

## **Production Notes**

Ken Follett Presents

a Stepping Stone Pictures production

# PARADISE STOP

KENNETH NKOSI
RAPULANA SEIPHEMO
VUSI KUNENE
BONGINKOSI THWALA
CHARMAINE KWENYANE
SONIA SEDIBE
MADHUVHA MADIMA
REA RANGAKA
NICK BORAINE
LUCKY LEGODI
KEKETSO SEMOKO
MARY TWALA

Directed by JANN TURNER

Producers
JANN TURNER
KENNETH NKOSI
RAPULANA SEIPHEMO

Executive Producer KEN FOLLETT

Screenplay
JANN TURNER
KENNETH NKOSI
RAPULANA SEIPHEMO

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#### INTRODUCTION

From the team that brought South Africans the smash hit *White Wedding* – a hugely successful and critically acclaimed romantic comedy, which grossed over R1,1 million on its opening weekend on the local movie circuit – comes *Paradise Stop*, a high-speed action comedy that brings back to the silver screen superstars Kenneth Nkosi and Rapulana Seiphemo.

Set in a sleepy Limpopo town, *Paradise Stop* is the story of two men on opposite sides of the law. Peppered with local characters and running the gamut of idiosyncrasies of small town life, *Paradise Stop* pits an honest hardworking police officer, Detective Potso Mogopudi (Rapulana Seiphemo), against a host of small town crooks and big city sharks.

Ben Khumalo (Kenneth Nkosi) is the owner of the Paradise Stop Truck Stop. This is the meeting place for all the long-haul carriers travelling across the border and although on the surface is the epitome of a successful, honest business, behind the scenes Ben is conducting all sorts of shady deals. Right under the nose of his best friend, Detective Potso Mogopudi.

Paradise Stop features performances by some of South Africa's most loved actors, including: Vusi Kunene as The General, Bonginkosi Thwala as Diesel, Sonia Sedibe as Moshidi, Madhuvha Madima as Zandi, Nick Boraine as Johnny, Lucky Legodi as The Mayor, Keketso Semoko as Commander Matlaku and Mary Twala as Ma Putting.

Written by Kenneth Nkosi, Rapulana Seiphemo and Jann Turner, *Paradise Stop* is an original screenplay directed by Jann Turner. "It's a more ambitious action filled film than *White Wedding*. Although it's a comic heist movie, it's also a movie about corruption and how individuals navigate right and wrong in their day-to-day lives" says Jann Turner.

The film is executive produced by award winning novelist, Ken Follett and will be distributed locally by Indigenous Films.

Paradise Stop releases on 25 March 2011.

#### **SYNOPSIS**

This is the story of two friends who live their lives on opposite sides of the law. Potso will only drive if the light is green. Ben (Kenneth Nkosi), on the other hand, will go when it suits him.

In any one month thousands of cargo-carrying 16-wheeler trucks move freight north, bound out of South Africa to Zimbabwe and further into the heart of the continent. Near the N1 freeway that links Johannesburg with the country's northern border, outside a small town, is Ben Khumalo's truck stop Paradise Stop, complete with bar, restaurant, and ladies of the night. Ben maintains that he is a legitimate businessman and his establishment is as sharp and clean as one of his suits. However, round the back and under the table there are all kinds of shady deals taking place at this meeting point. Paradise Stop is well known as a hangout for shysters and criminals. Ben is a hustler and he wouldn't let a little thing like the law get in the way of his own needs or those of his customers.

Ben has a happy marriage and a thriving family. His wife, Goodness (Charmaine Kwenyane), knows that he has a shady past in Johannesburg. She was there, and that was in fact where she met him. But Goodness believes that Ben has cleaned up his act. She would kill him if she knew that he was involved in any dodgy dealings today.

Ben's friend Potso (Rapulana Seiphemo) is a good cop in a rotten system. He has dedicated his life to upholding the law and to catching the bad guys, but so far the bad guys have always eluded him.

Potso is struggling to keep his crumbling marriage from falling apart altogether, whilst fighting a losing battle against crime and corruption at work.

The delicate balance of things is upset when The General (Vusi Kunene), Ben's boss from his murky Johannesburg past, shows up in town. The series of heists that ensues pits former friends, Ben and Potso, against one another and put everything in the two men's lives at stake. Both men are faced with a choice between right and wrong, but when the General threatens Goodness and the children, Ben and Potso have to join forces to protect what really matters to them.

