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*My Life in Crime* new article content ...

<i>My Life in Crime</i>	
<b>Author</b>	John Kiriamiti
<b>Country</b>	Kenya
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Series</b>	<i>My Life in Crime</i> trilogy
<b>Genre</b>	Crime fiction
<b>Publisher</b>	Spear Books (Kenya)
<b>Publication date</b>	1984
<b>Media type</b>	Hardback
<b>Pages</b>	216
<b>ISBN</b>	9966-46-192-2
<b>Followed by</b>	' <i>My Life with a Criminal</i> '

*My Life in Crime* is a 1984 novel by Kenyan author John Kiriamiti. It is a fictionalized account of Kiriamiti's criminality in Kenya during the 1960s and 1970s. The novel details Kiriamiti's crimes under the alias Jack Zollo that led to his imprisonment. It is the first novel in Kiriamiti's *My Life...* trilogy, which is currently being made into a film.

## Background

John Kiriamiti was a real-life criminal in Kenya during the 1960s and 1970s in the wake of the country's independence. Kiriamiti evaded the Kenyan police for all the crimes he committed until he was arrested in November 1970 on the eve of his wedding. He was charged and imprisoned on January 6, 1971 on counts of robbery. *My Life in Crime* was written and published while Kiriamiti was in jail. He was released in 1984, five months after the novel's publication.

## Synopsis

### Chapter One

Young John Kiriamiti is kicked out of secondary school, allegefily for organizing a strike. Rather than tell his parents and uncle of his expulsion, he pretends he is still in school in order to continue receiving money for school fees from them. He begins spending time in Nairobi, where he learns the workings of the city. John's family eventually finds out that he is no longer in school and orders him to return to his home in rural Thuita. Before even boarding the bus home, John plots his return to Nairobi. He soon returns to the city and his belongings are soon after his arrival. John involves the police and spends time at the police station, where he meets Wanjau. John settles in Nairobi and

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becomes a pickpocket under the alias John Zollo.

### **Chapter Two**

Jack has the desire to furnish his new apartment, but does not have the money to do so. He accepts a friend's, Captain Ngugi's, offer to be involved in a robbery that will earn him a large sum of money. Jack contemplates the harsh legal punishment for such crimes, especially those that are violent, but agrees anyway. Jack and Captain, along with a few other accomplices, successfully rob a white man of his money, causing Jack to walk away with six grand. He returns home, but leaves soon after, needing to get his mind off the guilt he feels from committing the robbery. He goes to Jericho Social Hall, where he runs into his sister Connie, whom he has not seen since running away to Nairobi years ago. Connie is now married, and she and her husband invite Jack to their house. The three watch the news at Connie's house and reported is the robbery in which Jack was involved. The news anchor gives a description of Jack's appearance and the gun he dropped when getting into the get-away car. Jack becomes paranoid and soon leaves Connie's house. She accompanies him on the walk home and questions Jack about what they just heard on the news. Jack chooses to be honest with Connie, who offers to help Jack buy the furniture for his place.

### **Chapter Three**

Jack and Connie continue spending time together. One day when Jack visits his sister's home, their mother is over, and she is overjoyed to see her son. His mother insists that he return with her for a visit and that he share with the family part of the money he has been earning. Jack is broke, though, and resorts to robbing again so as to not disappoint his family. In this robbery, he makes away with 10,000 dollars in Ugandan currency and travelers' cheques, which he exchanges for Kenyan currency before returning home with his mother. Jack finds that his family has moved into a new house and he realizes how much he prefers living in Nairobi than the rural village. Jack returns to Nairobi after three days at home and begins getting rid of the other, non-valuable items he stole from the car in his last robbery. While out one day, Jack picks up a lost student ID and becomes enamored with the girl pictured, Miriam Nyambui. Jack decides to visit the girl's school to return her ID. Jack spots Miriam and calls her over to give her the ID, then asks her to lunch. Miriam accepts the offer, and the two begin spending a lot of time together. Jack eventually decides to ask Milly's mother for her daughter's hand in marriage, but he is unable to breach the subject with the mother himself, so he gets a friend to accompany him to Milly's mom's shop where she sells beer. At first, Milly's mom does not give Jack a straight answer on his proposal to marry Milly. It is not until later, after Jack rescues Milly and her family when he finds them at their house suffering from food poisoning, that Milly's mother consents and even encourages Milly to move into Jack's apartment before they marry.

