CHAPTER 5:
The Mayor of Cronyism

"A farmer is sitting on his porch in a chair, hanging out. A friend walks up to the porch to say hello, and hears an awful yelping, squealing sound coming from inside the house.

"What's that terrifyin' sound?" asks the friend.

"It's my dog," said the farmer, "he's sittin' on a nail."

"Why doesn't he just sit up and get off it?" his friend asks.

The farmer replies: "Doesn't hurt enough yet."

- Amanda Palmer, author of 'The Art of Asking'

The DA-led Bitou Municipality commissioned a report in 2011, into irregularities between itself and a company called Xylophone Investments No 10 CC. The result showed that Rowan Spies, who'd become a DA Councillor in 2016, had been involved in fraud and graft. It was reported that there was ANC connection. At the time, his wife, Eleanore Spies, was the ANC Mayor of Knysna. One payment had gone into their joint account.

After the DA made Eleanore their Knysna Mayor in 2016, an opposing faction of the DA forced an investigation which was conducted by De Swardt Vogel Myambo Attorneys. The 2018 recommendation was that she and top officials be disciplined and held criminally liable for a series of different wrongdoings.

Additionally, Eleanore had arranged for her friend, Fran Kirsten, to become the Municipality's Communications Manager. It was alleged that it was a trade for the money she didn't have to pay Kirsten for being her election manager. The Auditor General found the contract illegal to the tune of almost R400,000.

Fortunately, the DA had marketed themselves as the anti-corruption party, and Helen Zille and Mmusi Maimane listened to me. That meant all crooks were expelled from the party and prosecuted-

-EXCEPT THAT NEVER HAPPENED.

Instead, the DA buried both reports and promoted Rowan and Eleanore to the Garden Route District's Mayoral Committee (MAYCO). Knysna and Bitou were among the Municipalities that fell under it. Their new boss, Memory Booysen, was Bitou's ex-Mayor.

Kirsten would occasionally pop back into Knysna Municipality for smaller jobs.

Welcome to the Western Cape.
Before you go to the toilet, you've got to feast. I'm unsure when that began for Eleanore Spies so can only follow the smell...

Under her ANC Mayorship, there'd been accusations that the FIFA World Cup soccer money had been mishandled, and that government officials had stolen branded equipment and clothing meant for township kids. I hadn't been an activist then and have never looked into it, so it can only be treated as rumour. And it's likely no one cared after the French grabbed the spotlight with their infamous protest. All would've been totally forgotten if the soccer team hadn't burned a bus with Knysna's name on it four years later. Then it was quickly forgotten again.

The rumour that Eleanore had been a DA spy whilst in the ANC rang much louder.

It was said to have begun when she was on the ANC's Regional Executive Committee with Stephen de Vries and Victor Molosi (who took turns as the Knysna ANC's Chief Whip from 2011 to 2018, a period of DA rule). The alleged deal was that Eleanore would pass on info against her enemies in the party. There's no proof of this but she became the ANC Mayor of Knysna (2007-2011).

Apartheid has long been over but its legacy, truths and lies, lives on harshly. Race, unfortunately, defines much of our South African lives. It's currently inescapable, especially in politics.

By the time the 2011 elections approached, Eleanore had become a darling among a social set of white women but unpopular amongst non-white ANC members. It was claimed that she was helping the advantaged more than the disadvantaged, that she'd forgotten her community.

Again, no proof, but the result was the local ANC dropping her so far down the candidate list that she'd never re-enter Council with the 2011 elections. But she allegedly had a friend in Gwede Mantashe, then the ANC's National Secretary General. He allegedly overrode the locals, placing her at #2 on the list. That guaranteed more local anger and her a position... but not as the boss of the town. The discontent her sudden elevation caused became ironic as Spies was unhappy not being the top dog. She was accused of getting revenge by campaigning for others against the ANC. This has been told to me so many times it's either folk lore, the truth or a version of the truth.

There's value in relating what could explain her meteoric rise in the DA, and their
repeated refusal to hold her corruption accountable. Once in bed together, it's possible that none could tell each other's secret lest the other do the same. If not this secret, then maybe this book will encourage another to leak out. But I wouldn't have published this without one high-ranking ANC member going on record.