The film is peopled with a cast of eccentric characters who find themselves washed up in this remote town – an arrogant mayor, a spirited small-time gangster's lackey, an easily beguiled desk sergeant, a simple minded swimming pool maintenance man, and a feisty, sexy security investigator who all become embroiled in a madcap comedy-thriller of errors.

Paradise Stop, like White Wedding, is a captivating film with a great sense of humour. It offers an acute but affectionate look into the vibrant ups and downs of life in present day South Africa.

# Q & A: JANN TURNER, WRITER, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER

#### Where did the idea for *Paradise Stop* come from?

While we were on the road making *White Wedding* we decided we'd really like to do a heist movie. We were kicking some ideas around and started thinking about truck heists, which one of us had recently read something about somewhere. Then we started to talk about characters for Raps and Kenny and the story flowed from there. Our movies tend to come from a whole lot of ideas and thoughts that are floating around in our heads and in our worlds.

The issues of corruption, people acting morally and how one navigates the tricky waters of right and wrong were also very much in the news and in our conversations so that also came into the film thematically.

#### How did you choose the location?

The story was set in a small town along the N1 North. Having written it, we needed to find a place that matched our tale, so one day we set off in Raps' car and headed up the freeway looking for truck stops and small towns. Also, the province of Limpopo is fairly close to Joburg and has the kind of wide, dusty, flat landscape and the big sky that we wanted for the film.

We got as far as Louis Trichardt. I wanted to go all the way to the border, but Raps and Kenny flatly refused as we'd really loved Mookgopong (a small town previously known as Naboomspruit), which was near the start of our trip and we decided to go back there and explore it in more detail. Mookgopong really fitted well and also fired our imaginations. We wrote another draft of the script after that first visit.

#### Describe the writing process. How do the three of you write together?

It's very much the same as we've always done. We meet, drink a lot of coffee, talk about movies and things we've seen or been thinking about and then I start the computer and input the ideas that are flying around. I work the keyboard and Kenny and Raps talk and improvise while I keep my head down and my fingers flying. We do this a couple of afternoons a week for a few months and we focus on a different facet of the script each time. Slowly, but surely a script emerges.

We also get inspired when we go on recces. In the case of *Paradise Stop*, we got a lot of ideas when we headed up the N1 looking for an ideal location. Some of the dialogue in the film comes from conversations we had in the car – like the Congolese riff about Chicken Licken. That arose from a discussion we had every day around lunchtime, when Kenneth insisted that we had to find a Chicken Licken because he wanted hot wings and chips and nothing else would do. It drove me and Raps nuts. Other ideas come from the improvisations that Kenny and Raps launch into at the table where we sit in writing conference. It's a very intense, fairly private process. We have to go into the room and stay there until we've achieved our goal for the day and that can be quite exhilarating and also exhausting. We have a lot of arguments, but also a lot of laughs and about 80% of what we come up with gets thrown out!

# Paradise Stop is a character-based film with some lively personalities. How do you create and then develop them?

We started with the world of the film, our truck stop on the N1. Next we worked on Kenny and Raps' characters and doing that generated many more characters, like their wives and children and work colleagues. Often the characters develop more once we've met the actor that we're thinking about working with. Sometimes the character develops on its own without us even deciding, like Viras, for example. Rea Rangake is a young actor and director who was doing an internship with us, which means being a dogsbody around the office and doing whatever needs to be done that day, whether it's ordering and collecting lunch or booking screenings or other arrangements. Rea is a very unusual and funny person and one day we realised that the rookie cop we'd created and given a few lines to was actually Rea. We called him Viras, and his role kept on expanding – just like a virus!

# Kenny and Raps' roles are very different from what they were in *White Wedding*. Was this a conscious decision?

Yes, we want to give our audience something different. We want to surprise them.

# You've introduced some new talent in *Paradise Stop*. Can you explain the casting process?

We generally don't do casting calls. We write for people we know or else – as we're writing – we'll realise that the character resembles an actor we know. Then we get in touch with them and meet with them to see if they fit. Sometimes we decide there's someone we really want to work with, like Nick Boraine, for instance. Nick's character was pretty vague until he came in and just gave us a few simple clues to who Jonny was; then it was easy to write the character and of course Nick had to play him.

