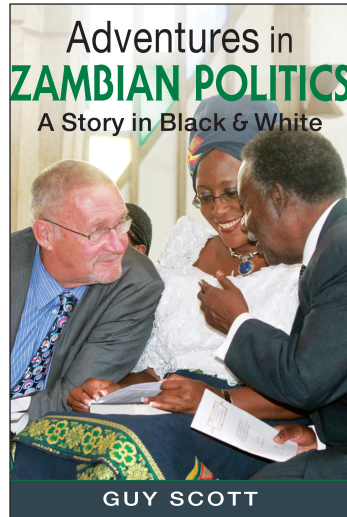


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Adventures in
Zambian Politics:
A Story in Black and White

Guy Scott

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1800 30th Street, Suite 314
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telephone 303.444.6684
fax 303.444.0824

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1

Prologue

WE HAD JUST COME BLOODIED FROM A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION THAT saw us whimpering in seventh place, clutching only 3.4 percent of the valid votes cast. In the parliamentary election run simultaneously, we came up with one seat in remotest Bembaland, won by a once-upon-a-time agricultural officer whose name we didn't know. This single seat was all we had against 149 seats belonging to our enemies, spattered in big smudges on the national map in a sort of tribally tinged action painting.

Michael Chilufya Sata was unimpressed. "Rigging!" he declared. "The vehicle sent to rig our only seat must have broken the clutch plate and failed to make it to the polling center. Remember the trouble we had with that road? We will spend a lot of money on fixing roads."

Could things get much worse?

As soon as the election was over, I went in for a medical check-up in South Africa. There were no electrocardiogram machines around Lusaka in those days, and the Zambian response to such problems is to do nothing and change the diagnosis. It nonetheless was becoming obvious to my wife, Charlotte, that I was prone to angina and a heavy smoker and that the two facts might be connected. She put me on a plane to Johannesburg. Two days later I lay recovering from a triple coronary artery bypass graft (a CABG nicknamed "Cabbage" by the cognoscenti). I was nursing a vile temper but there was compensation in the attentions of nurses moving among us in the intensive care unit.

I did not get to see or even hear from Michael—"Candidate Number Seven"—for four weeks; this was when I was dispatched back to

“Africa,” the new, politically correct name among South Africans for what used to be called the Black North.

On arrival, in a wheelchair on the apron, I heard that Michael was in jail, awaiting trial for “car theft.” It was not possible in Zambia in those days, way back in 2002, to obtain bail while awaiting trial for car theft, the reason being as follows. The first post-one-party-state president, Frederick Chiluba, slayer of the long-standing incumbent Kenneth Kaunda, champion of democracy (we shall dig up some better stuff in due course), became incensed with his own inability to jail one Archie Macatribuoy, a used car salesman, on the basis of extant law. So he sent a bill to parliament, which declared that the mere allegation of car theft should be non-bailable. (He could have declared a State of Emergency and locked up Archie even without an excuse, but that would have been over the top even for a jilted president.) Archie’s alleged crime was that he was rumored to be the lover of Vera Chiluba, a large, cuddly woman who had found herself first lady of Zambia. As soon as parliament passed the no-bail law, Archie was accused of stealing a string of secondhand motors and disappeared inside. Has anyone heard of him since?

Unfortunately, once the *affaire* Archie was over, nobody remembered to restore the law to a less ass-like tendency, and it duly misfired, resulting with Michael in jail. Michael had kept two ministerial vehicles and used them for the election campaign. I recall that one was a Japanese 4 x 4, almost brand new, in which we spent endless hours touring thousands of miles of very poor dirt roads up and down the country. Obviously, because he had to resign his position in government to campaign for the presidency as bona fide “opposition,” he should have returned all government property, and his use of the cars could be construed as theft to some degree. One of his many less-than-deadly but more-than-mere-irritant opponents was appointed minister of transport in the new government. He was not slow to make use of the ability to throw Michael into jail, under the Archie law, as a putative car thief.

