

PIETER-DIRK UYS

African

TIMES

PENINSULA
in association with
MISSING INK



This playscript is proudly sponsored by Rovos Rail.

Published in 2015 by Peninsula
c/o Evita se Perron, Darling Station, Darling, 7345, South Africa
www.pdu.co.za

in association with
Missing Ink, PO Box 15509, Vlaeberg, 8018, South Africa
www.missingink.co.za

© Text Pieter-Dirk Uys 2015

ISBN 978-0-9946702-9-8

All rights reserved. No part of this script may be performed, reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission.

All enquiries including professional/amateur stage performances should be addressed to pdu@evita.co.za

Cover by Stefan Hurter
Design and typesetting by User Friendly
Printed and bound by Digital Print Solutions

CONTENTS

Introduction 5

Biographical note 6

Characters 7

Setting 7

Time 7

Stage history 8

Cast 8

Production team 8

The play 9



INTRODUCTION

South Africa, once a celebrated democracy that came into being in 1994 with a government of national unity led by Nelson Mandela, is now in a different world. The rainbow is fading into a monochrome political horizon. The United Nations has lifted an embargo against the Tswane Regime. A senior cabinet minister, Dr MZNkosi, returns from a sanctions-breaking visit to Beijing with his youngest daughter Karabo, who was in self-imposed exile in China. Nkosi comes home with a new wife, much to the disapproval of his eldest daughter, Sibongile, and to the delight of her younger sister Nomsa.

Sibongile is forced to take control of the family after her father's sudden death. Rumours of an assassination threaten to overtake the truth of his heart attack. The family are sidelined by the government and wait alone on their estate, Ubuntu. The fabric of their society is unravelling faster than they could have ever dreamed. Afrophobia rules the land. Violence and fear is in the air. Electricity and water are too scarce to share with just anyone. The security cluster, intrigue and corruption confuse them even more.

All they have left are images of their country at its best: television images of its beauty, old news clips of Nelson Mandela's embracing smile ... The Nkosi family are forced to shed their prejudices and fantasies and confront the reality of their situation. Nostalgia for a past struggle is no match for the chilling expectations of the struggle ahead.

Pieter-Dirk Uys says about the play: *'In 1975 I wrote a story about an Afrikaans family in their beautiful Cape Dutch home, secure in their political and social status, and yet trapped behind high walls and state-of-the-art security for their safety. It made shocking sense in the play God's Forgotten. Now forty years later, the story has reinvented itself to reflect a new reality, also set in the not so distant future.'*

Is it a white comedy or a black tragedy? Whose side will you find yourself on?

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Pieter-Dirk Uys is celebrating his 70th year as the first Arts Icon at the 2015 National Arts Festival. He directs his new play *African Times* and performs three one-man shows: *A Part Hate A Part Love*, a revue for Evita Bezuidenhout; *Never too Naked*, a cabaret with Bambi Kellermann, and *The Echo of a Noise*, a memoir. He lives in the West Coast town of Darling where his unique entertainment hublet, Evita se Perron, attracts an audience from all over South Africa, Africa and the world. He is working on various projects for the next ten years and beyond.

CHARACTERS

SIBONGILE NKOSI-SKOSANA, *the eldest daughter*

NOMSA NKOSI, *her sister*

KARABO NKOSI, *their younger sister*

LIU CHEN (GUGU), *their father's new wife*

MR VORSTER (*voice only*)

SETTING

The setting of the play is Ubuntu, the home of His Excellency Comrade Dr MZ Nkosi, a South African statesman.

The action takes place in the large living room in the Cape Dutch homestead near Cape Town. The furniture is antique Cape Dutch and includes a large dining table and chairs. All the furnishings are covered with large white sheets at the start of the play. French windows lead to a patio. A grand piano. Large South African flag. Painting of Minister Nkosi. A large TV screen on the one wall. A few objects that underline the futuristic feel of the setting. A combination of heritage and sci-fi.

All we see outside the windows is a rough wall, which runs round the house – we cannot see the top of it.

TIME

The time is the future in democratic South Africa.

STAGE HISTORY

World premiere of this play at the National Arts Festival in the Rhodes Theatre Grahamstown on 2 July 2015. Produced by the National Arts Festival in association with PD Uys Productions.

CAST

Sibongile Nkosi-Skosana Peggy Mongoato
Vorster Stefan Hurter
Nomsa Nkosi Zoliswa Kawe
Liu Chen Sue Pylar
Karabo Nkosi Ntombi Makhutshi

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director Pieter-Dirk Uys
Stage manager Stefan Hurter
Assistant stage manager Omnia Grobler
Company manager Arks Smith
Set designer Nicholas de Klerk

There are two acts, but for the NAF 2015 the play will run without an interval.

Night. The dining room is dark. Quiet.

SIBONGILE's voice is heard:

SIBONGILE *(Off.)* There's water everywhere! For heaven's sake, can someone do something? Hello? *(In Xhosa.)* Jackson? Jackson! *Where is everybody? (In Afrikaans.)* Maria? *Ek is hier. Ek weet ek is laat. Jammer. (She enters, elegantly dressed, carrying a bunch of flowers.)* Where is everybody? *(She struggles to get the lights on digitally.)* Oh, come on, don't tell me this thing doesn't work? *(She switches the lights on at the wall. Sees the room in confusion.)* Oh, for heaven's sake! Bongani? *(In Xhosa.)* The painting of this room was meant to be finished last week! When I spoke to them, they promised ... *(Pause.)* Bongani?

Slight pause. Then VORSTER's voice fills the room.

VORSTER The proofs of the *SECPOL Review* are waiting on your desk. They've just arrived.

SIBONGILE Yes, I expected them yesterday. Wait a minute, is that Vorster?

VORSTER Yes, comrade.

SIBONGILE Where is Bongani?

VORSTER A family tragedy in KZN. I'm standing in for him.

SIBONGILE They let you out?

VORSTER The case was dismissed. The state carries all costs. If you're not happy with me ...

SIBONGILE No, no. Do you mean yesterday's incident?

VORSTER The massacre, yes. His wife and two kids.

SIBONGILE Bongani loved those little brats. Send him something nice from me. What do people regard as 'nice' nowadays?

VORSTER A one-way first class ticket to New York.

SIBONGILE does not react to his joke.

SIBONGILE Why wasn't I told? (*She takes out a cellphone.*)

VORSTER I don't know, comrade. We're pretty understaffed up here ...

SIBONGILE Okay. Well, I'm here. This room is a mess! How long does it take the department to finish on schedule?

VORSTER Service delivery.

SIBONGILE I'm talking about the minister's residence, not some school. The painting was supposed to happen while he was away. But then again how would you know? Damn, no internet service either!

VORSTER The department says there's been a delay ...

SIBONGILE The proofs can wait. I need time to study them. If I remember correctly, the whole of section three needed a rethink.

VORSTER The Security Blue priority has been extended to embrace all deviations ...

SIBONGILE The whole maximum-security clause reads like something from the old days ...

VORSTER Blame it on apartheid!

SIBONGILE You might alert the bureau that I expect them to submit something a little more original and effective.

VORSTER They won't like it.

SIBONGILE We'll discuss it after tomorrow's press conference. I think the comrade minister should be fully informed, but I want him to have a good rest first.

VORSTER Very well.

SIBONGILE You've been briefed on all this?

VORSTER Yes, comrade.

SIBONGILE And there's a problem with a water leak outside. Send some people over who can also finish this painting job. The minister does not enjoy eating off a tray in the library.

VORSTER sighs.

I heard that, Vorster.

VORSTER Heard what?

SIBONGILE That little Afrikaans sigh. Don't worry, as from tomorrow we'll be back to normal.

VORSTER Hopefully.

SIBONGILE We passed some visitors on the freeway ...

VORSTER Your escort has made a report.

SIBONGILE No, Vorster, the news of my father's arrival might have been leaked.

VORSTER I doubt that ...

SIBONGILE There is to be a total security alert. Round up those visitors and accommodate them.

VORSTER Not my department, comrade.

SIBONGILE Just see that it is passed on to the right people. And have that water rupture attended to. We cannot be seen to be carelessly wasting water now, can we, Mr Vorster?

VORSTER It's Colonel Vorster now. Yes, will that be all?

SIBONGILE My sister has been unwell ...

VORSTER Yes, the report is on my screen.

SIBONGILE Has Nomsa been found?

VORSTER No.

SIBONGILE Well, get your people to find her and tidy her up. I've enough on my hands as it is. Oh, and stay with me. I'll discuss the arrangements as they come to mind. Actually, no – switch off the GM2, I want some privacy.

VORSTER I'd rather not do that, comrade ...

SIBONGILE I am armed, Mr Vorster. *(Pause.)* Oh, Vorster?

The GM2 is switched off. He can't hear her. She activates her cellphone.

Vorster?

VORSTER Your GM2 is now operational.

SIBONGILE Alert that bald man at Channel 6 ... what's his name ... the comrade at the head of Current Affairs this month. Inform him I intend to use my personal hairdresser tomorrow. And suggest that they send me the make-up unit on time for a change. I'll be wearing black, green and gold.

VORSTER Traditional? That's a nice change, comrade ...

During this NOMSA has entered with a plate of snacks. Sloppily dressed. SIBONGILE becomes aware of her presence. Levels a pistol at her.

SIBONGILE I could've shot you ...

NOMSA *(Sniffs.)* Flowers?

SIBONGILE Nomsa!

NOMSA When's he arriving?

SIBONGILE I could've shot you!

NOMSA Me too. *(She also has a pistol..)* Stick 'em up, sister. Bang, bang, you're dead. *(Laughs.)*

SIBONGILE takes the gun from NOMSA.

SIBONGILE What is happening here?

NOMSA You can tell that forever-sighing Bongani I've got my own little gun.

SIBONGILE Bongani lost family in an incident.

NOMSA The usual?

SIBONGILE No, his family is not foreign. Vorster's back.

NOMSA Vorster? That piece of Afrikaans shit!

SIBONGILE Shhhh!

NOMSA Is the thing off?

SIBONGILE They've been looking for you all over the place.

NOMSA I'm sure. Bongani in a panic, my hideous Corporal Bengu in a flap. One of his contact lenses is lost again. God, he gets on my damn nerves!

SIBONGILE Nomsa, where are Jackson and Gogo Maria?

NOMSA I was scared. It can become very still here, at Ubuntu.

Pause. They listen to the silence.

SIBONGILE He's coming home.

NOMSA I can feel it. Those damn flowers give me hay fever.

SIBONGILE He might be in the country already, I don't know.

NOMSA Since when can we fly across Africa. Oh? By sea? How did he get in?

SIBONGILE That's confidential.

NOMSA You mean our submarines now actually work?

SIBONGILE Who told you?

NOMSA Is there any other way in?

SIBONGILE *(Calls.)* Jackson! *(She starts clearing the sheets off the furniture. This can take some time, as each piece of furniture is uncovered till the rich brown wood dominates.)* I tried to phone you from my car. Bongani has been trying to contact you since yesterday. All we hear on your GM2 is your corporal's radio. Why aren't you at your flat? It's past nine.

NOMSA Already? Another day's gone ...

SIBONGILE The day will come, Nomsa, when uTata's name won't keep you out of trouble.

NOMSA I want to go out. I like the night air.

SIBONGILE It's illegal.

NOMSA Not for us; for them!

SIBONGILE Don't start all that again ...

NOMSA Just another one of your 'security measures' ...

SIBONGILE Which protect you too! Help me here ...

They start resetting some furniture.

Come here. What on earth is this? (*She takes something out of NOMSA's hair.*)

NOMSA It's the hairclip I got from Mama Albertina on the day of our first election. Oh, leave me alone, Sibongile, I was lonely. Forever alone, I had to do something new. Anyway, I also wore this when I sang 'Nkosi Sikelela' with the school choir at Madiba's inauguration. It's my life, this little relic. No one ever writes about my life on Facebook. I have to do my own research in the old cupboards!

SIBONGILE I don't ask the social media to write all that nonsense about me, Nomsa. That's what they do. They have freedom of speech ...

NOMSA snorts pointedly.

Please don't attack me about things that I just have to accept as part of the job.

NOMSA But it is nice, isn't it, to coo like a bird of prey in the splintered tops of the trees? The day will come, big sister, when our father's name won't be enough to keep your corruption off the iPads.

SIBONGILE Where are the staff! Jackson? (*She phones on her cell.*)

NOMSA The water got into their rooms. They're on holiday.

SIBONGILE Who's on holiday?

NOMSA Jackson, Gogo Maria and old Mugabe. I okayed their applications this morning. Our selfie's on the website. They've gone. I told you, I'm alone here, me and Mama Albertina's hairclip.

SIBONGILE But uTata ...

NOMSA Your security measures were too successful. How was I supposed to know? No one tells me anything. After all, I'm just the weak-minded one, the 'sickie' to keep the truth from!

SIBONGILE I've never tried to keep things from you ...