Ralph Stander is a Knysna resident and an ex-member of the ANC PEC (Provincial Executive Committee). He and I used to disagree a lot, my bucket of water versus his fiery, racial politics. The power of talking is that we mellowed over the years, sometimes disagreeing but more often able to appreciate the other's insights over the occasional coffee or breakfast. He and I are proof that South Africans from different backgrounds can put differences aside to focus on what we have in common. And that we can speak about topics other than politics (well, sometimes).

He left office and the ANC several years back, and refused to answer new questions about the Spies family. He'll likely be cross with me for resurrecting an old interview.

Mike: “Is there truth to the rumour that Eleanore Spies was undermining the ANC in Hornlee and Concordia [suburbs of Knysna] before she quit? Allegedly, part of the fallout with the ANC was because she was telling people in her ward not to vote for the ANC whilst she was the ANC Mayor, just before the 2011 elections. Is there truth to this?”

Ralph: “That was definitely the case. There are a few comrades who gave affidavits to that effect. When she didn’t make it in ANC processes, she became very angry and was determined to show the ANC. She and other comrades indeed showed the ANC by supporting the Independent candidate in Ward 8. That didn’t only make the ANC lose the ward but also [helped lose] the Knysna Municipality and Eden Municipality. The worst thing for any organisation is when its destroyed from the inside.”

Mike: “Eleanore sued you for R200,000. What was the result of the case?”

Ralph: “That was a scare tactic for reporting the matter to the powers, and for questioning her love for attention from the white community, and her lack of attention to the coloured and African communities.”

Mike: “Do you deny that she was approached by the DA? Or that she approached them?”

Ralph Stander: “I’ve been told she approached them in 2011. Remember, there was also the agreement with the DA [before that]. She’s officially DA now and
at least everyone knows where she stands. My big concern is those agents who are still inside the ANC. Under the previous regional leadership, of which she was part of, there was some kind of agreement with the DA at those two municipalities [Knysna and Eden District, which was renamed Garden Route]. I'm still trying to get the details. I know part of the agreement was to keep Ricky van Aswegen and The Knysna Community Forum out of running the municipality.” [Van Aswegen folded the Knysna Community Forum and joined COPE, making him their only councillor. He supported the ANC in Council until the DA put him on their MAYCO – politics has everything and nothing to do with us].

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Since her rupture with the ANC, Eleanore had been an estate agent, the manager of an old age home, and a teacher at Concordia High School. Apparently, a failed business was in the mix. An inconsistent resumé never mattered if she was only passing time before returning to Council. Considering her activities, that seemed true.

In 2012, the George Herald newspaper photographed Eleanore having fun with Alan Winde (DA MEC), Richard Dawson (DA councillor) and Shaun van Eck (Knysna Tourism CEO and member of the DA Constituency).

Under the title Knysna First, I called a meeting in attempt for people to find common cause. DA Chairperson Peter Myers told me that he couldn't make it but met me separately, telling me he'd gotten involved with the DA to fight the ISDF tender which he considered the greatest threat to Knysna. He acted like he was my friend and that we'd cooperate. I'd soon discover how fake he was.

My meeting, which Eleanore attended, was sadly fake too. Few were interested in cooperation. Some arrived only to bitch, some to find out if I was running for office (which I wasn't).

As previously related, I had that disagreement with Zille at her 2011 rally, and the consequent useless meeting with MEC Alan Winde and Myers (who began showing his true colours). Eleanore accepted my invite to the latter but cancelled last moment with flimsy excuse. In retrospect, it's possible she didn't want to be in a situation that directly revealed she was on the DA’s side.

Eleanore was a member of the Audit Committee, a civilian oversight body that all local governments are required to have. Some are good, most useless. Unfortunately, the Knysna committee was the latter kind (it's improved immensely since). It had failed to
hold the DA-led Municipality accountable for its spending spree; the purchase of Nissan Jukes at a higher price from a supplier who never won the tender; expensive out-of-budget office refurbishments and; the unsupervised spending of millions that spiralled Knysna Tourism into the red.

