



Portrait with Keys: The City of Johannesburg Unlocked

Ivan Vladislavic

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“Surely one of the most ingenious love letters—full of violence, fear, humour, and cunning—ever addressed to a city.” —Geoff Dyer

This dazzling portrait of Johannesburg is one of the most haunting, poetic pieces of reportage about a metropolis since Suketu Mehta’s *Maximum City*. Through precisely crafted snapshots, Ivan Vladislavic observes the unpredictable, day-today transformation of his embattled city: the homeless using manholes as cupboards, a public statue slowly cannibalized for scrap. Most poignantly he charts the small, devastating changes along the postapartheid streets: walls grow higher, neighborhoods are gated off, the keys multiply. Security—insecurity?—is the growth industry. Vladislavic, described as “one of the most imaginative minds at work in South African literature today” (André Brink), delivers “one of the best things ever written about a great, if schizophrenic, city, and an utterly true picture of the new South Africa” (Christopher Hope).

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