

GREEN MAN FLASHING

Mike van Graan

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Mike van Graan, the Playwright

*Van Graan has, since the advent of the post-apartheid era, crafted plays that are politically charged. He has provocatively raised issues on stage that people may be too intimidated to vocalise elsewhere. – Luvuyo Kakaza, *The Weekender**

*One of the few practising contemporary South African playwrights able to construct morally complex and dramatically layered scripts dealing with highly controversial socio-political topics. – Brent Meersman, *Mail & Guardian**

Mike van Graan was born in 1959 in Cape Town. He matriculated from Harold Cressy High School in 1977, and then graduated from UCT with a BA Honours degree in Drama and a Higher Diploma in Education.

Van Graan's foray into the arts world was sparked by the political, when the apartheid government declared the State of Emergency in June 1986. This led to a greater involvement in arts-related activities. In 1986 he organised the *Towards a People's Culture Festival*, which was banned a few days before opening. It was deemed a 'threat to national security'.

Over the years, Van Graan has served in leadership capacities in various cultural non-government organisations. In 1987 he was elected Western Cape representative on the National Steering Committee of the Congress of South African Writers (COSAW) at its founding conference. In 1991 he became COSAW's National Projects Officer. From 1988–91 he was the Theatre Coordinator of the Community Arts Project (CAP) and subsequently its Director. From 1993 to 1996 he held positions as General Secretary of the National Arts Coalition, the country's largest arts and culture lobby, Director of the Bartel Arts Trust (BAT) Centre in Durban, and, after the country's first democratic elections, Special Adviser on arts and culture to the new Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology.

He served as the Secretary General of Arterial Network, an Africa-wide civil society network of artists, cultural activists, creative enterprises and cultural NGOs active in more than 40 African countries, from its inception in 2007 to mid-2012.

Other positions include:

- Member of the Steering Committee of the International Network for Cultural Diversity (INCD)
- General Secretary of the Performing Arts Network of South Africa (PANSA) from 2002 to 2006
- Serving on the National Steering Committee of the Network for Arts and Culture South Africa (NACSA) in 2003

- Serving as the Secretariat of the Arterial Network, a continent-wide body dedicated to the African creative sector
- Executive Director of the African Centre and the African Arts Institute in 2008 and 2009 respectively
- Programme Director of the World Summit on Arts and Culture hosted by the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA) in 2009
- UNESCO Technical Consultant on the Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions

Van Graan launched Article 27 Arts and Culture Consultants in Jan 1996, serving a range of clients in the cultural field. He is a respected columnist, having written weekly for Artslink.co.za, providing commentary on the unfolding arts and culture scene through *The Cultural Weapon*. He has also produced a weekly, subscriber-based internet arts column, *Artwatch*, monitoring and commenting on South African arts and culture, and *Artwit*, a weekly arts columnist for the *Mail & Guardian*.

Van Graan lives in Cape Town with his wife, Janet Purcell, a senior lecturer in the Department of Graphic Design at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. They have two sons, Nicholas and Adam.

Plays by Mike van Graan

- 1991 *The Dogs Must Be Crazy*
- 1992 *Some of our Best Friends are Cultural Workers*
- 1996 *Dinner Talk*
Not Exactly PC!
- 1999 *The Tables Trilogy*
- 2003 *Green Man Flashing*
- 2004 *Hostile Takeover* (reworked as *Just Business* in 2012)
- 2005 *Mixed Metaphors*
Some Mothers' Sons
Two to Tango
- 2006 *Brothers in Blood*
Mirror, Mirror
- 2007 *The General (Die Generaal)*
Bafana Republic
- 2008 *Bafana Republic 2: Extra Time*
Odysseus van Holland
Ramiz and Julio
- 2009 *Brothers in Blood*
Bafana Republic 3: Penalty Shootout
Iago's Last Dance
- 2010 *Is it because I'm Jack?*

Stage History

Green Man Flashing started as a radio play, *The Reunion*, broadcast on SAfm in the Saturday Play slot on 3 April 1999.

The first theatre adaptation appeared as *Slippery Slope* at the Baxter Theatre Centre in Cape Town in May 2002, featuring in a season of readings of new South African works. With the help of a grant from the National Arts Council, and influenced by the storytelling style of the Brazilian movie *City of God*, Van Graan completely re-wrote the play, then entered it as *Green Man Flashing* in the Performing Arts Network of South Africa (PANSA)/UCT Festival of Readings of New Writing in November 2003. Five works were selected for staged readings over the weekend festival, and *Green Man Flashing* won the Jury Award for 'Best Play'.

The Jury commended the play for its courageous and insightful tackling of contentious, contemporary South African themes through believable, full-blooded characters.

At that time, theatres were reluctant to produce the work as it was deemed to be too politically controversial. Van Graan himself produced the work for the National Arts Festival in 2004, ten years after the advent of the democracy that was supposed to have ushered in conditions more conducive to the practice of freedom of creative expression.

The first production of *Green Man Flashing* was directed by Clare Stopford. The premiere on the Fringe was met with critical acclaim and enthusiastic audience responses, leading to capacity houses later in the run. This contradicted the widely-held belief that audiences weren't interested in, or ready for, contemporary political theatre.

Soon after the success of the play in Grahamstown, Malcolm Purkey saw the play during its brief run at the Market Lab immediately after Grahamstown in 2004, and, when he was appointed as the Artistic Director of the Market Theatre, he wanted the play to be the first hosted at the Market Theatre under his tenure, as it exemplified the kind of theatre that he wanted the Market Theatre to be doing again. *Green Man Flashing* opened at the Market Theatre on 14 January 2005.

The Market Theatre leased the play's rights to the Baxter Theatre to stage its own production in May that year, with Clare Stopford directing.

In May 2006 a staged reading of the play took place at the Oval House Theatre in London as part of a season of readings of contemporary South African work. Amy Bonsall directed the play and Dorothy Ann Gould played the lead.

The play was regarded by many as a turning point for contemporary South African drama because of the way it dealt with contemporary politics. But more so, it was regarded as remarkable in anticipating the real-life drama of the ANC Deputy President, Jacob Zuma, linked to charges of corruption in the arms deal and then later charged with rape.

As Len Ashton, columnist for the *Sunday Independent*, put it in 2005 (before Zuma was charged with rape in 2006): 'No wonder *Green Man Flashing* is a hot ticket. The immediate topicality of the Mike van Graan play is breathtaking. The rapt Baxter Theatre audience recalled the tension of parliamentarians at last week's Zumagate denouement. Full marks to Van Graan for prescience.'

First reading

PANSA/UCT Festival of Reading of New Writing, 2003

Director

Liz Mills

Cast

Gabby Anderson ... Clare Berlein
Aaron Matshoba ... Tshamano Sebe
Anna Richards ... Terry Norton
Luthando Nyaka ... Itumeleng wa-Lehulere
Inspector Abrahams ... Ivan Abrahams

First production

Fringe, National Arts Festival, 2–9 July 2004.

Producer

Original producer: Mike van Graan/Article 27 in 2004, then the Market Theatre in 2005

Director

Clare Stopford

Casts

Original cast (2004)
Gabby Anderson ... Jennifer Steyn
Aaron Matshoba ... Vusi Kunene
Anna Richards ... Charlotte Butler
Luthando Nyaka ... Sechaba Morojele
Inspector Abrahams ... André Samuels

Market Theatre (2005)

Gabby Anderson ... Michelle Douglas
Aaron Matshoba ... James Ngcobo
Anna Richards ... Charlotte Butler
Luthando Nyaka ... Sechaba Morojele
Inspector Abrahams ... André Samuels

Baxter Theatre (2005)

Gabby Anderson ... Jennifer Steyn
Aaron Matshoba ... Tshamano Sebe
Anna Richards ... Roberta Fox
Luthando Nyaka ... Chris Gxalaba
Inspector Abrahams ... André Samuels

Awards/Recognition

- Jury Award, PANSA/UCT Drama Department Festival of Reading of New Writing, November 2003.
- Nominee: Best New South African Play Produced, Naledi Theatre Awards, 2005
- Nominee: Best New Script, Fleur du Cap Theatre Awards, 2005

What the Critics Said

Van Graan is set to lead a new brand of politically active theatre in South Africa. ... It will undoubtedly emerge as one of the finest plays of this year's fringe. – Anton Krueger, *Cue*, National Arts Festival, 2004

Van Graan shows again why he has been such a thorn in the flesh as a cultural activist for the new elite in the last few years. – Gabriel Bothma, *Die Burger*, 2004

It tears at the heart and soul of our democracy, and rips at the underbelly of corruption and political power through its astute writing –Adrienne Sichel, *Star Tonight*, 2004

It's got its finger firmly on the pulse of the precariousness of our democracy and the distance between politicians and the increasingly marginalised public. – Peter Tromp, *Cape Times*, 2004

Is it the quintessential South African play needed for this time in our country's history? – Rafiek Mammon, *The Argus*, 2004

It will in time be recognised for the ground-breaking work it is. – Brent Meersman, *Mail and Guardian*, 2005

Two Comments

Many contemporary plays grapple with the heart and mind of conflict and post-conflict life, with all its contradictions, but Green Man Flashing carries a high-voltage current that touches the nerve ends. – Nadine Gordimer, Nobel Literature Laureate

Mike van Graan's Green Man Flashing brilliantly lays bare the difficult paradoxes South Africans have to confront in achieving the real promise of our inspiring constitution: our ability to live it. – Prof Njabulo Ndebele, then Vice Chancellor, University of Cape Town

Playwright's introduction

Title

The title is a reference to a pedestrian crossing signal at a set of traffic lights.

Background

The play is set in Cape Town in contemporary South Africa, about six weeks before the second non-racial democratic elections in June 1999. It explores themes such as individual human rights versus the greater political good, personal relationships versus political loyalty and moral responsibility for individual choices.

Characters

Gabby Anderson is a 43-year-old white woman from a liberal family that owned a publishing company. She is a former 'student lefty', who studied English, Psychology and Politics at university and joined the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). She left South Africa in 1980 at the age of 24 to evade the constant detention of her partner, Aaron Matshoba, and because of the harassment they faced as a mixed-race couple. Their path led through various countries, until they settled in East Germany, where they had a son, Matthew; much of Gabby's time was spent looking after him, although she did some work for Radio Freedom. They returned to South Africa in 1992.

Aaron Matshoba is 45 years old. He underwent basic military training in East Germany, but also studied further in international law, soon becoming one of the leading exiles. He is now a leading negotiator for a major political party. He was part of their negotiating team, which brought about the interim constitution. Rather than formally going into government as a politician or bureaucrat, he chose to remain active as a 'soldier' for whatever the party required. A former student leader, highly articulate, he

is passionately committed to the new South Africa, and to making it successful. He is principled, loyal, hardworking and firm, yet sensitive. His choice to stay out of government shows his commitment: he believes that not all skilled people should join government, but should be available to get their hands dirty in 'unsexy' work. He has a conscience, but his commitment to the party is paramount.

Anna Richards is a 44-year-old lawyer who runs her own legal practice. A divorced mother with two daughters aged 19 and 14, she is more of a feminist than her longstanding friend Gabby. She's a strong woman, whose experiences have made her a bit cynical about love and life.

Luthando Nyaka is the quintessential party hack. In his early 50s, he's a party hard-liner, but not in a political sense. He is loyal to the party and vehemently defends it. He would change his politics depending on what the leadership said. He is dogmatic, defensive, arrogant and not shy to use force or the threat of force to obtain his ends. He is the ultimate 'bad cop' in a 'good cop, bad cop' approach to persuasion. This may be because he feels the need to prove his loyalty and commitment more so than others, because of rumours about his past.

