



**NOVEL-SCRIPT
PROJECT 2020
PLAYSCRIPTS**



Twist Theatre Development Projects Presents



The Novel-Script Project, 2020

RE-WRITING WITH PURPOSE

In association with the Virtual National Arts Festival 2020



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PREFACE

Twist Theatre Development Projects is a dynamic project that focuses on the development of community theatre groups in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa, and on the creation of sustainable relationships and networks for theatre development, both locally and beyond our borders.

Twist works with established community theatre groups in KZN and links them with local theatre organisations, the drama departments of theatre schools, theatre festivals, mentors and experienced theatre practitioners through ten diverse projects each year.

One of these annual projects is the 'Novel-Script Project' which is a programme focused on the professional development of theatre writers. Writers from this project are connected with each other and with community theatre groups, to further build skills and relationships which keep theatre alive and vibrant in the province and beyond.

The Novel-Script Project

The 2020 Novel-Script Project brought together selected writers from South Africa, Nigeria and Zimbabwe in a professional writer's development programme. The project is co-ordinated by Twist Theatre Development Projects and was produced in association with the Virtual National Arts Festival in 2020. Each year a novel is selected as the basis for the project, so that all of the writers are focused on a common theme and characters.

The starting point for the 2020 project was the novel "The Ones With Purpose" by Cynthia Jele. The novel is set in contemporary South Africa, and explores issues of love, loss and family responsibility. Novel-Script writers were asked to create a short, ten-minute dialogue inspired by or based on the novel.

This year's programme involved five writers, three directors, and seven actors; making it an intimate programme that developed not only writing skills, but also capacity in directing and performance. The workshop was facilitated by the award-winning script writer, poet and dramaturge, Kobus Moolman, who mentored the writers through the process of the workshop.

Writers included Gideon Jeph Wabvuta from Zimbabwe, Tosin Tume from Nigeria and Tammany Barton, Ncumisa Ndimeni and Gabriella Pinto from South Africa. The scripts were brought to life by the Daniel Maposa from Savanna Arts Trust in Harare, and Durban-based directors from Twist Projects, Roel Twijnstra and Emma Durden. The actors included seasoned South African actors Bhekani Shabalala, Philisiwe Twijnstra, Mthokozisi Zulu, Ilana Cilliers, Lara Toselli and Ayanda Fali, and young performer Mpho Seleteng from Lesotho.

Because of the Covid-19 Lockdown, the project was held for the first time online, via Zoom. The results were broadcast online as part of the Virtual National Arts Festival, and the writers have copies of the recorded works.

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INTRODUCTION

By Kobus Moolman

What is dramatic structure?

How does a writer set up dramatic structure in a 10-minute self-contained scene?

What are the dramatic alternatives to the conventional structure of Exposition - Conflict – Crisis - Resolution?

And given the demands of such dramatic structure, how does a writer identify who between their two characters is the bearer or agent of the story? In other words, which character has the greater claim to change (or denial)?

These were the kinds of challenging questions that young scriptwriters had to look at, take into themselves, and then resolve in this year's Twist Novel-Script project.

Unable to follow the tried and tested model of a 10-day residency just before and then during the National Arts Festival, because of the national lockdown to contain the spread of Covid-19, the project found a new identity and way of mentoring and learning via remote technologies. Awkward, perhaps, initially and yet at the same time strangely able to generate a sharpness of focus, a more intense crystallization of ideas.

This year the award-winning novel, *The Ones with Purpose* by Cynthia Jele was used as inspiration and departure point for drafts by the six participating writers from three countries: Gabriella Pinto (SA), Ncumisa Ndimeni (SA), Gideon Wabvuta (Zimbabwe), Tosin Jobi-Tume (Nigeria), Tammany Barton (SA). The sixth writer, Mbasa Tsetsana, unfortunately fell ill during the workshop and had to withdraw.

Gabrielle's play is about denial and closing off, but it is also about vulnerability, as two sisters confront the past through the present. Ncumisa re-examines the conflicting roles and demands in the relationship of a black upper middle-class young couple, setting out to conquer the world. But whose dreams will have to be sacrificed? In Gideon's play – similar to that by Gabrielle – two sisters are brought into a painful confrontation with their past and themselves, as they are reunited on the deathbed of the elder. Tosin plays off the Oedipal myth in a self-contained scene that succeeds in ten minutes to achieve the catharsis of a Greek tragedy, while Tammany cleverly uses the confinement and screening provided by a changing room in a boutique to explore differences in age, race and sexual orientation between her two characters.

In Grotowski's seminal text, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, he asks why we as human beings are concerned with theatre, and answers himself: "To cross our frontiers, exceed our limitations, fill our emptiness - fulfil ourselves." It seems to me, then, that this precisely describes the experience of these scriptwriters in their journey with their scripts.



CHANGING ROOMS

By Tammany Barton



Tammany Barton is a playwright and actress who believes that the only way to measure the impact of a great writer is to ask yourself “Do I believe the story?” and “ Why do I believe it?” She is a writer who respects the art of storytelling and believes writing is a labour of love.

If you would like to contact the writer for permission to use this script, please email: tammany.barton@gmail.com

CHARACTERS:

LAUREN: A white woman in her late 20s.

WINSTON: A black man in his 50s.

A Friday afternoon. A dressing room in a cozy little clothing store. A curtain separates the two characters. Lauren on the left and inside the change room, a few dresses hanging above her on the rail. Winston on the right of the curtain surrounded by clothing racks, scarfs and a wall adorned with hats. Both characters facing the audience. Winston is neatly hanging up a suit right next to the change room curtain. Lauren sits staring at the dresses around her. She never tries on a single dress.

WINSTON: That's the third dress you've tried on.

LAUREN: Women right? Hard to make up the mind.

WINSTON: My daughter will help you, she should be here soon. *(To himself.)* Stupid boyfriend.

LAUREN: *(Overhearing.)* Keeping her from work hey?

WINSTON: Not good for the family business.

LAUREN: Daughters?

WINSTON: Boyfriends.

Lauren smiles.

LAUREN: I don't really have much experience.

WINSTON: Fifty years this business has been running. I took it over from my late father twenty five years ago. "Mabuza's Fashion." It's Lesedi's turn now, and she's late. Why? Boys! "Yes daddy I'll take over the business one day. Yes daddy, I want to be Miss Mabuza's fashion. Yes daddy, yes daddy." And here I am... waiting and waiting. *(Beat.)* How does that one fit?