And so it happened that the now mythical grand reunion of the two leaders of the Patriotic Front—Michael and me—had to take place during visiting hours in the Kamwala Remand Prison. The prison officers were most helpful to me with my chair, and remarkably sympathetic about the cushion I carried everywhere. This was an aid that helped stop my chest from hurting whenever I laughed.

After greetings, I proudly handed over to my boss an automatic blood pressure measuring machine that his wife, Christine (a pediatric surgeon), had somehow procured from the University Teaching Hospital. He had earlier expressed concern about his “BP.” I strapped his

upper arm according to the instruction pamphlet and turned it on. Within a minute it declared his blood pressure (high and low) to be 120:80, with two green lights to match. That's very good, perfect in fact, we shouted in unison, for a man in his sixties. Then it was my turn: 120:80. Just out of hospital and fine-tuned! It did not blink at Charlotte's perfect score either, nor at the doctor's, nor the gigantic murderer being prepared for release after twenty years of "life" and who had begged to be assigned to Michael as his bodyguard and had in turn been assigned to bring us hot water for tea.

"The machine is giving us a blessing in the coming battle," our leader pronounced.

"Michael," I said, "it is broken. It is not capable of making up any other numbers. If you strap up one of these rats here and manage to avoid squeezing it to death, it will tell you its blood pressure is 120:80."

"Let's catch one and see!"

"Nonsense," I said.

He responded sarcastically: "That's what you need a white man for in your political party, to tell you what the numbers mean. Let me tell you something about numbers: the only good number is one that is dead or at least wounded.

"In fact I am going to remove three zeroes from the currency. I want a strong kwacha."

"Well, please don't try it on your blood pressure."

And so we continued until I was looking too exhausted for Charlotte's liking. I stumbled to the car in acute pain, chortling. Michael of course remained behind but we were one in resolve:

*Is it not passing brave to be a king,
And ride in triumph through Persepolis?*

(You don't often get Marlowe in African narrative but it is a plus when the opportunity occurs.)

Time passed and then one morning they picked up Michael in the *kasalanga* (a truck that ferries prisoners) and, after visiting all the prisons in search of accused persons, took him to court. His fellow defendants sang for him as the truck, an old 15-ton cattle transporter, bore him to yet another session of the unassailable state versus the unbailable former minister. What anyone expected I do not know, but suddenly an unexpected, hitherto unseen little man popped up in the witness box. In retrospect he looked for all the world like those small mammals on guard duty over a burrow, such as are used for advertising cornflakes

the world over. The small mammal gave it as God's truth, and nothing but the truth, that Michael had been authorized to take the "borrowed" campaign vehicles on account of his being a "Friend of the System."

Without a sign of thought, the magistrate wielded his ancient splintered hammer and struck the cracked colonial-era hardwood block, after which the accused and the friends and followers of the acquitted uttered a deep sigh and left the courtroom. Michael clicked his fingers for some money and commenced peeling off 10,000 kwacha notes (to be "rebased" in due course) for his fellow passengers in the *kasalanga*. After leaving the court we drove in my car through the town center as pedestrians and motorists alike waved to us in a friendly way. Everyone knew Michael but they could not see quite yet the added zero that would pump our votes from 3 to 30 percent. But we were not in a skeptical mood. We told ourselves that 3 percent is a good start.

"What on earth," I asked, "is 'the System' and how do you qualify as its friend, Mr. Opposition candidate?"

"Ssshhh, do you ask a mongoose that has come to rescue you, where it came from?"

"A mongoose? Is that a Bemba saying? How long were you in the slammer?"

"Forty days," he answered, "Forty days and forty nights. Like Jesus."

I thought closer to twenty, and I said so.

"What is the use of twenty days and nights?" he demanded, "It has to be seven, twelve, or forty—or none. Thank you for the lift and now go home to your wife."

In passing, it may help the reader understand Sata-matics if I recount "the tale of the corrupt farmer." Levy Mwanawasa (the new president, the one who had just beaten us) became very fond of boasting about his achievements in the agricultural sector. Shortly after his release from imprisonment and already on the campaign trail, Michael attacked Levy as a corrupt individual with eight farms! Levy promptly convened a press conference where he attacked Michael in return, declaring that he, Levy, had only six farms (and was thus pure as morning dew).

