

AUDITIONING ANGELS

a new play by Pieter-Dirk Uys

© 2003 Pieter-Dirk Uys

All rights reserved
www.evita.co.za
email: admin@evita.co.za

Professional and amateur performance rights in South Africa from:
DALRO
PO Box 9292
Johannesburg 2000

Elsewhere from:
ML2000
19 Margavine Gardens
London W6 8RL
info@ML2000.org.uk

This play premiered at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival on 27 June 2003

Produced by Toerien Productions
and directed by Blaise Koch

Majuba Xhaba	Thoko Ntshinga
Nurse Tessie	Nandi Nyembe
Matthew Nathan	Paul du Toit
Gloria Nathan	Jo da Silva
Gerald Nathan	Clive Scott

AUDITIONING ANGELS

THE TIME AND PLACE

The time is now. Johannesburg. A large hospital.

(The operating theatre has a sense of steel and glass. An operating table with, above it, the large reflective floodlight. There are electric wires across the linoleum floors. A stretcher-trolley and a wheelchair maybe? Because the theatre is not being used, much can be covered in white calico cloth.)

(There is a double door leading into the passage outside, as well as a door leading off to a sloproom on the side.)

(Many unrelated things are also stored here.)

THE CHARACTERS

The characters in the play are:

- * DR GERALD NATHAN
- * GLORIA NATHAN DE VILLIERS his daughter and mother of Sensi
- * MATTHEW NATHAN his son
- * MAJUBA XHABA
- * NURSE TESSIE BREDENKAMP

THERE ARE TWO ACTS

ACT ONE

IN A DISUSED OPERATING THEATRE.

LIKE A BODY, MAJUBA IS LYING ON THE OPERATING TABLE COVERED IN A CLOTH FILLED WITH CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS.

A TELEVISION MONITOR/SET FIZZLES STATIC.

INTERCOM (IN SPANISH): Doctor Gonzales? Please report to Casualty, Doctor Gonzales?

NURSE TESSIE ENTERS WITH A TROLLEY. ON IT IS A TRAY OF TEA. THERE IS ALSO A BOX. IT IS FULL OF ANTI-RETROVIRAL DRUGS THAT SHE HAS STOLEN (BUT WE DON'T KNOW THIS YET).

TESSIE HIDES THE BOX IN THE ROOM.

OPENS MAJUBA'S HANDBAG.

MAJUBA SITS UP ON OPERATING TABLE.

MAJUBA: Excuse me!?

TESSIE: Eish! You give me such a fright!

MAJUBA: What the fuck are you doing?

TESSIE: Your friend said to switch on your phone in case she needs to contact you. I didn't want to wake you. Eish? There are three phones in this bag!

MAJUBA: Oh, I'm sorry, it's you. What news?

TESSIE: Tea?

MAJUBA: I slept.

TESSIE: You're lucky.

MAJUBA: Coffee?

TESSIE: I wouldn't risk it here. Slop-buckets taste better.

MAJUBA: Thanks. Don't you ever go off-duty?

TESSIE: I am. Sugar?

MAJUBA: You live in this place?

TESSIE: No, I live so far away, it's not worth it going home just to come back. Milk's sour.

MAJUBA: Never mind.

TESSIE: Black and bitter.

MAJUBA: All these toys?

TESSIE: We keep things safe. There's no cellphone signal in here.

MAJUBA: I managed to get through an hour ago in the parking lot.

TESSIE: Ja? Here you'll have to stand on one leg with your head under your left arm. It's all the concrete.

MAJUBA: So no news? They said we can take her home.

TESSIE: Ja, I think the little girl will be okay.

MAJUBA: Do they do the test? How long does one have to wait?

TESSIE: It's usually quite quick.

MAJUBA: Isn't there a window of infection, or what do they call it?

TESSIE: You'll never be quite sure for some months. This tea is terrible. Sorry. I better go.

MAJUBA: But if you're off-duty?

TESSIE: I visit the children. I want to take some toys.

SHE HESITATES WHERE SHE HID THE DRUGS, THEN RATHER SORTS OUT A BOX OF FLUFFY TOYS. SHE IS NERVOUS ABOUT MAJUBA THERE.

INTERCOM (IN SPANISH): Dr Castro? Report to Casualty? Dr Castro.

THE TV HISSES AND STROBES.

MAJUBA GOES TO THE TV AND TRIES TO SWITCH IT OFF. SHE CAN'T.

MAJUBA: Shut up shut up ...

SHE LIES BACK ON THE OPERATING TABLE AND COVERS HERSELF AGAIN. TESSIE JUST ABOUT TO OPEN THE BOX OF DRUGS WHEN MATTHEW NATHAN ENTERS LIMPING.

MATTHEW: Thank God, signs of human life! Nurse? Could you just point me in the right direction? Jesus, what was this place? An operating theatre?

TESSIE: This area is out of bounds for the public ...

MATTHEW: The front entrance is sealed off because some Minister was supposed to be making a hospital visit for the cameras two days ago. He's still not pitched, but it's all sealed off for security reasons. Me and millions of potential patients had to

go through some kitchen area. No food. There's a strike. I asked reception eventually: where do I go? Reception doesn't know anything. No one speaks English.

TESSIE: I speak English.

MATTHEW: I tried Casualty. It's like a warzone.

TESSIE: No, it's just the usual Friday crowd.

MATTHEW: Bodies on the floor. Blood everywhere. Was there some bomb explosion? Some plane crash?

TESSIE: It's only afternoon. Wait till tonight. You're in the wrong place, sir ...

MATTHEW: They said I'd find my sister here. Obviously not.

HE EXITS. AS MAJUBA SITS UP FROM UNDER THE COVER.

MAJUBA: Oh? You're Matthew? Hello?
SHE GETS UP AS ONE OF THE PHONES RINGS.
Yes?
WRONG PHONE.
Yes!
TRIES ANOTHER.
Yes! You're breaking up. What? Hello? Shit. Gloria? I can't hear.

WE HEAR GLORIA OUTSIDE LOUDLY.

GLORIA: Hello Majuba? Majuba? Shit, I can't hear
SHE ENTERS WHILE TALKING INTO HER PHONE.
I'm on my way ... oh, I'm here.

MAJUBA: All these damn useless phones ...

TESSIE: Well, the signal must go through the concrete and find the satellite to come back through the concrete and find you. Tea?

MAJUBA: It's cold, be warned.

GLORIA: Can't we switch off that damn monitor?
SHE TRIES, BUT CAN'T. LOOKS AT WATCH.
Is this all you could wangle, Majuba? And dressed for a premiere? Did you cancel that meeting?

MAJUBA: Excuse me, Gloria, I don't cancel your meetings! You've got your secretary to 'cancel that meeting'!

GLORIA: Christ Majuba, it's after the cabinet briefing. We're expected to be there! Phone them!

MAJUBA: You phone them!

GLORIA: Tell them what happened ... no, don't tell them what happened.

MAJUBA: Your child was raped.

GLORIA: Don't say that! I don't want to hear that! No, no ... say there's been an accident ...

MAJUBA: Your child was hit by a car?

GLORIA: No, no, don't say accident ... say we'll get there as soon as possible.

TESSIE: You'll never get to Pretoria in time! With all the traffic?

MAJUBA: We won't be able to get there for hours. Jolie's assistant in Pretoria? He can go and represent us?

GLORIA: Make up something clever, Miss Xhaba! Isn't that part of your charm? Anyway I can't leave here now.

MAJUBA: So say it. You want me to go through to Pretoria!

GLORIA: One of us should be there.

MAJUBA: And obviously, the black one with the charm would be more effective?

TESSIE: I think the child will be okay.

GLORIA: You spoke to my baby?

TESSIE: I waved through the door. They were finished with the test. I think she saw me.

MAJUBA: I'll go out into the parking lot and phone ... What's her name? The girl in the Minister's office?

GLORIA: Brigitte or Brigitta or ... I don't know.

MAJUBA: She's 'his' mistress.
SHE'S REFERRING TO GOSSIP ABOUT A MINISTER.

GLORIA: Her name's on the computer. And, doll, bring me a Diet Coke from the machine in the foyer.

TESSIE: If you find a machine that works ...

MAJUBA: If I can find a foyer! By the way, Gloria, I think your brother's here.

GLORIA: Matthew here? No, that's impossible. That was Matthew?

TESSIE: Well, he said he was looking for his sister and he looks like you.

GLORIA: Rubbish, he's older and ... and ... Look, Nurse, will you show her the way?

MAJUBA LEAVES LED BY TESSIE.

INTERCOM (IN XHOSA): Lottery numbers from last night's draw are 1, 45, 3, 17, 24 and 25.
Plus bonus ball 32!!

GLORIA COVERS THE TV WITH THE CLOTH FROM THE TABLE.

THEN WE HEAR FROM UNDER IT – LIKE A SOAP OPERA:

HE: 'I'm afraid it's your daughter.'

SHE: 'She's still at school.'

HE: 'No, she's in hospital.'

SHE: 'She's only a little girl.'

HE: 'She was raped.'

SHE: 'That's impossible, she's only a child!'

GLORIA UNCOVERS THE TV, BUT ALL WE SEE JUST STATIC.

MATTHEW COMES IN.

HE AND GLORIA JUST LOOK AT EACH OTHER. IT'S BEEN YEARS.

MATTHEW: I didn't recognise you.

GLORIA: You never leave PE.

MATTHEW: I'm here on business.

GLORIA: You could've let me know.

MATTHEW: I don't have your number. I went to your office. They said you're here. Don't you have any clout with those Commies who run the country, Gloria? Whatever happened to pulling some strings?

GLORIA: You didn't have to come, Matthew. It's all under control. We all had a scare, but she's okay.

MATTHEW: Your sour secretary said

GLORIA: She's okay.

MATTHEW: But ...

GLORIA IS SHRILL AND OBVIOUSLY CLOSE TO BREAKING.

GLORIA: I don't want to talk about it! Nothing! Shut up, okay??

PAUSE.

MATTHEW: Surely there are still some good private hospitals left in Gauteng? That's all I want to say ...

GLORIA: There's nothing wrong with this place. If it's alright for thousands of people on a daily basis, it's alright with me.

MATTHEW: It's a hell-hole, Gloria! Use your contacts. Get Sensi into a private clinic.

GLORIA: Sensi is fine here. She had her appendix out here. I had my eye done here. It's fine here. When Karel died, they brought him here.
SHE LOOKS AT THE TABLE. THIS WAS WHERE KAREL WAS BROUGHT.
Funny, you didn't come all the way from PE when Karel died.

MATTHEW: It stinks here!

GLORIA: The airconditioning is not operational. It's stuffy, that's all.

MATTHEW: The biggest hospital in the Southern Hemisphere and the one wing is closed down?

GLORIA: They're renovating.

MATTHEW: They're bankrupt!

GLORIA: What do you know?

MATTHEW: They say they had to close down this wing because they spent all the state money on a heliport for overseas visitors to fly directly here from Joburg International to book in for their face-lifts and then fly off directly to the game farm to recuperate! And you say: power to the people?

GLORIA: Where did you read that rubbish?

MATTHEW: Writings on the walls.

GLORIA: You didn't have to come. There's nothing you can do.

MATTHEW: Moral support?

GLORIA: Oh please!

MATTHEW: I'm here, Gloria.

GLORIA: A few decades too late, Matthew.

MATTHEW: Exactly eleven years. I worked it out in the car.

GLORIA: No, even before that. Because when you blamed Father way back then, you also blamed me.

MATTHEW: I never blamed you, Gloria.

GLORIA: I was Sensi's age when I left with Father.

PAUSE.

MATTHEW: You went on the Union Castle boat.

GLORIA: Windsor Castle. Still with braces on my teeth and all those nice boys from Stanger going over to play soccer in Oxford!

MATTHEW: I remember standing on the quay and looking up. The coloured streamers and people waving and the military music from the loudspeakers. Mom was so pissed.

GLORIA: Mommie looked nice the boat. She wore that hat.

MATTHEW: She didn't wear a hat!

GLORIA: Mommie wore that felt hat!

MATTHEW: A felt hat in the Durban swelter? I think not. No.

GLORIA: I was also there!

MATTHEW: There was no hat, Gloria!

PAUSE.

GLORIA: That was the last time saw her. From the boat as we moved away from the quay.

