

## THE WALKER

Kobus Moolman

A man walks down a road. Any man. Any road. In a big city. On a hot windy day. With fires to the north and fires to the south. And black ash floating down.

The smell of burning.

A man walks down a road. And he notices.

A woman on one leg taking a small stone out of her high-heeled shoe. A woman under a striped beach umbrella selling airtime for mobile phones. A young girl wearing a pair of diving goggles while riding a rusted tricycle.

A man continues walking down a road. Any road. Any man. A greasy drizzle coming down now. Cold wind. And he notices.

A man with outsized shoes and a plastic packet on his head. A man pushing a supermarket trolley piled high with copper taps and copper pipes and joints. A young boy with an empty speech bubble coming out of his mouth.

A man walks down a road. Any man. Old blankets opening out all across the sky. Then wind and wind again pushing and pulling. And he notices.

A piece of newspaper in a gutter. An advert for a car alarm on one side. The funeral notice for a man with the same initials as his own on the other. And he bends down. And he picks up the side of the newspaper with the advert. But he leaves the other side behind.

A man proceeds down a road. Steam rising from the cracked tar all around him. The smell of engine oil. The smell of diesel. The smell of bitumen.

A man walks down a road. And he notices.

Two dogs fighting through a wire fence. Two crows squabbling over a dead dog in a gutter. A blind man with a blind dog on a rope.

A man walks down a road. A man continues walking. A man with a stone in his foot. With one side of a piece of newspaper in his hand. Dragging a dead dog on a rope.

## THE BEDWETTER

Priscillar Matara

When Chiwelo's mother left her at the stream, she hid behind a rock, afraid of being found by creatures that eat children at night but hide in the village's smoky caves during the day. But the moon was kind, gleaming off the lazy stream and lighting the spot where she stood, her cupped hands covering her nakedness.

She tried to ignore the lizard resting on her thigh, its limp body secured tightly by a string around her waist. Afraid she may disturb the *ngaka's* cleansing ritual, she kept her arms away from her body to avoid touching it.

She had only drunk a small amount of ginger ale, only enough to share in celebrating the birth of her new brother.

'Not too much, Chiwelo, we all know your problem,' her mother said.

Morning had not yet arrived when her mother roused her from sleep with a loud slap because their hut was filled with the putrid smell of urine. She took her to the stream, determined to break their neighbour's bewitching spell, as revealed by the *ngaka*. The neighbour was jealous because Chiwelo's teachers praised her intelligence instead of her own daughter's.

Chiwelo's mother found her at the stream, the rising sun hitting her brown face. She didn't speak, just angrily snatched the lizard from her waist and threw it in the stream. Chiwelo looked down and saw mud at her feet. It hadn't worked.