### **Chapter Four**

Jack becomes involved in another big robbery job, this time with his friend G.G.. The two plan to rob a rich white man whom they are told withdraws money from the bank in the same routine every month. Jack and G.G. have a couple days before the end of the month to plan the heist. Jack becomes nervous about the job, particularly because he knows he will have to use his gun for the first time. Jack and G.G., with the help of Kamande and Kagwaci, rob the man as he is leaving the bank with his large sum of money, but not before engaging with him in a gun fight. Kagwaci is shot by the man and consequently dies, which angers Jack. Jack, G.G., and Kagwaci divide the money amongst themselves, and Jack returns home, deciding to lay low for a while. Although he never talks about the job with anyone, word spreads and he becomes one of Nairobi's most wanted criminals. Jack stays around his apartment as much as possible, pulls a few small jobs here and there, and falls even more in love with Milly.

## Chapter Five

Jack and Milly join Captain at Small World Club for a meeting. A woman, who Jack believes to be a prostitute like most of the other women in their presence, arrives and asks for Jack Zollo. Jack identifies himself, and the woman becomes quite interested in him, even with Milly sitting at his side. The woman offers to buy all of Jack's drinks for the remainder of the night, then leaves the room. Returning in her place are a number of armed policemen, who ask for Jack. Jack succumbs to arrest without a fight and is taken to Central Police Station. Brainstorming how he can escape being found guilty for all his crimes, Jack decides to take on the name Albert Wanjohi instead of answering to Jack Zollo. Jack is beaten by the cops for giving them trouble and not answering to the name Zollo. Jack admits to himself that he is guilty of all the crimes of which he will be accused, especially since the police have his fingerprints associated with some of the crimes he committed. Jack spends a few days in jail and plots to escape. He approaches one of the drunkards in jail on lesser charges and persuades him to let Jack use his name to bail himself out. Jack, pretending to be Jadiel Gichoya, makes bail under the false name and flees the jail just as the police are realizing Jack's escape. Jack returns home, much to Milly's surprise. Milly asks Jack for them to finally marry, but Jack refuses, saying that he must instead flee the country for no less than six months. Milly agrees to the plan, but first asks Jack to stick around long enough to get two of his siblings situated in the house so that Milly can have company and return to her own job.

## Chapter Six

Jack searches for a car to take on his get-away journey from Kenya. In the process, Jack ends up doing a couple carjacking jobs for Mota, an Indian who owns a car garage, in order to keep from paying to have a car altered. The first carjacking goes off without a hitch. Jack then, under Mota's orders, attempts to steal a car from another Indian man whom Mota claims stole the car himself. Jack reports to Liberty Cinema to carry out the carjacking, but the man who "owns" the car swiftly stops him and orders Jack into the car to drive him to the police station. Jack thinks quickly and begins blackmailing the man, saying he knows he stole the car originally and that if he brings Jack to the police station, Jack will only incriminate him, and the man will be the one who ends up in jail. The man agrees to not only let Jack off the hook, but gives him anything he demands, so Jack makes out with the car and a large sum of money. The next day, Jack goes in the car to visit his family and retrieve his siblings Wambui and Richard, who will stay with Milly while Jack is out of the country. Jack returns to his and Milly's house with his siblings, but does not stay for long and departs soon after to flee Kenya. On his way out of town, Jack stops at Hallian's club, where he runs in to his old friends Ndung'u and Njoroge, who join Jack on his trip out of the country. Before leaving Kenya entirely, though, Jack stops at his family's house again to tell his mother that he will be away for a while. The three fleeing criminals then get on the road and drive toward the Ugandan border. They stop at a hotel in Nakuru, where Ndung'u and Njoroge end up getting themselves into drunken trouble. Jack reprimands the two for calling attention to themselves and says he is leaving promptly, with or without them. Ndung'u and Njoroge leave with Jack and the three stop again shortly after at a night club. There, they are approached by police for questioning, and Jack is the only of the three who does not resist arrest. The three are taken to the police station for questioning and are told their fingerprints will be taken in the morning to prove their identities and whether they are some of the wanted Nairobi criminals. Jack, knowing that his fingerprints will incriminate him, decides to take a razor to his hands and peels off the skin. The pain he puts himself through proves beneficial as Jack's prints do not identify him and he ends up leaving the police station with Ndung'u and Njoroge still captive. Jack resumes his fleeing from Kenya and drives to Uganda, stopping for a few days every now and then. His final destination is Bukavu, Congo where he stays with a girl named Linda for two months.