NOMSA Oh, then why can't I drive my own car? That revolting, repulsive Bengu gets on my nerves with his constant arse-creeping and those stupid contact lenses. Besides, Mrs Nkosi-Skosana, he's a rotten driver! I want to drive my own car where and when I like!

SIBONGILE Yes, yes ...

NOMSA Yes, yes. Well, the *amakwerekwere* have gone home. Shame, it really looks like we two princesses will have to play at being handmaids to the big *Induna!*

SIBONGILE Will you be quiet! (*Speaks into her cell.*) Vorster? Check on the Ubuntu website. Jackson, Gogo Maria and ... (*To NOMSA.*) ...what is old Mugabe's name?

NOMSA Robert?

SIBONGILE Vorster, there's another old Zim guest. We have our own name for him. There's been a misunderstanding here and they've been sent home. I don't know which SADC area they belong to. They're probably still on the bus. Get them back. Vorster? Are you there?

VORSTER I'm here, Comrade Nkosi-Skosana.

SIBONGILE What are you doing?

VORSTER Drinking a lukewarm cup of department coffee, if you really must know.

NOMSA *(Sarcastically.)* Poor Vorster.

SIBONGILE Please report a ruptured water pipe in the vehicle compound.

VORSTER I see that was filed two days ago.

SIBONGILE Two days ago? Gushing water is like leaving a bank vault open! Who is sleeping on the job!

VORSTER We are surrounded by fifty million unemployable people who can't even dig their own graves.

SIBONGILE *(Icily.)* Don't be satirical, Colonel Vorster. It doesn't find favour in this house.

VORSTER I'm sorry, comrade.

SIBONGILE I want our people back immediately.

VORSTER Yes, we'll fly them down from wherever they're detained.

NOMSA No! Vorster, don't fly them ...

SIBONGILE Shhhh. By the way, I've found my sister.

VORSTER So it seems.

SIBONGILE breaks the frequency.

SIBONGILE Don't you ever do that again! Don't interfere when I'm talking to the department!

NOMSA They mustn't fly them down, please, Sibongile! Old Gogo Maria will die. You know how terrified she is of heights.

SIBONGILE No one asked you to send them away.

NOMSA They long for their wives, their children, their grandchildren. They're not all as independent as their Comrade Sibongile; they need to be with their people.

SIBONGILE And what do you mean by that?

NOMSA Gogo Maria cries. She's scared they'll forget her back there in the township, in the slum wherever home is. These are people with whom you are playing at being God, Sibongile, people who will not forget. Look, if they must be brought back here, okay, but don't let the Department force Gogo Maria to fly. Sibongile, Gogo Maria brought us up!

SIBONGILE And her son threatened to shoot our father.

NOMSA Nonsense, he just wanted to be allowed to see his mother. He was trying to attract attention. You know how emotional Coloured people get?

SIBONGILE With a gun in his bag?

NOMSA You have a gun in your bag!

SIBONGILE People once took this land from us with a gun. We have no alternative than to keep it with a gun.

NOMSA Okay, blame the whites ... put away your little pistol, Mrs Nkosi-Skosana, we're safe in Ubuntu. (*Reads.*) 'Cape Town, 14 July 2009 ...'

SIBONGILE What's that?

NOMSA I found it in Karabo's scrapbook. From ... Joshua. Who was Joshua?

SIBONGILE I don't know. It's none of your business. Put it back where you found it.

NOMSA It was loose at the back. 'Thank you for your lecture notes. I hope I pass.' Joshua? Wasn't this Joshua that Jewish activist?

SIBONGILE I don't know. It really doesn't interest me.

NOMSA reads part of the letter. Then:

NOMSA Christ, was this it? I knew there was a reason Karabo left a year later. I knew there was some problem in her relationship with this Joshua, but what does this mean? He couldn't come and eat at our table because he was a Jew?

SIBONGILE A Zionist! Activist!

NOMSA Kara's boyfriend, that's all!

SIBONGILE Mixing with them was against Party protocol. You remember all that confusion. (*She sighs.*) Imagine this Joshua at Minister Nkosi's table? Anyway, it was so long ago, Nomsa ...

NOMSA And so she packed up and left and you still call her names. How pathetic. It still all looked so simple then, 14 July 2009. It was near the end of the long Mandela honeymoon and the beginning of a new madness.

SIBONGILE You've not taken your medication, have you? It has to be taken on time!

NOMSA Sometimes I hope it's all going to end in a few minutes. Everything. Then I can only say thank God we'll all be gone and won't have to apologise for allowing precious freedom to just slip away, drip by drop. No official investigation, because there'll be no one who will admit remembering what we left behind.

SIBONGILE What are you snivelling about now?

NOMSA One day something will happen to uTata or this country, and then we'll be on our own. Then there won't be anyone to nervously open doors for you. Then you'll have to spell your name over the GM2, because the world will have forgotten about Sibongile Nkosi-Skosana, Ubuntu's pushy comrade guardian angel.

SIBONGILE Thank God that losers like you don't run this country. I can just say thank God for small mercies.

NOMSA It's difficult enough not to enjoy my elitist life here. Please don't make me responsible for the reasons for my happiness.

SIBONGILE First things first: the catering. All those people. Now, on which document do I keep the official lists ... Vorster, talk to me?

VORSTER Yes, comrade?

SIBONGILE The official guest list for tomorrow, pages eight and nine of Document 8743, will you find it, please? Nomsa, wash your face, that stuff ruins your skin ...

NOMSA uTata's little darling. Go wash your little face, Princess, the people are coming ...

SIBONGILE Shhhh.

VORSTER I have Document 8743. There are three Security Blues. They'll need clearance.

SIBONGILE Blues? Don't be silly, these aren't Press people, they are the minister's friends ... (*She refers to her iPad.*) I don't understand, Vorster, I don't have this information ...

VORSTER Classified information, of course, Mrs Nkosi-Skosana. I'll have to ... (*Pause.*) Comrade, I've just been informed of subversion within the safety radius outside Ubuntu.

SIBONGILE What has that got to do with me?

VORSTER SECPOL will be sending reinforcements. The minister will be brought straight to the department. He has valuable information about the expected ending of the United Nations embargo.

SIBONGILE That's just a matter of time, Vorster.

VORSTER The recent xenophobic attack in KZN won't help us.

SIBONGILE We don't use that word. The UN blockade was an overreaction and now it's over. My father ...

VORSTER I just wanted to warn you, comrade. The cameras on circuit north-west are still out of order. I know they were supposed to be ...

SIBONGILE Just confirm electrification of the main walls.

VORSTER That has been done. I'd like to keep your GM2 open, just for safety.

NOMSA No, damn it, is there no privacy left!

Pause.

SIBONGILE Mmm ... no.

VORSTER But, comrade, open GM2 procedure is a primary security measure...

SIBONGILE No, if SECPOL does its job properly, there should be no need for GM2. Thank you, Vorster.

Pause.

NOMSA Thanks, I hate that thing. And that accent! Isn't he a grandson to that Boer prime minister on whose watch Biko was murdered?

SIBONGILE The GM2 is for your own safety. I'd better get back to the department immediately to meet the minister ...

NOMSA No, please stay here. Look, Vorster didn't ask you to go, did he?

SIBONGILE I don't want to be late ...

NOMSA Look, I'll ... I'll find us something nice to eat, put on some music. I have lovely things on my iPod. What do you fancy? Remind you of our soirées? You always played your violin.

SIBONGILE And why not?

NOMSA Unforgettable, your fiddle. Proof that Eurocentricity is catching.

SIBONGILE Our musical evenings were always wonderful ...

NOMSA Good, I'll find us something tuneful but cultured, and then I'll cook you a perfect ... hard-boiled egg!

They laugh. NOMSA exits to kitchen but comes back concerned.

What is this Security Blue?

SIBONGILE Confidential.

NOMSA sighs, annoyed.

Well, Security Blue exists when all forms of departmental safety measures have been withdrawn. Security Blue suspects are stripped of their GM2 facilities, weapons and guards. 'Unnecessary for the survival of the nation'. I wonder who they are?

NOMSA Don't let's think about them. Hey, I counted fourteen spare bedrooms here today. I thought there were only twelve.

SIBONGILE Fourteen. It was meant for a big family in those old days.

NOMSA Imagine how scared those Boere were knowing that when the Communists took over, seven villages would live in this house: the former Laager Excelsior. Today I seemed to notice the garden for the first time. The party probably bought it for our family as a jigsaw-puzzle, it looks so perfect. The birds must fly over with crossed legs: shame, our perfect piece of paradise.

Breaking glass off. SIBONGILE finds her pistol.

VORSTER Comrade, your GM2 is operational. Speak from wherever you are.

NOMSA Your camera in here is working, Vorster. Look on your screen! *(She waves and sticks out her tongue.)*

VORSTER There's just been a small incident down at your west gate. It is now under complete control. A SECPOL squadron has taken over from your military guard. Comrade Nkosi-Skosana, can you hear me?

NOMSA We can all hear you, Vorster! There was a sound of glass breaking outside! Why?

VORSTER The children threw bottles over the walls. It's all under control.

NOMSA Will you keep GM2 on? For our safety?

VORSTER Miss Nkosi, it's all under control. If you need your privacy, your GM2 can safely be switched off.

NOMSA Sarcastic drip!

SIBONGILE Thank you, Vorster. *(To window.)* Bottles ... they dare send their children to throw their bottles against the walls of Ubuntu!

NOMSA Good practice. Empty bottles tonight, petrol bombs tomorrow.

SIBONGILE It's very late. I'd rather you were taken back to your place.

NOMSA I had to escape from there, Sibongile.

SIBONGILE But Doctor Steyn ...

NOMSA To hell with Doctor Steyn! Dear God, I'm not an invalid! After all, I was only raped!

SIBONGILE Nomsa, don't allow yourself to remember ...

NOMSA How can I forget? Didn't that experience change my life? Look how you treat me, always with a reminder of that moment?

SIBONGILE Yes, hate them, but don't destroy yourself!

NOMSA addresses a school assembly.

NOMSA Learners? I have some very bad news. Last night, on her way home from Beyers Naude High School, our most beloved teacher, 'Princess Nkosi', daughter of our great statesman, found herself under a pyramid of visitors and had herself well and truly fucked! (*To SIBONGILE.*) How can I forget? The taste of the earth is still fresh on my tongue.

Pause. SIBONGILE pretends not to be involved; works her cell.

I was bored at home, damn it! I did everything and found nothing new in my life. I've seen it all and it stinks. I even tried to sleep with my Corporal Bengu.

SIBONGILE Good.

NOMSA You're not listening.

SIBONGILE Yes, yes, I'm listening. Ah, service is back ...

NOMSA What did I say?

SIBONGILE You tried to sleep with Corporal Bengu ... what?

NOMSA Hello? (*Waves at SIBONGILE.*) You know, that pimply Gerald Bengu, sweet twenty-seven going on for twelve? Oh, Sibongile, please, he was one of the boys from my class at Beyers Naude, still calls me 'Miss'.

SIBONGILE That I have to waste time like this ...

NOMSA All he'd do is give his life in defence of my revolting little cage: die for Comrade Miss Nkosi. Come on, where's your sense of humour? Oh, what a pointless question ... Anyway, I made such a fuss, bitching over the GM2, that the department was forced to give me a permit to come here. Don't you ever check the website?

SIBONGILE It was down for hours. I wonder what the minister achieved in Asia ...

NOMSA You're talking about the minister? Or our father?

SIBONGILE ... in Beijing, face to face with the leadership. What an incredible breakthrough for us. Damn the UN for turning us into a pariah. This is still Mandela's Rainbow Nation!

NOMSA Only on DSTV. Come on, we looked the other way when our own people killed visitors for being hard workers, for selling cheaper food ...

SIBONGILE Simply for stealing their water.

NOMSA How can you people politicise water?

SIBONGILE Only party members have access to fresh water. It's nothing new. Other countries do the same.

NOMSA And they can't even blame apartheid. Anyway, on our way here, we had to pass through a raid, sirens

shrieking, crawling through the foreign masses, countless fingers clawing at the car windows to draw our attention to their demands ...

SIBONGILE We'll probably be televised tomorrow.

NOMSA Water please? Sanitation please? Lights would be nice! Jobs? Food? Ebola vaccine for my kids? Permits to remain? Just to live? Please?

SIBONGILE The minister in Beijing is his final step to the presidency, just in time for the next general election.

NOMSA ... little children, hands outstretched, women wailing, men bleeding next to the road.

SIBONGILE Lies!

NOMSA Yes. Lies. No one screamed or clawed at the car or bled. They just stood at the side of the road behind the barbed wire, across from the guns – Somali faces watching, Ethiopians waiting. Some Congolese even smiled. I pressed my face against the tinted glass and cried.

Dogs barking and police whistles are heard off.

Something's brewing, I can feel it.

SIBONGILE I feel quite nauseous. I'm not used to sitting still for so long.

Pause.

NOMSA I can see a grey hair.

SIBONGILE Don't worry, I still have enough energy in reserve for a few more years. Let's discuss tomorrow's reception ...

