

A man in a leather jacket is shown in profile, holding a handgun. His torso is transparent, revealing a city skyline at night with lights reflecting on water. The background is a light, textured surface.

FIRST VICTIM

TRUTH IS THE FIRST VICTIM OF ANY WAR,
ESPECIALLY THE WAR ON CRIME IN KZN'S BADLANDS,
WHERE THE LINE BETWEEN POLICE AND PERPETRATORS
IS A SNAKE ON THE MOVE.

PROPOSAL FOR A TEN PART
DRAMA SERIES

SYNOPSIS

GENERAL JOHAN BOOYSEN is the top investigator in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province. He shouldn't be. He earned his stripes under the old regime; enforcing racist apartheid laws for the old, white government. It's testimony to how effective he is at police work that he's made it this far, in a new country enforcing the new laws.

The unit he now heads has been focused on brutal killings in the taxi industry. The violence spawned by owners competing for taxi routes in KZN is off the charts, but Booyesen's unit is closing it down. Then a key member of the unit is ambushed and killed while transporting a taxi hit-man to trial. Encouraged by populist politicians, the unit wastes no time in identifying the perpetrators and launching a manhunt. But this time it's clear their goals have shifted. They know what happens when they put too much faith in the court system; now they're making sure that when they take these thugs down, they stay down for good.

To the crime-weary public the cops in this Special Crimes Unit become heroes. But taxi violence is not the only investigation on the unit's books.

Booyesen is also investigating illegal procurement deals within the police force, and that investigation is dragging into the light some dirty secrets, hidden in important people's closets.

He starts to realise that he's stumbled across a money chain that leads all the way to the wallet of Number One, the most powerful person in the country.

And that's when things really start to go wrong. A series of national media exposés now brand Booyesen and his unit as a rampaging hit-squad in the pay of maverick taxi bosses.

They're arrested and jailed.

This sensational reversal of fortune is the work of a local investigative journalist, Lakela Radebe. Her once flourishing career as a newshound is on the rocks until she stumbles on an inside source; someone who tells her the real story behind the Special Crimes Unit.

But is she being told the real story? Or is it a version of the truth convenient to powerful people who want to stop the Unit's more important investigation...

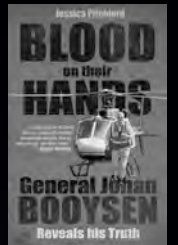
Johan Booyesen is a real cop.

This is his story, as told in
investigative journalist

Jessica Pitchford's

South African bestseller

Blood On Their Hands.





FIRST VICTIM

will not only be a reconstruction of these events, it will transpose them into a fictional world, reinterpret them, use them to inspire a gripping drama series, where perspective regularly shifts and the viewer's own assumptions will be engaged, subverted and challenged.

THE STORY of an old-fashioned operator in a new world, *FIRST VICTIM* slots neatly into the well-established genre of crusty, flawed cop at odds with his/her new reality.

But it will also push beyond this easy episodic TV label.

During the course of the series *FIRST VICTIM* will switch POV a number of times. Characters who were originally peripheral will become central protagonists as subsequent episodes unfurl. We will be asked to shift our perspective to see through their eyes, and judge if their version of the truth holds more weight than what has come before.

It's become a truism that we live in a world of information silos. South Africans are more familiar with them than most. From our cities to our farmlands, the social silos that apartheid built are still very solid. Johannesburg's affluent northern suburbs and the sprawl of Soweto are different universes. The country is filled with similar communities, living side by side but largely invisible to one another. There are few common areas.

It's a condition the developed world now recognises as more familiar to them than they would like. The ability of competing points of view to find common ground is crumbling across global communities.

That's the central idea *FIRST VICTIM* explores. That the truth is the first victim of any conflict, especially this one. The idea that truth is defined by the framing of the narrative - the silo you inhabit.

