

THE UNCODED

A Dystopian Novel of Memory and Resistance



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The Uncoded...

Foreword...

This is a work of fiction...

The characters, events, and institutions portrayed in *The Uncoded* are entirely imagined... Any resemblance to real individuals, governments, technologies, or organizations is purely coincidental...

And yet...

What if it were not?...

What if programmable currency, biometric scoring, and climate-driven control systems were not just speculative ideas - but blueprints already unfolding?...

What if the erosion of privacy, the manipulation of truth, and the quiet conditioning of obedience were not distant possibilities, but present realities?... This story is not a prediction... It is a warning... It asks not only what could happen - but what is already happening, unnoticed, normalized, and accepted...

The Uncoded is a tribute to those who question, who remember, and who resist. It is a call to remain human in a world increasingly designed to forget what that means...

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Chapter 1: The Last Cash Transaction...

Johannesburg, 2029... The city had changed - its skyline now pierced by glass towers wrapped in solar mesh, its streets patrolled by silent drones, and its people tethered to the pulse of the digital state... Sipho Maseko walked briskly through Johannesburg, his wristband glowing faintly with notifications... He ignored most of them - carbon alerts, trust score updates, biometric sync reminders... They were constant now, like background radiation...

The air smelled of ozone and sterilized concrete... The old Johannesburg was buried beneath layers of code and compliance... Sipho passed a row of shops, each entrance guarded by biometric scanners and CBDC terminals... A bakery caught his eye - not because of the bread, but because of the woman just standing there...

She was elderly, wrapped in a faded shawl, clutching a handful of coins... Her fingers trembled as she placed them on the counter...

“Please,” she said softly, “Just a loaf.”

The cashier, a young man with a sleek implant behind his ear, didn’t even glance at the coins... “Cash is obsolete, Ma... You need a CBDC wallet.”

“I don’t have one,” she replied, “I don’t trust it.”

The cashier shrugged, “Then I can’t help you.”

Sipho stepped forward, “I’ll pay for her.”

The cashier hesitated, then nodded... Sipho tapped his wristband against the terminal... The transaction flashed green, the loaf was handed over...

The woman turned to him, eyes brimming, “Thank you, son... I remember when money was real.”

Sipho smiled gently, “Some of us still do.”

He walked her home, her name was Zanele... She lived in a cramped flat in Hillbrow, surrounded by relics of another era - paper books, analog radios, a dusty typewriter... The walls were lined with photographs, yellowed and curling... Children, weddings, protests... A life lived offline...

“They say it’s progress,” she muttered, placing the loaf on the counter... “But it feels like a cage.”

Sipho nodded, he’d felt it too... The slow erosion of choice, the quiet pressure to conform... At school, the curriculum had changed, history was sanitized... Apartheid was mentioned only in passing, colonialism was reframed as “global integration.” The students were taught to memorize, not to question...

He taught what he was told... But Mandla, one of his brightest students, asked questions...

“Sir, why did they ban cash?”

“To prevent crime,” Sipho replied, repeating the official line...

“But isn’t privacy a right?”

Sipho hesitated. “It used to be.”

Mandla had frowned, unconvinced, “My dad says they banned it so they could watch us.”

Sipho had no answer...

That evening, Sipho sat in his apartment, scrolling through his CBDC wallet... Every transaction was logged - location, time, item, carbon impact... He remembered buying a book from a street vendor last month... The system had flagged it as “unverified commerce.” His trust score had dropped by three points...

He opened the news feed... Minister Kgomotso stood at a podium, flanked by digital screens showing melting glaciers and burning forests...

“Cash is chaos, digital money is order... We must embrace transparency.”

Sipho closed the feed, he thought of Zanele, of Mandla... Of the questions he was afraid to ask...

The next morning, he walked past a protest. A dozen people stood in front of the Civic Data Centre, holding signs:

“Cash = Freedom”

“We are not QR codes”

“Unchipped, Unscored, Unafraid.”

Police drones hovered overhead... One protester shouted, “We are The Uncoded!”

The drones descended. Tasers crackled, the crowd scattered... Sipho watched from the shadows, something stirred in him... A memory, a fire...

He walked away, but the words echoed: “We are The Uncoded.”

Later that week, Sipho sat in the staff lounge at school, sipping lukewarm tea... The other teachers chatted about curriculum updates and biometric attendance, Sipho stared out the window... The principal entered, her wristband blinking: “Reminder,” she said. “All staff must complete their Civic Compliance audit by Friday... Trust scores below 80 will trigger review.”

Sipho’s heart sank, his score was 76... He returned to his classroom, where Mandla was waiting...

“Sir, my dad says they’re going to start scoring our friendships.”

Sipho blinked, “What do you mean?”

“He says if you hang out with someone with a low score, your score drops too.”

Sipho felt a chill, “That’s not confirmed.”

Mandla shrugged, “It will be.”

That night, Sipho visited Zanele again... She was listening to an old jazz record, the kind that crackled with warmth.

“They’re scoring us like cattle,” she said... “But cattle don’t ask questions.”

Sipho sat beside her, “What happens if we stop playing along?”

Zanele smiled, “Then we remember who we are.”

The next day, Sipho received a notification: “Trust Score: 74, Alert: Below Civic Threshold.”