When we wrote the character of Raffi, who is based on a man who works for me, we knew he had to be played by Mishak Mavuso and we were thrilled when Mishak agreed to do it. We were very lucky that so many huge talents - like Lillian Dube and Lucky Legodi and Keketso and Sonia Sedibe and Vusi Kunene – had all loved *White Wedding* and wanted to be a part of our new film, so they were willing to make time and agree to low rates to work with us. We also worked with amazing people who haven't had much screen exposure, but are very experienced and talented actors – people like Bonginkosi Thwala who plays Diesel. The only non-actors we worked with were the guys who play our Congolese characters. We found them through our Congolese art director who brought in a whole lot of his countrymen and we chose Alain and John, who have two of my favourite cameos in the film.

# Although filled with action and comedy, *Paradise Stop* is also a wry look at contemporary life in SA. Can you select certain scenes that stand out in this respect and elaborate?

There are quite a few scenes in which we are commenting explicitly on aspects of contemporary life in South Africa. In the first heist, the Malawian truck driver has some dialogue that refers to the experience of being a foreigner in our country.

The scenes with Raffi, the Zimbabwean malaitsha (a transporter who ferries groceries to Zimbabwe) are also built around the struggles of many Zimbabweans who have to feed their families back home while working here in an environment that is not always easy.

The struggle that Kenny's character has over trying to look after his family and do the right thing while being drawn to petty crime is one that many South Africans will relate to. Raps' character's determination to abide by the rules despite the temptations to do otherwise is also something I think we can all understand.

Just about everyone's been in a position where you can slip a bribe to a cop to get rid of a traffic fine. But that's the wrong thing to do even if there seem to be no direct consequences. So Kenny and Raps' characters are grappling with that aspect of contemporary South African life.

Our mayor is drawn from stories we've all read about – small-time (and even bigtime) politicians abusing the power of their office. The captain at our police station is just trying to do her job with very few resources – it's a common scenario.

But we don't create characters to fit a message. We are not in the business of messaging; we are in the business of storytelling and entertainment. The story is what's important and the characters must be believable and recognizable to our audience, so that's where all those scenes come from. We've tried to make everything true to what we see, experience and know.

#### What about the look of the film? As a director what was your vision?

Like the writing, this is something that grew out of many discussions between Raps and Kenny and me, and then our DOP Willie Nel and me. Above all, I believe that form should be determined by content and this film is a dark action comedy. That meant we needed a dusty look, slightly drained of colour in the backgrounds and landscapes. At the same time, we also needed to ensure that the colourful characters – like Kenny and his family – stood out. We kept it simple, capturing the performances and the landscapes and making sure that the film had the right feel for the story.

#### What do you hope audiences will get from *Paradise Stop*?

We hope they'll have a great night out at the movies and will leave laughing and maybe even talking about the story and the issues we've raised about corruption and how to do the right thing.

### **BIOGRAPHIES: CAST**

#### Kenneth Nkosi (Ben Khumalo, Writer, Producer)

"Kenny is a natural born clown with a gift for explosive physical comedy, but unlike other local comedians he roots his comedy in the truth of South Africa's still uneasy race relations in a manner that is both hilarious and biting," said Barry Ronge, writing in the *Sunday Times*.

Kenneth got his first taste of acting in 1986 as part of a community theatre group. He realised the need to perfect his craft, and in 1993 he enrolled at the Market Theatre Laboratory as a student in dramatic arts. He made his debut in 1995 with his former teacher Robert Coleman in a comedy called *Afrodizzia* at the Johannesburg Civic Theatre. In that same year he met up with Annie Barnes who specialise in children's theatre at the Civic Theatre. The union was a spectacular success that went on for almost three years.

Once he'd conquered the theatre world, Kenneth ventured into television. His first role was in the South African soapie *Isidingo*. Soon after he landed a part in *Saints, Sinners and Settlers,* written by Zakes Mda and directed by John Matshikiza. His face also became familiar as he was on the *The Toasty Show* in the mornings on e.tv.