LAUREN: *(Pretending to have tried on a dress.)* Great. I'm not sure it's the right one yet though. *(Beat.)* So you only have the one daughter ?

WINSTON: My other daughter will come home when the cows do. But, no lobola, so no cows. She left home to play house house in the suburbs with her "friend." Her father's shop isn't good enough for her either.

LAUREN: I'm sure she has her reasons.

WINSTON: There is never a reason to throw away a business with a good name.

LAUREN: Maybe she found something else she wanted to do instead? You know, follow her dreams? Love maybe?

WINSTON: Love? She didn't have to go out and find it in the city! My father built this from scratch, with nothing but love! Love, is right here in this shop. *(Clicks his tongue.)* I'd rather let it burn than give it to someone I don't know! Sorry - I'm talking to myself - What do you need that dress for anyway?

LAUREN: Just a funeral ...

WINSTON: A funeral? But, yellow is a colour for celebrations? *(Beat.)* Okay, Lesedi will be here soon. She'll help you.

LAUREN: Trust me to pick the wrong colour dress and the one colour she hates. *(Beat.)* When she was a little girl, she shared her room with her younger sister, the room was yellow. "Floor to bloody ceiling." She'd explain using her long lanky arms to show me just how much yellow there was. She said the yellow was so loud it kept her awake at night. Our first flat we lived in had a mustard yellow wall in the living room, the same colour as your shop curtains. She wanted to keep the wall that colour. The loud room we called it. We painted everything else white.

Winston hands a black dress through the curtain.

WINSTON: *(Warmly.)* Here. This one's better.

Lauren takes the dress she holds it closely.

LAUREN: Thank you. *(To herself.)* 10 years my love. *(To Winston.)* Can I ask you something?

WINSTON: My daughter will know how that dress works. You will need to wait. Otherwise you must come back tomorrow.

LAUREN: No, um.. I've got the dress. Thanks. *(Beat.)* Your other daughter. Do you know who she played house house with?

WINSTON: You mean who she married?

LAUREN: Yes.

WINSTON: Some white woman.

LAUREN: That must have been hard on the family.

WINSTON: *(Abruptly.)* Does that dress fit? You must hurry now, I want to close the shop. My daughter isn't coming.

LAUREN: *(Bravely.)* She was happy.

WINSTON: Excuse me?

LAUREN: Nolwazi, your other daughter. She was happy.

WINSTON: What?

LAUREN: We met in our first year at university. There were instant sparks between us, I've never meant anyone like her. *(Beat.)* I think I loved her the moment I saw her. She showed me what family meant. *(Beat.)* She must have gotten that from somewhere.

WINSTON: You won't find what you are looking for here.

LAUREN: She was good with numbers too, you know that.

WINSTON: I don't know what you are talking about.

LAUREN: She told me that when she was little, she would spend her weekends here, with you. Sitting on your lap counting the coins with her delicate little fingers pushing the money around the front desk. One rand, two rand, three rand. She learnt how to count here, in this shop, with you. She always spoke with such a deep love for you Mr Mabuza.

Lauren and Winston move closer towards the curtain.

WINSTON: You must leave.

LAUREN: That's why I could never understand why you ignored us. She said you were kind and loving and that you just didn't understand how two people of the same sex could love each other, that's all. *(Beat.)* We reminded each other of that all the time...

WINSTON: You don't know my daughter!

Lauren smiles.

LAUREN: She loved being a big sister to Lesedi. Lesedi visited us sometimes, when I could come up with a good enough lie to get her to tell you.

WINSTON: You kept her away from me with your lies.

LAUREN: I tried to bring us together.

WINSTON: My wife died because of Nolwazi. Her mother drank herself to death when she found out about you. Did she tell you that!?

LAUREN: Rubbish! She just said no to you and yes to herself. She chose to live a life she loved. You chose not to be a part of it.

WINSTON: She turned her back on us.

LAUREN: You turned your back on her!

WINSTON: Typical Nolwazi, sending someone else to do her dirty work. Never taking responsibility for her own actions.

LAUREN: Why didn't you just come?

WINSTON: Did she send you here?

LAUREN: We invited you to our wedding and you never came. We asked for your blessing and you ignored us.

WINSTON: Did she send you here?

LAUREN: *(Breaks down.)* We just wanted to share our love with you...

WINSTON: Did she send you here?!

LAUREN: Be a family...

WINSTON: Did she send you here!!!

LAUREN: YES! *(Whisper.)* Yes...

WINSTON: See, I'm right. That one... no responsibility. She didn't even come to her mother's funeral.

LAUREN: We were there. She knew you would chase her away, so we sat in the car behind the gum trees. We watched you bury Mamma Bhule.

WINSTON: Don't you dare say her name.

LAUREN: I watched Nolwazi watch you collapse to the ground, burying the woman you loved. Then I watched the woman I love bury her own love for you, knowing she would never be welcomed home again. I tried for years to help her see that we could build this relationship. But I understand now why it was impossible.

WINSTON: She broke her mother's heart. You tell her that! You tell her she sent her mother to her grave. And this is all that's left of the Mabuza family!

LAUREN: It's too late.

WINSTON: What ?

Lauren opens the curtain looking at Winston.

LAUREN: I came here today to ask you a question Mr Mabuza. To ask you to help me bury Nolwazi next to her mother. To find a way, even in her death, to be a family.

WINSTON: What are you saying?

LAUREN: But I see now that was mistake.

WINSTON: Wait. What? Nolwazi is...

LAUREN: Dead. *(Beat.)* I held onto her memory of you. Ignoring your hate for her marrying a woman. "Disrespecting" the family. But all that is left of that man she loved are these yellow curtains.

WINSTON: My daughter is dead?

LAUREN: Yes.

WINSTON: My daughter is never coming home?

LAUREN: No.

WINSTON: How?

LAUREN: Cancer. It was quick. I wanted to come sooner.

Winston sits down.

WINSTON: It can't be...

LAUREN: I'm sorry.

Lauren sits down. They sit side by side in their respective "changing room." There is silence for some time.

WINSTON: Her fingers weren't delicate and little. They were fat and juicy, counting one rand, two rand, five rand, three rand. "Daddy count with me, count with me daddy." ... She got it right eventually.