MATTHEW: Ah yes, well, the last time I saw her was in the mortuary.

GLORIA: I don't want to hear this.

MATTHEW: Imagine, a kid of eleven being taken to the morgue by that lawyer, Hellermann? He bought me an ice-cream.

GLORIA: Phil Helderman

MATTHEW: He and Mom used to go out together.

GLORIA: I wouldn't know.

MATTHEW: 'You must identify the body, Matthew,' he said. As if I was the only one in the world who remembered her. He could've done it. He'd seen her naked.

GLORIA: Family must do it. He wasn't family.

MATTHEW: And you and the old man were in London. So there was just me. Me and Mom. She lay on the silver tray that rolled out of the fridge. Sort of uncomfortably. As if she wanted to turn on her side, like when she was drunk. Always would turn on her side and mumble. I would have to put her back into bed. There was just the right way for her to lie so I could get her shoes off and then put the sheet over and leave her in her clothes. She often mumbled the old man's name. Never yours.

GLORIA: You're still such a liar!

MATTHEW: I'd sit with her till she passed out. And then take her cigarettes and money and go.

GLORIA: Didn't two kids die in that accident?

PAUSE.

MATTHEW: I'd go to the movies. I'd look older than 11 and they'd let me into the films not allowed for under-16s. Then I'd buy some take-away chicken and go home. Sometimes she was awake. We'd sit and eat chicken and listen to the radio. We never talked. She sometimes spoke about the old man and his obscene love affair with politics. How he walked out on her and became a martyr for The Cause. She never mentioned your name.

GLORIA: She was drunk and drove into those kids and killed them.

MATTHEW: Yes. But remember, it all happened in Johannesburg in 1977. They were black kids so they didn't count.
THE TV HISSES STATIC.
What's wrong with that television?
HE CAN'T SWITCH IT OFF.

GLORIA: It doesn't switch off.

INTERCOM REPEATS LOTTERY NUMBERS IN ZULU.

MATTHEW: I also read in the paper that the old man's in the country.

GLORIA: I didn't think you'd read the Mail and Guardian?

MATTHEW: They wrap things in it at work. Does he know?

GLORIA: He's researching his book.

MATTHEW: The story of Gerald Nathan's life? Who cares?

GLORIA: I think he's on his way back to London.

MATTHEW: That's not what I heard. I was told he was still here. The ANC Office said he was due there sometime this morning.

GLORIA: You still hate him.

MATTHEW: Yes. Comfortably.

GLORIA: So why are you so keen to see him? Want to borrow money, Matthew?

MATTHEW: Fuck him! Always the politician! I bet you no one there even remembers him! What an asshole!

GLORIA: So? Did you come just for Sensi and me?

MATTHEW: No. came to kill that old fucker you call Father.

GLORIA: Really. So it is money.

MATTHEW: It's easy in Joburg, I'm told. Killing is a sport. In PE it's inevitable.

GLORIA: Don't make jokes. My husband was killed in Joburg.

MATTHEW: I believe the man who did it is here too?

GLORIA: Who killed Karel?

MATTHEW: Raped Sensi.

GLORIA: Who told you about a rape? What rape?

MATTHEW: Your pretty boss.

GLORIA: My associate. Majuba Xhaba and I run the company together. And she knows nothing!

MATTHEW: Your pretty token black CEO?

GLORIA: Is that what she said?

MATTHEW: She's trying to find some blue sky to aim her phone at out there.

GLORIA: He's under police guard. The man who attacked my child.

MATTHEW: In this place? How do they guard anyone in the wards! You can't even walk on the floor, there are so many people lying on the linoleum!

GLORIA: He was shot in the leg so he can't escape.

MATTHEW: So when was he shot in the leg?

GLORIA: Leave it now, Matthew!

PAUSE.

MATTHEW: I never blamed you for Mom's death

MAJUBA ENTERS.

MAJUBA: A Dr Gerald Nathan's down at the entrance making a scene. He demands to be allowed in through the entrance. He's throwing his toys.

GLORIA: Oh fuck!

SHE EXITS.

MAJUBA: Dr Gerald Nathan seems to think people automatically know who he is. But Dr Gerald Nathan looks like any whinging old white man abandoned by his family. I'm Majuba. And you must be the difficult brother?

MATTHEW: Majuba? Like in the Battle Of? Who gave you that name? Or is your real name 'Doris'?

MAJUBA: You're the brother alright. No, my father named me. He was writing a history book at the time. A black nationalist look at South African history.

MATTHEW: I'd have thought 'Sharpeville' would be more to the point. Why Majuba?

MAJUBA: I don't know. It's too late now to ask him why. He's got Alzheimer's and doesn't even know who my mother is.

MATTHEW: Convenient.

MAJUBA: He has a wonderful day meeting new people all the time.
PAUSE. HE IS OBVIOUSLY NOT GOTNG TO MAKE SMALL TALK.
You better go down and sort out your father. He's behaving like a real white politician. Worse.

MATTHEW: You mean, like a Rhodesian refugee at a Zimbabwean Rally? Sounds like old times.

MATTHEW EXITS.

MAJUBA: Your father ...
SHE COVERS THE TV.

WE HEAR:

HE: 'What do the doctors say?'

SHE: 'I don't know ...I've been waiting for hours, for days

HE: 'Is she still in a coma?'

SHE: 'I don't knowmaybe that doctor can help us? Excuse me?'

DOCTOR: 'I'm afraid there is no news as yet, Mrs Henderson. As soon as ...

SHE: 'You will tell me? No matter what?'

DOCTOR: 'Yes.'

SHE: 'No matter how bad the news?'
DOCTOR: 'I promise
SHE UNCOVERS THE TV BUT THERE IS NOTHING.

TESSIE ENTERS WITH ANOTHER BOX OF DRUGS.

TESSIE: Ag no man, you people must now go!

MAJUBA: What programmes come over this channel? Some soap opera? Want a hand?

TESSIE: I don't know how that damn thing switches off. It's been like that for months. No, it's okay. Cooldrinks for the kids.....

PUTS THE BOX DOWN AND COVERS IT.

MAJUBA: But there's a soapie that keeps coming on the teevee.

TESSIE: No, the thing's broken.

MAJUBA: But it was working just now.

TESSIE: No one knows how to switch it off. Crazy hey? Here, maybe the little girl would like to take this home?
HANDS MAJUBA A TEDDY BEAR.

MAJUBA: Thank you. But she's more into computers. And boys. Teddy's only got one eye.

TESSIE: In this place he's the lucky one. She's only eight?

MAJUBA: Yes. Eight going on forty.

TESSIE: Already looking at the boys? They grow up so quickly.

MAJUBA: My daughter is the same age.

TESSIE: Full-time job, hey?

MAJUBA: Having a daughter, yes.

TESSIE: Being a daughter.

MAJUBA: You got kids? Sorry, what is your name?

TESSIE: Tessie Bredenkamp.

MAJUBA: For real? Never mind that my name is Majuba!

TESSIE: My mother worked for the Bredenkamps in Benoni. When I was born, they called me 'Tessie' after Mrs Bredenkamp's horrible old ma and gave me their surname. I had no choice. So now that's me.

MAJUBA: Parents should be punished for the names they curse their children with.

TESSIE: And kids? I've got about 16 kids today. I had 13 kids yesterday. Maybe tomorrow. I'll have 20 kids again like last week. You need anything?

MAJUBA: The girl's grandfather has arrived.

TESSIE: Ja, the important comrade-politician.

MAJUBA: You know him?

TESSIE: No. I just heard him shout that he was high up in the ANC. He should be careful. That doesn't impress people here any more. Everyone here is high up in something important.

MAJUBA: Drug gangs, fake passports and other Nigerian interests.

TESSIE: Was it because of the comrade-politician that you've been allowed up here? There had to be some reason for giving you this place. It's usually out of bounds. The girl's mother and I run a PR agency. We have powerful clients.

TESSIE: Government?

MAJUBA: Yes.

TESSIE: That explains a lot. The government never comes here.

MAJUBA: No, they go to private clinics.

TESSIE: Or overseas when they get sick.

MAJUBA: And then die of natural causes. But Gloria – Mrs de Villiers – believes in being one of the people.

TESSIE: No other whites would think of ever coming here.

MAJUBA: Well, Tessie Bredenkamp, just jack up the catering and you'll be packed out!

TESSIE: The tea. Horrible hey?

MAJUBA: Never mind. I'll get a Diet Coke once I find the machine.

TESSIE: Machines were stolen months ago.

SHE EXITS.

FROM THE TV:
MOTHER: 'I don't want you to spend so much time with her.'
CHILD: 'She's my best friend.'

MOTHER: 'Yes I know, darling, but she's a bad influence on you.'
CHILD: 'I like her, Mummy'
MOTHER: 'I like Daddy, but he doesn't stay here. She's bad for you.'

MAJUBA LIFTS THE CLOTH TO STATIC.

MAJUBA: What programme is this?

WE HEAR GLORIA APPROACH WITH GERALD AND MATTHEW

GLORIA: ... it's just down the passage, nearly there ... Here! It's the best they could find us under the circumstances ...

GERALD ENTERS, FOLLOWED BY GLORIA.

Today's not the best day to form a first opinion about this place.

GERALD: And if I'd wanted your cynical opinion, I would've asked for it years ago!
HE IS TALKING TO MATTHEW WHO IS STILL IN THE PASSAGE.

GLORIA: There's a strike by the kitchen staff, although we won't be eating here. Obviously. We also represent a great restaurant in Sandton and I've got us a table. This is Majuba Xhaba.

GERALD: You've always just thrown things back at me! Xhaba?

GLORIA TRIES TO KEEP CALM.

GLORIA: Majuba? This is my father, Gerald Nathan. Majuba and I run the consultancy. Did I tell you? It's been such a strange journey. We met just after Karel died, gosh, when was that? 1998? It just worked out so well. And of course, you must remember her parents, Milton and Xhaba? Majuba's little daughter Jenna is Sensi's best friend.

MATTHEW ENTERS.

MATTHEW: If I recall, there was very little to throw back at you!

GLORIA: And oh yes, Matthew? Have you met Majuba? Of course. I don't quite know if we can order anything to be brought up here. I don't think they do room service here. Maybe that nurse can help?

CALLS INTO PASSAGE.

Hello Nurse? Is she on duty, Majuba?

GERALD: Never thought for a moment that you'd bother to show some family loyalty. So why are you here? There's no inheritance!

MATTHEW: There might be after I kill you.

GERALD: Bore me to death? Pathetic.

GLORIA: Oh, Father, why don't you sit down, you must be tired ... I really didn't expect you to come here directly from the airport.

MATTHEW: You've just arrived?

MAJUBA: From Cape Town?

MATTHEW: Researching a life lost long ago? Pathetic!

GLORIA: No, things are actually not as bad as they sound, really. I could manage quite easily. Everyone's been such a darling. Yes, it's a bad day at the hospital. I wished you could see it under circumstances. They've done so much to bring it into line ... I mean, with treatments and structures. Lots of additions and improvements. Our company helped them launch the new clinic. I don't know if someone pointed it out when you arrived, Father? Just to the left of the heliport? You'll be amazed who we've had here for cosmetic work. If I thought you'd know whom I meant, Father, I'd mention names like Gloria Berdaz and Phyllis Schechter, but knowing you, you never watch television, so I don't think you'll know who I mean ...

GERALD: Will you shut up, Gloria!

GLORIA: Sorry, Daddy, but really this is not as terrible as it looks ...

GERALD: Your daughter is okay?

GLORIA: Yes.

GERALD: Good. Well, let me tell you about my granddaughter. My only granddaughter. She's eight years old, Gloria. I've never seen her, because I've been living in London while she grew up here. She was born two days after I returned to London in 1994. Two days after the inauguration of President Nelson Mandela to which I had personally been invited.

GLORIA: I just wanted to ...

GERALD: My granddaughter is not fine, Gloria. She's eight years old and she's lying somewhere in this mausoleum like all the other local kids I've seen on television, another small victim of the new national sport. So even if they patch her up and say she'll be fine, I doubt it. So forgive me if I don't share your enthusiasm about quote this the largest working hospital in the Southern Hemisphere unquote, trying to survive in spite of a strike in the kitchens and water pouring down the stairwells because the lifts are out of action and ...

A BLACKOUT.

MATTHEW: And the lights have just gone out too.