Inspector Theo Abrahams is a 54-year-old coloured policeman. During apartheid he served in the security branch of the police force. With the changes in the political system, and after receiving amnesty at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), he requested a transfer to the Violent Crimes Unit, rather than joining colleagues and taking 'the retirement package'. He's a sincere, good policeman, who simply wants to do a good job. Under the old regime, he genuinely felt that he was fighting communism, but he was not party to many of the human rights violations that the TRC exposed. While never one of the security police inner circle, his policing skills and colour benefited them at the time, and so he was treated with respect without ever being pressured to do more than he wanted to. Under the new regime he is happy to be a good policeman intent on serving people rather than ideology or politicians.

Setting

The action takes place in a variety of locations, including a courtroom, the living-room area of Gabby's upmarket townhouse and Anna's suburban home, a hall for the TRC hearings and a video link-up to Australia for Gabby's evidence at the inquest. In order to switch scenes rapidly, the variety of locations means the set should be simple. It may be best to split the action on two levels of the stage: the courtroom and TRC hearings on the 'upper level', the primary action in the living rooms on the 'lower level'. The time is 1999.

Junkets Press (Publisher) Comment

It is six weeks before the country's second elections in 1999. Gabby Anderson, a white personal assistant, alleges she has been raped ... by her boss, a black, high-profile government minister with an impeccable anti-apartheid struggle record. Sent to persuade her not to go through with the charges is Gabby's former husband, Aaron Matshoba, the party's major trouble-shooter.

How do past tensions between Aaron and Gabby affect the situation? What does Inspector Abrahams know that will impact on Gabby's attitude? How will her lawyer and long-time friend Anna advise Gabby, and why? What will Gabby be offered in exchange for dropping the charges? What will she decide?

Green Man Flashing is a fast-paced political thriller that takes on the challenge of deep moral and political questions for which there are no ready answers, and certainly no easy ones.

In a remarkable instance of life imitating art, the events depicted in the play were to become real-life drama in all the South African news media.

After Athol Fugard's early work, Mike van Graan is South Africa's finest working playwright.

Scene 1

(Inquest into the death of LUTHANDO NYAKA. The spotlight is on AARON only. ANNA questions him, but she is in darkness all the time.)

Aaron: *(Spotlight on him.)* I was outside when I heard the shots.

Anna: *(Only her voice is heard.)* Outside?

Aaron: Outside her house.

Anna: What were you doing outside?

Aaron: I was taking a call on my cellphone. The reception was better outside.

Anna: What went through your mind when you heard the shots?

Aaron: I thought that *he* had shot *her*.

Anna: What made you think that?

Aaron: I didn't know that she had a gun.

Anna: And did you know that he was armed?

Aaron: Yes.

Anna: Then what did you do?

Aaron: After I heard the shots, I ran inside the house, shouting her name.

Anna: And what did you see?

Aaron: Gabby ... Ms Anderson ... was standing there ... shaking. She had a gun in her hand.

Anna: And where was Mr Nyaka?

Aaron: He was lying on the ground. He was bleeding from his chest.

Anna: And what happened next?

Aaron: I asked her what had happened. She couldn't answer. She was in a state of shock.

Anna: And then?

Aaron: Then I checked on Mr Nyaka. He was breathing, but with great difficulty. I knew it was only a matter of time ...

Anna: Mr Matshoba, was there any indication that Mr Nyaka had tried to harm Ms Anderson in any way?

Aaron: Well, he was still clutching his gun when I checked on him.

Anna: What were you and Mr Nyaka doing at Ms Anderson's home?

Aaron: We flew down from Johannesburg that morning to attend a conference. I hadn't seen Ms Anderson in a while. We still had some time before our meeting, and since it was in the area where she lived, we popped in to say hi.

Anna: Why was Mr Nyaka armed?

Aaron: It was Mr Nyaka's job to protect senior party officials.

Anna: Isn't that what the VIP Protection Unit does?

Aaron: Only for cabinet ministers and members of parliament. Parties are responsible for the security of their own officials.

Anna: So Mr Nyaka was accompanying you to protect you?

Aaron: Yes.

Anna: And what happened to have made him draw his gun on Ms Anderson?

Aaron: I have no idea. As I indicated, I was outside at the time.

Anna: And you had no indication from what went on before you went outside that this would happen.

Aaron: None at all.

Anna: What were your impressions of what took place?

Aaron: It appeared that, for some reason, he had threatened her. But somehow, she managed to get in first and shoot him.

Scene 2

(Scene changes to GABBY's apartment. She is seated, reading a one-page document. LUTHANDO is standing a little away from her, observing her resentfully. When he speaks, he constantly looks over his shoulder towards the entrance, aware that AARON, who is outside speaking on his cellphone, could walk in at any minute. He tries to keep his voice down, but his resentment comes through.)

Luthando: You got yourself a good deal, lady. *(Pause.)* You were lucky to have Comrade Matshoba *(Gesturing towards the door.)* fighting for you. If it was up to me ... *(Shaking his head.)* Eish. *(Pause.)*

Gabby: Please ...

Luthando: Please what? *(Pause.)* Sign the bloody document, so we can go.

Gabby: I'm not signing anything without my lawyer's advice.

Luthando: This has got nothing to do with lawyers. You get lawyers involved in this and ... Eish! It's all there ... in black and white. What more do you want?

Gabby: I want what is right.

Luthando: I'm telling you, if you weren't white, this thing would be handled differently. If you were a black woman ...

Gabby: Then what ...?

Luthando: I don't think I'll ever understand women. But I know that I'll never understand white people. We're offering you a deal for the sake of the country. And all *you* want is your white justice.

Scene 3

(Lights fade on LUTHANDO and GABBY. Spotlight comes up on ABRAHAMS, alternating with AARON in the following sequence.)

Abrahams: I swear to tell the truth. *(Spotlight fades on him.)*

Anna: *(Spotlight comes up on AARON, but ANNA remains in darkness.)* How many shots did you hear?

Aaron: There were three shots. *(Spotlight fades.)*

Abrahams: (*Spotlight comes up on him.*) I swear to tell the truth. The whole truth. (*Spotlight fades on him.*)

Anna: (*Spotlight comes up on AARON.*) You heard three shots?

Aaron: That's right.

Anna: And then you ran into the house, calling her name.

Aaron: Yes. (*Spotlight fades.*)

Abrahams: (*Coming into light.*) I swear to tell the truth. The whole truth. And nothing but the truth.

Scene 4

(*Lights come up on LUTHANDO and GABBY. She is pointing a gun at him.*)

Luthando: (*Arrogantly, smirking.*) Are you threatening me?

(*Throughout this sequence, LUTHANDO steps forward towards GABBY, and she backtracks even though she has a gun. She's reluctant to use it.*)

Gabby: I asked you politely to leave ...

Luthando: Pointing that firearm at me ... you've made it personal, lady ... I don't care who you are ... who you are connected to!

Gabby: Get out! Please ...!

Luthando: The last person who pointed a gun at me ... (*Walking towards her.*)

Gabby: Please! Please ... just leave! Go!

(*LUTHANDO lunges at GABBY in an attempt to grab her gun. She screams and a shot goes off. He is hit in the shoulder.*)

Gabby: (*Shocked at what she's done.*) Shit! I'm ... I'm sorry.

(*AARON rushes in.*)

Aaron: Gabby!

(LUTHANDO is standing with his hand clutching his right shoulder. GABBY is pointing her gun at him. Fast fade.)

Scene 5

(Lights come up on ABRAHAMS in the witness box at the inquest into LUTHANDO's death. Again, ANNA is in darkness and only ABRAHAMS is lit.)

Anna: Inspector Abrahams, you were the first on the scene after the shooting at Ms Anderson's townhouse.

Abrahams: That is correct.

Anna: Could you tell this inquest what you saw?

Abrahams: When I came to the house, Mr Matshabo opened the door for me. Miss Anderson was seated on the sofa. Mr Nyaka was lying on the ground with a newspaper over his face.

Anna: So Mr Nyaka was dead by the time you got there?

Abrahams: Yes.

Anna: And how long had he been dead for?

Abrahams: His body was still warm. I believed that he died within half-an-hour before I got there.

Anna: We've heard testimony that Mr Nyaka was still holding a gun in his hand?

Abrahams: That is correct.

Anna: Had any bullets been discharged from his gun?

Abrahams: No. But three rounds from Mrs ... from Miss Anderson's gun had been fired.

Anna: And they all hit Mr Nyaka?

Abrahams: Yes. One in the right shoulder, and two in the chest.

Anna: Were they fired from the same range?

Abrahams: More or less, yes. From quite close range. So I suppose it was difficult for her to miss.

Scene 6

(Scene changes to GABBY's townhouse. AARON is seated and reading the Saturday Weekend Argus and LUTHANDO is walking around.)

Luthando: Only when I got to East London itself, I realised they gave me the wrong gun. When you go into the City Hall, they've got these metal detectors. I put my briefcase through it, and they tell me to open it. In my rush, I forgot. Normally, I keep my gun in a shoulder holster. So I open the plastic bag they wrap the guns in and ... it's not mine! A little Rossi revolver! That's what they gave me, comrade. A *woman's* gun! You can't stop a dog with that! That's why, whenever I fly now, the first thing I check on arrivals is that they gave me the right gun. *(Shaking his head.)* South African Airways! First they delayed on the tarmac by forty-five minutes. Then they ran out of J&B on the flight. Then they gave me the wrong gun! *(Pause.)* And the food, comrade. Even in business class ... You saw for yourself this morning. Fried tomatoes! Mushrooms! It's five years since we took over, and they still serve us white food.

Aaron: *(Dryly, without looking up from the newspaper.)* The tomatoes were red. And they were *black* mushrooms.

Luthando: You know what I mean, comrade.

Aaron: *(Turning the page.)* Maybe, next time, you should order a special meal ... Kentucky.

Luthando: I know it's party policy to support the national carrier, but it's time they also came to the party, comrade. This morning they greet us in English. Then they say they can also help passengers in Afrikaans, German and Arabic. German and Arabic! Since when are these official languages, comrade? And then the captain thanks us for flying SAA ... in Afrikaans. And hopes to see us all back again soon ... in English. When are we going to transform SAA? We have black people in high positions in every part of our national life ...

Aaron: Except in the cockpits ...

Luthando: Exactly.

Aaron: Some high positions require training ...

Luthando: Comrade, you're treating this like a joke.

Aaron: It *is* funny. Couldn't you feel the difference between a Rossi revolver and ... what is the latest party issue?

Luthando: Vector. 9mm parabellum.

Aaron: Couldn't you feel the difference in the shape? The weight?

Luthando: I was in a rush, comrade. I was late ...

Aaron: (*Turns back to the newspaper.*) Whatever. I don't want to talk about guns. They make me nervous. (*Pause.*) It's six weeks before the elections, and what does the *Weekend Argus* have on its front page? 'Stormers star on drunken rampage.' 'Blind man asked to leave restaurant.' 'Woman fined for dog poo.'

Luthando: That's Cape Town, comrade. It's not part of the new South Africa.

Aaron: Listen to this. (*Reads.*) 'A national poll conducted by IDASA has found 32% of the electorate to be undecided. 41% said they would vote for the ANC, while 27% indicated that they would vote for one of the opposition parties.'

Luthando: They suck these polls from their thumbs, comrade.

Aaron: (*Continuing to read.*) 'More than 45% listed crime, the economy, unemployment and education as their major areas of concern.'