NOMSA For God's sake ...

SIBONGILE We must do something, Nomsa. The silence is driving me mad! We must do something, even if it's only always for tomorrow.

NOMSA I want to watch TV.

She switches it on. We see footage of Nelson Mandela's walk to freedom on 11 February 1990.

SIBONGILE But uTata ...

NOMSA Shhhh.

We watch the sisters watch, remembering, forgetting. Then suddenly, brutally, all the lights go out. Blackout except for a blue wash from outside and the red emergency glow from within.

SIBONGILE Damn!

VORSTER Comrade Nkosi-Skosana?

SIBONGILE What is happening now?

VORSTER Classified info: a slight change of plan. Comrade, it seems your father has arrived. His motorcade will stop at Ubuntu before coming to the department. The *SECPOL Review* is being delivered to you by hand. We have a top priority rating on it.

SIBONGILE Yes, yes ...

VORSTER I should've warned you. Another power outage is due ...

SIBONGILE Yes, we know. This one was not scheduled.

VORSTER The 1990 Mandela release you are watching can be accessed from official channels, in case you wish to see the ending.

SIBONGILE We know the ending.

NOMSA It was a happy ending.

VORSTER Or I can send it straight to your iPad?

SIBONGILE Why doesn't our emergency lighting kick in!

VORSTER Ubuntu's solar-power generator is still broken, comrade. Bongani's records show that you were informed last Tuesday and you said, and let me quote: 'The minister won't be expected back for some time so there's no rush,' unquote.

SIBONGILE Yes, yes, whatever. Thank you, Vorster.

VORSTER Your GM2 is now operational.

Pause.

NOMSA I wonder if he saw Karabo over there. I always think about her, especially here at Ubuntu.

SIBONGILE She's an exile.

NOMSA She's our sister!

SIBONGILE Sold out her country and her people in exchange for 'love'!

NOMSA She's free, Sibongile.

SIBONGILE She walked away. I don't know her.

NOMSA Then let me remind you: Karabo Nkosi, Ubuntu's little Christian, until one day brotherly love became a liability and overnight she became a traitor to the cause. If you may not love her Zionist neighbour, Sibongile, at least remember your younger sister.

SIBONGILE Be quiet! Go and do something to your appearance. Wasting my time like this. Sometimes you're worse than a snotty-nosed brat!

NOMSA Brat? Mine would've been a Congolese bastard ...

Sirens and motorcade heard approaching off.

SIBONGILE He's here! And I have no power!

NOMSA Help me with my hair ...

SIBONGILE What? We've sat around all night and now you ask?

NOMSA Say I won't be long ... For God's sake, he's just my father, what's the matter with me! What must I do? Tell me!

SIBONGILE Wash your face, look carefully in the mirror and then you'll know what to do.

NOMSA exits. SIBONGILE fusses around, prepares to greet her father. LIU's voice is heard off.

LIU (*Off.*) ... of course you know all those stories one hears about lions still roaming the streets? With this huge estate outside I can well believe it. All those flashing blue lights made it even more difficult to see much in the dark. I'll drop this here. (*She enters.*) Oh, hello. My shoes are ruined. All that gushing water outside. And I read somewhere that water is so scarce here? Never mind, what do I know. What a beautiful old house, so romantic in this light. I can't talk, they're

waiting for me. Would it be all right if I just left this here? (*She enters with her suitcase.*) I'm Liu.

SIBONGILE Oh?

LIU Yes.

SIBONGILE Good.

LIU And you're Sibongile.

SIBONGILE Yes, I know.

LIU Don't tell me ... Nkosi's eldest daughter?

SIBONGILE Nkosi?

LIU He's waiting in the car. Just stopped by so that this could be delivered to you. Very secret hush-hush. Hard copy too? Can't hack hard copy.

LIU hands SIBONGILE the SECPOL Review.

Look, I'd better go. He gets so impatient ...

SIBONGILE What?

LIU We'll be back later and then we can talk. So much to catch up on. But first a meeting with the cabinet at some department. It never ends, does it? Politics, politics, right down the line.

LIU takes out her selfie-stick and goes to SIBONGILE and takes a selfie. She runs her hand across the table top.

No IKEA ... (*Looks around the room.*) Bit musty in here? Anyway, I must run. See you later, Sibongile.

SIBONGILE I see no need for you to come back.

LIU Nkosi will be impossible to live with if I don't ...

SIBONGILE Don't call him that! My father is a great man!

LIU I know, comrade. That's why I married him. Bye.

LIU exits. SIBONGILE stands stunned. KARABO enters. Pause.

KARABO Hello, Sibongile.

Sirens heard leaving off. Pause.

uTata told me your husband was killed in the troubles. Father told me so many things. The last eight years sound like a bad TV horror series. *(Pause.)* She might come across as superficial, but she's very nervous of all this. She's Chinese, you get used to them after a while. He loves her very much. He's getting old, Sibongile, he needs youth to help him forget his mistakes.

SIBONGILE Don't talk about him in that tone, you little bitch! Old? The day you turned your back on him and ran away, he became old. Because of you – the greatest mistake of his life. Traitor!

KARABO That's over now ...

SIBONGILE I remember it so well. Ma was still alive. We didn't know we'd only have her for a few months longer. Imagine what you did to her in her sickly state. You probably killed her!

KARABO Cancer killed her.

SIBONGILE She was alive. Our windows were full of sun then – no concrete, no soldiers, no tinted glass. We used to walk on the beach at weekends and laugh together. We were complete. And then you crippled us. 'I can't

stay with you, my family. If you force me to make a choice between family and future, I choose Joshua.' You accused your father of stealing your self-respect, of making this Jew a second-class citizen. Little Karabo was not prepared to change her mind for the sake of party protocol, of the family.

KARABO Yes, I remember – I was young and in love. Besides I still won't regard anyone different from me as a second-class citizen!

SIBONGILE And so little Karabo sold out to the Zionists and killed her mother. She died of a broken heart, Karabo, not cancer!

KARABO She was eaten up by cancer. For years! At least she didn't suffer.

SIBONGILE Oh yes, you see the suffering of the suppressed Israelites so keenly, but the agony in your own family you push aside with ease. After all, family is only just family. So? The publicity in the Zionist press helped? Good job in Tel Aviv?

KARABO I didn't do it for publicity.

SIBONGILE But you see, little sister, you were wrong. We're still here. Jerusalem has become the smoking ruin. Nothing has changed for us, Karabo.

KARABO Tinted glass?

SIBONGILE For privacy.

KARABO Bullet-proof?

SIBONGILE Our democracy is stronger than ever before. The troubles, which you no doubt watched on CNN, just made us stronger.

KARABO And so many died.

SIBONGILE Yes. We'd just decided to start a family when he was called to duty and I became the most glamorous black widow this country has ever seen. Their damn uprising was our own fault. At first we welcomed them here. After all, we were all Africans. We tried to get them to stand on their own feet, encouraged them to go into business. 'Entrepreneur' – wasn't that the password? It was supposed to make them proud. We hoped it would make them work. Ungrateful fools, always complaining about service delivery. And yet, in spite of their deaths, our losses, we are stronger than ever before. The fact that you came back proves it.

KARABO Proves what?

SIBONGILE You had to share in our security. Israel isn't easy living, is it?

KARABO No.

SIBONGILE I knew you'd never lose your taste for comfort. You're a true South African, Karabo Nkosi. And now, if you'll excuse me, I have some work to do. *(Pause.)* Kara, who is this girl?

NOMSA enters in an uncomfortable dress. Sees KARABO.

NOMSA You've been arrested.

KARABO No.

NOMSA Repatriated?

KARABO No.

NOMSA You're so thin, you can't be eating properly.

KARABO No, I eat.

SIBONGILE Karabo?

NOMSA The Zionists had you deported.

KARABO No.

NOMSA Something's happened to uTata! Something we don't know about?

Pause.

KARABO No.

NOMSA Why the pause?

KARABO Sibongile will tell you.

SIBONGILE Sibongile's forgotten. Well, we're a bit disorganised this evening. Nomsa's given the staff time off.

KARABO Old Maria? Is Gogo Maria still here?

SIBONGILE I said: nothing has changed. You'll have to help with the catering, Karabo.

KARABO and NOMSA giggle.

What's so amusing? The place is falling apart and you laugh? What's the matter with you?

NOMSA You and your catering, Sibongile. You'll delay the coming of Jesus for the sake of your catering.

SIBONGILE He might be hungry! I'll have a quick bath, then we'll all three go to the kitchen. Karabo? You don't look as pretty as I recall. Pity.

The lights come on.

SIBONGILE About time!

SIBONGILE exits with LIU's suitcase. KARABO goes towards NOMSA, happily.

KARABO Oh no! Is Eskom still at it?

NOMSA Shhhh. Vorster?

VORSTER Yes, Miss Nkosi?

NOMSA Would you be so kind as to switch off the GM2? I want to tell someone the story of my life.

VORSTER Out of the question, Miss Nkosi, it's after eleven. You know the law.

NOMSA I watched it being written. Please, Vorster?

VORSTER The law ...

NOMSA Vorster, the department would be very intrigued to learn of your after-hours frolics with that young blond lieutenant. *(Pause. Then she laughs.)* Good old blackmail. Not enough of it around.

KARABO What is this?

NOMSA GM2, our guardian angel.

KARABO But why at Ubuntu? Why here?

NOMSA Don't be shocked, it's a luxury. The department has a long list of names waiting for their GM2s. The latest South African status symbol. More popular than Netflix or *Vorsprung Durch Technik* ...

- KARABO I don't understand ...
- NOMSA So we can sleep in peace. At least they can hear when someone attacks the house or ...
- KARABO But what about your privacy?
- NOMSA Things have changed, Kara.
- KARABO What's happened to us, Nomsa?
- NOMSA I suppose we became fat and secure in our entitlements. We became dulled through our belief in our survival. We became proud of our self-sufficiency, our arrogance, our power. As democrats we loved the losers who'd killed so many of us because they had no hope, and we hated each other because we became our own rivals. We encouraged the little people to dance and rattle their beads, hoping it would make enough noise to warn us in time. And after we deprived them of everything that would ultimately destroy us, I think we've bestowed on them the patience to wait for us to frighten ourselves to death. Do you still think of our old friends from Africa? Even our token white comrades?
- KARABO Mine were never token.
- NOMSA Oh? And where are they now? Your eternal Boer and kosher buddies? On Facebook? Do you Tweet? Or that new thing ... what is it called?
- KARABO I lost touch.
- NOMSA Ah, yes. Well, that's what's happened to us, Kara. We lost touch. (*Loudly.*) Vorster? There are six naked Rwandans waving things at me! (*Listens: then.*) Now, quickly, why are you here? Why did you

leave Tel Aviv? What's happening? Are you under departmental control?

KARABO Please, Nomsa, you're asking me too many questions.

NOMSA I don't understand why you're here. You were free.

KARABO Yes, quite free.

NOMSA So? Blackmail! How else did the department get you to leave your Joshua?

KARABO How come you know so little? You could've Googled me. I'm on Facebook. Or do you have to be part of the inner circle of cadreship to qualify as a friend?

NOMSA Something like that. What have I missed?

KARABO Joshua was killed in a Hamas rocket attack seven years ago. I left Israel soon after that. I was invited to Moscow, and then after a few years, Beijing.

NOMSA Beijing? Does this have our father's fingerprints on it?

KARABO Well, the Tshwane regime does have firm friends in the Forbidden City.

NOMSA So why come back?

KARABO I wanted to come home, that's all.

NOMSA That's all?

KARABO Yes, I missed it. You know, the sea, the air, the sun, the Karoo, the wine ... the toyi-toyi. Home.

NOMSA Home.

- KARABO Yes, that's why I'm here.
- NOMSA They didn't force you?
- KARABO The moment I saw uTata, I decided. I couldn't remember why I'd always fought him, even hated him. He's so elegant, so terrifyingly strong. He's the first person I've felt safe with in years. I think I need that feeling more than freedom.
- NOMSA We have wonderful images of the sea-air-Karoo-wine-sun. I'll run some for you tomorrow.
- KARABO Who wants to see images! I want to go to the beach tomorrow – it's such perfect weather. You know, I even missed our sea sand. I used to finger the salt in restaurants and think of the soft warm dust of Plett. *(Pause.)* Nomsa, what've I said?
- NOMSA You've made me homesick, too.
- KARABO Oh, for God's sake, don't tell me Plettenberg Bay was sold to a highest bidder? Or that we still can't go to the beach on Sundays? Do we still have to suffer through those eternal family lunches?
- NOMSA You still don't seem to realise that things have changed since the troubles.
- KARABO The xenophobia ...
- NOMSA Shhh. Afrophobia. No, before that even ...
- KARABO We heard that after the missile attack on Sandton City ...
- NOMSA No, that was a one-off. Probably some *nouveau-noir* princess complaining about the outrageous prices in the Gupta Emporiums.

She laughs; KARABO doesn't.