LIGHTER AND MATCHES LIGHT THE SCENE.

A LIGHT FROM OUTSIDE HERALDS ARRIVAL OF TESSIE WITH A STRONG TORCH WHICH SHE GIVES TO MATTHEW.

TESSIE: Small blackout. Sorry. It was not planned. Here. We keep them just in case. At least no one here is on a heart-lung machine or life support system? They might say the emergency power kicks in, but I wouldn't bank on it. Let me take you outside. It's day out there.

MATTHEW: Any glasses in here?

TESSIE: Do you want cooldrink?

MATTHEW: This family needs more than cooldrink!

HE WAVES A BOTTLE OF WHISKY AND PROWLs AROUND SNOOPING. TESSIE TAKES COOLDRINK BOTTLES OUT OF A BOX WITH SOME PLASTIC MUGS.

TESSIE: Here. We had a party here on Sunday for the orphan kiddies and they drank out of these mugs. But they've all been washed in disinfectant. Besides, you can't catch the virus from someone's cup. Sorry the service is so terrible, but there's a strike on and if I touch anything in the service areas, there'll be trouble. Did you give the teddy to the little girl?

MAJUBA: No, not yet ...

TESSIE: Well, if you need me, I'm just down the passage. You'll see light. There are windows with sunshine and air. Don't you rather want to wait there till they call you?

THEY IGNORE HER. EVENTUALLY TESSIE EXITS.

MATTHEW: And Sensi is not your only granddaughter! You have another granddaughter in Port Elizabeth. Her name is Jane. Like her grandmother? You know the one who died in the car smash? But you won't remember that. You were nice and snug in the arms of the anti-apartheid movement in London, sipping brandy in fancy hotels and running up a tab that the Struggle had to cough up for? Well, Old Man, I can tell you, my Janie is beautiful and fine. And once our papers come through and we can get the hell out of Hell, she'll be safe in Australia where there's no chance she will get raped by a grown man, because in some civilized places, thank God, real men don't fuck babies!

GLORIA: Australia? What makes you think they'll take you, Matthew?

MATTHEW: Why shouldn't they? They've taken everyone else.

GERALD: I'd forgotten about the pathetic limp. It suits you so perfectly. That final touch of self-pity. It's been a long time since I've visualised my son. And look I was wrong. He's a crippled loser.

MATTHEW: Sorry, I'm doing very well with my own business, thank you very much.

GLORIA: Oh no, not now. Not here! Call a truce! You both must promise! Sensi comes first!

GERALD: Matthew, I don't have anything to say to you. I've ignored you successfully for all these years. Believe me, nothing need change.

MATTHEW: That suits me fine. You laughable old hasbeen.

LIGHTS GO ON. THEY SIT SILENCE.

INTERCOM (IN SPANISH): Dr Rodriquez? Please report to Casualty, Dr Rodriquez?

GERALD: That's not Zulu.

MAJUBA: Cuban doctors need their language.

MATTHEW: Eleven official languages, now plus Cuban?

MAJUBA: No, English, plus the others. We mainly use English here.

MATTHEW: Not in Reception.

GERALD: How is your father? I knew him quite well in Zambia in the 80s. He was a remarkable warrior. And a worrier. About you. Worried how he would bring a child up in this war, he said.

MAJUBA: He managed.

GERALD: By the looks of you, you could've been brought up in my family.

MATTHEW: I don't think so. too young to have been our nanny.

GERALD: I wasn't asking your opinion, Matthew Nathan.

MATTHEW: You said my name! You remember my name!

GERALD: My name. You're named 'Gerald Matthew Nathan' after me.

MAJUBA: My father's quite ill. He used to speak about you. You and something about a file with an elephant on it? He thought that was quite funny.

GERALD: Really? Ill?

MAJUBA: Alzheimers.

GERALD: Oh dear me. Well, he won't remember why he thought it was all so funny now, will he? And your mother?

MAJUBA: Helping with AIDS orphans in the township. Mama was always a closet activist.

INTERCOM: LOTTO NUMBERS IN TSWANA

GERALD: Were those lottery numbers?

GLORIA: We now have a draw twice a week. Like London.

MAJUBA: People used to spend their hard-earned money every seven days. Now every 3.5 days.

GLORIA: Yes, but if your people win, it's really good news.

MATTHEW: I take it your company also works for a piece of Lotto pie?

PAUSE.

GERALD: Your father's picture is still on the wall.

MAJUBA: The wall?

GERALD: At the office. I stopped by to surprise some old friends.

MATTHEW: Some surprise? They think you've been dead for years!

GERALD: His picture is there. Next to Mbeki. Under Mandela. Left of Lutuli.

MATTHEW: And don't tell me, yours has been put in the toilet?

GLORIA: Pamela Gustaffson also came.

PAUSE.

GERALD: What?

GLORIA: Miss Sweden? To have her lips done ... in the clinic ... please don't fight ...

MATTHEW: She's going to cry! I don't believe you still do that, Gloria! She always did that to get his attention!

GERALD: It still works. Come here, Princess.
SHE DOES.
We missed you so much after you left ...

GLORIA: I wanted to study.

GERALD: You could've studied there.

GLORIA: But I'm an African.

GERALD: You never visited.

GLORIA: I got married, Daddy ...

GERALD: Yes. We invited you so often ...

GLORIA: I know...

GERALD: I wanted you to come for a real English Christmas. And to bring Sensi.

GLORIA: I know....

GERALD: Especially after Carl was killed.

GLORIA: Karel. I know.

MATTHEW: I also said to you: come to us.

GLORIA: I know!

MATTHEW: Now I say: come with me.

GLORIA: No.

MATTHEW: Your daughter has been raped. Your husband was murdered by a band of cold-blooded killers. For no reason!

MAJUBA: You need a reason?

MATTHEW: Politics is often a reason. 'Politically-motivated crime'? Ask my old man!

GLORIA: Karel was hijacked and things went wrong. It was an accident.

GERALD: We still have the house in the country, Gloria.

MATTHEW: No, a ship hitting an iceberg is an accident. A man dying behind the wheel of his car because four teenage hooligans want to take it and fire a pistol at his head, that is not an accident. Jesus, Gloria, I know you always want to see the glass as half-full and not half-empty, but this glass is dry!

GLORIA: Father, I still often look at those photos you took. My 18th birthday, just before I came back to Cape Town. I had such long hair.

MATTHEW: I also had long hair then, remember? When you saw me you were so shocked.

GLORIA: God, you're such a mad bitter fucker. Sorry Father And it wasn't a highjack-killing. The gun went off by mistake!

MATTHEW: A mad bitter fucker? Like father like son?

GLORIA: Don't do this, Matthew! Not here, I beg you!

MAJUBA: My dad might enjoy seeing you while you're here, Dr Nathan.

GERALD: Me? I don't think so.

MAJUBA: He might remember something.

GERALD: He has good reasons to forget. The ANC doesn't have Alzheimer's. My picture's gone.

PAUSE.

MAJUBA: Your picture's gone?

GERALD: It was to the left of Fisher. He was a Communist. I was never a Communist.

MATTHEW: That's why you're in such a bad mood. Not because of me?

GERALD: They removed my picture from that wall in the foyer!

MATTHEW: So it's not my fault.
HE'S BEEN PLAYING WITH THE TOYS. SPEAKS TO A HAND PUPPET.
And here I was thinking: Daddy hates my face and therefore Daddy is so unhappy.

GERALD: After everything I sacrificed!

MATTHEW: Excuse me?

GLORIA: They're probably just rearranging the pictures, Father. Or having them reframed.

MAJUBA: Mistakes happen. Remember how Helen Suzman's parliamentary picture ended up on the rubbish heap with Verwoerd and Vorster?

GLORIA: That's not a helpful example, doll!

GERALD: You don't expect rewards or awards. That's not what it was about. You just know that what you did was important. Made a difference. When I was ignored during the negotiation process ... and who better than I to help structure a constitution and a bill of rights? Dear God, that's my career, my bread and butter! But never mind, it was time for the new generation to establish themselves. We cleared the tracks for them to travel in on.

GLORIA: Madiba invited you back.

GERALD: To his inauguration. A personal call, yes. But it would've been better staying at home and watching it on television. I had to sit behind Fidel Castro, who smoked

one cigar after the other and was so big in his uniform, I couldn't even see the podium!

GLORIA: We'll talk to someone in the President's office, won't we, Majuba? I'm sure it's just a mistake.

GERALD: Comrade Thabo was never a fan.

GLORIA: I know his spokesperson well ...

GERALD: No, no. Please. Don't make a thing of this. It's not important. It's nothing. A picture on the wall? A small salute to a life sacrificed in the service of the Struggle.

MATTHEW: God, I'm going to be sick.

HE EXITS.

MAJUBA: Why is he so angry?

GLORIA: It's a long story.

GERALD: No, it's a small footnote to the story of our family. My son is a loser. Not only did he lose his country, he also lost his dreams. No one took either from him. He just misplaced them both. And now he doesn't know where to look.

PAUSE. THEN GERALD TO THE DOOR.

I want to go and collect Sensi! Now!

GLORIA: They said they'll call us, Father.

MAJUBA: Cellphones don't seem to work in this place.

GLORIA: Wait here, Father, let me go and find out.

GERALD: I'm coming with you!

GLORIA: Stay here! I'll come and fetch you. Then we can go together. Did you get through to the Minister's office?

MAJUBA: They heard about it on the news. They said don't rush.

GLORIA: Shit! This is not news! This is ... not news!

SHE EXITS DIALING HER PHONE.

FROM THE COVERED TV WE HEAR:

SHE: 'Tell me about your first wife?'

HE: 'Do you want to know?'

SHE: 'I don't want to have to live in her shadow.'

HE: 'She didn't have a big shadow'

SHE: 'Does that mean I'm fat? Tell me! I must know!'
GERALD LIFTS THE CLOTH TO STATIC.

MAJUBA: Some faulty connection ...

GERALD: Soap operas everywhere. My memory was supposed to be supported by 'War and Peace'. It's getting more and more like the 'Bold and the Beautiful'. God, they hate me!

MAJUBA: No, Dr Nathan. Really, there is such compassion and goodwill among the races in the Movement. Even though you chose to spend so much time in the United Kingdom, they didn't hold it against you. You're remembered with affection, especially by the older comrades. They talk about you. There was a documentary on the Rivonia Trial recently and they showed that famous picture of you? I couldn't believe that you were so committed at such a young age! Maybe they feel it's time to give prominence to the present and not too much to the past? It's only a picture on a wall, Doctor. Your life cannot be rearranged. Your achievements. No one in the ANC hates you.

GERALD: Thanks for that, I was referring to my children, not my party.

MAJUBA: Oh, I thought ...

GERALD: Matthew has never forgiven me for divorcing his Mom and leaving South Africa. He was 10. She kept him and I took Gloria. Then Jane died and ... well, you know the story. Matthew stayed with my sister in Port Elizabeth. I implored him to join us. There was no communication from my son other than what my sister told me. He got into drugs at school, failed, rebelled, you know, the usual. He was drafted into the Army in 1984. I'll never forget that year. The year of 1984, except his vision of hell had already happened in South Africa in 1976, but no one noticed. Every time we sat at strategy meetings in that safe house in Brighton planning the next strike against the apartheid armies, I knew my son was there, somewhere behind a thorn bush in South West Africa, or a sandy knoll in Angola. His rifle pointing in my direction ...

MAJUBA: Well, I was only seven years old at a private school in Lusaka and my father was a heavily taped picture on my bedroom wall. He was always somewhere else, fighting the fight, as Mama would say. As all of us would say. Matthew, Gloria, me.

GERALD: It was a war, our Struggle.

MAJUBA: A war is professional. A struggle sounds part-time.

GERALD: Thank God we were amateurs in love with a land. Otherwise we'd have become another Middle East. Do you know how lucky we are, Majuba? My dad was at the first meeting with the Afrikaners in Dakar. He said the tension was broken when someone told a Van der Merwe joke in Afrikaans. They all got pissed on Tassenberg and sang boeresongs.

GERALD: I wasn't asked to be part of all that. For obvious reasons. I mean, I was in London and Dakar is in ... You know, I remember meeting your father in Moscow around the time of the Breshnev funeral. We all had to go and make sure the old bastard was finally dead. Many pins were surreptitiously pressed into old Leonid's right leg by comrades just checking.

