

GOD'S FORGOTTEN

by

Pieter-Dirk Uys

God's Forgotten is a black comedy or a white tragedy – depending on
whose side you're on

Characters

TOSCA BRAND-JANSEN, *the eldest daughter*

SARAH BRAND, *her sister*

ALIZA BRAND, *their younger sister*

IMOGEN, *their father's new wife*

HASTINGS (voice only)

The setting of the play is Excelsior, the home of His Excellency the Hon. J.J. Brand, 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 dinner 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. Pierneef paintings. All we see outside the windows is a rough wall, which runs round the house – we cannot see the top of it.

The time is the future in white South Africa.

***God's Forgotten* was first performed at the Space Theatre, Cape Town, on 22 May 1975, directed by Pieter-Dirk Uys, with Esther Van Ryswyk (TOSCA), Christine Basson (SARAH), Lynne Maree (ALIZA), Maralin Vanrenen (GUDRUN, here called IMOGEN) and Blaise Koch (HASTINGS).**

ACT ONE

Night

TOSCA: *(Off) Jackson? Jackson! Mary?
(She enters. Elegantly dressed, carries a bunch of proteas)
Where is everybody? Hastings? I'm at Excelsior. I don't want to
be disturbed. The house is in a mess!
(Slight pause. Then HASTINGS's voice fills the room.)*

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

TOSCA: Yes, I expected them yesterday.

HASTINGS: The Department says there's been a delay...

TOSCA: The proofs can wait. I need time to study them. If I remember
correctly, the whole of Chapter Three needed a rethink.

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

TOSCA: The whole Maximum-security Clause reads like a KGB handout!
You might alert the Bureau that I expect them to submit
something a little more original and effective.

HASTINGS: They won't like it.

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

HASTINGS: Very well.

TOSCA: I heard that, Hastings.

HASTINGS: Heard what?

TOSCA: The little sigh. Don't worry, as from tomorrow we'll be back to
normal.

HASTINGS: Hopefully.

TOSCA: We passed some vagrants on the freeway ...

HASTINGS: The corporal has made his report.

TOSCA: No, Hastings, the news of my father's arrival might have been
leaked.

HASTINGS: I doubt that ...

TOSCA: There is to be a total security alert. Round up those people and accommodate them.

HASTINGS: Yes, will that be all?

TOSCA: Has Sarah been found?

HASTINGS: No.

TOSCA: Well, find her and tidy her up. I've enough on my hands as it is. Oh, keep your frequency open, I'll discuss the arrangements as they come to mind. But switch off the GM2, I want some privacy.

HASTINGS: I'd rather not do that, Mrs Jansen ...

TOSCA: I am armed, Hastings.
(Pause.)
 Oh, Hastings?
(The GM2 has been switched off. She speaks into a walkie-talkie.)
 Hastings?

HASTINGS: Yes, Mrs Jansen?

TOSCA: Fax SATV Channel Three. Get that little bald man ... what's his name ... the little one at the head of Current Affairs. Inform him I intend to use my personal hairdresser tomorrow. And suggest that they send the make-up unit on time for a change. I'll be wearing orange and white.

(During this SARAH has entered. Sloppily dressed. Prone to hay fever. Chain-smoker. TOSCA becomes aware of her presence. Levels a pistol at her. Pause.)

TOSCA: I could've shot you ...

SARAH: *(Sniffs)* Flowers?

TOSCA: Sarah?

SARAH: When's he arriving?

TOSCA: I could've shot you!

SARAH: Me too.
(She has a pistol also.)
 Stick 'em up, sister. Bang, bang, you're dead.
(Laughs. TOSCA takes the gun from her.)

TOSCA: What is happening here?

SARAH: You can tell that forever-sighing Hastings I've got my own little gun. Is the thing switched off?

TOSCA: Yes. They've been looking for you all over the place.

SARAH: Yes, I'm sure. Hastings in a panic, my hideous Corporal Vermeulen in a flap. One of his contact lenses is lost again. God, he gets on my damn nerves!

TOSCA: Sarah, where are Jackson and Mary?

SARAH: I was scared. It can become very still here, at Excelsior.
(Pause. They listen to the silence.)

TOSCA: This house always gives me the creeps when I'm alone.

SARAH: Don't worry, I'm here with you.

TOSCA: What was that?
(They listen.)

SARAH: It creaks a bit.
(Looks at her hands)
Yellow fingers ...

TOSCA: You smoke too much.

SARAH: Yes.

TOSCA: 'One. Two. Three. Four. Five – Father?' I never had the courage to call for him at night. The hours I seemed to spend, staring at the blackness of the open bedroom door, with all the terrorists in Africa waiting for me to take a breath – to call Father. 'One. Two. Three. Four ...' Go on, say it. Father would chase them all away ... And then the old fridge would suddenly give a gurgle in the playroom and my heart would leap into my mouth and smother my breath with its terror!

SARAH: Yes, it always made me feel safe, that funny gurgle ...

TOSCA: I'd pray: 'Dear Jesus meek and mild, have mercy on this little child – and forgive me my sins and keep me safe always.' I so wanted to go to heaven.

SARAH: What for? We are here.

TOSCA: 'Gentle Jesus meek and mild, please forgive this little child ...' And now the old house sighs and groans and I am older and more terrified than ever before.

SARAH: 'One. Two. Three. Four. Five?'

TOSCA: 'Father?'
(Pause.)
He's coming home.

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

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

SARAH: How did he get in?

TOSCA: That's confidential.

SARAH: Submarine!

TOSCA: How do you know?

SARAH: Is there any other way?

TOSCA: *(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. Hastings has been trying to contact you all day. All we hear on your G M2 is your corporal's radio. Why aren't you at your flat? It's past nine.

SARAH: Already? Another day's gone ...

TOSCA: The day will come, Sarah, when Father's name won't keep you out of trouble.

SARAH: I want to go out. I like the night air.

TOSCA: It's illegal.

SARAH: Just another one of your 'security measures' ...

TOSCA: Which protect you, too!

SARAH: I've been here for hours, feels like days. Slept. In your room, then in my room. Hey, the fridge still gurgles. I looked at Aliza's scrapbooks – photos of us posed for history. Father looking so friendly and nice. Who said the camera doesn't lie? Then I went and lay down on Father's bed and dreamt about *braaivleis* in the veld and looking for tortoises under the bushes and singing our South African songs.
(She sings a bit of one.)
 And what else did I do? Oh yes, I invaded Father's drinks cabinet. It's really like a who's who in the government: the State President's brandy, SECPOL's gin, the Army's whisky. I gurgled through the whole lot and ended my orgy with a nice glass of sherry – oh yes, our father always has the best taste in the cabinet. And then I very elegantly vomited the whole regime out on to my clothes, and what you see is what I found. One of Ma's things ...

TOSCA: Sarah. You didn't drink out of the State President's bottle, did you?

SARAH: I'm sorry, Tosca, but that's exactly what I did.

TOSCA: But ...

SARAH: Don't worry, Tosca, we'll top it up with water or pee in the bottle. No one will know the difference. I found my old school uniform. *(Chants)* 'Which is the best school in the land: Berghof, Berghof, Berghof.'

TOSCA: Come here. What on earth is this?

(She takes something out of Sarah's hair.)

SARAH: It's a hairclip. Leave me alone, Tosca, I was lonely. Forever alone, I had to do something new. Anyway, I wore this that day I won the cup at the Eisteddfod. It's my life, this little relic. No one ever writes about my life; I have to do my own research in the old cupboards!

TOSCA: I don't ask anyone to write all that nonsense about me, Sarah. Please don't attack me about things that I just have to accept as part of the job.

SARAH: 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 father's name won't be enough to keep you on the front page of every local newspaper.

TOSCA: Where are the staff! Jackson?

SARAH: I really look a sight in my school uniform.

TOSCA: Don't tell me they saw you like that?

(SARAH looks to the window quickly. Pause.)

SARAH: Like what?

TOSCA: Do you hear anything?

(Pause.)

SARAH: Er ... no. What were you saying?

TOSCA: Did any of the black staff see you dressed like that?

SARAH: Unfortunately people don't look any more. How my boys spoilt me; how they always stared. Did I ever tell you about that one history class? I didn't wear a bra to the class that day and every boy failed the test on the 1820 British settlers. There's nothing like contours to upstage Sir George Grey. Keeping ...

TOSCA: Keeping abreast of the times, yes, I know the story.

SARAH: You don't know the story! My little boys knew how to make me feel like a pretty woman. I wonder what happened to all my boys? To me they're all still under sixteen. Good God, some must be married by now, some must have children; some must be bald, some must be dead. I wonder how many of my boys died during the war. You never bothered to find that out for me, you know?

TOSCA: Sarah, Father will be here any minute from now. The house is in chaos. Go and fetch Jackson and Mary. They're probably watching TV in their compound.

SARAH: No.

TOSCA: Sarah, please – I can't get myself to go out to their rooms. You know how I feel about their habits: that stench. It disgusts me. Please?

SARAH: They're on holiday.

TOSCA: Who's on holiday?

SARAH: Jackson, Mary and old Hitler. I signed their papers this morning. They've gone. I told you, I'm alone here, me and my hairclip.

TOSCA: But Father ...

SARAH: 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 loony to keep the truth from!

TOSCA: I've never tried to keep things from you ...

SARAH: Oh, then why can't I drive my own car? That revolting, repulsive Vermeulen gets on my nerves with his constant arse-creeping and those stupid contact lenses that keep falling out. And besides that, Mrs Jansen, he's a rotten driver! I want to drive my own car where and when I like!

TOSCA: Yes, yes ...

SARAH: Yes, yes. Well, the black slaves have gone home. Shame, it really looks like we two white princesses will have to play at being handmaids to the big boss!

TOSCA: Will you be quiet!
(Speaks into walkie-talkie)
Hastings? Check in the Excelsior file. Jackson, Mary and ...
(To SARAH)
... what is old Hitler's name?

SARAH: Adolf?

TOSCA: Hastings, there's another old man. We have our own name for him. There's been a misunderstanding here and they've been

sent home. I don't know which homeland they belong to. They're probably still on the bus. Get them back. Hastings? Are you there?