Eleanore announced an anti-crime movement in her home suburb of Hornlee. It seemed as hollow as a doughnut, convincing me she was managing her image, aiming for return to political office. I offered her lunch to ask the question.

Uninvited, Rowan arrived halfway through, ordered food and drink, and left me with the bill. Besides him being a dick, his appearance was notable since they’d recently gotten divorced. Why was he interested in me and her secret political ambition?

But Eleanore admitted she was running, leading me to believe she’d be independent. She asked for my silence so that she had time to prepare. I may have had doubts but agreed. I’d long hoped for independents in Council, politicians who serve residents instead of Cape Town.

Her anti-crime initiative went nowhere. And she became a figurehead rather than a participant in Leisure Unlimited, a community upliftment/look for tenders group that also went nowhere. But she was getting her name around.

It would turn out that she and Myers were working together, which must have meant that Winde, as the representative to Knysna, was involved too.

The new DA faction would take over the town.

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'Shock as Knysna’s ex-ANC Mayor Turns DA Blue' was my May 2014 header. That may have been true for others but obviously not for the ANC and me. Eleanore may have had a contingent of white socialite ladies in her corner, but the majority of older DA supporters were taken by surprise.

DA Councillor Magda Williams had died and by-elections have no sympathies. My main memory of Williams was her wanting to work with me and being embarrassed when she was banned by the DA from doing so.

Eleanore was running for William’s Ward 5 seat which stretched from the farmlands and township of Rheenendal, across the N2, to some of the wealthiest suburbs of Knysna - Belvidere, Lake Brenton and Brenton-on-Sea.

Eleanore stayed on the opposite side of town to Myers who lived in Brenton-on-Sea. A
group of people from that little, latter place would play a large role in our town’s future. I’d guess that it’s over 25km from her area to his. Yet Myers decided she and not he would compete in the by-election. “Compete” isn’t the best word as she was guaranteed to win on the DA ticket. She faced mixed reactions in the rural coloured area but was embraced by white folk along the coast and estuary.

To me it was obvious that the DA were planning to eventually make Eleanore the Mayor. Online, I posed that as a question to the Public.

On her first day as DA councillor, she got promoted to Speaker, put in charge of the Council’s integrity and rules of order. That also ensured a good salary.

“On the surface, I like Eleanore,” I blogged. “I’ll give her a chance. She’s smart. Knysna can definitely use smart leaders. But Eleanor needs to prove that what just happened wasn’t her and other politicians outsmarting Knysna... again.”

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Within a month, Eleanore and I were at loggerheads. I knew for certain what she was, and she no longer had to pretend to be nice.

Rowan Spies had failed to respond to queries about the Mazars Report against him, and his relationship with his wife. He made it clear in June 2014 that he wouldn’t deal with me:

“There is nothing I want to contribute to your current crusade against my ex-wife, especially since you see it fit to use my divorce as fodder for your blog. I am a private citizen and see no need to answer any of your questions. My private e-mail is rowansps@gmail.com so I’d appreciate it if you could direct future questions there. I doubt I will find it necessary to answer any.”

He never has.

I blogged strongly when Eleanore lied that she’d meet me but didn’t. Her response was to try discredit me. DA loyalists, the Knysna-Plett Herald, had a 400-word letter limit. They published her 1000-word letter against me. It included “I will not be engaging Mike Hampton on any platform at any level.”

I responded with the 'Lies and Failures of Eleanore Spies' but the newspaper refused to publish it. I was denied right of reply.

The Constitution of South Africa was dying in Knysna. The DA had no intention of changing. Eleanore and Rowan had found their perfect political home.
Two months before the 2016 Local Government Elections, I posted 'Did DA Top Man Backhand Cash When Wife ANC Mayor?' and 'Urgent: Download This Secret DA Document'.

I was referring to Rowan Spies, who was still Eleanore's husband when he was implicated in graft and fraud in neighbouring Bitou Municipality. At that stage, she was still in the ANC.

When the DA took over Bitou in 2011, it ordered an investigation into a company called Xylophone Investments. Rowan was the front-man. His partner was Estelle Gie, wife of a local businessman who was considered to be well-connected to the ANC.

