Nairobi Half Life

By Billy Kahora
Bill knows he's about to die
and there's nothing he can do,
because he's the one who taught her
the five-step technique.
He then wipes off his blood.
He takes his five steps.
That's how he died.
Stop fooling around and give me a movie.
This is a very good one,
give me 50.
It better not be scratched!
Why can't you find a worthwhile job?
- So I can be as busy as you guys?
You go on making 50 bob
while we live like fat cats.
At least I'm passionate about what I do.
We love the big bucks.
The Vultures will be performing
at Gathanji Square!
That's where I'll make my big bucks.
People, people!
Even a child knows
that he who smells it first, did it.
Know that the new constitution has
empowered us and we will take action.
You do understand that what's mine,
is yours, and what's yours, is mine.
How can I loot that which is mine?
- People, people!
A fool doesn't know
the extent of his foolishness.
You're right! What's yours, is ours.
But what is ours, is not yours.
People, people!
Let's go!
People...
- Excuse me!
We'll be right back after this break.
Dude, who's that?
This one?
He's the King of Sparta who killed
thousands of people with his bare hands.
Mwas, show him!
- What's that?
You want a demonstration?
This is the story of a Spartan boy.
Just like you.
Are you done?
People, people!
Let me tell you... - What were you saying? Smell on his behalf or smell him?
I tried to remember it. Nothing!
I tried to get a rhythm.
Blundering is your expertise.
- Excuse me,
I'd like to join the Vultures.
"I'd like to join..."
- Let me talk to this guy.
How can I become an actor?
- You're good.
Thanks.
- But you live in a village.
I could come to Nairobi.
And then what?
- Can you help me?
Well maybe.
Maybe.
But you'll need an agent.
An agent?
How do I find an agent?
You're looking at one.
- Really?
Can you help me?
- Well,
of course I can. It'll cost you 5,000.
Don't worry, my friend, don't worry.
No need to get worked up.
I understand. You're nothing but
a suffering artist
trying to make it big. - Big, yes!
So give me 1,000 and I'll hook you up.
1,000?
It's all I have.
- Bring the rest to the National Theatre.
No problem.
- When you get there, ask for Jose.
I'm always there. Cool?
Got it, my man.
What, Mwas? 500?
Give you 500 of my own money?
Stop treating me like an idiot.
What do you take me for?
Don't you think I know what I'm doing?
You don't! You have no idea!
You think one day you'll be a star
like Bruce Willis! Who are you kidding?
Go to hell.
No wonder you're always broke.
Let's drink and be merry
for a child is born.
Now, Mwas, seriously,
look at your dad. He drinks like a fish.
Do you want to leave me alone with him?
You want me to feel guilty?
- History will always be a lie.
Look at the leaders of tomorrow!
Look at the leaders of tomorrow!
What bullshit!
Why have you come
to my home without my permission?
Are these the bars
you put up to keep me out?
You have decided I can't think?
Aren't you ashamed of yourselves?
Why are you always in other folks' homes?
Don't you have husbands to cook for?
Is this alcohol or a curse?
- What are you asking?
Is it your booze
or did you buy some and I poured it?
I'd better go.
What?
Mwas! I'm talking to you. Come here!
Stop staring at me
like those movies you sell.
What is it?
I'm going to Nairobi.
Really?
That's fine, but know this:
be wary of alcohol
and women.
Nairobi has the worst people.
You see, the better you become,
the harder they try to stop you.
In Nairobi you can't be good and make it.
Let me tell you, Nairobi is not a city
for brilliance. – Is there a good place?
Nowhere! The whole society is as rotten
as Babylon!
Why don't you go to sleep
and leave the children in peace?
Since when do you tell me
when to go to sleep?
Mwas, the last time you were in Nairobi
you were a small boy.
That place is where poverty,
disease and the devil live.
Do you know that?
Here.
Go. And remember your mother's words.
1,000? Not unless I'm marrying you!
Sit down.
So you have decided to work like a man?
If you're going to Nairobi,
there's a package
I want you to take somewhere.
OK?
