

THE GHOST OF DE DEUR GHOST (EPISODE 54)

I switch off the Corona's engine and kill the lights. The legend of the headless biker of De Deur demands a moonless night, so it's almost completely dark.

Corne, the videographer is fiddling with the settings on his camera. He's switched to low-light mode (infra-red) and he has to clamber into the back seat where he perches on top of a tripod, drone and various sharp and uncomfortable bits of gear, trying to create some distance between me and the lens, so he can focus. The image is either non-existent or totally washed out when it catches a passing car's headlights.

It's the night after the winter solstice. Freezing cold. We're sitting on the side of a deserted country road and I'm beginning to think that the ghost of a headless biker might not be the unfriendliest thing we could encounter.

Earlier in the afternoon, we did a recce of this spot, confirming that this is Boundary Road, trying to establish the accurate and authentic location where the haunting is supposed to take place. There were obvious signs that this is an area that's been hit hard by crime. Lots of barbed wire and electric fencing, neighbourhood watch signs prominent on gates, local people watching closely. If I saw two strangers driving up and down my street, taking video, my first thought wouldn't be "There goes that oke with the YouTube channel." I might contact my neighbours to be extra vigilant and reactive when the sun goes down.

Now we sit.
Alone.
I hope.

The veld around us might hold real, living people who would quite like our car, equipment and wallets and are willing to turn us into the characters of a new ghost story to get hold of them. My beloved Toyota is fifty three years old. Like me, she takes a while to get running from a standing start. Her days as a getaway vehicle are definitely over.

Time to test the ghost story. I flick my lights. Once... Twice... Three times.

Almost immediately, a light has popped up on the road in the distance. It's impossible to tell how far away. Probably just a car approaching...

But it doesn't seem to get any closer. I expect the single light to separate into the usual twin headlights of a car. Could it actually be a motorbike? That would be a helluva coincidence.

What the ...?

The light fades. Did it turn off the road? Can't be sure. It looked like it simply faded.

Did we just see...?

No. Can't be!

I repeat the sequence with my lights, twice more. Corne hangs out of the car window to get cutaway shots of them flashing. Up front, on the road, there are no more unusual headlight phenomena. The occasional bakkie drives by, slowly, but erratically, avoiding the many vicious potholes. I take care to note that every driver does in fact have a head.

It's time to go. We can't decide whether we "got" the ghost story or not. That mysterious light could've been anything

As we drive off, I discover that the driver's window of the Corona won't roll up properly. Must've been jolted by the many potholes I couldn't see on the unlit road. The glass rattles loudly and the cold air blasts in. By the time we're back in Johannesburg, my right ear feels frozen. I know how that poor headless biker feels.