He opened the app, his visit to Zanele had been flagged, “Unverified residence.” His conversation with Mandla had been transcribed, “Sensitive topic: surveillance.” He stared at the screen; his privileges were shrinking... He couldn’t do a booking to travel... His salary was delayed; his social feed was filtered... He walked to the bookstore in Braamfontein... It was one of the few places that still accepted cash - quietly, discreetly... He bought a copy of *1984*, the cashier winked...

“Still thinking for yourself?”

Sipho nodded, “Trying.”

That evening, he received a message from Thandi Dlamini, an old friend and journalist...

“Meet me. Melville Café. No wristbands.”

Sipho arrived after sunset... The café was dimly lit, filled with whispers and old music... Thandi sat in the corner, her wrist bare...

“They’re rewriting everything,” she said. “History, science, even memory.”

She slid a folder across the table, inside were documents - leaked memos, altered textbooks, biometric compliance charts...

“They’re building a reality where dissent doesn’t exist.”

Sipho flipped through the pages, “And the Uncoded?”

Thandi leaned in, “They’re real underground and preserving the truth.”


Sipho exhaled, “I want in.”

Thandi smiled, “Then follow the map.”

Inside the folder was a hand - drawn map... It led to an abandoned train station outside Soweto, a red X marked the entrance... Sipho stared at it for a long time, then he packed a bag... And he walked into the night...

Chapter 2: The Carbon Wallet...

The sun rose over Johannesburg like a warning - orange, hazy, filtered through layers of smog and surveillance... Sipho stood at the bus terminal, staring at the screen above the turnstiles. His digital wallet pulsed red.

 “Carbon travel quota exceeded.”

He blinked, confused, he hadn't driven much this month... Just a few trips to school, one to the clinic, and a weekend getaway to Cape Town... Tapped the screen again, the message remained... “You have exceeded your monthly carbon allowance... Travel suspended until next cycle.”

He sighed long and hard, his mother's birthday was tomorrow... She lived in Limpopo, a six-hour bus ride away... Sipho had promised to visit, now, the system said no... Without really thinking he opened his Carbon Wallet app... It displayed a pie chart: 38% meat consumption, 24% fuel usage, 18% electricity, 20% travel. A small note at the bottom read: “Carbon credits are calculated using UN Climate Compliance Protocols.”

Sipho scrolled through the breakdown, his weekend flight had cost him dearly... He remembered the view from Table Mountain, the laughter with old friends... Now, it felt like a mistake... He tried to transfer credits from his “social engagement” category... No luck at all because the app was locked...

At school, Mandla approached him after class...

“Sir, my dad says we can't drive to the village anymore... He says the car is ‘too carbon - heavy.’ What does that mean?”

Sipho hesitated, “It means the government wants us to reduce emissions.”

“But we live far sir, isn't that unfair?”

Sipho nodded slowly, “It is.”

Mandla frowned, “He also said the climate predictions were wrong... That the sea levels didn't rise like they said and that the temperature didn't spike.”

Sipho looked around... The classroom was empty; he lowered his voice...

“Your father's not wrong.”

That evening, Sipho sat in his apartment, watching the news... Minister Kgomotso stood at a podium, flanked by digital screens showing melting glaciers and burning forests... “The climate crisis is the greatest threat to humanity... We must act; carbon rationing is not punishment - it is protection.”

Sipho switched channels, every station echoed the same message... “Carbon is the new currency.” “Sustainability is survival.” “Compliance is patriotism.”

He opened his laptop and searched for alternative views... Most sites were blocked, a few underground forums remained... One post caught his eye: “Carbon quotas are not about saving the planet... They're about controlling movement.”

He clicked, the page loaded slowly... A video played - an interview with Dr. Elias van Rooyen, a former climate scientist... “The data has been manipulated; the models are exaggerated... The crisis is real, but the response is engineered.”

Sipho leaned forward... Elias spoke calmly, citing suppressed studies, satellite data, internal memos... He explained how carbon credits were designed not to reduce emissions, but to limit autonomy... “They don't want you to travel, they want you to stay put... To be predictable, to be programmable.”

Elias showed graphs - projected sea level rise vs. actual measurements... Predicted temperature spikes vs. recorded data, the discrepancies were stark... “In 2020, they said Cape Town would be underwater by 2030...”

It's not. In 2022, they said we'd hit 2 degrees Celsius by 2025... We haven't... The models were wrong, or worse - deliberately misleading."

Sipho felt a chill, he closed the laptop and looked out the window... The city glowed with artificial light; drones zipped through the sky... Billboards flashed slogans: "Track your footprint. Earn your freedom." He thought of his mother, of the long road to Limpopo... Of the freedom to move, to visit, to live...

He opened his wallet again, still red...

The next morning, Sipho met Thandi at the café in Melville... She was already seated, flipping through a folder of documents... "They buried the data," she said... "The real climate numbers, the ones that show the crisis isn't what they claim." Sipho scanned the pages, satellite images, temperature logs, rainfall records... All showed stability, not collapse...

"They needed fear," Thandi said... "Fear justifies control."

Sipho nodded, "And carbon credits justify surveillance."

Thandi leaned in, "They're scoring our breath, Sipho. Our footsteps. Our meals."

He exhaled, "And we're letting them."