Moby Dick’s was a respected restaurant with rare beach location on Council property. The lessee was booted early 2011 after the Council put the lease of the premises out to tender. Whether true or not, it was a move widely seen as an ANC plot for friends. Henk Visser, the restaurant owner, stated to the Sunday Times that, “There is obviously a political agenda.”

The matter became more contentious when Kobus Smit, the mining billionaire and owner of the famous Featherbed Company in Knysna, stated via affidavit that Xylophone’s tender documents had fraudulently used his company's name. Notably, Rowan Spies had previously worked for Featherbed. It's logical to suspect that he was involved, or solely responsible, for creating the false application.

It's possible that there was a family interest in getting into the trade. Eleanore had failed to secure the Knysna Oyster Company restaurant tender from SANParks. Rowan, before becoming councillor, ran a SANParks tuckshop in the Knysna Forest.

The Moby Dick's matter became clouded and Xylophone vanished from view.

I'd initially failed to find info about Moby Dick's, only gaining those affidavits in 2018. But in 2014, Attorney Hardy Mills, who was supposed to be my lawyer at that stage, gave me related documents by mistake. He was based in Bitou and had represented the Municipality and several politicians in the Western Cape. As I was unaware of the second issue involving graft, I was fascinated by the damning report by Mazars. Rather than use the information as a victory over the ANC, the DA strangely buried it too.
It involved a Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) function hosted by the municipality. It was a window into kickbacks from Xylophone to Ralph Links, then Bitou’s Head of Strategic Services. Links was also considered to be ANC.

In a nutshell, Xylophone charged for work that they didn’t do. Ralph Links then provided that work at the Municipality’s expense. That ensured Xylophone made good profit.

Money, with the reference ‘Ralph’ was paid into the joint account of Rowan and Eleanore. That appeared to be the kickback. Estelle Gie, Rowan’s partner, claimed it was an error that should’ve been referenced ‘Rowan’. However, she was unable to explain why the amount was separate to Rowan’s share paid a minute before.

Additionally, Gie lied that PAYE tax was paid on the ‘Ralph’ payment. In fact, all Spies’ payments, EXCEPT for ‘Ralph’’s, had PAYE paid.

Worsening matters, Mazar’s proved that Gie fraudulently altered a date on an email so as to support her version of events with falsehood.

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Johann Brummer, a Bitou DA councillor during the scandal, had publicly expressed concerns regarding the situation. He said that he was the one “who had uncovered the Xylophone scam.” He told me that he didn't want to get involved in the mess again as he considered the DA cover-up to be the main reason why he was expelled from the party. He believed that decision had been made in Cape Town, and that MEC Anton Bredell had been part of it.

Many months later, an informant gave me a copy of a detailed email between Brummer and MEC Bredell. Although it doesn't mention the Xylophone/Spies matter by name, it seemed to be referring to it (and other serious matters). That letter requires investigation on several levels. Why didn't Bredell act on it. Why, instead, was a Council investigation in its advanced stages, cancelled?

After I published my article, Prieur du Plessis, a partner in Mazars, the firm which had undertaken the audit for the Bitou Municipality, contacted me. He complained that the report was confidential and that I must remove it from my website. He also wanted to know who’d given it to me.

The report is the property of the Bitou Municipality, paid from Public funds, and thus the property of the Public. I considered his threatening me with lawyers as acting as proxy for the DA. I wasn't going to be bullied. It helped that I was facing far worse
intimidation at the time.

I reported the situation and Rowan Spies to Premier Helen Zille in July 2016, a month before the local election. It was a face-to-face meeting followed by detailed emails for which I have read receipts. Downloading the emails (zip folder), only a fraction of what I’ve sent her, will show that she was given information on serious issues ranging from Knysna Tourism and the ISDF tender to the intimidation I was facing. In stark contrast to her promised action, Rowan and another candidate I reported became DA councillors the following month.

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In 2016, when the full elections came round, Eleanore remained Myer's ward councillor and added the Mayoral throne.

Myers participated in that election... but in my overwhelmingly white ward which was approximately 20km from his home. He became Deputy Mayor. But it was well known that he ran the DA and the Council. Clashes were inevitable. Myer's plan would spectacularly backfire. There was no way Eleanore was going to be #2 again.