Luthando: (*Dismissively.*) Sandton concerns.

Aaron: 'The poll found that only three Cabinet ministers enjoyed an approval rating of more than 50%. They were Ruth Mkhonto, Minister of Welfare and Children's Affairs with 53%, Raj Govender, Minister of Water and Forestry with 57%, and (*Slows down for emphasis.*) Minister of Trade and Tourism, Shadrack Khumalo, with 62%.'

(*There is a general pause as they both take in the importance of this.*)

Luthando: (*Quietly.*) This is an important mission, comrade.

Aaron: (*Resentfully, folds up the newspaper.*) I spend my life cleaning up after bastards!

Luthando: (*Shocked, even outraged.*) Comrade ...!

Aaron: (*Sharply.*) What?

Luthando: Comrade, I know this must be difficult for you.

Aaron: You don't know *anything*. (*Pause.*) Have you been dragged out of bed at three in the morning because the Mayor of Jo'burg has written off his car, pissed out of his mind? And the comatose woman in the passenger seat is not his wife? How many times have *you* had to devise a strategy to protect some senior party member who's about to be exposed for something or other? Find the spin angles. Develop the party line. Handle the media. (*Pause.*) The Minister of Damage Control. (*Grunts dismissively.*)

Luthando: Everyone has the highest regard for you and your work, comrade.

Aaron: This was going to be my first Saturday off for weeks. Instead, I'm on the first flight to Cape Town to clean up another mess.

Luthando: With respect, comrade, you didn't have to come.

Aaron: (*With a hint of irritation.*) With respect, Luthando, I *had* to.

Luthando: You're too emotionally involved, comrade.

Aaron: And you're not? You're here because of Khumalo.

Luthando: Comrade Khumalo is key to us getting a two-thirds majority.

Aaron: Comrade Khumalo – if the intelligence reports are true – has just messed up pretty badly!

Luthando: We all make mistakes, comrade. And anyway, we don't know if the reports are true.

Aaron: You saved Khumalo once before. He's been good to you since.

Luthando: The party values loyalty, comrade.

Aaron: This mission requires sensitivity.

Luthando: Like you, comrade, I'm here to ensure the best interests of the party.

Aaron: But you've never handled situations like *this* before.

Luthando: I've sorted problems out for the party.

Aaron: Maybe you have. But we are not going to solve *this* issue with strong-arm stuff. This requires reason. Logic. Sympathy.

Luthando: *(Pause, then, quietly.)* So ... what are we going to do?

Aaron: Luthando, we have our instructions. It's simple. *(Pause as he suddenly thinks of something.)* We do have the same instructions, don't we?

Luthando: Yes.

Aaron: You're not bullshitting me?

Luthando: Comrade, what the leadership agreed last night is what we have to do. Get the document signed, and get back to Jo'burg as soon as possible.

Aaron: *(Firmly, not seeking LUTHANDO's approval.)* I'll do the talking. If there's any negotiation that has to happen, I'll handle it.

(Pause.)

Luthando: Shouldn't we phone her?

Aaron: And take away the element of surprise? She's not expecting us. That will be to our advantage.

Luthando: What if she doesn't come?

Aaron: Then we go with Plan B.

Luthando: What is Plan B?

Aaron: I'm still working on it.

(There's a tense silence for a few moments. LUTHANDO, shaking his head, walks away, and takes out a pack of cigarettes.)

Aaron: I don't think you should be smoking.

Luthando: It's okay. My father smoked forty a day. And he's 74.

Aaron: Good for him. But I still don't think *you* should smoke.

Luthando: Why?

Aaron: (*Agitated.*) How would you like to come home and find two people in your house whom you are not expecting, and the place stinks like smoke?

Luthando: But, comrade, there's an ashtray ...

Aaron: And, Luthando, (*Pointing through the side window.*) there's a swimming pool.

Luthando: So?

Aaron: It doesn't mean you can swim!

Luthando: I don't understand you, comrade. We've walked into her house. You've read her newspaper. But it's not okay ...

Aaron: If you want to smoke outside, be my guest. Let's show *some* respect for her space.

Luthando: Comrade ... (*Pause, unable to hide his anger.*)

Aaron: (*Tersely.*) What?

Luthando: (*Changes his mind.*) Nothing.

(*The doorbell rings. The following conversation takes place in hushed tones.*)

Luthando: She's here.

Aaron: Why would she ring her own doorbell? (*Looking through window.*) Inspector Abrahams ...

(*LUTHANDO registers surprise. AARON opens the door.*)

Aaron: (*Charmingly.*) Inspector Abrahams ...

Abrahams: (*Surprised to find AARON answering the door.*) Mr ... Mashaba?

Aaron: Matshoba.

Abrahams: Correct. I'm sorry ...

Aaron: No problem. We haven't seen each other in years.

Abrahams: I see you on TV.

Aaron: Hopefully, not on Police File, Inspector. *(Laughter.)* Inspector Abrahams, this is Luthando Nyaka.

(ABRAHAMS and LUTHANDO stare at each other awkwardly.)

Abrahams: Yes, I ...

Luthando: *(Quickly.)* Pleased to meet you, Inspector.

Aaron: You know each other?

Abrahams: No, I was going to say I see Mr Nyaka on TV too.

Aaron: *(Playing the game.)* TV 2? Really?

(They all laugh awkwardly.)

Aaron: How may we help you, Inspector?

Abrahams: Is Mrs Anderson in?

Aaron: Ms Anderson.

Abrahams: Correct, yes. Miss Anderson.

Aaron: She's not here right now. Was she expecting you?

Abrahams: I told her I will pop around this morning.

Aaron: Is it about Matthew?

Abrahams: I'm sorry, no, Mr Matshabo. *(Pause.)*

Aaron: Is anything wrong?

Abrahams: If there is, it would be better for her to tell you. *(Awkward pause.)* Did Miss Anderson say when she'll be back?

Aaron: Actually, we haven't seen her yet. We flew in from Jo'burg this morning ... for a conference. We've come to say hi before it starts.

Abrahams: Oh ...

Aaron: (*Sensing ABRAHAMS's thoughts.*) Inspector, you're probably wondering how we got in. I remembered where Gabby ... where Ms Anderson hides a spare key.

Abrahams: I see.

Aaron: (*Jokingly.*) I hope you're not going to arrest us for housebreaking.

Abrahams: As you know, Mr Matshabo, we don't interfere in domestic affairs unless we receive a complaint.

Aaron: I know. I know. I was just ...

(AARON's cellphone begins to ring. He checks the number on the screen.)

Aaron: Excuse me, gentlemen, I have to take this. Hello? Hello? You're breaking up. Hello? Just hold on. I'm going outside to try to get better reception.

(AARON exits. ABRAHAMS and LUTHANDO are left together, with LUTHANDO decidedly more uncomfortable than ABRAHAMS.)

Abrahams: (*After a few seconds.*) Uphila njani, umnumzana Nyaka? [How are you, Mr Nyaka?]

Luthando: Ndiphilile ... [I am well.]

Abrahams: You're very quiet.

Luthando: I don't have anything to say.

Abrahams: How's your father?

Luthando: (*Awkwardly, constantly looks around to see if AARON is in earshot. His answers are generally monosyllabic, not really wanting to engage in conversation.*) Fine.

Abrahams: He were a good guy. A good cop. Please give him my regards when you see him again.

Luthando: Sure.

Abrahams: He tried to teach me Xhosa when we were stationed together. I weren't a very good student. (*Laughs.*) You don't miss the Eastern Cape?

Luthando: No.

Abrahams: I was happy when they transferred me to Cape Town. It's a nice place. (*Changes tack.*) What's the conference about?

Luthando: I don't really know. Comrade Matshoba is speaking. I'm accompanying him.

Abrahams: Are you still doing VIP protection?

Luthando: In a way ...

Abrahams: I read about you in the papers. When you saved Mr Khumalo in that ambush.

Luthando: Was that in the newspapers here also?

Abrahams: I was still in PE then. I don't buy the newspapers. But Major van Rooyen ... you remember Major van Rooyen? Or maybe he was still captain in your time. He phoned me and said I should get the paper. He's retired to a farm near Robertson now. You were on the front page, *nogal* [even]. Natal was a war zone then. When was that? Four ... five years ago?

Luthando: Ninety-three. Before the elections.

Abrahams: Correct. Mr Khumalo wouldn't be a minister today if it wasn't for you.

Luthando: (*With false modesty.*) I was just doing my job.

Abrahams: Some say Mr Khumalo might be made Deputy President after the next elections ...

Luthando: That would be good for the country.

Abrahams: And what do you do now, if I may ask?

Luthando: Still security. Deputy Chief of Security. I'm responsible mainly for senior party officials who are not in government.

Abrahams: You don't have a job for me? Former security policeman, now Violent Crimes Unit. There's a ceiling for cops with my history. (*LUTHANDO doesn't respond. Pause.*) You've done well for yourself ... (*With a smile.*) comrade.

(AARON enters.)

Abrahams: I was just telling Mr Nyaka that I think I'll come back later.

Aaron: Are you sure?

Abrahams: Yes, no, I don't want to get in the way of your visit with Mrs ... with Miss Anderson.

Aaron: I'll let her know that you came by.

Abrahams: Ask her to give me a call when it's convenient. (*Gives AARON a business card.*)

Aaron: A business card?

Abrahams: (*Proudly.*) We're trying to professionalise the service.

Aaron: Wouldn't the money be better spent on catching criminals?

Abrahams: I printed these myself.

Aaron: I'm impressed. Our country can do with more patriots like you, Inspector Abrahams.

Abrahams: Thank you, Mr Matshabo. Enjoy the seminar. (*Deliberately says 'seminar' to see how AARON responds.*)

Aaron: (*Wise to it.*) The conference ... Yes, thanks.

(ABRAHAMS exits.)

Aaron: It was Head Office. They want us back as soon as possible. They're very worried about this leaking to the press.

Luthando: How?

Aaron: Gabby's best friend is a lawyer. Intelligence says she's probably involved already.

Luthando: What does that have to do with the press, comrade?

Aaron: Her ex-husband is Graham Richards. The parliamentary reporter for Independent Newspapers.

Luthando: Shit!

Aaron: *(Pause.)* He knows.

Luthando: Richards?

Aaron: Abrahams. I'm sure he's involved in the case.

Luthando: You think so, comrade?

Aaron: This wasn't just a social call. You heard him say that it wasn't about my son's case. He was the investigating officer.

Scene 7

(Lights come up on GABBY and ANNA having a drink at GABBY's townhouse in the mid-nineties.)

Anna: How long will you be on leave?

Gabby: Just till Tuesday.

Anna: Isn't it a bit soon into your new job to be taking leave?

Gabby: Someone's got to sort out Matthew's new school. Aaron's away.

Anna: Again ...

Gabby: It's only a couple of days this time.

Anna: What was the problem with the co-ed?

Gabby: It's fine. But Bishops offers better sports options.

Anna: I didn't think Aaron was the private-school type.

Gabby: A lot of Matthew's friends are there.

Anna: All the sons of the former comrades ...

Gabby: That wouldn't have been Aaron's choice. But that's where my father and my brother went. So I don't mind too much.

(ANNA's cellphone rings.)

Anna: (*Answers, businesslike.*) Susan, you've done the affidavit? (*Pause.*) Yes. Leave it on my desk. I'll collect it on my way home. (*Ends cellphone conversation.*) So how *is* the new job?

Gabby: It's okay.

Anna: Just okay? Personal assistant to the great Shadrack Khumalo!