At school, Sipho tried to teach the standard curriculum... But the words felt hollow, "Climate emergency." "Global unity." "Digital sustainability."

Mandla raised his hand. "Sir, what if the emergency isn't real?"

The classroom went silent...

Sipho looked at him and answer, "Then we're living in a lie."

That night, Sipho received a message from Ayanda... "We have the full climate archive, come to The Archive... Bring Thandi."

They arrived at the abandoned train station just after midnight... The tunnels were quiet, lit by flickering lanterns... Ayanda greeted them with a nod... She led them to a room filled with servers, humming quietly...

"This is our mirror," she said, "A replica of the state's database... We intercept, decode, preserve."

Sipho stared at the screens... They showed real-time edits - climate graphs adjusted, historical data overwritten, dissenting voices erased...

"They're not just watching us," Ayanda said. "They're rewriting reality."

She handed him a file, inside were records - his own profile, his flagged activities, his predicted behaviour...

"They've modelled you," she said. "They know what you'll do before you do it."

Sipho felt cold, "How do we fight that?"

Ayanda smiled, "By being unpredictable."

Later, Ayanda showed them the climate archive... It was vast - terabytes of raw data, unfiltered, unedited...

Thandi gasped, "This is everything."

Ayanda nodded, "The truth they buried."

Sipho flipped through the files... He saw the projections from 2015, 2020, 2025, none of it had come true... The sea levels haven't risen, most definitely not meters... The temperatures had fluctuated, but not spiked... The disasters had been localized, but also globally... Around the world the governments did the same to their people...

“They built a narrative,” Ayanda said. “And they used it to build a system.”

Sipho looked at her, “And now?”

Ayanda’s eyes burned, “Now we dismantle it.”

Chapter 3: The Booster Ban...

The school gates loomed ahead, sleek and metallic, flanked by biometric scanners that pulsed with blue light... Sipho approached, his wristband ready... He had walked the same path for years, but today felt different...

The scanner blinked red...

✗ “Access denied. Booster overdue.”

He frowned, “What?”

The security guard, a young man in a crisp Civic Compliance uniform, checked his tablet... “Your health profile shows you missed your third booster... You’ll need to reschedule before entering.” Sipho stepped aside, confused... He opened his Health Sync app; his vaccine passport showed two green ticks and one flashing red X... “Booster 3: Required by 15 July. Status: Incomplete.”

He had missed the deadline by three days... He hadn’t meant to, but life had been busy... But now, his wallet was partially frozen... He could buy food, but not electronics, travel, or entertainment... His access to school systems was revoked, his teaching credentials were suspended.

He called the clinic... The next available slot was in five days... At home, he received a message from the Department of Education: “Non-compliance with health mandates may result in employment review.” He felt a knot in his stomach...

Thandi called him that night... “They’re tightening the screws,” she said. “Health compliance is just the beginning.” She had been denied entry to a press conference... Her booster was overdue, she showed Sipho leaked documents - internal memos linking vaccine passports to financial access...

“They’re conditioning us,” she said. “Every shot, every scan, every score - it’s all behavioural programming.”

Sipho was silent... Thandi leaned in. “You feel it, don’t you? The pressure... The fear... The quiet obedience.”

He nodded. “Yes, I do.”

The next morning, Sipho tried to buy a textbook online, but his transaction was denied...

✗ “Trust Score insufficient. Health compliance required.”

He tried to access his teaching dashboard... That where blocked, he walked to the school anyway... The guard stopped him: “Sir, you’re flagged... You need to report to Civic Health.”

Sipho turned away...

He met Ayanda at The Archive that evening... The tunnels were quiet, the servers humming...

“They’re merging health and finance,” she said. “Your body is now your wallet.”

She showed him a chart - booster compliance linked to trust scores, which were linked to spending limits, travel permissions, and employment status...

“They’ve created a loop,” Ayanda said. “Miss a booster, lose access... Lose access, miss a booster.”

Sipho stared at the screen. “And the data?”

Ayanda nodded, “We intercepted it... The boosters aren’t about immunity, they’re about tracking.”

She showed him internal memos - biometric upgrades, DNA tagging, behavioural prediction models...

“They’re mapping our biology,” she said. “And monetizing it.” Sipho returned home and opened his Health Sync app... He scrolled through the permissions - location tracking, biometric syncing, emotional monitoring...

He disabled them all, the screen went black...

✘ “System error. Reboot required.”

He stared at the message, then he powered down the device.

The next day, he met Mandla in the park... The boy looked tired: “My mom got fired,” Mandla said. “She missed her booster... Her trust score dropped... They froze her wallet.”

Sipho sat beside him. “I’m sorry.”

Mandla looked up. “Why are they doing this?”

Sipho exhaled. “Because control is easier than truth.”

That night, Thandi broadcast a message through The Archive’s underground network. “Your body is not a barcode... Your health is not a currency... Your freedom is not negotiable.” The message spread quietly - through encrypted channels, whispered conversations, handwritten notes...

Sipho watched it play on a cracked tablet in Zanele’s flat... She smiled. “They can’t vaccinate the soul.”

The next morning, Sipho received a message from Civic Health: “Booster appointment confirmed. Failure to attend will result in permanent suspension.” He stared for a long time at the screen, then deleted the message and walked into the shadows...