HASTINGS: I'm here, Mrs Jansen.

TOSCA: What are you doing?

HASTINGS: Drinking a lukewarm cup of Department coffee, if you really must know.

TOSCA: Poor Hastings. I want those people here immediately.

HASTINGS: Yes; we'll fly them down from wherever they're detained.

SARAH: No! Hastings, don't fly them ...

TOSCA: Shhhh. By the way, Hastings, I've found my sister.

HASTINGS: So it seems. Mrs Jansen, her chauffeur ...

(Tosca breaks the frequency.)

TOSCA: Don't you ever do that again! Don't interfere when I'm talking to the Department!

SARAH: They mustn't fly them down, please, Tosca! Old Mary'll die. You know how terrified she is of heights.

TOSCA: No one asked you to send them away.

SARAH: They long for their wives, their children, their grandchildren. They're not all as independent as their Miss Tosca; they need to be with their people.

TOSCA: And what do you mean by that?

SARAH: Old Mary cries. She's scared they'll forget her back there in the kraal, in the slum wherever home is. These are people with whom you are playing at being God, Tosca, people who will not forget. Look, if they must be brought back here, OK, but don't let the Department force old Mary to fly. Tosca, old Mary brought us up!

TOSCA: And her son tried to shoot Father.

SARAH: Nonsense, he just wanted to be allowed to see his mother.

TOSCA: With a gun in his hand?

SARAH: You have a gun in your hand!

TOSCA: We took this land with a gun, we will keep it with a gun.

(Pause. TOSCA is busy with her files. SARAH looks out of the window.)

SARAH: How pretty the garden looks in the moonlight. Or is it the searchlight? I walked to the little *braaivleis-laager* in my old school uniform, singing 'Sarie Marais' ever so softly and sweetly, like the old days. But the walls get higher each year. Soon they'll push the sun out forever. The corporal at the West Gate saw me.

TOSCA: Oh Lord ...

SARAH: Silly little corporal. He's got flat feet, he says, that's why he's here at Excelsior. Poor flat-footed soldier: so young, so pale, so ruthless. Thanks to his flat feet he might live to the ripe old age of thirty.
(Pause.)
Is the thing off?

TOSCA: Yes. Why?

SARAH: No, just asked.
(Takes a letter out of her pocket)
We've got our little flat-footed friend. We're OK.

TOSCA: Sometimes you make me feel very sad.

SARAH: How exhausting for you. Put away your little pistol, Mrs Jansen, we're safe in Excelsior. *(Reads)* 'Cape Town, 14 July 1985 ...'

TOSCA: What's that?

SARAH: I found it in Aliza's scrapbook. From ... Joshua. Who was Joshua?

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

SARAH: It was loose at the back. 'Thank you for your lecture notes. I hope I pass.' Joshua? This Joshua died on the island!

TOSCA: I don't know. It really doesn't interest me.

SARAH: *(Reads)* 'I know what you must be up against at home. I understand, but I cannot accept it. We live in a soap-bubble, Aliza. We are friends, we laugh together. I heard about your dinner-party. Everyone enjoyed it. I couldn't have come anyway, but you didn't allow me that excuse. Aliza, you sleep with me and we share the problems your people have created. It means little to me. Offer me your plate, give me your spoon, look me in the face as I eat at your table. Then you are a friend. I'll return the notes soon. We must not see each other. My people regard your visits as white propaganda. Joshua.' How pathetic. It all looked so simple then, 14 July 1985. It was near the end of one life and the beginning of a death. Sometimes I hope it's all going to end in a few minutes. Everything. Then I just say: thank God

we'll all be gone and won't have to apologize. No Nuremberg Trials. There'll be no one to see what we left behind.

TOSCA: Go wash your face.

SARAH: Yes. I found some charcoal crayon in the playroom. Gives tired eyes a pretty glow ...

TOSCA: Sarah, what if Father invites the Cabinet round for a briefing and they see someone's been at their bottles?

SARAH: It's the blacks who steal. Old Mary who brought us up constantly steals from us. We'll say it's the staff. Let me off the hook; and there are many more where they come from.

TOSCA: This room smells funny.

SARAH: Yes, funny, ever since you came in.

TOSCA: Leave me alone, Sarah, you know what I think of you.

SARAH: Nothing?

TOSCA: If only it were that simple.

(Pause.)

SARAH: This room is also dead. When Ma died, she took our lives with her.

TOSCA: Rubbish.

SARAH: Remember that time Father nearly remarried and your pathetic howling forced him to cancel everything?

TOSCA: My 'pathetic howling', as you call my concern, had nothing to do with it.

SARAH: I wonder what our lives would've been like with a new ma.

TOSCA: Father doesn't have the time for new 'ma's. Besides, that Scholtz woman was quite wrong for him, and since then I've been proved right - a social climber of the first order and an alcoholic. There'll probably be a reception tomorrow. Depends, of course, on how Father feels ...

SARAH: That Scholtz woman was here at one of our Sunday *braais*. She looked so damn smart, I thought you'd have a fit or choke on your *boerewors*. She'd have kept him young, Tosca, it's a pity you chased her away, too.

TOSCA: You'll have to ask your Vermeulen to assist you with the catering. I'm far too busy. Where will I find the time for that SECPOL Review!

SARAH: You're only his daughter, Tosca, not his wife or his mother. There are things that he may not want from you, no matter how hard you try and force them on to him.

TOSCA: What are you complaining about now?

SARAH: One day something will happen to him 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 Tosca Brand-Jansen, Excelsior's pushy guardian angel.

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

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

TOSCA: First things first: the catering. All those people. Now, where are the official lists ...

(She exits. SARAH looks around the room, listening to the silence.)

SARAH: The wakes, the parties, the burble of elitist conversation. The whitest of lies, morning suits, botanical hats and sport, sport, sport. The great test matches of yesterday: the Bothas play the Smiths, Air Force beats the Navy; white against white. Who needs the outside world if we can do it ourselves. A nation rots while we play sport. *Vrystaat* ...

(TOSCA enters with the lists. Uses her walkie-talkie bleeper)

TOSCA: Hastings, this is Excelsior.

HASTINGS: Yes, Mrs Jansen?

TOSCA: The official guest list for tomorrow, pages eight and nine of the list, will you get it, please? Sarah, wash your face, that stuff ruins your skin ...

SARAH: Father's little princess. Go wash your little face, Princess, the people are coming ...

TOSCA: Shhhh.

HASTINGS: I have the pages. There are three Security Blues. They'll need clearance.

TOSCA: Blues? Don't be silly, these aren't Press people, they are the Minister's friends ... I don't understand, Hastings, who are they?

HASTINGS: Classified information, of course, Mrs Jansen. I'll have to ...
(Pause.)
Mrs Jansen, I've just been informed of subversion within the safety radius outside Excelsior.

TOSCA: What has that got to do with me?

HASTINGS: SECPOL will be sending reinforcements. The Minister will be brought straight to the Department. He has valuable information.

TOSCA: But he ...

HASTINGS: I just wanted to warn you, Mrs Jansen.

TOSCA: Electrify the main walls.

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

SARAH: No, damn it, is there no privacy left!
(Pause.)

TOSCA: Er ... no.

HASTINGS: But Mrs Jansen, open-GM2 procedure is a primary security measure...

TOSCA: No, if SECPOL does its job properly, there should be no need for GM2. Thank you, Hastings.
(Pause.)

SARAH: Thanks, I hate that thing.

TOSCA: It's for your own safety. I'd better get back to the Department immediately to meet Father ...

SARAH: No, please stay here. Look, Hastings didn't ask you to go, did he? Look, I'll... I'll find us something nice to eat, put on some music. We have lovely things. What do you fancy? Like at our soirees? You always played your violin.

TOSCA: Why not?

SARAH: Unforgettable, your fiddle.

TOSCA: Our musical evenings were always wonderful ...

SARAH: Good, I'll find us something tuneful but cultured, and then I'll cook you a perfect ... hard-boiled egg!
(They laugh. SARAH sorts the CDs.)
What is this Security Blue?

TOSCA: Confidential.
(SARAH 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?

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

TOSCA: Fourteen.

SARAH: When the communists take over, seven villages can live in our house: the *Laager* Excelsior. Today I seemed to notice the garden for the first time. Father probably bought it as a jigsaw-puzzle, it looks so perfect. The birds must fly over with crossed legs: shame our perfect piece of paradise.
(*Music: 'Claire de Lune'. They listen.*)
What are you thinking?

TOSCA: Nothing.

SARAH: You look lovely when you just sit and think about nothing.

TOSCA: Sarah, find something to do!

SARAH: Last night I actually made a decision. It was so quiet I could hear the beetle eating the stinkwood of Father's big wardrobe. Have you ever lain awake at night and listened to the beetle eat their way through your heritage? It has to be so still that your heartbeats sound like a frantic knocking at the door: and then you hear them – krts, krts, krts ...

TOSCA: Sarah ...

SARAH: Sarah Brand made a decision: that should her famous father die, be it only for show, she would lay him out on his big bed, force a few more frowns into his forehead so that he wouldn't look too soft and useless, straighten out his famous wagging finger – maybe even put it on a little wire so that it shakes up and down – and hide a tiny speaker behind his one false tooth:
(*In a deep voice*)
'Do not hide away in terror, o my daughters, for your father is home in Excelsior, and all will be well in our land!' We'll ask for a Krugerrand or two at the door – a guided tour! Just think, for each excursion you can wear a different colour hat with matching handbag, gloves and a smile. View Father in all his splendour, at one with God. United with his Mentor, his Accomplice. Called away to join the Great White God on his segregated cloud to celebrate the triumph of the great South African Dream. Our Father who art then in Heaven, all dead and gone, draped in the flag, our great statesman. Tosca, we could make a fortune! And we'll have people round us. The empty halls of Excelsior will shimmer in the snot of their sorrow.
(*She looks round the room.*)

You know, my little flat is so much smaller than this, but just as bare.

(Breaking glass off. TOSCA points her pistol at the window.)

HASTINGS: Mrs Jansen, your GM2 is operational. Speak from wherever you are.

TOSCA: I'm here.

HASTINGS: 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. Mrs Jansen, can you hear me?