MAJUBA: Yes, I still have the photo of you and Dad in Red Square.

GERALD: I'd like to see that.

MAJUBA: I'll find it for you, Dr Nathan.
PAUSE AS HE LOOKS AT HER INTENTLY.
What's wrong?

GERALD: You. No baggage of the past. No inherited hatred and the inevitable revenge. No thousand year old pogrom to avenge. No fear. And you're so beautiful. And you don't have to call me Dr Nathan.

MAJUBA: Gerald? Okay. Being the child of a soldier doesn't allow for childhood. Although my former husband occasionally called me 'beautiful'. He's now with the Ministry of Defence.

GERALD: Which your consultancy firm represents?

MAJUBA: Not because of me, I can assure you.

GERALD: 'Being the child of a soldier doesn't allow for childhood'? Tell that to Gloria. I thought it was working well. She had some nice English friends. She liked her school, the television, all the things girls enjoyed in the 80s. She also liked Patricia. But in the end she wasn't the daughter of a soldier like you were.

MAJUBA: Your new wife? Patricia?

GERALD: No longer so new. When I decided to come and research my book, I begged her to accompany me, but she believes what she reads in the Sunday Telegraph. Too much violence and crime and in Johannesburg. She'd rather watch it all on television.

MAJUBA: Too much Africa?

GERALD: Too many urban legends. She's at home looking after the garden. That's important. Soldiers are not good in the garden.
PAUSE.
Tell me what happened?

MAJUBA: I should maybe let Gloria ...

GERALD: Don't be a PR, Just tell me what happened to my grandchild.

MAJUBA: What do you already know?

GERALD: Sensi was raped.

MAJUBA: And?

GERALD: And?? Isn't that enough?

MAJUBA: Not in this country. It's a way of life now.

GERALD: Is this what we fought for? Me and your family? So that our grandchildren get raped as a way of life?

MAJUBA: Sorry, I used the wrong words. It seems ... Sensi was raped by a man who

GERALD: Yes, that I know. He goes by the name of Ben or Banji. He's a thug.

MAJUBA: Yes, a thug who can't read or write.

GERALD: Can't read or write?

MAJUBA: Yes, a thug who has no job. A thug who has AIDS.

GERALD: AIDS?

MAJUBA: You're in the New South Africa, Gerald.

GERALD: He has AIDS? And he raped an eight year old girl? What did I read last month in the Economist? That unbelievable urban legend? That a man with AIDS thinks he can be cured by raping a virgin?

MAJUBA: Having sex with a virgin, yes.

GERALD: But a little girl of eight?

MAJUBA: That's a virgin for sure, Gerald. With little girls of ten you're not that sure.

GERALD: Why will Gloria not talk about it? Why is there all this confusion?

MAJUBA: It's more complicated than you think.

GERALD: Then let me talk to whoever's in charge!

MAJUBA: That's what I mean. Back off, Gerald! Something is being done.

GERALD: There are drugs, medications. In the UK this can be controlled!

MAJUBA: Oh. That. Well, we've applied for permission to have access to anti-retrovirals....

GERALD: This is a hospital!

MAJUBA: The drugs are embargoed because of pending Supreme Court decisions on their usage and distribution.

GERALD: Then the drugs don't work?

MAJUBA: They do work.

GERALD: But we can't use them? To save a child's life?

MAJUBA: They'll let us know.

GERALD: They'll let us know?! Let me talk to them!

MAJUBA: No, Gerald! That won't help. Believe me, this is familiar territory. We must wait.

GERALD: So your child was also raped?

MAJUBA: Not yet, thank God.

PAUSE.

GERALD: Familiar territory?

MAJUBA: We all have friends who've been in this situation. Once they get anti-retrovirals and take them regularly, they can survive.

GERALD: My grandchild! That black ... that bastard! He must hang for this!

MAJUBA: There is no death penalty in South Africa, Dr Nathan.

GERALD: Hang him! There's no argument here, surely?

MAJUBA: We all fought against the death penalty. It's unconstitutional, Dr Nathan. Wasn't that your bread and butter?

MATTHEW ENTERS.

MATTHEW: And so this baby fucker'll probably get bail and go out and do it again. There's riot police outside. I think we're in either for a bloody massacre, or the visit of a Minister.

OPENS A BOX TAKES OUT A VIAL OF MEDICINE.

Hello, what's this? Will it go with whisky one wonders? Ask that old fart if he wants a medicinal tot?

GERALD: Tell that pathetic cripple: no thanks.

MATTHEW OPENS ANOTHER BOX AND TAKES OUT A VIAL OF THE DRUGS PREVIOUSLY HIDDEN.

MATTHEW: And what's this? God, this could brighten up my day!

MAJUBA: Leave those things, Matthew, they store things here.

MATTHEW: Maybe it's for all the supermodels who come here to have their fat arses pushed up into their button tits.

FROM THE COVERED TV WE HEAR:

SHE: 'They told me you were having an affair

HE: 'That's a lie.'

SHE: 'Yes, but there is someone else?'

HE: 'No, that's not true either.'

SHE: 'And the cancer? that also some

HE: 'No. That's true. You're going to die!'

MATTHEW TO THE COVERED TV.

MATTHEW: Why don't we watch that? Sounds very slice of life ...
UNCOVERS THE TV. JUST STATIC.
Oh shit, I must've touched something ...

GLORIA ENTERS.

GLORIA: Thank heavens. She'll be ready to go in about an hour. That's the good news.

MATTHEW: And the bad news?

GLORIA: The drugs are gone!

MATTHEW: Drugs! Heroin! Cocaine!

GLORIA: They spoke about Sensi's situation to the Minister who obviously gave her to access the medication and such a sweet message to me ... to us. They went into the dispensary. The drugs are gone!

MATTHEW: Drugs?

MAJUBA: Anti-retrovirals. They're locked away till the Department lifts the embargo.

GLORIA: Well, they're gone.

MATTHEW: Ah, stolen.

MAJUBA: There must be other supplies.

GERALD: Gloria, why didn't you tell me!?

GLORIA: What?

GERALD: This man Banji has AIDS?

PAUSE.

GLORIA: Oh. Well, he has AIDS.

MATTHEW: That's so perfect. The final touch! Down there somewhere, waiting for the right drugs? And did I hear those words 'death penalty' spill forth from the moral high ground up here?

GERALD: Yes, we fought to abolish the death penalty, especially for political crime, but this is rape!

MAJUBA: There is no death penalty in our country, full stop!

MATTHEW: Then change the name: call it a 'reward'! You rape my baby, we give you the reward of death.

GLORIA: Banji? Banji? Why does that name sound so familiar? Banji. Didn't a Banji work for me? In the garden?

MAJUBA You have Hildegard's Garden Service..

GLORIA: No, before that. I employed a black man. I mean, not because he was black. He was very good. He had green fingers.

MATTHEW: As opposed to itchy fingers?

INTERCOM ANNOUNCEMENT: Will the Head of Hospital Security please urgently dial
Emergency Code 47-B3. (REPEAT IN XHOSA)

MATTHEW: Emergency Code 47-B3? Oh ... things are looking pretty ugly down there. Overcrowding, no service, no water, no food, no medical staff. Only patients being patient.

TESSIE ENTERS WITH ANOTHER CARDBOARD BOX.

TESSIE: Oh no, are you people still here? This is against all regulations... ..

SHE TURNS TO LEAVE.

GERALD: Comrade Nurse, what's happening out there?

TESSIE: It's nothing unusual, Comrade Dr Nathan. Except there's police and troops because of the Minister. And of course you, Comrade Dr Nathan.

SHE HOLDS THE BOX DOWN GENTLY. THERE IS A BABY IN IT (BUT WE DON'T KNOW THIS YET) SHE MUST NOT WAKE THE BABY. TRIES TO MAKE CASUAL CONVERSATION WHILE ROCKING THE BOX SLOWLY

MATTHEW: Now who needs a little picture on a foyer wall?

TESSIE: Ja, people have been waiting for hours. There's one doctor to every 200 people. Not always as bad as that, but that's what it feels like when you're on duty. No food, just junk from the vendors outside the gates. Ja. The water pipes seem to have broken on the roof, or maybe they were not connected properly. Water's pouring down the stairs. Ja, it's like a fountain. People are standing with their mouths open to catch the water. Some are bathing! It's a bit of a mess, but Comrade Dr Nathan, it's under control. The Minister has arrived and the teevee cameras are with him. There will never be any sign of chaos where the Minister is.

GERALD: And what is the Minister and his television team selling the world out there. Nurse Tessie?

MATTHEW: That our health system's on track. Proof of investment that's invested and not just pocketed. A glittering hospital like on 'ER'? Successful treatment and happy people.

TESSIE: Ja, that's why you're all up here. None of you look very happy.

MATTHEW: Definitely not happy enough to appear on the news!

GLORIA: Shit – teevee news! Excuse me, Nurse ... whatever!
SHE SWITCHES OVER SELF-CONSCIOUSLY INTO ZULU.
Wini! Ezo Ngijabulisa!
TESSIE MAKES CLEAR SHE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND.

TESSIE: Hey?

GLORIA: I really resent your flippancy! Why should we look happy? My child was raped; her attacker has AIDS. No, Nurse, we're not the perfect family posed for a photoshoot!

TESSIE: I'm sorry, Mrs de Villiers. About your child. But I've seen too many to stop and cry.

INTERCOM (IN ENGLISH): Owing to the visit by Dr Williams, the Deputy Minister Health, access to the Hospital can not take place from the south side. Please use the northern entrance. And a final call to the Head of Hospital Security – or her Deputy? Please dial code B3!
REPEATS IN AFRIKAANS, ZULU AND XHOSA.

A LOUD NOISE OFF: BREAKTNG GLASS.

TESSIE: Now let me be straight with you people. I'm could be in big trouble being up here while on duty, but you are just in the way.

MATTHEW: But what are you doing up here?

TESSIE: Never mind. We have some trouble happening down there, because some of the sick cannot wait for a phone call from a secretary in Pretoria before they get the muti to make them stay alive! They want help.

MATTHEW: From us?

TESSIE: You are no help to anyone. You're all white.

MATTHEW: And feeling whiter by the second.

MAJUBA: Excuse me?

MATTHEW: Okay, you're off-white.

GLORIA: Trouble? What trouble!

TESSIE: I ... I need to bring ... some things here.

GERALD: We can help you.

GLORIA: Don't get involved.

GERALD: What must we do?

GLORIA: Father!!

TESSIE: Down the passage is a door to the left. No ID. Just a red ribbon stuck on with elastoplast. Open that door and go in. There are a few other cardboard boxes like that one. Bring the boxes here but with great care!

MATTHEW: What's in those boxes?
SHE OPENS THE MOST RECENT BOX. HE LOOKS.
You're joking.
SOME GO AND LOOK.

GLORIA INSTEAD PROWLs AROUND TRYING TO FIND A SIGNAL ON HER CELLPHONE.

GERALD: What is going on here, Comrade Nurse?

TESSIE: Shhh! Don't make a noise! When you get there, Comrade Doctor, there are 16 cardboard boxes. And if anyone drops one of them, I'll kill you. I promise. I'm a nurse. I know how to kill with kindness.

MATTHEW: Nurse Ratchett? Mad Mother Theresa?

GLORIA OPENS ANOTHER BOX AND TAKES OUT THE VIALS.

GLORIA: Jesus Christ!

MAJUBA: What!

GLORIA: Here they are! You! You!!

TESSIE: Yes.

GLORIA: You stole those drugs!!

TESSIE: Yes! Otherwise my babies will die.

GLORIA: And what about my child? Your child is lucky. Her nanny has three cellphones!

SHE AND MATTHEW EXIT.

GLORIA: We must do something! Speak to the right people! She's a criminal!

GERALD: We first do what she says. Let's fetch the boxes.

GLORIA: She's insane, Father!

GERALD: Maybe that's the best symptom you could wish for under these 'normal circumstances'. Come.
HE MOVES TO THE DOOR.
Gloria?

GLORIA TO DOOR WITH AND TURNS.

GLORIA: Come, Majuba, damn it! This exercise is not for whites only!

GERALD AND GLORIA EXIT.

MAJUBA PUTS ON MAKE-UP PEEVED.

MAJUBA: And if anyone ever calls me 'off-white' again, I swear to God, I'll platz!

SHE EXITS AFTER THEM.