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3 August 2016 is symbolic for Knysna politics. There may have been a bunch of confusion and announcements arriving much later, but that was when the DA clung onto Knysna through coalition. The town won and the town lost. That could be said for every place in South Africa but the generalisation isn't what I mean.

3 August 2016 is a question mark. It's representative of the foggy nature of politics and its accompanying power that claims to be for the people yet never explains itself.

- 12 of 19 councillors were replaced.
- 6 of those were from the DA, the 'clean audit' winning team made less a team by faction politics removing 60% of its members.
- 1 extra ward added meaning 2 extra councillor seats needed warming.
- 3 small parties and 1 independent climbed into Council, adding an uncertain dynamic that never existed during the DA's previous term of office.
- The DA announced victory only to discover that it wasn't. The rush for the best coalition deal began. The DA were spoilt for choice, capable of offering the lowest trade. No non-DA member would become Mayor, Deputy Mayor or Speaker but they had other MAYCO seats to trade.
Velile Waxa, Independent after being a name in the ANC, became the DA’s partner, gaining himself a seat on the Mayoral Committee (MAYCO). I’d later discover that the DA had secretly funded his campaign, and he’d get arrested on suspicion of assassination.

1 loser, the African National Congress (ANC). The victory of the smaller parties had to come at their loss. But they’d later conspire with two DA councillors and get their revenge.

3 August 2016 was between 5 years we never understood and 5 years we couldn't predict. More 'parties' became involved in the struggle for control than there were on the ballot papers. There was certainly more than one DA.

Earlier that year, Director Town Planning Mike Maughan-Brown, the second highest ranked municipal employee, had quit. He may have given two months warning but his action was unexpected, allegedly impulsively decided in anger and frustration. It's rumoured that his decisions were being questioned at every turn by the incoming DA faction headed by Peter Myers. He's now selling kitchen cupboards in the UK, a far cry from the powerful man he once was.

Pariksha Gobrie, who'd replaced Easton as Director Finance, quit after a few months. Although it took the Public by surprise, it'd been internally rumoured that she was going to leave because she'd been offered a better job. However, it wasn't presented that way. Instead, she was projected as having left due to political interference. Even the local newspaper's headline said so. Her departure became a grand exit in support of Municipal Manager Grant Easton (or was it?).

Easton had been under fire. External investigators were digging into his decisions. He clung to office, supported by the ANC and soon departing DA members who prevented a quorum in Council by not appearing or walking out. But when elections were over, the investigation's results were in. The ANC were outvoted by ex-ANC members such as the KUC and Independent Waxa who, by default or intent, exacted revenge on an ANC they felt had previously betrayed them. Easton was suspended. And, as I told you earlier, he quit during his disciplinary.

What of alleged whistleblower, Avita Sunkar, whom Easton and Gobrie were attempting to get rid of? What of the prime, municipal waterfront property that Maughan-Brown wanted to donate to a private company? What of my petition against corruption that was crawling through Parliament without any mention, on record, by the Knysna Council?
There were many 'what ifs' and 'what abouts'. This series of books won't address them all, not if I'm to get to bigger things before you commit suicide because of the insincerity and hopelessness of it all.

Many days had been politically afire but 3 August 2016 was when the tide changed in an unfathomable sea of power flecked with foam from Cape Town. All residents could do was learn how to swim in an ocean of confusion and distrust.

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"DA Governs Knysna" was the header of the 15 August 2016 press release by the Knysna Municipality. The DA hadn't won the Local Elections but found a way to cling on. Considering how evil defecated thereafter, the following extracts would become ominous and laughable:

"The Democratic Alliance (DA) won six out of the 11 wards situated within Greater Knysna. The final results gave the DA 10 out of the 21 available seats in Council. Cope received one as did the ACDP and the Knysna Unity Congress and the last remaining seat went to Independent Councillor, Vellie Waxa. After several meetings the DA has entered into a coalition agreement with stalwart Waxa - resulting in the DA officially being the party that will govern Knysna for the next five years."

There was more wrong that their failure to use commas.