There's an Indian shop on River Road
called Khanji Electronics, got that?
OK?
Mwangi, where are you going
with so much luggage?
Nairobi.
– Have a safe journey, Mwangi.
Easy, man, let go of the bag.
Easy, easy. What happened?
God!
– Go look for these people.
God!
Come here!
– No!
It wasn't me!
– You don't think I work here?
Don't hit me! I'm sorry!
– Let's go!
Name?
Sir, there's a mistake. I'm innocent.
Answer the question!
- Let me tell you what happened.
Name?
- George Mwangi.
I haven't done anything.
In fact I'm the one who got robbed.
Young man, I didn't bring you here.
So give me your phone and your wallet.
I have nothing left!
Didn't I just tell you I got robbed?
Rono, lock this one up!
Honestly, sir, I'm not lying to you.
I only got here this morning and then...
We're not here to work for one person.
I'm not lying. I got here this morning!
- They all want to be attended to!
Quiet! Belt.
- I don't know what's happening...
Let's go.
In here.
Come here. Where's the knife?
- I don't have one! - Where is it?
I saw you with it!
You've hidden it up your arse!
Where's the knife?
Where is it?
Get out of here, bitch!
He doesn't even have money...
What?
- Nothing. - Faggot!
Can someone clean this toilet?
Shit!
Which one do you want?
Dude,
haven't you started from the gutter?
Don't worry,
tomorrow morning you'll be released.
But when you get out,
you need to know that for survival
in Nairobi you have to be smart.
Where do I start?
Go downtown to Kirinyaga Road.
Near Nyayo Market
there's a neighbourhood called Gaza.
Ask for Dingo.
Tell him I sent you. Cool?
Cool.
When will you get out?
We always get out.
Here I am!
I see you.
When are the auditions?
- There are no auditions.
What?
You have to sort yourself out.
What? You played me!
Take it easy, my man.
Nairobi is like that.
My God!
Excuse me, we're rehearsing.
Can I get an audition?
- You should check the notice board.
What dungeon are you from?
All you Kikuyus
are thieves!
- Sorry. - Sorry?
Sorry won't bring back my stereos.
- How much? I'll get it for you.
You're as stupid as that daddy of yours!
The 20,000 will come from your arse!
20,000?
- Minimum!
I promise I will find the money.
Don't tell Daddy M. - Idiot!
Motherfucker! Out!
Please don't tell him!
- Out! - Please!
Where's Dingo's place?
- Dingo is in there.
I'm not lying! Ask him, you lazy bums!
I'm looking for Dingo.
And who are you?
My name is Mwas. Oti sent me.
He told me to ask for Dingo.
- Which Oti?
Oti and I were in Central.
Talk to me.
I need a life.
We don't sell lives here.
Could you hook me up with a job?
What do you think this is?
The labour office?
Not really. I'm just looking for
something to keep me going for a while.
Dude, take him to work for Mama.
Thanks!
Mama Akinyi,
give this guy a job.
- OK.
Here are the dishes,
soap and everything you need.
And hurry up, OK?
Hurry up!
- OK.
The customer wants water.
Bring it to him. - OK.
The two teas
are for that table at the end.
Make sure you finish all of them.
Ah, Oti!
Give me five, my man!
What are you doing?
I told you to talk to Dingo!
Yeah, and he got me this job.
This is like dumpster diving. Let's go.
What about the work?
We live for the day.
Where do you make money here?
- Everywhere, but you have to be smart.
In Gaza
the main moneymaker is spare parts.
But there's also cocaine,
booze and pussy.
Whatever makes you happy.
Hey, what's up?
- I'm good.
One of the people who move our stuff.
Merchandise?
- Yeah.
Gaza has owners. Gaza is ours.
I have my own gang.
I'll tell you what,
let's go this way. Cool?
See this place?
This is one of the places
where we sell our stuff.
Where are we going?
It's been a long time
since I saw my woman.
Go away! What kind of man are you?
You can't even pay for a blowjob!
What? Come where?
The way your game is down
with your tiny snake dick?