"You see," Sata said to me, "the guy rises like a tiger fish to take that bait. He thinks he can defend six farms against eight to a group of people who do not know what one farm looks like."

Didn't make sense to me. But I had at least five years to figure it out.

I went home to seriously recuperate and keep track of time. After some number of days and nights I abandoned the wheelchair, the crutches, and the smokes. I assiduously applied myself to walking: first 20 paces, then 200, then 2,000 daily.

Over a period of, let's say, forty days and forty nights I felt I was recovered.

We had endured the worst passage of our journey and we could sense the flavor of the future, all airiness and light and the painless variety of laughter.

And never mind the System, wherever It lives, however It works. With luck, It will not even notice us.

Michael was extraordinarily well-known throughout the length and width of Zambia, and was as much a part of folklore as he was a part of the political zoo. How it worked I could not figure, but I observed. Children as young as two recognized him instantly and stood fixated in awe. In fact, such was his "charisma" or his "presence"—which are inadequate words—that people would hallucinate his appearance in their home or workplace. Reports of Sata sightings frequently came from different locations simultaneously. He was our own Elvis and Lord Lucan rolled into one. It is not easy to capture such a character in the written word, especially if he is one who enjoys reinventing his past to craft better stories.

As for me, I am the product of "white settlers," although both my parents had good credentials as "liberals" (sometimes known as "communists" in the nomenclature of the confused and far-off southern African 1950s). My father represented African interests in various forums and also Lusaka's voters as an MP in the parliament of the Central African Federation. Like many politicians the world over, I acquired my taste for electoral politics while still a child from politically minded parents and prominent visitors.

We lived in a sprawling Cape colonial style bungalow outside Lusaka; all the rooms opened on to deep verandas, which provided access to a robust garden nursed by three streams that in their turn enticed you to follow them into evergreen forest. An arbitrary explorer—say a boy with dogs and a shotgun—could find in this vined greenery evidence of abandoned experiments in building and exotic agriculture. All this, it seems, inspired a chorus of small birds and mammals, themselves no more than nature's toys, to be conspiring to distract the hunter from his task.

Uwaningila mumushitu tomfwa inswaswa. Do not listen too closely to noises in the *mushitu* (dense rain forest); they will distract you from your goal.

Back on the verandas I might suddenly find myself face-to-face with prominent freedom fighters or nationalist "terrorists" of the day—Kenneth Kaunda, Harry Nkumbula, Simon Kapwepwe—needing my father's help or just somewhere comfortable to confer. Today they all

have six-lane highways, international airports, and secondary schools named after them. One day I came back from the forest and found a gorgeous red-haired lady who introduced herself as Barbara Castle and her mission as the destruction of the British Empire. I could only gaze in wonder and take it for granted that this was a worthwhile objective. Wow, what hair!

Most communication with the outside world was by way of early electronics: the BBC news was miraculously accessible to people such as my father, who was prepared to put his ear to a huge loudspeaker and imitate the attentive dog of “His Master’s Voice.” The main machine was connected to wires festooned through the gum trees as well as tractor batteries to keep all those valves warm. You had to learn to ignore sounds like those made by manic electronic hyenas (real? imaginary?). We were also served by a “party line” telephone, number A3, with a ringing tone of three short rings. One day I answered it and was challenged to a duel by someone who turned out to be an angry Italian. My father had publicly denounced the federal policy of banning blacks working for the railway from ascending to the responsible position of engine driver. The state would import Italians and Greeks to do this job. The Italian man on the phone wanted to kill him, once he had chosen his weapon. My mother took the phone and explained that they were threatening her bambino and that she would call the police and that she was anyway a good shot and my father had no intention of dying like a Russian poet.

