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UNTOMBI NETHAMBO LAKHE LEKENTUCKY

The Translation of Popular Romantic Fiction into isiZulu

by

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A RESEARCH REPORT

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MASTER OF ARTS IN TRANSLATION

Supervisor: Dr Libby Meintjes

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ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the challenges involved in introducing popular romantic fiction into the Zulu literary system, which currently does not include this type of genre. The study involves the translation of extracts from the Mills & Boon novel, *Blind Date Marriage,* into isiZulu under the title of *UNtombi nethambo lakhe leKentucky*. In her role as the translator, the author discusses the important cultural (and other) factors that need to be taken into account in the translation of popular romantic fiction into isiZulu. This is done through a descriptive analysis of the cultural context adaptation strategies adopted by the translator in the process of producing the target text and of the extent to which the target culture/system and its linguistic norms necessitate the re-contextualisation of the source text for the new audience.

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Translation in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

_____

(Name of Candidate)

_____ day of _____, 2010

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INTRODUCTION

It is a well-known fact that African cultures are primarily oral-based, with the histories of its people having previously been passed down from generation to generation through oral recitation. With the advent of colonialism, the proselytizing missionaries brought with them their writing systems and African languages thus passed from being purely oral in nature to also being scripted. By comparison, information regarding the reading habits of people whose languages have undergone this transition is rather less forthcoming. Have they, in fact, developed any reading habits? While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to seek to establish quantitative evidence of the reading habits of the Zulu people in particular, it is nonetheless a point of interest that is considered in the discussion.

Somewhere in Britain, one Mills & Boon novel is sold every 6.6 seconds (Borland, 2008). This astounding piece of information is the foundation upon which the following questions are based, questions that ended up being central to the formulation of the research question: if these books are so popular in their original versions, how about a Zulu version of the same? People obviously like to read them, but what about the Zulu people – do they enjoy reading? And, more pertinent to the issue at hand, would they enjoy reading a Mills & Boon novel that is written in isiZulu? Seeing as such does not already exist in isiZulu and as this translator harbours no delusions of being a writer, translation was the ideal solution. Having reached this point in her reflection, it then fell upon the translator to choose a Mills & Boon novel that would be suitable for translation, but what would be the grounds for suitability? And, in the interest of this research paper, what purpose would such a translation accomplish?

Chapter One deals with a number of aspects, the point of departure for this discussion being a review of the history of Mills & Boon novels, their provenance and the reason for their sustained popularity more than 100 years after their inception. Although their sales figures might paint a pretty picture of great popularity, Mills & Boon novels are not to everyone's liking, and it is important that we consider both the point of view of those who advocate the propagation of this genre of literature and the point of view of those who are vehemently opposed to it.

Mills & Boon novels fall squarely into the romantic fiction genre whose main purpose is to provide light and entertaining reading, with the prerequisite happy ending to every story. The stories inevitably revolve around a couple who meet, are either initially attracted to each other but have to overcome great adversity in order to be together, or meet and are initially repulsed by each other but, as the story progresses, they discover their love for each other and all is well that ends well. These stories, however, are based solely on western courtship rituals which are clearly not the same as African courtship rituals. Brief consideration is therefore given to traditional Zulu courtship and modern Zulu courtship today. The end of Chapter One expands on the main question that this research paper intends to answer: **what does the translation of romantic fiction into isiZulu need to take into account?** The last section of the Chapter, the Rationale, discusses the reasons for which such an undertaking is of interest.

As previously mentioned, part of the task of conducting this research paper included choosing a Mills & Boon novel that would be deemed as suitable for translation after having met the requirements established by the translator. These grounds for suitability and the reasons for the final choice of source text are discussed in greater detail under the Rationale.

In Chapter Two, the discussion focuses on the review of the literature that is pertinent to it. The genre of romantic fiction is discussed at some length. This is followed by a review of the Zulu literary system in an attempt to understand how it has developed since its inception, to provide an overview of the kind of reading material that is available within in and to understand, since we wish to introduce the genre of romantic fiction into a system where it currently does not exist, if it would be possible to create a place for it within that system. Chapter Two also presents the Theoretical Framework and the theoretical concepts that inform it. Finally, the Methodology section details the manner in which the analysis of the translation is handled.

In Chapter Three, the translation of the source text into the target text is analysed in detail. The purpose of this analysis is to formulate an answer as to what needs to be taken into account during the translation of romantic fiction into isiZulu. As this translation serves as to introduce a genre of literature that does not exist in the target culture, there are many elements that need to be taken into consideration when carrying out the translation. The purpose of the translation analysis is to explain the choices made by the translator during the translation process, choices that were informed by the discussion under the Literature Review and Theoretical Framework and by the translator's innate knowledge of the target culture and language norms. The analysis is structured under different headings that correspond to those salient elements of the target culture and its language norms which it was necessary to take into consideration during the translation process and incorporate into the target text.

The Conclusion reviews all the work carried out in the study with the intention of gauging the usefulness of this translation exercise as a means of introducing a literary genre that currently does not exist in the target language. We discuss to what extent the translation has been

successful and provide an idea of what the final product should look like in the ideal eventuality of such an endeavour reaching the stage of publication.

CHAPTER ONE: Mills & Boon and romantic Zulus

1.1 A History of Mills & Boon

Mills & Boon is a publishing company that was established in 1908 by Gerald Mills and Charles Boon. Their aim was to publish books on a variety of subjects but, by 1913, the company had "discerned a growing appetite among women readers for escapist reading and decided to concentrate on hardback romantic fiction" (The Independent, 2008). The company only began specifically to concentrate on publishing romances in the 1930s, and it can currently be described as the UK's undisputed market leader in romance fiction publishing. In the early 1970s, Mills & Boon merged with a Canadian publishing company, Harlequin Books, and the new company was known as Harlequin Mills & Boon Limited, itself a subsidiary of Harlequin Enterprises Ltd.

Mills & Boon celebrated its centenary in 2008 and in its 102 years of existence, the company has developed into a publishing phenomenon: "Their books are translated into 25 languages and sell in 100 international markets. They have a stable of 1,300 authors around the world, many of whom make millions but most of whom prefer to lurk behind *noms de plume*. A jaw-dropping 35 million titles are sold every year worldwide, seven million in the UK. Flying in the face of public condescension (and mainstream publishing trends), they publish 70 new titles each month and pulp any unsold copies after three months" (The Independent, 2008).

As of 2007, Mills & Boon has 11 series under which it produces several titles each month. These include: *Modern, Romance, Blaze, By Request, Medical, Historical, Desire 2-in-1, Special Edition, Super-romance, Intrigue* and *Spotlight*.

1.2 Literary criticism of Mills & Boon novels

There can be no doubt as to the classification of Mills & Boon novels as formulaic literature, the main distinctive feature of which is "the dominant influence of the goals of escape and entertainment. Because such formulaic types…are used as a means of temporary escape from the frustrations of life, stories in these modes are commonly defined as subliterature (as opposed to literature), entertainment (as opposed to serious literature), or in terms of some other pejorative opposition" (Cawelti, 1976: 13). Joseph McAleer describes the novels as "a kind of guarantee of an easy, thrilling and satisfying read with an obligatory happy ending. This flavourful confection, wrapped in a brightly coloured paperback cover with a dreamy scene, is to many addictive in its escapist nature" (McAleer, 1999: 2).

This categorisation as popular literature has led to Mills & Boon novels being perceived in a negative and derogatory light, due mainly to their perceived lack of variety in plotlines, the inevitability of their happy endings, and a more simplistic writing style than mainstream literary works. Further criticism levelled against Mills & Boon by Julie Bindel is that it perpetuates stereotypes and propaganda. Bindel "would go so far as to say it is misogynistic hate speech", and in a heavily critical article on Mills & Boon novels, she proceeds to lift examples from various novels as proof of that (Cummins and Bindel, 2008).

Bindel's comments elicited a flood of angry responses from fervent Mills & Boon readers and, in a response to Bindel, Daisy Cummins states the following: "Let's start with the first old chestnut that's used against these books: that they are pulp fiction written in purple prose. Well, they have never been presented as contenders for literary prizes and therefore need not offend anyone who would denigrate them on this basis. These books started out as serials, novellas written to appeal

to women who pick them up for an exotic, escapist treat" (Cummins and Bindel, 2008). Indeed, as McAleer points out, the Mills & Boon guideline for aspiring authors is quite clear on this matter: "We're in the business of providing entertainment, a short foray into the emotions. Our readers don't expect to read about the sort of petty worries they can encounter any day of their lives, such as an overdue library book, or the sort of serious problems which cause too much heartache or anguish. We're talking about escapism. But escapism must be based on reality" (McAleer, 1999; 2).

1.3 Romantic Zulus?

With the background of Mills & Boon novels described as above, the proposed translation of a Mills & Boon novel into isiZulu takes on varied and interesting dimensions. The very notion of romance within a Zulu cultural context is not one that can be equated to its Western counterpart as the Western idea of romance does not translate into Zulu culture: there is no tall, dark and handsome Prince Charming waiting on the wings to come and sweep Cinderella off her feet, ride off into the sunset with her and they both live happily ever after[1]. How it is possible, then, to speak of romance within a Zulu cultural context? Are there any romantic Zulu men out there and, if so, what established courtship patterns do they employ?

Before the onset of the colonial era, male and female roles were quite clearly defined within the household and these were not easily interchangeable. Traditionally, the Zulu nation is one of

[1] When discussing this thesis with my older brother, he amused me by remarking that isiZulu and romance do not mix too well as the language is a language of warriors and it has no place for romance, a point of view which he undoubtedly s hares with the majority of the Zulu people.

farmer-gatherers. The men would tend to the livestock as cows were a measure of a man's wealth and the birth of a female child was appreciated since she represented wealth to the family in that she would bring in yet more cows as her dowry when the moment came for her to be married off. A male child, however, would be even more precious as he would ensure the continuity of the family name. He would also be the heir to his father's wealth as customary law dictated that inheritance be passed through the male line. Also, and especially during the reign of King Shaka, men were warriors. They were the protectors of not only their families but of the whole nation. The role of the female within the household was to cook, clean, bear children and cater to all the needs of the head of the house: the male.

All of this is not to say that there was no romance per se, only that the understanding of romance is culturally defined. Men would court women but this did not happen over candlelit dinners with roses and champagne. Rather, he would court her with words; charm her with his impressive command of the language, its idiomatic expressions, and its sheer poetry. In isiZulu, this courtship ritual is called *ukweshela.* In his book entitled *Kusadliwa ngoludala*, Christian Themba Msimang (1975) explains in great detail how the process of *ukuqoma* (a girl choosing a lover) would be carried out: here, we provide a brief summary.

As previously explained, the role of the woman in the household was to oversee all domestic chores, and young girls were trained in this from an early age. One of their tasks was to fetch water from the river, and young men would take full advantage of this opportunity to converse with young maidens far from the prying eyes and ears of strict parents and chaperones. Young men would don their finest attire and waylay the girls as they made their way to the river. Courtship etiquette required that the young men attempt to charm their target by displaying their

mastery of the language, but this required that the girls be willing to hear them out. If a girl was not willing to give a young man the chance to express his interest in her, he would be obliged to force her to listen, going so far as to overthrow the pot of water that she had already fetched from the river, thus obliging her to go back to the river once again. Young men would also force their attentions on young girls by physically holding them back and twisting their arms, inflicting pain in the name of courtship. Young girls who took a long time in fetching water from the river would get a bad reputation as being of loose morals, and in the interest of preserving their good names, they would even go so far as to feign disinterest in the very suitors that they longed for.

IsiZulu has a number of idioms that have to do with courtship which are interesting given the nature of this study. When courting a young woman, a young man would use courting language, including the use of any of the idioms listed below. While candlelight dinners were not the order of the day when it came to wooing a partner, it seems that the alternative method of Zulu men of using idiomatic language as a seduction tool was equally as effective, and it is of interest to us to consider these idioms and be aware of their cultural significance. As a literal translation of these idioms into English does not always convey what is meant by them, it is their meaning which is discussed here.

"Dudlu mntanethu! Zala abantu ziye ebantwini, akukho ntombi yagana inyamazane". Here, a young man would be approaching a young maiden who already has a suitor and he would be informing her that he is also a human being like her suitor and not an animal, or that even if she turns him down, she will one day accept another person's advances and not those of an animal.

"Gegelagege, ntaba zonke ziyangigegela". Here, a young man would be asking of a young woman that she take pity on him and accept his advances as nothing else is going well for him.

"Oseyishayile akakayosi, oseyosile akakayidli kanti noseyidlile udle icala". The sentiment behind this idiom is that the fact of a young woman already having a suitor is not entirely problematic as she can always be lured away from that suitor by another.

Along with these idioms of courtship, isiZulu has certain expressions that are used to describe the beauty of a woman. To cite but a couple of examples: if a young woman had dark skin, this was much appreciated and she would be called "*indoni yamanzi*", likening her complexion to the fruit of berry trees that grow on riverbanks. Msimang (1975) further explains that it is a new concept that young women look down upon dark skin so much that they use western products in an attempt to lighten their skin tone. Similarly, it is also a relatively new development for young women to want to be slim and have a "figure", whereas traditionally, a beautiful Zulu woman would have a full figure. A young woman with beautiful eyes was said to have eyes like a dove's and dimples were particularly attractive. As for the attractiveness of a male to a female, his attractiveness for her would not depend on his looks or his appearance, some of the determining factors according to the western ideal of romance. His attractiveness would be based on how many cows he had, which was a good measure of his ability to protect and to provide for her and any future children they would have together.

The onset of the colonial era, heralded by the arrival of the Dutch, the Afrikaner trek to the then Transvaal, the discovery of gold and diamonds in present-day Gauteng and the ascent of the National Party to power in 1948, together with its apartheid legislation, brought dramatic change to the whole country. With the launch of the migrant labour system, the family unit as already described suffered unprecedented upheaval: men were separated from their families for seemingly interminable stretches of time to go and work in the mines and with the removal of the

head of the father-mother-child hierarchy, many households were then headed by the matriarch of the family during the absence of the male, and over decades the role of the male within the family unit has been eroded to such an extent that, today, we are currently faced with the situation where to be male is no longer necessarily to be the only able provider in your home. The Zulu male has been forced to adapt accordingly.

The development of communications technology has bestowed upon the world the television, radio and internet, to mention but a few examples of technological development. We are today comfortable with the adage that the world has become a global village, given how technology has inevitably revolutionised the lives of even the most self-contained nations on earth. What the onset of this revolution signified and what it continues to signal, however, was the infiltration of Western culture into all the cultures that it came into contact with, and the Zulu nation was no exception.

Contact with the early missionaries led to a change in many things: clothing became westernised with a shift from the traditional cow-hide male and female coverings to the cloth pants, skirts and tops of today. Traditional religious beliefs were compromised with the advent of Christianity and Mvelinqangi was renamed God. Romance would not have been exempt, and the migration from the rural to the urban areas in particular would have exposed people to a way of living and loving to which they would have hitherto been oblivious.

Modern-day Zulu culture has diversified greatly since the era described above to such an extent that it is impossible to claim that there is any one set courtship pattern that is emulated by all Zulu people throughout the country. What is certain is that fetching water from the river is no longer the only opportunity afforded young men to approach the objects of their affection.

Ukuqoma is no longer the only possibility: we now have *ukujola*, which is a relatively new term that is closer to the concept of dating than the traditionally acceptable process of *ukuqoma*. While the practice of dating is no longer a foreign concept to modern-day Zulu culture, however, it is still not something which we can claim to be a widespread practice within it, and as such, it remains difficult for the western understanding of romance to be associated with the Zulu culture. As such, it is an interesting concept to introduce a genre of fiction that sees Zulu characters indulging in a fantasy of romance according to western courtship rituals.