NOMSA Beaches, mountains, picnics, drives: we can now rather watch them on YouTube. It's safer. Unless you can justify an armoured blue-light escort to take you to the seaside and surround you with steel while you paddle.

KARABO Oh, come on! More jokes?

NOMSA No, not a joke. We now have certain hours each day when armed convoys go into the city. It's just a precaution. It's quite safe really during the day – but occasionally a stray car is stopped by gangs of young m-m-men and people are m-m-maimed and hurt ... (*She tries to control herself.*) Tell me about Beijing.

KARABO What? Oh ... polluted.

NOMSA And the Great Wall?

KARABO What great wall? Oh, I never went. I suppose it's also crumbling.

NOMSA What are the people like? Happy?

KARABO Yes. No. I don't know. One has very little contact with strangers nowadays. I was based in the African compound, can you believe it ...

NOMSA Paris! Did you ever go?

KARABO What's happened to all the staff?

NOMSA Notre Dame – is it true they blew it up?

KARABO Good God, who?

NOMSA al-Qaeda? ISIS? The Ethiopian terrorists?

- KARABO I don't know.
- NOMSA But surely BBC World, CNN, Al Jazeera must've been full of it!
- KARABO Not behind the firewall of China. Nomsa, since I've arrived back, I've not seen any people in the streets. Where are they?
- NOMSA That's odd. I distinctly remember an SATV newflash on my birthday: Notre Dame gutted by terrorists, then St Peter's, Westminster Abbey ... 'You destroy our Prophet, we kill your God ...'
- KARABO That's absolute nonsense, Nomsa. Madonna's son was married in Westminster Abbey last week. Believe me, mainstream jihad stopped years ago.
- NOMSA So it seems did our reality. (*Pause.*) They say our visitors have nuclear warheads. Is that absolute nonsense?
- KARABO I keep on hearing people use this word. What do you mean by 'visitors'?
- NOMSA SECPOL exposed a conspiracy to attack national key points. I think it's just to find an excuse to round up the illegals. But what if there are elements that are organised? If we did it through MK in the Struggle, why can't they catch us now?
- KARABO You mean there are still underground cells of overweight Afrikaners with handlebar moustaches and bad breath trying to reclaim a white homeland?

They both laugh.

- NOMSA What a picture. No, Kara, millions of illegals stream in from everywhere for our water. Border controls

have collapsed. Home Affairs is on permanent go-slow. Police are corrupted with bribes and drugs. Sixty percent of our under-thirties are without jobs.

KARABO looks around nervously.

KARABO You could be describing any country in the world. Sorry, Nomsa, ours is not unique.

NOMSA But surely you know more. What do the tweets tell you? The podcasts?

KARABO I don't know, Nomsa. Please, I'm very confused ...

NOMSA *You're* confused? You've been living in civilisation for so many years and you're confused? I'm starving for reality, Kara. Our obsession with high security and suspicion of anyone who looks 'different' somehow drains the imagination and empties the soul of inspiration.

KARABO Of course it would.

NOMSA All right then ... what are they saying about us?

KARABO You mean, in China?

NOMSA Yes, I mean China, Europe, London, on the BBC, in the press! What are they saying!

KARABO About South Africa?

NOMSA All the bloody racist rubbish as always, I suppose: corruption, service delivery collapse, failure of education, unemployment. We're doing pretty well considering what we're up against.

KARABO Nothing.

NOMSA What do you mean: nothing?

KARABO Nothing. Not a mention.

NOMSA But we were told ...

KARABO That's why I had to come home! Outside in the rest of the world South Africa has ceased to exist. For months I couldn't find a word in the media, even referring to the so-called one-party dictatorship, or anything. The world out there is as sick, and in no state to show any interest or sympathy. We're just not good moral-high-ground copy any more.

NOMSA Impossible. Our gold and platinum ...

KARABO The strikes chased the customers away years ago. Anyway, we don't need your platinum ...

NOMSA 'We'? 'We!' For heaven's sake, wake up, wake up! 'We'?

KARABO 'They' ... Nomsa, very little is coming in or going out of this country!

NOMSA And you're telling me? Ha, don't be so sure! You and your father came in!

KARABO Yes.

NOMSA So we're not that isolated after all.

KARABO I'm not arguing with you, please, Nomsa ...

Pause.

NOMSA Dear God, I'm sorry ... I didn't touch you, hold you, kiss you ...

They embrace.

NOMSA My darling, why did you come back? At least I kept living through thoughts of you!

KARABO At least you took the chance to change things. I ran away, you stayed and fought.

NOMSA Fought? Do you really think that?

KARABO Of course. You still love your teaching, don't you?

NOMSA Love my teaching? Yes, I love. I still have that, don't I? And my faith in the party? I still have that, haven't I? Haven't I! The party is still on our side, no matter what happens. (*Into her cell.*) Thank you, Vorster, you can make GM2 operational now.

VORSTER Yes, Miss Nkosi.

NOMSA is the schoolteacher now.

NOMSA Repeat after me, children: We, the people of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know: that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people; that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities; and we pledge ourselves to strive together. The people shall govern!

KARABO Nomsa, that Freedom Charter ...

NOMSA The fucking people shall govern? What happened to 'all national groups shall have equal rights'? Where are the people 'who shall share in the country's wealth'? The land shall be shared among those who

work it? Bullshit! All shall be equal before the law? Only party members, dear comrade! All shall enjoy human rights! *Ja!* I'd believe a TV commercial for bottled water with more ease!

KARABO Nomsa, is this necessary ...

NOMSA Remember, children. There shall be work and security! Oh yes, the doors of learning culture shall be opened! Tell your mummies and daddies that there shall be houses, security and comfort! Assure Gogo and uTata that rest, leisure and recreation shall be the right of all. And a bath!

KARABO Enough Nomsa, *basta wena!*

NOMSA And Holy Mandela looked down from his cloud and saw that there was, as promised, peace and friendship. But he wasn't wearing his glasses.

Pause.

KARABO Yes, they do have missiles ...

All the lights go out. Moonlight through the window.

Oh! Not again! Jesus, what's happening?

SIBONGILE enters.

NOMSA Viva Eskom! And so, sister? How come your almighty department can't fix a faulty generator or a dripping tap?

KARABO Is there more trouble or something?

NOMSA Fresh candles in the bottom drawer.

KARABO What's going on!

SIBONGILE We don't need candles. Vorster, the generator is fixed. Activate the HKB900 now.

Very bright emergency lights on.

NOMSA *(Delighted.)* Sibongile! You fixed it? Now please, fix the country!

KARABO I don't remember this happening before. HKB900?

NOMSA I told you, Kara, things aren't what they used to be. *(To SIBONGILE.)* I hope you didn't break a nail!

SIBONGILE They either dig up cables to steal copper, or blow up pylons and cause temporary disruption.

NOMSA It's an old trick.

SIBONGILE It's a damn nuisance.

NOMSA As you can see, we have our own HKB900 power generator, but only for emergencies.

KARABO Which this is?

SIBONGILE No. Vorster, can you hear me?

VORSTER Yes, Comrade Nkosi-Skosana, your Eskom power should be restored in a few minutes. We're all very impressed with your skills. Under that Armani exterior ...

SIBONGILE The pylons are protected by the laser beams. Why did this happen again? Who is sleeping on the job?

VORSTER It is difficult to keep a check on everyone, comrade. After all, there are only just 65 million out there, give and take a few.

SIBONGILE If it's not restored in five minutes, I'll have to keep the HKB power operational. You will have to explain why!

VORSTER Solar power is only for an emergency ...

SIBONGILE The minister will want a meal when he comes home. That's an emergency. Nomsa, sit down.

NOMSA I am sitting.

SIBONGILE How can an old man ... a great man ... fall in love with a ... mere girl overnight? Did you engineer this, Karabo? It smacks of your brand of intrigue.

KARABO Oh, stop it.

SIBONGILE She will not come into this house as long as I am in charge. 'This room smells musty.' Damn cheek. What's wrong with this room?

NOMSA It smells musty.

SIBONGILE Who the hell is this person, Karabo?

KARABO Her name is Liu ...

SIBONGILE Yes, I know all that. 'Professor' Liu Chen. Where? In a kindergarten? What's she doing here?

KARABO Don't tell me you searched her luggage?

SIBONGILE Of course I searched her luggage, but it tells me nothing.

NOMSA What are you talking about?

SIBONGILE Doesn't she know? Tell her, Karabo!

NOMSA What is it with this Professor Liu Chen! Liu Chen?

KARABO Liu Chen is Father's ... er ...

NOMSA Mistress!

SIBONGILE How dare you say that!

NOMSA What's happened without me knowing again? I want to be included in the new decisions!

KARABO There are no new decisions. It's just that our father's remarried.

NOMSA Remarried who?

SIBONGILE Liu Chen, for goodness' sake!

NOMSA How can he *re*marry Liu Chen? Professor Liu Chen? What sort of a name is Liu?

SIBONGILE She's trying to explain.

KARABO Why must I explain? It's got nothing to do with me.

NOMSA A new ma ...?

SIBONGILE She's still a child!

NOMSA ... my God, we might have a new ma!

SIBONGILE Explain, Karabo!

KARABO All I know is, she met Father all those years ago when he accompanied President Zuma to China, and slowly on the internet, things developed from there.

NOMSA Well I never, there's hope for us yet!

SIBONGILE ‘Things developed’? For heaven’s sake, she could be his ... daughter! It’s a scandal! And this after all I sacrificed for the family: my husband, my youth, my children ...

NOMSA Guess who’ll have to play second fiddle now!

SIBONGILE You both don’t seem to realise what it means!

NOMSA Simple. It means uTata will have someone with him.

SIBONGILE I’m here!

NOMSA Someone to warm his bed for him when it’s cold – you don’t qualify. Someone to tell a rude story to – you’re too prissy. Someone to help him – you’re too keen. And I’ll have a new friend ... please God, let her be a friend ...

SIBONGILE I’m sorry, but I won’t tolerate ...

KARABO Tolerate? You will not ‘tolerate’ the fact that uTata has a life of his own? That he actually enjoys himself when you’re not around? No wonder you’re all-powerful. I read all the weird tweets on Twitter about life under the grey rainbow. And starring Sibongile Nkosi-Skosana, our own Evita Peron!

KARABO and NOMSA share the joke.

SIBONGILE Don’t be so silly. And where’s this Professor Chen going to sleep?

NOMSA Oooo, our father who art in bed with a Chinese professor!

SIBONGILE They tweet about me overseas?

KARABO They ignore daily attacks in the refugee camps. Who cares about the suffering, when you have the glamour of Sibongile's latest fashion fad, Sibongile's exclusive fundraising tea party ...

NOMSA Sushi bash !

KARABO No! Sushi? How oriental!

SIBONGILE So they talk about me in Beijing?

NOMSA (*Sarcastic.*) They gossip, Sis. Kara was telling me. You're in every magazine, like their Olympic royalty.

KARABO And Hong Kong! Don't forget the Hong Kong bling websites!

NOMSA There too! Bling bling!

SIBONGILE That's going a bit too far. Typical. When will they learn to control media excess?

KARABO You're a household name from Beijing to Bombay!

SIBONGILE Then the bad news obviously doesn't travel.

KARABO Failed states don't sell magazines.

NOMSA African bling does!

KARABO Yes, the world prefers to eat and breathe South Africa's sea, sand, beach, mountain, lions, elephants.

NOMSA We even include rhino in our DVDs, although they've ceased to exist.

KARABO Viva Photoshop! They can add a horn to anything!

SIBONGILE They need us. They might not understand us, but they cannot ignore us.

KARABO You might not understand me, but please don't ignore me ...

The lights snap on, replacing the HKB lights.

SIBONGILE About time.

KARABO Sibongile?

SIBONGILE (*Snuffs out candles.*) So, you're home, Karabo Nkosi?

KARABO Yes.

NOMSA He missed you so.

KARABO Did he?

NOMSA Constantly.

SIBONGILE Occasionally.

Dogs bark off.

KARABO Do we still have the dogs?

SIBONGILE No, our dogs ran away.

NOMSA We think they were poisoned.

KARABO What were they called? Hitler and Mussolini? No ...

SIBONGILE PW and FW.

She has made a feeble joke. The two sisters are surprised – then all laugh with relief. The first real moment together.

NOMSA Yes, shame, we don't have any animals here. I have a kitten at the flat but it always cries. I don't really like it very much.

Pause.

KARABO What's happened to this room?

SIBONGILE Why is everyone suddenly going on about this room? It was painted! Rooms need paint!

KARABO No, the feeling in it ...

SIBONGILE All right! It's musty, it's old, it's boring, it's impractical, but it's all we've got! We must make the best of what we have, or else we might as well give up. And I'm sorry, but I don't regard that phrase as part of my vocabulary. Vorster? Have the staff been found?

VORSTER Not yet, Comrade Nkosi-Skosana. They'll be transported down. It might take some hours.

SIBONGILE Please send me some efficient staff for tomorrow.

VORSTER It's very late. I don't know if we can get clearance to enter the camps at this time of night.