In retrospect, and before the election, it was obvious in the late months of 2001 that Michael and I had hit the wall—although in different places—in the multiparty democratic political system that had prevailed in Zambia for the previous ten years; we were now both gasping for air, if not dying in the water. What could be more obvious? The country’s outgoing president Fredrick Chiluba had (to use his own soccer metaphor) “dribbled” Michael and prevented him from becoming head of the ruling party—and thence the next president of the country. (Like most Zambians—except Michael—Chiluba was a huge soccer fan. He reportedly sent ministers warning letters on yellow State House letterhead. I never got one, though, and my letter of dismissal was not red. He later likened his political skill in getting rid of his opponents as “dribbling.” For the uninitiated, a yellow card in soccer is a warning, and a red card gets you sent off the pitch; dribbling involves using tricks and superior skill to retain control while getting the ball past your opponent.)

I had meanwhile hunted high and low for influence in the political world, having been comprehensively dribbled much earlier by the same cunning Fred. However, once he had accepted that he could no longer

play the ball all by himself, Michael went back to basics. He phoned my home and got Charlotte on the line. "Tell your husband to come here," he growled.

I decided to join his secretly conceived and newly born political party and help him head for hegemony. I took about two weeks to wrap up my chores as a nonaligned "political consultant." Our new party was called the Patriotic Front. A boat was chosen for its symbol, ostensibly Noah's Ark, complete with dove and olive branch. (However, village voters found our picture of the ark incomprehensible, so we had the artists metamorphose it into a dugout canoe. Cartoonists needed no prompting to add dove-droppings.)

And then? Can I remember?

Just under ten years later I drove through the hallowed gates of State House to the smiles and cheers of the guards. As I found and entered the right room I was castigated roughly thus: "You, white man, late as usual, what would you be if you were not white? I think you would be dancing for coins outside the Post Office."

"Perhaps I would be president, Sir?"

"That job is taken. But I will give you the next one down. Pick up a Bible, read this sheet of paper and then sign it. Your *Honour* the Vice President, *Sir*."

What could I say?

"Thank you, your Excellency. I believe I am the only white vice president in sub-Saharan Africa. This is a tribute to your nonracial approach to nation-building."

"My foot," he replied, "I just want to destroy Obama's monopoly as the only black president in the world with a *mzungu chola* boy [white person bag-carrier]. And you'll do."

The diplomats present, including the US ambassador, laughed not entirely heartily; they were not sure in what spirit the words were uttered. Since this is a book whose author is striving to impart clarity in murky areas, I will seek to explain.

In Zambia the practice of *chimbuya* is widespread. When used literally as "cousin" it is no more nor less than it sounds; "I want you to fly to London tonight and bury your *mbuya* Mrs. Thatcher on my behalf" is plaintext. Coded, the word is translated in the academic literature as "traditional cousinship" or "teasing cousinship." Tribes or groupings of tribes who have fought each other and stolen each other's women and cattle in the distant past have considerable license to insult each other without usually provoking anything beyond a mocking response. It is said that if you find yourself in court, your most earnest hope should be

that the judge is your “cousin,” your *mbuya*. He will treat you more leniently even than a member of your own tribe will. That is the theory.

Marriage across tribal lines is common; a good place to observe *chimbuya* is at a wedding party in which the bride and groom are tribal cousins. Recently I was present at such a wedding reception for a bride who was a member of the Sala tribe, which is a component of the Tonga or “three tribes” grouping. The master of ceremonies was a Lozi from the groom’s side. Constant jibes were aimed across the divide: “I will ask the band to play slowly so the Tongas can keep in step,” “extra meat is available if you show your registration card proving that you are Tonga,” and so on.

Chimbuya is easy enough to understand, but when practicing it, take care! This morning’s paper, it just so happens, bears a photograph of a Bemba schoolteacher, handcuffed to a tree for attempting to play *chimbuya* with Paramount Chief Mpezeni of the Ngoni tribe. The two tribes are cousins, and one of the standard lines of mockery relates to the eating of monkeys by the Bemba versus the eating of field mice by the Ngoni. The formal mode of address to Mpenzeni is *Nkosi wama kosi*, “King of All Kings.” The word for “rat” in both languages is *koswe*. The Bemba had greeted him with the pun *Koswe wama koswe*, “Rat of All Rats.” Normally this might pass as a good joke, but Mpezeni was not in the mood for such a thing. He was still recovering from a tear gas attack by riot police who had broken up a meeting of Ngoni chiefs and subchiefs to discuss issues of contention with government. Lesson: before you open your mouth, try and be sure that you understand both the culture and the politics, as well as the neurological impact of a recent tear gassing on someone’s sense of humor.