1.4 Aim

The aim of this research project is to answer one main question: what does the translation of romantic fiction into isiZulu need to take into account? In translating a romantic fiction novel into isiZulu, the translator will have recourse to cultural context adaptation strategies: will the translator be able to determine at what point the recontextualisation of the source text calls for its complete rewriting? I propose to attempt to answer these questions by carrying out a translation of selected passages from *Blind-Date Marriage* (2007), a Mills & Boon novel written by Fiona Harper under the *Romance* line.

In proposing to transfer a novel from the English literary system to a Zulu one, an exploration of the Zulu literary system becomes necessary, especially in light of the fact that the genre of popular romantic fiction, under which Mills & Boon can be categorised, is absent from the Zulu literary system. This leads to a number of interesting questions that also need answering: is romance depicted at all in the Zulu literary system? If so, how is this achieved? If romance does not feature in the Zulu literary system, is there any value in carrying out such a translation? Is

there an audience for this genre in isiZulu? If ever it were to be published, what kind of readership would it be likely to attract?

1.5 Rationale

Let us consider that "[r]omantic fiction is a very prolific source of translation and is thus an interesting subject of research, not only for this reason, but also for its phenomenal popularity world-wide" (Smith, 1994: i). Also, "[t]he profit figures from Harlequin are so staggering that every publisher is dying to get in. It's a small investment and few books are returned. Clearly, it's a licence to print money" (Kure, 1993: 155).

There are no Mills & Boon novels currently written in, or translated into, any indigenous African language in South Africa[2], a country with a population of over 47 million, 79,6% of who are African, 9,1% white, 8,9% Coloured and 2,5% Indian/Asian. If we calculate the percentage of the population that speaks English as their first language according to the above figures, then we can make the sweeping statement that only 20.5% of the South African population is catered for, in view of the fact that the Mills & Boon novels that have been and are for sale in the country are in English. Of the remaining 79,5% of the population, if we argue that approximately half of them can read and we disregard their personal likes, literary preferences and their levels of disposable income, we can conclude that this leaves a group of close to 18 million readers for

[2] It is with interest that I have noted the existence of a Mills & Boon in Afrikaans Book Club, under licence from Harlequin Enterprises Limited, described as a romance book club for women who are avid readers of Afrikaans romantic fiction. For the purposes of this research, however, I do not include Afrikaans as an indigenous African language of South Africa.

whom there is no market or there are no published romantic novels. This is an enormous source of wealth left untapped, "a licence to print money" that is being ignored[3].

The genre of popular fiction is one that is likely to have a larger appeal to its target audience than novels in the genre of 'elite' fiction. Another advantage to the genre of popular fiction is that, if mass produced, it is likely to be reasonably priced and thus be more affordable to its target audience. There is a severe shortage of accessible reading material in any and all of the indigenous South African languages, and a simple means of verifying this fact is to notice that at bookshops such as Exclusive Books, the number of books for sale in languages other than English is very small indeed. Also, the range of books presented in the indigenous languages is nowhere near as wide and as varied as in English.

The Maponya Mall branch of Exclusive Books in Soweto opened in September 2007 and my hypothesis was that, given its location, the branch caters for a different reading public as compared to the Rosebank branch, for example, and thus their collection of reading material for sale should reflect this[4]. It was disappointing to discover that the only non-English reading material in the entire shop was made up of a paltry number of titles under the children's books section. It is important to note that the actual size of the bookshop in Maponya Mall is very small compared with other branches in the Rosebank, Killarney, Menlyn and Brooklyn Malls that I have personally visited. This might account for the small number of the non-English publications stocked, but it does not in any way account for the fact that there are no titles written in any of

[3] The idea for this research was planted in my mind during an informal discussion in which Judith Inggs commented that she had observed a security guard with only a Bible for his reading pleasure. The discussion led to query why there are no translations of novels that would fall under the popular fiction genre.

[4] It was to my great disappointment to realise during a recent visit to Maponya Mall that their Exclusive Books branch has subsequently been shut down. There is no longer a book shop in the entire shopping mall.

the indigenous South African languages in the entire shop aside from those in the children's books section, many of which are, in fact, translated from English.

Mills & Boon novels are highly popular in the English version, and shops such as the Killarney branch of CNA have a whole rack dedicated to the novels. In trying to further gauge the popularity of Mills & Boon novels, I phoned the Centurion Mall CNA branch and spoke to an employee named Sarah. Sarah told me that a single novel sells for R39, 95 and a pack of 5 novels sells for R99, 95. At the time of our conversation (April 2008), Sarah informed me that their Mills & Boons were selling so fast that they had resorted to putting some old stock on the shelves ("it is estimated that a Mills & Boon paperback is sold somewhere in Britain every 6.6 seconds" (Borland, 2008)). Even then, one of their regular customers had browsed through them and had commented on how she had read most of the titles on display. Lastly, Sarah clearly pointed out that even though their Mills & Boons sell very well, the majority of people who buy them are white people.

If we consider the South African education system, we are obliged to acknowledge that it is not renowned for producing matriculants of the highest calibre in terms of the marks they achieve – it suffices to look at the matric pass rate to see how dismal the situation really is. "[S]ince 2003 the matric pass rate has been declining annually, from 73.2% in 2003 to 66.5% in 2006 and to 65.2% in 2007. In addition, the endorsement rate has also declined from 18.2% in 2004 to 15.1% in 2007" (Education Trends, 2008). One of the contributing factors towards this dismal state of affairs is the fact that reading is not cultivated within African families. Commenting on South African parents at large, Charlene Smith raises the same point. "The failure of South African parents to get involved in their children's education shows in alarming pass rates and functional

illiteracy. Learning begins at home. South Africa has one of the highest literacy rates on the continent. There is no reason why parents cannot read to children at night, have books in the home or help children with homework. This is a society of self-obsessed adults and children are suffering" (Smith, 2007).

Obviously, reading a Mills & Boon novel in one's mother tongue does not represent a complete solution to this problem. The point to be made is that the availability of such fiction in other South African languages may contribute to the cultivation of a reading culture. For the publishing houses, who would only be interested in such a venture if it held the promise of increased profit margins, the popularity of Mills & Boon novels in English has already been mentioned and is astounding. The fact of their popularity in translation should also be of interest to them – they are already translated into 25 languages worldwide, with the introduction of translation into the Japanese manga form as recently as 3 years ago. As of February 2008, the English bookshop WHSmith started stocking Polish translations of the most popular Mills & Boon titles, to cater for Polish immigrants settling in Britain and with whom Mills & Boon novels have proven to be popular (Borland, 2008).

I have been reading Mills & Boon novels from a young age and enjoy them for the exact reason that they are written: as a form of stress relief and an exotic escapist treat. In trying to find an ideal novel to translate for this project, I have read an approximate 30 Mills & Boons since December 2007. I was looking for a Mills & Boon novel with a credible story line because, as McAleer points out, "escapism must be based on reality" (McAleer, 1999; 2). My ideal novel would not overly-emphasise the physical and sexual encounters between the characters but rather focuses on the development of their relationship. I have yet to read a Zulu novel where there is

an explicit description of the sexual relationship between two characters: it would be my hypothesis that Zulu culture would be less receptive to seduction and passion in writing, were it not for the influences of radio and television on popular culture. This is further developed in the Literature Review.

In the search for a suitable Mills & Boon novel to translate, I read 30 novels collected through various means: some were from the Brooklyn library in Tshwane, others belonged to my aunt. These were all unsuitable, some because they were written as far back as 1971, others for their propagation of a stereotypical view of women. *Blind-Date Marriage* was a free gift included in a copy of *Essentials*, a magazine that targets women "balancing career, family and fun time with school runs and long dinner parties on the weekend" (Essentials, 2008). It offers advice on fashion, beauty, health, food and décor. This magazine targets the same age group as I hope to target with the Zulu translation of *Blind-Date Marriage*, women between the ages of 25 and 45. The price of the magazine is R20.00, including a free Mills & Boon novel that would normally retail at R39.95 at CNA. *Blind-Date Marriage* is the love story between Serendipity Dove, daughter of famous rocker Michael Dove, and her love interest, Charles Jacobs. The passages that I have elected to translate are the passages that mark the development of their relationship and these are outlined under the methodology section.

The discussion thus far has been preoccupied with explaining the genesis of the idea to carry out this research, presenting the main research question and its spinoff secondary questions, providing a rationale for the pertinence of this issue, juxtaposing the place of romance in the source cultural context with that in the target cultural context as well as providing background

information on the history of Mills & Boon novels. We now proceed to Chapter Two where the Literature Review provides an ideal point of departure.

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Literature Review

The literature to be discussed consists of four main sections: the first section is a general discussion on the definition of the genre of romance fiction. The second section is a brief description of the Zulu literary system and part of this discussion focuses on the current lack of a Zulu readership and the factors that have contributed to this current state of affairs. The third section considers the kind of literature that is already available within the Zulu literary system, and the fourth section briefly outlines some of the theories and practical strategies to be adopted and applied during this project.

2.1.1 Romance Fiction

Romance fiction is a Western literary genre that is governed by two basic prerequisites: a romance fiction novel must focus on a love story that is central to the novel, and it must have "an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending" (Romance Writers of America, 2008). The Romance Writers of America is an American association for published and aspiring romance writers; the group is responsible for the above-mentioned definition of the genre of romance fiction and they expand further on its prerequisites. In romance fiction, the plot centres around two individuals, their journey to falling in love and the struggles that they have to overcome for their relationship to endure. A writer is free to include as many subplots as they desire, given that these do not detract from the main focus of the story. The emotionally-satisfying and optimistic

ending is as a result of the firm belief held by all contributors to romance fiction of "the idea of an innate emotional justice – the notion that good people in the world are rewarded and evil people are punished. In a romance, the lovers who risk and struggle for each other and their relationship are rewarded with emotional justice and unconditional love" (RWA, 2008). Finally, as long as these elements are satisfied, the story is not limited in terms of its setting or the elements in the plot, as long as the superseding plot remains the love story between the two main characters. Leigh Michaels points out that "[i]f you were to take out the love story, the rest of the book would be reduced in both significance and interest to the reader to the point that it really wouldn't be much of a story at all" (Michaels, 2008).

There are various sub-genres into which the category of romance fiction can be further divided, depending on the ability to vary plots and settings as mentioned above. These sub-genres range from *Historical Romance*, where the requirement is that the plot be set in any time period before 1945, to *Paranormal Romance* where the future, a fantasy world or paranormal happenings are central to the plot. The vast majority of romance fiction readers and writers are women[5] and so the stories are told from the woman's viewpoint, in either the first or the third person. Some Mills & Boon novels might have interplay between the female character's point of view and that of the male character, but the female character's point of view ultimately dominates.

[5] Harlequin boasts 1300 authors, only one of whom, Dwight Fryer, is male.

2.1.2 The Zulu Literary System

This research project investigates the merging of the genre of romance fiction into the Zulu literary system. IsiZulu is a language which enjoys a rich oral narrative history; however, "reading is a culture that is generally foreign to African communities, especially in South Africa" (Maake, 2000: 153). In writing about the history of publishing in South Africa, Nhlanhla Maake mentions the problem of "the dire lack of readership apart from the school environment. … The problem arose mainly because reading was a relatively new tradition for Africans. Mazrui…observes that it has never become part of the culture; rather it is an educational process" (Maake, 2000: 137).

There are many reasons that account for the fact that, today, reading is not an activity that is cultivated within the Zulu culture. In order to understand the current situation, it is necessary to look to the past as it is the events of the past that have shaped the present as we know it today. The first publisher to establish themselves in Natal was the Catholic missionary press in Marianhill, set up in 1882. "Like those of Lovedale and the Berlin Missionary Society, Marianhill's publications – readers, plays and so on – were intended to promote Christianity" (Mpe & Seeber, 2000: 16). This promotion of Christianity meant that the publication of literature for the sake of literature was not a priority with the missionaries, and indeed Maake makes the point that "literature as literature in African languages emerged *in spite of*, not because of, missionary interests" (Maake, 2000: 135). Phaswane Mpe and Monica Seeber mention that the missionaries had a hypocritical commitment to publishing, declaring their support of African writing on the one hand whilst negating aspects of African culture on the other hand (2000: 17).

This duplicity was such that the missionaries entertained political dealings with administrators and politicians of that time.

Before we consider the effects that the National Party's takeover was to have on Zulu literature, it is important to note the contribution of translation to the emergence of African language literature, in general, and Zulu literature in particular. Tiyo Soga was responsible for the translation of the first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* into isiXhosa in 1867, while his son, John Henderson Soga, completed the translation of the second part in 1927. In seSotho, the translation of the Bible in its entirety was first published in 1878, and *The Pilgrim's Progress* was translated in 1872. Solomon T. Plaatje wrote *Mhudi*, a novel whose fame lies in the fact that it was "the very first novel to have been composed in English by a black South African". Plaatje was also responsible for the translation of *The Pilgrim's Progress* into seTswana in 1948, as well as Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* in 1930 and *Julius Caesar*, published posthumously in 1937 (Gérard, 1981: 194).

With regard to Zulu literature, "[t]he first publications in Zulu – extracts from the Scriptures translated by Newton Adams, a pioneer of the American Board of Mission in Natal – appeared in 1846 and 1847. They were followed by a steady flow of similar works by missionaries of various denominations and nationalities" (Gérard, 1971: 182). Albert Gérard mentions that the first original work by a Zulu author was printed in 1922, *Abantu Abamnyama lapha bavela ngakhona (The Black People, Where They Come From)* by Magema ka'Magwaza, issued by the City Printing Works in Pietermaritzburg (Gérard, 1971: 201). D. B. Ntuli and C. F. Swanepoel consider the year 1930 as "heralding the birth of modern literature in Zulu, with the appearance of *Insila kaShaka* (*Shaka's bodyguard*) by J. L. Dube" (1993: 44). This historical novel was

Dube's only work of fiction, a genre that allows the author to convey, "in an oblique and politically innocuous way…the lessons that the past held in store for the present" (Gérard, 1981: 195-6).

It was not the past that ought to have troubled Dube but rather the future: two decades later, in 1953, the National Party passed the Bantu Education Act. This Act made compulsory the education of Africans in their mother tongue, with the effect that "they learned no more English and Afrikaans than they needed to carry out discussions relating to their work, and in particular to understand and carry out orders" (Mpe & Seeber, 2000: 17-18). This change in the education system created a demand for books and teaching material in the vernacular languages, a vacuum that was much too large to be filled by original fiction writing and which required translation from English as one of the solutions. The National Party also established language boards which DK Ntshangase describes as "homeland-attached government structures created to develop African languages and recommend books to be prescribed by the education departments" (in Mpe & Seeber, 2000: 18). In reality, one of the main purposes served by the language boards was to act as a watchdog for the National Party in the field of African language publishing, ensuring that published pedagogical and non-pedagogical material "promoted, or at least did not threaten, the entrenchment of apartheid ideology" (Mpe & Seeber, 2000: 19).

The missionary press's well-intentioned interventions combined with Bantu Education's long-lasting destructive consequences are some of the main ingredients in the melting pot of events which have set the stage for an African readership that is presently stunted in terms of growth.

As mentioned above, the biggest market for reading material in vernacular languages was the school market, and as such the majority of reading material in isiZulu was developed with a

pedagogical aim in mind, as opposed to literature developed for the sake of entertainment. This has had the long-lasting effect that most material that is currently available in the Zulu literary system today has distinctly instructive undertones in terms of moral and spiritual conduct.