Gabby: To be honest, he's a bit all over the place. He's a good politician. Just not a very good hands-on manager.

Anna: That's why *you're* there.

Gabby: I suppose so.

Anna: Aren't you surprised you got it? I thought it would be a black appointment.

Gabby: Apparently, Khumalo himself insisted on me.

Anna: (*Wryly.*) And you still maintain that Aaron had nothing to do with your getting the job ...

Gabby: Aaron would never do something like that. Anyway, I told you I applied for the post as Gabby Anderson ...

Anna: Come on, Gabby. Everyone knows that you and Aaron are connected.

Scene 8

(ANNA's phone rings. She answers, 'Yes?' Blackout. Scene with ANNA and GABBY juxtaposed with scene between GABBY and AARON. Lights on AARON and GABBY in GABBY's townhouse.)

Aaron: (*With his jacket off to indicate another time.*) What do you want me to say?

Gabby: (*Cardigan on.*) I just want you to acknowledge it. So we can deal with it.

Aaron: (*With a hint of tease.*) With what?

Gabby: See? You're in denial. You don't even want to ...

Aaron: Okay, okay, okay. The black-white thing.

Gabby: Yes.

Aaron: I'm not even going to go there. It's such ... with due respect, Gabby, it's such crap!

Gabby: Methinks the gentleman doth protest too much!

Aaron: Methinks the lady has constructed a world quite removed from reality.

Gabby: You know, that's what I used to think. That maybe I was just *imagining* these things. That I was *imagining* that you weren't keen to take me to social functions after we got back. That I was *imagining* that when we *did* go to functions together, you hardly ever introduced me as your wife. That maybe I was just *imagining* that you seemed to be embarrassed about having a white wife in the new South Africa.

Aaron: (*Whistles nonchalantly, as if he's not listening.*) Are you done?

Gabby: We leave the country because it's illegal for us to be together. Then when we come back, and we *can* live together, you just about disown me.

Aaron: Gabby, your sense of conspiracy is a little ... overdeveloped.

Gabby: Don't patronise me, Aaron.

Aaron: What's happening to us, babe?

Gabby: What's happening to *you*?

Aaron: I don't know what you mean, Gabby. The only thing that's different is that I'm busier ...

Gabby: (*With gentle irony.*) Oh, is that all, my darling? (*A bit more strongly.*) That's pretty damn major, Aaron! We don't talk like we used to. We don't have time to do fun things together ... I feel like I don't really know you anymore. I'm like a single parent to Matthew.

Aaron: Gabby, you and Matthew ... I couldn't do what I'm doing now without knowing that you are there.

Gabby: Really?

Aaron: Yes, really.

Gabby: You're not just saying that to end this conversation so that we can go to your official little function?

Aaron: I mean it.

Gabby: (*Seductively.*) Then let's not go out tonight. Let's cancel the babysitter and order pizza.

Aaron: Gabby, don't do this ...

Scene 9

(Blackout. Lights come up on ANNA and GABBY again in GABBY's townhouse. They pick up on another conversation.)

Anna: (*On her cellphone.*) For goodness sake, Graham, sort it out. You're their father. (*Pause.*) So what would you like me to do? (*Pause.*) No, I'm at Gabby's place. (*Pause. Rolls her eyes as she listens. Says to Gabby, bored.*) Graham says hi ...

Gabby: (*Equally bored.*) Hi, Graham.

Anna: Let me speak to Tanya. (*Pause.*) Graham, just give Tanya the damn phone. (*Pause.*) Hello, darling. I don't think it's a good idea for you and Cheryl to go clubbing tonight. (*Pause.*) Why? Because Cheryl doesn't have a licence. If your father drops you and picks you up, fine ... Okay. Okay. Love you. (*Pause.*) No, I don't need to talk to him. Bye. (*Sighs.*) If Graham ever has to write his biography, he'll have to call it 'Portrait of a useless man'.

Gabby: That's what you've said about all your men.

Anna: Maybe. But Graham is the original useless man. I can't believe that I stayed married to him for ten years!

Gabby: Ten years?

Anna: And you and Aaron? Thirteen, isn't it?

Gabby: It will be twelve years in September.

Anna: You got one of the good guys.

Gabby: Don't you miss having someone?

Anna: Sometimes. But mostly, I'm too busy running the legal practice and being a single parent to notice.

Gabby: What happened to Stan?

Anna: I told him to make a new plan.

Gabby: He was quite ... nice.

Anna: In a Homer Simpson kind of way ...

Gabby: And Jeffrey?

Anna: He found religion after he crashed my car. I really pick them, don't I? You know, it's just struck me ... there's one thing about all the men I've ever had relationships with ...

Gabby: They were all useless?

Anna: Make that two things. They were all white. Maybe *I* should find myself a black man, too. *(Pause.)* Come to think of it, why haven't black men found *me* attractive?

Scene 10

(Blackout. Lights come up on GABBY and AARON again, this time having a different argument.)

Aaron: It's just a few days, Gabs. Then we'll go away together. I promise.

Gabby: I should never have come back here. We should have stayed in exile.

Aaron: *(With a suitcase in hand.)* You hated Germany.

Gabby: At least there I had a family. I had a husband. My son had a father.

Aaron: Please, Gabby, don't make this any harder for me than it already is.

Gabby: *(Sharply.)* Excuse me. This is *not* about *you*.

Aaron: I'm sorry. I didn't mean it like that.

Gabby: (*Bitterly.*) It's always been about *you*, hasn't it? *Your* job, *your* travelling, *your* meetings. To hell with the rest.

Aaron: Gabby, I don't think this is the time ...

Gabby: Oh, but I think it is! *I* think it's a great time. (*Quieter.*) I'm always amazed when you go off to sort out conflicts all over the country. Because you're such a failure at dealing with it in your own life.

Aaron: Gabs, let's deal with this when we both have the time. Please.

Gabby: You're so busy fixing up everything else, you don't realise that your own marriage has broken down.

Aaron: Gabby, now you're being melodramatic.

Gabby: Is that what you think this is? Melodrama?

Aaron: We've been through this so many times. It's my *work*, Gabby.

Gabby: We are your *family*! I am your *wife*!

Aaron: Gabby, everything that we ever dreamed about is about to happen. As a country. As a region. But these things are not going to fall out of the sky. We have to work damn hard to get there. What we do now will determine whether we succeed or not.

Gabby: That's what first attracted me to you.

Aaron: What?

Gabby: Your passion. Your commitment.

Aaron: So what's the problem now?

Gabby: Now *that's* what's driving you away from us. There just isn't space for me or Matthew any longer.

Aaron: I'm sorry, Gabs. I really need to go or I'll miss the plane. I promise to make up for it when I get back. (*He goes over to her to give her a goodbye hug.*) It's just a few days, Gabs.

Gabby: (*Moving away from him.*) Go, Aaron. Go! Go! Go! Just leave.

(*Blackout.*)

Scene 11

(Scene changes back to ANNA and GABBY. They pick up their earlier conversation.)

Anna: When does Aaron get back?

Gabby: *(Sighs.)* I don't know. He said he'll probably have to stay as long as it takes to negotiate the ceasefire.

Anna: In Angola, that could be weeks.

Gabby: Exactly. *(Pause.)* So much for our girls' night out!

Anna: Aaron owes us big-time.

Gabby: He was supposed to take Matt to the big soccer game today.

Anna: Aaron's become the proverbial Mr Fix-It. Why Angola? Don't we have enough of our own problems for him to deal with?

Gabby: *(Imitating AARON.)* 'Gabby, everything that we ever dreamed about is about to happen. As a country. As a region. But we have to work damn hard to get there'. That's Aaron's most recent speech.

Anna: I hate to say it, but he has a point.

Gabby: Hey, whose side are you on?

Anna: Someone's got to do it.

Gabby: But why does it have to be Aaron?

Anna: You're not taking strain, are you?

Gabby: It wasn't like this when we were in exile. We were a real family then. Mostly what we had was ... each other.

Anna: It's just a phase we're going through, Gabby.

Gabby: So many of the couples we knew in exile split up after they came back. It's bizarre. Like, apartheid kept us together. And freedom ... our freedom seems to be driving us apart.

(The doorbell rings. GABBY opens it. Inspector ABRAHAMS is at the door.)

Gabby: Yes?

Abrahams: I'm looking for a Mrs Matshabo.

Gabby: I'm Mrs Matshoba.

Abrahams: *(Having expected to see a black person.)* Good afternoon, Mrs ... Matshabo? I'm Inspector Abrahams.

Gabby: You're a policeman?

Abrahams: Yes.

Gabby: What is this about, Inspector?

Abrahams: *(Solemnly.)* It's about your son.

Gabby: Matthew?

Abrahams: That is correct.

Gabby: What about him? *(Suddenly very anxious.)* Has something happened?

Abrahams: He was at the shopping centre...

Gabby: Yes, I sent him to buy milk.

Abrahams: Apparently two street kids tried to take his bike. He resisted ... and they stabbed him.

Gabby: Oh my God! *(ANNA comes to support her.)* Is he okay?

Anna: Where is he now?

Abrahams: He's on his way to hospital in an ambulance.

Gabby: Are you sure it's him?

Abrahams: The chemist recognised him and told us where you lived. I'm sorry to bring you such news.

(ANNA embraces GABBY, who is in tears. Slow fade as GABBY registers her extreme anxiety and emotion.)

Scene 12

(Lights come up slowly on GABBY and AARON.)

Aaron: *(Quietly.)* It's nearly ten months now, Gabby ...

Gabby: So?

Aaron: How much longer are we going to live in silence?

Gabby: How long does it take for a mother to get over the death of her child?

Aaron: You still blame me for Matthew's death. As if I were somehow responsible for it.

Gabby: *(Raising her voice a little.)* He would be alive today if you had been here. That's the same thing.

Aaron: I was in Angola.

Gabby: Yes, it was touch and go with the cease-fire. You had to go immediately. This was a little window for peace. Great! They still don't have peace in Angola. And I don't have my son.

Aaron: Gabby, history is bigger than any of us. Sometimes we have to do things that are at odds with what we really want to do. Especially when there are many lives at stake. It's not easy being caught between the demands of history and the people you love.

Gabby: Oh, spare me!

Aaron: Gabby, please ...

Gabby: It's not about history! Who do you think you are? God? Sacrificing your son for the sake of humankind ...?

Aaron: *(Sighs.)* Okay, Gabby. I surrender ... you win. Okay? You win.

Gabby: This is not about winning and losing ...

Aaron: I just wish you'd find it in your heart to forgive me.

Gabby: Have you forgiven yourself?

Aaron: Gabby, Matthew went to the shop to buy milk. Two kids stabbed him and took his bicycle. It would have happened even if I were here.

Gabby: (*Angrily.*) You promised to spend the day with him. You were going to take him to soccer! But not for the first time, you cancelled on him!

Aaron: (*Quietly.*) Children die, Gabby. It's terrible whenever it happens. It's devastating when it happens to be yours. But it happens.

Gabby: (*Emotionally.*) He was my son!

Aaron: He was *our* son! (*Pause.*) Do you think I haven't had sleepless nights thinking about him? About what could've been if ... About what might have been if only ... (*Pause.*) Life goes on, Gabby.

Gabby: So you simply put it all into a little box, and stuck it away somewhere. And threw yourself deeper into your work.

Aaron: What would you rather have had me do?

Gabby: I don't know. But it all seems so easy for you.

Aaron: Well, it wasn't. It isn't. (*Pause.*) And I wish you could forgive me ... so we could move on.