Kenneth appeared in Fela's *TV*, and *Tsotsi* (winner of the Oscar for Best Foreign Film), *Jerusalema*, *Surprise*, and the international sci-fi hit *District 9*. He created the role of Elvis (for which he won a SAMA best actor award) and co-wrote and produced *White Wedding*.

#### Rapulana Seiphemo (Potso, Writer, Producer)

Rapulana Seiphemo is one of South Africa's best know actors. In 1989 he completed his diploma in Acting and Playwriting at the Federated Union of Black Arts Academy in Johannesburg. He then went on to complete a BA in Theatre at the Arts College Station Texas A & M University in the US.

His theatre career started in 1987 with *Apartheid in the Court of History* at the FUBA Academy. Other performances include the acclaimed *My Children My Africa* in 1992 and *The Blacks* which opened at the Stockholm Stad Theatre in 2001. Rapulana has directed a number of plays, including *Statements After an Arrest Under the Immorality Act* by Athol Fugard and *A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams*.

Probably best known for his lead role in the TV soap *Generations*, Rapulana has appeared in South African TV in *Muvango*, *Isidingo*, *Deafening Silence* and in *Silent Witness* for the BBC.

He played the lead in the recent box office hit and critically acclaimed *Jerusalema* for which he won the best actor award at the Durban International Film festival. Other

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features include *Themba* by Stefanie Sycholt, *Hijack Stories* by Oliver Schmidt, the Oscar winning *Tsotsi* by Gavin Hood, *Dead End* by Donovan Marsh and Les Blair. He created the role of Tumi and co-produced and directed the comedy hit *White Wedding*.

#### **Vusi Kunene (The General)**

Vusi Kunene is best known for his role as villain Jack Mabaso in the SABC1 soapie *Generations*. In 1991, he registered at the Wits School of Drama for a degree in Dramatic Art. There he got the opportunity to perform in numerous student stage dramas, including *The Hill*, where he was spotted by his future agent Moonyeenn Lee. During his student career he was cast in three television films: *Drumbeats*, directed by Jurgen Schaderburg; *The Line*, directed by Brian Tilley for Channel Four; and the mini-series *Rhodes*, directed by David Drury for the BBC.

He was also cast in the role of Reverend Msimango in *Cry the Beloved Country*, directed by Darryl Roodt. He was awarded an M-Net All Africa Film Award for Best Supporting Actor and a Zimbabwe-Southern African Film Festival award for Best Performance for his role as Reverend Msimango.

After graduating he landed a role in *The Coloured Museum* directed by Itumeleng Motsikoe for the Market Theatre.

In 1996 he appeared in *Homelands* directed by Neal Sundstrom and in 1997 he appeared in *Deafening Silence* directed by Ettienne de Villiers, both for SABC Television.

In 1998 he was cast in the drama series *Justice for All*, directed by Peter Goldsmid, for which he won an Avanti award for Best Actor.

He was nominated for an NTVA award for Best Actor for his role of Daniel Mofokeng in *Homelands*, and was nominated for the same award three years in a row (2002-2004) for his role as Jack Mabaso in *Generations*.

In 1996 he was cast in two feature films: *Fools* directed by Ramadan Suleman, and *Kini and Adams* (in which he played the lead role of Kini), directed by Idrissa Ouedraogo for Framework, Zimbabwe.

In 1998 he was cast in *A Reasonable Man* directed by Gavin Hood and *The King is Alive*, a Dogma production which was directed by Kristian Levring and filmed in Namibia in 1999.

Later film roles included *Final Solution* and the made-for-TV movie/mini-series *Diamond Hunters*.

He made a guest appearance in an episode of the sci-fi television series *Charlie Jade* in the 2005 episode entitled "Dirty Laundry" (Season 1, Episode 6). He also had a lead role in the second season of the SABC 1 youth drama series *Yizo Yizo*. In 2008 he played the role of Doctor Gulubane in the pilot episode of *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*, directed by the late Anthony Minghella.

#### Bonginkosi Thwala (Diesel)

Bongi was born in 1971 in Soweto and went to school in Orlando West. He had no formal training in acting, but picked up tips from actor Monde Mayephu. In 1997 he started taking acting seriously when he appeared in a play entitled *Umkhaya Lo!* written by the late Essrom Nkomonde.