The overwhelming majority of material available in isiZulu can be classified as fiction and the targeted readership ranges from children to adults. With regard to children's books, described as suitable for children from 6 to 7 years old on the catalogue compiled by the Publisher's Association of South Africa, it is interesting to note that the material available is mostly made up of translations (PASA, 2008: 8). Zulu authors seem to completely disregard this target audience; instead we find that they only target readers in their teens and above. For the older age groups, we find that the types of literature published can be classified under novels, traditional literature, short stories, drama and poetry. It is interesting to note that some of the titles available in the category of drama are the published form of radio plays that had proved to be highly popular mainly with listeners of the Zulu-medium radio station, Ukhozi FM (PASA, 2008: 73). In 1999, Ukhozi FM enjoyed a listenership of between 4 million and 4.5 million people, and this listening community endows upon radio "the ability to collapse – and also of course, to create – boundaries. Certainly, in Africa, radio has been crucial both in the creation and maintenance of national identities, and public cultures in Africa are, at a national level, radio-driven cultures" (Gunner, 2000: 217-8).

The truth of the above statement is borne out by the fact that, alongside the mediums of television and the internet (although still accessible only to a minority of the South African population, for economic reasons), the influence of radio on popular creativity remains strong. Karin Barber explains that popular creativity fits into a "vague, shapeless, undefined space,

demarcated only by what it is not. It is not wholly 'traditional' – in the sense given to this term by exclusively indigenous African languages or images…On the other hand, it is not 'elite' or 'modern', 'Westernized' culture - in the sense of inhabiting a world formed by higher education, full mastery of European languages and representational conventions, defined by its cultural proximity to the metropolitan centres, and addressed to a minority but 'international' audience'" (Barber, 1997: 1). If we take the example of the aforementioned Ukhozi FM that better fits the description of 'traditional' and Yfm, a Gauteng-based radio station that targets the youth and that fits the 'modern' description, they bear witness to this polarisation of their target audiences. Both of these stations are central to the dissemination of popular culture, whose definition exists between "'popular culture' - that which truly serves the interest of the people by opening their eyes to the historical conditions of their existence – and 'people's' culture, that which emanates from the people but which is a form of false consciousness, working against their true interests by fostering acceptance of the status quo" (Barber, 1997: 3).

As previously alluded to, my choice of a Mills & Boon novel to be translated was influenced by my intrinsic understanding that Zulu literature has had the tendency to avoid frank and open discussion on sexual matters in its written form. We must, however, consider the influence of popular culture on the language, taking into special consideration the popular music that is broadcast on such radio stations as mentioned above, and this requires that we consider kwaito. "Kwaito music is a contemporary black dance-music genre that has emerged over the past decade and become intensely popular in South Africa. The music usually consists of a male rapper with mostly female singing, and generally is rapped and sung in *tsotsitaal*, a township slang that combines various South African languages, giving it an indelible South African

musical identity. Although it is party music, at times its lyrics are misogynist and live performances are renowned for the sexual explicitness of the dancing" (Stephens, 2000: 256).

A kwaito song that was released over the summer of 2006, 'Sister Bettina', is a case in point. In it, Nkosinathi Mfeka, known under the stage name of Mgarimbe, sings: *sidla ubusha bethu, sibhebha nabantwana* – "we're enjoying our youth and we're screwing girls". When the song was released, there was an immediate outcry from Ukhozi FM listeners, decrying the foul language used in the song. The outcry was to such an extent that Mgarimbe had to record a 'clean' version and this was the one to be played over the radio. Rather than adversely impact upon the popularity of the song, it was my own personal observation that the foul language used in it seemed to rather increase its attraction for younger listeners. 'Sister Bettina' is, of course, only one example of many kwaito songs whose lyrics include the use of foul language normally avoided in conversation but whose use is increasingly more common and acceptable in popular music.

It is therefore my hypothesis that, if kwaito lyrics frankly and directly address sexual matters in kwaito songs and still prove to be popular, then popular culture in general must be in the process of becoming increasingly receptive to talk of sexual matters. If that is the case, then a Zulu translation of a Mills & Boon novel need not actively avoid a straightforward translation of those sections dealing with the sexual contact between the characters but can freely depict them in the understanding that, as far as popular culture is concerned, such a direct address is no longer necessarily as shocking as it might have once been.

If we turn our attention back to the genre of romantic fiction, there aren't any titles in the Zulu literary system that perfectly fit this description. Some published novels do address the subject of

love, but as previously mentioned, this is motivated by pedagogical aims. We can take the example of a novel entitled "*Ukube,…ngabe…*" (*If..., then…*) by SJ Mchunu (PASA, 2007: 172). In the description about the novel, the reader is told the following:

> *Inoveli ekhuluma ngezithandani oSipho noThandi abafunda ebangeni leshuminambili…Iqwashisa abafundi ukuthi bangalali nabafana bengaka shadi, nokuthi bafanele ukufundela umsebenzi anduba bashade*.
>
> *The novel is about Sipho and Thandi, they are in Grade 12 and they are in love. The novel is a warning to female students not to sleep with boys before marriage, and to undergo vocational training before getting married*.

We can reach two important deductions simply from analysing the title and the descriptive text. Firstly, the title seems to imply that if the characters had done something different to what is presumably recounted in the novel, then their lives would have turned out differently and in a positive way. Secondly, the fact that the novel is a warning aimed mostly at female readers[6] aligns it perfectly with the pedagogical aim upheld by most Zulu literature novels. With such a title and such an aim, we can already conclude that there will be no "emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending" required of romantic fiction. It is a feature of not only this novel but the entire Zulu literary system that the majority of novels written in this language have a pedagogical aim, given the history and the development of writing and publishing in South Africa as already discussed under the Literature Review. It is thus clear that the genre of romantic fiction awaits introduction into Zulu literature, fiction written with the primary aim of entertaining the reader rather than imparting moral and ethical lessons.

[6] The novel is described as a warning to female students against pre-marital sex.

2.2 Theoretical framework

Blind-Date Marriage (Harper, 2007), the novel chosen for the purpose of this research project, is firmly based within a cultural context that shares very few similarities with the target cultural context. If the translation of this novel fails to take the above into consideration, then the risk is very high that the end product, the translation, will be neither relevant nor accessible to the target audience. The introduction of this genre into the Zulu literary system through the medium of translation thus entails a significant amount of change to the source text.

In their discussion on relevance theory, Sperber and Wilson point out that "the notion of a contextual effect is essential to a description of the comprehension process. As discourse proceeds, the hearer retrieves or constructs and then processes a number of assumptions. These form a gradually changing background against which new information is processed. Interpreting an utterance involves more than merely identifying the assumption explicitly expressed…it involves seeing the contextual effects of this assumption in a context determined, at least in part, by earlier acts of comprehension" (1986: 118). Relevance is then established when an assumption has some contextual effect in a given context and where the effort required to process it in that context is small (1986: 122-3).

For the target text to be relevant and accessible to the target audience, the translation strategy thus needs to include cultural context adaptation and recontextualisation. The need for cultural context adaptation arises when "elements of the cultural context are obviously not known to the same extent to the readers of the target text as to the readers of the source text" (Klingberg, 1986: 11). Göte Klingberg suggests a number of strategies that the translator can use when confronted with elements in the source text that will prove to be foreign to the target text. In total, Klingberg

suggests 10 categories of problematic elements for translation; however, these are not all relevant to this research project and only the relevant categories are discussed. Examples of the application of the categories and strategies discussed below to the translation of *Blind-Date Marriage* into isiZulu follows under Chapter 3.

When dealing with the category of buildings, home furnishings and food, Klingberg states the general rule that deletion or substitution must be avoided in preference of an element of the target culture. When it comes to the category of personal names, titles, names of domestic animals and names of objects, Klingberg discusses the use of personal names belonging to everyday language, the meaning of which has been utilized by the author in a way not intelligible to the readers of the target text (1986: 44). Here, he does not give a rule per se; instead, he gives brief descriptions of strategies that have been followed by translators in their work. The last category that is of geographical names where Klingberg states that "[c]ultural context adaptation of some sort is desirable when it may not be wholly clear to the readers of a target text what geographical phenomena a certain name refers to" (1986: 51).

Klingberg also proposes several methods which the translator can use to effect cultural context adaptation. Again, only those methods relevant to this research project are discussed. The translator may have recourse to providing added explanation where the cultural element in the source text is retained but a short explanation is added within the text (Klingberg, 1986: 18). The translator may choose to reword certain parts of the source text, expressing what is said by the source text but leaving out the use of the cultural element. The substitution of an equivalent or of a rough equivalent in the culture of the target language is another option open to the translator. The translator may choose to simplify a concept or, failing that, they may settle for omitting the

problematic word, sentence or paragraph. Finally, there is localisation where "[t]he whole cultural setting of the source text is moved closer to the readers of the target text" (Klingberg, 1986: 18).

While Klingberg's theory on cultural context adaptation is integral to the translation of *Blind-Date Marriage*, it is equally as important to consider the role of the reader in interpreting texts. As suggested by Umberto Eco, an author (or, in this case, translator) organises a text by relying "on a series of codes that assign given contents to the expressions he uses. To make his text communicative, the author has to assume that the ensemble of codes he relies upon is the same as that shared by his possible reader" (Eco, 1979: 7). The author of the novel has to envisage "a model of the possible reader", someone who will be able to "deal interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them" (Eco, 1979: 7). The choice of Model Reader is made by the text through its choice of a specific linguistic code, a certain literary style and specific jargon (Eco, 1979: 7). Some texts "give explicit information about the sort of readers they presuppose", while others "make evident their Model Reader by implicitly presupposing a specific encyclopaedic competence" (Eco, 1979: 7). In the same way that the author is conscious of the Model Reader, the translator also needs to be cognisant of their Model Reader during the translation process: if the translator chooses expressions in the translation which are incomprehensible to the Model Reader, then that decreases the level of accessibility of the target text to the target audience.

The issue of the Model Reader gives rise to reflection about the target audience with particular regard to the identity of the members of the target culture who are targeted by the translation. It is important to consider the characteristics that mark the Model Reader out as being a member of

this particular group. The ideal readership of this translation consists of female readers of an indeterminate age: Mills & Boon novels are predominantly consumed by female readers and this readership commences at a relatively young age when girls read them clandestinely whilst still at school. The Model Reader might therefore still be in school, be a university student, have recently entered into the world of work, be a seasoned professional or a retired grandmother. She is able to speak fluent English and is an avid reader, particularly of Mills & Boon novels, but has not had much exposure to reading material written in Zulu - aside from that written for educational purposes as described under the Literature Review. For that very reason, she will be intrigued by the concept of a Mills & Boon novel that has been translated into isiZulu or, ideally, one that has been conceptualised and written in isiZulu from the start.

Let us consider, then, the concept of popular or mass culture as it constitutes a part of the theoretical aspect that situates this project within current popular trends. This will be done by way of answering the following questions: what is popular culture? Is it possible to differentiate between popular culture and people's culture? Who are the people evoked by the idea of 'mass' culture? Karin Barber's discussion of Yoruba theatre as popular culture is useful insomuch as it provides a clear illustration to all the salient principles. In the discussion of the above points, parallels are drawn between the theoretical principles of popular culture and my proposed translation of Mills & Boon into isiZulu.

What, then, is popular culture? As previously alluded to, Barber points out that it is not in any way part of the social or the educational elite (1997: 1). Indeed, "[i]t is not wholly 'traditional' – in the sense given to this term by much Africanist scholarship, that is, purely oral, expressed in exclusively indigenous African languages or images, and coming from or alluding to the pre-

colonial past. On the other hand, it is not 'elite' or 'modern', 'Westernized' culture – in the sense of inhabiting a world formed by higher education, full mastery of European languages and representational conventions, defined by its cultural proximity to the metropolitan centres, and addressed to a minority but 'international' audience. It is rather defined by its occupation of the zone between these two poles" (Barber, 1997: 1).

One of the outstanding characteristics of African popular culture is its vitality and its malleability and, as it is open and incorporative in nature, this makes it hospitable to foreign elements (Barber, 2000: 6). Furthermore, over and above welcoming that foreign element, it is then appropriated into the welcoming culture so much so that it becomes embedded within it. An example that clearly illustrates this point can be found in our previous example of kwaito music. While the musical elements of kwaito music can be traced back much further than the approximate two decades that is has been in existence, "it is an evolution of music known as 'bubblegum' or South African disco, with elements of American hip-hop, European house, and other international sounds thrown in" (Stephens, 2000: 256). Also, "[t]he presence of international musical dimensions in kwaito has resulted from producers recognizing what consumers are listening to…In the appropriation of ragga and hip-hop, kwaito not only employs symbols of black cultural ecumene and resistance, but places itself into a comparative context. While ragga artists such as Shabba Ranks, Shaggy, Chaka Demus and Pliers have gained international success, the same musical elements that secured that success can be found in kwaito" (Stephens, 2000: 257). Today, however, the hip-hop and house origins of kwaito music remain largely unknown to the average kwaito fan on the streets and the music genre is embraced by its fans as a truly indigenous South African sound as well as a prominent feature of South African popular culture.

The divide existing between 'elite' and 'traditional' has been much discussed in African studies, and still there remain many products of African culture that fall into the chasm between the two: these "cannot be classified … as 'oral' or 'literature', as 'indigenous' or 'Western' in inspiration because [they] straddle and dissolve these distinctions" [Barber, 1997: 2]. In the current age in which we live, where purely traditional modes of life have been eroded by contact with the West, "local producers speaking to local audiences about [the] pressing concerns, experiences and struggles that they share…then undermine the binary paradigm of 'African culture'" [Barber, 1997: 2).

Barber refutes the "assumption made by some early enthusiasts of African 'popular art' that [it] is by definition naïve, cheerful and carefree" by raising awareness that "genres billed as entertainment usually talk about matters of deep interest and concern to the people who produce and consume them… In other words, these arts are about things that matter to people" (1997: 2). If we return to kwaito, however, we see that it proves to be inconsistent with Barber's claim above. In their lyrics, kwaito musicians do not address "matters of deep interest and concern to the people who produce and consume them". Instead, "the beat and the 'instruments' [are] more important than the lyrics, which [are] intended to have no real meaning" (Stephens, 2000: 263).

If the power of kwaito music is not the message that it conveys, what purpose does it then fulfil? Moreover, is it possible to reconcile that purpose with Barber's claim that popular art necessarily addresses matters of deep concern to the people, both producers and consumers? Seemingly, kwaito's attraction was not the fact of what it was saying through its lyrics but rather, and to the contrary, the very fact that it wasn't saying anything at all. "Many saw a positive change occurring in popular music where they can enjoy dancing without having to engage with any

socio-political discourse in verbal text. Considering the political element that has motivated a large selection of South African popular music for so long, kwaito is breaking from tradition. In this respect it reflects post-apartheid society by freeing the African body…from political consciousness and repositioning it in spaces of new physical freedoms" (Stephens, 2000: 263).

Of course, the fact that popular art forms address the very issues that are of importance to its audience is underscored by the fact that "this kind of text usually says only the things that people want to hear. But while it is true that people want to hear that justice will prevail and that the good will be rewarded, they do not want to hear escapist fantasies" (Barber, 1997: 2). Here is where we find the link between popular culture and Mills & Boon novels. As previously described, Mills & Boon novels provide an escapist treat for the reader and the success of the novels lies in the fact that this escapism is firmly based on a feasible premise: it is probably easier for the reader to get lost in a romantic fiction novel where they can imagine themselves in the role of the female character rather than in a novel that is based on pure fantasy to such an extent that it is not longer feasible to envisage yourself as one of the characters. Popular fiction then also seems to be based on the same premise, thus firmly ensconcing romantic fiction within the realm of popular culture.