FROM THE COVERED TV WE HEAR:

SHE: 'Congratulations, Doctor. That was a seventeen hour operation!

HE: 'Yes, and she's alive!'

SHE: 'You did it, Doctor!'

HE: 'We did it, Sister Debbie. No, don't worry, we're alone. Let me kiss you

SHE: 'Where's your watch? The one I gave you for your birthday

HE: 'It's oh my goodness I must've ... it probably slipped off and ...

SHE: 'And you sewed up the patient and left your watch inside her body? Doctor!'

HE: 'Silly of me. Never mind. Sister Debbie? Do you have the right time?'

DRAMATIC SOAP OPERA MUSIC SWELLS AS WE END THE ACT.

INTERVAL

ACT TWO

WE ARE IN THE SAME SETTINGS BUT THERE ARE 16 CARDBOARD BOXES WITH BABIES SLEEPING IN THEM. THESE ARE TESSIE'S BABIES.
MATTHEW AND MAJUBA ARE ALONE AND HOLDING TWO BABIES.

MATTHEW: Why don't they make a noise?

MAJUBA: Drugged.

MATTHEW: Mine's prettier than yours.

MAJUBA: Mine's whiter than yours.

MATTHEW: Off-white.

MAJUBA: I get so mad when they call me that.

MATTHEW: Hey?

MAJUBA: Because was educated outside South Africa. Because I speak without an African accent, they call me a Coconut!

MATTHEW: You have an African accent!

MAJUBA: I went to special classes to learn how to sound South African.

MATTHEW: Sound like me.

MAJUBA: Not like you. Not off-white South African. Black South African.

MATTHEW: I'm not off-white. I have a horrible heritage of pure-white chaos. Jewish persecution from the Dad, hence no foreskin. Atheist morals from the Mom, therefore no discipline. Catholic wife; no hope. White children. No future!

MAJUBA: I thought the reason all of you want to go to Oz was for a future?

MATTHEW: No, it's to get away from a past. You're pretty smart.

MAJUBA: We're all pretty smart. A lot of smart has happened in the few years since we became legal.
AWARE OF BABY.
I think it's pooped.

MATTHEW: They do that. Poep. Kak. Stink. Vomit. Burp. Then one day they say 'Dada?' and you forgive anything.

MAJUBA: I am a mother, Matthew.

MATTHEW: You don't talk about her much. Jenna?

MAJUBA: Jennifer. It's too ...

MATTHEW: Off-white.

MAJUBA: She's smart. She's nine going on eighteen. They're all on speed.

MATTHEW: Drugs?

MAJUBA: No! Fast forward. What took us a lifetime to experience from 8 to 10, they do in a month while they're 9. They know all the terrible secrets our parents kept from us.

MATTHEW: I don't understand.

MAJUBA: They have to. If they don't ... That baby you're holding is an AIDS baby.
HE LOOKS NERVOUS.
You see? Now you want to put it down.

MATTHEW: No, it's wet.

MAJUBA: A bodily fluid? So what are you going to do? Look at it. It's a little person. It can't be more than 10 days old.

MATTHEW: It looks older.

MAJUBA: It's dying. They get that expression as they're told by their guardian angel: 'Okay kid, mistake. Wrong destination. Pack your little lunchbox, we're moving on.'

MATTHEW: They're all dying?

MAJUBA: If they don't get help.

MATTHEW: There is no cure for this.

MAJUBA: I don't mean cure. I mean care. they weren't all 'off-white' do you think they'd be here? They'd be safe and sound, hidden behind locked doors, but given the best necessary medical care.

MATTHEW: She steals the drugs. That's monstrous.

MAJUBA: She steals the drugs to give the drugs. Why do you think these little creatures are still alive?

MATTHEW: They get those drugs?

MAJUBA: Yip, she steals from the living to give to the dying.

GERALD ENTERS HOLDING THREE ROLLS OF TOILET PAPER.

GERALD: There's no toilet paper. I had to go to the offices. I said it was an emergency and to bill the ANC. Where is everybody? Am I the only one doing nappy duty?

MATTHEW: Here, 'Father'. Hold this ...
HANDS GERALD THE BABY SEES THE STATE OF HIS SHIRT.
Shit!

MAJUBA: That's what it looks like.
THEY ALL STARE AT THE SHIRT.
Shall I play the maid? Hold my one ...
HANDS HER BABY TO MATTHEW, TAKES PAPER AND TRIES TO WIPE
THE SHIRT CLEANER. IT JUST GETS WORSE.
Take it off!

GERALD: We should all be wearing gloves!

MAJUBA: Shit is shit.

GERALD: Are there no surgical gloves around? Is there no structure here?

MATTHEW: It's sealed off, closed down, deserted and unused. Nothing here is supposed to work.

GERALD: Where do these babies come from? This is so unhygienic! I'll find you something to put on ...

MATTHEW: Throw that shirt away! It's not something I think I'll become fond of.

MAJUBA: Oh no, I wasn't going to wash your shirt! Fuck you! Master Matthew!

SHE THROWS THE SHIRT DOWN AND EXITS TO THE PASSAGE.

PAUSE.

BOTH MEN LOOK FROM ONE BOX AND BABY TO THE NEXT.

MATTHEW: I know what you're thinking.

GERALD: Really?

MATTHEW: We're both fathers and we've done it all with our babies, but I bet you're dreading it as much as I am.

GERALD: What?

MATTHEW: That one of these babies start crying and we have to pick them up and hug them and love them and catch their disease.

GERALD: Is it that easy to catch?

MATTHEW: I don't know. I always changed channels when the subject came up.

GERALD: Nurse Tessie says the drugs will keep them asleep.

MATTHEW: Or dead? Who can tell the difference? At least if they cry, they're alive.

GERALD: We'll ignore them and wait for the nanny.

MATTHEW: Good healthy liberal way of looking at things, Dr Nathan.
PAUSE.
They probably think you are a real doctor.

GERALD: It just stuck and became a habit.

MATTHEW: Well, Desmond Tutu has 99 doctorates, but he doesn't call himself Dr Dr Dr Dr Dr. Not even just Dr.

GERALD: It was an honour to get the degree.

MATTHEW: From some small college in the American Midwest which probably was expecting a real black hero of The Struggle and then they got you. Shame. Gerald Nathan who can't even change a nappy, let alone a regime!
HE IS AWARE OF GERALD'S STARING AT HIS NAKED TORSO.
What!

GERALD: You're getting an old man's body.

MATTHEW: Fuck you, Father!

GERALD: It's too late. You're stuck with it. Middle-aged spread.

MATTHEW: So I'll stand.
HE STANDS.
See? All gone!

GERALD: Steady, you'll die of suffocation.
HE LAUGHS AT MATTHEW WHO IS HOLDING HIS BREATH.
Let your breath out, Matthew. Show me the real you!
EVENTUALLY MATTHEW LETS HIS BREATH OUT WITH A TERRIBLE SIGH.
That's better.

MATTHEW: At least I'm not a carbon copy of you! Thank God I'm like Mom.

GERALD: A drunk?

MATTHEW: A good person.

GERALD: A good person who drinks too much.

MATTHEW: I don't drink too much.

GERALD: Your mother was two people. There was a wonderful witty girl who said all the right things at the wrong times. You didn't inherit that. She got me into trouble when I was desperately trying to hide my political leanings. She would insult the Boers and laugh at their affront. She was magnificent. And then she had you and lost interest in being the satirical life of the party. You were a damn difficult baby, Matthew, did your Mom ever tell you?

MATTHEW: She said I was a perfect little angel with lots of hair and a lovely laugh.

GERALD: No, dear boy, that was your sister. You were a bald ugly little goblin. You never stopped screaming and kept her awake for five years.

MATTHEW: Really? While you, of course, supported her all the way?

GERALD: No, I was fighting for freedom on behalf of millions of people who needed me.

MATTHEW: Mom and I needed you.

GERALD: Mom discovered vodka.

MATTHEW: My fault? You say it's my fault?

GERALD: That was the other Jane, the one that moved into my life after you were born. No more laughs. No more interest in the political arenas. In me. Just sarcasm. No wit. Bitter accusations. The woman I loved and married was gone.

MATTHEW: So I killed her?

GERALD: A car crash killed her.

MATTHEW: Yes, and two black children died because of it.

GERALD: Is that what you heard?
MAJUBA ENTERS WITH A SURGICAL GOWN IN HAND.
Keep it down. I can hear you both shouting from down the passage. Here. Cover your nakedness.

SHE HANDS THE GOWN TO MATTHEW WHO PUTS IT ON.

GERALD: So? There's no one here.

MAJUBA: Just sixteen dying babies.

GERALD: What happened to their sixteen mothers?

MAJUBA: I don't know. But since there are no sixteen mothers here, I can only surmise that they died. Or left without their poisonous baggage.

TESSIE WHEELS A TROLLEY WITH TAKE-AWAYS. ON IT IS HER BIG GHETTO-BLASTER WITH MUSIC.

MATTHEW: And you're pissed off that we will attract attention up here?

TESSIE: I'm the one with the radio. 'There's old Tessie again' they say as trolley past with boxes of babies! No one has stopped to ask 'What's in the box?' And when the baby cries, the music covers the sound.

GERALD: Don't they need respirators? Special treatment?

TESSIE: We have one respirator for every twenty babies. The ones under a kilo? Switch off. I choose the strong ones who might still have a chance.

GERALD: And there's another baby in that box?

TESSIE: No, take-aways.

MATTHEW: At last!

TESSIE: Now just don't be fussy, you people. I couldn't get your whole list, so be grateful for small mercies. Who wanted a sandwich?

GERALD: Please. On rye?

TESSIE: Sorry, a Chocolate Log. I got you two. Who wanted fresh orange?

MAJUBA: Is it fresh?

TESSIE: It's TAB. And you, Mister Matthew?

MATTHEW: You don't have to call me 'Mister' Matthew?

TESSIE: I call him 'Doctor' Nathan. I'm being polite. I know you're not a 'Mister'.

MATTHEW: I wanted some biltong!

TESSIE: I brought you some Gummi Bears.

MATTHEW: You found Gummi Bears! Here? I love Gummi Bears! Remember, old man? When we went on that holiday to Lourenco Marques in the old Buick and discovered Gummi Bears in the shop near the harbour? Gloria and I guzzled Gummi Bears until we were sick all over the hotel beds – while you and Mom went nightclubbing.

MAJUBA: L.M.? We lived in old L.M. for 4 years. Two blocks down from the Polana Hotel.

TESSA: Well, we have everything here now. Three minutes from the hospital. Gummi Bears, pornography, democracy, crime, crack, AIDS, corruption.

MAJUBA: We're just like your adopted homeland, Comrade Doctor, except our disguises are not as good.

MATTHEW: Have you noticed? (IN A COD ENGLISH ACCENT) 'Old Man'? Things are more open here.

GERALD: While my first world racism is worse?

MAJUBA: Come now, those British forefathers killed all aboriginals in Australia and Indians in America. Do you blame the few for being pissed off with the first world?

GERALD: But here we colonial devils kept you natives alive?

TESSIE: Ja, and behold me. The proud descendant of Zulu warriors and Xhosa princesses.

MAJUBA: Called 'Tessie Bredenkamp'?

TESSIE: There's a good Xhosa click somewhere in Xtessie
SHE DEMONSTRATES A BABY CRIES.
No man, sis, I woke a little angel.
SHE GOES TO THE BOX.
Tula tula ... shhhhh.
SWITCHES ON HER RADIO: A ZULU SOAP.
I try and create familiar sounds for them. Maybe the mother was Zulu.

THEY ALL LISTEN TO THE RADIO FOR A MOMENT. THE BLACKS REACT WITH AND LAUGH. THE WHITES ARE PERPLEXED.

GERALD: Is that a typical home scene?

TESSIE: Ja, the story is about the man who comes back from the mines and finds his family is massacred.

MAJUBA: And his house burnt down.

TESSIE: You listen to it?

MAJUBA: Sure.

TESSIE: Eish! Ja, shame, no money, no prospects and nobody.

MAJUBA: Pretty familiar.

GERALD ISN'T SURE IF THIS IS A JOKE. POINTS AT THE BABIES IN THE BOXES.

GERALD: I must say, they're very good. Radio soaps are a good muti.

TESSIE: I give them medicine otherwise there would be a lot of pain and discomfort.