Winston looks at Lauren.

WINSTON: So you're the Lauren she told us about?

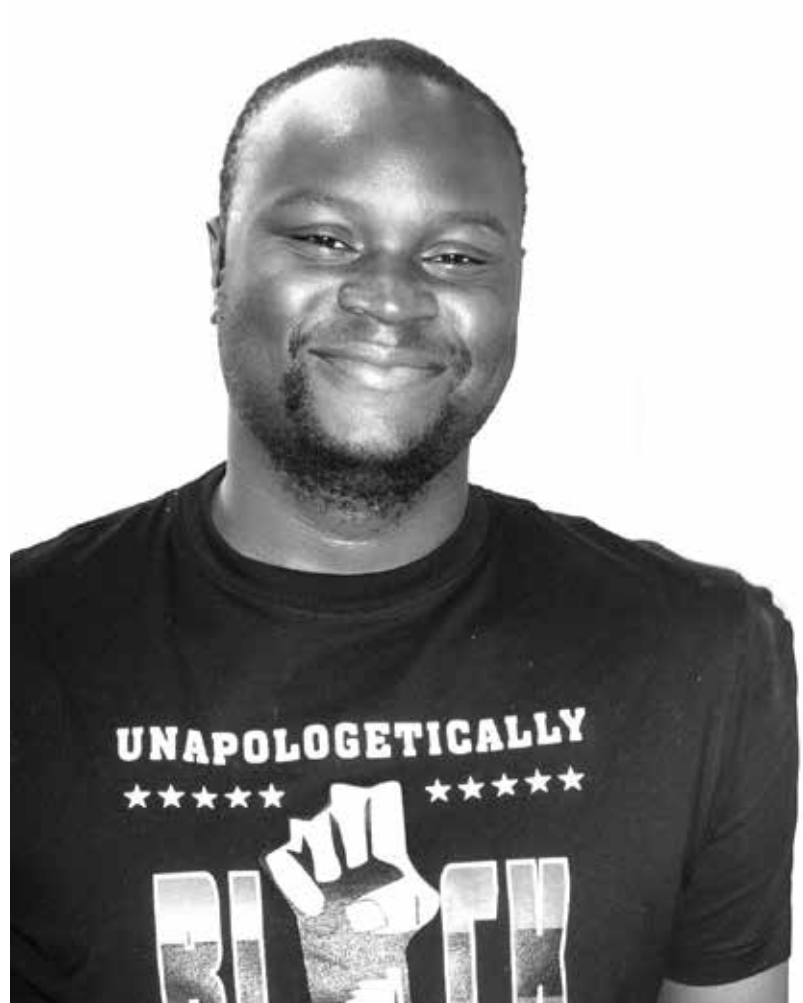
Lauren looks at Winston.

LAUREN: Yes. *(Beat.)* Lauren – Lauren Mabuza.

THE END

THE PRAYER GROUP

By Gideon Jeph Wabvuta



Gideon Jeph Wabvuta is a writer and solo actor from Zimbabwe, whose work focuses on reclaiming and reframing the African narrative within theatre. His work has been showcased within Africa and beyond.

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CHARACTERS:

FATIMA: 33

RUJEKO: 26

Lights up on a room. Sparsely furnished, single bed against the wall, on it is Fatima. She is leaning against the wall. Next to her, sitting on a wooden stool is Rujeko.

In the lounge, offstage we can hear church singing.

RUJEKO: Sis everyone misses you at church. Lizzie sang 'Siyakhudhumisa' last Sunday and it was a disaster.

FATIMA: That's my song.

RUJEKO: Made Baba cry every time... I miss him.

FATIMA: Me too, everyday... We miss YOU here.

RUJEKO: Clearly not everyone, I've been here an hour and I already feel like a ten-year-old again.

FATIMA: Want to run?

RUJEKO: Been wanting to run since I walked in here. I hate this house.

FATIMA: So why did you come back?

RUJEKO: I don't know...I mean, I knew you were sick again but...

FATIMA: You still didn't want to come.

RUJEKO: She makes me bad Fati. Seeing her in that white gown being all holy just... It sets me off.

FATIMA: You need to forgive her.

RUJEKO: She needs to apologize, to my face.

FATIMA: You know mother is never going to do that.

RUJEKO: Why? I walk in and she says: 'I prayed to God for forgiveness', I don't care Fati, I don't.

Prayer is heard in the lounge.

RUJEKO: *(Pointing towards prayer sounds.)* You have to endure that prayer noise every day?

FATIMA: Feels like it. I couldn't stand the constant head squeezes and the spit in my face, so I told her to keep her white gemenzi people in the lounge.

RUJEKO: I still have that white gemenzi.

FATIMA: Why did you keep it?

RUJEKO: I don't know. It was on the bed when I left so I took it. My last boyfriend, Talent, he hated it...Pentecostal guy-

FATIMA: Mademoni kind of guy?

RUJEKO: He took me to some prophet everyone called papa.

FATIMA: In a shiny silver suit?

RUJEKO: Maroon! Looked like a sofa. Told me I was holding on to evil spirits and as soon as we walk out of the church, the boyfriend, says to me: 'Maybe that's why your family is a mess, you keep demonic garments'.

Fatima chuckles.

FATIMA: *(Chuckles.)* We are a mess though.

Rujeko looks at her phone for a moment, types and looks back at Fatima.

FATIMA: Everything ok?

RUJEKO: Ok...? Oh...Yeah...

The prayer goes up, it's fervent.

FATIMA: I have something for you.

Fatima produces a white envelope and hands it to Rujeko.

FATIMA: Open it.

She does...

FATIMA: The house, we own it now. There is a bank account for the kids. Prince grade seven-

RUJEKO: Why are you giving me this?

FATIMA: Thulani grade five, they've grown big and make sure their airhead of a father picks them up every Friday. The community garden pays out every last Friday of the month and you need to make sure the boys go or else we, you, will-

Rujeko hands the envelope to Fatima.

RUJEKO: I can't.

FATIMA: Oh you can and you will. You expect me to leave my children with her?

RUJEKO: And you expect me to live in this house with her?

FATIMA: Yes I do!

RUJEKO: I can't Fati! I will run, I know myself, the moment she opens her mouth again to-

FATIMA: I DON'T CARE RUE... You left and I stayed and took care of her, the least you can do is let me die in peace and take care of mother for once!