Chapter 4: Mandla's Disappearance...

Sipho hadn't been inside the school for over a week...

His booster status was still flagged as "non-compliant," and his trust score had dropped below the employment threshold... His teaching credentials were suspended and access to the school's digital dashboard was revoked... Even his messages to colleagues were filtered or blocked...

But what disturbed him most wasn't his own exile - it was Mandla's silence...

The boy hadn't responded to any of Sipho's encrypted messages... He doesn't know that Mandla's profile on the school's public roster had vanished... No "relocated," no "suspended," no "transferred." Just gone... Sipho sat in the café in Melville, staring at his offline tablet... He had managed to bypass the biometric lock using a workaround Ayanda had taught him. that gave him limited access to archived school data...

He searched Mandla's name.

"No results found."

He tried again. Nothing.

He leaned back, heart heavy... The regime didn't just remove people, they erased them... That evening, Sipho walked to Mandla's apartment complex in Yeoville... He kept his hood up; his face angled away from scanners. The building was quiet, too quiet... The door to Mandla's unit was ajar... Inside, the apartment was stripped bare, no furniture, no photos, no trace... Nothing of Mandla and his family who lived there...

A neighbour stood in the hallway, watching...

"They were relocated," she said softly.

"Where?"

She shrugged. "Somewhere rural. Off-grid."

Sipho stepped inside, the walls were bare... The floor was dusty; a single sheet of paper lay on the counter... "Citizen relocation: Zone 9. Compliance pending." He folded the paper and slipped it into his pocket...

Later, back at The Archive, Sipho handed the paper to Ayanda... She scanned it, her expression grim. "Zone 9. That's where they send the Unscored."

"The Unscored?"

Ayanda nodded. "People who've dropped off the grid... No wristbands, no scores, no access."

Sipho sat down, "And Mandla?"

Ayanda looked away, "He's gone. For now."

Thandi joined them later, with news... She had intercepted a transmission from the Civic Data Authority...

"Subject: Mandla Dube

Status: Relocated

Reason: Parental refusal of biometric upgrade

Risk: Ideological contamination".

Sipho clenched his fists, "He is just a child."

Thandi nodded, "That asked questions."

They pulled up Mandla's last flagged interactions, his classroom questions... His conversations with Sipho, also his visits to Zanele...

Each one marked “Deviation.”

Ayanda turned to Sipho... “They’re not just punishing him. They’re punishing you.”

Sipho exhaled. “Then let’s make it worth it.”

—

That night, Sipho recorded a message.

“Mandla Dube was my student, who asked questions... He sought truth, he remembered and for that, he was erased... But memory cannot be relocated, it cannot be scored, and it cannot be silenced.”

The message was added to The Archive’s vault... Ayanda placed Mandla’s photo on the wall of faces...

Beneath it, she wrote: “Unscored. Unbroken.”

The next morning, Sipho received a message from a hidden relay node...

It was brief...

“Zone 9. He’s alive.”

Sipho stared at the screen, then he whispered, “We remember.”

Chapter 5: The Uncoded Underground...

The tunnels beneath Soweto were old and colder than Siph0 expected... Damp air clung to the walls and the scent of rust and dust lingered like history itself... He followed Ayanda through the narrow passageways, past flickering lanterns and faded murals - paintings of fists, broken chains, and eyes wide open...

"This way," Ayanda said, her voice low but firm...

They reached a steel door, unmarked except for a symbol etched into the metal: a circle split by a jagged line... The mark of The Uncoded... Ayanda placed her palm against a scanner, the door hissed open... Inside was a cavernous room, lit by old halogen bulbs and the glow of dozens of screens... People moved quietly between workstations, sorting files, scanning documents, whispering updates... The walls were lined with shelves of banned books, analogy radios, and stacks of printed newspapers from before the blackout...

Siph0 stood still, absorbing it all...

"This is The Archive," Ayanda said. "The heart of The Uncoded."

They walked past a row of terminals where young volunteers were decoding intercepted transmissions... One screen showed a live feed from a government server - Minister Kgomo tso giving a speech about "digital unity" and "biometric harmony."

Ayanda pointed to the corner of the screen, "Watch." a Line of code flickered, the speech was being edited in real time, words changed... Phrases softened, the message was reshaped...

"They're not just broadcasting," Ayanda said. "They're rewriting."

Siph0 felt a chill., "How long has this been happening?"

"Since the first lockdown," she replied. "When they realized fear was more effective than force."

Ayanda led him to a smaller room, quieter, lined with filing cabinets and corkboards... a Map of South Africa covered one wall, dotted with red pins...

"These are our nodes," she said. "Safe houses. Signal relays. Memory caches."

Siph0 stepped closer. "You've built a network."

Ayanda nodded. "We preserve what they erase. History. Science. Identity."

She handed him a folder, inside were pages from textbooks - original versions, before the edits... One page described apartheid in detail... Another explained the 1976 Soweto uprising... Both had been removed from the current curriculum...

"They want a generation that doesn't remember," Ayanda said. "Because memory breeds resistance."

Siph0 sat down, overwhelmed. "How do you keep all this hidden?"

Ayanda smiled. "We don't use the grid. No wristbands. No biometric tags. We live in the cracks."