### **Chapter Seven**

Jack seeks a job in Congo and is led to a position through the help of his friend Hirji, an Indian hotel owner. Hirji gets Jack a job chaufferring for a Greek millionaire, Stephano, and his family. Jack leaves Linda and her apartment, much to Linda's sadness to live on the Greek family's farm. Stephano welcomes Jack as more than a laborer, but as a son, and the whole family happily includes Jack. He often accompanies them to the movies, visits them at work, and tells them stories of Kenya at dinner time. Jack becomes enamored with Stephano's secretary, Miss Makarios. Stephano even takes Jack with him to the bank at the end of the month to withdraw funds to pay his laborers' wages. Jack entertains the idea of staying in Congo the rest of his life instead of returning to Kenya.

### **Chapter Eight**

Jack finds himself in the middle of a love triangle with Stephano's daughter, Hellene, and his secretary, Elizabeth. Each woman tells him to stop spending time with the other, and both propose marriage. Meanwhile, Hellene's brother, Karamikos warns Jack of continuing his affair with Hellene. While out at a shop one day, Jack overhears the shopowners speaking in his native tongue. He hangs around the shop and eventually talks with the shop owners, Kamau and his wife, who are pleased to find out he is from the same tribe as them. Jack becomes friends with them, but under false appearances, as he tells them he is a political refugee instead of a fleeing criminal. Hellene visits Jack one night and again pressures him to marry her, saying that she is two months pregnant. Jack decides the best way to deal with the muddled situation in which he has found himself is to leave Congo. He plans to leave the same day Stephano goes to the bank to withdraw money for his laborers. So as to not cause suspicion, Jack visits Kamau and his wife, Karamikos, and Hirji before boarding a plane to Uganda the next day.

### **Chapter Nine**

Jack does one last favor for Karamikos the night before he is to leave Congo. Jack also writes a letter to Stephano, explaining why he has left his family and the country. Jack accompanies an unsuspecting Stephano to the bank, and boards a plane soon after for Uganda. Jack feels that he is in the clear and safely on his way to Uganda, but he is approached by the plane's captain and told he must get off the plane at the next layover in Astrida, Rwanda. There, Jack is questioned and detained by the Rwandan police. Jack schemes to flee the airport and asks to use the restroom, where he is able to escape from a window above the stall. He makes his way via cab and foot to the town center, where he approaches a shop owner, Silvester Mukasa who Jack admits to that he is the flier from the airport, and offers to help get Jack to Kenya. Mukasa introduces Jack to Davis Kiwanuka, who works for the E.A.A. and can help get Jack a flight to Entebbe, Kenya. After landing, Jack spends the night at Entebbe and leaves the next morning for Nairobi. There, he returns to his house to find his siblings, who have by now grown older, but not Milly.