SARAH: We can all hear you, Hastings! There was a sound of glass breaking outside! Why?

HASTINGS: They threw bottles over the walls. It's all under control.

SARAH: Will you keep GM2 on? For our safety?

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

SARAH: Sarcastic drip!

TOSCA: Thank you, Hastings.
(To window)
Bottles ... they dare throw their bottles against the walls of Excelsior!

SARAH: Good practice. Bottles tonight, bombs tomorrow.

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

SARAH: I had to escape from there, Tosca.

TOSCA: But Dr Steyn ...

SARAH: To hell with Dr Steyn! Dear God, I'm not an invalid! After all, I was only raped by blacks!

TOSCA: Sarah, don't allow yourself to remember ...

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

TOSCA: Yes, hate them, but don't destroy yourself!

SARAH: One night, on her way home from Viljoensdrif High School, 'Princess Brand', daughter of our great statesman, found herself under a pyramid of Kaffirs and had herself well and truly fucked!

TOSCA: Let's see to the food ...

SARAH: Sarah Brand, defiled by savages. They pushed my face into the dirt of my land and forced their way into me. What a bargain; ten rides on one ticket! How can I forget? The taste of the earth is still fresh on my tongue.
(Pause. TOSCA pretends not to be involved.)
 I was bored, damn it! I did everything and found nothing new in my life. I've seen it all and it stinks. Tosca? I tried to sleep with my Corporal Vermeulen.

TOSCA: Good.

SARAH: You're not listening.

TOSCA: Yes, yes, I'm listening.

SARAH: What did I say?

TOSCA: You tried to sleep with Corporal Vermeulen ... what?

SARAH: You know, that hideous Vermeulen, sweet seventeen, pimple paradise. Oh, Tosca, please, he was one of the boys from my class at Viljoenshof; still calls me 'Miss'.

TOSCA: That I have to waste time like this ...

SARAH: All he'd do is give his life in defence of my revolting little cage: die for Miss Brand. Come on, where's your sense of humour?

TOSCA: Switch that off, it's getting on my nerves.

SARAH: They're your nerves; switch it off yourself!
(TOSCA stops the music.)
 Anyway I made such a fuss, bitching over the GM2, that the Department was forced to give me a permit to come here.

TOSCA: I wonder what Father achieved in Europe. What an incredible breakthrough for us.

SARAH: We had to pass through a raid, sirens shrieking, crawling through the masses, countless fingers clawing at the car windows to escape the horror of being our blacks ...

TOSCA: We'll probably be televised tomorrow. Father is the first South African to be allowed overseas in over five years.

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

TOSCA: Lies!

SARAH: 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 – watching, waiting. Some 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. Another pathetic march with *assegai*, bottle and stick. Our servants stand in protest and we make jokes with the flatfoot soldier while they mow down our masses.

TOSCA: I feel quite ill. I'm not used to sitting so still for so long.

(Pause.)

SARAH: I can see a grey hair.

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

SARAH: For God's sake ...

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

SARAH: I want to watch TV.

(She switches it on.)

TOSCA: But Father ...

SARAH: Shhhh.

(There follows a scene from the well-known old film. Sentimental. We see them watch, remembering, forgetting. Then suddenly, brutally, the film is interrupted by the United Nations' satellite.)

TOSCA: Damn!

(She switches off the TV.)

HASTINGS: Mrs Jansen?

TOSCA: Yes, Hastings?

HASTINGS: A slight change of plan. Your father has arrived. His motorcade will stop at Excelsior before coming to the Department. The SECPOL Review is being delivered to you by hand. We have a Top Priority rating on it.

TOSCA: Yes, yes.

HASTINGS: By the way, the United Nations' satellite is again jamming SATV with communist propaganda.

TOSCA: Yes, we saw.

HASTINGS: Ruined the best part of the film.

TOSCA: Yes, yes, thank you, Hastings.

HASTINGS: Your GM2 is now operational.

(Pause.)

SARAH: I wonder if Father saw Aliza over there. I always think about her, especially here at Excelsior.

TOSCA: She's a traitor.

SARAH: She's our sister!

TOSCA: Traitor! Sold out her country and her people in exchange for her safety.

SARAH: She's free, Tosca.

TOSCA: She's an exile. I don't know her.

SARAH: Then let me remind you: Aliza Brand, Excelsior's little Christian, until one day brotherly love became an illegality and she overnight a traitor. If you may not love your neighbour, Tosca, at least remember your sister.

TOSCA: Don't use the Scriptures to justify her action!

SARAH: We all use the Scriptures to justify our actions!

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

SARAH: Brat? Mine would've been a black bastard ...

(Sirens and motorcade heard approaching off.)

TOSCA: He's here!

SARAH: Help me with my hair ...

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

SARAH: 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!

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

(SARAH exits. TOSCA fusses around, prepares to greet her father. IMOGEN'S voice is heard off.)

IMOGEN: *(Off.)*... of course you know all those stories one hears about lions roaming the streets? With this huge estate outside I can well believe it. Couldn't see much in the dark. I'll drop this here.
(She enters.)

Oh, hello. What a beautiful old house ... I can't talk, they're waiting for me. Would it be all right if I just left this here?
(A small overnight bag)
I'm Imogen.

TOSCA: Oh?

IMOGEN: Yes.

TOSCA: Good.

IMOGEN: And you're Tosca.

TOSCA: Yes, I know.

IMOGEN: Don't tell me ... Brand's eldest daughter?

TOSCA: Brand?

IMOGEN: He's waiting in the car. Just stopped by so that this could be delivered to you.
(She hands TOSCA to the SECPOL Review.)
Look, I'd better go. He looks so impatient ...

TOSCA: What?

IMOGEN: 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.
(Looks around the room)
Bit musty in here? Anyway, I must run. See you later, Tosca.

TOSCA: I see no need for you to come back.

IMOGEN: Brand will be impossible to live with if I don't ...

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

IMOGEN: I know, Tosca. That's why I married him. Bye.

(She exits. TOSCA stands, stunned. ALIZA enters. Pause.)

ALIZA: Hello, Tosca.
(Sirens heard leaving off.)
What? You'd better talk louder, my ears still feel blocked ... maybe I should try and yawn.
(Pause.)
Father told me your husband was killed in the war. Father told me so many things. The last five years sound like a bad TV horror series.
(Pause.)
She might come across as silly, but she's very nervous of all this. She's English, you'll get used to her after a while. He loves her very much. He's getting old, Tosca, he needs youth to help him forget his mistakes.

TOSCA: 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!

ALIZA: That's over now ...

TOSCA: 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!

ALIZA: Cancer killed her.

TOSCA: 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. It destroys me having to be responsible for so much tragedy around me.' You accused your father of stealing their self-respect, of making them second-class citizens. Little Aliza was not prepared to lose her life for someone else's dream gone wrong!

ALIZA: Yes, I remember – I was young ...

TOSCA: And so little Aliza sold out her loved ones and killed her mother. She died of a broken heart, Aliza, not cancer!

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

TOSCA: Oh yes, you see the suffering of the suppressed so keenly, but the agony in your own family you push aside with ease. After all, family is only just family. So? The publicity helped? Good job in London? Sympathy from the English?

ALIZA: I suppose the publicity helped.

TOSCA: But you see, little sister, you were wrong. We're still here. Excelsior is not a smoking ruin. Nothing has changed, Aliza.

ALIZA: Tinted glass?

TOSCA: For privacy.

ALIZA: Bullet-proof?

TOSCA: We are stronger than ever before. The war, which you no doubt watched on television, just made us stronger.

ALIZA: And so many died.

TOSCA: Yes; we'd just decided to start a family when he was called to duty and I became the most glamorous widow this country has ever seen. Their damn revolution was our own fault. We were always trying to get them to stand on their own feet. It was supposed to make them proud; we hoped it would make them

work. Ungrateful fools, they deserved to die! And yet, in spite of their deaths, our deaths, we are stronger than ever before. The fact that you came back proves it.

ALIZA: Proves what?

TOSCA: You had to share in our security. London isn't easy living, is it?

ALIZA: No.

TOSCA: I knew you'd never lose your taste for comfort. You're a true South African, Aliza Brand. And now, if you'll excuse me, I have some work to do.

(Pause.)

Aliza, who *is* this girl?

(SARAH enters in an uncomfortable dress. Sees ALIZA.)

SARAH: You've been arrested.

ALIZA: No.

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

ALIZA: No, I eat.

TOSCA: Aliza?

SARAH: You've been deported.

ALIZA: No.

SARAH: Something's happened to Father! Something we don't know about?

(Pause.)

ALIZA: No.

SARAH: Why the pause?

ALIZA: Tosca will tell you.

TOSCA: Tosca's forgotten. Well, we're a bit disorganized this evening. Sarah's given the staff time off.

ALIZA: Old Mary? Is old Mary still here?

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

(They giggle.)

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

SARAH: You and your catering, Tosca. You'll delay the Day of Judgement for the sake of your catering.

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

(TOSCA exits with IMOGEN's suitcase. ALIZA goes towards SARAH, happily.)

ALIZA: Sarah ...

SARAH: Shhhh. Hastings?

HASTINGS: Yes, Miss Brand?

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

HASTINGS: Out of the question, Miss Brand, it's after eleven. You know the law.

SARAH: I watched it being written. Please, Hastings?

HASTINGS: The law ...

SARAH: Hastings, the Department would be very intrigued to learn of your after-hours frolics with your young blond lieutenant.
(Pause. Then she laughs.)
Good old blackmail. So much of it around.

ALIZA: What is this?

SARAH: GM2, our guardian angel.

ALIZA: But why at Excelsior? Why here?

SARAH: Don't be shocked, it's a luxury. The Department has a long list of names waiting for their GM2s. The new South African status symbol.

ALIZA: I don't understand ...

SARAH: So we can sleep in peace. At least they can hear when someone attacks the house or ...

ALIZA: But what about your privacy?

SARAH: Things have changed, Aliza.

ALIZA: What's happened to us, Sarah?

SARAH: We became fat and secure in our comfort. We became dulled through our believe in our survival. We became proud of our self-

sufficiency, our arrogance, our power. As Christians we loved them because they had no hope and we hated each other, because we became our own rivals. We encouraged them 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 ultimately destroyed us, we bestowed on them the patience to wait for us to frighten ourselves to death. Do you still think of our token black friends?