FIRST VICTIM is a series about extreme events twisted into new shapes and used as props in stories they were not initially part of. What starts out as the story of a police operation that may or may not have gone too far, becomes an exposé of the greed that has infected the lifeblood of the state.

CONCEPT & STRUCTURE

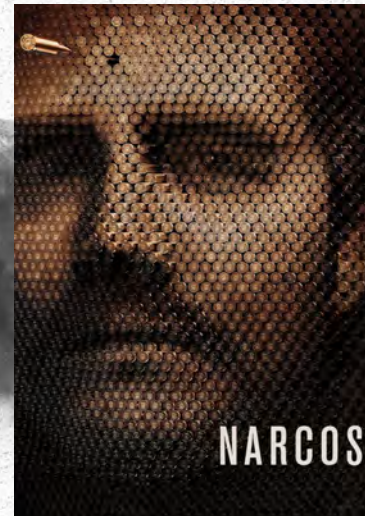
MANY TV drama series from smaller markets that have leapt to international prominence are crime stories - *The Bridge*, *Spiral*, *The Killing*, *Narcos*.

They focus on dysfunctional central characters who operate under singular, stressful conditions and are

effective precisely because of their flaws and their obsession with finishing their tasks.

Part of their appeal is that they represent a very familiar genre (procedural cop show with flawed

hero) set against a backdrop unfamiliar and exotic to international viewers, a context which throws up unpredictable obstacles.



In the case of *FIRST VICTIM* that backdrop will be a violent taxi war in the rolling hills and sprawling badlands of South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal Province (KwaZulu) and a South African law-enforcement world deeply compromised by political leadership with no respect for the law.



CONCEPT & STRUCTURE

ANOTHER WAY this series will capture a current storytelling trend is in blurring the lines between a documentary reconstruction of real events and a high-concept drama that reflects the troubling spirit of our times - not just in SA, but globally.

American Crime Story has proved how successful this new genre can be.



Our main protagonist is based on a real-life policeman, convinced of his own righteousness and supported by a public increasingly angry with crime levels that have spiralled out of control.

Latest statistics reveal that 57 people are murdered every day in South Africa. In some hot spots, the murder rate is higher than in war zones like Afghanistan or Somalia.

Booyesen is challenged by an investigative journalist who accuses him of operating outside the law - of commanding a hit squad. Both of them are the heroes of their own crusades; as is the Internal Affairs investigator who tries to get to the bottom of alleged abuses; as is the police commissioner who sees herself as unfairly hounded and criticised for her good intentions and forgivable lapses.



CONCEPT & STRUCTURE

ALL THE CENTRAL characters in *FIRST VICTIM* are on a mission to prove themselves in a society where the reckless are rewarded, and the line between good and bad is fluid to the point where it sometimes entirely dissolves.

Taking its cue from this ethical relativism, the story itself will be told through multiple points of view, while centring on a protagonist whose version of events isn't always trustworthy (*The Night Of* and *Making a Murderer* highlight this particular trend).



For the first episode it will look as though taxi task team leader Colonel Chonco is our protagonist, until he's killed at the climax of episode one.

When we're focused on the fightback from within the unit during the next two episodes (an *Untouchables* style of narrative), it will feel as though Booysen is our hero protagonist.

Then the story switches to journalist Lakela Radebe's point of view. We've been only dimly aware of her in the narrative up till now. We go back in time, revisiting key story moments in the revenge arc we have already witnessed and learning another set of facts that she uncovers, new information that seems to indicate that she's right to hold the unit to account for operating beyond the law and nurturing a culture of extra-judicial executions. Suddenly Booysen is no longer a hero.

We then switch perspective again, go back in time again and learn even more about a second investigation that Booysen was conducting in parallel with the taxi case, one involving a corrupt local tycoon with a network of enablers that includes many of his fellow police officers. This casts more fresh light on the events we have already witnessed.