GERALD: You do this alone?

TESSIE: You think I'm like that Mother Theresa?

MATTHEW: She didn't do anything alone. Always with at least twenty cameras.

TESSIE: There are a few dozen nurses and doctors who help. It's all very much against the rules. We'll all lose our jobs if you tell.

MATTHEW: I won't tell.

GERALD: I wish I could tell the world what you're doing here. It's magnificent.

TESSIE: You're so surprised?

GERALD: The last thing one expects here is compassion.

TESSIE: The only reason we're here is because of compassion. I don't know what you've read in the paper, Comrade Doctor ...

GERALD: You can call me Gerald. The doctor is honorary.

TESSIE: And honourable. Well, I don't have time to read, but when I clean up and I use newspapers to soak up the piss and the shit and baby vomit, I read the headlines and some of the stories. No man, those newspapers would make me die just of fear! I would never leave my house, let alone another country to come here.

GERALD: You're doing something!

TESSIE: I'm a nurse! It's my job.

GERALD: Breaking the rules like this?

MAJUBA: No, the rules are politics. The drugs are embargoed, because politicians must still work out with pharmaceutical companies who gets the highest cut and the biggest percentage. The drugs are not locked up because they are toxic. They are locked up because the politicians are toxic.

TESSIE: Ja.

GLORIA ENTERS.

GLORIA: I got lost. Every passage looks the same.
SHE HAS SOME TOILET ROLLS IN HAND.
Oh, you found some tissues?
HEARS THE RADIO SERIAL.
Is that television playing up again?

MATTHEW: Tessie's background noises.

TESSIE: The babies like it.

PAUSE.

GERALD: And?

GLORIA: It's okay. These Cuban doctors are so charming. They showed me x-rays. No damage. Sensi's going to be fine. It's like nothing happened. I'm so upset
AT LAST SHE BREAKS DOWN PICKS UP MATTHEW'S DISCARDED SHIRT AND WIPES HER FACE

MATTHEW: I wouldn't use that ...

GLORIA: Sorry, sorry, this is so un-me. I'm the tough cookie who never shows strain or emotion ... oh sis man. Poo!

GERALD: Can we take her home?

GLORIA: Yes, in about an hour. It's the blood test ...

TESSIE: HIV-tests don't take very long any more
PAUSE. A BABY CRIES. TESSIE PICKS IT OUT OF THE BOX AND SOOTHES IT.
Come on, little impi. You've got a wind. Make it go up or down. It's got to come out somewhere ...
THE BUNDLE FARTS.
Down! Viva!
SHE SITS ON THE FLOOR WITH THE BABY.
This is my favourite. I call him 'Samson' because he's got hair. And he's strong. He might be okay. There's another little tough one in that box near the wall 'Hot Stix'. But the others?

GLORIA: Now I know what Karel's mother went through, working for the Animal Welfare. 'Don't fall in love with the strays,' she always said.

GERALD: We hear all about the orphans. It's in our papers.

TESSIE: Hey? I must make a scrapbook for them.
TO THE BABY:
Did you hear, Samson? You're in all the overseas papers. As famous as Michael Jackson.

GERALD: What can we do? We sit in London. We feel so helpless.

TESSIE: Well, you're here now. Hold 'Samson'. Here! If you want to do something, hold this little boy. Let him feel the touch of a father. Of a grandfather. He has neither.
GERALD TAKES SAMSON NERVOUSLY.
Now talk to him. Go on, Comrade Nathan, tell him a story.

GERALD: I might wake him.

TESSIE: He is awake.

GERALD: His eyes are closed.

TESSIE: He's not dead, I promise you. He's awake. Tell him a story.

MATTHEW: That'll put him to sleep.

GLORIA: Shhhh. Go on Father.

PAUSE.

INTERCOM DOWN THE PASSAGE: AFRIKAANS LOTTERY NUMBERS.

GERALD: Once upon a time ... sorry, it's been so long ...

TESSIE: Then tell me the story. I'm as old as you are. You don't have to feel embarrassed. And I'm black. Pretend it's the old days. Educate me.

GERALD: Once upon a time ... there was Mama Bear, a Papa Bear and two Baby Bears. And the Papa Bear ... the Papa Bear was always out in the forest, trying to see if the hunters were coming to hurt his family. So ... so Mama Bear had to bring up the two Baby Bears more or less on her own. The older Baby Bear was very noisy and naughty, while the little Baby Bear ...

MATTHEW: Had lots of hair and a lovely laugh?

GLORIA: You know this story?

MATTHEW: Not the ending. ...

GERALD: And one day ... Papa Bear felt it was no longer safe to live under the big tree and wanted to move his family up into the hills. But Mama Bear liked where she lived because she ...

MATTHEW: Because she could drink the honey that dripped down the bark of the tree ...

GERALD: Is that where it came from?

MATTHEW: Yes. From the upstairs cupboard where no one ever looked.

GERALD: Funny, I never thought of the cupboard ...

GLORIA: Why don't I know this story?

GERALD: So Mama Bear kept the naughty Baby Bear, while Papa Bear went far away with the other Baby Bear.

GLORIA: What is this stupid story?

MATTHEW: And then Mama Bear died when she fell out of the tree having eaten too much honey?

GERALD: No, actually Mama Bear saw two little squirrels cross the road against the red light and yes, though she had too much honey in her, she stopped and showed for them to cross safely. But then another ... another Bear just crashed into Mama Bear's Cortina and shot her forward right into the two children ...

MATTHEW: Squirrels, Father.

GERALD: What?

MATTHEW: The story? It's two squirrels.

GERALD: Yes, two squirrels were killed. It wasn't Mama Bear's fault. But it was convenient to blame her. And Papa Bear for leaving her.

PAUSE.

MATTHEW: Fuck you, Gerald Nathan!

GLORIA: Matthew! How can you say that! He's your father!

GERALD: No, just a tired old man from his past.

MATTHEW EXITS. GERALD STARES DOWN AT THE LITTLE BUNDLE IN HIS ARMS.

GLORIA: What is it?

GERALD: Samson's looking at me. His eyes are open. I didn't make him sleep. He's looking at me.

TESSIE: He likes you.

GERALD: He's smiling ...

GLORIA: Let me see? Oh, he's so sweet ... Ja, this is the sweet part. The little ones.

MAJUBA: But some of them will soon be 16. No parents, no food, no home, no hope, crazy killing machines who will take your head off.

GLORIA: For heavens sake, Majuba!

MAJUBA: Take your head off for fun. Soon we fancy people will have to shoot the mad AIDS kids on our street before we open the electric gates so we can drive out in our new four-by-fours.

GLORIA: What country are you living in? Sometimes I just don't get you at all, you know?

TESSIE TAKES GLORIA'S HAND.

TESSIE: You think that's sweet? Come and meet my family this little girl's called 'Zola Budd'. You laugh? There's even a 'Hansie Cronje' in here somewhere, or was he last week? I think he died.

THEY GO OFF BETWEEN THE BOXES TALKING SOFTLY ABOUT THE BABIES.

GERALD: I never thought of the older ones ... God, I hope someone is ...

MAJUBA: Don't fall in love with the strays ...

GERALD: Where can I change a nappy? Is there a place out here?

GERALD MOVES AWAY WITH SAMSON IN HIS ARMS. HE EVENTUALLY EXITS INTO THE ADJOINING SLOPROOM. MAJUBA LOOKS AT HER WATCH. IMPATIENTLY PICKS UP HER CELLPHONE AND TRIES TO DIAL. NO LUCK.

MAJUBA: Fuck this technology. At least when we didn't have it, we didn't try and make it work!

THE TELEVISION ACTIVATES UNDER THE COVERING.

HE: 'The only reason you're there is because you're a blonde!'

SHE: 'No! got a brain as well ...'

HE: 'They're not interested in your brain, honey. They need a bit of window-dressing.'

SHE: 'A token blonde?'

HE: 'That's you.'

SHE: 'But I'm brunette. I assure you, deep down. Brown brown brown ...'

HE: 'Keep it a secret or you lose your job.'

MAJUBA TO TV.

MAJUBA: What is this crap?

SHE PULLS OFF THE COVER, BUT THERE'S NOTHING ON THE SCREEN. A PAUSE TO GIVE A SENSE OF SILENCE, PLACE, SPACE AND EMPTINESS.

AWARENESS OF THE SOUNDS OF THE DECAY: WATER DRIPPING, STEEL GROANING, WOOD SPLINTERING.

MATTHEW ENTERS.

MATTHEW: They've locked all the interleading doors.

MAJUBA: You probably tried the wrong doors.

MATTHEW: Where's my father?

MAJUBA: Nappy duty in the sloproom. What's this war between you two?

MATTHEW: Mind your own business.

MAJUBA: Make friends, Matthew. It's too late when you're at the funeral.

MATTHEW: I wish. What's he doing now? Always kissing babies for votes!

MAJUBA: Alright, if you reject him as a father, that's not my business.

MATTHEW: It's not.

MAJUBA: But you can't negate what he did in the Struggle. I know what it's like to be the child of a soldier.

MATTHEW: Soldier? Gerald Nathan? Don't make me laugh.

MAJUBA: Surely you don't believe those stupid stories?

PAUSE.

MATTHEW: Oh?

MAJUBA: You know?

MATTHEW: I didn't say anything about 'those stupid stories'

MAJUBA: Come on Matthew, they say the same shit about my father now. And my mother. They say it about everyone who was in the Struggle.

MATTHEW: That's comforting.

MAJUBA: They couldn't all have been informers and police spies.

MATTHEW: Who cares now?

MAJUBA: None of them were informers!

MATTHEW: My father was.

MAJUBA: There were no rules to fight the good fight. It took a World War to destroy the Nazis. Ours was a local struggle! We had to follow our instinct.

MATTHEW: Oh? Now suddenly 'they' are 'we'?

MAJUBA: Sometimes they made mistakes and trusted the wrong people. How can you believe a tatty rumour about your own father!

MATTHEW LOOKS OFF INTO THE ADJOINING ROOM.

MATTHEW: He sold secrets to the National Party Government. It's common knowledge.

MAJUBA: What secrets?

MATTHEW: How must I know? They were secret.

MAJUBA: Who told you?

MATTHEW: When I got to the Eastern Cape, I met up with some of the very people my father gave his life's blood for. The first thing they said was: 'Matthew Nathan? Your pa's a traitor to the Cause.' They laughed at me for being white. I got beaten up. Called a fucking racist. I hadn't been in a fight like that since primary school! Then they called me a fucking Jew.

MAJUBA: I don't believe a word of it. It's all shit, all that rubbish small people whisper about the gods.

MATTHEW: My father was no god. And if he was a god, maybe that's why I rejected him.

MAJUBA: We all reject our parents temporarily.

MATTHEW: No, I cursed God. They were all praying to Him, you see, and asking favours and He granted those favours and seemed to be on their side and I couldn't believe it!

MAJUBA: What are you talking about?

MATTHEW: The fucking Army. I was doing my two years like all the other brainwashed arseholes. South West. Fighting SWAPO.

MAJUBA: Yes, the present government of Namibia.

MATTHEW: Every onslaught against them by the SA troopies succeeded. We walked over them. They blew themselves up with their own landmines and the white boys laughed and thanked their white God. So I cursed Him. I didn't want to be part of His so-called human race.

MAJUBA: You seem to have managed to resign from that quite easily!

MATTHEW: I'm nicer at home with my wife and kids.

MAJUBA: That's good. And so SWAPO got you? I don't want to think it was God's revenge.

MATTHEW: Hey?

MAJUBA: Your leg?

MATTHEW: I should say yes and leave it at that.

MAJUBA: We can if you like. I'm not that interested.

PAUSE.

MATTHEW: I did it.

MAJUBA: You did it?

MATTHEW: They were moving us up into Angola. Talk of fighting the Cubans. The guys were excited and just wanting to kill kaffirs.

MAJUBA: Cubans are Commies, not kaffirs. We were the kaffirs.

MATTHEW: Commies. Kill communists! I knew some of them would be friends of my father. My mother. Maybe some of the people I saw in L.M. Such ordinary nice people who were just not allowed to go home. I just couldn't go there. So I shot myself in my foot.

MAJUBA: This is horribly ... funny.

MATTHEW: I missed my foot and the bullet ploughed through my leg and fucked it up for good.