NOMSA You're quite right, Vorster. Why subject our taste buds to alien Somali or invasive Malawian cooking when we can do it ourselves?

VORSTER That is not what I meant, Miss Nkosi.

SIBONGILE But I must have staff.

KARABO Why?

SIBONGILE They have to prepare.

KARABO What do they have to prepare?

SIBONGILE The food, the house ...

KARABO We can do that.

NOMSA Yes. Thank you, Vorster, goodbye. We'll cook.

SIBONGILE Don't be silly.

KARABO What's the problem? There are three of us.

NOMSA And Professor Liu Chen. Is she too intellectual to cook?

KARABO She's Chinese.

NOMSA Thank God we don't have dogs.

She exits with a hoot of laughter. SIBONGILE starts setting the table. KARABO finds a metal bird under a sheet.

KARABO Oh my goodness, I gave this to uTata all those years ago! He's still got it!

SIBONGILE Leave it alone! No one is allowed to touch it.

KARABO watches SIBONGILE set the table.

KARABO I don't know what to say to you.

SIBONGILE I don't think there's that much to say.

KARABO Oh yes, so much ... so much.

SIBONGILE Don't touch the cutlery. I'll do it.

KARABO watches her set the table.

KARABO It's like watching Ma prepare the table.

SIBONGILE Nonsense.

Pause.

KARABO The last time we were all together in this room, there were only two subjects. The Struggle and the party. At varsity we were for the party. For some of us the Struggle was too far back in history. We entertained whites; we even slept with some Afrikaner boys just to prove to ourselves how adaptable we'd become. They hated us for it and we feared them even more. (*Notices the table settings.*) Are we going to suffer through a Mahlamba Ndlopfu Banquet? Can't we just be nostalgic with a little Nkandla-type cheese and wine next to the firepool?

SIBONGILE uTata is not allowed cheese. Lactose intolerant.

KARABO Caused by a deficiency of the enzyme lactase, which is produced by the cells lining the small intestine. (*Smiles at her sister.*) One of my many jobs was looking after small children who were lactose intolerant.

SIBONGILE Full of surprises.

KARABO Some of us even voted ... Democratic Alliance? Was that the name of the party? Yes, we canvassed for that alternative to a stagnant revolution. And then I left university with its politically-incorrect parties and hope and suddenly found the old warriors had become legend and Nkandla with its power and secrets became the reality. The president gave you a welcome kiss and kept his mouth there too long. His bodyguard looked down your front. The head of intelligence had a wonderful sense of humour and I really liked him until he tried to rape me.

SIBONGILE He was innocent. The case was thrown out of court.

KARABO That baby went with the bathwater. I tried to separate them and the result of their work. Like our father, I believed that they were also good people with a good story. Then suddenly I was sleeping with the enemy.

SIBONGILE You were warned ...

KARABO It became a nightmare. They assured me: 'Not anti-Semitic, just against Zionist expansionism. Like we fought against apartheid imperialism.' My friend was called a racist by the family. Hounded. Insulted. I couldn't hate you all and allow you to destroy me too with prejudice. So I had to run away and try to forget.

SIBONGILE Now where did I lock up the crystal glasses ... (*She makes for the exit.*)

KARABO Before you go ... Sibongile, in all my years in foreign free lands, I have never met people who in any way compared to the generosity, the warmth, the hospitality of our comrades and cadres. Do you understand what I'm saying?

SIBONGILE I wasn't listening.

KARABO Sibongile, even though xenophobia is a word few people spell properly, you and Nomsa and I are stuck with the consequences. 'Careless' is also a terrible word to use. It means: there was a solution, but there was no care to deliver.

SIBONGILE You've been brainwashed by the racist media!

KARABO I'm not attacking you.

SIBONGILE You are attacking me! You're assaulting me with your 'humanity'! What do you know about this country? You ran away, years ago. What was wrong then, is forgotten now. You have no right to any opinions. We've proved ourselves as a democracy, Karabo. We've been voted back into power, time after time, in spite of puny opposition. Did they ever win an election? A few occasional personality triumphs, but that's not a bad thing. Any good government thrives on a loud visible opposition. And I'm all for a bit of glamour.

KARABO And where's that visible glamorous opposition now with their ...was it red berets?

SIBONGILE We have no alternative but to stand together.

KARABO How many million of them against how few million of us?

SIBONGILE Didn't some idiot say the poor shall inherit the earth?

KARABO I have a feeling it was Jesus. Extraordinary how most of the great warriors who formulated our lifestyle eventually died comfortably in their beds, leaving us holding the chains. Thank God we have no children.

SIBONGILE Yes, thank God.

KARABO Why didn't you and ...

SIBONGILE We didn't have time.

KARABO Yes, the family is a full-time business. Soon we'd all have died out completely: too scared of our world to produce children and too ashamed of our heritage to share it. Maybe that's why they're waiting. They have time and a majority. They also have missiles.

SIBONGILE Rubbish.

KARABO You think rubbish?

SIBONGILE Where from?

KARABO Open the atlas, put your finger anywhere in Africa and from there the drones. You play your violin while they set the fuse. Do you still play your violin?

SIBONGILE Time permitting. Why?

KARABO Forewarned is forearmed.

SIBONGILE Jealous. Always making snide remarks about my playing, you and Nomsa.

KARABO Why should I be snide about your violin? You played very well.

SIBONGILE Never mind; I remember one of our fundraising soirées. Everyone wanted my encore and just as I prepared to start, you boomed out: 'Oh God, not again!'

KARABO I was only a child!

SIBONGILE They all laughed at me.

KARABO You never forget.

SIBONGILE Just remember one thing for the rest of your life, Karabo Nkosi ...

KARABO All right, I apologise ...

SIBONGILE I stayed and fought the corruption while you ran away. I stayed home and prayed when all party unity seemed lost. I cringed at home, hearing shots

and screams, and prepared myself to die for what I believe in, while you fled to safety! I also have foreign African friends, but when that day came, I was 'us' and no 'them' was going to save my life. I defended your home, your childhood, your roots. I lost my youth, my husband, my mother. I stayed; you didn't. So wherever I choose to play my violin in this country, they will listen, because I stayed.

NOMSA enters with a plate of snacks.

NOMSA Always politics. Here, eat something, Kara, you're too thin for a black woman. What've I missed?

KARABO Do you ever think of Ma? Nomsa? Sibongile? We can't forget her. We must talk about her, remember her. It's the only way to keep her from dying.

SIBONGILE Leave her in peace. She's dead.

NOMSA I never stop thinking about her.

SIBONGILE What for? To feel sorry for yourself?

KARABO Sibongile, stop being so noble. There's no one here to impress.

SIBONGILE Of course I think about her. Not a second passes without the emptiness of her loss hurting me – every day.

LIU enters, unseen.

But that won't help. She won't come back, like you. We must remember, but privately. uTata can't hear her name without weeping. Please, for his sake, we mustn't ...

LIU I was hoping her memory wouldn't make my life more difficult here. She sounds like quite a person, the first Mrs Nkosi. You must be Nomsa.

NOMSA Yes.

LIU Your father spoke a great deal of you.

NOMSA We don't get on that well, but he's all right. What did he say?

VORSTER Comrade Sibongile? I need to speak to you in private, please. Mrs Nkosi-Skosana! This is very urgent. I'll clear a frequency to the minister's study, if you'll take it from there, please!

SIBONGILE Later, Vorster, I have a guest.

VORSTER Comrade, I must insist ...

LIU Colonel Vorster, I thought we decided that I should ...

VORSTER Yes, Professor Chen, but it's really my duty to ...

LIU Please!

Pause.

SIBONGILE Professor Chen? Where is my father?

LIU I'm afraid your father is dead.

BLACKOUT.

A blue wash on stage for reset. On the TV screen a SA Tourism DVD with narration.

Actors take their places for Act Two.

Light change indicates the next morning. Bright sunlight. Continued on the TV screen are images of the best of South African tourism: seascapes, beaches, wild animals, Karoo etc. No sound.

KARABO in her father's dressing gown is crunched up in a chair watching. LIU is outside the open doors, against the wall. She has a book in her hand and reads from it. The silence disturbs her.

LIU 'It's about a year ago since Father died, isn't it? I remember how cold it was and how it snowed. I thought then that I would never survive his death; and yet now after a year we can talk about it so easily ...'

Dogs bark off. She starts.

'I remember Father's funeral, the military band at his graveside and that salute with rifle fire ...' (*Looks around but doesn't see KARABO.*) Where is everybody?

More barking off.

'Oh, dear God, when I woke up this morning and saw this flood of sunshine, all this spring sunshine, I really felt so moved and so happy! I felt such a longing to go back home to Moscow ... to Moscow ...'

KARABO All that talk of Moscow isn't going to do you much good around here, you know, Professor. Our alliance is with Beijing, not the Kremlin.

LIU (*Startled.*) Oh, please don't jump out at me like that. Moscow?

KARABO Yes, all that going back to Moscow.

LIU Yes, well, that was Chekhov's idea; nothing to do with me.

KARABO Chekhov?

LIU I taught English at Shanghai University ...

KARABO An English professor *nogal*.

LIU Trying to get the pieces back together again, generations after the Cultural Revolution which seemed to take forever. Chekhov wasn't a priority.

KARABO Talk to Nomsa about getting pieces back together again.

LIU I enjoy reading plays more than seeing them played. I have a photographic memory that stores up the best of other brains. I often use their words to prevent myself from going completely mad. What were you watching?

KARABO The best of Plett to prevent myself from going completely sad.

LIU You have some lovely books. I've been up most of the night. This house can be a very lonely place if you don't know where anyone is. Were you here all the time?

KARABO I had some thinking to do.

LIU All night?

The dogs bark again off.

I didn't realise you had so many dogs.

KARABO No.

LIU Oh, strays? Can't we feed them?

KARABO SECPOL use dogs.

LIU Oh, yes, the soldiers. I woke up as they left in their trucks. I watched the sun rise over the mountains from my window. Actually, I stood on a chair and could see over the top of the wall. Do you think your soldiers left their dogs behind?

KARABO No. SECPOL always treat their dogs well.

LIU So these must be strays.

KARABO Yes, they must be strays.

KARABO goes back to her chair and curls up. Pause. SIBONGILE enters with a tray of coffee mugs and confronts LIU.

SIBONGILE I'm glad we're alone. I think we should talk.

LIU Not if you're tired.

SIBONGILE We don't have much time!

LIU All right. This Chekhov collection has penciled directions on many pages. Who is the actress here? You?

SIBONGILE My sister Nomsa liked to act once.

LIU Oh? I must talk to her about these plays.

SIBONGILE My father has been under great pressure lately.

LIU Yes, I know. He had various scans in Beijing, not all encouraging.

- SIBONGILE There have always been decisions that he had to make, very often just a choice between two evils. It's obvious that in Beijing ... the freedom he felt ...
- LIU It was only free because no one knew who he was. Black faces in China no longer turn heads.
- SIBONGILE How involved are you ... were you with his negotiations?
- LIU Heavens no. We never talked politics. I knew how important it was for him to relax. He loved the theatre.
- SIBONGILE He had no time for the theatre!
- LIU Chinese theatre and opera. We'd always go together, each time he visited Beijing. A friend of mine worked at your embassy before the new security measures prevented foreigners from getting jobs there. We went in a group to Shanghai once to see ... I think it was a Chekhov. He still said the last time he'd seen the play was in Afrikaans. Is that possible?
- SIBONGILE Possible. The Afrikaners might have lost their political power, but their culture remains strong, even vibrant. My father has a soft spot for the language.
- LIU Eleven official languages. So everyone can see Comrade Chekhov in their mother tongue.
- SIBONGILE The party does not encourage us to indulge in trivial things. Besides, life here is different to your theatre and opera. And freedom.
- LIU His description of life here was always so vivid and passionate – the colours and the excitement. It always made me want to come and see for myself. So I did ...

SIBONGILE What did he talk to you about? I mean, what could you two have had in common?

LIU He was honest about his feelings.

SIBONGILE My father was a great man ...

A jet flies over the house loudly. SIBONGILE moves away. NOMSA has entered, carrying a bunch of flowers. LIU opens the book and reads.

LIU 'You're so lovely today, you really look most attractive. Masha looks pretty today also, but as for me ...'

NOMSA 'As for me, I've just got older and a lot thinner ...'

LIU and NOMSA speak the lines together.

NOMSA/LIU 'But today I'm home, I'm free and I feel so much younger than I did yesterday ...'

NOMSA 'I suppose whatever God decides must be right and good, but sometimes I really can't help wondering that if I'd married and stayed home, it would have been a much better life for me ...'

LIU 'I would've been very fond of my husband!'

NOMSA Incredible! I played Olga at university!

LIU I taught Olga in Shanghai!

NOMSA I was far too young.

LIU So was I.

NOMSA That's my book ... I translated it all into isiXhosa for my drama class at school. Extra-curricular activity. I've looked for that book everywhere.

LIU I found it in the library.