Scene 13

(Scene shifts to TRC hearing with ABRAHAMS about to give evidence. Spotlight comes up on ABRAHAMS.)

Abrahams: (*Slowly, in Afrikaans.*) Ek sweer om die waarheid te praat. [I swear to tell the truth.]

(Light comes down slowly on ABRAHAMS. This scene interchanges with GABBY and ANNA at ANNA's house. GABBY is quiet while ANNA speaks to her.)

Anna: Abrahams was here. I told him you were in the bath. He dropped off the final version of your statement for us to check.

Abrahams: Die volle waarheid en niks anders as die waarheid nie. [The whole truth, and nothing but the truth.]

Anna: I told him you'll be at your place later. He said he'll pick it up at about eleven.

Abrahams: So help my, God. ['So help me, God.']

Anna: Would you prefer me to read it?

(Lights fade. Spotlight comes up on ABRAHAMS giving evidence at the TRC. This scene alternates with the reading of GABBY's statement.)

Abrahams: Daar was vyf van ons in die kamer. ['There were five of us in the room.'] *(Starts evidence in Afrikaans, and then changes to English to give the impression that he is essentially Afrikaans-speaking, which would have been the language in which he gave evidence at the TRC.)* Captain Francois van Rooyen and Captain Mike Naude. Sergeant Nico Meiring. An askari who we called Tiny because of his big feet. And myself. Captain Naude ordered Tiny to handcuff Mrs Dlamini and to tie the handcuffs to a beam above her head. So she was standing with her arms stretched upwards like this. *(Places his hands in the air as if tied directly above his head.)* Captain Naude and Sergeant Meiring were questioning her about her son, Bongji. We knew that he had left the country to get military training and that he and three others were responsible for blowing up electric pylons in the Despatch area. We wanted to find him.

(Lights fade on ABRAHAMS. Lights come up on GABBY and ANNA. ANNA is reading GABBY's statement. After the first few lines, GABBY's voice takes over the reading.)

Anna: *(Reading softly.)* There was a history of suggestions, looks, even touching. *(Changes to GABBY's voice reading the statement.)* Sometimes I would threaten to report him, and it would stop for a while. But then it would start all over again. It was like he couldn't help himself. I suggested that he go for professional help. After the farewell cocktail for the Singapore delegation, at about 8 p.m. on Thursday night, he said that we should go back to the office to collect two files that he needed to take with him to Pretoria the next morning. He told the driver to take us to his car, and then let the driver go. He drove us to the office building and I offered to run up and fetch the files. But he insisted on coming.

(Shift to ABRAHAMS at the TRC.)

Abrahams: Mrs Dlamini was an active member of the UDF in the Eastern Cape. She refused to answer any questions. So Captain Naude ordered Sergeant Meiring to turn on a hosepipe. Captain Naude continued to ask her questions while Sergeant Meiring kept wetting her with the hosepipe. She still refused to answer any questions about her son. Then Captain

Naude ordered Tiny to start taking off her clothes. First her jersey. Then her dress. Then her slip. And all the time Sergeant Meiring was still wetting her with the hosepipe. Finally she was completely naked. And she was soaking wet. And still she didn't say anything. She didn't even cry like I'd seen so many other women detainees do.

(Shift to ANNA's house.)

Gabby: *(Reading.)* We took the lift to the office on the twelfth floor. He didn't say anything in the lift. Except, he whistled some silly tune. He'd had a couple of glasses of red wine, but I wouldn't say that he was drunk. I put on the light in the secretary's office, then went into his office. He followed me, and I remember thinking it strange that he would close the door behind him. I was bending forward over his desk, looking through the in-tray for the files I had left earlier. And then it happened. So quickly. He came up behind me, and pushed me hard on to the desk. The tray went flying, and I remember feeling pain as my stomach hit the side of the desk. I was completely shocked. He pushed my head down with one hand, so that I could hardly breathe, and pressed me with all his weight against the desk.

(Shift to ABRAHAMS at the TRC.)

Abrahams: Captain Naude took the hosepipe and shoved it into Mrs Dlamini's private parts. He then said to Tiny that Mrs Dlamini was now wet. He ordered Tiny to have sex with her. At that stage, Captain van Rooyen and I walked away.

(Shift to GABBY and ANNA.)

Gabby: Then he lifted my dress, pulled down my pants, and entered me from behind. I felt pain, but I was more aware of his grunts as he forced himself into me. When he was done, he picked up the tray and placed it back on the table. He picked up the files from the floor and left.

(Shift to ABRAHAMS at the TRC.)

Abrahams: Mrs Dlamini was raped repeatedly but she still wouldn't tell us anything. Then one day we told her that we had killed her son in a shootout. Then she broke down completely. In fact, she went *bossies*. [Crazy.] We heard that she threw herself under a train a few weeks after she was released. *(Beat)* But I am thankful to have this chance at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to say sorry...to Mrs Dlamini's family. I should have done something. I am truly sorry.

(Shift to GABBY and ANNA.)

Gabby: I called my friend, Anna Richards. She came to collect me. She took me immediately to the District Surgeon. She wanted me to report the rape at the local police station. But I asked her to contact Inspector Theo Abrahams, a policeman I had met a few years ago, and someone whom I knew I could trust.

(ANNA is sitting next to GABBY with her arm around her. GABBY lays her head on ANNA's shoulder, and is sobbing.)

Anna: Does it hurt?

(GABBY nods through her tears.)

Anna: Are you still bleeding?

Gabby: A little ...

Anna: *(Herself a bit teary, a mixture of sympathy and anger.)* How could he do this? Khumalo ... of all people! I still can't believe it! How could he do it? And to you?

Gabby: *(Quietly.)* Maybe it's *my* fault ...

Anna: No! No ways, Gabby! That's what victims often think. That somehow, *they* were responsible. That's a cliché, Gabby.

Gabby: I *feel* like a cliché. I never expected that it would happen to me. I know the person who did it. I ... I ... *(Weeps again.)*

Anna: *(Holding GABBY again.)* Are you sure you won't stay another night?

Gabby: I need to be in my own space, Anna.

Anna: This is not something to go through by yourself.

Gabby: Thanks, Anna. I don't know what I would have done without you.

Anna: *(Deliberately shifting the topic.)* What would you like for breakfast?

Gabby: I'm not hungry.

Anna: You must have something, Gabby. There's fruit, yoghurt, toast, eggs ...

Gabby: I'm really not hungry.

Anna: You have to eat something before you take your anti-retrovirals.

Gabby: (*Grimacing at the thought.*) Oh no ...!

Anna: I know. They're horrible. But you have to, Gabby.

Gabby: I have that feeling, Anna. It's like ... Matthew all over again. I don't know if I can do this a second time.

Anna: When do you see Shireen?

Gabby: Wednesdays.

Anna: Shall I try to get an appointment with her today?

Gabby: What's today?

Anna: Saturday.

Gabby: Saturday?

Anna: I'm sure Shireen will be happy to do an emergency appointment today.

Gabby: It's been three years since Matthew ... three years of weekly sessions with Shireen. And it still hurts, Anna. (*Sighs deeply, and begins to sob again.*) It still hurts.

Anna: Let me get you some tissues.

Gabby: There's some in my bag ... (*ANNA picks up GABBY's bag and rifles through it*). I feel so ... like ... what's the point, Anna?

(*ANNA pulls out the tissues and hands them to GABBY. Then she pulls out a revolver.*)

Anna: And this?

Gabby: (*Awkwardly.*) It's a gun.

Anna: Is it yours?

Gabby: Yes.

Anna: How long have you had it for?

(GABBY shrugs.)

Anna: Since Matthew's death?

Gabby: Yes.

Anna: Did you have it with you on Thursday?

Gabby: *(Quietly.)* Yes ...

Anna: But?

Gabby: But it all happened so fast. I couldn't ... I didn't ... think.

Anna: Jeez, Gabby!

Gabby: I know. It's bizarre. We came back here when apartheid was dying. Now apartheid's dead. My son's dead. My marriage is dead. And I'm carrying a gun.

Anna: Do you think it's okay for you to have a gun? Now?

Gabby: After what happened? Even more reason to have to it.

Anna: In these situations, our minds play funny tricks on us, Gabby.

Gabby: You think I'm going to shoot myself?

(Lights fade.)

Scene 14

(The scene takes place in GABBY's townhouse. Only AARON is present when the scene opens. He tidies up the newspaper. He crosses to the CD player, and selects a CD, a piece of classical music, which he puts on using the remote control. He looks through the bookshelf and selects a book. He crosses to the sofa, when his eyes fall on the photographs. He walks across to these, and picks up the one of the 10-year-old boy. He stares at it for a while, sighs deeply, puts it down and sits on the sofa to read the book. After a few minutes, there's a key in the door. AARON turns off the CD player, and GABBY enters.)

Aaron: Hi, Gabby.

Gabby: *(Completely surprised.)* Aaron ...

Aaron: I'm sorry if I scared you ...

(ANNA enters.)

Aaron: *(He's completely surprised.)* Anna ...

Anna: Well, well, well. If it isn't Mr Fix-It himself.

(Both GABBY and AARON are awkward in each other's presence. ANNA takes charge.)

Aaron: Mr Fix-It?

Anna: How dare you, Aaron? How dare you just walk into Gabby's house?

Aaron: I need to speak to Gabby.

Anna: *(Protectively.)* I don't think she wants to talk to you right now.

Aaron: Perhaps Gabby can speak for herself.

Anna: No, I speak for her. She's my client.

Gabby: *(A little embarrassed, but delighted that ANNA is around.)* Anna ...

Anna: *(Gently ignoring GABBY.)* Why are you here, Mr Matshoba? Is this official business?

Gabby: Anna said that we'd be hearing from the party. We didn't ... I didn't expect that they'd send you.

Aaron: I came down this morning ...

Anna: Of course! When the party's in a tight spot, who do they call? Comrade Aaron Matshoba.

Aaron: I know that these are not great circumstances ...

Anna: The master of understatement!

Aaron: Can we talk ... like reasonable people? Please ...

Anna: Reasonable? Shit, Aaron! You haven't seen each other ... for how long? Twelve months?

Gabby: Longer ...

Anna: Then Gabby arrives home one day – in 'not great circumstances' – and *you* happen to be in her house. Illegally, I might add.

Aaron: The key ...

Anna: I don't give a shit about the key! What gives you the right? Do you know what Gabby's just been through?

Aaron: I have an idea.

Anna: And you talk about being reasonable?

Gabby: Anna ...

Aaron: You're right, Anna. I shouldn't have entered your house, Gabby. It was a misjudgement on my part.

Anna: Oh, I love it. (*Mockingly.*) 'I shouldn't have entered your house.' 'I shouldn't have entered ... her! It was a "misjudgement", your honour.'

Gabby: Anna, you're being a little ...

Anna: Hang on, Gabby. Before you start feeling sorry for him, think about this. He wasn't expecting me to be with you. What if you had come home alone and he was here? He would have tried to charm you, persuade you – steamroller you, if necessary. Now things aren't going according to plan, and he has to change tack. 'I'm so sorry for entering your house.' (*To AARON.*) Am I right?

Aaron: (*Smiles wryly.*) Does it matter? You'll believe what you want to.

Anna: I believe what is logical.

Aaron: Ever the lawyer.

Anna: (*With a touch of venom.*) Ever the party hack.

(Bell rings. GABBY goes to answer. Two conversations take place – one between ANNA and AARON and one between ABRAHAMS and GABBY. Lighting switches from one to the other.)

Gabby: Hello, Inspector.

Abrahams: Good morning.