ALIZA: Mine were never token.

SARAH: Oh? And where are they now? Your eternal Kaffir buddies?

ALIZA: I lost touch.

SARAH: Ah, yes. Well, that's what's happened to us, Aliza. We lost touch.
(Loudly.)
Hastings? There are six naked men waving things at me!
(Listens: then)
Now, quickly, why are you here? Why did you leave London?
What's happening? Are you under Departmental control?

ALIZA: Please, Sarah, you're asking me too many questions ...

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

ALIZA: Yes, quite free.

SARAH: So? Blackmail! How else did the Department get you to leave Britain!

ALIZA: I wanted to come home, that's all.

SARAH: That's all.

ALIZA: Yes, I missed it. You know, the sea, the air, the sun, the Karoo, the wine ... home.

SARAH: Yes.

ALIZA: Yes, that's why I'm here.

SARAH: They didn't force you?

ALIZA: The moment I saw Father, I decided to come home. 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 need that feeling more than freedom.

SARAH: We have wonderful videos of the sea-air-Karoo-wine-sun. I'll run some for you tomorrow.

ALIZA: Who wants to see videos! 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 Sandy Bay.
(Pause.)
Sarah, what've I said?

SARAH: You've made me homesick, too.

ALIZA: Oh for God's sake, don't tell me we still can't go to the beach on Sundays?

SARAH: You still don't seem to realize that things have changed since the war.

ALIZA: The isolation ...

SARAH: No, before that even ...

ALIZA: We heard that after the missile attack on Johannesburg ...

SARAH: No, not just commercial air-travel. Beaches, mountains, picnics, drives: we watch them on video. It's safer. Unless you can justify an armoured escort to take you to the seaside and surround you with steel while you paddle. We now have certain hours each day when armed convoys go into the city. No, it's just a precaution, it's quite safe really – but occasionally a stray car is stopped by gangs of young b-b-bl-black men and people are maimed and hurt.
(She tries to control herself.)
Tell me about London.

ALIZA: What? Oh ... grey.

SARAH: And Soho?

ALIZA: Soho? Er ... also grey ...

SARAH: What are the people like? Happy?

ALIZA: Yes. No. I don't know. One has very little contact with strangers nowadays.

SARAH: Paris?

ALIZA: What's happened to all the black staff?

SARAH: Notre-Dame – is it true they blew it up?

ALIZA: Good God, who?

SARAH: The terrorists.

ALIZA: I don't know.

SARAH: But surely the BBC must've been full of it!

ALIZA: No, I don't recall anything about Notre-Dame. Sarah, since I've arrived I've not seen any of our black people. Where are they?

SARAH: That's odd. I distinctly remember an SATV newflash on my birthday: Notre-Dame gutted by terrorists, then St. Peter's, Westminster Abbey ...

ALIZA: That's absolute nonsense, Sarah. Father and I went to Westminster Abbey last week. Believe me, the bombings stopped years ago.

SARAH: So, it seems, did our reality.
(Pause.)
Our blacks have a nuclear bomb. Is that absolute nonsense?

ALIZA: How do you mean, a bomb?

SARAH: A bomb! The United Nations' satellite jams our SATV with this ... Tosca calls it propaganda. The satellite says the blacks have the Bomb. Now, that is absolute propaganda, isn't it? Isn't it?

ALIZA: I don't know, Sarah. I know very little. Please, I'm very confused ...

SARAH: *You're* confused? You've been living in civilization for so many years and you're confused? I'm starving for reality, Aliza. Five years of total isolation somehow drains the imagination and empties the soul of inspiration.

ALIZA: Of course it would.

SARAH: All right then ... what are they saying about us?

ALIZA: You mean, in Europe?

SARAH: Yes, I mean Europe, London, on the BBC, in the Press! What are they saying!

ALIZA: About South Africa?

SARAH: All the bloody left-wing rubbish as always, I suppose: death-camps, riots, chemical warfare ...

ALIZA: Nothing.

SARAH: What do you mean: nothing?

ALIZA: Nothing. Not a word.

SARAH: But we were told ...

ALIZA: That's why I had to come home! Outside in the rest of the world South Africa has ceased to exist. For years I couldn't find a word in the Press, even referring to our white dictatorship, or

anything. The official government-in-exile is black and represents that majority. We don't exist any more.

SARAH: Impossible. Our gold and uranium ...

ALIZA: Things have changed. We don't need your gold ...

SARAH: 'We'? 'We'! For heaven's sake, wake up, wake up! 'We'?

ALIZA: 'They' ... Sarah, for years nothing has come in or gone out of this country!

SARAH: And you're telling me? Don't gloat, little liberal! Ha, you and Father came in!

ALIZA: Yes.

SARAH: So we're not that isolated after all.

ALIZA: I'm not arguing with you, please, Sarah ...

(Pause.)

SARAH: Dear God, I'm sorry ... I didn't touch you, hold you, kiss you ...
(They embrace.)
My darling, why did you come back? At least I kept living through thoughts of you!

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

SARAH: Do you really think that?

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

SARAH: Yes, I love it. I still have that, don't I? And my faith in God? I still have that, haven't I? Haven't I! God is still on our side, no matter what happens. Thank you, Hastings, you can make GM2 operational now.

HASTINGS: Yes, Miss Brand.

SARAH: We are white! We are right! We have always been right! Repeat after me, children. The decisions made by our fathers and inspired by God and passed down to us are our true heritage. We will sacrifice all for the truth of our beliefs. We are God's children. We are the only light in a dark world!

ALIZA: Oh my God ...

SARAH: Behold, they will come with weapons and wealth and enclose you with hatred and darkness, but my love will shine through you. Do not hide away in terror, o daughters of Excelsior, for your father is home, and all will be well with white South Africa!

(Pause.)

ALIZA: Sarah, they do have a bomb ...

(All the lights go out. Moonlight through the window.)

ALIZA: What's happened?

(TOSCA enters.)

TOSCA: Sarah, where are your matches?

SARAH: Somewhere on the table next to the vase, I think ...

ALIZA: Is there trouble or something?

SARAH: Got them?

TOSCA: Yes ... yes ...

SARAH: Fresh candles in the bottom drawer.

TOSCA: I know ...

ALIZA: What's going on!

SARAH: Don't mess candlewax on the priceless stinkwood, Mrs Jansen!

TOSCA: Oh, shush ...

(She lights the candles.)

ALIZA: Please don't be so calm. It frightens me even more!

TOSCA: What?

ALIZA: I don't remember this happening before.

SARAH: I told you, Aliza, things aren't what they used to be.

TOSCA: They either dig up cables or blow up pylons and cause temporary disruption.

SARAH: It's an old trick.

TOSCA: It's a damn nuisance.

SARAH: We have our own power supply, but only for emergencies.

ALIZA: Which this isn't?

TOSCA: No. Hastings, can you hear me?

HASTINGS: Yes, Mrs Jansen, your power should be restored in a few minutes.

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

HASTINGS: It is difficult to keep a check on everyone, Mrs Jansen. After all, there are over 4 million of us.

TOSCA: If it's not restored in five minutes, I'll switch through our own power.

HASTINGS: This is not an emergency ...

TOSCA: The Minister will want a meal when he comes home. That's an emergency. Sarah, sit down.

SARAH: I am sitting.

TOSCA: How can an old man ... a great man ... fall in love with a ... foreigner overnight? Did you engineer this, Aliza? It smacks of your brand of intrigue.

ALIZA: Oh, stop it.

TOSCA: 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?

SARAH: It smells musty.

TOSCA: Who the hell is this person, Aliza?

ALIZA: Her name is Imogen ...

TOSCA: Yes, I know all that. What's she doing here?

ALIZA: Don't tell me you searched her luggage?

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

SARAH: What are you talking about?

TOSCA: Doesn't she know? Tell her, Aliza!

SARAH: What is it with this Imogen?

ALIZA: Imogen is Father's ... er ...

SARAH: Mistress!

TOSCA: How dare you say that! Father's a Christian!

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

ALIZA: There are no new decisions, it's just that Father's remarried.

SARAH: Remarried who?

TOSCA: Imogen, for goodness' sake!

SARAH: How can he remarry Imogen? Imogen? Who the hell is Imogen?

TOSCA: She's trying to explain.

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

SARAH: A new ma ...

TOSCA: She's still a child!

SARAH: ... my God, we've got a new ma!

TOSCA: Explain, Aliza!

ALIZA: All I know is, she met Father ten years ago and suddenly things developed from there.

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

TOSCA: 'Things developed'? Good Lord, Father could be her ... father! It's a scandal! And this after all I sacrificed for the family: my husband, my youth, my children ...

SARAH: Guess who'll have to play second fiddle now!

TOSCA: You both don't seem to realize what it means!

SARAH: Simple. It means Father will have someone with him.

TOSCA: I'm here.

SARAH: 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 ...

TOSCA: I'm sorry but I won't tolerate ...

ALIZA: Tolerate? You will not 'tolerate' the fact that Father has a life of his own? That he actually enjoys himself when you're not around? No wonder you're all-powerful. I heard odd rumours about your glamorous existence from other South African exiles in London: Tosca Brand-Jansen, our own Evita Peron!

(She and SARAH share the joke.)

TOSCA: Don't be silly. And where's the girl going to sleep?

ALIZA: They ignore the camps and the homeland fiascos and the anonymous mass of millions waiting above Excelsior's walls like a petrified wave. Who cares about the suffering when you have

the glamour of Tosca's latest fashion fad, Tosca's exclusive tea-party ...

SARAH: *Braaivleis!*

ALIZA: *Braaivleis ...*

TOSCA: So they talk about me overseas?

SARAH: *(Sarcastic)* They gossip, Sis. Aliza was telling me. You're in every newspaper, like their royalty.

TOSCA: That's going a bit too far. Typical. When will they learn to control their Press?

ALIZA: You're a household name from Brighton to Belfast!

TOSCA: Then the Blockade obviously doesn't work.

ALIZA: It's a failure. The world eats and breathes South Africa.

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

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

(The lights snap on.)

TOSCA: About time.