Zambian journalists, well acquainted with the *chimbuya* genre, used to laugh at Michael’s and my cousinship jokes at public meetings or press conferences, but never bothered to publish them. Foreign journalists, alas, sometimes produced stories around “black president insults white veep” or vice versa. I tried to warn Michael of this source of misunderstanding but he ignored me. So far as he was concerned, all whites, nay all humans, were his cousins and he stuck to this position until his dying day. Visitors to Zambia’s State House displayed variable rates of adaptation to learning they were Michael’s cousins. I remember a high-powered delegation from Barclays Bank being totally bemused by Michael attacking me for being a racist when I complained about high interest rates for corporate agriculture. I attacked him back and the English bankers were plainly embarrassed. Conversely, George W. Bush, accompanying his wife, Laura, on a visit to her cervical cancer

charity in Zambia, got in on the game very quickly. He had me nailed as a “scaly old dude” before I even had time to look up a few sayings from my Texican dictionary.

Back to my appointment as vice president. I declined to answer Charlotte’s phoned queries as I guided my new motorcade to our farm. It took eight minutes from door to door without too much use of the sirens. The drivers and the security detail engaged in a constant advisory dialogue over the walkie talkies: “Mike Poppa at the lights!” “Charlie Charlie!”

“Who is Mike Poppa?” I asked.

“It means Mad Person, your honor.

“Charlie Charlie?”

“It just means ‘copied’ or ‘Roger.’”

“How do you describe a road like this?”

“Shit, sir.”

“What’s all this?” Charlotte asked as our numerous scruffy dogs scrambled to make their mark on the sudden plague of new car wheels. “Don’t tell me you’re the VP!” We fell in each other’s arms with the tears that mark the successful culmination of a long journey.

There was a surge of international media interest in the phenomenon of a white vice president in an independent African state. It was brief mainly because there was none of the controversy that contemporary journalism requires. Virtually no Zambian, not that I knew of anyway, disapproved my appointment on racial grounds. Most folks on the street shrugged and asked: so what? And why should you care if he is white if we don’t? How do you make a controversy out of that? Go and hover with your microphone elsewhere.

The terms of reference of a vice president vary from country to country in line with constitutions and unwritten traditions. Generally, as the title implies, it is a supportive role to an executive president who may delegate responsibilities or not, according to whim. This has caused some to question the importance of the job; the most notable skeptic being one-time US VP John Nance Garner, whose scatological description of the job is easily found via Google.

So far as I can see, Michael had chosen me as VP for two major reasons. The first is that I had worked hard and earned the position. My involvement in the ten-year campaign was a key ingredient in PF’s coming to power, and voters would seriously question my being sidelined. Indeed, Michael had promoted me to VP of the party four years earlier. Such an argument is not decisive in political reasoning, however, and I figure Michael also had something extra—a message he

wanted to send to the world—perhaps a message concerning the need to end the sterile debate about color, colonialism, guilt, and compensation. The point was not that he too could appoint “technocrats” or minority representatives as Chiluba had already done with me, and as Robert Mugabe and others had often done, but that he could actually use a white as an emblem of the state. It added to his pride that what he was doing was decades ahead of South Africa, the self-styled trendsetter in our neck of the woods.

So those who criticized my posting as “ceremonial” missed the mark: that is precisely what it was intended to be. Never mind my day job in charge of famine risks and other looming disasters; never mind my leadership of parliament; never mind my use of convening power to



At the White House with Barack and Michelle Obama, attending the US-Africa Leaders' Summit, 2014

achieve joined-up government. Yes, I had power, and I enjoyed using it. But my primary function was to represent Zambia, as delegated by the Boss, and make Zambia stand out from the crowd of “can’t quite remember which one that is” African countries.