Gabby: I'm glad we got here before you did. I thought we were late.

Abrahams: I did actually pop in earlier.

Gabby: Oh, I'm sorry. We had to drop off Anna's daughter at a hockey match along the way.

Abrahams: No problem. Did Mr Matshabo not tell you that I came around earlier?

Gabby: *(With a smile.)* I don't think he's had a chance to.

(Lights fade on ABRAHAMS and GABBY, who freeze. Light comes up on AARON and ANNA.)

Aaron: I'm going to level with you, Anna. The party is very concerned about what allegedly happened on Thursday night.

Anna: They wouldn't be concerned if it only *allegedly* happened.

Aaron: Innocent until proven guilty. Isn't that what the law says?

Anna: Oh, I know what the law says. And in terms of the law, you couldn't have a more guilty party.

Aaron: You're aware of the damage to the country if this goes public.

Anna: And you're aware of the damage to the party with an election just around the corner.

Aaron: Whatever, Anna. Whatever. The point is that there will be major political repercussions.

Anna: No, Aaron! The point is that a woman has been raped. The point is that this woman, my friend, your ex-wife, Gabby, has a right to justice!

Aaron: I agree. A hundred per cent! But life's a little more complex than that. Sometimes ... sometimes justice has to be sacrificed for the greater political good.

Anna: I don't believe I'm hearing this.

Aaron: Anna, you're a lawyer. You represented victims at the TRC. Did you throw up your hands then?

Anna: That was different.

Aaron: Was it? How many perpetrators of human rights abuses were brought to book? How many of the victims whom you represented got 'justice'? None. Not a single one. Justice had to be sacrificed for the greater political good. The TRC was a deal, Anna. It wasn't about justice. You know that.

Anna: And that's why you're here. To strike a deal. For the good of the nation.

(AARON and ANNA freeze. The lights fade on AARON and ANNA, and come up on GABBY and ABRAHAMS, who have shifted positions to show development in their conversation.)

Gabby: The statement's fine.

Abrahams: Are you sure?

Gabby: Anna's happy with it. What happens next?

Abrahams: That's up to you. Are you going to lay a charge?

Gabby *(Sighs.)* The million-dollar question. What do you think I should do?

Abrahams: A lot of women don't lay charges.

Gabby: So you think I shouldn't lay a charge?

Abrahams: It's not really for me to say ...

Gabby: I know. I just want to know what you think.

Abrahams: It's a very difficult one. There's the trial ... the public spotlight ... In your case, there will be even more pressure.

Gabby: You don't have to remind me.

Abrahams: We've got the report from the District Surgeon. We've got your statement. You lay a charge. And we'll arrest the Minister.

(Lights fade on them and come up on AARON and ANNA.)

Aaron: This will be a big case for you, Anna.

Anna: Not the biggest case I've done.

Aaron: From a publicity angle, this will be your biggest.

Anna: Maybe.

Aaron: It will be great for your practice.

Anna: Are you implying that I want Gabby to go through with the charges so that I can get publicity for my firm?

Aaron: I didn't say that.

Anna: How can you stand there ... Do you still have a conscience, Aaron? Does Gabby mean nothing to you?

Aaron: On the contrary, I'm here precisely to make sure that Gabby's best interests are served. And I hope that you are, as well.

Anna: I have to say this for you, Aaron. You've got balls.

Aaron: Anna, have you thought about what a trial will do to Gabby?

Anna: This is exactly why rapists get away with ... murder. It has to stop.

Aaron: Khumalo is a powerful man. With great influence and a large following of people with vested interests in making sure that he remains in his position. There's strong speculation that he will be appointed Deputy President after the elections. There are people whose interests would be hurt if that didn't happen. There are things beyond the control of the party. I don't want to be dramatic, but Gabby could face physical danger. Damage to her property. Death threats. So when I say that I'm here because I care about Gabby, then you'd better believe it. And not only Gabby. You too, Anna.

Anna: *(With a touch of sarcasm.)* Nice speech, Aaron. *(Claps in jest.)*

(Lights fade on ANNA and AARON and come up on ABRAHAMS and GABBY.)

Gabby: Anna insisted that I make the statement. But I didn't want to tell the story to just anybody.

Abrahams: We have made *some* progress in this area. There are now specially-trained policemen and -women to deal with rape victims.

Gabby: Yes, I know. But I couldn't face the prospect of talking to someone who wouldn't ... *(Chokes.)* You're the only policeman I know. Thanks for responding to my call.

Abrahams: I'm sorry that it had to be in these circumstances.

Gabby: Does anyone else know?

Abrahams: I had to tell the station commander. It's too big to keep from him.

Gabby: I don't know how *they* got to know ... *(Gesturing towards the living room.)*

Abrahams: Mr Matshabo and Mr Nyaka? I *thought* they weren't down for a conference.

Gabby: Who's Mr Nyaka?

Abrahams: Miss Anderson, you don't want to know ...

(Lights fade on them and come up on AARON and ANNA.)

Aaron: You want to know what's on the table?

Anna: For academic reasons, maybe.

Aaron: Anna, you have no right to dismiss what we have to offer out-of-hand. At least let Gabby hear what's on the table. Let her be part of making the decision.

Anna: You expect her to make a rational, informed decision in the state that she's in? As her lawyer, it would be completely irresponsible of me to allow it.

Aaron: I appreciate that. But time is of the essence. If we don't agree on a course of action in the next few hours, then a tiny window of opportunity to change history will be lost. And we'll reap the whirlwind.

Anna: How can you be doing this Aaron? Does the constitution mean nothing to you?

Aaron: Anna, you know what Gabby has been through ... as a mother, a woman, a person. I don't want her to experience any more suffering. No more humiliation. No more pain.

Anna: Then we agree on something.

Aaron: *(Going up to ANNA, gently taking her hand. He talks charmingly and gently.)* Anna, we agree about lots of things. In your heart you know that what I'm saying makes sense. You're a fantastic lawyer ...

Anna: *(Getting sucked in by the charm momentarily.)* Don't do this Aaron ...

Aaron: Thank you for being there for Gabby, Anna. I really mean that.

(GABBY and ABRAHAMS enter. There is a moment of awkwardness as ANNA lets go of AARON's hand.)

Gabby: Inspector Abrahams came to collect the ... document, Anna.

Anna: Yes, it's in my bag. *(Reaches inside her bag and retrieves the statement.)*

Aaron: Hello again, Inspector.

Abrahams: Good morning. *(ABRAHAMS uses the opportunity to walk around – and discreetly places his bugs in position.)*

Anna: Thanks, Inspector. It's fine. I'll give you a call later.

Abrahams: Okay, then. Goodbye.

(The others greet him. ABRAHAMS exits. There is an initial awkward silence after ABRAHAMS leaves.)

Anna: Aaron wants to tell you about a deal they're offering.

Gabby: A deal?

Aaron: I have a proposal for you to consider, Gabby.

Gabby: (to ANNA.) What do you think?

Anna: Oh, I think you should at least listen.

Aaron: Gabby, I've tried to explain to Anna that this has as much – if not more – to do with what I consider to be in your best interests, as that of anyone or anything else.

Anna: Cut to the chase, Aaron.

Aaron: You can choose to work in any embassy for a minimum of five years. London, Washington, Paris, Canberra. You name it. Even the consulate in Sydney if you want to be closer to your family.

Anna: And in exchange?

Aaron: In exchange, you don't lay any charges.

Anna: I thought so.

Aaron: You will also have to agree to be silent about what happened. And you won't be able to come back here for at least five years, or until circumstances change that would make it acceptable for you to return. We will ensure that you have a decent job at the embassy of your choice, set you up with accommodation and even pay for professional counselling for up to a year. If you choose an embassy other than Australia, we will pay for an annual ticket for you to visit your family in Australia.

Gabby: (*Flops into a chair.*) Wow!

Anna: Tell me something, Aaron. If you and Gabby were still married and this had happened, what would you have advised Gabby to do?

Aaron: I don't know.

Anna: If Gabby had laid a charge, and a party delegation came to see her with the same offer you've just made, what would you have advised her to do?

Aaron: (*Sighing loudly.*) This is not about Gabby and me.

Anna: Oh, but it is. You used to be lovers, friends, husband and wife. And now your ex-wife, your former lover, the mother of your child has been raped, and you are standing there, asking her not to charge her rapist. All

we want to know is: would you be giving her similar advice if you were still lovers?

Aaron: Let's just say that I'm glad not to be in that position.

Anna: So you're happy to be in the position of telling her not to go through with the charges, because she's your ex-wife.

Aaron: That's not what I'm saying. I'd rather not be in this position, either. But, like I said, I'd rather be here – for Gabby's sake – than not.

Anna: Cut the crap, Aaron. Yes or no. Would you advise Gabby to drop the charges or not?

Aaron: What does it matter? It's hypothetical. It makes no difference. What matters, is now.

Gabby: I want to know.

Aaron: Why?

Gabby: Just tell me.

Aaron: If I said that I'd advise you to charge the Minister, then you would ask why I am doing this now. And if I said that I'd advise you *against* charging the Minister, it would reinforce your view that the party means more to me than you. Either way, I'd be damned. Let's just say that, whatever your choice, I would have supported you.

Anna: You are the weakest link. Good-bye!

Aaron: Sorry?

Anna: The question wasn't 'Would you support Gabby's choice?' If you had to help her make the choice, what would you have advised? *That's* the question.

Aaron: I don't know. It's very hard for me, either way.

Anna: That's such a cop-out.

Aaron: So I'm a coward. I'm a bastard. I'm a male prick! But Gabby, this isn't about me. It really is about what's best for you.

Anna: You're like an old boyfriend breaking up with Gabby. 'This is for your own good. I might seem like a shit right now, but one day you'll thank me for it.'

Aaron: Maybe one day, she will.

Anna: Oh, please ...!

Aaron: Gabby, I hope that your anger towards me about other things won't influence the way in which you respond to this offer.

Gabby: Don't worry ...

Aaron: I just want to put that on the table.

Gabby: I have enough anger to go around.

(Pause.)

Aaron: Gabby, if *you* were in *our* position, what would you do to make it right for someone in *your* position, and that would take account of the national interests?

Gabby: I don't know.

Aaron: But you do know that, as a minister, Khumalo has attracted major foreign investment despite the negative perceptions of political risk. You know that he plays an important role in keeping the lid on political violence in KwaZulu-Natal. And you also know that we have an election coming up, and political temperatures are rising again. We cannot afford to lose Khumalo right now.

Anna: And if we do, then it will all be Gabby's fault.

Aaron: No, it will be his fault. He is responsible for his actions. But this is to appeal to you to do something bigger. To consider the greater good.

Anna: As defined by whom?

Aaron: The objective greater good. No one would think that the possible flare-up of political violence and the loss of hundreds of lives is in the best interests of the country.

Anna: Neither is the rape of a woman.

Aaron: Anna, if you were standing at the traffic lights, and the green man's flashing in your direction, whose right of way is it?

Anna: What is this? Twenty questions?

Aaron: Indulge me. Please. Whose right of way is it?

Gabby: It's hers. So?

Aaron: But there's a taxi coming down the road at 80 km an hour. And it's not going to stop, despite the traffic lights being red and the green man flashing in your favour. Would you still cross the street?

Anna: Of course not.

Aaron: But why not? It's *your* right to cross the street!

Anna: And your point is? That Gabby can give up her right to seek justice and live. Or she can exercise her right, and risk getting wiped out in the process.

Aaron: That's a bit crude.

Gabby: That's what your metaphor implies.

Aaron: What I'm trying to say is that sometimes exercising your right is not in your best personal interests.