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Few notice the hypocrisy of DA supporters acting negatively towards ANC politicians but welcoming them when they cross to their side. There are sometimes legitimate reasons but, more often than not, it seems like selfish retention of salary and power. It's not like they suddenly become new people with different beliefs.

The sheer elasticity of it makes me believe that political party identities are a marketing con, that friendships and getting rich supersedes ideology and election rhetoric. It's why politicians sell hate. The Public have more in common than they have differences yet fail to keep an eye on their leaders whilst directed to squabble amongst themselves.

The DA's new team was dressed in the ANC's green and gold. Spies had previously been the ANC Mayor. Municipal Manager Johnny Douglas had performed the same role under her then. And 'Independent' Councillor Waxa, the DA's coalition partner, had been a major ANC figure and municipal employee when he'd led protests blocking the
national road. Team DA.

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I'd be comforted if overweight politicians worked so hard they lost weight. But five years of DA rule hadn't given me anything I wanted or hoped. And Mayor Eleanore Spies would literally get fatter as her corruption grew during her 2016-2018 reign. She was a honeysucker truck in reverse. The DA had squatted many times before but her self-serving, political diarrhoea, and the party's support of it, stained our lives.

The first major falsehood by Eleanore was saying that:

“There should be a communication strategy in place to ensure questions that arise get addressed. This is crucial and close to my heart.”

The second was that:

“...the DA council also undertakes to stop corruption by increasing resident’s awareness of their anti-corruption hotline and anti-fraud policy. The DA has already taken steps to tighten up their Supply Chain Policy to comply fully with the relevant legislation.”

Because propaganda requires repetition, Spies ended with:

“Greater Knysna will experience a completely transparent Local Government, one that bides by legislature and one that is free of corruption.”

The 'speech' was almost a copy and paste job of the DA's 2016 National Municipal Election Plan promise:

“To stop corruption by increasing resident’s awareness of their anti-corruption hotline and anti-fraud policy... achieving greater transparency in the supply chain system.”

But no corrupt official from the previous DA misrule would be prosecuted. And Georlene Wolmarans, the despicable previous Mayor, had switched places with Spies to become Speaker, a position requiring her impossible impartiality. There she’d earn the same pay as before, and be responsible for the morals of councillors. It was another political fart joke.

What Mayor Eleanore Spies had meant to say is that she was repeating the DA's traditional pre-election lie and that the DA could never be included in the definition of corruption because they're not blue lizards from out of space (hey, fuck David Icke, I'm being facetious).
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I delivered several complaints to the new Knysna Council, twenty-one copies, one for each councillor (DA, ANC, COPE, ACDP & Independent). It was signed for by their staff. Considering I’d named it 'The Elephant in the Room Complaint', it was appropriate that none responded. The ANC and COPE, who were supposed to be the DA's opposition, weren't interested. And the ACDP voted blindly with the DA on every decision in Council. The Independent was in coalition, getting double the salary.

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Before the 2016 elections that would make her Mayor, Eleanore Spies was said to be deeply in debt. Her financial status would be emphasised much later when it was discovered that Candace Myers, wife of Peter Myers, had loaned Eleanore R40,000. Eleanore allegedly wanted more, and then refused to pay back the original amount saying it was a gift. Candace mocked Eleanore on Facebook.

I was told that a deal had originally been made, that Eleanore would get Johnny Douglas as Municipal Manager and Peter Myers would get Marlene Boyce as Director Planning & Development. If there's truth to the trade, it's a serious breech of law and an earthquake in the Knysna Municipality. When Eleanore and Peter fell into opposing DA factions, Douglas and Boyce were aligned with their alleged sponsors.

Fran Kirsten was Eleanore's election campaign manager. The tandem rumour was that Kirsten's payment would arrive later in the form of her appointment as Knysna Municipality's Communications Manager. That happened but as a consultancy contract instead of a permanent position. However, during the Great Knysna Fire disaster, Kirsten told Cape Talk Radio that she was a municipal employee. She wasn't but that was the original goal.

Eleanore's journey to despot had begun quickly.

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Eleanore Spies, the new Executive Mayor for Knysna, went to Hornlee Primary School to talk to the kids about what politicians do. After her talk, she asked for questions.