You and your small dick can go
and get fucked elsewhere. Useless git!
Oti!
Hi. You're out?
Am I not a citizen?
Who's this idiot?
- My friend.
Dude, get busy!
What do you want me to say?
- I've missed you. - I've missed you!
Chill...
- Stop that!
Chill. Don't be scared.
What is it? - I don't have money.
- Money is not the issue.
Touching is free.
But if you come, you pay. Cool?
Take it easy. I'm hot 24/7.
- I don't have money. Stop it.
What's her name?
Amina.
Amina?
She's hot!
So where do you live?
We'll go there later.
Hey, Oti! What's up, boss?
How's it kicking, Waf?
- The cops can't hold you.
Hey, Oti, who's this?
My pal Mwas. This is my gang.
I saw you guys working earlier.
There's a lot of work.
By the way, Oti,
there's a job in Ngara. What do you say?
A well paying job or not?
What? Ngara? That's where the cops shot
the hardcore criminals. Look at him!
That's stupid. Do you want to die poor?
We have to live large.
We have to live it up!
Oti's right.
That's the way it is, guys.
Mose, are you buying or am I?
- I'm buying, you order.
Mum, Nr 65 and the soup of the day.
- Same here.
Move aside, mistress.
All you bring is distress.
What are you writing?
- Lyrics.
Are you an artist?
Mose wants to be a star like Kidum.
This is Nairobi. You can't
make it here without connections.
But you can, if you know a few cops.
What are you talking about?
Do you want to get shot by
the side of the road like that Meru guy?
What did he do?
He was an informer.
He ratted on some guy from Majengo.
When the guy got out,
the informer was gunned down.
- God!
Oti's asleep.
I want to sleep, too.
How many people have you robbed
to afford those clothes?
Not as many as you've fucked.
I know what you're thinking.
What?
Why do I do it?
Because the pay's good.
How much?
500 a day.
I didn't mean that.
How much do you charge?
That depends.
Between 50 and 5,000.
So I can have you for 50?
Never!
So can I ask you what your plans are?
I want to go to school,
become a beautician
and open up my own salon.
- Sounds good.
What about your parents?
My mum has disowned me.
If my dad knew what I was doing,
I'd be dead.
Welcome to the home of rejects!
I have an appointment.
Dude, push the cart. Come on!
What? Me?
We'll walk up front. If the shit
hits the fan, we meet at the base.
How are you, officers?
- Young man,
what are you singing?
- It's God's...
Where are you taking all this weed?
Officer, I'm saved.
So if we spray you with bullets,
we'll miss you?
But the choir of angels
will sing for me.
What's this guy talking about?
- I wonder...
Leave him alone. He's mad.
Guys! Man!
B15's again? I told you,
no one is buying these things!
Has the government
given you a tender, or something?
Give us 5,000.
Maybe I'll give you 500, end of story.
- What good is 500?
I'd rather throw the stuff away.
3,000. Final offer.
Oti...
Here, maybe I'll give you 2,000.
Just this once.
- Listen, my man,
I want you to get Corolla parts for me.
Head lights
and side mirrors, OK?
Stop looking so miserable all the time.
- Fuck off!
Oti? See you later.
- Smart!
We could've made more in that deal.
- Fine. Next time you negotiate.
I can read body language.
You!
Stop, thief!
Stop, thief!
Give me back my phone.
Shit.
Where does she think she is?
Shit, shit, fuck!
Cops!
What?
- Those are the idiots who arrested me.
I thought you were untouchable?
I am, but these guys
are new in the area.
What do you mean?
They want to split 50-50 on what we make.
- And if we don't?
What if we don't give it to them?
What's up?
I'm on my way.
Let's go.
What's up?
- Found the Corollas. One is here,
the other one's over there.
What about the watchman?
- Looks like he's about to take a break.
There he goes.
He's going, guys.
He's gone.
- For now. - Be quick!