ALIZA: Tosca?

TOSCA: Yes.
 (Snuffs out candles)
 So, you're home, Aliza Brand?

ALIZA: Yes.

TOSCA: Father's probably pleased.

ALIZA: Yes.

SARAH: He missed you so.

ALIZA: Did he?

SARAH: Constantly.

TOSCA: Occasionally.
 (Dogs bark off.)

ALIZA: Do we still have the dogs?

TOSCA: No, our dogs ran away.

SARAH: I think they were poisoned.

ALIZA: Churchill and Kaiser?

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

(Pause.)

ALIZA: What's happened to this room?

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

ALIZA: No, the feeling in it ...

TOSCA: 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 left or else we might as well give up. And I'm sorry, but I don't regard that phrase as part of my vocabulary. Hastings? Have the staff been found?

HASTINGS: Not yet, Mrs Jansen. They'll be transported down. It might take some hours.

TOSCA: Please send me some efficient staff for the night.

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

SARAH: You're quite right, Hastings. Why lose ten young white lives for the sake of housekeeping?

HASTINGS: That is not what I meant, Miss Brand.

TOSCA: But I must have staff.

ALIZA: Why?

TOSCA: They have to prepare.

ALIZA: What? What do they have to prepare?

TOSCA: The food, the house ...

ALIZA: We can do that.

SARAH: Yes. Thank you, Hastings, goodbye. We'll cook.

TOSCA: Don't be silly.

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

SARAH: And Imogen. Can she cook?

ALIZA: She's English.

SARAH: Oh dear, better leave the cooking to me.

(She exits. TOSCA starts laying the table.)

ALIZA: I don't know what to talk to you about.

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

ALIZA: Oh yes, so much ... so much. The last time we were together in this room, there were only two subjects. The Now and the revolution. At varsity we were for the revolution. We entertained blacks; we even slept with them occasionally just to prove to ourselves how liberal we'd become. They hated us for it and we feared them even more. We voted ... Progressive? Was that the name of the party? Yes, we canvassed for that alternative to the bloody revolution. What alternative? A white revolution instead of the black one? Suppress them or love them; live with them? It never occurred to us. And then I left university with its mixed parties and hope and suddenly the liberals became a legend and Excelsior with its power and secrets became the reality. The State President was uncle Pieter; the head of the Security Police had a wonderful sense of humour and I really loved him. But I could not separate them and the result of their work. They were all 'good people'. If we'd had Hitlers and Goerings and Stalins amongst us, it would've been easier to hate. But they weren't the great monsters of history. They were warm, loving Christians who believed as implicitly in their god as they did in their great folly. I couldn't hate them and help to destroy them. I had to run away and try to forget them. They poisoned my conscience with their 'goodness'. And yet, 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 'uncles' and 'aunties'. Do you understand what I'm saying?

TOSCA: I wasn't listening.

ALIZA: Tosca, they made a mistake, and you and Sarah and I are stuck with the terrible consequences.

TOSCA: You've been brainwashed by propaganda!

ALIZA: I'm not attacking you.

TOSCA: 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 rights to any opinions. We've proved ourselves as a democracy, Aliza. 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 visible opposition. And I'm all for a bit of glamour.

ALIZA: And where's that visible glamorous opposition now?

TOSCA: We whites have no alternative but to stand together.

ALIZA: Forty million of them and 7 million of us?

TOSCA: Yes, if we have to include the coloureds and Indians: 7 million.

ALIZA: Extraordinary how most of the great men who formulated our lifestyle died comfortably in their beds, leaving us holding the chains. Thank God we have no children.

TOSCA: Yes, thank God.

ALIZA: Why didn't you and I ...

TOSCA: We didn't have time.

ALIZA: 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 40 million. They also have a bomb.

TOSCA: Rubbish.

ALIZA: You think rubbish?

TOSCA: Where from?

ALIZA: Open the atlas, put your finger anywhere and from there – the bomb. You play your violin while they set the fuse. Do you still play your violin?

TOSCA: Time permitting. Why?

ALIZA: Forewarned is forearmed.

TOSCA: Jealous. Always making snide remarks about my playing, you and Sarah.

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

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

ALIZA: I was only a child!

TOSCA: They all laughed at me.

ALIZA: You never forget.

TOSCA: Just remember one thing for the rest of your life, Aliza Brand ...

ALIZA: All right, I apologize ...

TOSCA: I stayed and fought while you ran away. I stayed home and prayed when all 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 had black friends, but when that day came, I was white and no 'friend' 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 and fought!

(SARAH enters with snacks.)

SARAH: Always politics. Here, eat something, Aliza, you're too thin for a white woman. What've I missed?

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

TOSCA: Leave her in peace. She's dead.

SARAH: I never stop thinking about her.

TOSCA: What for? To feel sorry for yourself?

ALIZA: Tosca, stop being so noble. There's no one here to impress.

TOSCA: Of course I think about her. Not a second passes without the emptiness of her loss hurting me – all day.
(IMOGEN enters unseen.)
But that won't help. She won't come back, like you. We must remember, but privately. Father can't hear her name without weeping. Please, for his sake, we mustn't ...

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

SARAH: Yes.

IMOGEN: Your father spoke a great deal of you.

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

HASTINGS: Mrs Jansen, I'd like to speak to you in private, please. Mrs Jansen, this is very urgent. I'll clear a frequency to the Minister's study, if you'll take it from there, please!

TOSCA: Later, Hastings, I have a guest.

HASTINGS: Mrs Jansen, I must insist ...

IMOGEN: Hastings, I thought we decided that I should ...

HASTINGS: Yes, Mrs Brand, but it's really my duty to ...

IMOGEN: Please!

TOSCA: 'Mrs Brand'? Where is my father?

IMOGEN: I'm afraid your father is dead.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Morning.

Bright sunlight.

TOSCA sits in a chair, looking at a box of photos.

IMOGEN is outside the open doors, against the wall. She has a book in her hand and reads from it. The silence disturbs her.

IMOGEN: '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)

Where the hell 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 ...'

TOSCA: All that talk of Moscow isn't going to do you much good, you know.

IMOGEN: *(Startled)* Oh, please don't jump out of the darkness at me like that. Moscow?

TOSCA: Yes, going back to Moscow.

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

TOSCA: Chekhov? At a time like this?

IMOGEN: I was once an actress ...

TOSCA: I've never heard of you.

IMOGEN: No, why should you. I wasn't very good. I enjoy reading plays more than playing them. I have a photographic memory that stores up the best of other brains. I use their words to prevent myself from going completely mad. You have some lovely books. This can be a very lonely place if you don't know where anyone is. Were you here all the time?

TOSCA: I had work to do.

IMOGEN: All night?
(The dogs bark again off.)
I didn't realize you had so many dogs.

TOSCA: No.

IMOGEN: Oh, strays? Can't we feed them?

TOSCA: SECPOL use dogs.

IMOGEN: 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?

TOSCA: No. SECPOL treat their dogs well.

IMOGEN: So these must be strays.

TOSCA: Yes, they must be strays. Look, I'm glad we're alone. I think we should talk.

IMOGEN: Not if you're tired.

TOSCA: We don't have much time!

IMOGEN: All right.

TOSCA: My father was under great pressure lately. There were decisions that he had to make, always a choice between two evils. It's obvious that in London ... the freedom he felt ...

IMOGEN: We never talked politics. I knew how important it was for him to relax. He loved the theatre ...

TOSCA: He had no time for the theatre!

IMOGEN: Theatre, opera. We'd always go together, each time he visited London. A friend of mine worked at your embassy before they closed it. We went in a group once to see ... I think it was a Chekhov. He still said the play should've been in Afrikaans.

TOSCA: My father would never allow us to indulge in trivial things. Besides, life here was different to your theatre and opera and freedom.

IMOGEN: 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 ...

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

IMOGEN: He was honest about his feelings.

TOSCA: My father was a great man ...

(A jet flies over the house loudly. TOSCA moves away. SARAH has entered, carrying a bunch of flowers. IMOGEN opens the book and reads.)

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

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

(They speak the lines together.)

SARAH/IMOGEN: 'But today I'm home, I'm free and I feel so much younger than I did yesterday ...'

SARAH: '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 ...'

IMOGEN: 'I would've been very fond of my husband!'

SARAH: Incredible! I played Olga at university!

IMOGEN: I played Olga at college!

SARAH: I was far too young.

IMOGEN: So was I. And bad.

SARAH: That's my book ... I translated it all into Afrikaans as well ... I've looked for that book everywhere.

IMOGEN: I found it in there.

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

IMOGEN: I suppose you also found sleep impossible?

SARAH: No, I slept well. I was just scared you'd all be up before me and do things without me.

TOSCA: And what would we do without you?

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

(ALIZA enters wearing her father's dressing-gown. No make-up.)

SARAH: You know, it's a terrible thing to say, but I often used to pretend he'd died and then plan what I'd do ... and now suddenly it's all happened and I can't remember what I'd planned ... come outside, Imogen, it's lovely in the sun. I can't show you a cherry orchard, but we have some very nice things.

TOSCA: Just stay close to the house.
(Pause.)

IMOGEN: You translated all this into Afrikaans?

SARAH: Yes. And *The Cherry Orchard* too. Chekhov works beautifully in Afrikaans.

IMOGEN: I suppose he must. There's an amazing similarity between his white Russians and you people ...

SARAH: Not really. They lost their revolution.

ALIZA: Oh God, I feel so awful. Those pills you gave me were monsters, Sarah.

SARAH: Oh? Well, you slept, didn't you?

ALIZA: Where did you get them?

SARAH: Why?

ALIZA: In London people kill each other to get hold of pills like those.

SARAH: That's terrible. They're just supposed to make you sleep. Come for a walk, Aliza?

ALIZA: No.

TOSCA: I couldn't sleep.

IMOGEN: Maybe you should've taken one of those pills?

TOSCA: I don't need to take pills.
(Again a jet screams overhead. TOSCA drops some photos. ALIZA picks them up slowly.)

SARAH: Do you remember any more?

IMOGEN: Any more what?

SARAH: The last scene, you know, where the three sisters are left behind all huddled together ...
(She leafs through the book.)

IMOGEN: Er ... 'How cheerfully and jauntily ...'