Fatima pauses, she catches her breath, she expelled way too much energy. She looks spent.

RUJEKO: I wasn't easy.

FATIMA: Looked easy. Handed you a cup of tea, walked back into the kitchen and five minutes later I walk out and you're... gone.

RUJEKO: That morning... I made a cup of tea and mum walks in, she looks at me, picks up my cup and walks out. So I follow her and ask for my tea back, she screams at me for being selfish, stubborn, all the greatest hits. I apologize and she tells me my if I had not 'stubbornly' asked to go play netball he wouldn't have had an accident and died. So I killed him apparently.

FATIMA: Of course she said that!

RUJEKO: ...not even in her serious I'm angry voice. It was nonchalant...easy... I could tell she believed I had actually killed father. So when you walked in with the tea, I had been staring at baba's photo, the one on the fireplace and you come in, you hand me the tea and I take a sip, look at the photo and I just walk into my room toss a few things into my backpack and I... walk out.

FATIMA: You left me.

RUJEKO: Was I supposed to say, hey sis, I'm running, I don't know where I'm going but come with me the streets are better than living with a toxic mother. It's the streets Fatima not-

FATIMA: Not what Rue? It was us two, just us but you left me exposed. Everything became my fault, worse when Thulani's father left me, I became the slut who couldn't keep a man.

RUJEKO: She accused me of killing baba Fati!

FATIMA: She accused me of giving myself cancer because I was with a man who smoked! What's new...?

Fatima sighs loudly as Rujeko looks at her phone.

FATIMA: Listen. She destroyed both of us, she is crazy, I'm angry, you are...I don't know what you are, but right now I need you to stop monopolizing pain because the sun will rot before she apologizes to anyone. Take the envelope.

Rujeko looks at her phone again.

FATIMA: Rue whats going on, you've been staring at that phone since you walked in.

RUJEKO: I left...

FATIMA: Left who, what?

RUJEKO: Boyfriend... He's been...

Rujeko chokes up as she shows Fatima a mark on her neck.

FATIMA: Take the envelope...stay here, you are not a punching bag, hear me.

RUJEKO: How are you so...

Rujeko gestures, calm/zen.

FATIMA: I'm tired of fighting... when I found out the cancer was back I had this whole 'demand God for healing plan' but... I'm tired Rue, I don't want to put the boys through chemo and the... I need to be happy.

A moment. Fatima takes Rujeko's hand and holds it. Singing resumes in the lounge. Rujeko is in tears now.

RUJEKO: I'm sorry...

FATIMA: I'm going to see baba, Rue. Take the envelope, and I go happy.

RUJEKO: You are not going to meet your niece.

FATIMA: Niece? Who...wait? Are you...

Rujeko holds her belly.

RUJEKO: Four months... Fatima Theodora for you and baba.

FATIMA: *(Emotional.)* And you let that fool beat you and baby Fati?

RUJEKO: He doesn't know, he's been...he is a good man, maybe I -

FATIMA: He doesn't deserve to know, and good man don't beat up people, simple!

Rujeko picks up the phone again. Fatima proffers the envelope.

FATIMA: Rue, put the phone down, (she does), take the envelope. Blank slate, white sheet, write a new story Rue... Raise baby Fati here...If you go back, I will haunt you, I'm serious...

Rujeko takes the envelope, she smiles through the tears. She looks at Fatima as the song changes to Siyakhudhumisa.

FATIMA: What are the odds?

RUJEKO: Baba's song...

Rujeko joins in the song...

RUJEKO: Siyakudumisa
Siyakudumisa
Siyakudumisa
Nkosi yamakhosi

Fatima joins...They both cry, steeped in the memory of their father.

FATIMA: Akekho fana nawe
Akekho fana nawe
Akekho fana nawe
Nkosi yamakhosi

RUJEKO: Akekho fana nawe
Akekho fana nawe
Akekho fana nawe
Nkosi yamakhosi

The sisters sing softly, looking at each other, smiling, as lights fade to black.

THE END

THE COUPLE THAT TALKS

By Ncumisa Ndimeni



Ncumisa Ndimeni is a Johannesburg based writer who trained at the Market Theatre Laboratory. She has written award winning plays; *Hani: The Legacy* (2019 Naledi/ NAF17 Gold Ovation), and *Pop iCherri* (NAF17, Student Merit- Best Original Work). *How to Crack a Coconut*, her first solo written play had a run at Pop Art Theatre and forms part of the anthology *Between the Pillar and the Post*.

If you would like to contact the writer for permission to use this script, please email: ndimenin@gmail.com

CHARACTERS:

ANDILE: A male, in his 30's, English and isiZulu speaker.

GABISILE: A female, in her 20's, English and isiZulu speaker.

Gabisile is in the kitchen preparing dinner. Andile comes home.

ANDILE: Sawubona sthandwa.

GABISILE: Hi njunju.

ANDILE: Kume bani la phambi kwakho?

GABISILE: uANDILE.

ANDILE: Zama futhi.

GABISILE: My husband?

ANDILE: Last chance.

GABISILE: Hayibo ANDILE, musa ukudlala ngami.

ANDILE: The new General Manager of investment portfolios at Stein and Lindberg global. The position is based in Seattle, Washington, and the package! Baby we can live wherever we want, drive the cars we want. uNathi will be going to school with the kids of board members- sesifikile! Woza la.

GABISILE: Oh wow, that's life changing news, congratulations. And the food is almost ready so why don't you quickly go and change and-

ANDILE: Don't worry about dinner; I brought us something from that place on the main road.

GABISILE: You should've sent a message Andi.

ANDILE: Ngiyaxolisa sthandwa, it was a last-minute thing.

GABISILE: It's fine; but who must I give this food to now? You know you don't like eating leftovers.

ANDILE: Hayi akunankinga; since we won't be eating it, it's still fine for tomorrow.

GABISILE: Ok. All your work is finally paying off, we should celebrate.

ANDILE: Kahle bo, we still have to let everyone know first.

GABISILE: Yes, but we should celebrate now and then we can have a big party and invite everyone later, I'll get the champagne.

ANDILE: Khululeka, ithi ngihambe ngiyoshintsha kuqala and then I'll bring the shampopo when I come back.