### **Chapter Ten**

Jack is finally reunited with Milly, but Jack notices that she acts differently toward him than before he left Kenya. Jack adjusts back to life in Nairobi and soon feels comfortable returning to the city to see movies and the like. Jack learns that most of his old criminal friends are dead or in jail, which temporarily convinces him that he himself should no longer be a criminal. Jack soon, however, meets up with his long lost friend Captain and gets pulled into another job, this time robbing a rich Indian who owns a supermarket. Jack, sensing that Milly is unhappy with him and knowing of the impending job, promises to get her gifts. The job, however, does not go as planned and Jack returns home empty-handed. Milly returns home and surprised by Jack's presence. Milly's friend Jane visits soon after and tells Milly of the supermarket heist she witnessed. Milly suspects Jack might have been involved, but does not accuse him outright. Jack takes a two month break from jobs, but then becomes involved in another that he hopes will result in enough money that he can spoil Milly and retire from being a criminal.

## Chapter Eleven

Jack's mother and sister are visiting Nairobi, so he ventures to meet them at the O.T.C. Booking Office. On his way there, Jack is recognized and summoned by an old friend, Stanley. Stanley introduces Jack to Jackson Macharia, and asks Jack to join them for a meeting. The three go to Kagondo Bar, where Jack is expected anyway to pick up a package. Stanley reveals to Jack a plan to rob a bank in Naivasha, and Jack accepts only after he has completely felt out the situation and orders that a certain boy not be part of the heist for he knows him to be unreliable. Jack then reveals that Stanley only included him in the job because he owns a gun. Jack then goes to pick up his mother and sister at the O.T.C., then returns with them to his house, where Milly is to take care of them. Jack again meets Stanley at Kagondo Bar the next day to further plan the upcoming bank robbery, and Jack hires Captain Mgugu as the driver. Jack becomes involved in a verbal skirmish with Captain, and the Captain demands Jack tell him where he lives or else he will follow him home. Jack lies to the Captain and, believing the Captain will follow him anyway, leads him on the wrong trail to his house. On a Friday, Jack and his accomplices meet one last time to discuss and plan the bank robbery. Jack later returns home and Milly and the maid notice he is uneasy. Milly tries to talk Jack out of the robbery, but Jack does not listen. He then leaves the house and joins Stanley, Macharia, and Captain to journey to Naivasha where they are to rob a bank. Unforeseen circumstances at the bank complicate doing the job as swiftly as they would like, but the group soon do the job and flee in the getaway car. They notice, though, that they are being followed by a European. They lose him and then continue on their way home to Nairobi. The car, travelling at a high speed, comes across an accident between a bus and a car, and does not have time to properly stop. The car tries to circumvent the accident, but ends up rolling over multiple times. Civilians from the bus in the accident approach the car to help Jack and the others inside, but Jack fires warning shots and the civilians flee. Jack and Captain run in the same direction away from the scene of the accident.

## Chapter Twelve

Jack and Captain flee through the forest of Kenya so as to evade capture. Jack and Captain notice low-flying police airplanes and people with dogs searching for them. The two continue running without really knowing where they are heading, and Jack turns around once to see that Captain is no longer with him; he is now on his own. Jack comes across a boy with two dogs, and after firing warning shots that kill the two dogs, asks the boy where the town is. Jack continues in that direction, then comes upon a house into which he steals. Jack is forceful with the mother and kids, and the man who comes to visit them, and ends up harming the man. Jack feels for a while that he is safe in the house, and even takes out his money to count it, but the police are hot on his trail and a Land Rover soon appears outside the house. Jack flees through a back window and runs through a corn field until he comes across a kiosk owner and his driver. Jack threatens the men and orders them to drive him where he wants. One of the men asks if he is the fleeing criminal for whom the police are looking. Jack eventually kicks out the driver and drives the car himself to a hotel where he stays the night before returning to his apartment in Nairobi. Milly and the maid are home, and Milly, knowing what he has just done, tells him right away to no longer be a criminal. Jack knows Milly is right. Jack then spends a couple more days with his visiting mother and sister before they return home and he brainstorms what to do with his life now. Jack has to lay low, though, as Stanley is arrested and the police are searching for him.