CONCEPT & STRUCTURE

WE BEGIN to see that the narrative has been manipulated because Booysen is uncovering lucrative links of patronage that powerful people want to maintain, and it's in their interest to discredit him and his unit. Lakela has been fed a convenient version of the facts and her sensational national media 'exposés' have been manipulated to serve corrupt ends.

In the final episodes of the series, Booysen and Radebe team up to expose this deception, and find that their investigations take them to the door of the highest office in the land, that of 'Number One' - the President of South Africa.

Through these successive switches in protagonist and POV and backtracks in time, it will be our sympathy for the central characters and their struggles to get to the truth, to have their voices heard, that will ensure viewer's ongoing engagement.

MAIN CHARACTERS

MAJOR-GENERAL JOHAN BOOYSEN - once a low-level apartheid policeman supporting a violent and racist regime, Booyesen finds himself fitting in and adapting to crime fighting in the democratic new South Africa. Highly effective, he becomes one of the country's top cops. His war on taxi violence is seen as his big success. He starts an investigation into a corrupt local millionaire businessman, only to discover this man has connections that go all the way to Number One - the President of South Africa. He goes from transporting criminals to trial to being transported there himself. And on a personal level he has his collapsing marriage, his devotion to his church choir, his inappropriate office romance and two problematic sons.

COLONEL ZETHEMBE CHONCO - part of Booyesen's inner circle, focused on taxi violence investigations. It's a lucrative and cutthroat industry, where scores stretching back decades are settled ruthlessly. He and Booyesen have come a long way together. A fearless and meticulous officer, Chonco operates on the ground in the most dangerous policing arena. His death sets off a trail of events that ends with the arrest of Booyesen and the kneecapping of the Special Crimes Unit.

LT GENERAL SINDI NGOBENI - a provincial police commissioner who comes from a rural law enforcement background. Many colleagues in this macho environment believe she isn't cut out for a high-powered job. Whispers in the corridors are that she was only appointed because of her relationship with the Provincial Police Minister, who has an eye for pretty women. Out of her depth at head office, at first she turns to Booyesen, her more seasoned and efficient deputy, who comes to resent her. Then she throws a lavish birthday party for her husband, makes the mistake of letting a local tycoon pick up the tab and finds herself dragged into a procurement scandal.

MAIN CHARACTERS

VIC NAIDOO - one of the Who's Who of Durban.

In his early forties, debonair and stylish, he claims to turn over R60 million a month, trading in diamonds and precious metals in The Congo. One of his business partners is the president's son. He's the director of 22 companies and is on first-name terms with the provincial commissioner, who turns a blind eye to his lucrative government contracts.

At Booysen's behest Crime Intelligence intercept calls between them, which reveal the extent of Naidoo's connections.

LAKELA RADEBE - at the start of the series, Radebe thinks that her days as a journalist are over. Fired from her job on a national newspaper for failing to fact check, she's reduced to filing mind-numbing copy on local court cases for a community newspaper and growing vegetables on some family land near Durban. Then she gets wind of a story involving a police general and the Special Crimes Unit, and fans it into a sensational sequence of national headlines. Her career is reborn. Her tarnished reputation is restored. Her vegetable plot is abandoned, until she starts to realise she might have been used - her desperation preyed upon. Her own personal demons return to torment her, and this time they're even harder to fight.

SHEENA HAMMOND - an investigator with Internal Affairs, she supplies information to Radebe. If there's a shooting involving the police, she attends, investigates and writes a report. Her colleagues despise her and make her job difficult. Too many grisly crime scenes have taken their toll and made her neurotic - terrified the Special Crimes Unit will come and get her. Every knock on her door or dropped phone call causes anxiety. Because she's seen too many bodies on the mortuary slab, she's obsessed with always wearing the best and most expensive underwear. She'll make sure she never lands up on the slab herself wearing anything less.