On stage: split perspectives

Andile leaves to go and change, but first he stops to look for the champagne. He finds an envelope containing a few sheets of paper. He opens the envelope and begins to read the letters, he then returns to the kitchen.

ANDILE: Dear Mrs Bhengu, we have noted your enquiry regarding readmission into the MB.ChB programme. Dear Mrs Bhengu, we are pleased to inform you that you qualify for readmission into the bachelor of medicine and surgery programme.

He hands her the letter.

GABISILE: Oh this, I even forgot about it, you can throw it away. Did you forget the champagne? How are we going to celebrate you without it? Let me quickly go and get it.

ANDILE: Gabisile! It's dated from this month.

GABISILE: This letter means nothing, it's just paper see, I can tear it and it's gone. Which plate do you want?

ANDILE: But you sent it, you took the time to meet with...ngubani igama- Professor Abrahams at the school. So clearly this is something you intend on doing, intended, still intend, angazi?

GABISILE: Ubaba was on my case to get back into medicine so I just wanted him to be at ease, you know how my parents are.

ANDILE: Ok, ngicela umshayele ucingo ngizokhuluma naye and we can put his mind at ease together.

GABISILE: Hayibo Andile angathini uBaba! There's no need to do that, I've already told him I'm not going.

Andile reaches for the phone.

GABISILE: If you want to talk to him, I won't try to stop you, but I know my father.

Andile lifts his fingers from the dialling pad.

GABISILE: Don't let him think he has the upper hand in our marriage. Besides, what would you say to him? Who the hell do you think you are telling my wife to go back to school? You want him to think you can't handle your own wife? What do you think he'll do? He'll start inserting his authority in this house, he'll bring in oMalume noMamaoncane, your parents - it'll be a mess. All for something as silly as a piece of paper.

ANDILE: I won't be manipulated in my own house Gabisile.

GABISILE: And that's what I told him when he first asked, I said I don't want him in our business, I make decisions with you - you're my husband

ANDILE: You know I don't like it when you keep things from me.

GABISILE: I know baby, I know; and I'm sorry I never told you, ngiyaxolisa sthandwa sami. It was nothing and I just wanted to move past it- so I forgot about it. Nxese njunju.

ANDILE: Ya.

ANDILE: So who do you want to invite to the party?

ANDILE: Our parents and the rest of the family, uLwazi, uThiza, Fred; I'll get you some of my colleague's contacts.

GABISILE: Don't worry about that, I'll ask your assistant to send me the numbers. What about some of the neighbours that we get along with? Devin and Claire came to that braai we had...

ANDILE: What's happening in the medical field these days?

GABISILE: It's all in the letters.

ANDILE: I'm just curious; you were already a few years in before you dropped out to have Nathi so maybe things have changed?

GABISILE: Well, I actually saw one of my old schoolmates a while ago, Zuraida, we were both shopping for children's clothes and she recognised me from the girl's section. We started catching up and she was telling me where everyone was and what they were up to. Then I asked her about her life, and she told me about her two kids, a two year old little girl and an eight month old baby boy, well, he's about eleven months old now I think. She's a surgical doctor and a professor at the university and her husband is a dentist.

ANDILE: Zuraida...Professor Z Abrahams? The one from those letters?

GABISILE: Is that such a bad thing?

ANDILE: You said this whole thing was your father's idea.

GABISILE: I just thought that if she can do it then why can't I you know; she's a doctor, a mother, and a wife.

ANDILE: Ngazile! Gabisile ave unamanga, we had an agreement kudalo- you take care of our home and our son, I go out and work. We're supposed to be a team.

GABISILE: We are still a team, nothing's changed. But maybe I can also do a little bit more with my life.

ANDILE: Bese mina ngenzeni without you?

GABISILE: I'm not going anywhere, we'd just have to do a little bit of adjusting - and we can get a helper.

ANDILE: He-eh, abo-ousie bayinkinga kabi and I don't like their food. uNathi needs his mother here at home to raise him, to instil good values in him. Do you want our son to be like these kids who run around the streets because they weren't raised properly? You can't have it all Gabi.

GABISILE: You know Andile, with everything that I do I put you and Nathi first. Have I ever done a thing to make you feel like you won't always have me or that I don't love you? I was on my way to becoming a doctor when I got pregnant. Do you know how many black female medical students graduate and go on to be working doctors in this country? I'm not just talking about any doctor; I was going to be a neurosurgeon. There are five black female neurosurgeons in this country Andile, five!

ANDILE: I don't want a neurosurgeon; I want a wife.

GABISILE: Well that's not enough for me.

Andile makes a phone call.

GABISILE: Andile! Andile ungalinge!

ANDILE: Baba, sawubona, yebo. Baba I'm sorry to call you like this so late at night, but I wanted to inform you ukuthi indodakazi yenu uGabisile does not want to be in this marriage anymore. I am asking you as her parents for guidance in this matter, ngiyabonga Baba. Your father wants to talk to you.

He hands Gabi the phone.

GABISILE: Sawubona Baba, yebo, a family meeting on Saturday- kulungile, bye.

THE END

WONDER WOMEN

By Gabriella Pinto



Gabriella Pinto is an award-winning actress, writer and director from Cape Town. Currently, she is part of the University of Johannesburg's 2020 Playwriting Laboratory, while her latest work can be read in *Living While Feminist*, published by NB publishers. She is passionate about telling stories that explore the human condition.

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CHARACTERS

HANNAH FOURIE: Caucasian, 30s, down-to-earth housewife. Married with two young children. Tamara's older sister.

TAMARA FOURIE: Caucasian, 30s, an ambitious defence attorney.

SETTING:

A middle-class, suburban home in Cape Town.

A Saturday morning in present day, South Africa.

A lived-in family room, with boy's toys littered about.

Hannah fiddles with party decorations. She blows into a party horn, tosses it aside and slumps on the couch. Tamara, dressed to the nines, bursts through the door, her hands laden with parcels, and a cell phone.

TAMARA: Devon, it's a lot to think about. Well, I... No, but that's not what I... That's not fair. Now you're just twisting my words! You know that is not what I meant. Look, we can speak about this later. I'm at Hannah's house, helping with party decorations!
(She slams phone down on the coffee table.)
Oh my god! I just can't... *(She sighs.)* Hope I didn't delay things. Murphy's law, they didn't have the balloons you wanted. I'll pop into another store on my way home.

