



## Thirteen Cents: A Novel (Modern African Writing Series)

By K. Sello Duiker

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**Thirteen Cents: A Novel (Modern African Writing Series)** By K. Sello Duiker

**Winner of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize.**

With an introduction by Shaun Viljoen

Every city has an unspoken side. Cape Town, between the picture postcard mountain and sea, has its own shadow: a place of dislocation and uncertainty, dependence and desperation, destruction and survival, gangsters, pimps, pedophiles, hunger, hope, and moments of happiness. Living in this shadow is Azure, a thirteen-year-old who makes his living on the streets, a black teenager sought out by white men, beholden to gang leaders but determined to create some measure of independence in this dangerous world. *Thirteen Cents* is an extraordinary and unsparing account of a coming of age in Cape Town.

Reminiscent of some of the greatest child narrators in literature, Azure's voice will stay with the reader long after this short novel is finished. Based on personal experiences, *Thirteen Cents* is Duiker's debut novel, originally published in 2000.

This first edition to be published outside South Africa includes an introduction by Shaun Viljoen and a special glossary of South African words and phrases from the text translated into English.

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## **Editorial Review**

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In scenic Cape Town, South Africa, while many enjoy the ocean vistas on the slopes of majestic Table Mountain, street kid Azure struggles to survive under a bridge in affluent Sea Point. Once he went to school, but, since the murder of his parents, he has suffered unspeakable brutality: taunted for his combination of blue eyes and dark skin; surviving through prostitution, especially with men; abused, exploited, and robbed; scavenging for food, always hungry and high. Then he climbs Table Mountain and finds shelter and a kind of magic in a cave. This entry in the Modern African Writing series, dotted with slang and obscenities in various languages, holds the reader with its vivid descriptions of the gorgeous setting, with the striking portrayal of the physicality of Azure's daily life—the misery and the beauty of rain, the joy of keeping warm—and, finally, with the magical realism of his escape, which brings the recognition of those we know are out there, but we do not see. Winner of the 2001 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book. -- Hazel Rochman

## **Review**

“*Thirteen Cents* goes to the core of what has been a clear subject of avoidance for writers: the astonishing rate at which children are now victims of a (violent) society intent on turning a blind eye to the plight of its weakest members.”

— *Feminist Africa*

“This slim novel tells the story of a street child, Azure. As such it is a biting social commentary, which will leave very few readers unmoved.... Be warned that this is not an easy book to read. The language of the streets is not an easy one, and somehow the words we are all so familiar with as spoken epithet become more foul by their appearing in print. The brutality of life on the streets and its language forms an interesting—and at times stylized—contradiction to the often lyrical nature of Duiker's prose.”

— *Cape Times*

“A gritty, *dagga*-infused tour through a Cape Town underworld of street children, hustlers, and cruising ‘johns.’”

— Anderson Tepper, *Words without Borders*

“A 13-year old South African boy turns tricks in Cape Town in Duiker's emotional whiplash of a debut novel, available in the US for the first time.... With lucid imagery fluctuating between dreams and rationalized escapism, Duiker—through genuine insight, a captivating voice, and candid child-narration—explores a world ruled by primary instinct.”

— *Publishers Weekly*

“This entry in the Modern African Writing series, dotted with slang and obscenities in various languages, holds the reader with its vivid descriptions of the gorgeous setting, with the striking portrayal of the physicality of Azure's daily life—the misery and the beauty of rain, the joy of keeping warm—and, finally,

with the magical realism of his escape, which brings the recognition of those we know are out there, but we do not see.”

— *Booklist*

“Duiker is to literature what Steve Biko is to politics, both having died at the tender age of 30 but leaving indelible footprints in our collective memory.”

— *Mail & Guardian*

“K. Sello Duiker’s short novel, *Thirteen Cents* is simultaneously gruesome, violent, deeply disturbing, whimsical, and beautiful.... Told from Azure’s perspective, Duiker weaves a narrative that lays bare the violence, exploitation, racial and sexual politics found just under the surface of South African society.”

— *Africa Is a Country*

#### About the Author

K. Sello Duiker was born and raised in Soweto, South Africa, and went on to study journalism at Rhodes University before moving to Cape Town. His varied experiences while living there form the basis of *Thirteen Cents*. He also wrote two other novels, *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001) and *The Hidden Star* (published posthumously in 2006). Duiker was widely considered one of South Africa’s most promising young novelists before his untimely death in 2005 at the age of thirty.

Shaun Viljoen is a Professor in the English Department at Stellenbosch University in South Africa, and the author of a forthcoming biography of the writer Richard Rive.

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