NOMSA Aren't these beautiful? (*Shows the flowers.*) At least they still stay with us.

LIU I suppose you also found sleep impossible?

NOMSA No, I slept well. I was just scared you would be up before me and do things without me.

SIBONGILE And what would we do without you?

NOMSA Everything! I also want to take part in all the official weeping and wailing!

KARABO emerges from her chair.

KARABO God, I feel so awful. Those pills you gave me were monsters, Nomsa.

NOMSA Well, you slept, didn't you?

KARABO Where did you get them?

NOMSA Why?

KARABO In the real world, people kill each other for pills like those.

NOMSA That's terrible. They're just supposed to make you sleep.

SIBONGILE I couldn't sleep.

NOMSA Maybe you should've taken some of my pills?

SIBONGILE I don't need to take pills.

KARABO watches her carefully. NOMSA bumbles on.

NOMSA It's all so exciting. Liu, I want to show you so many wonderful things. Outside we have a tree which is half oak and half pine. They say it's very rare.

LIU Sounds very rare.

NOMSA There's something else. I want to show you some textbooks in my room. The revisionist historical fantasies created by the department for the enlightenment of our youth. You'll laugh at the chapters on China. No mention of Tiananmen Square or ... *(In her excitement she splashes the coffee over LIU.)*

LIU *(Snaps in Chinese; then:)* ... for fuck's sake!

NOMSA Sorry ... I didn't do that on purpose. I'm just trying to help ...

Another jet screams across the house.

KARABO If only we knew what really happened.

LIU I told you what happened, Karabo. Your father and I arrived at the department. We were late, of course. Met by the deputy president and then got into the lift ...

SIBONGILE Mistake.

LIU What?

SIBONGILE It happened in the street.

LIU I was there.

SIBONGILE Outside in the street! They couldn't infiltrate the department. It happened in the street!

LIU Nkosi was in the lift when it happened.

SIBONGILE Are you saying he was assassinated in a maximum security area? In a national key point? What soap opera do you think this is? And don't call him that!

KARABO That was his name.

SIBONGILE His friends called him uTata.

LIU I was his wife.

SIBONGILE So you call him Sir!

NOMSA Please don't fight. Look, I'll make us some fresh coffee, anything ... please ...

KARABO We'll have to wait for the breaking news. My internet is down.

NOMSA All our internets are down. No cellphone reception. Jammed. Probably a glitch and a click and we're back in the Dark Ages. Can anyone still use a pencil?

SIBONGILE Why should there be news? The minister was attacked and murdered by visitors. They will find the assassins, the murderers. No news. He's dead. He died in the service of his country.

LIU He died in the lift!

SIBONGILE *(In Xhosa.) Nomsa, will you take this little bitch out of here before I do something radical?*

KARABO Yes, Nomsa, why don't you take Liu and show her something nice? After all, she is *your* friend ...

NOMSA Yes, come on, Liu, I want to show you our famous *boma*. When Nelson Mandela came here for a week-

end after his marriage to Graça Machel on his 80th birthday ... we had just moved back after exile in London. In Paddington. Shame, I never met that little bear.

SIBONGILE Graça Machel was also a visitor. We all respected her in spite of it.

NOMSA ... and it was such a wonderful celebration. I will show you where he sat ...

Behind SIBONGILE's back she indicates drinking. LIU nods and they exit. SIBONGILE speaks into her cellphone.

SIBONGILE A senior minister is dead ... he must be buried immediately ... there can be no official lying-in-state. Besides, the department says such a ceremony would be an illegal gathering and constitutes a breach of the Protection of State Information Act. They're right, of course. The sooner we bury him, the less chance of unrest ...

KARABO Can't I make you some breakfast?

SIBONGILE paces like a trapped lioness, preoccupied.

SIBONGILE Let me think ... yes, we must prepare for the media funeral. What about our guests? Oh, this terrible thing has happened to me and here I sit without servants. Never mind, I'll worry about that when the time comes We can sit here ... *(She is outside on the patio.)* ... it's warm. What if they want something to eat? No, no, just tea and coffee. How can I get this place in order ... no, mustn't touch anything. Yes, leave everything as he left it. The people will want to come and see it. Everything as it should be. Our lives ... I'll go and get ready.

NOMSA and LIU enter.

NOMSA Why is uTata's room locked?

SIBONGILE That's none of your business, and anyway, what do you want from there?

NOMSA Something to drink. Give me the access card.

LIU Not if it's too much trouble ...

NOMSA And whose side are you on? Sibongile, give me the access card! (*Suspiciously.*) What are you two hiding from me? Why is our father's room locked?

SIBONGILE Nomsa ...

NOMSA What've you two been talking about?

KARABO Nothing, Nomsa ...

NOMSA Well, I'm sorry, but I want to know what's going on!

SIBONGILE Go and prepare yourself for the funeral.

NOMSA Already? What's the rush?

SIBONGILE The people are on their way ...

NOMSA I refuse to go. I want a drink first!

LIU I also could do with a little vodka.

SIBONGILE Leave the cabinet alone!

NOMSA A drink, Sibongile, not a *coup d'etat*!

KARABO For God's sake, give me the access card!

SIBONGILE *I'll get the drinks ... (She exits.)*

Pause.

LIU It must be those pills. Dry one out. Is there anything I can do? (*Pause.*) Shouldn't we prepare something for these people?

KARABO Why should there suddenly be people?

LIU I don't know, I thought Sibongile said ... maybe we should get a doctor or something?

NOMSA Why? Does someone feel sick?

LIU I just thought ... Look, is she all right?

NOMSA No, she's Sibongile Nkosi-Skosana, the calm one, the logical one. My sister won't cry: too strong. Won't allow herself to be merely human. A true daughter of the Struggle. (*Looks around; listens for the GM2.*) The thing's probably off. Our flat-foot corporal is also gone. Everyone seems to have more important things to do. Strange, I suddenly miss my hideous Bengu ... but we must all stay calm, mustn't we? After all it's only a death in the family. We're quite used to that sort of thing ... (*She smiles at LIU's confusion.*) And you just smile and nod, or shrug and frown. Don't you understand anything?

LIU Your father ...

NOMSA My father died of a heart attack; Sibongile's senior minister was attacked and assassinated by visitors.

LIU It was the pressure of the last few weeks. He wasn't young, Nomsa, there were no visitors! What visitors?

NOMSA Of course there were visitors! There are always aliens, foreigners, illegals, hijackers, drug dealers, criminals, murderers – millions of *amakwerekwere!*

- LIU But I was there with him! My God, aren't I ever going to wake up? I just keep telling myself: It's not your fault, Liu, this is just a bad dream ...
- KARABO That's right, the great South African Dream. A rainbow ride to heaven. Our leaders can't afford to slip out and up via mundane heart attacks or strokes, or other suchlike cop-outs. We have to add others to the great *induna's* funeral pyre.
- NOMSA Throw his bloated corpse from the twentieth floor, blame apartheid and then draw the assassins out of the Security Blue file. (*Fingers the flag.*) Funny how obsessed we are with colour, hey?
- LIU His heart stopped.
- KARABO When our mother died, the heart stopped.
- Pause.*
- NOMSA Did he ever talk about her?
- LIU No.
- NOMSA No.
- LIU Kara made her sound like a very happy person.
- KARABO That was careless of me.
- NOMSA Yes, she forced herself to live the good story, just for the sake of us children. She played her part very well, like Sibongile, always the perfect consort.
- KARABO She died in agony. And I wasn't here to say goodbye.
- NOMSA I'm sure she was glad to go. It really wasn't worth waking up.

- LIU Cancer.
- NOMSA Maybe. She was also comfortable with pills; maybe she took too many, I don't care. It's not important. She took a sense of humour with her that left us crippled.
- KARABO Nomsa, enough ...
- NOMSA Yes, enough of a late mother. I can't cry about death any more you see, Liu. The novelty has worn off and, anyway, tragic endings don't move me to tears. They make me laugh. *(Pause.)* I suppose you've heard about that terrible thing that happened to me?
- LIU Eh ... I ...
- NOMSA Well, I'm sorry, I can't talk about it; it's too horrible ... *(She is suddenly restless.)* I want to go home. *(Struggles with reception on her cell.)* Vorster? Oh shit, nothing works! *Kolonel Vorster? Kan jy my hoor?*
- KARABO Leave it, Nomsa ...
- NOMSA Put me through to Corporal Bengu! *(She shouts into the air.)* Vorster? *Ek weet jy's daar!*
- KARABO Come, Nomsa, I'll help you with your hair ...
- NOMSA What for? I'm not going! Oh, don't look so worried, Liu, you'll have a wonderful time at the funeral. Comrade Sibongile will be an example to us all, a soap opera in herself. *(She starts off.)*
- LIU Kara, I'm sure a doctor would ...
- KARABO No!

But NOMSA has heard. She stops and turns.

NOMSA We've all got it, like Ma. It's not the burning tyre round the neck that will end us: it's the cancer inside. Even you have all the symptoms, Karabo Nkosi: democratic South African. And now you're in the sanitarium, dying with us, while they wait outside in the perfect sunshine. They won't use their little missiles; they won't – but we might. Rather take away what the Struggle gave only for us, than share it. I really love my starving neighbour. It's my fat family I loathe! (*She throws the letter at KARABO.*) Here. You left it lying around! (*She exits.*)

KARABO picks up the letter.

LIU How long is it going to last?

KARABO Don't you like it?

LIU Oh, for goodness sake ...

KARABO Till the pills wear off.

LIU And then?

KARABO And then all hell could break loose at Ubuntu. (*Reads.*) 'Cape Town, 14 July 2009.' My Zionist lover, Joshua. Now I can't quite hear the sound of his voice. See his face? He was so determined that his politics were right. I was so determined that mine could not be wrong. I can't remember where we differed. His people were fighting an Arab majority; my people tried to embrace a Eurocentric minority. It looked so simple then.

LIU No, nothing is simple. Only familiar.

KARABO I keep on wondering if this isn't just a state of emergency, but a state of mind – *ubuntu*.

- LIU Doesn't *ubuntu* mean: a person is a person through other people?
- KARABO 'I am what I am because of who we all are'. Yes, I believe in the Easter Bunny as well.
- LIU Your father told me that an Afrikaans family once lived here. A Boer politician and three daughters.
- KARABO And we would have been in the kitchen and called Jackson, Maria and ... Liu. We were simply all non-whites then.
- LIU Not simple, just familiar.
- KARABO The estate was called Excelsior. They were fighting us. I think we eventually won. But they left us the high walls. I think the last laugh is still to be had. Strange.
- LIU Life in the Forbidden City.
- KARABO For all those years away from here I cared, I planned, I prayed – and now I'm home and all I want to do is sit on the beach and look at the sea. When did the anger end and the sadness begin? (*Pause.*) My God, he's actually gone and died, the old bastard. What the hell happens now?

From off, the strains of SIBONGILE playing Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika on her violin. They listen.

Sibongile's encore at the end-of-term concert.

- LIU Such a beautiful tune.
- KARABO But what a statement it was then. The beautiful elegant black princess playing a gem of Afrocentric beauty. It said to the cynical world: we are not

savages, we play the violin. We live in a beautiful old Cape Dutch farmhouse with its stinkwood furniture and have even kept decadent apartheid art safely wrapped in the damp basement. Just in case ...

LIU Have you?

KARABO Oh yes, signs for separate toilets. Why reinvent the wheel.

Pause. The violin plays on.

It looks so beautifully warm outside ... (*Shivers.*) When I woke up this morning I felt excited and free. At first I couldn't understand what was bothering me, some reason for me not to welcome the sun and smile. Then I realised that you cannot exist as a human being in isolation. Our *ubuntu* here is isolation, Liu. The sun even started to hurt my eyes.

LIU Your father very seldom called me Liu. He gave me the name Gugu.

KARABO Ah, yes, Gugu. I think I'll stick to Liu. You might not believe this, but I'm going to be happy here. I'll find a bubble to float around in and be very happy. Nearly time for the wild flowers. You should see them, Liu, it's worth organising an armed escort. Nice change from life; see a bit of nature.

LIU Wild flowers aren't at the top of my list ...

KARABO But nature is on our side, Mrs Nkosi. God and nature. The self-sufficient rainbow *kraal*. Who needs the world? Well, God and nature would know.

SIBONGILE starts to play again.

LIU She doesn't seem to have a large repertoire, does she?

KARABO No, it's all for show. You don't need more than one of anything for show. *(She starts to exit.)*

LIU Please don't leave me! Kara, please ... tell me about the family. I think I should know more.

KARABO Are you frightened?

LIU No, it's just ...

KARABO What are you frightened of?

LIU I don't know, that's the problem. It's so perfect here, and yet you all make me think I'll be bludgeoned to death behind every bush ...

KARABO Possible.

LIU Please don't ...

KARABO Well then, stay away from the bushes.

LIU starts to cry.

Pull yourself together, Professor! You're too new around here. You don't yet have the right to shed tears.

LIU controls herself. Pause.

LIU Yes. I'm sorry.