One boy puts up his hand up. Eleanore asked for his name. “Mike Hampton,” he said.

“And what is your question, Mike?” she asked.

“I have several,” he says. “I collected them from the class.”

“Go ahead, Mike.”
“First, what happened at Knysna Tourism?” asked Mike. “Secondly, how can you be Mayor when you, as Speaker, previously failed to investigate complaints against your fellow corrupt councillors? Is your husband a crook? If he is, does that mean the DA is a crooked party? And, last, whilst Knysna was in crisis the two weeks before the elections, where were you? Why was Councillor Myers always in the news and not you? Is he your boss?”

Just then the bell rang for lunch time. Eleanore gave a big, politician's smile and told the kiddies that they would continue after the break.

When they were back in class, Eleanore asked, “Okay, where were we? Oh, that’s right, question time. Who has a question?”

Several kids put their hands up. Eleanore pointed to a little girl and asked what her name was. “Busisiwe Mkhwebane,” she said.

“And what are your questions, Busisiwe?”

“Why did the lunch bell ring 20 minutes early? And why is Mike missing?”

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Kirsten's contract never went out to tender. In the small town of Knysna where almost everyone I knew was struggling, R35,000 per month was a lot of money, probably more than Kirsten had ever earned before. She became a main figure in blocking honest communication, continuing the negative role she'd previously performed as a journalist of the Knysna-Plett Herald and as the public relations officer for Knysna Tourism.

Previous Communications Manager, Christopher Bezuidenhout, would work as the Mayor's "Office Manager" whilst still receiving salary as Communications Manager. Bezuidenhout's position was not on the organogram and had not undergone the Integrated Development Plan's (IDP) required Public participation process. It was illegal too, and thus wasteful expenditure.

Kirsten's contract was contravention of both the Knysna Municipality's Supply Chain Management (SCM) policy and the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA).

The Municipality tried to pretend that Kirsten was needed as a specialist to overhaul communications. Susan Campbell told me that Kirsten only had a qualification as a gym instructor.

After I exposed the crime and asked from my website if Myers was her boss, Mayor
Eleanore Spies held a meeting with me on 2 September 2016. She promised cooperation. Considering that I’d been banned for five years, I didn't believe her but took the opportunity to put matters on record. Thankfully, Eleanore and all the officials with her, were more arrogant than smart. My audio recording is an essential listen. It's reality is in utter contrast to what happened next. It would clearly show that she was a liar and that the meeting was the first step in a set-up to try discredit me again.

I'll leave the intimidation for Part 2 but, basically, Eleanore issued a propaganda press release against me, likely written by Kirsten. They claimed I was uncooperative when in fact the recording shows I was polite and they were evasive, and that they promised to come back to me with proof and answers. Their disinformation was accompanied by a full-blown, extremely nasty campaign to discredit me via social media. And Knysna Municipality banned me on Twitter.

During a tea break for a Council Meeting, which I almost always attended, Kirsten ridiculously threatened me with arrest for taking photos of councillors. I responded by taking a photo of her in which she had immediately converted to a smile (which dropped as soon as the camera was down). Then she called Richard Meyer, Head Disaster Management and hypocritical weekend pastor, who hung nearby but wisely chose not to act. I call him hypocritical because he too never addressed the corruption I was reporting. I reported Kirsten's absurd threat to Municipal Manager Johnny Douglas. He acknowledged me but did nothing.

In July 2017, I met CFO Mbulelo Memani to discuss several issues. Memani was new which is probably why he met me. Fran Kirsten was a main topic. Unfortunately, it took Memani months before he refused to pay Kirsten any longer. By then, Eleanore and Kirsten had a back-up plan.

They were going to switch Bezuidenhout and Kirsten around. He would go back to the job he was being paid for, and she would become the Mayor's Office Manager. Except that title wasn't being used. In-house, it was labelled as "Kirsten's job" before she got it.

But Kirsten unexpectedly discovered the true value of her friendship with the Mayor. She got screwed for Eleanore's political convenience.