Michael Sata was a delegator indeed. I danced with the Obamas on his instructions (alas stepping on the first lady’s foot without his authority while getting down to Lionel Richie). I flew tens of thousands of miles around the world surrounded by pistol-packing bodyguards on the strength of his signature. To obey him, I was sleepless in Sri Lanka, baffled in Bolivia, and confused in Korea (North—he kept South for himself). As the official embodiment of the Head of State, I descended into hundreds of Zambian villages on a Chinese helicopter—sometimes with a door having fallen off in flight—to make promises and garner support for our party in by-elections. I can proudly say I did a good job of detribalizing voting patterns across the west of the country, in particular.

Mario Cuomo allegedly said, “You campaign in poetry, but govern in prose.” I am not sure I can explain or teach poetry, but I am certain you cannot argue with it. There are other ways of describing the “emotional intelligence” content of political campaigning. Joyce Banda, the former two-year president of Malawi, described campaigning in her country as “falling in love with the voters and persuading them to fall in love with you.” Unfortunately for her, she fell short of being reelected as only the second female president in Africa, despite the insight. Michael and I, during interminable outings on the campaign trail, decided to restructure the PF’s campaign content and strategy along the lines of a Catholic church service: 50 percent music, 25 percent promises you can’t quite guarantee to fulfill and 25 percent threats you certainly cannot enforce.

Sorry, Your Grace, only joking!

The bit about governing in prose has its meaning, but it should not be taken as justification for removing the fire from political activity and replacing it with whatever keeps bureaucrats warm. And when all is said and done, effective governing itself is part of campaigning for the next election. So while part of this book treats some of the “technical” aspects of running an African government technically, it is nowhere neglectful, I hope, of the emotional or poetic aspects that feed into policymaking and popular support.

A challenge for me with electoral poetry was that I did not speak Bemba, the language in which we were mostly campaigning. But I persevered with learning many of the subtle sayings to which the language has given birth. I have scattered some of our favorites liberally throughout

this book because I cannot resist them either. Please note that I famously even invented one myself.

Alas, the fairy tale of the accession of a once-upon-a-time porter at Victoria railway station to state president by dint of sheer energy, cheek, and charisma lasted just over three years. Then Michael died, not far from the same Victoria station. We will find the body ahead.

We started with a mistake—it would be very un-Zambian to get it right straightaway. To a question regarding how far back we have to go to find a white president in Africa, I responded “to the Phoenicians,” a pretentious reference to a pre-Christian Semitic civilization that hung out in the Mediterranean and circumnavigated Africa. The word was reported by a *Telegraph* reporter as “Venetians” and circumnavigated the earth by email, and we were all mocked. One newspaper ventured an apology to the effect that it is a good thing on my part that I read T. S. Eliot. I shut up and said nothing. It happens I found the Phoenicians strutting their stuff in a novel by Wilbur Smith (b. 1933 Broken Hill, then Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia). Thanks, man.

Upon Michael’s death, the Zambian Constitution elevated me to the job of acting president. Contrary to some poor reporting and mud-stirring, there were no two ways about it. There was some political waffle to the effect that the Constitution was being wrongly interpreted, but not a single legal authority without political interests took that position, and neither did the chiefs of the security forces. So now I became the only white president in sub-Saharan Africa, though without much real power to counter the disorderly scrapping for succession that immediately broke out. This short-lived promotion provided the *Economist* with one of its more amusing punning headlines: “White Man, Burdened” (4 October 2014). Indeed, there was another brief media feeding frenzy about me, but after a couple of gaffs, subsequent severe reprimand from Charlotte, and some timely, firm advice from her sister Stephanie, I cut off communication with most of the international press. With tensions so high, trouble could easily arise from sensational and inaccurate reporting intended to amuse foreign readers—but it was potential dynamite when recycled into Zambian discourse, most especially by word of mouth and via social media.

The Constitution required that I act for no more than ninety days, within which an election was to be held to replace the dead president through the ballot.