Popular culture is necessarily conflated with the idea of the mass, but who exactly are 'the people'? And since we are addressing popular culture within an African context, who are these African masses? Within the European context, there have been multiple usages of the term that have existed side by side, and the limits of the applicability of the term have shifted over time (Barber, 1997: 3). On the one hand, 'the people' is a term that can be used to refer to the whole of a country's inhabitants, synonymous with the word 'nation'. On the other hand, however, "it

has been used to mean only part of the nation – those who are not the State, the dominant classes, the aristocracy, or the bourgeoisie. 'The people' then, in this usage, corresponds to a class, or group of classes, though the boundaries are not usually clearly specified, and the 'people's' culture can be seen as engaged in contests over those boundaries" (Barber, 1997: 3). In Europe, therefore, there is a clear distinction where the people's culture is equated with "low or common culture as opposed to the high culture of the ruling class" (Barber 1997: 3).

If we are to adhere to the idea that 'the people' are a "really existing demographic category", it is then easy to assume that each level of society has its own distinct culture, its own way of living and a variety of artistic forms and genres which are indigenous to it and affirm its identity vis-à-vis the other levels of society. This assumption is one that cultural historian Roger Chartier disagrees with. "[I]t is impossible to find 'strict' correspondences between cultural cleavages and social hierarchies. Instead, what you find is fluid circulation, practices shared by various groups, and blurred distinctions. Lower echelons of society made use of motifs and genres that were never considered specific to them, and elites only slowly distanced themselves from popular culture" (in Barber, 1997: 3). Cultural artefacts were not transferred from the elite class down to 'the masses' in a top-to-bottom trajectory, but rather both "elite and common people constantly imitated and appropriated each other's cultural forms" (in Barber, 1997: 3).

The transference of the term 'popular culture' to an African context is a problematic one insofar as the term "'high', if it exists at all, is not the prerogative of an ancient ruling class but of a fragmented, precarious, conflictual new elite, defined by its proximity to an outside power, but nonetheless bound up with local populations by innumerable ties of kinship, language, community membership and patronage" (Barber, 1997: 3). Within the African context, 'the

people' refers to "unstable congeries of differentially defined groups, linguistics, ethnic, occupational and religious, only thinkable as a category in that they are excluded from the privileges of the political, business and military elites" (Barber, 1997: 4).

Large numbers of people have been brought together in new ways: "the press, the church, the school and more recently the electronic media addressed new categories of listeners, interpellating and thus calling into being new collectives" as well as through new forms of entertainment such as organized sport, cinema and commercial theatre (Barber, 1997: 4). However, it is erroneous to assume that the crowds described above are the same as 'the masses' that are the audiences put forward in Western studies of 'mass culture'. Within the Western context, genres such as television soaps and English-language popular fiction are readily identifiable as being examples of 'popular' or 'mass culture'.

Within an African context, however, these genres do not necessarily retain the same classification. English-language popular fiction in South Africa does not really form part of popular culture; it is rather what Barker refers to as a marginal case, consumed mainly by the affluent and the educated (Barber, 1997: 4). The medium of television, however, is one that is firmly ensconced within the realm of popular fiction, with programs such as *Generations* enjoying both longevity and popularity countrywide as one of the most watched programmes on the box. Barber raises the point that "[m]uch of what is consumed by 'the people' in Africa is also produced by them" and if we remain within the realm of television, the popularity of South African-made programmes when compared with imported programs bears testimony to this observation. From the translator's own observations during visits to relatives and friends, soapies with large African-language content such as *Generations*, *Isidingo*, *Muvhango*, *Rhythm City* and

Scandal! generally tend to have larger followings within the African community than their American counterparts – *Days of Our Lives*, *The Bold and the Beautiful* and *All My Children* which are entirely in English. Previous dramas on SABC 1 such as *Yizo-Yizo 1, 2 and 3*, *Gaz'lam* and *Tshisa* as well as current dramas such as *Soul City* and *Home Affairs*, reflecting the reality of township life that is very genuine for the overwhelming majority of the South African population that calls townships home, and in the language of the masses, are definite crowd-pullers for the national broadcaster. Barker warns that the "mere fact of the presence of imported mass entertainment should not lead to the conclusion that people have become its devotees" (Barber, 1997: 7) and indeed the continued popularity of home-grown dramas and soap operas is testament to that fact.

The conclusion that Barber reaches is that the division of 'traditional' and 'elite' that has characterized the field of African cultural studies should then not be taken at face value. She rather advises that "we should read it as an indication of something else that it cannot accommodate: the shifting, mobile, elusive space of the 'popular' which is in fact continuous with both the 'traditional' and the 'modern' categories and which deconstructs all the oppositions which sustain the binary paradigm" (Barber, 1997: 8). Barber provides the example of Yoruba theatre in order to illustrate the principles of popular culture that have been drawn out above.

Yoruba plays are improvised instead of scripted, yet at the same time they are carefully planned. The role of a main storyteller is minimized; rather, the story unfolds on stage "through the actions of dramatic characters on stage to establish themselves through their own speech" (Barber, 2000: 2). Also very important is the fact that has been mentioned in the discussion of popular culture, mainly the fact that the producers of Yoruba theatre did not belong to the social

or the educational elite but rather it was a theatre produced by the people for the people. The actors in these plays were drawn from a wide social range, but the audiences were drawn from an even wider one. Indeed, "the popular theatre's largest and most dependable audience was drawn from the same intermediate section of the population as the performers and was predominantly youthful, poor and male" (Barber, 2000: 3). While the theatre was by the people and for the people, members of the "the intellectual avant-garde despised the popular theatre", deeming it vulgar and decrying its "lack of social or political radicalism" (Barber, 2000: 3). In the same way as its producers were defined by what they were not, "this theatre occupied a cultural space defined by what it was not – it fit neither the model of 'modern literature' (i.e. written texts in European languages) nor the model of 'traditional heritage'. For this reason, it received little official recognition or support even at the time of its greatest efflorescence" (Barber, 2000: 3). The output generated by these plays would be described as "'people's' rather than 'truly popular' culture", describing a culture that spontaneously and naturally emanates from the people but that does not reflect "their true interest" and which does not open "their eyes to their real historical situation" (Barber, 2000: 3).

Barber thus sums up the Yoruba plays as follows: "The plays are unscripted, composed and learnt orally, and performed in a way that allows a good deal of improvisation. They almost always portray ordinary people, very rarely in the elite, except as occasional stock comic characters. The audiences seem to identify closely with the situations presented on stage, and they wholeheartedly endorse the moral or 'lesson' that the plays teach. Indeed, a number of people…go to the theatre 'not just to laugh' but definitely to seek out a moral or a model which they can apply to their daily life" (Barber, 1997: 92). This was a theatre that spoke of issues that

concerned the people in the genres and the languages of their own choosing, in much the same way as has been discussed in relation to the dramas screened on SABC 1.

In the same way that the forms of expression that are encompassed by the term 'popular culture' do not target the social and the education elite, my proposed translation of *Blind Date Marriage* would not target such a readership. In actual fact, my target audience will be the exact opposite of that: people who are not members of 'high' society but who better fit the term of 'ordinary' people. Mills & Boon novels in their original English format are well known for their mass appeal, and that is an appeal that I would be keen to maintain in the target text. I am eager for the target text to appeal to people who are not only ignorant of the 'traditional' vs. 'elite' debate but who would be unlikely to turn their noses up at such a novel due to the 'mass appeal' nature of the books.

Most of the time, Mills & Boon stories are recounted from the point of view of the lead female character. This character is almost always an ordinary girl (excepting for the *Modern Romance* line where the lead female characters are as likely to be high-flying successful business characters in their own right as their male counterparts) who is inevitably endowed with extraordinary beauty. Her very ordinariness is the principal quality that makes her a character with whom it is easy for the reader to relate, making her approachable in spite of her beauty. If this were not the case, she would have to have characteristics denoting her association with the social elite, and that would be an alienating factor. Rather, to confirm the association with popular culture, she remains ordinary, even if the situation in which she and the male character interact might not necessarily be as ordinary. After all, this is escapist romantic fiction; the reader must be allowed some leeway to fantasize.

This proposed translation of a Mills & Boon novel into isiZulu would not feed into the 'elite' vs. 'traditional' debate that is the concern of the African cultural studies field. It would fit neither the mould of the corpus of work formed by the many traditional methods of artistic expression, nor the canon of 'high' literature fit for the educational elite. Instead, it would fall into the aforementioned chasm in-between the two, where it would comfortably ride the wave of popular culture.

Finally, this Mills & Boon novel functions much in the same way as has been mentioned of the Yoruba plays where the presence of a narrator is omitted in favour of a narrative that is carried forward through dialogue. While it might be erroneous to state this as a standard feature of all Mills & Boon novels, it is certainly the case as far as *Blind Date Marriage* is concerned. The story of Jake and Serena's courtship is carried forward through the dialogue between them, interspersed with moments of reflection by Serena and, much less frequently, by Jake. This is yet another quality of the source text that I would be eager to maintain in the target text.

2.3 Methodology

With regard to the translation I intend to carry out, the following is a list of the passages which I have selected for translation. These are the passages that mark the main stages of the development of the relationship between Jake and Serena, the very elements which make this novel to fall under the category of romance fiction.

Pages 7 - 15: The first half of the first chapter is where the reader is introduced to the two main characters. The description of their personalities is an ideal starting point for the translation.

Pages 41 - 48: This passage chronicles the growing attraction between Serena, as she prefers to be called, and Jake, as he prefers to be called, culminating in their first kiss. Even though I have stated that my emphasis is not on sexual contact between the characters, this is still a main characteristic of Mills & Boon novels and it would be unwise to completely disregard it.

Pages 69 – 79: This part of the story introduces tension between Serena and Jake, leading to the end of their relationship. This is the challenge that they must overcome if they are to have a future together, and even though the passage is quite lengthy, it is necessary to translate it in its entirety to properly reflect the story's progression.

Pages 94 – 99: Even though Serena and Jake have broken up, their attraction to each other remains just as strong, as described in this passage.

Pages 126 – 133: In this passage, Jake proposes a solution to their problem, but it is a solution that Serena does not accept as it means compromising on her deepest desires for herself.

Pages 157 – 162: In her love for Jake, Serena has reached the point where she is prepared to sacrifice her own desires and she is ready to do whatever it takes to be with Jake. This leads her to a situation where she is deeply humiliated by Jake's ultimate rejection of her.

Pages 177 – 184: Jake realises his mistake, and stages a very romantic setting where he apologises to Serena, declares his undying love for her and proposes to her. She accepts his proposal and they (presumably) live happily ever after.

Following the translation of the above passages, I then analyse the shifts that are necessitated by the translation in terms of the theoretical approaches of relevance and cultural context adaptation, whilst remaining cognisant of the target text Model Reader. I attempt to define the point where the adaptation of the source text becomes tantamount to completely rewriting it and, in conclusion, I determine whether it is worth the effort of translating a Mills & Boon novel or whether it is simpler to just write one.

The analysis of the translation necessitates the comparison between source text passages and their target text equivalents. It is preferable not to assume that all participants to this discussion are isiZulu speakers. Therefore, a back translation is provided as a standard means to ensure that the discussion is open to all who care to participate in it. In each quotation from the source text and the target text, the salient point under discussion is underlined in order to render it more easily identifiable.

CHAPTER THREE: Translation Analysis

3.1 The translation of the title

The translator has been wrestling with the question of how to translate the title 'Blind Date Marriage' into isiZulu ever since the inception of the idea to carry out the translation and the choice of a suitable Mills & Boon novel was made. As already alluded to in Chapter One, the predicament is manifold: firstly, the concept of dating does not exist in an identical form in the traditional Zulu culture. The distinct courtship ritual that exists in the Zulu culture, traditionally referred to as *ukuqoma* and, lately, more colloquially referred to as *ukujola*, may be considered to be similar to dating, but in no way identical. Following on that, a blind date would be an even harder event to translate. A translation of 'Blind Date Marriage' that preserves the use of the first two words would thus not be a suitable solution: the direct translation of 'Blind Date Marriage' into *Umshado we-Blind Date* thus not being a viable option, a different solution was necessary.

Since the translation of the title could not contain 'blind date' in it because of the reasons stated above, the translator was obliged to think in a completely different direction. If 'blind date' had to be dropped, maybe 'marriage' could also be dropped, thus giving the translator free reign to be creative enough with the translated title to come up with something that is relevant to the storyline but is not limited to these particular three words. In any case, Mills & Boon novels are characterised by the fact that every single one of them has a happy ending, something that is a requirement of romance fiction novels, and marriage is therefore inevitable. Given this fact, the translator felt able to drop the word 'marriage' from the title without detracting too much from the source text. The essential was to have a title that reflects the genre of the novel as romantic fiction, a title that immediately marks the novel as belonging to the genre of popular fiction and

thus resonating with popular culture. If the title could immediately speak to its target audience and transmit all of this information at a glance, then the translation would be on its way to success.

Mbongeni Ngema is a renowned South African musician and playwright who has enjoyed success and recognition in his field, in particular with a song released in the early 1980s entitled 'Stimela saseZola'. In this song, he sings about his beloved to whom he refers by using various seemingly nonsensical terms of endearment, one of which is '*thambo lami leKentucky'*. On face value, '*thambo lami leKentucky'* seems an odd choice of words to use as a term of endearment seeing as its literal translation into English gives us 'my Kentucky bone'. Let us consider, however, that KFC was and still is a very popular choice of fast food for many South Africans, especially those of the lower income brackets who constitute the majority of the South African population. Moreover, African people in South Africa have a vociferous appetite for meat that even extends to the juicy bone marrow contained within KFC chicken bones, among other meats. It is not an unusual sight to see people enjoying their KFC so much so that they happily crunch into the bones and grind them to a powder before spitting that powder out into their hands and then transferring the mess onto the plate. KFC bones lend themselves particularly well to this activity and as such have developed into a cherished part of the meal.

In light of the above information, if the love for KFC bones is this strong, then referring to your girlfriend as '*ithambo lami leKentucky'* no longer seems untoward but rather endearing in its creativity. It occurred to the translator that it might be an interesting idea to create an intertextual link between the translation of the title and the song 'Stimela saseZola', which has become a prominent feature of Zulu popular culture seeing as the song has retained its popularity until

today. It would be a hard feat indeed to find Zulu people who are ignorant of this particular song seeing as the younger generations have also been exposed to it through the house remix by DJ Black Coffee which in itself was very popular. The title of '*UNtombi nethambo lakhe leKentucky'* is thus the translation proposed by the translator and the most pleasing to her – 'Ntombi and her sweetheart'.

It could be said that Mbongeni Ngema's song is sung from a male perspective and that this term would therefore be used by a man to refer to his beloved. Changing the orientation and putting the use of the endearment term in the hands of a female character is therefore a departure from the norm and might possibly be disorienting to the target audience. However, Mills & Boon novels tend to foreground the female character over the male one and as such the translator has felt free to make Ntombi, the lead female character, the possessor of the Kentucky bone instead of the possessee. The translator is confident that the difference in orientation is not significant enough to offset the reception of the title translation by the target audience.

3.2 The translation of the characters' names

When undertaking the task of translating a novel of a genre that does not exist in the target language, it became a real need for the translator to render the translation as close as possible to the target readership in order to mask this disparity. It seemed to the translator that substituting the original English names of the characters with typical Zulu versions would go a long way towards achieving such a goal. It could be argued that many African people have an English

name alongside their Zulu one and thus such a substitution should not be entirely necessary as English names would not be unusual or unfamiliar to the target audience. However, in the translator's experience, such English names are usually the 'school names' that are easier for everyone to remember and to pronounce, especially in the last 15 years where multiracial schools have welcomed African students and teachers have subsequently been faced with a plethora of seemingly unpronounceable indigenous names. Those same students will nonetheless be referred to by their Zulu names when at home and in their ordinary interactions with other members of their communities. It therefore seems to the translator that the Zulu name is the one that is more strongly definitive of the person as an individual, and the one that would best serve as a bridge between our source and target cultures and audiences.