MAJUBA: But you were spared Angola?

MATTHEW: Yes. I spent 4 months in a military hospital where I got septicaemia and nearly died.

MAJUBA: And then you moved to PE? I see God's hand in this somewhere. You really must've pissed Him off.

MATTHEW: Are we going to make jokes here?

MAJUBA: Shhh, don't shout! Do you want your father to hear?

THEY LOOK BUT GERALD IS STILL OFF.

MATTHEW: Who cares.

GLORIA: I care.

SHE HAS BEEN LISTENING. TESSIE IS BUSY CHANGING NAPPIES.

MATTHEW: You know nothing about any of this. You were always above it all. The clever girl with the lovely laugh.

MAJUBA: And the hair. Don't forget the hair!

MATTHEW: He could never do wrong, that old sheister. He was always your God.

GLORIA: Just my father.

MATTHEW: He could've taken me too. I wasn't that big. I would've liked growing up in London.

GLORIA: We were outside London.

MATTHEW: Instead I went to hell in a familiar place.

MAJUBA: Am I glad you're running off to live in Australia? You're like battery acid.

MATTHEW: Well, at least I'll be able to walk the streets of Sydney without having eyes in the back of my head. At least my children will be safe.

MAJUBA: Until you take them to a local seaside resort and a terrorist blows them up?

GLORIA: Our children are safe.

MATTHEW: Sorry. Have I missed something vital here? Why are we cooped up in this storeroom for unwanted piccaninns? Because your child is in this hospital, Gloria. Because your child was raped. That doesn't happen in a decent neighbourhood. I'd rather have battery acid in my veins than someone's knife in my back.

GLORIA: It's every mother's nightmare. Ask your wife sometime. What is her name?

MATTHEW: Pauline.

MAJUBA ECHOES THE NAME MOCKINGLY.

MAJUBA: 'Pauline ... Pauline'. Figures.

GLORIA: When you have kids and you're a mother, you keep on expecting the worst hoping the worst will never be as bad as you imagine.

MATTHEW: Optimistic.

MAJUBA: Practical.

GLORIA: When I walked into the house and found my traumatised little girl naked and crying, I knew the worst had happened beyond any of my most horrible nightmares.

MATTHEW: But if you know there are men out there who have been misinformed about what sex with children can do for them, do something about it!

GLORIA: What? Round up the loiterers and tramps, the out-of-work masses and the confused hordes? You're talking about the entire fucking country!

MATTHEW: Where did this thing start? Majuba? Was it your lot?

MAJUBA: My lot? Excuse me?

MATTHEW: Your witchdoctors? The sangoma-babble?

MAJUBA: I don't go to sangomas. I have a specialist at a private clinic.

GLORIA: We don't know where it started. I don't want to think about it now! It's over and she's fine. Now change the subject, Majuba.

MAJUBA: That's usually my job as part of the team. Gloria troubleshoots and I change the subject. The codephrase she gives me is: 'Majuba? Time to fetch the kids'.

MATTHEW: Then you change the subject?

GLORIA: It works.

MATTHEW: But this is not one of those times. If Sensi was raped by this man, why is everyone taking it so casually?

MAJUBA: It's complicated, Matthew, not casual!

GLORIA: Banjy!!!

MATTHEW: Who?

MAJUBA: The perpetrator of the crime.

GLORIA: You know, I think he was that gardener I employed some months ago.

MAJUBA: Yes, he was.

MATTHEW: He was?

MAJUBA: Yes. Jenna knows him too.

MATTHEW: Jenna knows this rapist too?

MAJUBA: He planned the herb garden and the girls helped him plant the herbs.

GLORIA: Why didn't you warn me!

MAJUBA: Why warn you? 'Gloria, your spoilt brat and my child are being nice to the historically-disadvantaged person you employ to enrich your walled garden?' Isn't that what we fancy people do to the peasants who work for us? We're nice to them?

MATTHEW: And then they rape you?

GLORIA: No, sorry. You knew this man was trying to endear himself to my child so that he could ... take advantage of her?

MAJUBA: He endeared himself to my child too. Jenna also liked him.

GLORIA: Well, thank God it didn't happen to her as well.

MATTHEW: So this man raped Sensi?

MAJUBA: You see, that's the complicated part ...

GLORIA: We don't know!

MAJUBA: After it happened, the police ...

GLORIA: Once the police arrived, you mean.

MAJUBA: It took a few special phone calls to get them to make us a priority case.

GLORIA: I'll never forget the sight of the children huddled in a heap and the sound of Sensi's sobbing.
SHE STARTS CRYING.
MATTHEW EMBRACES HER AND SHE PULLS AWAY.
Don't do that now! I want to be hugged when I'm happy, not when you're sorry for me. God! I feel so ... so fat!
SHE EXITS TO THE PASSAGE.

PAUSE.

MATTHEW: 'Children huddled in a heap'?

MAJUBA: Sensi wasn't raped.

MATTHEW: What? But.. ...

MAJUBA: Wait! I told you it was ...

MATTHEW: Complicated.

MAJUBA: The children were ... oh God ... the boy ...

MATTHEW: Banjy was there?

MAJUBA SUDDENLY GIGGLES.

MAJUBA: I think Banjy's gay.

MATTHEW: What? A gay historically-disadvantaged peasant?

MAJUBA: Because he's without a job and one of the lost generation, he's an easy solution.

MATTHEW: Isn't he a bit old for sympathy?

MAJUBA: Remember the Soweto Uprising of 1976?

MATTHEW: No. Before my time.

MAJUBA: It used to be my bedtime story. 'Once upon a time there was a revolution in Soweto. The schoolkids rose up in fury and burnt down their schools.' It's a long story, but has lots of blood and guts. My father would add noughts for effect. 'And thousands died to bring the Struggle home. So that one day we could live happily ever after.'

MATTHEW: Amen.

MAJUBA: Well, it seems the leaders in exile, like your father and mine, had sent these kids messages. 'Liberation before education.'

MATTHEW: I remember that. I used to want that! But I was just educated, never liberated!

MAJUBA: Well, there you are. But Banjy and his generation liberated the land and now they sit without education or jobs. And also with a virus that has no cure.

MATTHEW: Shit.

MAJUBA: Yea. I knew there was a punchline in this somewhere. It seems ... the children were playing and there was an incident.

MATTHEW: Sensi and Jenna?

MAJUBA: And Roberto.

MATTHEW: Not Banjy?

MAJUBA: Wait now, please. Roberto is a friend of the girls. In fact Jenna says he's Sensi's boyfriend. He's ... I think he's 12. They play like all kids play. Gloria's never at home. Sensi has her friends round to watch videos. They were watching a video. They played games, doctor-doctor. Like ER. It got out of hand.

MATTHEW: Come on, all kids play doctor-doctor.

MAJUBA: Copying the porno movie? I think not, Matthew. Not in our day.

MATTHEW: Jesus! You mean, they were ...

MAJUBA: Not watching the Teletubbies, no. Jenna said the one girl in the film was tied up and so ... so Roberto tied up Sensi's hands and ...

MATTHEW: You're not serious!!

MAJUBA: Jenna told me, eventually. I still don't know enough of the detail. The boy Roberto is big for his age. He went too far. He ... went too far.

MATTHEW: So it was rape!

MAJUBA: Jenna says it was not the first time with Sensi. Roberto was her ... boyfriend. Anyway, Gloria came home early. Found the two girls in the lounge. Sensi was without her clothes and with her hands tied and ...

MATTHEW: But the boy ...

MAJUBA: Jenna said was hiding behind the door. When the girls started crying, he got out of the room.

MATTHEW: But Gloria saw the porno video?

MAJUBA: God, the video! I don't know. No. I don't know! Sensi got hysterical. The word rape came out. Maybe she said it. Maybe Gloria said it ...

MATTHEW: And Banjy?

MAJUBA: Jenna said, when Sensi was asked, who did it?, she said it was Banjy. The easy solution. He was where they expected him to be. In a garden two blocks away, planting pink impatience and humming a BoyzIIMen song.

MATTHEW: Gloria doesn't know? Aren't you going to tell her?

MAJUBA: That her sweet innocent eight-year old baby girl fucks. Hello?

MATTHEW: I'm sorry, I find this ... can you be so sure about all this?

MAJUBA: Jenna told me everything. She's sworn me to secrecy. She's scared of Sensi. She says Sensi will kill her if she finds out I know.

MATTHEW: We're talking about eight year-olds, for fuck's sakes, Majuba.

MAJUBA: Yes. Eight year-olds now carry AK47's in third world civil wars. Eight year olds have sex. Eight year olds are different to what we once were.

TESSIE: Everything is different to what it once was.

SHE HAS BEEN LISTENING AS SHE STANDS ROCKING A BABY.

MATTHEW: What are we going to do?

TESSIE: Tell the mother. Mothers must know.

MAJUBA: No. Not always.

TESSIE: Is there no father?

MATTHEW: No. And the grandfather is no help.

TESSIE: Eish! Is there nobody to listen?

MAJUBA: Where's Gloria!

SHE LOOKS AROUND PANICKING.

TESSIE: She must be outside. It's just me in here and the Comrade Doctor in there.

MAJUBA: We're going to change the subject. Gloria mustn't know.

MATTHEW: 'Time to fetch the kids'?

MAJUBA: Where did she go?

SHE EXITS AFTER GLORIA.

PAUSE.

INTERCOM HEARD DOWN THE PASSAGE SPANISH:
'Calling Dr Roderiquez? Report to Casualty.'

MATTHEW: Why would children make up something like that?

TESSIE: Kids make up crazy stories, sometimes to hide the truth. Sometimes when they want to be noticed. They want to be special.

MATTHEW: It's such a terrible lie.

TESSIE: But so easy to believe. I would call it rape. This boy cannot take sex like that from a child, even with permission. It's rape.

MATTHEW: I must sit ... this damn leg ...

HE SITS.

TESSIE: Couldn't doctors fix it?

MATTHEW: No. I'd really done a good job. Severed a nerve. You know the one?

TESSIE: Limping doesn't make you look bad. It's quite sexy.

MATTHEW: You serious?

TESSIE: No, just making up a story to be noticed. We old black women also need to be loved!

MATTHEW: I love you, Nurse Tessie.

TESSIE: You're a liar, but thank you.

MATTHEW: I need some fresh air. Do any windows in the passage open? Some of them have no glass. Just breathe.

MATTHEW: And a toilet!

GLORIA ENTERS.

GLORIA: There are six loos down the passage. But don't pull the chain.

TESSIE: Come, Master Matthew, let the old nanny show you ...
TO GLORIA:
Look after my little family ...?

TESSIE AND MATTHEW EXIT.

INTERCOM HEARD FROM DOWN THE PASSAGE SPANISH:
'Dr Gonzales? Report to Casualty, Dr Gonzales?'

GERALD STILL HOLDING SAMSON IS IN THE DOORWAY OF THE ADJOINING ROOM.
GLORIA DOESN'T KNOW SHE'S BEING WATCHED. SHE TRIES TO RECOVER
HERSELF. THEN LOOKS UP AND SEES GERALD.

GLORIA: Hi.

GERALD: Hi. You okay?

GLORIA: Yes. No. Maybe. I don't know.
PAUSE
Would you mind if asked you something?

GERALD: Yes. No. Maybe. I don't know.

GLORIA: No, it's okay.

GERALD: What do you want to know?

GLORIA: That file? With the elephant on it? What was that really about?

GERALD: You want to know now? I'm surprised Matthew never told you, as an act of
revenge against me?

GLORIA: I wouldn't have listened.

GERALD: It's an old urban legend, Gloria. I'm surprised people still repeat it.

GLORIA: Not many people. He loves you under all that thick skin.

GERALD: I don't doubt that. The skin he got from me. But it's true.

GLORIA: I don't want to hear more.

GERALD: I did sell secrets to the apartheid regime. The file with the elephant on the cover?

GLORIA: No...!!

GERALD: Let me talk, Gloria.

GLORIA: Father, it doesn't matter any more!

GERALD: We did a lot of planning in London during the 80s. We had an Ultimate File for Action against Pretoria that would've made the Middle East look like a picnic. The war in Angola was a serious one. Many people died, more than anyone has counted or imagined.

GLORIA: My Karel was in that war.

GERALD: Yes, I always found that very ironic. That my daughter would marry a soldier from the other side.