Later, Ayanda introduced Siph0 to the others... There was Musa, a former data analyst who had defected after discovering the trust score algorithm was rigged... There was Lerato, a librarian who had smuggled thousands of banned books into the Archive and there was Kwezi, a teenager who had hacked the Civic Compliance servers and exposed the relocation program...

Each had a story... Each had lost something... Each had chosen to fight... Siph0 listened in disbelief, but he also felt the weight of their courage...

"You're one of us now," Ayanda said. "If you want to be."

Siph0 nodded. "I do."

That night, Siphos stayed in the Archive... He read through files, watched footage, listened to testimonies. He took in, learned and he saw the truth behind the regime's façade - the manipulated climate data, the staged health crises, the fabricated threats...

He saw Mandla's file, a photo... A transcript of his classroom questions and the relocation order... He closed the folder and opened a new one...

The next morning, Ayanda handed him a task.

"We need to recover a memory cache," she said. "It's in Braamfontein, hidden in an old bookstore."

Siphos nodded. "I know the place."

He walked through the city, careful to avoid scanners... He wore gloves to block biometric trace and held his head down... The bookstore was quiet, the owner recognized him...

"You're here for the cache," he said. "Follow me."

In the back room, beneath a loose floorboard, was a metal box. Inside were USB drives, printed documents, and a small notebook... Siphos opened the notebook, see that it was Mandla's...

He read the first page: "They want us to forget. But I remember."

Back at the Archive, Siphos handed Ayanda the box... She opened it, scanned the contents and smiled...

"This is gold," she said. "Proof. Memory. Resistance."

Siphos held the notebook. "Mandla was, is just a boy."

Ayanda looked at him. "And he saw the truth before most adults did."

That evening, Siphos stood before the wall of faces... He added Mandla's photo...

Beneath it, he wrote: "Unscored. Unbroken."

He turned to Ayanda. "What's next?"

She handed him a blueprint. "We hijack the feed."

Chapter 6: The Trust Score Trap...

The notification came at dawn, blinking on Sipho's wristband like a warning flare...

 Trust Score: 68...

Status: Below Civic Threshold...


Restrictions: Travel, Employment, Social Access...

Sipho stared at the screen, his score had dropped again... He hadn't posted anything controversial, or missed any appointments... But the system had flagged him, anyway, lowering his score further...

He opened the breakdown:

- Visited unverified location: The Archive...
- Associated with deregistered citizen: Mandla...
- Accessed restricted content: Climate Archive...
- Failed biometric sync: Booster 3 overdue...

Each entry was marked with a red triangle and each one chipped away at his score...

He tapped the "Appeal" button:  Appeal denied, pattern indicates ideological deviation... Sipho exhaled slowly, "Ideological deviation." The phrase echoed like a sentence...

At school, the principal summoned Siphon to her office.

"You've been flagged," she said, her tone clipped. "Your trust score is below 70... That's the threshold for active educators."

Siphon sat down. "I'm still a teacher."


She tapped her tablet. "Not for long. You need to correct your behaviour."

"What behaviour?"

She turned the screen toward him... His profile glowed red. "You visited Mandla's home... You accessed The Archive; you're also associating with The Uncoded."

Siphon felt his throat tighten. "I'm just asking questions."

She leaned in. "Questions are dangerous now."

That afternoon, Siphon tried to buy groceries... His wallet blinked red:  Transaction denied, his Trust Score is insufficient... He tried to book a bus ticket, it got denied... Then he tried to log into his teaching dashboard - Blocked... He walked home worried and hungry... On the way, he saw a man being arrested... His wristband got ripped off, a drone hovered overhead...

"Non-compliant citizen. Trust score: 41."

Siphon kept walking, faster, feeling this knot in his stomach...

At The Archive, Ayanda explained the system: "The trust score is a behavioural algorithm," she said. "It tracks everything - what you buy, who you talk to, where you go, what you read." She showed Siphon the code... It was vast, recursive, self-learning...

"It's not just surveillance," she said. "It's prediction."

Siphon leaned in. "They know what I'll do before I do it."

Ayanda nodded. "And they punish you for what you might do."

Thandi joined them later... She had hacked into the Civic Compliance servers and retrieved a classified document: "Trust Score Protocol v7.3."

She read aloud: "Scores are adjusted based on proximity to flagged individuals, consumption of non-state media, and deviation from approved narratives."

Sipho frowned. "So, if I talk to someone with a low score - "

"Yours drops," Thandi said. "It's guilt by association."

Ayanda added, "And if you try to help someone, the system sees it as ideological contamination."

Sipho sat back. "It's a trap."

They showed him a chart - score thresholds and consequences:

Score Range	Status	Restrictions
90–100	Civic Elite	Full access
80–89	Compliant	Minor monitoring
70–79	Watch listed	Travel limits, employment review
60–69	Flagged	Wallet freeze, social isolation
50–59	Non-compliant	Relocation risk, biometric override
Below 50	Unscored	Arrest, erasure, exile

Sipho's score was 68, he was on the edge – he is worried...

That night, he received a message from Civic Compliance: "Your score indicates deviation. Please attend a Reorientation Session."

He ignored it... The next day, his wristband locked...

Ayanda gave him a burner device - offline, untraceable... "You're off the grid now," she said...

Sipho nodded. "Then I'm free?"