With the above in mind, the translator decided to choose popular local Zulu names with the assumption that the target reader would find it easy to relate to them. Zulu names, however, have meaning attached to them, and it seemed appropriate for the translator to choose popular local names whose meaning would be in keeping with the characters of Jake and Serena.

Jake is presented as a self-made man who is determined to free himself from his poverty-stricken childhood and has managed to achieve this goal through hard work and sheer determination. It seemed fitting to name this character *Menzi*, a Zulu name which can be translated to mean 'the one who accomplishes feats' or, quite simply, 'the do-er'. As the source text develops, we find out that Jake's first name is not Jake as he chooses to be known but rather Charles Junior or Charlie, named for his father. The relationship between father and son, however, is highly strained as the father is abusive in character and Jake has chosen to distance himself as much as

possible from his father's disruptive presence, to the extent of using his childhood nickname which is, in essence, the shortened version of his surname, Jacobs.

Ideally, the translation should also reflect all the varying degrees of emotion Jake attaches to the use of his various names. Rather than using a nickname derived from the shortened version of the character's surname, the translator chose to derive both names for this character from the verb stem '-enza' (*to do*), the first being *Menzi* as abovementioned, and the second name being *Zenzele*, which is, in fact, the imperative command to 'do it yourself'. The advantage of this strategy is the fact that not only are both names related in meaning, thus maintaining the continuity established between the names Charles Senior and Charles Junior of the source text, but there is sufficient difference between the names to identify them as being distinctly separate within the target text, thus respecting the wishes of the character of Menzi.

As for Jake's love interest, her full name is Serendipity, a name she struggles to accept. In fact, when she meets Jake, she refuses to tell him her name for fear that he will mock her:

> ...the only reason she hadn't told him her name was the funny reaction it provoked in almost everyone she met. She hadn't wanted to spoil the moment, hadn't wanted the delectable Jake to have the usual set of preconceptions about her. What had her parents been thinking when they called her Serendipity? It was tantamount to child abuse! She'd been the target of bullies from her first day of school because of her name. Why couldn't she have been called Sally or Susan? Nice, sensible, traditional names. (Harper, 2007: 15-16)

Her dislike of the full version of her name is so strong that she prefers to be called Serena and introduces herself as thus to Jake. Before the two characters meet and while he is on his way to their blind date, Jake indulges in a moment of imagining the physical attributes of the woman he is going to meet:

> Serena. Sounded kind of horsey. She probably wore jodhpurs. Mel had refused to comment on whether she was pretty or not, so she probably looked like a horse as well. He could see it so clearly: the gymkhana trophies, the chintzy bedroom. Serena wore her hair in a bun and had too many teeth. (Harper, 2007: 7)

It is a near impossible feat to find a translation of the name 'Serendipity' in isiZulu that would encompass all the mixed feelings that the name evokes in its owner as well as the imagery Jake associates with *Serena* in his mind as he is on his way to meet her. Moreover, if the translator is allowed some scope to generalise, horse riding is an elitist sport that remains a foreign concept to the vast majority of the target audience. The mention of jodhpurs and gymkhana trophies is one that does not translate into Zulu culture and the metaphor of horse riding in the source text is thus futile in the translation. Rather than try and force this imagery on a culture that would not welcome it, the translator decided to find an alternative solution that would necessarily involve its omission.

The name 'Ntombi', meaning 'young lady', is a very popular choice of name for girls among the Zulu people. One of the most effective vehicles of popular culture, the popular soapie 'Generations', is the longest running locally produced soap on South African television and has a character named Ntombi. Generations has a solid and loyal audience, commanding 7 million viewers on a daily basis (Tsumele, 2009). The most common versions of the full name are

Ntombizodwa meaning 'girls only' and *Ntombifuthi* meaning 'yet another girl', and parents who were hoping for a boy child tend to give these names to a female child born after a long line of other female children. The translator chose to give the character of Serena the name Ntombi in the target text because it was possible to emulate the Serendipity/Serena play on names that takes place in the source text with a similar play on names on Ntombi and the full version of the name as chosen by the translator, Ntombenhle – a beautiful young lady.

The self dialogue that Menzi indulges in when he is on his way to the blind date is thus rendered as follows in the target text:

> *Liyahlupha nalo lelo gama. Amantombazane angoNtombi ayinkinga ngoba ngeke wazi ukuthi kuthiwa nguNtombi nje kwakwenzenjani. Ntombenhle? Ntombizodwa? Ntombifuthi? UMpumi wayenqabile ukuphawula ngoNtombi ukuthi muhle yini noma chabo, okwakusho khona ukuthi mhlawumbe wayengaphiwanga ngasebuhleni, kungcono avele alikhohlwe elikaNtombenhle.*

Back translation:

> Her very name is problematic. Girls who are called Ntombi are a problem because one never knows why they were called Ntombi in the first place. Is she maybe a beautiful girl? A girl born into a family of girls only? Was she yet another girl child? Mpumi had refused to say whether Ntombi was beautiful or not, meaning that she was probably not gifted in the beauty department and he should just stop hoping that her full name means 'a beautiful young lady'.

As is evident in the comparison between the source text and the back translation, the horse imagery has been completely discarded by the translator in favour of creating a sense of intrigue around the full name of the translation of Serena's name. Menzi questions himself as to which version of the full name Ntombi is shortened from and even though she does not have any reason to dislike her name as it doesn't stand out of the ordinary in any way, the character is accorded some sense of mystery as it is not revealed until later in the story what the full version of her name is.

For the other characters involved in the storyline, the thought process in choosing Zulu names that would correspond to the character was not as thorough as they are secondary characters that appear very fleetingly in the passages chosen by the translator for the purposes of this thesis.

3.3 Colloquial language and the use of English words

As previously mentioned under the Literature Review, isiZulu has two distinct versions: written isiZulu and spoken isiZulu and, historically, the spoken version has not translated all that well into the written form. As mentioned under the Literature Review in relation to the development of Zulu literature, isiZulu writing can be described as archaic and stagnant. Reading has generally not been encouraged as a cultural pastime and if some people have ventured into it in spite of its lack of popularity, they were more than likely discouraged by the difficulty of the task at hand. Reading isiZulu is a task complicated by the fact that the language relies heavily on tone, to the extent where a word can have different meanings according to the way it is pronounced. For example: the word *amabele* can refer to either the sorghum used to manufacture

traditional beer, or a woman's breasts. When used to mean sorghum, the intonation on the penultimate syllable drops. When one is talking about a woman's breasts, the intonation has to rise on that penultimate syllable. Such differences in tone are ingrained and it is second nature for speakers to mark the difference given their ease in speaking which itself stems from the fact that this is their mother tongue and the language they have been speaking since birth.

Unlike the French language where different kinds of accents are used to mark the change in tone, there are no accent or tone markings in written isiZulu. The task of reading is therefore made doubly challenging as the reader must first decipher the meaning behind the sentence, perhaps by reading ahead to get the gist of the sentence, in order to avoid mispronouncing words and thus being unable to decipher the correct meaning behind the words used.

Written language has remained relatively static in spite of the fact that the spoken language has and continues to evolve at an amazing pace. The isiZulu that is spoken in Johannesburg, especially in and around Soweto, is very different from the isiZulu that is spoken in KwaZulu-Natal. Even in KwaZulu-Natal itself, that bastion of the heavenly language (*isiZulu = the language spoken by the Zulu people; amaZulu = the people of the heavens*), the dialects spoken in the northern regions of the province differ from those spoken in the southern regions. People who live in Johannesburg - be they of Zulu origin and Johannesburg residents for reasons of employment or people who are of other ethnic origins whose mother tongue is not isiZulu but who are able to speak it – these people are the reasons behind the vibrancy that characterises the spoken version of the Zulu language.

Popular forms of artistic expression, especially in the form of music, have also been instrumental in introducing this ever constant wave of change to the people at large. Kwaito music has played

a significant role in introducing several Johannesburg words into the mainstream version of isiZulu, where words such as '*utsotsi'* refer to a gangster but the Zulu word normally used would be 'i*sigebengu'*. '*Amajimbos'* refers to the gents instead of 'a*majita'*, and this word was popularised by kwaito musician Mzekezeke. *Mugodu* in Johannesburg refers to tripe, while back in KwaZulu-Natal we speak of '*inyama yangaphakathi'*. Once again, we have a musician, Hugh Masekela, who sings of *'mugodu'* in his popular song "Thanayi". '*Fong kong'* is an expression used to refer to something that is a fake copy of the original product, instead of '*upomu'*. This is not to imply that the original Zulu words are no longer in use; rather, the two words manage to co-exist and are used interchangeably but, sometimes, the new word is more easily recognisable in certain parts of the country than its original counterpart.

Contact with other languages such as English and Afrikaans, to mention just two of the languages spoken in this country, has led to word borrowing and the incorporation of foreign words into isiZulu. Also, some foreign concepts that are introduced into the language and the culture that do not have a corresponding name or word in the Zulu language thus necessarily have to be transported along with their English or Afrikaans word. One of the most prominent characteristics of colloquial isiZulu is the incorporation of foreign words, primarily through contact with English and Afrikaans. The process of word borrowing has been facilitated by the establishment of a process jokingly known as 'Zulufication' where English words are 'Zulufied' either by attaching a class prefix to the front of a noun so that it behaves like a Zulu nouns or, in the case of verbs, attaching the prefix 'uku-' to the front of the verb and letting the verb end in '-a' as with all Zulu verbs. Thus, the word 'computer' becomes '*i-computer*' and 'to put the kettle on' will become '*uku-onisa iketela*'.

Written isiZulu has steadfastly refused to reflect the changes that are commonplace in the spoken language. It is not the intention of the translator to emulate this tradition of using pure isiZulu as the language of translation as that would alienate the target audience – in this instance, the target audience is not made up of devoted readers of Zulu literature and so, in order to make this particular literature appealing to them, it is important to use a language register that will appeal to them, hence the inclusion of colloquial language. The translator thus chose to incorporate the use of English words in the translation, both English words that have become commonplace in the Zulu language under the guise of colloquial language as well as English words that represent foreign concepts in the Zulu language and which are more readily identifiable by their English name than by a coined Zulu term with which most readers will not be familiar.

In order to illustrate all of the above, the following are examples of the use of colloquial language and English words in the translation when compared with the source text. On his way to the rendezvous point for the blind date, Jake questions himself:

> Should he be marching this briskly towards the unknown? Probably not. But he wasn't going to be late. (Harper, 2007: 8)

In the target text, Menzi has an identical conversation with himself:

> *Kwakumele yini asheshise kangaka ebe elibangise lapho engazi muntu khona? Mhlawumbe kwakungelona isu elihle lelo. Kodwa phela wayengeke afike leythi.*

Back translation:

> Should he be hurrying this much while heading to the unknown? Maybe that wasn't a good idea. But then he wasn't going to be late.

'*Leythi*' is the English word 'late' that has been 'Zulufied' by the simple means of changing its spelling to one that mirrors its pronunciation better in the Zulu language as 'late' in isiZulu would be pronounced to sound like a 'latte' coffee. It is, of course, not impossible to express the idea of being late using only Zulu words as this can be expressed as '*ukufika emuva kwesikhathi*' (arriving after the set time). In spoken isiZulu, however, people have the tendency to take the shortest route towards expressing themselves. Using the English word 'late', which expresses 'arriving after the set time' in one simple word, is a much more expedient route than the three-word expression in isiZulu. Highbrow literature would have used the Zulu alternative; popular fiction in the form of this translation opts for the latter.

At a much later stage in the source text when Jake is about to break up with Serena and is trying to avoid telling her the real reason behind his decision, she demands to know the truth:

> "I want the truth". ...
>
> "You really want the truth?"
>
> "I really do". (Harper, 2007: 77)

In the target text, Menzi and Ntombi have a similar exchange:

> "*Ngifun' ukwaz' iqiniso". ...*
>
> *"U-sure ukuth' ufun' iqiniso ngempela?"*
>
> *"Ngi-sure".*

Back translation:

"I want to know the truth". ...

"You're sure you really want the truth?"

"I'm sure".

As with the word 'late', 'sure' is a borrowed word that has become commonplace in its usage in spoken isiZulu. Once again, there is a corresponding Zulu word with the same meaning that could have been used in its place. The word '*iqiniso*' means 'the truth' and from it we can derive the word '*qinisekisa'* meaning '*to ensure*' from where would stem the question 'uqinisekile?' meaning 'are you sure?". The translator felt that retaining the use of the English word in the translation would render the translation more accessible to the target audience as it mirrors more closely the language that the said target audience is more familiar with in terms of spoken language. For this same reason, the words 'fair' and 'worse' are retained in their English form when, at a later stage in the novel, Jake and Serena are rehashing the reasons behind their breakup and she laments to herself that:

Life is not fair!

When it seems to her that he pities her, she thinks to herself:

Oh, this was worse! His anger she could handle, but his pity…? (Harper, 2007: 97)

In the target text, Ntombi has identical reflections where the use of the words 'fair' and 'worse' are retained as they are familiar enough in the spoken language to not alienate the target audience:

Impilo yayingekho fair!' and *'Hhayi-ke, lokhu kwase kuba worse. Wayengakumela ukuthi uMenzi amcasukele, kodwa ukuthi amhawukele…?*

Back translation:

Life is not fair! *and* Oh, this was worse! She could handle him being angry with her, but pitying her…?

It is important to note here that the English words have not been Zulufied by means of adapting their spelling to better suit the norms of Zulu phonetics. The words 'fair' and 'worse' are neither nouns nor verbs and it is thus not possible to 'Zulufy' them according to the aforementioned rules that apply to verbs and nouns. If the word 'fair' were to be 'Zulufied' and spelled the way it would then sound in isiZulu, the result would be 'fe'. Similarly, if the word 'worse' were also to be 'Zulufied', the result would be 'wes'. 'Fe' and 'wes', however, are not an ideal solution as they are the translator's opinion of how the 'Zulufied' words should be spelled and as such are not a standardized solution. The translator therefore decided to retain the original English spelling of the words for fear that the attempt to spell the 'Zulufied' words phonetically would alienate the target audience rather than reassure it.

There are two instances in the target text where the translator has chosen to translate using words that can be considered as being definitive examples of colloquial language. In the first instance, the corresponding passage in the source text takes place just after Jake has finished proposing to Serena and she becomes aware that there are other people in the restaurant where previously there had only been the two of them:

Jake whispered in her ear. "I hired the restaurant for our engagement party".

She punched him on the arm. “You were a little sure of yourself, weren’t you?” (Harper, 2007: 182)

In the target text:

UMenzi wahleba endlebeni kaNtombi. “Ngiqashe irestoranti yonke namhlanje khona sizogubha kahle ukuba engaged kwethu”.

UNtombi wamdlalisa ngokumshaya engalweni. “Ish dade, waze wazethemba bo!”

Back translation:

Menzi whispered in Ntombi’s ear. “I hired the whole restaurant today so that we could celebrate our engagement properly”.

Ntombi hit him playfully on the arm. “Wow, but you were so sure of yourself!”

It is hard to find an equivalent expression in the English language for the expression *‘ish dade’* as the word ‘*ish’* does not really have any semantic meaning attached to it other than being an interjection that can be used to express varying degrees of a variety of emotions - joy, surprise, amazement, annoyance. The use of the expression “*ish dade*”, however, is very commonplace in spoken isiZulu and in this instance expresses Ntombi’s playful annoyance at Menzi’s overconfidence, an annoyance that is, however, vastly overshadowed by her happiness at the result of his overconfidence.