Pause.

KARABO All right. Tell me about your husband.

LIU Your father?

KARABO No, your husband. My father wasn't the sort of man I'd imagine in bed with a young thing called Gugu. Remember our father was a great man.

LIU Let me see ... what do you want me to say?

KARABO Describe him.

LIU Good looking. Very distinguished. Very amusing.

KARABO Very amusing?

LIU Yes.

KARABO About what?

LIU What?

KARABO What was he amusing about?

LIU Oh, his childhood here in South Africa growing up in the Struggle. The 1976 Soweto Riots?

KARABO He'd just married my mother. She was 18.

LIU Their exile in Rumania ...

KARABO Bulgaria. Only two weeks,

LIU Oh? The University of Moscow?

KARABO Just a year. 'Liberation before education'.

LIU What was that?

KARABO A bad idea. He should have finished his studies there. The University of Robben Island was over-subscribed. He did his three years though.

LIU Oh? Only three? (*Pause.*) His parents sounded extraordinary ... you know, real warriors ...

KARABO My grandparents died before I was born.

LIU Oh.

KARABO Yes.

LIU I'm sorry.

KARABO Me too.

Pause.

LIU Er ... I wonder whatever happened to our drinks ...

KARABO She's probably dressing up for the funeral.

LIU It doesn't really matter. Just something wet. Water?

KARABO I'll get you some bottled water. I'm told one shouldn't drink from the taps.

LIU Don't tell me your aggressive visitors poison the water supply?

KARABO They didn't say that, but one shouldn't take chances. I'm told my fellow poverty-stricken South Africans have the habit of committing suicide in the reservoirs and then dissolving into what is left of the water supply. It is, to say the least, a bit off putting!

She exits. LIU becomes aware of the silence. Then dogs bark again. She switches on the television. It is a clip of Mandela at his Inauguration on 10 May 1994. She watches for a bit, then switches off. NOMSA enters in an ill-fitting black dress.

NOMSA You'd better start getting ready.

LIU What do you ...

NOMSA Shhhh.

They both listen. Pause. Then NOMSA shrugs and lights a cigarette.

LIU What should I wear?

NOMSA What do you have that covers true feelings and fears?

LIU Kara's getting me some soda-water. My mouth feels so dry.

NOMSA What are you frightened of?

LIU What's that noise?

NOMSA *(Stiffens.)* I don't hear anything.

LIU No, in here. That scratching sound. There.

NOMSA *(Relieved.)* Korean beetle.

LIU Korean beetle? In the furniture?

NOMSA Maybe that chair, I can't remember.

LIU Don't they ever stop?

NOMSA Not until the chair's gone, then into the floor. No, I don't suppose they ever stop.

LIU What will happen to those they say killed your father?

NOMSA I don't know.

LIU But surely it will all come out in the trial?

NOMSA If we had trials for every suspect in this country, we'd be like those beetles: we'd never stop having trials. They'll probably disappear and no one will ever know that they even existed. Some other suspects will just take their places.

LIU Can't they escape?

NOMSA You've been watching too much television – where can one escape to? Even if we sent them back to their countries, things there are just as terrible. From the frying pan into the frying pan into the frying pan ... *(Pause.)* Many years ago there was a political prison near here surrounded by water. It used to be one of our proudest symbols of our struggle to reconcile all our people. A World Heritage site. All we had to do was just replace the toilet rolls. As it was, it was perfect, prison warts and all. Then it was outsourced to an American concern supposedly committed to investment and job creation.

LIU Oh, yes, the Disney people. Nkosi said he would take me. I believe you can book into Nelson Mandela's cell for a million rand per night.

NOMSA *(Laughs.)* One hundred and forty dollars.

LIU A million of anything is no joke.

NOMSA No, but look at the irony. There were our leaders in cells surrounded by walls to keep them in. And here we are, the grandchildren, surrounded by walls to keep 'them' out.

KARABO ... like magnificent black blind horses stampeding into the rusty barbed razor-wire! Here.

KARABO has entered and hands LIU a glass.

LIU Oh, really Kara, you shouldn't have bothered ...

NOMSA But you asked for it.

KARABO She's Chinese. They say those things automatically.

SIBONGILE enters in full imperial mourning attire.

SIBONGILE Why aren't you dressed?

KARABO I'm not going to a fancy-dress ball.

SIBONGILE There's been a change of plan. Vorster is sending unmarked transport. We have fifteen minutes.

NOMSA But what about the people?

SIBONGILE Nomsa, I've chosen a hat for you to wear.

NOMSA I'm not wearing a hat!

SIBONGILE Karabo, go and get ready. And wear comfortable shoes: we'll be walking behind the casket. The plan is as follows: when we come out of the church, we'll follow the gun-carriage down to the heliport. I'll lead the family, accompanied by the president and Uncle Robert ...

KARABO Uncle Robert?

NOMSA Head of SECPOL. You remember Uncle Robert? (*To LIU.*) You should hear him tell about his time in jail for someone else's corruption. Bizarre!

LIU In jail? For someone else?

KARABO What happened to the previous head of security? Uncle Joe?

- SIBONGILE Uncle Joe had to retire. Uncle Robert is now head of state security.
- KARABO Is Uncle Joe dead?
- NOMSA So close. He was paroled on compassionate grounds. Very sick. Does therapy on the golf course every day.
- KARABO Poor Uncle Joe.
- NOMSA Rich Uncle Joe.
- KARABO Clever Uncle Joe.
- SIBONGILE Enough talk of Uncle Joe.
- LIU Could somebody just tell me what is going on?
- KARABO We're supposed to be discussing the funeral ...
- SIBONGILE Then please stop interrupting! We don't have much time! Nomsa and Karabo stay together. Karabo, few people know of your return – the fewer the better. A helicopter squadron will give us cover in case of any trouble. SECPOLE has the entire city under control.
- NOMSA But all the 'subversive elements' are bound to have been arrested by now. Kara, you can be sure Uncle Robert never makes a mistake.
- SIBONGILE They're still looking for the right people.
- NOMSA But they must hurry up and find the right people. And quickly too! What's up with our boys? The minister's murderers must be punished!
- LIU What about me?
- NOMSA Goodness, did you kill him?

SIBONGILE Yes!

Pause.

LIU Where do I fit into this pageant? What about me?

SIBONGILE You can go wherever you like. As far as we are concerned, you don't exist.

LIU I'm here!

SIBONGILE You also killed him. You can go to hell!

NOMSA We're nearly there!

Pause.

KARABO Professor Chen belongs in the front of the procession with you.

NOMSA It's unimportant who leads, damn it!

SIBONGILE I lead!

NOMSA All right, we'll all lead!

LIU Shut up, you lot. If you really want an analysis of protocol, none of you lead. I lead. I am his widow.

SIBONGILE You don't exist.

LIU I'm his widow. The new Mrs Nkosi.

SIBONGILE You're not even a South African ...

NOMSA Where's my Bengu ...

KARABO She does have a point ...

SIBONGILE Please! Listen to us, like a bunch of drunk journos! Yes, I'm sure Professor Chen has many points in her favour, but we have enough problems and I'm not even prepared to consider any imported ones. Now, if we all listen to me, there'll be no anonymous massacre in the *boma*. We'll get back to the city safely and try and start again from another beginning ...

NOMSA Pills are wearing off ... I need a pill ...

SIBONGILE Well, I don't need pills and that's why you need me.

NOMSA I feel so sick ...

SIBONGILE Drink.

SIBONGILE hands her a glass and some pills. NOMSA swallows the pills.

VORSTER Comrade Nkosi-Skosana, your staff have been intercepted.

NOMSA Gogo Maria ...

VORSTER There'll have to be an official inquiry into their papers. They were signed without authority.

NOMSA I signed them! Me!

VORSTER Comrade, could you please control your sister?

NOMSA Sibongile, help them ...

VORSTER They're been taken to Depot Bengazi.

SIBONGILE Where are our cars?

VORSTER Your car is on its way.

NOMSA Where's my hideous Bengu?

VORSTER Your 'hideous Bengu' will be driving you back to the city, Miss Nkosi.

SIBONGILE Vorster, I still haven't had time to study the *SECPOL Review*, I'm sorry ...

VORSTER The *SECPOL Review* has been withdrawn.

SIBONGILE But ...

VORSTER Your GM2 frequency is being discontinued. It's a beautiful sunny morning. Enjoy it. The weather report predicts heavy rain on the way.

Pause.

SIBONGILE Vorster?

NOMSA I hate rain ...

Pause. SIBONGILE can't get any connection.

KARABO Do you think our staff are weeping at the sudden death of their boss?

SIBONGILE Of course. They are our friends.

NOMSA Yes, they worship us.

KARABO Their families too?

SIBONGILE There are permits for families to visit.

NOMSA They are allowed to visit regularly, Kara. It's not that bad.

LIU My God, you're fantastic! Even at a time like this you talk about tiresome politics. You really amaze me.

SIBONGILE You'll just have to get used to it, 'Mrs Nkosi'. It's a way of life.

LIU Yes, well, I've never been that interested in politics.

KARABO Well, Gugu dear, it's never too late to start.

SIBONGILE Here in our rainbow democracy we have more than just your congenial Chinese Grand-Hall-of-the-People-Political-Variety-Show.

NOMSA Here we have a little speed wobble ...

KARABO ... it's not going to be the end of the world ...

NOMSA ... but at present it tends to rule our every decision.

SIBONGILE Life can go on quite happily and no one need to starve to death ...

NOMSA ... or deserve to be shot on their mine dumps ...

KARABO ... unless they're stupid enough not to renew their party membership.

SIBONGILE And so we talk about it constantly.

KARABO And so we don't feel too badly when nothing gets done.

LIU Thank you very much. I don't want to be involved.

KARABO You're completely involved.

NOMSA You're here.

LIU I came here as his wife.

SIBONGILE You have no husband.

LIU I came here as his wife!

KARABO I came here as his daughter.

NOMSA You have no father.

LIU Look, your ridiculous politics have nothing to do with me.

SIBONGILE You're an outsider. You're not one of us, whether you like it or not.

LIU I'm part of the family now!

NOMSA There are many who flooded into this country because the life looked easier, the jobs more accessible, the sun warmer.

LIU I came here because of your father, my husband!

KARABO And I came because of the sun ...

LIU Then am I being accused of ... what?

NOMSA Leave her alone. How can we expect her to understand? You're right, Liu, it's far saner to quote Chekhov. Oh, we know it's fashionable to talk against what we are: corrupt, arrogant, careless – that doesn't count. We do it ourselves. But among ourselves. It's not for you to criticise.

LIU Even Karabo now criticises!

KARABO Of course, because Karabo's home.

SIBONGILE Please, we don't have much time.

NOMSA I feel sick ...

SIBONGILE Don't worry, Nomsa. I'll help you look pretty.

She starts to go off with NOMSA.

LIU Is there anything I should do?

SIBONGILE Yes. Dress yourself. The servants are off.

SIBONGILE and NOMSA exit.

LIU Was that meant to be a joke?

KARABO Please just do what she says.

LIU I really didn't come across the world prepared for a state funeral. What does your protocol demand of one? Black?

KARABO Black?

LIU You know what I mean.

KARABO Our protocol demands everything of one. Everything! And gives back nothing.

LIU exits. KARABO looks at some of the photos.

Look. Me with the Arch. It was once the most important thing in my life: my church. My belief in my God. I actually looked forward to Sundays because I could wear my best and most expensive clothes in which to apologise: sorry that we'll be in power till Your Son comes back; sorry that we're telling people that if they don't vote for us they will not go to heaven; sorry that I find the bishop's son so pretty that I can't concentrate on what his father is demanding of me. 'Love your neighbour' he said. Well, his pretty son turned out to be gay and the other neighbour a white racist, so where was I after

all? Pity you won't understand much of the service, Liu. They'll celebrate your dead husband as if he was God's gift to mankind – which he was.

She turns and sees LIU is not there.

And we'll all forgive him for what he was and remember him for what he should've been. I might also remember what I was like and forget what I am. 'Dear Jesus meek and mild, please forgive your little child ...'

SIBONGILE enters.

What is it now?

SIBONGILE turns on the television. Funeral commentary to muffled drums and marching.

Isn't this all a bit too soon? I haven't even got my shoes on ...

On the TV screen is the iconic view of Nelson Mandela lying in state at the Union Buildings in December 2013.

ANNOUNCER And there the casket has been solemnly placed on the gun carriage, not far from the very spot where Nelson Mandela was inaugurated – so introducing democracy into the lives of all South Africans, but also close to the spot where the architect of apartheid Hendrik Verwoerd was given his state funeral in 1966 by the racist apartheid regime after being assassinated in parliament by a courageous freedom fighter.

KARABO Hang on? What's all this?

SIBONGILE Shush. Listen. Look.

ANNOUNCER There is a hush amongst the crowd paying tributes ... a multi-African crowd of brotherhood in mourning. And here they are, standing to one side in the golden sunshine, a warm, perfect South African day ... as usual the symbol of dignity and elegance, Dr Sibongile Nkosi-Skosana, followed by her sisters, Nomsa and Karabo ...'