SARAH: 'How cheerfully and jauntily the band is playing. I really feel as if I want to live!
(She puts her arms around TOSCA and ALIZA as she acts Olga.)

'The years will pass and we will all be gone and quite forgotten ...
our faces and voices will be forgotten and people won't even
know that there once were three of us here ...
(TOSCA starts to cry.)
' – but our suffering may bring happiness to those who come
after us ...

TOSCA: Father ...

ALIZA: Tosca, don't ...

SARAH: 'There'll be a time when peace and happiness will reign in this
world, and then we will be remembered with kindness and
blessed. No, my dear sisters, life is not finished for us yet ... '
(Falters.)
Tosca, please ...

IMOGEN: (Reads.) 'We're going to live! The band is playing so cheerfully
and jauntily – maybe if we wait a little longer, we will find out why
we live, and why we suffer ... oh, if only we knew ... '
(She is embarrassed by their breakdown. Leafs through the
book.)
Yes, well, that's the end of it ...

SARAH: Cry, Tosca, cry!

TOSCA: Leave me alone!

(She breaks away from them roughly.)

SARAH: I just wanted to help.

TOSCA: Well then, get the good cups ready in the kitchen. The people
might start arriving at any moment.

SARAH: Oh no, to hell with 'the people'!

TOSCA: Our people always stand together in times of sorrow. They will
come now; we must be prepared.

SARAH: And Excelsior will shimmer ...

ALIZA: If only we knew what really happened.

IMOGEN: But I've told you everything over and over. Your father went into
the building and then into the lift ...

TOSCA: Mistake!

IMOGEN: What?

TOSCA: It happened in the street!

IMOGEN: I was there.

TOSCA: Outside, outside in the street! They couldn't penetrate into the Department. It happened in the street!

IMOGEN: Brand was inside when it happened.

TOSCA: Are you saying he was assassinated in his office? What do you think this is? The 1960s? And don't call him that!

ALIZA: That was his name.

TOSCA: His friends called him J.J.

IMOGEN: I was his wife.

TOSCA: So you call him sir!

SARAH: Please don't fight. Look, I'll make us some tea, anything ... please ...

ALIZA: We'll wait for the television news.

TOSCA: Why should there be news? Father was attacked and murdered by blacks. They will find the assassins, the murderers. No news. He's dead. He died in the service of his country.

IMOGEN: He died in the lift!

TOSCA: Sarah, why don't you take Imogen out of here and show her something nice? After all, she is *your* friend ...

SARAH: Yes, come on, Imogen, I want to show you our famous *braaivleis-laager...*

(Behind TOSCA'S back she indicates drinking and they exit. TOSCA paces, preoccupied.)

TOSCA: Father is dead ... there can be no official lying-in-state. The Department says such a ceremony would be an illegal gathering and constitutes a breach of the Maximum-security Clause. They're right, of course. Let me think ... yes, we must prepare for the 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 ...

(She automatically takes ALIZA'S cigarette and puffs at it.)
 We can all sit outside, 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 ...

(Puts out the cigarette.)
 I'll go and get ready.

(SARAH and IMOGEN enter.)

SARAH: Why is Father's room locked?

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

SARAH: Something to drink. Give me the key.

IMOGEN: Not if it's too much trouble ...

SARAH: And whose side are you on? Tosca, give me the key!
(*Suspiciously*)
What are you two hiding from me? Why is Father's room locked?

TOSCA: Sarah ...

SARAH: What've you two been talking about?

ALIZA: Nothing, Sarah ...

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

TOSCA: Go and prepare yourself for the funeral.

SARAH: I'm not going.

TOSCA: The people are on their way ...

SARAH: I refuse to go. I want a drink first!

IMOGEN: I also could do with a little vodka.

TOSCA: Leave the cabinet alone!

SARAH: A drink, Tosca, not a *coup d'etat*!

ALIZA: For God's sake, give me the key ...

TOSCA: I'll get the key ...

(*She exits. Pause.*)

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

ALIZA: Why should there suddenly be people?

IMOGEN: I don't know, I thought Tosca said ... maybe we should get a doctor or something?

SARAH: Why? Does someone feel sick?

IMOGEN: I just thought ... Look, is she all right?

SARAH: No, she's Tosca, the calm, logical one. Tosca won't cry: too strong. Won't allow herself to be merely human. A true Brand.

(Looks around; listens for the GM2)

The thing's probably off. Our little flatfoot corporal is also gone. Everyone suddenly seems to have more important things to do. Strange, I suddenly even miss my hideous Vermeulen ... 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 IMOGEN'S confusion.)

And you just smile and nod or shrug and frown. Don't you understand anything?

IMOGEN: Your father ...

SARAH: My father died of a heart attack; Tosca's father was attacked assassinated by blacks.

IMOGEN: It was the pressure of the last few weeks. He wasn't young, Sarah ... there were no blacks.

SARAH: Of course there were blacks! There are always blacks!

IMOGEN: 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, Imogen, this is just a bad dream ...

ALIZA: That's right, the great South African Dream. Hot line to heaven. Our leaders can't afford to slip out and up via mundane heart attacks or other suchlike cop-outs. We have to add others to the Great Leaders' funeral pyre. Throw his bloated corpse from the twentieth floor and then draw the assassins out of the Security Blue file.

(Fingers the flag)

Funny how obsessed we are with colour, hey?

IMOGEN: His heart stopped.

ALIZA: When our mother died, the heart stopped.

(Pause.)

SARAH: Did he ever talk about her?

IMOGEN: No.

SARAH: No.

IMOGEN: Aliza made her sound like a very happy person.

ALIZA: That was careless of me.

SARAH: Yes, she forced herself to live the Dream, just for the sake of us children. She played her part very well, like Tosca, always the perfect consort. She died in agony. I'm sure she was glad to go. It really wasn't worth waking up.

IMOGEN: Cancer.

SARAH: 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.

ALIZA: Sarah, enough ...

SARAH: Yes, enough of Ma. I can't cry about death any more you see, Imogen. The novelty has worn off, and anyway, happy endings don't move me to tears.
(Pause.)
I suppose you've heard about that terrible thing that happened to me? Well, I'm sorry, I can't talk about it; it's too horrible ... I want to go home. Hastings? Could you please put me through to Corporal Vermeulen? Hastings? I know you're there!

ALIZA: Come, Sarah, I'll help you with your hair ...

SARAH: What for? I'm not going! Oh, don't look so worried, Imogen, you'll have a wonderful time at the funeral. Tosca will be an example to you all, an opera in herself.

(She starts off.)

IMOGEN: Aliza, I'm sure a doctor would ...

ALIZA: No!

(But SARAH has heard. She stops and turns.)

SARAH: We've all got it, like Ma. It's not the *panga* against the head that will end us; it's the cancer inside. Even you have all the symptoms, Aliza Brand: white South African. And now you're in the sanatorium, dying with us, while they wait outside in the perfect sunshine. They won't use their bomb; they won't – but we might. Rather take away what God gave us than share it with the wood-hewers and the water-carriers. I really love my neighbour. Yes, dear our Father, I love my black neighbour in spite of you ... it's my white one I loathe!

(She throws the letter at ALIZA.)

Here. You left it lying around!

(She exits. ALIZA picks up the letter.)

IMOGEN: How long is it going to last?

ALIZA: Don't you like it?

IMOGEN: Oh, for God's sake.

ALIZA: Till the pills wear off.

IMOGEN: And then?

ALIZA: And then all hell breaks loose at Excelsior.

(Reads)

‘Cape Town, 14 July 1985 ...’

It looked so simple then. I keep on thinking I’m still back in London and that this is just a state of mind – Excelsior. Strange. For all those years there 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? Last night?

(Pause.)

My God, he’s actually gone and died, the old bastard. What the hell happens now?

(From off, the strains of TOSCA playing her violin: ‘The Last Rose of Summer’. They listen.)

Tosca’s encore at the end-of-term concert – always ‘The Last Rose of Summer’. It’s 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 remembered what I was, and the sun started to hurt my eyes. We’re so complex, aren’t we? As complex as the simpleness by which we live: God and Nature. You might not believe this, Imogen, 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, Imogen, it’s worth organizing an armed escort. Nice change from life; see a bit of nature.

IMOGEN: Wild flowers aren’t at the top of my list ...

ALIZA: But nature is on our side, Imogen. God and Nature. The self-sufficient Christian *laager*. Who needs the world? Maybe we are right and they are wrong? Well, God and Nature would know.

(TOSCA starts to play again.)

IMOGEN: She doesn’t seem to have a large repertoire, does she?

ALIZA: No, it’s all for show. You don’t need more than one of anything for show.

(She starts to exit.)

IMOGEN: Please don’t leave me! Aliza, please ... tell me about ... er ... this house. About the family. I want to know more.

ALIZA: Are you frightened?

IMOGEN: No, it’s just ...

ALIZA: What are you frightened of?

IMOGEN: I don’t know, that’s the trouble. I don’t know. You all make me think I’ll be bludgeoned to death behind every bush for a start ...

ALIZA: Possible.

IMOGEN: Please don't ...

ALIZA: Well then, stay away from the bushes.
(Imogen starts to cry.)
Pull yourself together, Imogen. You're too new around here. You don't yet have the right to cry. You're on your own.

(IMOGEN controls herself. Pause.)

IMOGEN: Yes. I'm sorry.

(Pause.)

ALIZA: All right. Tell me about your husband.

IMOGEN: Your father?

ALIZA: No, your husband. My father wasn't the sort of man I'd imagine in bed with a young thing like you. Remember, our father was a great man.

IMOGEN: Let me see ... what do you want me to say?

ALIZA: Describe him.

IMOGEN: Good-looking. Very distinguished. Very amusing.

ALIZA: Very amusing?

IMOGEN: Yes.

ALIZA: About what?

IMOGEN: What?

ALIZA: What was he amusing about?

IMOGEN: Oh, his childhood here in South Africa. His parents ... you know ...

ALIZA: No, they died before I was born.

IMOGEN: Oh.

ALIZA: Yes.

IMOGEN: I'm sorry.

ALIZA: Me too.

(Pause.)

IMOGEN: *(Laughs)* Well, last week I made a joke at his expense.