The other instance where the translator has chosen to use words that are a prime example of colloquial language is when, in the source text, Serena is berating herself for expecting an

engagement ring when, instead, Jake makes a big production of presenting her with a pair of earrings:

> It didn't matter that the little velvet cube hadn't contained what her over-active imagination had conjured up. They'd been seeing each other less than a month. It had been crazy to think... (Harper, 2007: 74)

Ntombi engages in a similar train of thought:

> *Kwakungenamsebenzi ukuthi leli bhokisana le-velvet belingaphethe lokho ayezicabangela khona ngomqondo wakhe ogijimela phambili ngokweqile. Yayingakapheli ngisho nenyanga bezwana. Bekuwubudididi nje ukuthi aze acabange ukuthi...*

'Ubudididi' (confusion, disturbance) is an addition to the slang register of the spoken language that, while not necessarily introduced into the language by him, was recently made popular by Mzekezeke. Mzekezeke is a well known kwaito artist who, although he used to force himself into the public eye, never revealed his identity but instead chose to wear a mask over his face[7]. Mzekezeke has released three kwaito albums and he used the word 'ubudididi' so frequently at the time of the release of his first album that, because of his overnight fame, the word was simultaneously propelled to the forefront of popular slang. As in the case of other words chosen by the translator, there does exist an indigenous Zulu word for craziness – *ukuhlanya* (go mad, be insane, become wild, ungovernable, act in a wild manner) – but, in the opinion of the translator,

[7] There have of course been rumours as to who he could be, the most popular guess being that he is DJ Sbu, himself a well-known personality in South African popular culture because of his career as a popular DJ; the host of the TV game show 'Friends Like These' that has garnered a loyal audience; a short-lived stint as a morning presenter on Ukhozi FM and a current show in the same time slot with the Johannesburg-based YFM.

this severe word choice would not fit in with the gently self-deprecating tone of the target text, whereas 'ubudididi' is flexible enough a word that it portrays the idea of an elaborate thought process without judging the character too harshly.

In the same passage in the target text where Ntombi is berating herself for jumping to erroneous conclusions, we also find the use of the word 'velvet' in its English form. Indeed, a cursory glance through entire target text reveals that this is not the only instance where English words have been used and kept in their English form. Other examples include but are not limited to: *internet*, *restaurant*, *designer*, *bar*, *Mr Wonderful*, *Mr Right*, *emerald* and *instruments*. The translator reached the decision to retain these English words without any attempt to modify their spelling to fall in line with the rules of Zulu phonetics (except for restaurant – *irestoranti*) after contemplating the fact that these words all represent entities that are foreign to Zulu culture and have been introduced into the language through close contact with other languages and cultures. If we are to take the example of the internet, it is a relatively recent invention and as it is not indigenous to the Zulu people, it does not have an isiZulu name that is an accepted part of the language. It is, however, not a foreign concept in this day and age, and the translator is of the opinion that using the common, everyday English word for it will not alienate the target readership. The same reasoning lies behind the inclusion of the other words mentioned above.

A few English words that have been kept in the target text merit special mention at this point. If we are to consider Zulu architecture, we will be aware of the fact that construction is limited to single story – and even single room – houses. Most traditional Zulu homesteads include a grass-thatched rondavel as well as a few other buildings that serve various purposes. What traditional Zulu homesteads will not have, however, are double-story or multiple-storied houses. It is

therefore difficult to express the idea of the 'top floor' in an apartment building without having recourse to the English word as the concept simply does not exist in the language. The translator is not claiming that Zulu people are unaware of double-story houses as this would be a false claim to make. Contact with different architectural styles and the improvement in the economic conditions of some members of the Zulu nation mean that many people today can afford to buy or to build themselves such homes and the term *isitezi* is used to refer to a house with stairs leading to an upper floor. However, it remains difficult to describe a multiple-story apartment and, as such, the English words will have to suffice.

In the target text, the word 'top floor' is 'Zulufied' by means of attaching the prefix 'e-' that marks the locative form of the noun, followed by the use of the hyphen to signify the fact that what follows after the hyphen is a borrowed word: *e-top floor*. Similarly, when Menzi comes to visit Ntombi at her home and she leads him to the kitchen that is in the basement, the word 'basement' is another problematic term for the reasons that have been mentioned above in connection with multiple stories. A similar solution was reached in that the word 'basement' is also preceded by a hyphen to mark it as a borrowed word: ekhishini eliku-basement (the kitchen that is in the basement).

The last point that the translator wishes to raise under this section dealing with the use of colloquial language as a main point of departure from high-brow literature, is the choice of spelling that has been exercised throughout the translation. As has been mentioned, written isiZulu is old-fashioned in character but when spoken, it speakers produce a melodious rhythm given the practice of emphasising the penultimate syllable of the words. Zulu speakers have,

however, developed another habit that lends an even more melodic quality to the spoken language.

The structure of Zulu words is consonant-vowel – for example: *mama, baba*. Combinations of consonants are also possible but they are also always followed by a vowel: *bhuti, mntwana*. IsiZulu is also a language that uses the system of noun classes and these noun classes can be identified by the prefix that marks the nouns as belonging to a particular class. ***U****mama,* ***u****baba* ***u****sisi and* ***u****bhuti* thus belong to one class while ***um****ntwana* belongs to a separate class, etc.

As has been previously mentioned, the verb in its infinitive form takes the prefix 'uku-' and the locative takes the prefix 'e-'. With all these vowels at the beginning of nouns and verbs and locatives and pretty much all the grammatical categories that are not mentioned for fear of getting sidetracked, it is clear that vowels are a prominent feature of the language. Zulu speakers have developed the habit of dropping the vowels at the end of words and, in a sense, eliding words together, thus making it possible for them to speak faster. Thus the question "where is mother?" can be asked in Zulu as: *"uphi umama?"* but the regular Zulu speaker does not wish to take the time to linger over each vowel in the sentence and will rather say: *"uph'umama?"* The dropped 'i' at the end of *uphi* is replaced by the apostrophe in the written form.

To the knowledge of the translator, this dropping of vowels has not been extensively mirrored in the written language. The translator felt compelled to render the target text as close to the spoken language as possible so that the target audience would find this to be yet another point attracting them to the activity of reading rather than alienating them by using a more formal style of writing. Thus, throughout the target text, dropped vowels are replaced by the apostrophe at

almost every instance where dialogue takes place between any of the characters and where it seemed expedient to the translator to do so.

The dropping of vowels was not done as a matter of course but was carried out at specific points in order to reflect as closely as possible the way a normal dialogue would take place between two Zulu speakers:

> *UNtombi wandonsa umoya sengathi uzothimula. "Ukunakekel' ubaba kuwumsebenz' ophelele, awaz' lutho wena!"*

In the above text, Ntombi takes a deep breath before explaining to Menzi how taking care of her father has been a huge burden on her. In the sentence preceding her actual speech, the translator does not drop the vowels as this practice is only found in spoken language and thus, when transposing it to the written form, the translator preferred to limit its use to instances of dialogue between characters. When she is actually speaking, however, the translator dropped the vowels at those moments where it seemed appropriate, to avoid a sentence that looks like the following where the vowels that the speaker would in any case not pronounce are highlighted in bold:

> *UNtombi wadonsa umoya sengathi uzothimula. "Ukunakekel**a** ubaba kuwumsebenz**i** ophelele, awaz**i** lutho wena!"*

In so doing, the translator hopes to have achieved her goal of bringing the written and the spoken forms of the Zulu language together in an effort to provide similarities which the target audience will recognise and appreciate.

3.4 Use of Ideophones

Clement Doke defines ideophones as "[a] vivid representation of an idea in sound. A word, often onomatopoeic, which describes a predicate, qualificative or adverb in respect to manner, colour, sound, smell, action, state or intensity" (Doke, 1935: 118). In his Master's Thesis entitled *Some Aspects of the Ideophone in Zulu*, Derek Fivaz provides the following description which he considers to be what "appears to be the first description of the ideophones in Zulu": "the general design...is to give intensity to whatever word or sentence (the ideophones) are attached...Many of the exclamations in isiZulu are onomatopoetic, and generally accompanied with some significant gesticulation of the hands or body, or expression of the countenance" (Fivaz, 1963: 1).

Let us now consider the examples from the target text where the use of ideophones has been incorporated as a translation strategy, comparing them with the source text to illustrate their effectiveness. A particularly poignant instance of the use of an ideophone in the target text occurs when Menzi and Ntombi share an uncomfortable few minutes in a Gold Reef City Ferris wheel carriage while waiting for it to descend to the ground after Menzi's failed attempt to impress Ntombi with a pair of designer-made earrings as a birthday present when she had fancifully expected a marriage proposal instead. After this particular anti-climax, the atmosphere is somewhat tense, as we can ascertain from first perusing the source text:

> They spent the last ten minutes of the ride in silence. He seemed a little distant. She hoped desperately that he hadn't caught her awkward stutter when she'd opened the box. (Harper, 2007: 74)

In the target text, Menzi and Ntombi's situation is translated as follows:

> *Imizuzu eyishumi elandelayo bayichitha bethule du belinde ikalishi ukuthi lifike ekupheleni kwendlela. UMenzi wayebonakala ejulile ngomqondo, ekude noNtombi. Wayethemba uNtombi ukuthi uMenzi wayenganakanga ukungabaza kwakhe ngesikhathi emvulela ibhokisi.*

Back translation:

> "They spent the next ten minutes in complete silence while waiting for their carriage to reach the end of the ride. Menzi looked like he was deep in thought, far away from Ntombi. Ntombi hoped that Menzi had not noticed how she hesitated when he had opened the box for her".

To emphasize the absolute silence that took place in the pod in those last ten minutes of the ride, the ideophone 'du' is coupled with the verb construct 'babethule'. In the English-Zulu Zulu-English Dictionary compiled by Doke, Malcolm, Sikakana and Vilakazi, the definition of 'du' is as follows:

> "2. Of quiet, stillness. *Thula uthi du* (Keep quite quiet!). *Usucwebile umoya wathi du* (The wind has now quieted down and the storm is still)" (1990: 169).

The Scholar's Zulu Dictionary defines 'du' as "(ideo) of quietness, of completeness" (1969: 336). The incorporation of the use of the idiophone 'du' in the translation of the source text thus lends a particular stillness to the silence that descends upon the carriage, clarifying the awkwardness of this stressful moment in the source text.

Another instance where the use of an ideophone is incorporated in the target text is when Menzi goes to see Ntombi with the intention of ending his budding relationship with her. Upon his arrival, her joy at seeing him causes her to bubble over with happiness and she busies herself preparing tea but when she realises that the proverbial 'something' is wrong, she stops what she is doing to pay him more attention. The source text is presented as follows[8]:

> Jake shifted his weight on the stool. "I have some important news".
>
> *News you're not going to like.*
>
> "Good news or bad news?"
>
> He didn't answer. She stopped getting cups out of the cupboard and took a good look at him. "It's bad news, isn't it?" (Harper, 2007: 75)

In the target text, the above passage is rendered as follows:

> UMenzi wanyakanyakaza esitulweni sakhe. "Nginendaba ebalulekile okumele ngiyixoxe nawe".
>
> *Indaba ongeke uyithande neze neze,* kuzicabangela uMenzi.
>
> "Indaba emnandi noma embi?" kubuza uNtombi.
>
> UMenzi akaphendulanga. UNtombi, owayekade ekhipa izinkomishi ekhabetheni, wama nqgi eyekela lokhu ebekade ekwenza, wambukisisa uMenzi. "Indaba embi, angithi?"

[8] Although the ideophone is used only in one sentence, the context of its use is of great significance. Although the passage quoted is rather lengthy, the translator feels that it is the shortest passage quotable that satisfactorily sets the scene for the use of the ideophone.

The back translation of the last two sentences, where, in the target text, the use of the ideophone is incorporated, reads as follows:

> Menzi didn't answer. Ntombi, who had been getting cups out of the cupboard, **s**tood still and dropped everything she was doing and really looked at Menzi. "It's bad news, isn't it?"

From the same English-Zulu, Zulu-English dictionary previously consulted, we get the following definition of 'nqgi':

> "(ideo) of firm, tight hold; of being fixed firmly ... *Mana uthi ngqi* (Stand fast)" (1990: 560).

Similarly, further research into the Scholar's Zulu Dictionary revealed a similar meaning:

> "(ideo) of firm hold; of being stuck; of tightness" (1969: 427).

This ideophone presented the translator with an interesting quandary. The translator is not personally familiar with the ideophone 'ngqi'; in fact, when translating the passage, the ideophone that immediately came to mind is 'ngci', which the Doke et al dictionary defines as: "ideo 1. Of firmness. Tightness, of being secure, fast, firm" (1990: 551). As for Dent and Nyembezi, they offer a similar definition: "(ideo) of tightness, completion" (1969: 424). It would thus seem that 'ngci' and 'ngqi' are very similar in meaning, but the question of the variation in spelling remains intriguing. It may very well be that the reason for this slight variation in spelling is that the two words are drawn from two dialects of the Zulu language, but while an etymological dictionary of the Zulu dictionary does not exist, it would be fairly difficult to ascertain this with any certainty.

How, then, does the translator make the choice between ‘ngqi’ and ‘ngci’? In this instance, intuition has a large role to play in the translation process. The translator has to assume that if she is familiar with at least one version of this ideophone, then so will the target audience. If an ideophone is a representation of an idea in sound, then the similarities in sound between ‘ngqi’ and ‘ngci’ are great enough to dispel any confusion that might be caused by spelling, in which case it is of very little consequence which dialectal version is used.

The next example where the use of the ideophone is incorporated as a translation tool can be found in the source text when Jake visits Serena to inform her of his decision to end their relationship. As he leaves:

> She kept her head turned away from him. He kissed her lightly on the cheek, hoping it would say all the sorrys he wanted to. She squeezed her eyes shit as the tears started to run in thick trails. (Harper, 2007: 79)

In the target text:

> *UNtombi akazange aphenduke ambuke uMenzi. Uma esedlula ngakuye, uMenzi wamqabula kancane esihlathini, ethembela ukuthi lokhu kuyomxolisela ngendlela ayefisa ukuxolisa ngayo. UNtombi wavalisisa amehlo akhe ngesikhathi izinyembezi sezithi qatha-qatha zigobhozela ebusweni bakhe.*

Back translation:

> Ntombi didn't turn around to look at Menzi. When he passed her, Menzi kissed her lightly on the cheek, hoping that the action would apologise for him in the way that he wanted to apologise. Ntombi closed her eyes as the tears kept coursing down her face.

The Scholar's Zulu Dictionary defines *qatha* as follows:

> "(ideo) of arriving, of falling down, of dropping" (1969: 464).

This definition shows that the use of the ideophone in this particular context adequately evokes the image of tears coursing down Ntombi's cheeks. However, the target text translation contains a duplication of the word *qatha* and in order to explain the reason behind the choice that the translator has made in this particular instance, we first need to peruse the definition offered by Doke et al in their English-Zulu Zulu-English dictionary:

> "ideo – [>qathaka; qathaza; qáthatha.] 1. Of falling, dropping lightly. *Isela lathi libaleka nemali yathi qátha-qátha phansi* (As the thief was making off with the money, it kept dropping on the ground)" (1990: 691).

The Zulu language uses duplication in the construction of diminutives and superlatives, depending on the intention of the speaker. In this instance, the idea of 'dropping lightly' is embodied by the word *qatha*, but since Ntombi's tears are not lightly shed, duplication of the word ideophone *qatha* lends weight to the intensity of her pain as her tears keep coursing down her face instead of dropping lightly.