THE DIFFICULT INTERREGNUM IS over, new leadership is in place, and I no longer have my job. Reasonable people have congratulated me on keep-

ing the peace, while some who feel shortchanged think I should have done it differently. One helpful person volunteered a heavily annotated copy of *Hamlet*. I think it is fair to say that Zambian political affairs are returning to the condition they were in before Michael Sata (with whatever help I could give him) tried to change the game forever. But it is too soon to judge whether there will be another upbeat and interesting political story to tell about our country or not. Meanwhile, this is the story of Michael Sata, PhD (well, I will explain the degree), and his campaign and government. In both of these I am proud to have played my part.

Let's borrow some words from my Zambian literary heroine, Namwali Serpell, the winner of the Caine Prize for African Writing.

One of the most insidious forms of prejudice is the inability to see beyond one's own understanding of what prejudice even looks like. Consider the media flurry over the death on Tuesday of Michael Sata, the fifth president of Zambia. Major news outlets—the BBC, al-Jazeera and CNN—have dutifully reported the facts: Sata, who concealed his terminal illness for months, was known as King Cobra for his vitriolic tongue; his politics entailed aggressive, sometimes racially inflected, jabs at ruling and infiltrating powers (the Zambian elite, the Chinese); he did some good, he did some bad; he fell short, he will be missed. But most of these reports have also placed curious emphasis on Sata's vice-president, Guy Scott, who will now step in as interim president for the 90-day period mandated by the constitution before a general election is held.

Untimely presidential death by illness has happened in Zambia before, as recently as 2008. When Levy Mwanawasa died halfway through his second term, the vice-president, Rupiah Banda, stepped in and won the interim election. So why is the world so interested in this old story from this young country? Well, as the BBC put it: "Zambian President Sata death: White interim leader appointed."

Yes, Vice-President Scott is white—or what Zambians call, with a measure of fond condescension, a muzungu. He is the "first white president in Africa in 30 years," some say; "well, since South Africa's FW de Klerk," others report with a meaningful look; "Oops, ahem, sorry, the first one since Mauritian prime minister Paul Berenger," still others hasten to correct. Cue collective eye-rolling from Zambians at home and abroad.

As Scott said when he was elected in 2011: "I have long suspected Zambia is moving from a postcolonial to a cosmopolitan condition." Or, as a (black) Zambian tweeted yesterday: "OH MY GOD our interim president is white! Do not chat to me about Africa not being progressive."

But of course the UK, blinded by the paternalistic mists of postcolonial guilt, would worry about a backslide. And the US, which only sees in black and white, would find this state of things confusing. Instead of recognising, as the internet does, that Scott's position is a sign

of political progress akin to the US election of a minority president, the mainstream media seems to be carrying that double-bladed hatchet of racial anxiety. Scott's interim position must be either a sign of black passivity or a harbinger of the threat that always hovers behind a black majority: the spectre of the black crowd, its riots and rampage and rage.

No matter that Guy Scott was born in Livingstone (in what was then Northern Rhodesia) and is a Zambian citizen. No matter that Scott has been our white Zambian vice-president for three years, or that Sata's death and Scott's constitutionally stipulated succession has been on our minds since Sata was first rumoured to be ill many months ago. No matter that Scott has been a major political player since the 1990s, shifting from party to party until he ended up in the Patriotic Front (PF) as Sata's running mate. The two men were already actual mates. An unlikely pair—Scott a PhD with a scathing sense of irony; Sata an outspoken populist with a reputation for stepping on toes—they spent more than a decade building the PF together and shared genuine respect. As Scott put it in a *Guardian* interview in 2013: "Michael's very clever, he knows people tend to regard him as a racist because he talks rough. He's usually tried it out on me already. He says things like, 'What would you be if you weren't white?' I said, 'The president?' That shut him up." Scott lost a friend as well as a president on Tuesday night. (Serpell, 2014)

There are many intelligent and well-informed people who have no idea where Zambia is, let alone how it is. We citizens sometimes like to boast that we are such a remote country that World War I lasted nearly a week of extra time thanks to poor communications. But there is or was another less amusing handicap. During the freedom wars of the second half of the twentieth century, Zambia was demonized by white supremacists in the south as the epicenter of "the Black North," a hot, violent, and disease-ridden land, full of terrorists. The manager of an animal rescue center in Zimbabwe once refused to allow the wife of a senior UN diplomat in Lusaka to adopt a stray dog on the grounds that he could not permit a dog to endure the horrors of Zambia.

