

# Democracy

THERE HE IS, mopping his face theatrically, using a handkerchief as big as a tablecloth, the gleam of sidereal light on his brow. No, he's way over there by a stand of trees, the scallywag, addressing a goat – a nanny, I believe – in a most cordial manner. During a twenty-eight-day period almost one thousand sightings were logged. Their veracity has been established with the use of a polygraph.

Occasionally, while rummaging through trash cans in the early hours, he gets mistaken for a bear – a large, hirsute man in a tatty racoonskin coat. As the tranquiliser dart pricks his thigh, he laughs, we all laugh, though his is a hearty boom and ours a nervous titter.

Yet, tranquillised, he sprints from the scene. He runs like electricity, so light of foot that native trackers cannot follow him.

Our laughter sounds hollow then, our demeanour becomes stern.

The adults who refused to submit to the polygraph were beaten with iron bars. While we brutalised and dismembered the toys, in accordance with the Torquemada manual, we made the children watch.

Truth will out.

But then we see him on TV, before the world's press, threatening to declare war on Switzerland ... and Swaziland, too, if such a place exists. He laughs. Everyone laughs, they're not sure why. The translators laugh, too, having nothing to translate but laughter. The flashguns of a ravenous pack of paparazzi are triggered as one, obscuring his means of escape. Temporarily blinded, we ask ourselves: *Is this really how a Minister for Foreign Affairs should behave?*

On misty mornings he uses the lake as a mirror. We find his scat among the trees, still warm to the touch. Of him: no trace.

Those who failed the polygraph test had their houses demolished. Their furniture was dragged into the streets and smashed to matchwood. Nothing is allowed to hinder our quest for truth, we are renowned for it the world over.

Later he was seen consorting with rogues, villains, scoundrels, thugs, scapegraces and desperados, a veritable mafia of them. On one occasion he appeared, the scamp, to be trying to sell his father's medals. (His father the war hero.) By his side stood the regimental goat, nuzzling his hand.

What are we to make of this? Ours is a fledgling democracy, and the nation looks to him for guidance.

The children of those who failed the polygraph test were fostered out to cannibals. Although he has spoken against this practice, spoken eloquently and with great conviction, still we persist. Old habits die hard.

But no man who venerates truth can claim to be without flaws. While he was operating a faulty mindset, lightning razed his neighbour's barn.