

Debut author awarded Sunday Times Fiction Award

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Moletsane was up against worthy competitors, including Damon Galgut (*The Promise*, 2021 Booker Prize winner), Joanne Joseph (*Children of Sugar Cane*), Karen Jennings (*An Island*) and Thenjiwe Mswane (*All Gomorrahs are the Same*).

Published by Penguin Random House under the Umuzi Trailblazer imprint, the judges described the book as "A tour de force. Bold, raw and surprisingly elegant Gonzo style writing".

For 29-year-old Moletsane, the award was a real surprise. "I didn't have any real expectations for it. I believed the literary scene probably wouldn't take too well to the content or the premise. The character is unlikable, there isn't a lesson at the end, the language is coarse, the book is too short," he says.

*He also says that the writing of *Junx* was part of satisfying a goal that was on his vision board for some years. "Once it got published, I thought, I did it! I did it! I'm done".*

SA' *Catcher in the Rye*

"We at Penguin Random House Local Fiction are doing a victory dance," says Catriona Ross, the book's editor.

“This is a story that captured our attention back in 2016, when Moletsane first submitted a sample to us. He then lost all his notes in a hijacking, spent the next couple of years reconstructing the novel, and finally resubmitted it.”

Ros says when she I read those first chapters she was sold. “Here was a unique voice, an unnamed, unbelievably cool narrator leading us through a wild night in Joburg with honesty, intelligence and humour.”

Calling it A Catcher in the Rye for this crazy country, Ross says it is a book with the potential to garner a cult following (see the Trevor Noah part!).

A rollercoaster without a seatbelt

“Junx captures the spirit and sass of South Africans as they pick their way through multiple challenges daily: corruption, poverty, mental health issues, dodgy parties. Moletsane is a unique local talent. We are so proud of him. Thank you, judges, for recognising the genius of his book,” adds Ross.

Telling the story of a guy who kicks off his day by sharing a joint with his imaginary friend Ari, Junx is a rollercoaster without a seatbelt.

With Ari perched on his shoulder, both protecting and goading him, our man will end up joyriding to a brothel in a snatched tourist rental car, then trying to outrun the police while the tourists catch up. At some point, things are going to come to a head. Will they turn out okay? Ask Ari. Ari never lies.

Meets the prize criteria

Both in style and content, Junx meets the prize criteria, being ‘a novel of rare imagination and style, evocative, textured and a tale so compelling as to become an enduring landmark of contemporary fiction’.

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