

# Fly on the Wall

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Fly recently had occasion to visit the portals of justice, in a professional capacity, on a Friday evening. Needless to say, those who attended said portals in their official capacities, from registrar, to stenographer, to the urgent judge on call, manifested something that was decidedly not the glee of little children being let loose at one of those birthday parties where sweets and pleasures knew no bounds.

They were, in short, not in the highest of spirits. For his part, Fly could at least take solace in the fact that, though he would be deprived of the ability to entertain the fond hope, over a few cold ones, of watching the Lions win a rugby match against foreign opposition, he would have those hard hours softened somewhat by the healing balm of fees. No such solace beckoned for the officials in attendance; hence Fly's acute awareness of the pressing imperative resting upon him, as the applicant's chappie, to justify this particular nocturnal frolic. It was therefore rather comforting that this was one of those cases where it was not at issue that something significant was to happen the next morning, the only question really being whether it ought to happen or not, with Fly's chappies and the other chappies not seeing eye to eye on that one – the sort of thing the portals were designed for.

Naturally, Fly and his learned friend, who had entered the spirit of things on behalf of the other chappies with a zest that was admirable for the hour, traded indignation and earnest entreaties, sound, fury and even a bit of law, until the inevitable interim arrangement was cobbled together to allow for the matter to be returned to the portals at a pace that, whilst never quite approximating that of the wheels of justice happily trudging through their quotidian kilometres, nevertheless had somewhat less of the insane about it.

Time flies when fun is had, and so, when all was said and done and it was time for Fly to leave the hallowed halls, the hands of time were inching ever closer to the witching hour. Fly is thus named for reasons unconnected to his ability to propel himself from one spot to another without mechanical aid. Like others of his station, he employs for the purpose a motor car, of which he happens also to be rather fond. Accompanied by the chappies on whose behalf he had just done his little bit, Fly went off to fetch the trusted steed from the bowels of the parkade where it lay in loyal wait.

Now, Fly has never laboured under the apprehension that the residents of the surrounds of the hallowed halls and high portals spent their leisure hours on lodges in Mpumalanga scolding their brokers on five thousand rand communicators for neglecting the fates of seven figure share portfolios on the exchanges. No, indeed, somewhere in

what he sometimes fancied as his mind there always rested an awareness of the fact that many, if not most, of those who shared this city with him as their city had a quality of life that differed markedly from that of those with whom Fly tends to spend most of his hours, waking or sleeping.

Yet there is a difference, and it is not a difference without substance, between the periodic acknowledgement of such awareness, on the one complacent hand, and, on the other face-slapping hand, stumbling over its writhing bodies in the dead of night in Smal Street Mall when one's car has been locked and shuttered away from one's anxious grasp. There's a song about 'die hemel is my dak en die veld is my bed' or some such bucolic schmaltz, which sprang to mind,



but there was nothing remotely pastoral about the brutish fact that illustrated itself so vividly that night – wherever there was a nook or cranny, or even the proximity of other warm bodies in a huddle, there the city became a bed. Except that 'bed' tends to connote images of pillows and duvets and Milo and novels – images that found no home in this stark and ghastly misery.

Fly and his chappies managed to escape, for escape it was, whole and safe in their obscenely flamboyant steeds that night. Off to continue to pull at the very particular oars in the ship of state assigned to them. Fly tends to enjoy his spot on the ship, and makes quite a good show of pulling at his oar with love and devotion. But when, on nights such as these, he glimpses the bodies thrown overboard bobbing in the foam behind him, he cannot help wondering where the ship is heading and how long it can go on without sinking.