Ayanda smiled. "Not yet Sipho, but you're close."

They began planning a broadcast, a message to the city... A truth bomb... Thandi prepared the footage - climate data, relocation orders, trust score algorithms... Ayanda mapped the signal routes...

Sipho wrote the script: "You are not a number!.. You are not a score!.. You are not a prediction!.. You are human!.."

The next morning, Sipho walked past a billboard: "Trust is earned. Obedience is rewarded."

He looked up and whispered, "Not anymore."

Chapter 7: Ayanda's Revelation...

The Archive was quiet that night, most of the volunteers had gone home or retreated to their sleeping quarters in the tunnels... Only Sipho sat alone at a terminal, reviewing intercepted transmissions... The silence felt heavy on him, like the pause before a storm...

Ayanda entered, carrying a box... She placed it on the table without a word...

Sipho looked up, asking: "What's this?"

She opened the lid... Inside were photographs, documents, a faded university ID card... "My past," she said. "And the beginning of The Uncoded."

Sipho leaned forward, taking the ID card that read: Ayanda Mthembu, University of Cape Town, Department of Data Ethics...

"You were a researcher?"

Ayanda nodded. "I studied algorithmic bias... How systems reflect the prejudices of their creators... I believed in transparency, in accountability."

She pulled out a photo – She is standing beside a group of students, smiling...

"We built a model to detect manipulation in public data. We thought it would help strengthen democracy."

Sipho listened, sensing the weight behind her words...

"But when we presented our findings," Ayanda continued, "the government shut us down. They said we were undermining national unity. My research was classified. My funding was revoked. My name was flagged."

She handed Sipho a document - an internal memo from the Civic Data Authority:

"Subject: Ayanda Mthembu

Status: Ideological deviation

Recommendation: Surveillance, score suppression, relocation"

Sipho felt a chill. "They tried to erase you."

Ayanda nodded. "So, I erased myself first."

She told him how she had gone underground, using her knowledge to build The Archive. She recruited others—disillusioned scientists, banned journalists, forgotten librarians. Together, they became The Uncoded.

"We started with memory," she said. "Because memory is resistance."

Sipho looked around the room, at the shelves of banned books... The walls of faces, at the servers humming with stolen truth...

"You built a sanctuary."

Ayanda smiled. "We built a weapon."

She led him to a locked cabinet, inside it was files labelled "Project Harmony."

"This is the core," she said. "The regime's blueprint."

Sipho opened the first file, which described a system of total integration - health, finance, education, movement - all linked through biometric data and trust scores...

"They call it Harmony," Ayanda said. "But it's control."

The next file detailed the climate manipulation - how predictions were exaggerated, how dissenting scientists were silenced, how fear was manufactured...

“They needed a crisis,” Ayanda said. “So, they built one.”

Sipho open the final file, in it was a transcript of a meeting between Minister Kgomo and tech executives...

“We must ensure compliance, memory is the enemy... Emotion is the virus, truth must be curated.”

He closed the folder... “They’re afraid,” he said...

Ayanda nodded. “Because they know truth spreads faster than fear.”

Later, Ayanda showed him a room he hadn’t seen before... It was small, dimly lit, filled with personal artifacts - letters, journals, photographs...

“This is the Memory Vault,” she said. “Each item belongs to someone who was erased.”

Sipho picked up a journal. It belonged to a teacher named Nomsa, who had refused to teach the revised curriculum.

“I told my students the truth... They took my job and then my home... Then my name.”

He read another entry: “If you’re reading this, please remember me... Remember what they tried to hide.”

Sipho felt tears sting his eyes... Ayanda placed a hand on his shoulder. “We don’t just fight for the living, but it’s also a fight for the forgotten.”

That night, Sipho added his own entry to the vault: “My name is Sipho Maseko, I’m a teacher and taught history... I remembered and asked questions... I resisted!..” He placed the journal on the shelf and felt something shift inside him...

The next morning, Ayanda gathered the core team...

“We’re ready,” she said. “The broadcast goes live in three days.”

Thandi had secured the signal route... Musa had encrypted the feed and Lerato had prepared the archive...

Ayanda turned to Sipho. “You’ll speak.”

Sipho nodded. “I’ll remember.”

Chapter 8: The Broadcast

The plan was simple and the risk was enormous... Hijack the feed, interrupting the Civic Unity broadcast and replace it with truth...

Ayanda stood at the centre of The Archive's operations room, surrounded by screens, cables, and people who had risked everything for this moment... The air buzzed with tension... Siphon paced nearby, rehearsing his lines... Thandi adjusted the signal relay, her fingers flying across the keyboard, everything must go like a oiled machine...

"We have sixty seconds," Ayanda said. "One minute before they trace us."

Siphon nodded. "One minute is enough."

The city was preparing for the monthly Civic Unity address... Minister Kgomotso would speak from the Capitol Tower, flanked by holograms of melting glaciers and burning forests... All the citizens were required to watch, their wristbands would log attendance... Trust scores would be updated accordingly...

Siphon had watched these broadcasts for years... They were polished, persuasive, terrifying... But tonight it will be different, the message would change...

At 19:59, The Uncoded activated the relay...

Thandi's voice crackled through the Archive. "Signal locked, the feed intercepted."

Ayanda gave just a nod and speak. "Go."