ALIZA: Really?

IMOGEN: Yes.

ALIZA: Tactless.

IMOGEN: No, he loved it.

ALIZA: Did he?

IMOGEN: I think so. He laughed.

ALIZA: Good. What was the joke?

IMOGEN: I said: Yes, I'm marrying you at last, you dirty old bugger.

ALIZA: Damn you.

IMOGEN: He laughed.

ALIZA: Dirty old bugger?

IMOGEN: It was a joke.

ALIZA: If I'd call him that, he would've slapped my face.

IMOGEN: Well, he didn't slap mine.

ALIZA: You weren't his daughter.

IMOGEN: Age didn't matter between us, you know.

ALIZA: I noticed that on the trip out.

IMOGEN: We always had a good laugh.

ALIZA: Good, your husband sounded fun.

IMOGEN: Yes, for that short time he was.

ALIZA: Nice to know.

IMOGEN: Does it matter now?

ALIZA: No. It just makes me sad that he and I never shared a joke. You seem to have had the best of him.

IMOGEN: He seemed to need me. It made me feel ... important.

ALIZA: Of course.

(Pause.)

IMOGEN: Er ... I wonder whatever happened to our drinks ...

ALIZA: She's probably dressing up for the funeral.

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

ALIZA: I'll get you some soda-water. I'm told one shouldn't drink from the taps.

IMOGEN: Don't tell me your aggressive little blacks poison the water supply?

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

(She exits. IMOGEN becomes aware of the silence. Then dogs bark again. She switches on the television. It is an Afrikaans film. We hear the melodramatic soundtrack. She watches for a bit, then switches off. Pause. SARAH enters in an ill-fitting black dress.)

SARAH: You'd better start getting ready.

IMOGEN: What do you ...

SARAH: Shhhh.

(They both listen. Pause. Then SARAH shrugs and lights a cigarette.)

IMOGEN: What should I wear?

SARAH: What do you have that covers true feelings and fears?

IMOGEN: Aliza's getting me some soda-water. My mouth feels so dry.

SARAH: What are you frightened of?

IMOGEN: What's that noise?

SARAH: *(Stiffens)* I don't hear anything.

IMOGEN: No, in here. That scratching sound. There.

SARAH: *(Relieved)* Beetle.

IMOGEN: In the furniture?

SARAH: Maybe that chair, I can't remember.

IMOGEN: Don't they ever stop?

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

IMOGEN: What will happen to those men they say killed your father?

SARAH: I don't know.

IMOGEN: But surely it will all come out in the trial?

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

IMOGEN: Can't they escape?

SARAH: You've been watching too much cable television – where can one escape too?
(Pause.)
 Many years ago there was a political prison near here surrounded by water. All references to it have been deleted from the official records, because no one could believe that a political prison would survive for so long in full view of a thriving Christian community. Even then there was no escape, but they were always in the public eye, so to speak.
(Laughs)
 I think there is a God, with quite a sense of humour, too.

IMOGEN: I see nothing funny in that story.

SARAH: No, but look at the irony. Here we are, surrounded by walls to keep them out. We're forgotten here in our luxury, trying to escape through culture and fashion and nostalgia. Magnificent white blind horses stampeding into the rusty barbed razor-wire!

(ALIZA enters and hands IMOGEN a glass.)

IMOGEN: Oh, really Aliza, you shouldn't have bothered ...

SARAH: But you asked for it.

ALIZA: She's English. They say those things automatically.
(TOSCA enters in full imperial mourning attire.)

TOSCA: Why aren't you dressed?

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

TOSCA: There's been a change of plan. Hastings is sending a convoy of cars. We have fifteen minutes.

SARAH: But what about the people?

TOSCA: Sarah, I've chosen a hat for you to wear.

SARAH: I'm not wearing a hat!

TOSCA: Aliza, 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 State President and uncle Stefaan ...

ALIZA: Uncle Stefaan?

SARAH: Head of SECPOL.
(To IMOGEN)
You should hear him tell a van der Merwe joke. Hysterical!

IMOGEN: I don't understand Afrikaans.

ALIZA: What happened to Uncle Koenie?

TOSCA: Uncle Koenie had to retire. Uncle Stefaan is now the Head of Security.

ALIZA: Is Uncle Koenie dead?

SARAH: Oh yes, shame. Living in Switzerland with his numbered bank account and new German wife. He died just in time.

ALIZA: Clever Uncle Koenie.

SARAH: Rich Uncle Koenie.

IMOGEN: Could somebody just tell me what is going on?

ALIZA: We're discussing the funeral ...

TOSCA: Please stop interrupting! We don't have much time! Sarah and Aliza, stay together. Aliza, few people know of your return – the fewer the better. A helicopter squadron will give us cover in case of any trouble. SECPOL has the entire city under control.

SARAH: But all the 'subversive elements' are bound to have been arrested by now. Aliza, you can be sure Uncle Stefaan never makes a mistake.

TOSCA: They're still looking for the right people.

SARAH: 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!

IMOGEN: What about me?

SARAH: Goodness, did you kill him?

TOSCA: Yes!

(Pause.)

IMOGEN: Where do I fit into this pageant? What about me?

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

ALIZA: Tosca ...

IMOGEN: I'm here.

TOSCA: You also killed him. You can go to hell!

SARAH: We're nearly there!

(Pause.)

ALIZA: Imogen belongs in the front of the procession with you.

SARAH: It's unimportant who leads, damn it!

TOSCA: I lead!

SARAH: All right, we'll all lead!

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

TOSCA: You don't exist.

IMOGEN: I'm his widow. The new Mrs Brand.

TOSCA: You're not even a South African ...

SARAH: Where's my Vermeulen ...

ALIZA: Yes, but Tosca, she does have a point ...

TOSCA: Please! Listen to us, like a bunch of drunk nannies! Please! Yes, I'm sure Imogen 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 *braaivleis-laager*. We'll get back to the city safely and try and start again from the beginning ...

SARAH: Pills are wearing off ... I need a pill ...

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

SARAH: I feel so sick ...

TOSCA: Drink.

(She hands her a glass and some pills. SARAH swallows the pills.)

HASTINGS: Mrs Jansen, your black staff have been intercepted.

SARAH: Old Mary ...

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

SARAH: I signed them! Me!

HASTINGS: Mrs Jansen, could you please control your sister?

SARAH: Tosca, help them ...

HASTINGS: They're been taken to Depot ZA556.

TOSCA: Where are our cars?

HASTINGS: Your car is on its way.

SARAH: Where's my hideous Vermeulen?

HASTINGS: Your 'hideous Vermeulen' will be driving you back to the city, Miss Brand.

TOSCA: Hastings, I still haven't had time to study the SECPOL Review, I'm sorry ...

HASTINGS: The SECPOL Review has also been shelved.

TOSCA: But ...

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

(Pause.)

TOSCA: Hastings?

SARAH: I hate rain ...

(Pause.)

ALIZA: Do you think our black staff are weeping at the sudden death of their boss?

TOSCA: Of course; they are our friends.

SARAH: Yes, they worship us.

ALIZA: Their families too? Tosca, I believe that you and the late General Jansen didn't spend that much time together, but then no law forced you to live apart.

TOSCA: There are permits for visits.

SARAH: Families are allowed to visit regularly, Aliza. It's not that bad.

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

TOSCA: You'll just have to get used to it, 'Mrs Brand'. It's a way of life.

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

ALIZA: Well, Imogen my dear, it's never too late to start.

TOSCA: Here in South Africa we have more than just your congenial British Political Variety Show.

SARAH: Here we have a little problem ...

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

SARAH: ... but at present it tends to rule our every decision.

TOSCA: Life goes on quite happily and no one is starving to death ...

SARAH: ... or officially shot on their doorsteps ...

ALIZA: ... unless they're tiresome enough to try and find something called self-respect.

TOSCA: And so we talk about it constantly.

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

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

ALIZA: You're completely involved.

SARAH: You're here.

IMOGEN: I came here as his wife.

TOSCA: You have no husband.

IMOGEN: I came here as his wife!

ALIZA: I came here as his daughter.

SARAH: You have no father.

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

TOSCA: You're white! You're one of us, whether you like it or not.

IMOGEN: I'm British!

ALIZA: Imogen, there are many who came to this country because the life was easier, the servants cheaper, the sun warmer.

IMOGEN: I came here because of Brand!

ALIZA: And I came because of the sun ...

IMOGEN: Then what are you talking about!

ALIZA: But don't you see? Those people are also involved. They voted for us against the others. They're also responsible.

IMOGEN: I haven't voted, have I?

TOSCA: You're here, aren't you?

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

IMOGEN: Aliza criticizes!

ALIZA: Of course, I'm home. And in London I defended everything.

TOSCA: Please, we don't have much time.

SARAH: I feel sick ...

TOSCA: Don't worry, Sarah. I'll help you look pretty.
(She starts to go off with SARAH.)

IMOGEN: Is there anything I should do?

TOSCA: Yes. Dress yourself. The servants are off.
(She and SARAH exit.)

IMOGEN: Was that meant to be a joke?

ALIZA: Please just do what she says.

IMOGEN: I really didn't come 6,000 miles prepared for a state funeral. What does your church demand of one? Black?

ALIZA: Black?

IMOGEN: You know what I mean.

ALIZA: Our church demands everything of one. Everything! And gets nothing. Shame.
(IMOGEN exits. ALIZA looks at some of the photos.)
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 apologize: sorry that I'm helping to keep Christianity white; sorry that I find the minister'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 black, so where was I after all? Pity you won't understand the service, Imogen. They'll make Father sound like God's gift to mankind – which he was. 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 ...'

(TOSCA has entered. Turns on the television. Funeral commentary to muffled drums and marching.)

ANNOUNCER: And as the casket is solemnly carried out of the church ... there is a hush amongst the waiting crowds ... a multinational crowd of brotherhood in mourning. The six pallbearers take their places ... the coffin reaches the gun-carriage and is carefully placed on to it. And they've just stepped out of the church into the golden sunshine, a warm, perfect South African day .. the State President and members of his government, accompanied by the daughters of the assassinated statesman. Tosca Brand-Jansen...

ALIZA: Tosca!