Anna: Shit!

Gabby: What?

Anna: Look at the time. I need to pick up Tanya. You have to come with me, Aaron.

Aaron: Why?

Anna: I'm not leaving you here alone with Gabby.

Gabby: I'll be fine.

Aaron: How long will you be?

Gabby: It's okay, Anna.

Anna: Are you sure?

Gabby: Absolutely.

Anna: Don't agree to and don't sign anything, okay? I'll be back in forty minutes.

Aaron: *(To ANNA.)* And don't you say anything to Graham.

Anna: Forty minutes, Gabby!

(ANNA exits, leaving AARON and GABBY alone. They are standing at opposite ends of the room.)

Aaron: I wouldn't like to face *her* in court.

Gabby: She *is* good.

Aaron: So ...

Gabby: So ...?

Aaron: Shall we start again? Hello. How are you?

Gabby: Not so great. Thank you for asking.

Aaron: *(Stepping towards GABBY.)* Would you mind if I hugged you?

(Without answering, GABBY steps towards AARON and they embrace. She sobs quietly.)

Aaron: Shit, Gabby, why you? Why did this have to happen to you?

(GABBY tries to speak, but only sobs louder.)

Aaron: *(Still holding her.)* Ssshhh. You don't have to say anything.

(AARON leads GABBY gently to the sofa where they sit next to each other. He still has his arm around her.)

Aaron: When I heard, I just went completely cold on the outside. I was shivering. *(Pause.)* But inside, it was a whirlpool. I wanted to scream. I wanted to go out and shoot the bastard. And I wanted to just ... hold you. *(Pause.)* I've been sitting on the plane for the last two hours wondering what it would be like to see you. Wondering what I was going to say to you.

Gabby: And?

Aaron: And I couldn't think of anything that wouldn't sound trite or insincere.

Gabby: What did you come up with?

Aaron: I came because I want to help you. I came because, whatever has passed between us, I still care about you. Deeply. About what happens to you.

Gabby: That's not so bad.

Aaron: You think so?

Gabby: Trite and hollow, maybe ...

(They share a moment of cathartic laughter.)

Aaron: Gabs ...

Gabby: Gabs ... that used to be your term of affection.

Aaron: They were going to send two of their cowboys. I had to fight to be part of this delegation. They didn't want me to come. They said I was too emotionally involved.

(Bell rings.)

Aaron: That's probably Luthando. I asked him to give us some time together.

(AARON goes to answer the door. LUTHANDO enters.)

Aaron: Gabby, this is Luthando Nyaka. Luthando ... Gabby.

Luthando: *(In a tone which is the opposite of the words.)* Glad to meet you.

Gabby: Hi. *(She doesn't accept his hand, but, instead, turns back inside.)* Excuse me, I need to use the bathroom.

(GABBY exits.)

Aaron: Was the Kentucky good?

Luthando: I had Nando's. (*Pause.*) How's it going?

Aaron: I think we're making progress.

Luthando: Head Office has been trying to reach you.

Aaron: I switched off my phone. (*Takes out his phone and switches it back on.*)

Luthando: That's why they called me.

Aaron: What's up?

Luthando: They've been in touch with Comrade Khumalo.

Aaron: And?

Luthando: He denies anything happened.

Aaron: Is that it?

Luthando: He says they were having an affair.

Aaron: (*Angrily.*) Bastard!

Luthando: Comrade ...

Aaron: What do they want?

Luthando: They still want her to sign the document.

Aaron: Why?

Luthando: I don't know. To have more options. But you're right ...

Aaron: About what?

Luthando: If they were having an affair, then there's no point ...

Aaron: They were *not* having an affair!

Luthando: With all due respect, comrade ...

Aaron: He raped her. Your hero ... your *Comrade* Khumalo ... the Minister ... the bastard (*Slowly, emphasising each word through clenched teeth.*), he ... raped ... her!

Luthando: Comrade! We all know you're in the camp that doesn't support Comrade Khumalo's appointment as Deputy President.

Aaron: You think this is about party politics?

Luthando: I'm just saying ... these accusations will damage Comrade Khumalo ...

Aaron: *(Angrily, but quietly.)* Luthando, just shut up! *(Through gritted teeth.)* Just shut the fuck up!

(Pause. AARON paces around. He opens up his briefcase and takes out the document for GABBY to sign, and a pen. They wait in silence for GABBY to return, avoiding each other's glances. After a while, GABBY enters.)

Aaron: *(Calmer.)* Gabs, we need to get back to Jo'burg. I know Anna will be back soon. But maybe you could read through this document in the meantime.

Gabby: What is it?

Aaron: It spells out the offer and the conditions I spoke *(His cellphone rings.)* about earlier. *(Checking the screen.)* Damn! It's Head Office. I'm going to have to take it outside. If there's anything there ... *(On phone.)* Hello? *(As he exits, he exchanges a tense stare with LUTHANDO.)*

(GABBY sits down and reads. LUTHANDO shuffles around uneasily. He is deeply offended by AARON's outburst at him. Then LUTHANDO breaks the ice.)

Luthando: You got yourself a good deal, lady. *(Pause.)* You were lucky to have Comrade Matshoba *(Gesturing towards the door.)* fighting for you. If it was up to me ... *(Shaking his head.)* Eish. *(Pause.)*

Gabby: Please ...

Luthando: Please what? *(Pause.)* Sign the bloody document, so we can go.

Gabby: I'm not signing anything without my lawyer ...

Luthando This has got nothing to do with lawyers. You get lawyers involved in: this and ... eish! It's all there ... in black and white. What more do you want?

Gabby: I want what is right.

Luthando: I'm telling you, if you weren't white, this thing would be handled differently. If you were a black woman ...

Gabby: Then what? You wouldn't even bother ...?

Luthando: I don't know if I'll ever understand women. But I know I'll never understand white people. We're offering you a deal for the sake of the country. And all *you* want is your white justice.

Gabby: You don't even know me ... and you talk to me like this?

Luthando: You're giving the opposition ammunition to use against us in the elections! You've been a party supporter all your life, but when it comes down to it, white people are all the same. You just want to make a black government look bad ...

Gabby: You're way out of line, Mr Nyaka.

Luthando: You can't resist, can you? Feeding the stereotype that black men can't keep it in their pants ... that all black men are rapists!

Gabby: In twelve years with Aaron, he has shown me nothing but respect.

Luthando: We know that you and the Minister were having an affair.

Gabby: (*Outraged.*) What ...?

Luthando: And now those who don't want Comrade Khumalo to be Deputy President are using dirty tactics to get their way.

Gabby: (*Shocked.*) If you want me to even consider signing this, I think you'd better stop now.

Luthando: (*Can't help himself.*) Your colleagues at the ministry will testify to the affair.

Gabby: And what deals did you make with them to get their testimony?

Luthando: What's your problem? You can join your family's chicken run to Australia. And with taxpayer support! What more do you want?

Gabby: I want you to leave.

Luthando: Sign the document, and I'll go.

Gabby: I told you I'm not signing anything.

(GABBY picks up the document and holds it up to tear it in half.)

Luthando: *(Outraged.)* What are you doing? You tear up that document, and ...

(GABBY tears up the document into small pieces. She picks up her bag.)

Gabby: Please get out of my house. Now.

Luthando: You crazy white bitch!

Gabby: I'm asking you one more time. Leave!

Luthando: *(Taking threatening steps towards her.)* I told them to let me deal with you ...

Gabby: *(Unzips her bag, and pulls out a revolver.)* I'm warning you! Get out.

Luthando: *(Arrogantly, smirking.)* Are you threatening me?

(Throughout this sequence, LUTHANDO steps forward towards GABBY, and she backtracks even though she has a gun. She's reluctant to use it.)

Gabby: I have asked you politely to leave ...

Luthando: Pointing that firearm at me ... you've made it personal.

Gabby: I know who you are.

Luthando: *(Not taking her seriously.)* Luthando ... Luthando Nyaka.

Gabby: How many more times do you have to prove your loyalty to the party, *Impimpi* Nyaka?

Luthando *(Looking over his shoulder towards where AARON exited.)* Are you mad? :

Gabby: What was it like seeing Inspector Abrahams again? He told me all about you ... Informer Nyaka!

Luthando: The last person who pointed a gun at me ... *(Walking towards*

her.)

Gabby: Please! Please ... Go!

(LUTHANDO lunges at GABBY in an attempt to grab her gun. She screams and a shot goes off. LUTHANDO is hit in the shoulder.)

Gabby: *(Shocked at what she's done.)* Shit! I'm ... I'm sorry.

(AARON rushes in.)

Aaron: *(Shouting even before he enters. Enters with cellphone in hand.)*
Gabby! *(He shows visible relief that she's not the one hurt.)*

Gabby: *(In shock.)* He ... he ...

Luthando: Comrade ...

Aaron: *(To GABBY.)* Are you okay?

(GABBY points at LUTHANDO, but the words can't come out.)

Aaron: *(Summing up the situation very quickly, very coolly, he placates GABBY.)* Sssshhh. Okay, give me the gun. *(He takes out a handkerchief, and takes the gun from her, barrel first, careful not to get his fingerprints on the gun. Then he holds the gun's butt in his hand with the handkerchief.)* Are you okay, Comrade? *(He assumes a position close to where GABBY stood when she shot LUTHANDO.)*

Luthando: *(In pain.)* I'll be okay. The bitch can't shoot ...

(AARON points the gun at LUTHANDO, and shoots him, twice.)

Gabby: Aaron!

(AARON hurries over to LUTHANDO, checks his pulse to see that he's dead. With his handkerchief, he takes LUTHANDO's gun out of his holster, and puts it into LUTHANDO's limp hand.)

Gabby: *(Horried.)* Oh my God! Oh my God! Aaron! What are you doing?

Aaron: *(Takes strong hold of GABBY by the shoulders.)* He tried to attack you?

(GABBY nods in agreement.)

Aaron: So you shot him in self-defence.

(GABBY nods less now.)

Gabby: You ... you killed him.

Aaron: He would have killed you.

Gabby: My God, Aaron ...

Aaron: You were lucky to get in first. The bastard! I shouldn't have left him alone with you. Bastard!

Gabby: What's going on, Aaron?

Aaron: We're managing a situation, Gabby.

Gabby: By killing someone ...?

Aaron: He would have dealt with it by killing you.

Gabby: You scare me.

Aaron: When you shot him, did you mean simply to hurt him or to kill him?

Gabby: I don't know.

Aaron: But you did shoot him, didn't you.

(GABBY nods.)

Aaron: And you could have killed him, right?

Gabby: Maybe.

Aaron: And you shot him in self-defence ... not so?

Gabby: I suppose ...

Aaron: So does it matter whether he's dead or not?

Gabby: But you just shot him. In cold blood! Why, Aaron? Why?

Aaron: Let's just say the world is a better place without 'Comrade' Luthando. For here lies a police informer, a thug, a murderer with no

conscience. May his victims now rest in peace. *(Pause.)* It's not legal. It's not constitutional. But no one can say that justice has not been done.

Gabby: Aaron! Listen to yourself!

Aaron: *(Grabbing GABBY firmly by the hands.)* Gabby! The police will be here soon.

Gabby: What are you going to do?

Aaron: We have to agree what to tell them.

Gabby: What ... what *are* we going to tell them?

Aaron: *I* will say that you shot Nyaka in self-defence. The evidence is pretty clear-cut. An inquest will be held. They will find no one criminally liable. And we'll all be able to move on with our lives. *(Pause.)* What will *you* say?