Siphon stepped in front of the camera. The lights were harsh. The room fell silent.

He began to speak: "My name is Siphon Maseko. I was a teacher and taught history. Until history was erased by the tyrannical government."

The broadcast cut across every screen in Johannesburg... Billboards flickered, wristbands buzzed and tablets glitched... The Capitol Tower went dark...

"You are being programmed!.. You are being scored!.. You are being silenced!.."

Behind Siphon, images flashed - Mandla's relocation order, Zanele's denied transaction, Elias van Rooyen's climate data...

"They told us the planet was dying, but the numbers were wrong... They told us we were sick, but the cure was control... They told us to trust, but trust was a trap." The city watched with some in shock. Some in silence and others in tears...

"We are The Uncoded!.. We remember!.. We resist!.." The screen went black, followed by a total silence...

In the Archive, cheers erupted... Hugs... Tears... Relief...

Ayanda smiled. "We did it."

Thandi checked the signal. "We reached every node, even Zone 9."

Siphon sat down, exhausted. "What happens now?"

Ayanda's smile faded. "Now they come for us with everything they got!."

Within minutes, the regime responded... Drones are deployed immediately and checkpoints got activated... Wristbands scanned aggressively... The Capitol Tower issued a statement: "A cyberattack has disrupted Civic Unity... Be assured: The perpetrators will be identified and prosecuted."

Sipho's face was everywhere and his trust score dropped to zero... His biometric ID was revoked, his apartment was sealed and he was officially Unscored...

—

The Archive went into lockdown, with Ayanda ordering a full data purge... Thandi encrypted the servers... Musa rerouted the signal paths...

"We scatter," Ayanda said. "We regroup. We rebuild."

Sipho packed a bag, taking Mandla's notebook, also Zanele's photo, with his own journal...

He looked at Ayanda. "Where do I go?"

She handed him a map. "Go north, towards Limpopo... There's a safe house, where you'll find others."

That night, Sipho slipped through the city's cracks... Making sure he avoided scanners and bypassed drones... He walked for hours, for days... He passed checkpoints, burned-out buildings, choosing the silent streets... He saw graffiti on a wall: "We saw you. We heard you. We remember."

In Limpopo, he reached the safe house... It was a small farm, hidden among trees, looking abandoned... Then he sees her, a woman... She greeted him, her name was Nomsa...

"You're Sipho," she said. "We've been waiting."

Inside there were others like him - teachers, students, people from all walks of life and elders... All Unscored, all remembering... They gave Sipho something to drink and eat, invite him to sit by the fire... Asking him questions and he told them everything... They just sat and listened...

Back in Johannesburg, Ayanda watched the regime's crackdown... The Archive was raided and the volunteers were arrested... Everything in the archive, like the servers were destroyed... But the message got out and spread like a wildfire across the country... The people whispered and it became a slogan: "We are The Uncoded."

Chapter 9: The Crackdown...

The regime moved swiftly, with precision... Within hours of the broadcast, the Civic Data Authority declared a state of digital emergency... All biometric systems were recalibrated. Wristbands of the people were updated with new compliance protocols... Trust scores were frozen, recalculated and weaponized against the people... The city became a grid of checkpoints and scanners, with drones hovering at every intersection...

Billboards flashed warnings: “Uncoded activity detected. Report non-compliance.”

Sipho had made it to Limpopo, but the journey changed him... He was thinner now, quieter and more observant... His wristband that once controlled his life, lay buried beneath a tree... His name no longer existed in the system that mean he was officially Unscored...

The safe house was modest - an old farmhouse surrounded by fields and silence... Nomsa, the caretaker, once a teacher like Sipho, who refused to teach the revised curriculum... Resulting in it that her trust score dropped, with that some of her students also vanished... Now, she taught again - under trees and in huts, even by firelight... Sipho joined her and together, they built a classroom... There are no screens, no scores and no surveillance, just stories...

Children came from nearby villages, of whom some never seen a wristband... Others managed to escaped relocation zones... They sat in circles, wide-eyed, eager listeners... Sipho told them about history, the real history that the regime tried to erase... Learn them about resistance, struggle and freedom... He told them about Mandla, who asked questions... Whom they tried to silence, but questions are like seeds and Mandla planted a lot.”

He told them about Zanele: “She remembered a world before everything changed, before the scores... Before surveillance and before people got silenced.” Told them about Ayanda: “She built a sanctuary, plus a strong weapon made of memory.” Everyone, from old to the children listened and they remembered...

Back in Johannesburg everything changed, all the people are on the edge... Ayanda was captured and Thandi disappeared, nobody know where she is...

Minister Kgomoitso gave a speech: “The Uncoded where labelled the enemies of unity, who seek chaos... They reject progress that’s good for everyone... But he promised that the uncoded will be erased.” Sipho watched the broadcast on a smuggled tablet, seeing Ayanda standing beside the minister, silent, bruised...

He whispered, more to himself: “They didn’t break her.”

Nomsa started gathering the community: “It’s important we must protect the memory,” she said. “Before they erase it, destroy it.”

They began building a vault - deep inside a hidden cave, not visible and accessible if you don’t know where to look and where to go to... Inside, they stored books, journals, photographs, recordings, everything of value... Mandla’s notebook and Zanele’s photo, including Sipho’s journal where put in the vault...