The last example of the use of the ideophone as a translation strategy can be found in the source text in the passage when, lost in reminiscent thought, Serena pauses at the threshold of the restaurant where she and Jake had their first date as she returns to this restaurant for a second blind date with a new man in a bid to move on with her life. As she pauses and reflects on that first date long ago, a man behind her who is waiting to enter into the restaurant and whom she is preventing from doing so by her immobility asks her:

> "Are you gonna stand there all night, love?"
>
> She jumped, and her fingers sprang away from the door handle as if it were red hot. "Sorry," she mumbled, hardly looking at the man who barged past her into Lorenzo's. (Harper, 2007: 177)

In the target text, this passage is rendered as follows:

> *"Manje uzoma laph'ubusuku bonke yini, wesisi?"*
>
> *Wethuka uNtombi, neminwe yakhe yadedela isibambo sengathi besivutha bhe.*
>
> *"Ngiyaxolisa," kwasholo uNtombi phansi, engayibuki nokuyibuka lendoda eyamgudluza endleleni isingena eMoyos.*

Back translation:

> "Are you going to stand there all night, my sister?"
>
> Ntombi was startled and her fingers let go of the door as if it were red hot.
>
> "I'm sorry," she murmured, not even looking at the man as he knocked against her on his way into Moyos.

The Scholar's Zulu Dictionary provides the following definition of this ideophone:

> "(ideo) of raging (e.g. fire, heat of sun)".

The translator trusts that the image of Ntombi suddenly letting go of the door as if it were raging hot will be vividly represented in the mind of the reader thanks to the use of the ideophone *bhe*.

The purpose of the above discussion has been to understand the purpose and the use of an aspect of the Zulu language that, although it can be found to a lesser extent in the source language, plays a larger role in the target language, especially in its spoken form. The intention of the translator in including ideophones in the translation has been to render the target text as close to the spoken form of language as possible. In that way, even if a target audience member is not familiar with isiZulu in its written form and might be put off reading by that very fact, being confronted with written isiZulu that is not so alien as it closely resembles spoken isiZulu will undoubtedly be of comfort and should facilitate the transition from speaking to reading.

3.5 Conceptual translation

The use of conceptual translation is another translation strategy adopted by the translator in this translation exercise. In his discussion on the theory of translation, Abdolmehdi Riazi advances the three following approaches to translation: "translation at the level of the word, translation at the level of the sentence and conceptual translation. The first approach is effective in the translation of phrases and proper names but is problematic at the level of the sentence due to differences in the syntax of the source and target languages. Translated texts as a product of this approach are not usually lucid or communicative, and readers will get through the text slowly and uneasily. Translation at the sentence level may be considered the same as the translation at the word level except that grammatical rules and word order in the target language are observed.

Texts produced following this approach will communicate better compared to word-for-word translation. In conceptual translation, the unit of translation is neither the word nor the sentence; rather, it is the concept. The best example is the translation of idioms and proverbs…(where) they should be translated into equivalent concepts in the target language to convey the same meaning and produce the same effect on readers " (Riazi, 2002).

In adopting the use of conceptual translation during the translation process, the translator was placed in an ideal position to illustrate the creativity that can be found in the everyday language that is spoken by native Zulu speakers. An example illustrating the use of this strategy can be found at the very beginning of our target text, but first it is necessary to examine the corresponding source text.

We first encounter the character of Jake when he makes his way on foot to the rendezvous point for his blind date with Serena:

> He stepped off the kerb of the busy London street and zigzagged through the gaps in the traffic. Headlights lit up his knees as he squeezed between the bumpers. A horn blared.
>
> That was why he liked to walk. It gave him a sense of freedom in the midst of the cloying traffic. He wasn't about to take orders from anyone, especially not a pole with coloured lights on top. (Harper, 2007: 7)

In the corresponding passage from the target text, the text has been rendered as follows:

> *Wehla kuphevumente yomgwaqo omkhulu odabula eNewtown owawuphithizela, waweqa ngokuhamba ezithunga njengenaliti phakathi kwezimoto. Amadolo akhe ayehamba*

ekhanyiswa ngamalambu ezimoto, kanti omunye umshayeli kwakungathi wavele walala phezu kwehutha yakhe nje ukucasuka.

Wayengenandaba uMenzi ngoba lena kwakuyindlela ayethanda ukuhamba ngayo. Kwakumenza azizwe ekhululekile engaxakiwe yilezi zimoto ezaziminyene emgwaqeni. Wayesekude futhi nokutshelwa omunye umuntu ukuthi makenzeni, singayiphathi ke eyokulalela amarobothi.

Back translation:

He stepped off the pavement of the busy road that crosses Newtown and crossed the road by threading between the cars like a needle. His knees were lit up by headlights and one driver seemingly draped himself over his horn in anger.

Menzi didn't care because this was how he liked to walk. It made him feel free and not bothered by the cars that were blocking the road. He was far from listening to anybody telling him what to do, never mind listening to robots.

It might not form part of standard speech to describe a person's manner of walking as threading themselves between cars in much the same manner that a needle weaves in and out of a piece of fabric during the act of sewing. Similarly, it might not form part of standard speech to describe a driver as draping himself over the horn when he hoots in anger. In spite of this, when spoken, isiZulu allows for the creativity of the interlocutor to be manifest and for concepts to be linked – walking to sewing, tooting a horn to draping one's body over it – whose juxtaposition would normally not be acceptable. In transferring this creativity from the spoken to the written format

of the language, the translator once again hopes to render the target text as easily consumable by the target audience as possible, thus increasing its chances of resonating with its target audience.

3.6 Translating African behavioural patterns

An important element that needed to be foremost in the translator's mind during the translation exercise was the issue of the behaviour and characteristics of African people, both in terms of their physical appearance and their mindset. This is an important element that had to be taken into serious consideration during the translation process.

3.6.1 African hair

With regard to physical appearance, let us consider the issue of African hair and the characteristics it can adopt under different conditions. African people have tightly coiled hair that, when left in its natural state, normally does not tend to grow to long lengths. When treated with chemical relaxers or twisted into the very Afrocentric dreadlock style, however, it is possible for African hair to be grown to significantly longer lengths than when left natural. When caught in the rain, wet natural African hair will be plastered onto the scalp but not in an identical fashion as Caucasian hair which does not possess the springy characteristic of tightly coiled African hair.

In the source text, as he is walking through the rain and after getting splashed with water from the puddle that Serena drives through, Jake's hair is plastered onto his scalp. Serena gets out of her car and approaches him, apologising for splashing him with water. In response:

> One eyebrow shot up. At least she thought it did. It was hard to tell under the dark hair plastered onto his forehead. (Harper, 2007: 10)

When transforming the character of Jake to Menzi, it is necessary to consider every minute detail about him that needs to be transformed accordingly. The difference in characteristics between Caucasian and African hair thus also has to be taken into consideration particularly in the translation of the above passage. It is not enough to be simply content with a literal translation that would read:

> *Kwakungelula ukubonisisa ngaphansi kwezinwele zakhe ezase zimnamathele esiphongweni sakhe.*

Back translation:

> It was not easy to see under his hair that has gotten plastered onto his forehead.

The difficulty with this direct translation is that it does not take into consideration the fact of the differing characteristics of the two types of hair as has been expanded upon above. Even though it is not inconceivable for an African male to have hair that is long enough to get plastered onto his forehead, it is almost unheard of that African heterosexual males allow their hair to grow to such lengths. Indeed, it suffices to look around at any significant gathering of Africans males to identify their prevalent hairstyles to be between a clean-shaven head or very short, close-cropped hair. As it is necessary to keep in mind the behavioural proclivities of African people, including

their physical attributes, in order to render the translation more faithful to the target audience, if Menzi is to have a clean-shaven head, there is no possibility of his hair being plastered to his head. A close-cropped fuzz of hair is also not a very appealing alternative for pretty much the same reasons. It is not an alternative for him have relaxed hair either as, according to prevailing stereotypes that the translator does not wish to perpetuate in this translation but which the translator nonetheless needs to keep sight of, African males with relaxed hair generally attract comparison to dubious characters with homosexual tendencies. At the same time, however, we have to keep in mind that these two hairstyles are very much in keeping with the choice image of African businessmen that is widespread on the streets of South Africa.

A suitable alternative for the purposes of this translation would be to have Menzi endowed with a healthy head of dreadlocks. The phenomenon of dreadlocks has recently spread across South Africa with more and more African people preferring the low-maintenance Afrocentric hairstyle over high-maintenance hairstyles that require treatment with chemicals. The only problem with having Menzi have a head of dreadlocks is the fact that they are not a hairstyle that is prevalent in the business sector and thus are not associated with a typical businessman image. However, the dominant concern at this juncture is the need to make the character resonate with the target audience, and seeing as dreadlocks are a familiar enough sight on the street and are readily identifiable as a popular hairstyle among Africans, the hairstyles can serve as a suitable alternative. If Menzi has a head of dreadlocks that are maintained at a length that is short enough for him to present a suitably professional image that is in keeping with his chosen career path, then the choice of dreadlocks does not clash with the personality that he is endowed with for the purposes of this story. Most importantly, Menzi's collar-length dreadlocks allow the translator the freedom to have the character of Menzi react the same way as the character of Jake when his

rain-splattered hair is plastered onto his forehead. Dreadlocks will not plaster flatly against their owner's face and/or head as the degree of plastering is much decreased, but it is there to a larger extent that with natural, unrelaxed African hair.

The choice to have Menzi endowed with a head full of dreadlocks is positively reinforced in the target text when the character of Menzi is able to mirror the actions taken by Jake even to the point of shaking his head in an attempt to rid himself of the water that has settled in his hair:

> She watched him shake his head and run his fingers through thick dark hair as he sat in the passenger seat. (Harper, 2007: 5)

The target text version:

> *Wayibuka le ndoda inikina ikhanda ngamandla izama ukususa amathonsi emvula kuma-dreadlocks ayo, yase iphulula izinwele, yazimbambatha ikhanda njengoba isihleli esitulweni esiseduze nesomshayeli.*

Back translation:

> She watched this man give his head a hard shake while trying to remove the drops of rain from his dreadlocks and then push it back, patting it down as he sat in the passenger seat.

If the character of Menzi had relaxed African hair or natural hair that has not been treated with any chemicals, then it would not be able to respond to the movement of one's head being shaken. In contrast, deadlocked hair is able to perfectly mirror Caucasian hair so that when the head is whipped around, it also tails behind in a wide, swinging arc, irrespective of length. For this

purpose and the advantages mentioned above, the translator considers the solution of dreadlocked hair as extremely suitable for the purposes of this translation.

If such a solution has fortuitously presented itself with regard to the characteristics of African hair, such cannot automatically be expected of other body parts that will necessarily differ from one racial grouping to another. In the following section, we will therefore consider what happens to African hair and eyes in particular during the translation process as this is relevant to the discussion of the success and/or failure of direct translation as a translation strategy.

3.7 Direct translation: success and failure

Direct translation, where a source text passage has a direct equivalent in the target text or when it can be successfully coined, has its place during the translation process. Sometimes, however, this translation strategy is less than satisfactory when elements of the source text cannot be translated into the target text for various reasons such as the lack of an exact target text equivalent or when the concept or theory in question does not exist in the target language. During the translation of *Blind Date Marriage*, the translator became aware that there was a recurring pattern of elements that were not suitable for direct translation and that, if examined closely, it was possible to categorise these elements according to the reason for their unsuitability for direct translation. The following is a brief discussion of these categories accompanied by examples that are lifted from the translation of *Blind Date Marriage*.

3.7.1 African hair characteristics

The first candidate of a source text passage that is not suitable for direct translation requires us to return to the mention of hair, first Jake's hair as previously alluded to and, at a later point in the story, Serena's. Once again, Jake is on his way to the restaurant where he is supposed to meet with Serena for their initial blind date and the London night sky showers him with a gentle drizzle:

> Once on the pavement again, he stopped to shake the drizzle off his hair. (Harper, 2007: 7)

If direct translation is to be used in this instance, then the following would be the result:

> Esewele ngaphesheya komgwaqo, wama kancane wanikina ikhanda ngamandla enzela ukususa amathonsana emvula ayesemhleli ekhanda kanye nasemahlombe.

Back translation:

> Having crossed the road, he stopped and shook his head forcefully in order to remove the raindrops that were on his head and shoulders.

At first glance, the above translation is quite acceptable for this particular source text passage. However, upon closer inspection, the glaring inconsistency already previously alluded to is once again evident: shaking a headful of African hair in an attempt to rid it of raindrops is not a particularly successful method of drying it as African hair does not co-operate with this method: it is characteristically short and curly and whipping a headful of it around with the hope that velocity will assist in shedding it of its wetness will most probably lead to a sore neck faster than

it will lead to dry hair. Quite simply stated, African hair does not behave in this way – it is more practical to apply a towel to wet hair than to attempt to shake the water off.

In a similar example lifted from the source text but this time in connection with Serena, the behaviour of her hair also needs to be reconsidered in view of the fact that Ntombi's hair will not react the same way to a similar stimulus:

> Serena was leaning out of a first-floor window, looking extraordinarily beautiful, with her dark hair falling forwards and a huge smile on her face. (Harper, 2007: 75)

The target text version:

> UNtombi wayevele ngefasitela eliku-first floor, emuhle ngendlela eyayimqeda amandla uMenzi, izinwele zakhe ziwela ebusweni bakhe futhi emamatheka kakhulu.

Back translation:

> Ntombi was leaning out of the first-floor window and she was so beautiful that she took Menzi's breath away, her hair falling across her face and smiling widely.

In the same way that Menzi cannot shake his short African hair in an effort to dry it, Ntombi similarly cannot have African hair that falls into her face. In these two examples, direct translation as a translation strategy will not succeed: an alternative is needed. African people are quite creative with their hair and indeed the African hair industry is quite a lucrative one in South Africa with an estimated worth of between R700 million and R1 billion. "The market is roughly split into two categories: wet and dry hair. Products available in the wet hair category are chemical products such as hair relaxers and straighteners, and after-care products such as

moisturizers. The dry hair market covers hair extensions, available in wigs, weaves and hair pieces" (Eprop, 2010). As has been previously discussed, though, dreadlocks are the suitable solution for Menzi as they allow him to have reasonably lengthy hair which he can then whip around in an action that is identical to that of his source text counterpart, Jake. As for Ntombi, hair extensions are a suitable alternative. These are currently quite popular and are favoured by many African women as their hairstyle of choice.

3.7.2 Blue eyes…

It might seem a bit excessive to be so meticulous in the translation that even the sensation that is given off by the characters' eyes has to come under close scrutiny. However, the translator is convinced that the more the character mirror characters that would be believable to their target audience, thus necessarily embracing and portraying only those qualities that are readily identifiable by that target audience, the better the chances of a successful translation that will resonate deeply with the said target audience.

In our source text, Serena sits in the driver's seat and watches the stranger that she has just drenched with water climb into the passenger seat and shake his head in an effort to rid it of the water that is drenching his hair and running his fingers in it an effort to slick it back. With his hair slicked back properly, she is now able to properly see the stranger's face and eyes and she wonders to herself:

> How did eyes that cool blue manage to smoulder? (Harper, 2007: 11)

There are two elements in the above sentence that could be a challenge with regard to the translation: the blue eyes and the word ‘smoulder’. It is necessary in the translation to be respectful of racial proclivities: it is an accepted reality that the majority of African people in South Africa do not have natural blue eyes, aside from those rare cases of genetic abnormalities. If we are to take a quick glance at fashion trends in South Africa, however, we might notice the trend of sporting blue and hazel-coloured contact lenses as a fashion statement of sorts. To the translator’s knowledge, this trend is practised by very few people in the country, so for the overwhelming majority of African people in South Africa and the quasi totality of the target audience, an African person with blue eyes does not compute.

This is where the need stems from to endow the character of Menzi with brown eyes as this is the eye colour that African people have, in the interest of rendering the translation recognisable and acceptable to the target audience. Therefore, the corresponding sentence in the translation of Ntombi’s inner thoughts is rendered as follows:

Ngabe enza njani amehlo ansundu kangaka ukubukeka sengathi ayavutha bhe?