So I have taken it as my responsibility to give more background information than the reader well versed in Zambian matters might require. Some newcomers may even conclude, as have many others, that Zambia is one of the world's better kept secrets. (Though some colonial officers came to call it MMBA—a Million Miles of Bugger All—so we are not all in agreement.)

Last, let me confess that we were not, of course, just two of us even at the start. From the very beginning there were people who were already or quickly became supporters of and believers in Michael; some arrived some days ahead of me. There was Paul Lumbi, who was

brought up with him in the domain of a left-wing British district commissioner; and Edgar Lungu, the future president (2015 until date as yet unknown), made-for-destiny, who stood for parliament in 2001 on a PF ticket. He came eighth in the Chawama constituency but he at least flew the flag in the faces of the mockers.

There were many who devoted their own time and money and ingenuity to organizing the Patriotic Front at various points in its ten-year battle for power. Michael was the commander and I his deputy. As former cabinet ministers, we were the two best-known and noisiest members of a venture that succeeded where many others, with apparently far better initial prospects, sank beyond the point of possible salvage.

Wise Bemba Sayings for the Campaigner in Poetry

In *modern* Bemba orthography, the sound usually denoted by “b” in writing is a three-way cross between “w,” “v,” and “b”—with the relative strengths in the mixture depending upon various factors. Thus, the word “bebele” is pronounced close to “vevele” by actual members of the Bemba tribe, while nonmembers may describe the tribe as the “awemba.” There is no “r” sound in Bemba. The sounds rendered by “ng” and “nd” leading a vowel are as in “sing” and “sand.”

Uwaningila mumushitu tomfwa inswaswa. Do not listen too closely to noises in the mushitu (dense rain forest); they will distract you from your goal. That is, do not pay attention to small distractions.

Kwindi ngaakokola alya namukasuba. Or Koswe nga akokola (munganda), alya nakasuba. The rat that stays (in the house) too long, eats even in broad daylight. Normally this is taken as a reference to relatives who stay too long and take over your house, but also used to refer to someone who has stayed in power too long and becomes corrupt. One urban version features a rat that changes the TV channels.

Sebana wikute. Necessary gratification without dignity. Loosely: A man has to do what a man has to eat. Even more loosely: Eating in the toilet.

Kolwe angala pa musamba anashya. The monkey plays on the branch that is familiar to him. A person when teasing tends to pick on someone who is used to being teased by him. More insightfully: you cannot joke with a person you do not know. If you watch vervet monkeys letting off energy, you will see that this saying also incorporates an accurate naturalistic observation.

Shaupwa bwino. I did not marry well. A witty apology for poor clothing or equipment (e.g., a cheap cell phone).

Elyo lwanya. Approximately: Now (a very large amount of) shit is about to be encountered.

Umuchinshi tabalomba. Respect cannot be imposed—it must be earned.

Ulelosha tabamuchebeba ku kanwa. Do not hold a man to account for what he says when you can see his face is twisted in grief.

Alanda elyo atontonkanya. He speaks and only then thinks.

Kuya bebele. They must go. The MMD (opposition party) slogan in 1991 against (ruling party) UNIP: “To go is a must.”

Donchi kubeba. Don’t kubeba. Do not tell them. This is my personal contribution to the Bemba language, meaning “it is only the vote that counts; you don’t have to say how you are voting. Just accept all the bribes they give you.” It became the title of a smash hit song.

Uwakwensha ubushiku bamutasha ilyo bwacha. How well you have been led in the night is apparent only when the sun comes up. Then you can praise or condemn the one you have been following.

Ukuteka mbwa mano. If you do not have the sense to feed it, even a dog will abandon you. Normally wedding advice to the wife about feeding the groom, it is also used to warn against driving away political allies.