GLORIA: Karel was a good man. He hated fighting for the other side.

GERALD: They all admit to that now.

GLORIA: Karel died just as the past was becoming the future.

GERALD: And you're not angry?

GLORIA: Angry? Yes, I didn't hug him enough.

GERALD: And bitter?

GLORIA: No. A country doesn't kill your husband and rape your child.

GERALD: Do you want to talk about it, Princess?

GLORIA: It's over. She's ... she's okay. Let's not look back.

GERALD: I've had to look back, writing the book. Making contact with one of the BOSS agents in London. He called me 'Oom'. I gave him information about the training camps in Zambia. Trivial stuff that really amounted to nothing.

GLORIA: Why? What was the point?

GERALD: They promised to keep Matthew safe. They promised the Army wouldn't send him up into the war zones. They'd keep him close to home.

GLORIA: Does he know this?

GERALD: I don't think so.

GLORIA: No. Look what he did to himself to get out of it.

GERALD: Yes. It was a total fuck-up both our sides, if you'll excuse my French.

PAUSE.

GLORIA: Is that all?

GERALD: I now have a crippled son who wants to kill me.

GLORIA: No, I mean, is that all to the story of your great betrayal? Nothing juicier?

GERALD: Sorry.

GLORIA: As I thought. A feeble rumour that doesn't justify repeating.

GERALD: I appreciate your professional opinion.

GLORIA: It's on the house.

PAUSE.

I want to hug you, but I'm scared I'll squash the baby.

TESSIE ENTERS.

TESSIE: Okay, they're bringing your child to Reception. She asked if she could give the flowers to the Minister.

GLORIA: For heavens sake!

TESSIE: She'll be on the tv-news!

GLORIA: Shit – teevee news!

GERALD: Go be there with her.

GLORIA: God, the fucking media ... that's all I need ... where's my bag ...

GERALD LOOKS DOWN AT THE BABY IN HIS ARMS.

GERALD: Samson. Samson Gerald Nathan. Here, he's still dry.

TESSIE TAKES SAMSON.

TESSIE: No more fairy stories?

GLORIA: Is there a mirror here? I need to put on some lipstick. If I'm going to be on TV ...

MATTHEW AND MAJUBA ENTER.

MATTHEW: Wonderful smell of dagga out there.

TESSIE: Probably some of the orderlies having a smoke before they go back into hell. We're due in Casualty ... LOOKS AT HER WATCH. ... in thirty minutes.

MAJUBA: Lipstick? Gloria, why are you wearing your media mouth?

GLORIA: They're here.

MAJUBA: Shit. Teevee news?

GLORIA: I can handle it.
SHE LOOKS AT HER REFLECTION IN A SILVER DISH.
I need earrings!

MAJUBA: Here.
SHE HANDS GLORIA HER EARRINGS, MAYBE ALSO A SCARF.

TESSIE: Dr Nathan?
HANDS HIM BACK THE BABY.
Take the baby.

GERALD: What do you mean?

TESSIE: 'Samson Gerald Nathan'. Take Samson. He has no home. He has no mother and no father. No auntie and no uncle. Nobody.

GERALD: I can't just take somebody's baby.

TESSIE: You're a doctor. You're respected. You've got money and contacts. You can afford the right treatment for him.

GERALD: I know nothing about this baby!

MAJUBA: Samson liked your story?

GERALD: Yes.

TESSIE: Ja, what more do you want. You make each other feel special.
HANDS ANOTHER BABY TO MATTHEW.
And you. Take.

MATTHEW: What are you doing, Nurse Tessie?

TESSIE: Take 'Zola Budd'.

MATTHEW: Hey? No, man, I'm flying back to PE!

MAJUBA: Then here ...
TAKES SOME PILLS OUT OF HER BAG.
Give her a bit of a valium before you leave for the airport. Put her in your hand luggage.

TESSIE: Ja, no one will know. She'll sleep all the way.

MAJUBA: And I doubt if they will notice her little skeleton in those X-ray-machines.

MATTHEW: I'll be caught, for God's sake!

MAJUBA: Then you can say: 'I didn't know about this. This is a stowaway!' And then they will just throw Zola Budd on the rubbish heap with the rest of the garbage.

SHE HANDS THE PILLS TO GLORIA WHO LOOKS GRATEFUL AND TAKES SOME.
TESSIE HANDS A BABY TO MAJUBA.

TESSIE: A really dark one for you.

MAJUBA: Hang on, I've already got a really nice dark one.

TESSIE: I know. But this is 'Hot Stix'. This little man will give you a second chance to make it work.
TO GLORIA:
And which one do you want? The one you seem to like is called 'Whoopy'.
PAUSE.
GLORIA HAS BEEN DEEP IN THOUGHT.

GLORIA: I've just had a fucking brainwave! This is what I've been waiting for! Tessie, my company can do things for you! We can make things happen for your babies. Majuba we must get those cameras in here!

MAJUBA: What are you thinking now?

GLORIA: This could be the biggest thing since the Live Aid Concert. Adopting Babies. Internet. Stars. Corporates. Names. MTV. Oprah! God, imagine!

MATTHEW: Horror stories!

MAJUBA: Interesting.

GLORIA: Unique!

GERALD: Let's leave all that till later. Come, Gloria, let's go.

GERALD HAS ALSO BEEN GETTING READY TO APPEAR ON TV.

TESSIE: Ja, her child's going to be on the tv-news!

MAJUBA: Why? Leave the kid alone!

TESSIE: She's just giving flowers to the Deputy-Minister.

MAJUBA: Oh. Oh? Is that why the warpaint's on?

GLORIA: The Minister. ...

MAJUBA: No, Acting Deputy-Minister, you mean.

PAUSE.

GLORIA: We should've sent that new girl in marketing.

MAJUBA: Or me. No, it's okay. I'll be nice to the understudy Minister, but there are other priorities. Gloria, Sensi needs ...

GLORIA: I know what she needs!

MAJUBA: Gummi Bears. A Barbi doll.
SHE TAKES CONTROL.
Okay, here's the plan, people. Gerald and Matthew are going home with Gloria and Sensi. Now.

GLORIA: No ...

MAJUBA: Yes! Now! I can throw flowers at the Assistant Deputy-Minister.

GLORIA: Matthew has a plane to catch.

MATTHEW: Only tomorrow. I have some unfinished business ...
HE LOOKS AT GERALD.
I want to go home. I really look forward to being with my family.

MAJUBA: Your sister has a great walled mansion. Her home is your home. Gerald?

GERALD: I did book a hotel.

MAJUBA: That hotel doesn't take babies.

GLORIA LOOKS FROM HER BROTHER TO HER FATHER.

GLORIA: A family dinner. At home ...

MAJUBA: Why not?

GLORIA: It's not going to work, Not after all these years ...

MAJUBA: Worth a try, Gloria.

MATTHEW: Do you have enough space for us?

MAJUBA: Are you joking? You're talking about our Gloria Nathan de Villiers!

TESSIE: There's always space for family.

GLORIA SIGHS.

GLORIA: Eh ... well ... I'm having renovations done, so you and Father will have to share a room.

MATTHEW: Are you serious??

MAJUBA: You can talk in your sleep, Matthew. Maybe someone in the room will hear what's really on your mind.

TESSIE: That's good, the child needs to be with her family.

MATTHEW: Ah, so we must pretend to be one, if only for her sake.

GLORIA: And mine.
THAT SLIPPED OUT.
Eh you know what I mean ...

MATTHEW: Too much lipstick ... if you don't mind me saying ...

GLORIA: No ... thanks ...

SHE ADJUSTS HER LIPSTICK.

MAJUBA: And take a rain cheque.

GLORIA: Of course I meant you to come too! We'll do something fabulous. Try out the new kitchen!

MAJUBA: Jenna's with her father for the weekend anyway.

GLORIA: Oh, that's a shame

MAJUBA: Yip. I'll hang around here and represent the firm. This is a difficult old Comrade. He used to babysit me in Zanzibar.

MATTHEW: You see, you went everywhere. I went nowhere.

GLORIA: But shouldn't I also stay?

MAJUBA: Off-white's better and speaks the lingo.

TESSIE: Do you need me to change 'Hot Stix'?

MAJUBA: He's already wet. Will you take him, Gloria? I'll pick him up tomorrow morning?

GLORIA: What's the difference? One orphan baby, ten orphan babies ...
AS GLORIA AND MAJUBA EXIT.

Okay, the idea of a baby lottery is not what I have in mind, but imagine if we could find homes for the orphans, with international visibility and sell some ad space?

MAJUBA: Sponsors?

GLORIA: Prizes!

MAJUBA: There's your cheap streak again! Prizes! No, I think ...

GLORIA: Excuse me, doll, who won the award as the top ...

THEY'RE GONE WITH THEIR BABIES.

MATTHEW: Wait! I want to follow you home.
HE TURNS TO GERALD.
You want a lift, you old fucker.

GERALD: So you can shoot me in the car and dump my body on the freeway?

MATTHEW: It happens all the time in this city.

GERALD: Yes, we'd like a lift.

MATTHEW: Okay. But if you snore, I'll smother you with a pillow.

GERALD: It's the best way to kill an old parent, Matthew. You leave no clues.

MATTHEW: Well, Father, this is one for the book.

MATTHEW EXITS WITH HIS BABY.

TESSIE: I didn't know you people make jokes about death so easily?

GERALD: It helps us live.
LOOKS DOWN AT SAMSON.
This must be illegal?

TESSIE: Yes.

GERALD: I can't just walk out with someone's baby.

TESSIE: No one wants it. I was the parents till now and now you can be the parents.
HANDS HIM THE TEDDY BEAR ORIGINALLY FOR SENSI.
The eight-year old going on forty doesn't need toys. Here Papa Bear.
GERALD JUST STARES AT HER.
And now this staring?

GERALD: Are you real? I mean, not a dream or the hallucination of an angel or something?

TESSIE: Dr Nathan, real angels are allowed to sleep and they don't have such swollen feet.

GERALD: You know I'm not a real doctor.

TESSIE: And I'm not a real angel.

GERALD: The ANC took my picture off their wall.

TESSIE: Never mind, I'll put you up on mine.

GERALD: And these other unwanted babies?

TESSIE: God will provide. Isn't that what they say?

GERALD: And if He doesn't?

TESSIE: Then pity God, darling. I'll give Him something to remember me by.

GERALD EXITS WITH BABY.

THE INTERCOM BOOMS DOWN THE PASSAGE SPANISH:

'Dr Castro? Report Casualty, Dr Castro?'

THE TELEVISION ACTIVATES UNDER THE CLOTH:

HE: 'How can it end like this?'

SHE: 'What choice do we have?'

HE: 'We could shoot ourselves?'

SHE: 'Too messy.'

HE: 'Pills?'

SHE: 'I...can't we just agree for once?'

HE: 'You mean?'

SHE: 'Yes just agree for once?'

HE: 'Okay I agree. I agree!'

MUSIC.

TESSIE LIFTS THE COVER, BUT THERE IS JUST STATIC.

TESSIE: Eish!
MAJUBA COMES BACK INTO THE ROOM.
This teevee is acting very strange.

MAJUBA: Aren't you supposed to go on duty?

TESSIE: I'm waiting for another nurse to take my place here.

MAJUBA: She's probably delayed at Reception.

TESSIE: Ja.

PAUSE.

MAJUBA: I'll do it!

TESSIE: Ja?

MAJUBA: No, it's okay. I'll sit with them till she comes.

TESSIE: The political people down there won't miss you?

MAJUBA: And vice-versa.

TESSIE: I'll be busy all night!

MAJUBA: I've got all night.

TESSIE LEAVES.

MAJUBA PUTS ON THE BLANKET WE SAW HER COVERED WITH AT THE START.
LOOKS AROUND THE ROOM AT THE BOXES. AT THE TV UNDER THE CLOTH.
SHE TURNS ON TESSIE'S RADIO. A RELIGIOUS SERMON IN XHOSA.
MAJUBA SLOWLY TAKES OFF HER ELEGANT SHOES AND RUBS HER SORE FEET.
TAKES OFF HER RINGS. HER WATCH. HER GLAMOROUS FACADE.

THE CHOIR SINGS ON THE RADIO.

SHE PICKS A BUNDLE OUT OF A BOX AND CRADLES IT.

JOINS IN THE SINGING AS SHE CLOSES HER EYES.

END