Dude, you broke it. Let's see you sell that to Waya! It's easy. You hit it on this side, see? Like this. And out it pops. Go on, hit it. Hit it hard! Hey, what are you doing? Thief! - Thief! What? "Thief, thief!" He was scared out of his mind. He was so scared he was rooted to the spot, like a car at traffic lights. The mob wanted to beat him up. Trouble was brewing... Big trouble! Today is Tuesday, or have you forgotten? - Officer, we need to talk. Look, we're broke. We haven't had a job in ages. So I'm asking you: could you come back next week? That'd be great. And what am I going to eat? - Look, you know how this business works. - What are you looking at? Give me your ID. - He's cool. He's one of my guys. You guys need to work hard. - No problem. He's my guy. How much did they swindle? - 1,000. So we have 1,000 left and merchandise worth 2,000. No, this stuff's worth 8,000. That's empty talk. - Let me show you how it's done. The joy of work is not money, but blowing the money. Live today, and tomorrow will take care of itself. - What do you do, if you're not out making money?
- This guy doesn't know anything.
Today we need to get laid.
Are these from China?
- China, my arse!
Do you think we're stupid?
- 4,000, maybe.
Waya, don't mess with me!
Give us 10,000,
so each of us can go home with 2,000.
What, am I your provider now?
OK... 5,000.
Don't, Oti!
5,000 can't even buy us all
a whore on River Road.
What's this?
- He's my guy. Let him talk.
Dude, here's the situation...
Have you lost your mind?
- Listen, crazy man,
I'll give you 5,000...
and 500 more, OK?
8,000.
Don't be stupid. 5,500.
Hey, stop being so pigheaded!
Where are you going with my stuff?
6,000.
8,000.
6,500. My final offer. Am I going to pay
for your whores and condoms, too?
Add 500 for fuel.
You're a fool.
Now get your arse over here.
Now go fuck yourself. Faggot.
No problem.
Dude!
Idiots!
Well done, dude!
You're my guy!
Didn't I tell you I know how to hustle?
Stop it, dude!
Talk to me.
Oh... Madame!
Yes.
Tomorrow's OK.
Listen to this, guys!
Hi, guys.
Mojo Jojo, Ministry of Evil!
Hey, Mwas, are you a guy of pints?
Let me throw you one in Westie.
OK.
Right. Let's go.
I don't understand.
She's with a customer.
Dude, give her this.
Let me go distribute the rest.
Mwas, what do you say?
Why not give me 100 and I'll do you
so good, you won't be able to... - No.
You're mean! It's only 100.
OK, let's make it 50 and I'll show you
styles you've never seen before.
Imported styles.
50 is fine, OK?
Right, 20. My last offer. I'll tell you:
you'll be back for more tomorrow!
Get out!
Get out, I'm on the job!
What?
I thought you were in trouble.
I know.
Thanks anyway.
Here.
There I was, getting of the bus,
when more than fifty gangsters
attacked me. They stole
everything I had, even your stereos.
I woke up in hospital with stitches.
- My friend...
In hospital, with...
I'm sorry!
Sorry broke the white man's china.
You're lucky you're my relative
or I'd have killed you.
Get up.
Come on!
What car did the Luo guy want?
- He wanted a VX.
Who are you doing business with?
They're my old mates. Why can't they steal the cars themselves? They could, but they want to work with us. Why? Because they trust me. We've never carjacked anyone before. That's why we've never made 100,000! I have to ask Dingo. My cut is 30,000.
No problem. Talk to me. - How much to Westlands? - 500. - Make it 300. Add 50 as we go, OK?
Don't worry about it. There, they're slowing down. Get out!
- Get out and don't look at me!
Living it up like pimps! Motherfucker, this is the shit!
Dude, this isn't work, man! - Check this out! - I see it! Check out the high tech stereo, man!
Look at us living like pimps! This is the meeting place. Where are your guys?
We had a deal. - Five step, motherfucker! I told you! This job requires know-how. You have to come to me for lessons. Stealing cars is dangerous. At least that car was worth it! Bitch, get out! Open the door, get out! Have you ever seen a real movie?
- No, never.
Me, neither.
Let's go.
This movie rocks!
It's really moved you.
- Completely.
