what they all shared in common was that they wouldnt stop until the demon was gone and the congregant had gone limp and collapsed on the stage. The person had to fall. Because if he didnt fall that meant the demon was powerful and the pastor needed to come at him even harder. You could be a linebacker in the NFL. Didnt matter. That pastor was taking you down. Good Lord, that was fun. Christian karaoke, badass action stories, and violent faith healersman, I loved church. The thing I didnt love was the lengths we had to go to in order to get to church. It was an epic slog. We lived in Eden Park, a tiny suburb way outside Johannesburg. It took us an hour to get to white church, another forty-five minutes to get to mixed church, and another forty-five minutes to drive out to Soweto for black church. Then, if that werent bad enough, some Sundays wed double back to white church for a special evening service. By the time we finally got home at night, Id collapse into bed. This particular Sunday, the Sunday I was hurled from a moving car, started out like any other Sunday. My mother woke me up, made me porridge for breakfast. I took my bath while she dressed my baby brother Andrew, who was nine months old. Then we went out to the driveway, but once we were finally all strapped in and ready to go, the car wouldnt start. My mom had this ancient, broken-down, bright-tangerine Volkswagen Beetle that she picked up for next to nothing. The reason she got it for next to nothing was because it was always breaking down. To this day I hate secondhand cars. Almost everything thats ever gone wrong in my life I can trace back to a secondhand car. Secondhand cars made me get detention for being late for school. Secondhand cars left us hitchhiking on the side of the freeway. A secondhand car was also the reason my mom got married. If it hadnt been for the Volkswagen that didnt work, we never would have looked for the mechanic who became the husband who became the stepfather who became the man who tortured us for years and put a bullet in the back of my mothers head Ill take the new car with the warranty every time. As much as I loved church, the idea of a nine-hour slog, from mixed church to white church to black church then doubling back to white church again, was just too much to contemplate. It was bad enough in a car, but taking public transport would be twice as long and twice as hard. When the Volkswagen refused to start, inside my head I was praying. Please say well just stay home. Please say well just stay home. Then I glanced over to see the determined look on my mothers face, her jaw set, and I knew I had a long day ahead of me. Come, she said. Were going to catch minibuses. My mother is as stubborn as she is religious. Once her minds made up, thats it. Indeed, obstacles that would normally lead a person to change their plans, like a car breaking down, only made her more determined to forge ahead. Its the Devil, she said about the stalled car. The Devil doesnt want us to go to church. Thats why weve got to catch minibuses. Whenever I found myself up against my mothers faith-based obstinacy, I would try, as respectfully as possible, to counter with an opposing point of view. Or, I said, the Lord knows that today we shouldnt go to church, which is why he made sure the car wouldnt start, so that we stay at home as a family and take a day of rest, because even the Lord rested. Ah, thats the Devil talking, Trevor. No, because Jesus is in control, and if Jesus is in control and we pray to Jesus, he would let the car start, but he hasnt, therefore No, Trevor! Sometimes Jesus puts obstacles in your way to see if you overcome them. Like Job. This could be a test. Ah! Yes, Mom. But the test could be to see if were willing to accept what has happened and stay at home and praise Jesus for his wisdom. No. Thats the Devil talking. Now go change your clothes. But Mom! Trevor! Sunqhela! Sunqhela is a phrase with many shades of meaning. It says dont undermine me, dont underestimate me, and just try me. Its a command and a threat, all at once. Its a common thing for Xhosa parents to say to their kids. Any time I heard it I knew it meant the conversation was over, and if I uttered another word I was in for a hiding what we call a spanking. At the time I attended a private Catholic school known as Maryvale College. I was the champion of the Maryvale sports day every single year, and my mother won the moms trophy every single year. Why? Because she was always chasing me to kick my ass, and I was always running not to get my ass kicked. Nobody ran like me and my mom. She wasnt one of those Come over here and get your hiding type moms. Shed deliver it to you free of charge. She was a thrower, too. Whatever was next to her was coming at you. If it was something breakable, I had to catch it and put it down. If it broke, that would be my fault, too, and the ass-kicking would be that much worse. If she threw a vase at me, Id have to catch it, put it down, and then run. In a split second, Id have to think, Is it valuable? Yes. Is it breakable? Yes. Catch it, put it down, now run. We had a very Tom and Jerry relationship, me and my mom. She was the strict disciplinarian; I was naughty as shit. She would send me out to buy groceries, and I wouldnt come right home because Id be using the change from the milk and bread to play arcade games at the supermarket. I loved videogames. I was a master at Street Fighter. I could go forever on a single play. Id drop a coin in, time would fly, and the next thing I knew thered be a woman behind me with a belt. It was a race. Id take off out the door and through the dusty streets of Eden Park, clambering over walls, ducking through backyards. It was a normal thing in our neighborhood. Everybody knew: that Trevor child would come through like a bat out of hell, and his mom would be

right there behind him. She could go at a full sprint in high heels, but if she really wanted to come after me she had this thing where she'd kick her shoes off while still going at top speed. She'd do this weird move with her ankles and the heels would go flying and she wouldn't even miss a step. That's when I knew, Okay, she's in turbo mode now. When I was little she always caught me, but as I got older I got faster, and when speed failed her she'd use her wits. If I was about to get away she'd yell, Stop! Thief! She'd do this to her own child. In South Africa, nobody gets involved in other people's business unless it's mob justice, and then everybody wants in. So she'd yell Thief! knowing it would bring the whole neighborhood out against me, and then I'd have strangers trying to grab me and tackle me, and I'd have to duck and dive and dodge them as well, all the while screaming, I'm not a thief! I'm her son! The last thing I wanted to do that Sunday morning was climb into some crowded minibus, but the second I heard my mom say sunqhela I knew my fate was sealed. She gathered up Andrew and we climbed out of the Volkswagen and went out to try to catch a ride.