“We are The Uncoded. We remember. We resist.”

One night, a boy arrived at the farm. He was thin, dusty, trembling and hungry...

“My name is Kwezi,” he said. “I’ve escaped Zone 9.”

Sipho immediately recognized the name, remember the boy... Kwezi had once hacked the Civic Compliance servers and after the broadcast he just vanished... Nobody know what happened to him, but hade their suspicions...

Now, he was here and he carried something very valuable with him; a flash drive...

“It’s the Archive,” he said. “I saved it.”

Sipho couldn't believe it, when he heard that... He thought everything were destroyed by the tyrannical regime... He took the drive from Kwezi, plugged it into an old laptop... The screen flickered, then files appeared... It all where there on the flash drive, everything: the climate data, trust score algorithms, relocation orders.

The truth lived, will live on for generations to come... They began teaching again, not just children, but adults, farmers, elders, all the survivors... They taught history, science, ethics, resistance and they taught memory...

One afternoon late, Sipho sat beneath a tree, writing in his journal: "The regime may control the grid, for now... who are free control the story... They erase names and people; we speak to them... They try to rewrite facts and history, we remember it... They silence voices, we echo them."

He closed the journal and knew a seed are planted in the people...

Chapter 10: The Seed...

The rains came late that year... The sky hung heavy with dust and the fields cracked beneath the weight of waiting... But the people of the safe house and there are more of them, worked anyway - planting, because they must eat and keep on teaching, remembering... Sipho stood beneath the old acacia tree, watching the children recite stories. They spoke of freedom, of resistance, of names that had been erased but those names and people is living on in the mouth and minds of those who remember...

“Mandla,” one child said. “He asked questions.”

“Zanele,” said another. “She remembered.”

“Ayanda,” whispered a third. “She built the Archive.”

Sipho smiled, the stories had taken root and are spreading... People come and some people left the safe house to spread the truth and give others hope...

One morning, a figure appeared at the edge of the field... Tall, lean, wrapped in a worn jacket. Sipho squinted against the sun, there is something familiar about that figure... The figure stepped closer, then Sipho recognized the boy...

“Mandla,” Sipho breathed...

The boy was older now - his face sharper, his eyes deeper, he became a young man... You can see he is tired, he carried a satchel and a notebook, with him...

“They couldn’t erase me,” he said.

Sipho embraced him. “They tried.”

Mandla nodded. “But memory is stronger than silence.”

Later that evening, Mandla sat by the fire and told his story, to everyone who wants to listen... He told about Zone 9, how life has been there: harsh - isolated, monitored, stripped of connection... But the people there had hope and they remembered... They had whispered names... Shared stories, hidden journals...

“They called it exile,” Mandla said. “But it became a school.”

He had escaped with help from former teachers, farmers, elders. He had walked for days, carrying only his notebook and a seed...

“A real seed?” Sipho asked.

Mandla smiled. “A memory seed.”

Together, they took it to the hidden cave, the fault... Where all the other valuable’s where:

- Mandla’s notebook
- Zanele’s photo
- Ayanda’s journal
- The flash drive from Kwezi
- Sipho’s final entry

They closed the cave, erase their footprints and way to the cave, to the fault... Until the next time...

“We are The Uncoded. We remember. We resist. We rebuild.”

The next day, Siphon gathered the community...

"It's time," he said. "Time to grow."

Calling Mandla to talk, he stood before the people...

"They told us obedience was safety," he said. "But safety without freedom is a cage."

"We are the weapon." It comes out of the people...

Silence came over the people, then Siphon spoke: "This is our revolution."

Back in Johannesburg, the regime faltered... The broadcast had cracked the illusion, the crackdown had bred resentment, the silence had grown loud...

Minister Kgomoiso resigned and fled the country, The Civic Data Authority restructured...

The trust score system was "temporarily suspended." But The Uncoded knew better, they kept teaching, remembering and keep on resisting...

Years passed and the acacia tree grew tall... Its roots deepened, its branches stretched wide... Beneath it, Siphon sat, older now, busy writing in a new journal... Children played nearby, elders told stories, teachers taught truth...

"They built a system of forgetting. We built a forest of memory."

He closed the journal and smiled...

The Uncoded had become more than a movement, it had become a way of life... a Seed planted in silence... Now blooming in truth...

THE END...

Blurb...

What happens when your identity is scored, your freedom is conditional, and your memories are erased?

In the year 2029, South Africa has become a hyper-digitized society ruled by biometric surveillance, programmable currency, and a trust score system that governs every aspect of life... Sipho Maseko, a history teacher, begins to question the regime when his brightest student vanishes for refusing a biometric upgrade... As his own score plummets, Sipho is drawn into an underground network known as *The Uncoded* - a resistance built on memory, truth, and defiance.

From the shadows of Johannesburg to the safe houses of Limpopo, Sipho joins journalists, scientists, and forgotten citizens in a fight to preserve what the regime fears most: the past... Together, they hijack the national broadcast, expose the lies behind the climate crisis narrative, and plant the seeds of a new movement...

But in a world where silence is safety and obedience are currency, remembering becomes a revolutionary act...

The Uncoded is a haunting and hopeful dystopian novel about the power of truth, the resilience of memory and the quiet courage of those who refuse to be erased...