

## In detention

by Chris van Wyk

He fell from the ninth floor

He hanged himself

He slipped on a piece of soap while washing

He hanged himself

He slipped on a piece of soap while washing

He fell from the ninth floor

He hanged himself while washing

He slipped from the ninth floor

He hung from the ninth floor

He slipped on the ninth floor while washing

He fell from a piece of soap while slipping

He hung from the ninth floor

He washed from the ninth floor while slipping

He hung from a piece of soap while washing

### Glossary:

Satire – attacking any wickedness, folly or abuse through mockery or sarcasm.

Regime – government.

Activist – a person taking forceful part in promoting change.

### Summary:

The poem is satire which aims to expose the behaviour of the South African police during the apartheid regime. It comments indirectly on the number of deaths that happened during the detention of political activists by not mentioning any names (green). The speaker uses the explanations typically offered by the security police for these deaths. Repetition and variation is taken to ridiculous extremes in order to attack and expose how absurd and senseless these explanations were. With each repetition the statement becomes increasingly strange and incredible and the variations create the effect of distorting/twisting facts. That the police expect the public to believe such obvious lies shows that they are arrogant and feel secure in their position as officials.

Compiled by B. S. Seegers