In each case our characters (and the many others that make up the full cast) will be positioned at the heart of their domestic worlds, which will run in parallel with their professional and political entanglements. A key part of the drama will be the unpeeling of the effects those professional battles have on their families, lovers and personal relationships. All characters will be treated sympathetically, with backstories and traits that will make it hard for viewers not to identify with some aspect of their lives.



LOCATIONS

THE DRAMA plays out in the sprawling badlands of Zululand and the dangerous downtown streets of Durban, a holiday mecca on South Africa's east coast. The world of our series will move from small-town life in Amanzimtoti, where Booysen lives, to the killing fields of KwaZulu and the intrigue at the offices of the National Prosecuting Authority - the legal arm of law

enforcement - where it transpires that justice plays second fiddle to politics and where Booysen finds a 'deep throat'.

Radebe's world moves from her free community paper to the newsroom of a top-selling national daily, where pressure to deliver is high.

Here Radebe develops a reputation for being able to cultivate impeccable sources and spends much of her time on the phone, in her car and meeting sources in parking garages, fast food outlets and airport coffee shops.



BROAD SERIES ARCS

EPISODE 1 - THE COP KILLERS

WHEN THE CASUALTIES IN THE WAR ON CRIME SHIFT FROM CIVILIANS TO POLICEMEN, THE RULES FALL BY THE WAYSIDE

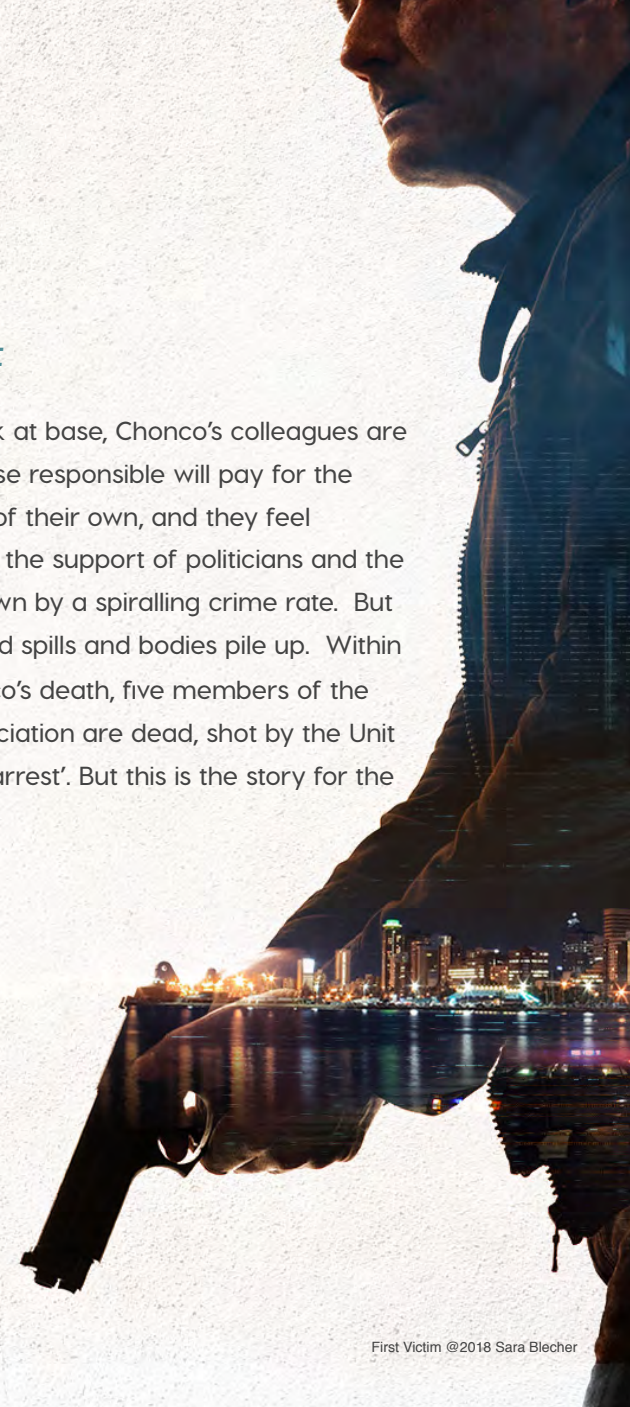
IT'S 2008. Crime is on the increase - with half a million serious offences committed that year alone. KwaZulu is the only province that has managed to reduce its crime rate, precisely because the Special Crimes Unit and a taxi task team, headed by Colonel Zethembe Chonco, operate with ruthless efficiency. Chonco is making real progress in arresting the *inkabi* - the hitmen who are carrying out taxi killings. It isn't a world in which suspects surrender. Every police operation almost always results in deaths. On both sides.