So now you won't leave here?
Do you remember the day
I asked you about your plans?
Yes.
Well, this is the job I want to do.
Work in a movie theatre?
- Are you slow! I want to be an actor!
No!
What, are you serious?
- Yes. I'm an actor already.
So actors are like you now?
- I'm serious!
I have an acting role at the Phoenix.
- Where's that?
Don't you know the Phoenix?
I've heard of it,
but I've never been there.
It's a nice place.
And the play we're working on is great.
- So you're some sort of celebrity?
Why didn't you tell me before?
- I don't know.
So can I come?
Yes, you can,
but I don't want Oti to know.
Especially about me acting.
Cool.
The play is this Saturday.
OK.
What 3,000?
- You faggot!
Give me the remaining 30,000!
- 30,000, my arse!
Bitch!
We agreed 50 per cent on every car!
How can 50 per cent of 120,000 be 30,000?
- Dude, what?
120,000?
- I'm the boss,
I decide how much 50 per cent is!
- Don't fuck with us! - What's going on?
The bitch is conning us.
- Dude,
you're holding us back?
- I taught you everything you know!
The money has to be paid.
- We did the work,
so now you have to pay us.
- I could just kill you!
Chill!
Don't waste your bullets!
Put your guns down!
When mine comes out, bullets will fly.
You've finished robbing everyone,
so now you're robbing each other?
It's not like that, officer.
This dog's stealing 30,000 from us.
Will you be bullied like kids?
In Gaza I make the laws!
- Maybe the young will reform you!
Why are you talking out of your arse?
Officer, how do you rule on this one?
- They should pay tax.
How many guns? 1, 2, 3?
30,000.
Pay up!
Right now.
Now go ahead and kill each other.
You have just fucked away my 30,000!
Bitch, that was our money!
- Chill, man!
Take it easy.
We can't let these guys go like that!
Let's go beat them up!
If we do nothing, they'll grow horns.
Dingo!
On the ground!
Get down!
Go on, get down!
Officer, we've found a man here.
Oh yeah, he's very dead.
So you think you have anything
to say here? Move! Move on, now!
Hey, wait a minute!
I want these people.
They're Nairobi's gangsters.
You, get out.
- Get out. Stand up, go on!
You, get out and stand over there!
Get down!
Right, thanks.
Let's go!
What's up? Get in there!
Get out!
Stay together!
Just stay together!
Let's go.
Get in there.
Dear Lord, we're dead.
What?
Sorry I didn't tell you, dude.
Tell me what?
We're now dead men walking.
What are you saying?
Why are we here?
Nairobi is full of unsolved crimes.
The cops have to round up some guys
from time to time to fool the public.
But why a whole gang?
What will happen to us?
They'll kill us and use our bodies
as evidence for something we didn't do.
They'll claim
we were shot in a shoot-out.
But our parents will come looking for us!
True. So what?
This cold is too much.
It'll kill me.
Move aside, mistress,
all you bring is distress.
Move aside...
Get up, go to the wall
and kneel down.
I said, get up,
go to the wall and kneel down!
Put up your hands!
You!
So?
- Please!
Please, don't kill me.
- Shut up. - Please, don't kill me!
What?
- Please, don't kill me!
You've decided it's you?
- Please, don't kill me!
Get up!
Haven't you volunteered yourself?
- No, I haven't! - Let's go.
We have to take them out.
Or they'll kill us all.
- No way! They've got guns!
You think you're bullet-proof?
Guys,
I'm not going down this way.
Look where your "brilliance" got us!
You got us into car jacking and guns.
You killed Dingo. And you still claim to be our saviour? How stupid can you be?
What is this bullshit? - You're screwing us like you've been screwing Amina!
You know Mose.
He talks out of his arse.
Stories about fucking aside,
right now we have to get out of here.
There are four of us.
We can take them out.
- And how?
How, Oti?
Listen, Oti,
I never slept with Amina.
Cool.
But I like her.
That makes two of us.
You know the drill.
As usual,
on your knees against the wall.
One,
two,
go!
Check if there are any others!