After this, Bongi got a small part as a dancer in the international movie *Who I Am* by Jackie Chan. In 1997 he appeared in the play *Too Young to Die*, written by Monde Mayephu and won a Civic Theatre award for Best Actor.

His other theatre credits include roles *The Red Door Case*, *Deep in the Cocalala* and *Umdlewembe*.

He has appeared in short films like *Dead End*, *Transit Cafe* and *Norman Comes to Jozi*. His television credits include roles in the series *Yizo Yizo* and *Gaz'lam*.

#### Sonia Sedibe (Moshidi)

Sonia Sedibe is best known for her role as Ntombi Khumalo in the SABC 1 soapie *Generations*, in which she has appeared since 2003.

She was born in Natalspruit and was formally introduced to acting when she joined a high school theatre group. A qualified PRO, Sonia was cast in a Beacon commercial, and also as a lead in the SABC 2 drama *Phamokate*.

She featured in *Soul City* and *Muvhango* and in films such as *Mr. Bones* and *God Is African*.

She has also appeared in television commercials for Vodacom, Sunsilk and Shield. In 1998/1999 Sonia won the FNB Vita Award for Most Promising New Actress.

#### Madhuvha Madima (Zandi)

Maduvha Madima is a South African afro-pop and gospel singer and actress. She is best known on television for her role as Vele Rambulana on the SABC 2 soapie *Muvhango*. She also played herself in a guest role on *Gaz'lam*.

#### **Nick Boraine (Johnny)**

Nick Boraine is best known for his role as Dr Johan Bester in the SABC 2 medical drama series *Hillside*. In 2010 he starred as Warren in the SABC 2 drama series *The Mating Game*, from March to June. He currently plays the role of Oliver Knight in the M-Net soapie *Binneland Sub Judice* (formerly known as *Binnelanders*).

#### **Lucky Legodi (The Mayor)**

Lucky Legodi is a popular stage and screen actor and star of soapies such as *Generations* and international films such as *Risky Business* (with David Hasselhoff). He is also the founder of Black Education Upgrade, which produces videos of prescribed textbooks. He offers workshops for teachers and has written a number of teaching aids for educators.

#### **Keketso Semoko (Commander Matlaku)**

Keketso Semoko matriculated from Lofentse Girls High School in Orlando East, Gauteng, then completed a BA Hons Degree in Dramatic Arts and Diploma in Cinematography at the University of the Witwatersrand.

She got her acting start in Maishe Maponya's stage production of the Lorraine Hansberry play *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Other theatre shows she has acted in include George Wolfe's *The Coloured Museum*; a workshop production entitled *The Hottentot Venus* in which she played the title role of the tragic Sartjie Baartman, the young Khoi girl who was exhibited throughout France as a freak; and *Sezar*, which played both South Africa's Market Theatre and Britain's Oxford Playhouse.

She has appeared in the television series *Justice for All, Young Justice* and the sitcom *Going Up*.

Films include the Canadian/South African co-production *Dr Lucille*, the Leon Schuster movie *Mr Bones* (2001) and Gavin Hood's *A Reasonable Man* (1999), *Drum* (2002) and Jason Xenopoulos' *An African Story*.

She also played the role of Mooma Tuussee in the 2004 made-for-TV movie *King Solomon's Mines*, starring Patrick Swayze.

In 2008 she appeared in the feature film The Seven of Daran: Battle of Pareo Rock. Keketso has been starring in *Isidingo* since July 1998, three months after the production premiered. She won the 2007 SAFTA award for best Actress in a TV Soap for her role as Ma Agnes Matabane.

#### Mary Twala (Ma Putting)

Mary Twala has had an extensive career as an actress, performing in roles in film, television and theatre.

Her film career includes such international films as *Mapantsula*, *Sarafina!*, *A Love in Africa*, *Malunde*, *Dr Lucille*, *Nyaka-Nyaka*, *Ngaka*, *Deliwe*, *Friends*, *Game for Vultures*, *Taxi to Soweto* (for which she won a Best Supporting Actress award), *Waati*, *Science Classic* and *Score*.

Her television career includes performances in many South Africa productions including *Undenzani Melwane*, *Iqhawe*, *Die SonKriel*, *Hlala Kwabafileyo*, *Soul Buddyz*, *Child of Soweto*, *Khululeka*, *Yizo-Yizo*, *SOS* and *Muvhango*. She won Best Comedy Performer awards for her performances in *Hlala Kwabafileyo* and *Molo Fish*.