HANNAH: And my costume?

TAMARA: Shit! I'll go get it now. You can start so long.

HANNAH: Ag, let's just get to work. There's a lot to do.

TAMARA: Can't you ask the kids to help?

HANNAH: Clive took them to fetch Dad.

TAMARA: Oh – is he coming?

HANNAH: Ja, you know he likes to feel included. Listen, you can start with the banner. There's paint over there.

They start making the decorations.

HANNAH: So, what's up with Devon?

TAMARA: Not just Devon. I didn't get the promotion.

HANNAH: What?

TAMARA: Yip.

HANNAH: But I thought you did. Like, wasn't HR just advertising the job as a formality?

TAMARA: That's what I thought too.

HANNAH: That sucks, ja-no, flip, I mean...

TAMARA: I worked my butt off. How am I supposed to support kids with a senior attorney's salary?

HANNAH: Since when do you want kids?

TAMARA: It's nice to have options.

HANNAH: It's also nice to have a job. *(Pause.)* Listen, the reason I...

TAMARA: *(Tamara's phone beeps. She picks it up and reads a text message.)*
Bloody hell! Sometimes I feel like I'm dealing with a man-child. He's just so damn adamant about immigrating.

HANNAH: I thought his fitness start-up was doing well.

TAMARA: Yes, but it's just the same old 'this-country-is-going-to-the-dogs' narrative. He reads too much fake-news and not enough facts.

HANNAH: You did you rave about London.

TAMARA: That was over a decade ago. Was my gap year inspiring? Yes. Did it rain? Lots. Was there was silver lining? I don't know because my most of my time was spent in shitty, grey office.

HANNAH: I never took a gap year. I just didn't want to leave Dad -

TAMARA: I mean Devon just wants to up and go with our currency. Let's just teleport ourselves to another country. Everything will be hunky-dorey. Have you seen the rand pound exchange rate?

HANNAH: You have more than most people.

TAMARA: Yes, but we won't be wining and dining like we do here. My life was a latte and now I'm staring into the abyss of an americano in a polystyrene cup.

HANNAH: Tamara, you didn't get a promotion. Your life isn't over.
(Gesturing to Jack's costume on the couch.)
Please pass me Jack's spiderman costume. I need to hem the pants.

TAMARA: Who suggested the superhero theme?

HANNAH: *(Taking the costume.)* Thanks. He wanted a spider man dress up party but was unhappy that everyone would look the same. Always needs to be the centre of attention, like someone else I know.

TAMARA: Are these scatter cushions new?

HANNAH: They're 3 months old.

TAMARA: I know it's been a while since I saw you guys.

HANNAH: Ja, it was Mothers' day.

TAMARA: Really?

HANNAH: Remember? We took flowers to mom's grave.

TAMARA: Oh, yes. Yes. So, besides minor décor changes, what's been happening apart from bathing the kids and doing the laundry?

HANNAH: Same-old.

TAMARA: Extremely eventful in the Thomas household. Lots of unpaid domestic and emotional labour.

HANNAH: I've been very busy renovating the boys' rooms. I just don't have energy when Clive is away for work. Things are hectic.

TAMARA: Ask Dad, he'd be happy to be included.

HANNAH: Or you.

TAMARA: You know my DIY extends as far as booking a manicure.

HANNAH: When last did you see Dad?

TAMARA: Like two weeks ago.

HANNAH: He told me it's been more than a month.

TAMARA: I call him every week.

HANNAH: You should visit.

TAMARA: *(Busying herself with the decorations.)* Do you remember at your 7th birthday party? We played hide and-seek, and you forgot to look for me? You called me, but I didn't answer. Eventually, mom found me sleeping behind the couch.

HANNAH: Ja, you wanted to go as Batman because you weren't a sissy. Mom said normal people can also be heroes, even girls, and convinced you to go as a nurse.

TAMARA: That was because they couldn't afford to buy the costume. Remember when you cut my fringe, I was –

HANNAH: *(Interrupting.)* Tam, do you remember when mom died...

TAMARA: Yeah...Why?

HANNAH: I've just been thinking about that day.

TAMARA: Oh my god. Trust you to be all morbid on a birthday. Every time there's a happy occasion...

HANNAH: Do you think it's worse when someone dies suddenly or when you have time to say goodbye?

TAMARA: I don't think about it.

HANNAH: So, you never wonder if -

TAMARA: *(Interrupting.)* No, Hannah. I don't. Dwelling isn't going to bring her back. You should have seen a therapist.

HANNAH: I should have seen a therapist?

TAMARA: Yes, because then we wouldn't have to talk about all the times mom can't and won't be here.

HANNAH: What's wrong with talking about it?

TAMARA: Nothing.

HANNAH: It's just - This time it's a bit -

TAMARA: *(Interrupting.)* How amazing does this banner look now? This glitter paint is so cool!

HANNAH: Yip.

TAMARA: You were saying?

HANNAH: Never mind.

TAMARA: No, don't do that now, start telling me something and then pull the "never-mind-feel-sorry-for-me" bullshit.

HANNAH: It's fine.

TAMARA: Evidently, it's not. So, what is it about? Mom?

HANNAH: It's not...

TAMARA: What?

HANNAH: About mom.

TAMARA: Oh. Well, that's progress.

HANNAH: Why you are you like this?

TAMARA: Like what?

HANNAH: Every time I try to bring up something serious you brush it off. If doesn't involve your life then it doesn't matter.

TAMARA: Fine. What do you want to talk about?

HANNAH: I don't.

TAMARA: Just as well you didn't go therapy. The therapist probably wouldn't have gotten a word out of you.

HANNAH: You know what Tamara, I actually called you, I called you because I found out, I found out on Wednesday, that...that I am really sick. And I didn't want to bother you earlier because Dad said you had a busy week at a work. And shit, there's a never a right a time to say these kinds of things, but with you there's just no time at all.

TAMARA: What do you mean you're sick?

HANNAH: You know the cancer I recovered from?

TAMARA: But you're super healthy. Fit as a fiddle. Everything is going great.

HANNAH: It's back.

TAMARA: What? Like...for real?

HANNAH: It was never not real.

TAMARA: *(Pause.)* How bad is it?

Hannah doesn't answer.

TAMARA: Hannah?