Gabby: I don't know. I don't know.

Aaron: You need to decide quickly. But just remember, Gabs, *(Quietly.)* it's your fingerprints on the weapon.

(GABBY sinks into a chair, overcome by the implications of what has happened and by AARON's statement. Lights go down but not to black. Action takes place in full view of the audience, but it is played out to music and the audience does not hear anything.)

AARON pours a drink and takes it to GABBY. He talks to her, but his words are not heard. She looks straight ahead of her, not saying anything, like a zombie. She takes the odd sip from her glass. AARON takes the newspaper that he'd been reading earlier and crosses to LUTHANDO. He looks at him, and then covers his body with the newspaper.

ABRAHAMS enters. AARON talks to him, explaining what happened. They look at GABBY, who is still looking into space. ABRAHAMS bends down, lifts the newspaper and checks LUTHANDO's pulse, feeling his neck. ABRAHAMS listens as AARON explains, nodding his head at times, but not saying anything. AARON takes out his cellphone as he continues explaining.

Lights come up to full, music fades.)

Aaron: I'm just going to make a phone call, Inspector. If you need me, I'll be outside.

Abrahams: Fine, Mr Matshabo. (*AARON exits.*) Quite something, Miss Anderson. (*No response from GABBY.*) You've had a tough few days ... You want to tell me what happened?

Gabby: I ... I ... shot him.

Abrahams: He probably got what he deserved.

Gabby: I suppose you'll need another statement.

Abrahams: A brief one. This looks like a pretty open-and-shut case of self-defence. (*Pause.*) Do you mind if I look around?

Gabby: Please ...

(ABRAHAMS goes over to where he had planted listening devices earlier, and picks them up. He stands there awkwardly, then looks at GABBY, and speaks in hushed tones so that AARON cannot hear.)

Abrahams: Miss Anderson, I'm going to be honest with you. (*Holds up the devices.*) These are highly-sophisticated listening devices. Part of a bag of tricks I brought with me from my days as a security policeman. Very useful for surveillance work. (*Pause.*) When I came to collect your statement this morning and saw Mr Matshabo and especially Mr Nyaka here, I was very worried. So when I came back later, I planted these devices and sat in my car just around the corner, where I couldn't be seen, but where I could listen to everything. I thought it was a good idea to keep an eye on you.

(GABBY looks straight ahead of her as the implications of what she's hearing sinks in.)

Gabby: Then you know everything.

Abrahams: I also have a recording.

Gabby: A recording?

Abrahams: (*Handing GABBY a micro-cassette tape.*) It's all here.

Gabby: You're giving it to me?

Abrahams: You can do with it what you wish.

Gabby: But surely this would be evidence ...

Abrahams: I didn't get the required authority, so the recording would be inadmissible in court. I can't use it. But you can.

Gabby: How?

Abrahams: Send it to the press. Tell Mr Matshabo you have it. Send it to his bosses. Throw it away. *(Pause.)* That's for you to decide.

Gabby: And you? What will *you* do?

Abrahams: I don't know. But it feels like old times.

(Lights fade on ABRAHAMS and GABBY.)

Scene 15

(The next morning. Lights come up on ANNA and GABBY at ANNA's house.)

Anna: Did you sleep okay?

Gabby: I don't think I slept at all.

Anna: Even with the pills?

Gabby: I don't know. Maybe I did. Maybe I just can't distinguish anymore between the nightmare that I've lived in the past three days, and the nightmares that I dream at night.

Anna: It will get better, Gabby.

Gabby: I should have stayed here, like you suggested. Then none of this would have happened.

Anna: Life's full of 'should have's. We just need to do the right thing when the time comes.

Gabby: *(In a subdued, insecure voice, with her hands over her eyes as if to block the images.)* I'm not sure that I can do what you want.

Anna: *(Quietly.)* It's the *right* thing to do, Gabby. But don't worry about it now.

Gabby: That's not what my head says.

Anna: You'll know it in your heart. When you feel stronger.

Gabby: Is that what you think?

Anna: You know what I think.

Gabby: Tell me again.

Anna: You've got the tape. There's the District Surgeon's report. I told Abrahams that we'll come in this afternoon and formally lay charges.

(Landline telephone rings.)

Anna: *(Having picked up the cordless phone.)* Hi. Yes. Just hold on. *(To GABBY.)* It's Aaron. Do you want to talk to him?

Gabby: *(With a visible change in her attitude, now more positive.)* Yes. *(ANNA brings the mobile part of the telephone to her.)* Hello? Okay, thanks. What? *(A smile breaks on her face.)* When? Sure. Yes, of course. Okay. Chat to you later. *(She sits there, slightly stunned, but beaming.)*

Anna: What?

Gabby: *(Takes a deep breath.)* I'm leaving for Sydney.

Anna: What?

Gabby: Tonight.

Anna: *(Shocked, and trying hard not to show a little outrage.)* Gabby!

Gabby: I'm sorry, Anna.

Anna: You kept this from me ...?

Gabby: I couldn't say anything till I heard from Aaron. We ... I didn't know whether the party would still make good on their offer after Nyaka ...

Anna: You agreed to their offer without telling me?

Gabby: It was a decision that I had to take. There and then.

Anna: After all we've been through in the last few days. Together ...

Gabby: I'm sorry, Anna. Really. You must feel ... betrayed.

Anna: I'm stunned. Why, Gabby? Why? (*Doesn't really wait for GABBY to respond.*) You're not betraying me. We had a chance ... a chance in a million to put rape on the national agenda. To once-and-for-all strike a blow for all those women, teenagers, girls ... babies that are raped every day in this country. A high-profile case like this will not come around every day!

Gabby: (*Her anger rising.*) Anna, please! (*Raising her voice.*) Please! This is not simply about 'rape'. This is about *me*. Don't lay a trip on me ...

Anna: (*More conciliatory.*) I'm not ...

Gabby: You are! You're making me feel guilty about not going through with a trial that could ... in your eyes ... rescue women from rape in this country!

Anna: If nothing else, it will show just how endemic it is! And then, hopefully, something will get done! But we need you to go through with this.

Gabby: I haven't asked to be in this position, Anna! I'm no martyr. I don't want to be.

Anna: Maybe, but, Gabby ...

Gabby: I've felt guilty all my life, Anna. Guilty about being white. Guilty about being able to live abroad when others were going through the hell of apartheid! Guilty about Matthew's death. Sure! I blamed Aaron for not being there on the day, but later I had to accept that maybe *I* was responsible for sending him to the shop to buy milk in the first place. And then I felt guilty about having divorced Aaron after coming to realise my possible culpability. Since I've come back here, I've felt guilty about being white all over again. Guilty that whatever decision I take, whatever statement I make will be judged in terms of my colour. Not what's right. Or wrong. But because it's a white me doing it. And now ... now you're making me feel guilty about letting down the sisters. I'm tired, Anna. I'm tired of feeling guilty all the time!

Anna: (*With a hint of bitterness.*) So you're just going to let them get away with it. Khumalo will get off scot-free, and when he rapes someone else again, how will you live with the guilt then?

Gabby: Anna ...! You're incorrigible!

Anna: It's okay for you. You can just leave. Again. Everyone who stays can sort out the mess!

Gabby: That's not fair, Anna!

Anna: (*Almost pleadingly.*) There's an election coming up, Gabby. It's a one-in-five-years chance for us to say that things are not okay.

Gabby: Then do it in whatever way you want. Just leave me out of it.

Anna: They've taken everything from you in the last five years. And you've just made a deal with them to say that it's okay.

Gabby: They? Who's they?

Anna: You know what I mean ...

Gabby: You're right. You're right, Anna. My experience of the new South Africa has been one of ... overwhelming loss. Everything that I've held dear and precious, I've lost. My son. My marriage. My honour. Everything.

Anna: That's what I meant.

Gabby: What should I do, Anna? *You* want me to fight back. And then what, Anna? Will this be a better place? Will I be happier? More fulfilled?

Anna: It could make a difference. For women ...

Gabby: The party's been good to me. I have no desire to hurt it. In exile, my main support came from the party.

Anna: This is not just about the party. What about the country?

Gabby: I'm going. For the good of the country, I'm going. And for my own good. I'm doing what's best for me.

Anna: And for Aaron.

(*Pause. Their eyes lock on each other's.*)

Gabby: Maybe ...

(*Lights fade slowly.*)

Scene 16

(The final sequence returns to the inquest. Spotlight comes up on AARON, ANNA in darkness as before.)

Anna: You heard three shots?

Aaron: That's right.

Anna: And then you ran into the house, calling her name.

Aaron: Yes.

Anna: So, in your opinion, Mr Matshoba, it was a case of self-defence?

Aaron: Ms Anderson certainly had no reason to shoot him. Not that I was aware of, anyway. That was the first time that she had even met Mr Nyaka. Knowing both of them quite well, he was a hundred times more likely to initiate or do physical harm to anyone. And he would have needed very little provocation.

Anna: So, in your opinion?

Aaron: In my opinion, the most likely explanation is that Ms Anderson shot Mr Nyaka in self-defence.

(Lights fade on AARON and come up on ABRAHAMS in the witness box at the inquest into LUTHANDO's death. Again, ANNA is in darkness and only ABRAHAMS is lit.)

Anna: Inspector Abrahams, you were the first on the scene after the shooting at Ms Anderson's townhouse.

Abrahams: That is correct.

Anna: Could you tell this inquest what you saw?

Abrahams: When I came to the house, Mr Matshabo opened the door for me. Miss Anderson was seated on the sofa. And Mr Nyaka was lying on the ground with a newspaper over his face.

Anna: So Mr Nyaka was dead by the time you got there?

Abrahams: Yes.

Anna: And how long had he been dead for?

Abrahams: His body was still warm. I believed that he died within half-an-hour before I got there.

Anna: We've heard testimony that Mr Nyaka was still holding a gun in his hand?

Abrahams: That is correct.

Anna: Had any bullets been discharged from his gun?

Abrahams: No. But three rounds from Mrs ... from Miss Anderson's gun had been fired.

Anna: And they all hit Mr Nyaka?

Abrahams: Yes. One in the right shoulder, and two in the chest.

Anna: Inspector Abrahams, what was your impression of what happened?

Abrahams: It's difficult to say. But from the scene it was possible to deduce that Mr Nyaka had drawn his gun. It appears that somehow Ms Anderson managed to shoot him first.

Anna: This inquest needs to find a reasonable explanation for the death of Mr Nyaka and to determine if anyone should be held criminally liable or not. As you know, Ms Anderson is in Australia, but her statement made to you on the day of Mr Nyaka's death states that she acted in self-defence. Could that be a reasonable explanation for the death of Mr Nyaka?

Abrahams: That could be, yes.

(Spotlight fades on ABRAHAMS, comes up on GABBY. Lights come up on ANNA for the first time at the inquest.)

Anna: Under normal circumstances, as she is a key witness, my client would be present at this inquest. But these are not normal circumstances. So I'd like to thank the authorities for allowing her to give evidence by video link to Australia. This inquest is particularly concerned with the events that led to the death of Mr Nyaka.

(Lights come up on ABRAHAMS, who is initially surprised and then he breaks into a wry smile as he prepares to listen to GABBY's evidence.)

Anna: In your own words, then, Ms Anderson, please tell us what happened on the morning that Mr Nyaka was shot.

(Lights come up on AARON and GABBY at the same time. AARON wears an anxious look.)

Gabby: *(As if she is physically at the inquest, takes in ABRAHAMS and finally AARON, then looks away from AARON.)* Where shall I start?

(Slow fade to black.)