TOSCA: Shhhh ...

ANNOUNCER: ... as usual a symbol of dignity and elegance, followed by her sisters, Sarah and Aliza ... Aliza Brand returned with her father from his historic overseas mission ... they take their places behind the flag-draped casket and slowly start the sad final journey through this beautiful city at the foot on the mountain ...

(TOSCA switches the television off. Leaves through a Vogue magazine.)

TOSCA: Oh well, it seems we're too late.

ALIZA: I don't believe it ...

TOSCA: Look at this new *Vogue* that Father brought me from London ...

ALIZA: There is no funeral.

TOSCA: No.

ALIZA: You lied!

TOSCA: Yes, I lied. Help me ...

ALIZA: I don't understand. That was me.

TOSCA: No. SATV English Drama Service. The nation must stay calm, that's why a state funeral is necessary. Don't you understand?

ALIZA: Father wasn't assassinated?

TOSCA: No. Heart attack.

ALIZA: Then why is everyone playing this elaborate game?

TOSCA: There's a bit of trouble ...

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

TOSCA: I know what I'm doing!

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

TOSCA: Don't ... it helps pass the time. Aliza, we must stay calm.
(Dogs start to bark. Clouds begin to cover the sun. TOSCA leafs through the magazine.)
 These overseas fashions are verging on the pornographic. Thank heavens our people have been spared all this filth ...

ALIZA: Does Sarah think she's going to a funeral?

TOSCA: 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 and go with it. It's just a matter of time ...
(Refers to a page)
 What on earth is that?

ALIZA: That's a hat.

TOSCA: You're joking.

ALIZA: No, you're joking, Tosca. This has gone far enough!

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

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

TOSCA: There's trouble ...

ALIZA: ... take off my shoes and walk in the sea. Let the icy water caress my knees into numbness. Build a sandcastle. I might even have a picnic: an orange frozen sucker and a packet of chips and I'll watch the lighthouse wink at me from the island. That's what I came home for. I want it!

TOSCA: You'll die out there!

ALIZA: I won't die a liar!

TOSCA: Excelsior has been declared Security Blue.

ALIZA: Excelsior?

TOSCA: We.

ALIZA: But we're Father's family.

TOSCA: Father's dead.

ALIZA: You're one of them. You help make the laws.

TOSCA: Father is dead!

ALIZA: What's that got to do with it? They must protect us.

TOSCA: Why? I helped draft that clause; Security Blue means switch off and ignore. Security Blue means useless: unnecessary for the survival of the nation.

ALIZA: Survival of the nation? What nation? We are the nation!

TOSCA: Father 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.

ALIZA: Are you scared?

TOSCA: What for? It's day. 'Five, four, three, two, one – Father?
(She crumbles. ALIZA holds her.)
 Get ready. There's a small service for him in the city. We must go and be seen there and remembered.

ALIZA: Oh God ...

TOSCA: Don't breathe a word to Sarah. Or what's-her-name.

ALIZA: Yes, yes ...

TOSCA: Swear!

ALIZA: I swear ...

TOSCA: Swear on your mother's soul!

ALIZA: You are scared!

TOSCA: Not a word. Pretend everything's normal ...
(SARAH's laughter can be heard off.)

ALIZA: Normal? And so what's actually become of Father? Dead Father?

TOSCA: Father's up there.

ALIZA: Naturally: halo, wings, the works.

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

ALIZA: Do not hide away in terror, o daughters of Excelsior, for your father is home and all will be well with white South Africa.

(SARAH and IMOGEN enter in conversation. IMOGEN also in black.)

SARAH: 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.

IMOGEN: What for?

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

IMOGEN: How fast were you traveling?

SARAH: 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 pick up the white of their teeth.

IMOGEN: I was once driving along the M1 ...

SARAH: I think they were young. Too polite not to be young. Funny, I never thought of them as young till afterwards – their young b-b-bl-black polite bodies. They've also got pink tongues like me ... They didn't hurt me, let me take off my jacket and fold it up. We lay on my beach-towel next to the broken wheel and I even rested my arm against the cool tyre as the hub-cap scratched my shoulder ... scratched my shoulder as they pushed my body up against it with rhythm ... and then the others came ...

TOSCA: Sarah, stop it.

SARAH: And the others came and it changed and they laughed at me. The nice young ones watched. I suppose that helped. I stared at them, trying to focus on their smiles, while the others did things to me. I forced myself to study their faces so that I wouldn't die and leave you alone with them ...

TOSCA: Take this pill.

ALIZA: What is she saying?

TOSCA: She's drunk. Take this pill, Sarah.

SARAH: They gave me an injection after telling me how dangerous it was to drive alone, but I wasn't alone, was I, Tosca? You see, Imogen, there seemed to be nothing wrong with the car. I must've passed out and then they probably fixed the wheel even took my beach-towel because it was gone. And my clothes were so beautifully folded that it must've looked funny, I suppose.

IMOGEN: Yes, I suppose so.

ALIZA: And all these years you've forced her to believe she was alone?

TOSCA: It's all wishful thinking ...

SARAH: And the moral of the story is: always let your cat have a litter before you have her spayed. It gives her fond memories.

(Pause. A clap of thunder.)

ALIZA: So you did get at the cabinet after all?

TOSCA: No one is to go into Father's room. Is that understood?

SARAH: No ... no ...

ALIZA: How many, Sarah?

IMOGEN: She took some for her headache ...

ALIZA: How many pills, Sarah!

SARAH: Am I doing it well?

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

TOSCA: Thank God. Hurry.

SARAH: I've lost my hairclip. It must be somewhere in this room!

TOSCA: Sarah, come on. That's the least of our worries.

SARAH: I want it now! It's mine!

(She searches.)

TOSCA: Aliza?
(But ALIZA exits. TOSCA sees IMOGEN and registers her outfit.)
What are you wearing?

IMOGEN: A dress ...

TOSCA: To a funeral?

IMOGEN: I don't really have anything else. *Jammer.*

TOSCA: What?

IMOGEN: *Jammer.* Isn't that Afrikaans for 'sorry'.

TOSCA: Yes. Is that all we've been able to teach you? *Jammer?*

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

TOSCA: Where did you have that made?

IMOGEN: This? No, I think I bought it in London.

TOSCA: Harrods?

IMOGEN: No, some little shop somewhere. Just off the peg.

TOSCA: Off the peg? I think it's vulgar.

(She exits.)

IMOGEN: Yes, maybe you're right ...
(Finds SARAH'S clip on the table with the photos)
Is this what you're looking for, Sarah?

SARAH: What?

IMOGEN: This little hairclip?

SARAH: 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.

IMOGEN: It's Brand now.

SARAH: Brand. Morning, Miss Brand.
(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.

IMOGEN: Shouldn't you sit down?

SARAH: Why? Are we staying here now?

(TOSCA enters.)

TOSCA: No, we're going back to the city.

SARAH: I don't want to go. The people look at me; they whisper things about me I can't hear. I want to stay in Excelsior!

TOSCA: You'll be safe with me.

SARAH: I don't want to be safe. I want to live!

(ALIZA enters in casual clothes, carrying TOSCA's violin case.)

ALIZA: Here, your hairclip.

TOSCA: But Aliza ...

ALIZA: I really don't feel like the Great Drama. I'd rather just go to bed with an Afrikaans book, for old times' sake.

TOSCA: You must come ... they're everywhere ...

ALIZA: I'm so tired of running.

(SARAH is busy with the photos. TOSCA talks softly so that she can't hear.)

SARAH: Aliza, look how terrible you look here. You had jaundice. The picture is all yellow ... maybe it's old ...

TOSCA: There'll be no one here.

IMOGEN: I'll be here. She'll be all right.

TOSCA: No, you must come with me.

IMOGEN: You're right about the dress ...

TOSCA: No, no, the dress is fine ...

IMOGEN: ... and anyway, I'll feel more at home watching television.

TOSCA: You don't understand Afrikaans.

IMOGEN: I'd like to see what propaganda the United Nations' satellite beams down. Aren't they saying your blacks have a nuclear bomb? Surely that was not true?

TOSCA: No, it's not true. Everything's under control.

ALIZA: Go with her, Imogen.

IMOGEN: 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 you tomorrow.

SARAH: 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, Imogen? Olga's words?

IMOGEN: Of course I remember.

SARAH: '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' ...
(She starts whistling 'The Last Rose of Summer.')
 Did you know that there are fourteen spare rooms in this house? The Fortress Excelsior? Three sisters and fourteen spare rooms. And a perfect garden. The sun still makes the grass steam in the early morning. And a *braaivleis-laager*? We really must have a *braaivleis* soon ...
(She exits to outside.)

TOSCA: Aliza, please come?

ALIZA: No. We'll stay here. With Father.
(Pause. Then TOSCA speaks with intent.)

TOSCA: Hastings? Take this urgent memo to SECPOL. Top Security. Chapter Three of the SECPOL Review is totally unacceptable. It's about time you boys did some thinking down there. Initial me for J.J. Brand, Minister of Internal and Foreign Affairs!
(SARAH appears.)

SARAH: Come on! Vermeulen'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. TOSCA collects her things, looks at the two staying behind and exits. Thunder. Rain.)

IMOGEN: Musty ... maybe it's damp ...
(A siren sounds as the car leaves.)
 I suppose if I got the staff to take one room at a time, we might get things moving. And get rid of that beetle. Yes, we'll start with this room.
(She notices ALIZA watching her.)
 It's all so big ...

ALIZA: I'm going for a walk.

IMOGEN: A walk? You won't go far, will you?

ALIZA: No, I won't go far.

IMOGEN: But you'll get wet.

ALIZA: I'll be all right.

IMOGEN: Will you?

ALIZA: Oh yes. God is on my side.
(She starts to go off.)

IMOGEN: Aliza? Do you think he made me pregnant?

ALIZA: I hope not.
(She exits into the rain.
Pause.
IMOGEN clears things away.
She then turns to the windows with a start.)

IMOGEN: Aliza?

(Peers out and closes them. The silence makes her nervous.
She switches on the television: a sports programme narrated
enthusiastically in Afrikaans. She sits and stares at the
television. Then the United Nations' satellite jams the
transmission with distortions.)

THE END

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