In 2007 she appeared in the supernatural mini-series *Ubizo (The Calling)*, for SABC 1. She played the role of Ma Dolly, Amos' sobriety counsellor, in the SABC 2 mini-series *Hopeville*, from March to April, 2009.

In 2010 she starred as MaKhambu in the SABC 2 sitcom Skwizas.

### **BIOGRAPHIES: CREW**

#### **Jann Turner (Director, Writer, Producer)**

Paradise Stop is Jann Turner's second feature film after the hugely successful White Wedding. An alumnus of NYU's Graduate Film School, she has directed multi-cam soaps and single cam dramas. She has also as co-created two successful drama series and has written numerous television scripts. She is the author of the novels Heartland, (Orion, Lubbe), Southern Cross (Orion, Lubbe) and Home Is Where You Find It (MML). She has been published in the Virginia Literary Quarterly as well as numerous newspapers including the UK's Guardian and Sunday Independent and South Africa's Business Day and Mail & Guardian newspapers, and Marie Claire, O, Femina and Real Simple magazines.

Turner has also made award-winning documentaries and worked for two years as part of the team of producers who made the Truth Commission Special Report. She was a co-creator of the SABC1 series *Mzansi*, which won the Audience Choice Award for Best TV Programme in 2006 and she is also a co-creator of the SABC3 drama series *Hard Copy*, which won the SAFTA Award for Best TV drama in 2007. Her feature film directorial debut *White Wedding* was the South African entry for nomination in the Best Foreign Picture category at the 2010 Academy Awards. White Wedding was also nominated for seven SAFTA Awards, including Best Picture, Best Directing and Best Writing.

#### **Ken Follett (Executive Producer)**

Ken Follett is one of the world's best loved novelists. He has sold more than 100 million books. His latest, *World Without End*, went straight to No.1 position on the bestseller lists in the USA, Spain, Italy and Germany.

He first hit the bestseller lists in 1978 with *Eye of the Needle*, a taut, original thriller with a memorable woman character in the central role. The book won the Edgar award and became an outstanding film starring Kate Nelligan and Donald Sutherland.

He surprised readers by radically changing course with *The Pillars of the Earth*, a novel about building a cathedral in the Middle Ages. Published in September 1989 to rave reviews, it was voted the third greatest book ever written by 250 000 viewers of German television ZDF in 2004, beaten only by *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Bible*. A similar poll conducted by the BBC placed it 33<sup>rd</sup> in a list of the one hundred greatest novels. In November 2007 it became most popular ever choice of the Oprah Winfrey Book Club, returning to No.1 on the *New York Times bestseller* list.

Follett was born on 5 June 1949 in Cardiff, Wales the son of a tax inspector. He is married to Barbara Follett, the Member of Parliament for Stevenage in Hertfordshire. An enthusiastic amateur musician, he plays bass guitar in a band called Damn Right I Got the Blues and appears occasionally with the folk group Clog Iron playing bass balalaika.

### **Stepping Stone Pictures (Production Company)**

Stepping Stone Pictures is a collaboration between Jann Turner, Kenneth Nkosi and Rapulana Seiphemo, together with Kevin Fleischer. They have been working together since 1998 when they met on the hit daily soap *Isidingo*. Along with Neil McCarthy, they created *Mzansi*, a series for SABC1, which won the Duku Duku (audience choice awards) for Best TV Drama in 2005. Their first feature film *White Wedding* took the South African box office by storm when it opened in 2008. *White Wedding* opened in the US in September 2010 to excellent reviews.

### **CAST & CREW**

EBENEZER (BEN) KHUMALO

POTSO MOGUPUDI

THE GENERAL

DIESEL

**GOODNESS** 

MOSHIDI

ZANDI

**VIRAS** 

**JOHNNY** 

THE MAYOR

COMMANDER MATLAKU

MA PUTTING

Rapulana Seiphemo

Vusi Kunene

Kenneth Nkosi

Bonginkosi Thwala

Charmaine Kwenyane

Sonia Sedibe

Madhuvha Madima

Rea Rangaka

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