In August of 2008, Chonco is leading a convoy transporting a prize prisoner, hitman Swayo Mkhize, to court in Pietermaritzburg. Everyone knows it's going to be a postponement. Chonco arrested him on an old murder charge, biding time while he hunts for a witness to prove Mkhize's involvement in a hit the week before.

But a phone is smuggled to Mkhize in the police cells the night before his court appearance. From the back of a police van on his way to court, he texts their movements to gunmen waiting in the area.

Chonco is driving, with a police bodyguard in the passenger seat. As they approach a bend in the road, they're ambushed and Chonco is killed, his face shot off and his head split open. It's savage. But he doesn't die alone. One of the ambushing gunmen is also killed. The Special Crimes Unit is first at the scene and finds a ringing phone on this dead criminal. This phone will help lead them to the rest of the killers.

Meanwhile back at base, Chonco's colleagues are determined those responsible will pay for the murder of one of their own, and they feel emboldened by the support of politicians and the public, worn down by a spiralling crime rate. But soon more blood spills and bodies pile up. Within weeks of Chonco's death, five members of the same Taxi Association are dead, shot by the Unit while 'resisting arrest'. But this is the story for the next episode.





BROAD SERIES ARCS

EPISODE 2 & 3 - THE N3 SHOOTOUT

THE COLOUR OF THE BLOODSTAINS DEPENDS ON THE SUNGLASSES YOU VIEW THEM THROUGH

BOOYSEN IS in his office when he receives a call from a highly placed source (the brother of the Minister of Police) about the whereabouts of Magojela Ndimande, a taxi boss and chief suspect in the killing of Colonel Chonco. He's told that Ndimande will be driving to the KwaZulu capital of Pietermaritzburg with his bodyguard, Tembe, to collect cash.

Booyesen organizes a surveillance unit to trace the car and tells his own unit to arrest Ndimande and bring him in for questioning. On the N3 highway, near Howick, Special Crimes operative Blackie Swart and his colleague, RC Maharaj, take over from the trace car. Suddenly realising they're being followed, the suspects open fire. Blackie shoots back, the bodyguard falls out of the back door and is dragged for several metres before the bullet-ridden car comes to a halt. Blackie gets out and sees the taxi boss behind the driver's seat, holding a pistol. He shoots him. Another suspect in the killing of Chonco is dead. 90 minutes later, Booyesen lands at the scene in a helicopter.

The National Police Commissioner heaps praise on the Unit. 'No-one', he says 'kills a cop and gets away with it'. The next day the KwaZulu papers are full of praise too. But Internal Affairs - led by Sheena Hammond - hears from an eyewitness that the taxi boss and his bodyguard were executed by the police and that illegal weapons, brought to the scene by Booyesen when he landed in his helicopter, were planted after the fact.

Sheena Hammond finds her concerns pushed aside. With few other options, Episode 3 ends with her call to our journalist, Radebe. If the police can't help her, maybe the press can. As far as she's concerned, extrajudicial killings are not an effective way to be fighting crime.

BROAD SERIES ARCS

EPISODES 4 & 5 - WHO'S THE HIT SQUAD NOW?