KARABO Hey?

SIBONGILE Shhhh ...

ANNOUNCER Karabo Nkosi returned to South Africa with her father from his historic mission to Beijing ... they will soon take their places behind the flag-draped casket and slowly start the sad final journey through this beautiful city ...

SIBONGILE switches the television off. Pages through a Vogue magazine.

SIBONGILE Oh well, it seems we're too late.

KARABO I don't believe it ...

SIBONGILE Look at this new *CHINA-VOGUE* uTata brought me from Beijing ...

KARABO There is no real funeral. That was old Madiba lying-in-state footage!

SIBONGILE Yes, there can be no real funeral.

KARABO You lied!

SIBONGILE Yes, I lied. Help me ...

KARABO I don't understand. That was me. That was you! That was Nomsa!

SIBONGILE No. Technology. DSTV soap opera stars. The nation must stay calm, that's why a state funeral is necessary. Don't you understand?

KARABO Our father wasn't assassinated?

SIBONGILE No. Heart attack.

KARABO Then why is everyone playing this elaborate game?

SIBONGILE They've found the missiles...

KARABO If there's no funeral, then where are we going?

SIBONGILE I know what I'm doing!

KARABO Do you get a cheap thrill by dressing up like that?

SIBONGILE Kara, we must stay calm.

Dogs start to bark. Clouds begin to cover the sun. SIBONGILE leafs through the magazine.

These overseas fashions are verging on the pornographic. Thank heavens our people have been spared all this cheap exhibitionism ...

KARABO Does Nomsa think she's going to a funeral?

SIBONGILE Does it matter what she thinks? We must just get her out of here as calmly as possible. This house is her life, our lives ... if she knew what we know, she'd want to stay. It's just a matter of time ... (*Refers to a page.*) What on earth is that?

KARABO The latest upgrade in body tattoos.

SIBONGILE You're joking.

KARABO No, you're joking, Sibongile. This has gone far enough!

SIBONGILE And please make yourself look respectable. We're not off to a picnic.

KARABO My God, I'll do it, even if it kills me ...

SIBONGILE There's trouble ...

KARABO ... take off my shoes and walk into the sea.

SIBONGILE ... a state funeral is the ideal cover for security clean ups.

KARABO Let the icy water caress my knees into numbness.

SIBONGILE The UN has started to talk of our xenophobia as a national disease.

KARABO Build a sandcastle ...

SIBONGILE The death of an icon will divert those accusations.

KARABO ... I might even have a picnic: an orange frozen sucker and a packet of chips. That's what I came home for.

SIBONGILE They will bury the coffin on the Island.

KARABO and I'll watch the lighthouse wink at me.

SIBONGILE That's fitting.

KARABO That's what I came home for.

SIBONGILE You'll die out there!

KARABO I won't die a liar!

SIBONGILE Ubuntu has been declared Security Blue.

Pause.

KARABO Why?

SIBONGILE We.

KARABO But we're uTata's family.

SIBONGILE uTata's dead.

KARABO You're one of them. You help make laws, so break them!

SIBONGILE Our father is dead!

KARABO The party must protect us.

SIBONGILE Why? I was on the legal team that helped draft that clause. Security Blue means switch off and ignore. Security Blue means useless: unnecessary for the survival of the nation.

KARABO Survival of the nation? What nation? We're the nation!

SIBONGILE The minister is dead. Family is just family.

The storm approaches. It is murky and dark.

It's going to rain. Things always look worse when it rains.

KARABO Aren't you scared?

SIBONGILE What for? It's daylight. Get ready. There's a small private service for him in the city. Just the inner circle of his close comrades. We must be seen and remembered.

A clap of thunder.

SIBONGILE Don't breathe a word to Nomsa. Or what's-her-name.

KARABO Yes, yes ...

SIBONGILE Swear!

KARABO I swear ...

SIBONGILE Swear on your mother's soul!

KARABO Oh, my God, you *are* scared!

NOMSA's laughter can be heard off.

SIBONGILE Pretend everything's normal.

KARABO Normal? So what's actually become of the late minister? Our dearly-departed dead dad?

SIBONGILE He's up there.

KARABO Naturally: halo, wings, the works. Toyi-toying with Madiba.

SIBONGILE They brought him home early this morning while you were asleep. He's up there in his room, on his bed. I never realised how small he was. It's better we leave him here. He would've wanted that.

KARABO Do not hide away in terror, o daughters of Ubuntu, for your father is home and all will be well.

NOMSA and LIU enter in conversation. LIU dressed in something close to black but more for a reception than a funeral.

NOMSA No, actually, I thought it was a plastic bag, or some sort of packet. That's what it looked like in the car's lights, like a plastic bag. I've always enjoyed driving over things like that, plastic bottles and bags, you know – killing them, squashing out their air. There was a concrete rock under it. They must've put it there.

LIU What for?

NOMSA Old trick, to break the wheel. I could've been killed, you know. There was a terrible spray of sparks as I hit it.

LIU How fast were you travelling?

NOMSA At first only two of them offered to help. The others were waiting in the dark. They didn't even smile in case the headlamps picked up the white of their teeth.

LIU wants to change the subject.

LIU Kara, is this outfit alright?

NOMSA I think they were young. Maybe not. At first I didn't understand the words. 'We'll show you what it's like!' So I spoke slowly, like to my kids at school: 'Please don't.' Then the others came ...

SIBONGILE Nomsa, stop it!

NOMSA And the others came! And it changed because they spoke my name! And they laughed at me! I'm sure you tried to help me, but they held you. I stared at you, forcing myself to believe that I wouldn't die and leave you alone with them ...

SIBONGILE Take this pill.

NOMSA throws the pill across the room.

KARABO What is she saying?

SIBONGILE She's drunk as always. Take this pill, Nomsa!

NOMSA throws that pill across the room too.

NOMSA They tested me for the virus. They gave me an injection after telling me how dangerous it was to drive alone, but I wasn't alone, was I? Was I, Sibongile? You see, Liu, there seemed to be nothing wrong with the car. I must've passed out and they told me that my clothes were so beautifully folded that it must've looked funny, I suppose. Like I'd asked for it ...

LIU Yes, I suppose so.

SIBONGILE It's all in her mind!

KARABO My God, Sibongile, you were there! And all this time you've forced her to believe she was alone?

SIBONGILE She was alone! She's always alone!

NOMSA again addresses a fictitious class of small children.

NOMSA And so you see, children? The moral of the story is: always let your cat have a litter before you have her spayed. It gives her fond memories.

A clap of thunder. KARABO embraces her.

KARABO Oh, my poor darling. So you did get at the cabinet after all?

SIBONGILE No one is to go into uTata's room. Is that understood?

NOMSA No, don't tell uTata ...

KARABO How many did you take, Nomsa?

LIU She eats pills like sweets ...

KARABO How many pills, Nomsa!

NOMSA Not enough ...

Sound of a siren approaching and a car horn. Thunder.

SIBONGILE Thank God they're here. Hurry ...

NOMSA I've lost Mama Albertina's hairclip. It must be somewhere in this room!

SIBONGILE Nomsa, not now! That's the least of our worries.

NOMSA I want it now! It's mine! (*She searches.*)

SIBONGILE Kara?

But KARABO exits. SIBONGILE sees LIU and registers her outfit.

And what are you wearing?

LIU A suitable outfit.

SIBONGILE To a funeral?

LIU I don't really have anything else. *Jammer.*

SIBONGILE What?

LIU *Jammer.* Isn't that Afrikaans for 'sorry'.

SIBONGILE Out of eleven languages is that all we've been able to teach you? *Jammer?*

NOMSA (*Searching.*) I was here, then I went there ...

SIBONGILE Where did you have that made?

LIU This? No, I think I bought it in Hong Kong last year.
Off the peg.

SIBONGILE Off the peg, yes. I think it's vulgar. (*She exits.*)

LIU Yes, maybe you're right ... (*Finds NOMSA's hairclip on
the table with the photos.*) Is this what you're looking
for, Nomsa?

NOMSA What?

LIU This little hairclip?

NOMSA No, I don't even think it's mine. It's silly. (*But she
happily puts it into her hair.*) I don't even know your
surname. Oh no, I do. It's Chen ...

LIU It's the same as yours now. Nkosi.

NOMSA Good morning, Miss Nkosi ... (*Looks at the photos.*)
Look, I was pretty once, too. You see that small boy?
He was so in love with me, can you believe it? Yes,
he was in love with *me!* And one morning I found
a little note tucked into the class register. 'I love
Miss'. A love letter. I still have it at home among
my things. I wonder whatever happened to my little
secret lover? I can't even remember his name.

LIU Shouldn't you sit down?

NOMSA Why? Are we staying here now?

SIBONGILE enters.

SIBONGILE No, we're going back to the city.

NOMSA I don't want to go. The people look at me; they whisper things about me I can't hear. I want to stay here in Ubuntu!

SIBONGILE You'll be safe with me.

NOMSA I don't want to be safe. I want to live!

KARABO enters in casual clothes, carrying SIBONGILE'S violin case.

KARABO Here, your 'hairclip'.

SIBONGILE But Kara ...

KARABO I really don't feel like being part of that reality-TV drama. I'd rather just go to bed with a book, for old times' sake. 'The Long Walk to Freedom'.

SIBONGILE You must come ... they could be anywhere ...

KARABO I'm so tired of running.

NOMSA is busy with the photos. SIBONGILE talks softly so that she can't hear.

NOMSA Kara, look how terrible you look here. You had jaundice. The picture is all yellow ... maybe it's old ...we should put them on our homepage. Your Facebook, Kara ...

SIBONGILE There'll be no one here.

LIU I'll be here. She'll be all right.

SIBONGILE No, you must come with me.

LIU You're right about the dress ...

SIBONGILE No, no, the dress is fine ...

LIU ... and anyway, I'll feel more at home watching it all on television. I'd like to see what's on the news about my husband's passing. I've heard mentions that your 'visitors' have access to something nuclear? A bit melodramatic, wouldn't you say? Are they now in with fundamentalists? Surely that's not possible?

SIBONGILE No, it's not possible. Everything's under control.

KARABO Go with her, Liu.

LIU I don't think I can face it. Please understand, I don't want to get involved. I don't want to be blamed. Well, maybe I'll join up with you tomorrow.

NOMSA Tomorrow? 'There won't be a single officer or soldier in the town ... all will just be a memory, and, of course, a new life will begin for us here.' Do you remember the words, Liu? Olga's words?

LIU Of course I remember.

NOMSA 'Nothing ever happens as we want it to. I really didn't want to become a headmistress, and yet now I am one. It means we shan't be going to live in Moscow' ...' I hope they allow me to sing at uTata's funeral. *(She starts singing: 'Nkosi Sikelela', then stops, excited.)* Did you know there are fourteen spare rooms in this house? Our homestead Ubuntu. Three sisters and fourteen spare rooms. And a perfect garden. The sun still makes the grass steam in the early morning. And a *boma*? I must show you where Nelson Mandela sat ... *(She exits to outside.)*

SIBONGILE Kara, please come?

KARABO No. We'll stay here. With uTata.

Pause. Then SIBONGILE speaks with intent.

SIBONGILE Colonel Vorster? Take this urgent memo to SECPOL. Top security. Section three of the *SECPOL Review* is totally unacceptable. It's about time you comrades did some thinking down there. Initial me for MZNkosi, minister for disabilities, arts and culture!

NOMSA appears.

NOMSA Come on! Bengu's driving us. He's hysterical again, says there's trouble. Hey, he's wearing his spare glasses now, can you believe it? God, he gets so on my nerves, I'd like to smack him one! Come on! (*Looks up.*) Oh hell, no, here comes the rain! (*Exits running.*)

SIBONGILE collects her things, looks at the two staying behind and exits into thunder and rain.

LIU Musty ... maybe it's damp ...

A siren sounds as the car leaves.

I suppose if I get the staff to take one room at a time, we might get things moving. And get rid of that Korean beetle. Yes, we'll start with this room. (*She notices KARABO watching her.*) It's going to be so ... so grand ...

KARABO I'm going for a walk.

LIU You won't go far, will you?

KARABO No, I won't go far.

LIU But you'll get wet.

KARABO I'll be all right.

LIU Will you?

KARABO Oh yes. Didn't uTata tell you? We'll be here till Jesus Christ comes back. And I don't think it will be today.
(She starts to go off.)

LIU Kara? Do you think he made me pregnant?

KARABO I hope not.

She exits into the rain. Pause. LIU clears things away. She then turns to the windows with a start.

LIU *(Calls.)* Karabo? Don't be too long. We're expecting people.

Peers out and closes them. She has plans for this room. She even takes a selfie of herself with the portrait of uTata. The silence makes her nervous. She switches on the television: a news clip of a familiar highlight in Nelson Mandela's life. She sits and stares at the television. The lights flash and dim. Then a power blackout. The bluish moonlight is all that's left.