## Chapter Thirteen

Milly and Jack decide to finally marry, and the two make preparations for the ceremony, which is to take place in Thuita. Milly leaves for Thuita ahead of Jack. When Jack does leave Nairobi, he calls for a self-hire car, and at the lot he spies two C.I.D. officers and Peter. Jack, thinking he has not been spotted, drives the car away, only to soon after have Peter's car and six other police vehicles tailing him in a car chase. The police shoot at Jack's car and break the windows. Jack eventually loses them and stops to get petrol for the car, where the station attendant realizes he has the back of his head is bleeding. Jack finally makes it to Thuita, where he asks a young boy to clean the mess in the car. The boy betrays Jack, though, and he is soon fleeing again from police. However, the police successfully shoot him, once in the arm, then twice in the leg, immobilizing him. Jack is swiftly arrested and transported to the police car to

take him to the station.

### Chapter Fourteen

On the day he was to be wed to Milly, Jack spends the day in the Central Police Station being questioned and tortured. He is later transported to a court, where he, Captain, Peter, and Stanley are all charged for robbing the Naivasha bank. Milly is present for the hearing, but does not speak to Jack and is visibly upset. All four plead not guilty, but all except Peter are sentenced to 25 years in prison and forty-eight lashes of the cane. They later, through an appeal, have their sentences reduced to twenty years. Jack, Stanley, and Captain are escorted to prison, where Jack writes his book and claims that he is a reformed man. Jack gives the book to G.G., an old friend who is also in prison, to edit, and G.G. suggests that Jack include more about being in prison. Jack ends the book on an unsure note of whether he will ever write more about his time in prison.

## Major Characters

- John Kiriamiti a.k.a. Jack Zollo - narrator who becomes a criminal after getting expelled from secondary school
- Miriam "Milly" Nyambui - girl with whom Jack falls in love after finding her lost school ID
- Anne Wanjiru - Jack's mother, a teacher by profession
- Captain Ngugi - a friend of Jack's who talks Jack into his first big robbery
- Connie - Jack's sister; first relative to come into contact with him after he runs away from home to Nairobi
- Hirji - Indian hotel owner who gets Jack a job in Congo
- Stephano - Greek millionaire for whom Jack works in Congo
- Hellene - Greek millionaire's daughter with whom Jack falls in love
- Karamikos - Greek millionaire's son who welcomes Jack into the family as a brother
- Miss Elizabeth Makarios - Stephano's secretary with whom Jack has an affair

## Themes

- Postcolonial crime
- Justice
- Religion
- Luck
- Truth vs. lies
- Role of news
- Guns and violence
- Anxiety and paranoia

## Critical Response

*My Life in Crime* was a best-selling novel in Kenya in the 1980s and has been reprinted ten times. According to the East African Educational Publishers Book Catalogue, Kiriamiti is the most published Spear Books author. It is cited as the first of many urban Kenyan "crime craze" books.

## Film Adaptation

*My Life in Crime* is currently being made into a movie by director Neil Schell. The film will star famous Nigerian actor Jim Iyke <sup>[3]</sup> as Jack and other actors include Ainea Ojiambo, Janet Kirina, Abubakar Mwenda, Melvin Alusa, Jeff Koinange, Lenana Kariba and Eddy Kimani. Kiriamiti himself may make a cameo in the film. Production for the movie reportedly costs 35 million KES (\$412 thousand USD).

## See Also

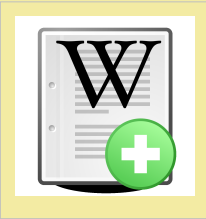
- List of African writers by country <sup>[4]</sup>
- List of Kenyan artists <sup>[4]</sup>

## References

- [1] [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia\\_talk:Articles\\_for\\_creation/My\\_life\\_in\\_crime&action=purge](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia_talk:Articles_for_creation/My_life_in_crime&action=purge)
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