BEWARE CRIME-FIGHTERS WHO ARE TOO SUCCESSFUL, ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVE A FEW SCAMS OF YOUR OWN

THIS BLOCK takes us back slightly in time through Lakela Radebe's history and ends with the headline that revives her journalistic reputation.

Inside a South African police death squad: shoot to kill then have a beer with your mates...

If you were thinking the series was *The Untouchables* - the story of a police squad having to use unconventional and sometimes morally questionable methods in the pursuit of good - you'll now understand it's more *The Shield*.

Subtly, the series will have shifted from one silo to the next.

EPISODES 6 & 7 - THE TYCOON ON THE TAKE

A SYMPHONY OF CORRUPTION STRETCHING FROM POLICE HQ TO THE MOST POWERFUL OFFICE IN THE LAND

AGAIN THE series will go back in time to reframe missing parts of the narrative omitted in the previous episodes. Amongst everything else, Booysen has been investigating crooked procurements. He's getting competing instructions from his superiors. During this block Booysen smells a rat and finds out why the tide has turned against him.

In these episodes we'll move back into Booysen's silo and explore the story of why he's been framed. This will include Booysen's surveillance of Naidoo, his uncovering of corruption and then, as a result of this, his arrest for racketeering and the manufacturing of evidence against him through a trio of witnesses he calls 'the state's useful idiots'.





BROAD SERIES ARCS

EPISODES 8, 9 & 10 - NUMBER ONE'S BACK DOOR

WHEN EVERYONE IS WORKING AN ANGLE, A STRAIGHT LINE IS HARD TO RECOGNISE

AS THE SERIES climaxes we'll widen our perspective from a provincial crime story into a political drama playing out on a national stage. This section will focus on the national prosecuting authority's investigation into Booysen and his desperate attempt to defend himself.

At the same time Radebe is starting to question her own version of the story. Has she been used and manipulated by what she thought were rock-solid sources? Does she shut up and enjoy polishing her journalism awards, or dig deeper?

As the series ends, Booysen and Radebe team up to expose the real criminals who have profited from each of their morally questionable crusades.

CREATIVE TEAM

SARA BLECHER is a co-founder of CINGA, a South African based production company that has made a number of award-winning features, documentaries and drama series. An honours graduate of NYU, Sara has made some outstanding and noteworthy documentaries including *Surfing Soweto* and *Kobus And Dumile*, for which she won CNN's African Journalist of the Year award. Sara currently lives in Johannesburg where she has just completed production on her fourth feature film *Mayfair* which has its European premiere at this year's London Film Festival and goes on general release in SA in November 2018. Her first feature, *Otelo Burning*, won over 17 international awards and was named by CNN as one of the top ten African films of the decade.

NEIL MCCARTHY has worked extensively in the South African entertainment industry as script-writer, director, producer, actor and presenter and is currently one of the most highly experienced screenwriters in the country. He has worked as a writer on some of the most successful local drama productions for national broadcaster the SABC (*Isidingo*, *Going Up*); eTV (*Rhythm City*, *Umlilo*) and DSTV (*Isibaya*, *Big Brother*). As a Head Writer he has won four South African Film and Television Awards. From 2010 to 2013 Neil was Senior Vice President in the Worldwide Drama Department of Fremantle Media, based in London. In this role he traveled widely, consulting across the group's drama properties in both Europe and Australia.

JESSICA PITCHFORD is the author of three books, including South African bestseller *Blood On Their Hands*, and has interviewed many of the key players in this story. As a reporter for the SABC in the Mandela years, Jessica covered news events during one of the most exciting periods of SA's history. While a documentary producer for current affairs series *Special Assignment* she won two CNN African Journalist of the Year Awards and the Media Institute of Southern Africa's Investigative Journalist of the Year. She has filled senior editorial positions on investigative news shows *Carte Blanche* and *Checkpoint*.

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