



UMNOTHO

Prologue

Indulge my retelling of a popular story.

There was once a village where the jungle pressed close.

Monkeys were everywhere. They stole fruit, screamed at dawn, and nobody thought twice about them.

They had no price.

They had no value.

They just were.

One ominous day, a stranger arrived.

He wore clean clothes. Drove a top-of-the-range SUV with all the add-ons: spinning rims, air suspension,,, in a custom colour.

He spoke softly. He said,
"I will buy monkeys. Ten dollars each."

The village laughed.

"This year we will enjoy imali yebhare" — loosely, this year we will enjoy a fool's money. After all, did not the elders say that a fool and his money are soon parted?

Then they caught monkeys.

Easy money.

Ten dollars for something the jungle gave away free.

Children skipped school to set traps. Farmers left fields. Grandmothers wove cages instead of baskets. Baddies undid their nails and focused on catching enough monkeys to get that new wig, or Gucci handbag.

The stranger paid.

He filled a warehouse.

The jungle began to grow quiet.

Fruits were safe outside.

When monkeys got scarce, he raised the price,
"Twenty dollars."

The village worked harder.
"Fifty."

The village forgot how to farm.

Then the stranger said,
"I must go to the city. My assistant will buy for me. When I return, I'll pay one hundred dollars per monkey."

The villagers panicked. If we do not pull up our socks, this fool and his money will go to the next village, and we will have to go back to farming, school, mending shoes, being broke baddies.

The assistant opened the warehouse. Ten thousand monkeys inside- all the ones the village had sold.

He leaned in close,
"Why wait? Buy from me now. Seventy-five dollars each. When the master returns, sell for one hundred. You keep the difference."

It was perfect math.

Clean profit.

Capitalism at its finest!

So the village emptied itself.

They sold land.

Mortgaged their homes.

They borrowed from neighbours.

They emptied jars buried under floors.

Listen, even the baddies sold their handbags and wigs.

Then they bought every monkey back for seventy-five dollars a head.

Then they waited somewhat impatiently, for a stranger who never returned.

The polite, lovely, and amiable assistant disappeared that night.

In the morning, the village had ten thousand monkeys.

The fields were dead.

The money was gone.

The land and homes now belonged to the bank.

The fools and their money had soon parted, like the elders had always said since time immemorial. But the plot twist was: they were the fools, not the gentleman and his PA.

Yes, the monkeys chewed through the cages and went back to the jungle, screaming.

This is the part where you expect me to go into exegesis about capitalism. You would be a fool also, because that is not how this unravels.

Instead, I will tell you about another fool. A cotton farmer who spent half a year farming cotton-

- tilling the land,
- buying seeds and fertiliser,
- planting,
- praying for rain,
- irrigating,
- applying pesticides and herbicides,
- handpicking the cotton,
- stuffing it into bales,
- transporting it to the cotton gin.

Then he used the profit to buy his two daughters matching Balenciaga towel skirts for three thousand dollars each, because they were going for fifty percent discount. He also took his new girlfriend to Konka for drinks. Timeously at that, just before it closed, permanently.

Now I can finally ask: is the value of six thousand dollars earned over half a year with intensive farming the same as six thousand spent at a Balenciaga sale on two towel skirts? Even if they were purchased at a fifty percent discount?

Is the fifty thousand an annum that an ICU nurse earns attending to critical clients at a poorly-financed government hospital the same value as the fifty thousand gifted to an OnlyFans creator from a forex trader?

If indeed your answer is yes, you are not the target market of this book. Please close it quietly and pretend this was a dream. If you had bought a physical copy, thank you. Please leave it at a park near you- hopefully a more conscious reader may pick it up. Or burn it and piss on the ashes. It's your money!

If your answer was no, you are in august company.

Join me for the ride.

Let's be more methodical, before we are accused of being all over the place. Money story first, oops, I meant monkey story first.

Price is what the stranger says.

Value is what the jungle knows.

The monkeys never changed.

They were not worth ten dollars, or fifty, or one hundred.

They were worth nothing to the village and everything to the jungle. Their value was in the trees, in the dawn noise, in the ecosystem that held the village together.

The stranger didn't buy monkeys.

He bought belief.

He bought the village's **attention**, then sold it back to them at a markup. How long have I been saying that attention is currency?

In the Kali Yuga, this is how "markets" move.

This is how souls go broke.

Price is external. It's announced. It's written on a tag, shouted in a market, promised by an assistant. Price is a story about the future: someone will pay more tomorrow.

Value is internal. It's quiet. It asks: what does this do? Who does this feed? What happens if it vanishes?

Value doesn't care about the next buyer. Value knows whether you can eat it, wear it, or if it keeps the forest alive.

Similarly, the **value** of a ten thousand dollar profit is half a year of labour-intensive cotton farming.

The **price** of two Balenciaga towel skirts and a night at Konka is also coincidentally ten thousand.

But the two are not the same thing.

Money is a stranger who comes to town.

He will always tell you the price.

The jungle is still there. It never speaks. It only shows you what's real when the stranger leaves.

The village thought they were trading monkeys.

They were trading their attention.

They were trading their future.

The question for your own life: what are you buying back from the assistant?

And what did you sell to get the money?

The monkeys always return to the jungle.

The only question is whether you'll have a village when they do.