Without the legal requirement of advertising a vacancy, "Kirsten's job" was given to Priscilla September. She was the niece of Councillor Velile Waxa who was intending a motion of no confidence (MONC) against Eleanore. He wanted disciplinary charges against him dropped, and more power in the coalition the DA had formed with him.
After September's appointment, Waxa dropped the MONC.

September's appointment must be considered a bribe but at least the more diabolical Kirsten was forced out.

Bezuidenhout returned to being Communications Manager and Kirsten had to settle for the odd, small contract which included her stepping in as a temp in Eleanore's office. After Eleanore was overthrown in 2018, September quit. Waxa's currently on trial for assassination. But let me not get too far ahead. That'll be in the next book.

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The Auditor General found the appointment of Christopher Bezuidenhout as Mayor Spies' Office Manager, and the contracting of Fran Kirsten as the Communications Manager, to be wrongful (pgs 75 & 107).

"Position of Manager: Office of the Executive Mayor not on establishment. The Manager in the Office of the Executive received a monthly salary of R34,812 for a period of 11 months in the 2016/2017 financial year and the total cost of his remuneration is R382,932. This results in irregular expenditure of R382,932 as it is in contravention of section 66(3) of the Municipal Systems Act."

Knysna Municipality's response to the situation was pure lie, implicating them further:

"Following the inaugural meeting of the Knysna Municipal Council on 15 August 2016, Mr CF Bezuidenhout, Manager: Communications and Customer Relations performed the duties of managing the office of the Executive Mayor in addition to his duties as Manager: Communications and Customer Relations. Mr Bezuidenhout was remunerated as in terms of the post to which he was appointed and not as Manager in the Office of the Executive Mayor as per the audit finding. It is imperative that it be pointed out that a secondment is a temporary transfer of a worker into another position and not an appointment or employment of a person into a post as contemplated in Section 66(3) of the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000. Mr Bezuidenhout was and still is, employed by the Knysna Municipality as the Manager: Communications and Customer Relations. Mr Bezuidenhout was never employed nor appointed by this council as Manager: in the Office of the Executive Mayor but merely temporarily transferred into that position."

The contracts to Kirsten trading as Out There Consulting resulted in R382,545 irregular expenditure. The Auditor General added that Kirsten didn't possess "specialist nature
that they warranted deviation from competitive bidding.” The Municipality capitulated, accepting the finding.

In any sane, democratic society, there'd have been consequences to crime. But the DA are insanely undemocratic, so no one got punished. And later, as will be related, they would get promoted after more wrongdoing.

I repeat that everything I'm telling you in this book I've already reported to the DA's leadership and several National agencies. None will honour their duty to protect.

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Eleanore and Rowan Spies are married in children, accommodation and politics. I consider their divorce, like their career, to be a convenience. Some say they got divorced because he's a verbally abusive alcoholic. It's been reported to me how horrid he gets, wanting to belittle her and be the “man”. But if it were for that reason, something else would've altered in their lives.

They electioneered as a couple. The church had no problem with them attending a Valentine's dinner as a couple. Rowan would call her his “cherrie”, or in English slang, his chick. As I type this, his Facebook cover picture is of them as a couple.

The only logical reason why they divorced was their joint desire for political office. DA rules, unconstitutional but understandable, don't allow married couples in the same Council. Maybe that was a consideration at one time. Although legal, it would also have looked suspicious with him being on the district council above her. And after all the twists and turns, which included her being overthrown by rebel DA councillors, the DA had to make a new plan to support them. Currently, they're on the Mayoral Committee of the Garden Route District Council... together.

"As often happens in politics, you can be heroes and liberators but if you hang around long enough, you can be the villains too."

Those were the words of Eleanore Spies when she was still Speaker. I disagree. I believe that she and her husband were villains from the beginning.... and because Helen Zille and the DA knew it, possibly helped them plan it, they're villains too.
Eleanor Bouw-Spies
@DA_Eleanor

When #DA #Mayor I will ensure better communication to #knysna residents.
@GBusinessCircle @KnysnaDA @Knys_Guy
Rowan Spies (Garden Route District MAYCO Councillor)
The smile Fran Kirsten threw me just after she threatened to have me arrested for taking photographs of politicians during Council tea break