HANNAH: This could be the last birthday.

TAMARA: That's ridiculous. What did...what exactly did the doctor say?

HANNAH: He said I've probably got a few months.

TAMARA: But did you get a second opinion?

HANNAH: I'm going this week.

TAMARA: That's...that's good. I mean you've beaten it before. I'm sure it'll be okay. Does...um...does dad know?

HANNAH: No. I haven't said anything yet.

TAMARA: *(Tamara sits next to Hannah. A long, awkward silence.)* I'm, I'm sorry about your costume.

HANNAH: Ag, it's not important.

They stay quiet for a moment.

TAMARA: And...Look, I know I never speak about mom.

HANNAH: It's fine, Tamara. You're right.

TAMARA: Look, I needed...

HANNAH: It's not going to change anything.

TAMARA: ...I needed to finish an art project for school, but you had used up all the glue. And I forgot to remind mom to buy more. "Tough luck," she said. I wasn't having it and threw a tantrum. So, she grabbed her bag and called me to go with her, but I refused. I wanted you to go. "This is the last time," she said, storming out. "The last bloody time!" The front door slammed shut. The sound echoed down the passage as I called after her. "Wait, mom! Wait! I found more glue in the cupboard! Please, wait!" I'll never forget how she sped off down the street in her Toyota Corolla, annoyed and mad at me. And the muffled sounds of Dad, later that night, sitting sobbing upstairs.

HANNAH: *(Pause.)* It was an accident.

TAMARA: *(Pause.)* I just really wish things were different.

HANNAH: I know, me too.

THE END

BOLUWATIFE (AS THE LORD PLEASES?)

By Tosin Jobi-Tume



Tosin Tume is a playwright, performing artist, and theatre scholar. She has to her credit several published and unpublished plays. Her plays have been performed locally and internationally. Her play *The Victims*, won the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) 2019 Drama Award.

If you would like to contact the writer for permission to use this script, please email: tosintume@gmail.com

CHARACTERS:

TITO: A 32 year old career lady who lives in the city. She is very pretty, fashionable, and successful.

TIFE: Tito's 16 year old brother. He is a rugged, embittered and angry young man.

Happenings.

A Sunday morning in Odo village, somewhere in Southwestern Nigeria. A modest living room with the barest minimum furniture: An old picture portrait of a couple is hung on the wall. There is a travel bag by the chair, and two wrapped packs on the table. Tife comes on stage, and is followed by Tito. Tife is wearing a T shirt and a pair of distressed jeans, while Tito adorns a beautiful shift dress and simple but chic jewelry.

TIFE: No, I am not going to Lagos with you!

TITO: But we discussed this already. We agreed it is the best thing to do.

TIFE: No, we didn't. That was all you. I didn't even say a word, remember?

TITO: *(Stoically.)* I see you haven't changed...

TIFE: How do you mean?

TITO: *(Softly.)* You've always been stubborn... even as a baby.

TIFE: *(Scoffs.)* You remember me as a baby?

TITO: Of course. I do remember everything about you, Boluwatife.

TIFE: *(Dryly.)* Hard to believe. How long has it been now? Fifteen years?

TITO: Sixteen years. I left home when I was exactly your age.

Silence as they both ruminates on Tito's statement.

TITO: Tife... Please, come with me. Let me take care of you.

TIFE: *(Laughs.)* Take care of me! You must think I'm still a baby.

TITO: *(Eye roll.)* You're only sixteen years old.

TIFE: *(Stubbornly.)* A sixteen-year old adult.

TITO: *(Budges.)* Okay...A young adult.

Tito resignedly lumps into a seat. Then she notices the two packs on the table.

TITO: And then?

TIFE: What?

TITO: (*Gestures towards the packs on the table.*) Your gifts... The phone and laptop I bought for you.

TIFE: (*Disinterestedly.*) Oh those... I haven't even unwrapped them.

TITO: (*Disappointed.*) I see that.

Pause.

TITO: So... What are your plans?

TIFE: Plans? I have none for now... But I will sort myself out. I always do.

TITO: (*Sigh.*) That doesn't sound good to me. You really should come with me to Lagos.

TIFE: Why should I?

TITO: Well, it seems the right thing to do. After all, I'm your... I'm your... sister.

TIFE: (*Guffaws.*) See how difficult it is for you to call yourself my sister. Because you haven't really been a sister to me!

TITO: (*Pleadingly.*) Tife...

Stony silence.

TITO: (*Sigh.*) What can I do to change your mind?

TIFE: Nothing. I am going nowhere with you. This is my home.

TITO: (*Exasperated.*) But I can't leave you here all by yourself.

TIFE: (*Braggs.*) I am a big boy. In fact, I run things in this hood. I have my goons, and we support each other. I cannot desert them.

TITO: (*Lost.*) Your goons...?

Silence.

TITO: Tife, with Papa and Mama gone, we need to...

TIFE: (*Bitterly.*) Yes, Papa and Mama are gone... and that is why you are here. To take over my life, right?

TITO: No, I didn't mean it that way. You are my blood, and my responsibility.

TIFE: (*Angrily.*) Don't you ever say that again, Tito. I am not and never will be your responsibility.

TITO: You just finished high school... surely you would like to go to the university?

TIFE: (*Adamantly.*) I will make a plan.

TITO: I can get you enrolled at the University of Lagos...

TIFE: *(Yells.)* I said no!

TITO: Why are you so angry with me?

TIFE: Angry with you? I don't even know you.

TITO: Tife, listen...

TIFE: No, you listen, Tito. It is too late for you to play big sister to me. There is no space for you in my life, period.

TITO: Tife, I get that you are angry with me, but I wish I could... I just wish I could...See, there is so much you don't know... So much you can't understand.

TIFE: I already know all I need to know.

Tife tries to leave but Tito blocks him.

TITO: Tife, we need to talk.

TIFE: *(Irate.)* Oh... Now you have something to say to me? After sixteen years?

TITO: Tife...

TIFE: All these years that you abandoned us...gallivanting about the city while your parents and brother suffered back here in the village...

TITO: I tried...

TIFE: Do you know how much we suffered? How much Papa and Mama struggled to make ends meet? How many nights we went to bed without dinner? How many times I was sent away from school for failure to pay my tuition fees? If not for Dr Pitan... He is the one who paid my school fees every term. He gave me a monthly allowance and asked me to tell him if I ever need anything. Whenever I asked why he is so good to me, he'd tell me to thank my Guardian Angel. What would have become of me if Dr Pitan hadn't taken me on as his personal charity case?

TITO: Tife...

TIFE: Are you aware that Papa went blind because we couldn't afford surgery for him? Did you know your parents were on their way to Irese village for traditional medicine treatment when they had the accident?

TITO: Tife, believe me, I tried to...

TIFE: And now that you are here, you think you can throw some money and gifts around, and everything will be fine? Well, I refuse to be bought.

TITO: *(Sighs.)* Tife, I feel your pain. I understand your bitterness.

TIFE: Do you really?

TITO: This is much more than what it seems. It is deeper than what you have been told.

TIFE: Okay, I'm listening.

TITO: *(Stutters.)* See... I... We... *(Sighs.)* You wouldn't understand.

TIFE: *(Triumphantly.)* See? I knew you had nothing sensible to say.

TITO: A lot of things happened to me here, Tife. Horrible...horrible things...

TIFE: Yeah, right. Mama already told me how you were the village slut, sleeping with every Tom, Dick and Harry.

Tito slaps Tife.

TITO: You will respect me, Tife!

TIFE: How dare you?

TITO: I will not be disrespected by you!

TIFE: Respect is earned and not demanded. You want my respect? Then earn it.

TITO: You can't talk to me that way.

TIFE: And why not?

TITO: Because I am your... I am your older sister.

TIFE: *(Sarcastically.)* Some older sister...

TITO: I mean it, Tife. You must respect me.

TIFE: You may be my older sister, but you are not my mother.

TITO: *(Yells.)* Actually, I am.

Tife is still ranting, and Tito's last statement only sinks in after a few seconds.

TIFE: You think you can shout me down... *(Silence.)* What did you just say?

Tito is silent.

TIFE: Did you just say what I think you said? My mother...?

TITO: *(Wearily.)* Yes.

Tife laughs hysterically and then claps slowly.

TIFE: Nice try.

TITO: I gave birth to you, Tife.

Pulls out a gun and points it at Tito. Tito is visibly scared.

TITO: Tife! Please...

TIFE: Are you crazy? Just because Papa and Mama are gone, you think you can come here and twist facts about my birth?

TITO: *(Trembling.)* It is... the truth...

TIFE: Liar!

Tife advances towards Tito and she falls on her knees.

TITO: *(Sobs.)* I am your mother, Tife.

TIFE: You are a liar!

TITO: You can ask Dr Pitan.

TIFE: Dr Pitan?

TITO: He delivered you right here in this living room. He's the only one who knows the truth about your birth... apart from Papa and Mama.

TIFE: *(Dazed.)* Unbelievable...He never said a word about it to me!

TITO: That is because he was sworn to an oath of secrecy. Ask him now, he will tell you the truth.

TIFE: Oh God...

Tito sobs louder. Tife is devastated.

TIFE: What could have made you abandon your own flesh and blood? Why did you leave? Why?

TITO: I left because I had to. But, please know this - I never abandoned you. I always kept watch over you. I paid your school fees and sent you a monthly allowance.

TIFE: How? When?

TITO: Ask Dr Pitan who your Guardian Angel is.

TIFE: You mean it was you who always gave Dr Pitan money to give to me?

TITO: I also got him to take pictures of you regularly. I have a folder full of your pictures, Tife. There is no single day that I don't think of you or drool over your pictures.

TIFE: Oh dear Lord... *(Pause.)* Then why didn't Papa and Mama ever tell me this story? Teenage girls get pregnant all the time. So why would they keep it a secret from me? Come to think of it... Who then is my father? Who impregnated you? *(Pause.)* I sure don't look like you... *(Pause.)* And I don't look like Mama... But I am Papa's spitting image. Everyone says so... *(Pause.)* So... Oh no...! No! No!

Tlito breaks into body-racking sobs as realization slowly dawns on Tife.

TIFE: No...!

Tife is in tears as he falls on his knees.

TITO: I was only fifteen.

TIFE: No!

TITO: When I told your grandmother about it, she slapped me and shut me up. Mama called me a slut who seduced her husband. Then I became pregnant and was locked up for months... until you arrived. Mama begged Dr Pitán never to reveal the secret to a soul. She claimed you as hers, and named you Boluwatife, meaning 'as the Lord pleases'...

Tife is silent.

TITO: Tife, I really wanted to stay...I would have stayed. Months after I had you, I told them that I wanted to go back to school, and they agreed. Only for my father... our father... to come visiting again later that night. I was not going to allow him do that to me again, I wrestled with him and stabbed him in the eye with a pen. I ran out of the house, out of the village, and out of their lives, and I never looked back... until now.

TIFE: This feels like a dream... a bad dream.

TITO: *(Smiles sadly through her tears.)* It is my nightmare.

Tife is rigidly quiet.

TITO: Son, please forgive me. Let us start our life afresh. Come with me?

Grim silence as Tife slowly gets up, takes a long look at Tito, and he exits. Then a loud gunshot is heard offstage. Tife kills himself.

TITO: *(Screams.)* Tife...!

THE END

ACTOR'S BIOS



Ayanda Fali is a theatre and film actress, voice artist, arts administrator and Live Performance lecturer at AFDA in Durban.

Bhekani Shabalala is a Durban-based theatre creator and stage and television actor, He also teaches acting and mentors young performers.



Ilana Cilliers is a left-handed maker, performer and educator. She is most well-known for her work in the film Johnny is Nie Dood Nie (2017) and excited about collaborations with creative partner Wolf Britz and their company Mount Maak.



Lara Toselli is an award-winning actress and writer. Her series, *Chin Up*, now in its third season, is the first web series to be acquired by Showmax.

Mpho Seleteng is a budding young actress and poet from Lesotho. She is particularly enthused by the stage medium and the raw human complexities it allows.



Mthokozisi Zulu is a Theatre Practitioner, Film Maker and Drama Coach. He has appeared in a number of Kickstart Productions as well as a few other national projects and two international collaborations.

Philisiwe Twijnstra is a writer, director and actor. She resides in Durban where she founded Durban Women Playwrights in 2017. She completed her master's in creative Writing at Rhodes University.





THEATRE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

ISBN 978-0-9947103-3-8