Back translation:

How do eyes this brown manage to look as if they are on fire?

3.7.3 …that smoulder

At first glance, the above might seem to be a fitting translation until we consider the issue of the smouldering eyes. If we consider the issue of black racial proclivities, generally brown eyes are not in the habit of being described as giving off the sensation of burning heat. Directly translating the smouldering heat as *ukuvutha bhe* is as incongruent to the translation as maintaining the cool blue of eyes of Jake in Menzi. Also, the Zulu language does not readily lend itself to the task of describing eyes as blazing hot. Tangible things that, when handled, are found to be hot can be described as such. Eyes cannot be held on the palm of the hand and be declared to be hot, hence the incongruence of describing them as such. This is clearly yet another instance where direct translation from the English into the Zulu would not work as a translation tool.

How, then, to translate the concept of smouldering eyes? It seems to the translator that the best course to follow would be to describe the eyes as contributing an element towards the description of the whole face. Rather than describe the eyes as smouldering hot, it might be better to describe them as eyes that give the (entire) face a veneer of warmth. In this way, we maintain the image of heat but it is toned down to warmth since, as explained in the above, smouldering eyes are to be avoided. The move from smouldering eyes to those that give off a sensation of warmth, when taking all of the above into consideration, renders the following final translation with which the translator is satisfied:

> *Ngabe enza njani amehlo ansundu kangaka ukumenza abukeke sengathi ungumuntu ofudumele kangaka?*

Back translation:

How do eyes this brown make him seem like such a warm person?

3.7.4 Mid-life crisis

African cultures in South Africa are based on the principle of respect for your elders. Young children are reared to respect their elders and to reflect that respect in the many different facets that compile their lives: be it in how they speak to their elders, how they speak of them, how they position their bodies when in the company of their elders, how they serve them, etc. There are many examples that can be supplied to illustrate the above: a young person is never to raise their voice to an elder in anger, disapproval, disagreement or any other similarly negative emotion. A young person never speaks ill of their elder; they are not to use inappropriate language when speaking of their elder as they might speak of their contemporaries. If an elder is talking to a young person and the elder is seated, the young person must either sit down or kneel beside the elder, or else the young person is considered as very badly mannered if they conduct the conversation while standing and obliging the elder person to look up to them. These are but a few examples that are lifted from the translator's innate knowledge of her culture.

In the source text, we encounter a passage where Serena is reluctant to inform Jake that the fancy car that she is driving actually belongs to her father as she feels that it reflects a less than desirable aspect of her father's personality:

> She wasn't about to tell him she was riding round in her father's car. It had mid-life crisis stamped all over it. Not that her father's crazy behaviour had started in his fifties. He'd

had a head start in his teenage years, and had never stopped long enough to mature. (Harper, 2007: 11)

If we are to proceed with a direct translation of the above passage, the resulting target text would read as follows:

Wayengazimiselanga ukumtshela ukuthi wayehamba ngemoto kababa wakhe. Wayezovese azibonele ukuthi imoto yomuntu owayengafuni ukuguga. Okungasho ukuthi ukuhlanya kukababa wakhe kwakumqale eseneminyaka engamashumi amahlanu. Kwakumqale kudala esasemusha, futhi kuyacaca ukuthi ubaba wakhe akazange ahlukane nalokho kuhlanya khona ezokhula kancane ngokwengqondo.

Let us consider the back translation for the actual meaning of the translation to be apparent:

She wasn't prepared to tell him that she was riding her father's car. He could see for himself that it was a car belonging to someone who did not want to get old. This didn't mean that her father's craziness only started when he was fifty. It had started while he was young, and it was clear that he father had not left that madness behind so that he could mature.

In this passage where direct translation has been used as a translation tool, if we compare the back translation with the source text, we find that the concept of 'mid-life crisis' has been translated into isiZulu as 'ukuhlanya'. This is because the concept of a mid-life crisis is one that does not easily translate into the Zulu culture. The idea of a mid-life crisis as a psychological fad is one that more easily fits the white bourgeois middle-class than the Zulu masses who, as a whole, can be categorised into the working classes without the luxury of entertaining

psychological fads. This is, of course, not categorically to state that Zulu men and women do not experience some or other form of life-altering psychosis as they enter into their middle ages, but rather that, firstly, it manifests differently where, for example, a middle-aged Zulu man might suddenly experience the strong urge to take a second wife who is much younger and much more nubile than his first wife; and, secondly, in the psyche of the African mind, it is not referred to as such.

As a direct consequence of the first and second points raised in the above paragraph, the direct translation of mid-life crisis is one that cannot succeed in the translation of the source text from English into isiZulu as the target language. The main reason for this is that for Ntombi to describe her father as experiencing some form of madness is disrespectful to the highest degree. As he is her elder, she cannot refer to him as going through madness or craziness, as is suggested by the back translation of the term 'mid-life crisis'. It is important that the cultural awareness of the need to be respectful to one's elders be reflected in the translated version of the source text at all times, otherwise the result will be a translation that will not resonate with the target audience.

It therefore becomes necessary for the translator to consider alternative means of translating the concept of 'mid-life crisis' without having recourse to the words 'madness' or 'craziness'. The reason that these words were chosen in the first place is because, when one truly considers it, the act of the middle-aged Zulu man who sets his sight on a younger and more nubile second wife when he has been married to his principal wife with no thoughts of turning his monogamous marriage into a polygamous one but for the realisation that he is getting old and the wish to dilute that realisation with the delusion of youth by sipping at its fountain – this is nothing but craziness or madness in its purest form. However, they are too direct and too harsh to be useable in the

target text, hence the need for an alternative. The following is the alternative that is proposed by the translator:

> *Wayengazimiselanga ukumtshela ukuthi wayehamba ngemoto kababa wakhe. Wayezovese azibonele ukuthi yimoto yomuntu owayengafuni ukuguga. Okungasho ukuthi ukungafuni ukuziphathisa okomuntu omdala kukababa wakhe kwakumqale eseneminyaka engamashumi amahlanu. Kwakumqale kudala esasemusha, futhi kuyacaca ukuthi ubaba wakhe akazange ahlukane nalokho kungafuni ukuziphathisa okomuntu omdala khona ezokhula kancane ngokwengqondo.*

In the above text, we have mid-life crisis muted down into *ukungafuni ukuguga* which means that her father "does not want to grow old". This euphemistic turn of phrase makes it hard to take offense with Ntombi's father's mid-life crisis whilst at the same time conveying an idea of some of the angst that is experienced by a person who is fighting the aging process in a matter that is ill-fitting to their age group. Similarly, Ntombi's father's "crazy behaviour" is also muted down to *ukungafuni ukuziphathisa okomuntu omdala* which means "refusing to comport himself as an adult". Here, once again, is another turn of phrase that encompasses the crazy behaviour of the source text while at the same time muting the description down as it takes into account the need for respect towards one's elders in the target language.

The aim of the above discussions has been to consider direct translation as a translation strategy, to illustrate where it is not successful and to find an alternative solution where this is possible. African hair, smouldering blue eyes and mid-life crises are just a few examples that have been lifted from *Blind Date Marriage* and that the translator felt best illustrate the shortcomings of

direct translation when transposed into the target language and where the alternative solutions are much more attractive.

3.8 Localisation

The discussion on localisation is informed by the statement by Klingsberg that "[c]ultural context adaptation of some sort is desirable when it may not be wholly clear to the readers of a target text what geographical phenomena a certain name refers to" (1986: 51). In the source text, the love story between Serena and Jake takes place in London. In translating this particular source text for a purely South African audience whom the translator assumes will be more familiar with a localized setting and in order to avoid the deletion of elements of the source culture that might render the target text foreign, the translator has opted to include elements of the target culture.

3.8.1 From London to Johannesburg

It thus seemed advisable to the translator to also accordingly change the city where the action takes place to the imminently more familiar Johannesburg, thus transposing the story from one metropolis to another without in any way losing its big-city quality. While it might be preposterous to assume that every single member of the target audience has had the personal experience of visiting Johannesburg, it is not outrageous to assume that all have heard of it and are aware of its position as the business capital of South Africa in the same way that London is the business capital of the United Kingdom.

Johannesburg is a large city that is much more manageable when divided into suburbs. In the target text, the localization takes place on a city level – from London to Johannesburg – but that localization goes one step further and the beginning pages of the source text are transposed to Newtown, a city centre locale in Johannesburg that is well known for being trendy and counts among its residents businesses, restaurants, theatres, nightclubs, radio stations, business offices and the like. It is a popular area both by day and night and if not well known to all members of the target audience, it is well known to those audience members who are familiar with Johannesburg and its surrounds. This would then be a *clin d'oeil* to them that they would particularly appreciate for what it is: a familiarizing tactic that seeks to draw them further into the story.

While keeping to the translation strategy of transposing the location of the story from London to Johannesburg, it is nonetheless the translator's wish to maintain some of the points of the story that are particularly interesting such as Jake and Serena's activities when they go on a date. That is why their visit to the park is maintained in the target text in an almost identical form to that found in the source text. Similarly, the translator wished to recount their visit to the London Eye and render it as true to the original as is possible under the circumstances. The difficulty in this case is that the London Eye is quite a unique feature and it has become one of London's most prominent features in its relatively short life-span – relatively short when compared with such giants as the Eiffel Tower or the Coliseum, architectural feats that define the skylines of Paris and Rome respectively.

In terms of size, there is nothing comparable to the London Eye in Johannesburg. There is no giant Ferris wheel with glass pods waiting to offer its passengers a rotating view of Johannesburg

from above. If we look to find something comparable in terms of size, then the translation strategy will fail. If, however, we look for something comparable in terms of concept – a Ferris wheel in the city that offers its passengers a rotating view of Johannesburg from above – then it is possible to find a solution within the confines of Johannesburg: the Gold Reef City Ferris wheel.

Gold Reef City is quite prominently situated to the right of the M2S as one drives out of Johannesburg's city centre, a major artery that is used by the overwhelming majority of travellers coming from the South where the biggest township in South Africa is located - Soweto, which accommodates people who form part of the ideal target market for this translation. Just as prominent as Gold Reef City and quite clearly visible to motorists travelling on the M2 in either direction but particularly south-bound on the M2 is the amusement park's Ferris wheel. While nowhere near as immense or as sophisticated as the London Eye, it still fulfils the same basic requirements as its fancier counterpart. In this instance, localisation allows the translator to include visual images that acknowledge a feature of Johannesburg that will be familiar to members of the target audience who have the occasion to see it on a regular basis and thus afford them a measure of comfort when they read about something that takes place in a place familiar to them. Those members of the target audience who are not familiar with this landscape will also nonetheless be comforted to be reading about something that takes place in a South African city that is known to them, if not by sight then by reputation.

3.8.2 Public housing to RDP housing

At a certain point in the source text, Jake takes Serena on a picnic on a strategically located park with a view to the council estate on the poor, rough neighbourhood where he grew up as a young boy. He then proceeds to tell her about his childhood and she reciprocates with a similar gesture. In the source text, Jake shows Serena the council estate where he grew up. The council estate is the term used in the United Kingdom to refer to public housing that is provided by the government for the use of its lower income earners.

In the target text, Menzi takes Ntombi on a picnic with a similar purpose to a similarly located park that allows him to show her the neighbourhood in which he grew up. When Menzi points out his childhood neighbourhood to Ntombi, he doesn't show her a council estate but rather a neighbourhood that is crowded with "RDP houses", as the South African version of public housing is referred to. In the following extract, Richard Knight provides insight into the history of RDP houses and of popular opinion about them:

> "In 1994 the African National Congress adopted the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), an integrated socio-economic policy framework which is now the policy of the government. The RDP set a goal of 300 000 houses to be built a year with a minimum of one million low-cost houses to be constructed within five years…Criticisms of the housing being built includes quality, size (many are very small) and location (numerous identical houses in areas with no social or economic infrastructure). Many of the houses that have been built are what are popularly known as "RDP houses". Some RDP houses are so small and badly built that people joke that they are "so small you need to go outside to change your mind". (Knight: 2006).

Seeing as there is a correlation between the British system of public housing and the South African RDP housing plan, it was the translator's decision to substitute the latter for the former in the target text. In this manner, the source text is faithfully represented in the target text while incorporating elements of target language norms that will be comfortingly familiar to the target audience, thus increasing the probability of the success of the target text.

3.8.3 Ham vs. peanut butter

In the source text, Jake takes Serena on a picnic where he makes a concerted effort to make the experience as memorable and enjoyable for her as possible. He packs an impressive picnic hamper for the two of them, including champagne. During a lull in the conversation, Serena thinks to herself what a perfect companion he would make as he fulfils all of her requirements in a suitor:

> He put one hundred per cent commitment into all he did, and everything he did was first class. Just look at this hamper of picnic food from London's most exclusive department store. No ham sandwiches wrapped in an empty bread bag here.
>
> But something inside her longed for ham sandwiches, lemonade, and children running down the hill with jam on their faces and grass stains on their knees. (Harper, 2007: 45)

Her longing for simpler food fare is rendered slightly differently in the target text. The assumption of the translator based on her own experience of having grown up as a member of a working-class family in KwaZulu-Natal is that ham is not a foodstuff that can be included in the daily fare of working class citizens. Ham and cheese in particular, are sandwich fillers that are

favoured in middle-class families with a reasonable income and who can afford to splurge on life's little luxuries such as these. For the working class family, jam and peanut butter sandwiches are more in line with the order of the day. Therefore in the target text, when Ntombi longs for simpler foodstuff that is comforting in its simplicity, she longs instead for jam and peanut butter sandwiches as these are more likely to be the target audience's simple foodstuff than ham sandwiches.

Lemonade also had to be changed to Oros for the same reasons and also for the fact that lemonade is not as readily identifiable as a popular drink among South Africans. Oros, however, is readily recognisable as a well-known squash and can be readily associated with South Africa. Also, if the propaganda on the Tiger Brands website is to be believed, then Oros "offers a feeling of nostalgia as many consumers grew up drinking it and it elicits happy memories" (Tiger Brands: 2006). If indeed the mention of Oros in the target text will elicit fond memories in target audience readers, then its inclusion in the target text can only have positive results.

Taking the above explanations into consideration where it would be incongruous to equate Ntombi's longing for simpler fare with ham sandwiches and lemonade, the translation has resulted in the following:

> *Kwakusobala ukuthi yonke into ayenzayo wayezimisele ukuthi iphumelele, futhi yonke into ayeyenzayo yayicokeme. Buka nje lo bhasikidi owawugcwele ukudla ayekuthenge kwesinye sezitolo zokudla ezibizayo zaseGoli. Kwakungekho zinkwa ezigcotshwe ujamu ne-peanut butter lapha.*

> *Kodwa ikhona into phakathi uNtombi eyayifisa ukudla isinkwa esigcotshwe ujamu ne-peanut butter, ehlise nge-Oros; wayefisa nokubona izingane zigijima zidlala epakini zigcwele ujamu ebusweni kanye notshani emadolweni.*

The back translation facilitates increased appreciation of where the target text deviates from the source text:

> It was obvious that he wanted to succeed in everything that he did, and everything that he did was first class. Just look at this basket that was full of food that he had bought from one of Johannesburg's expensive food stores. There were no jam and peanut butter sandwiches here.
>
> But there was something in Ntombi that longed for jam and peanut butter sandwiches, washed down with Oros; she wished to see children running and playing in the park with jam on their faces and grass on their knees.

If we recall Klingberg's theories on cultural context adaption, his general rule when dealing with the category of buildings, home furnishings and food is that deletion or substitution must be avoided in preference of an element of the target culture. While it is not the translator's presumption that ham sandwiches and lemonade are completely foreign to the target culture and thus require cultural context adaptation, the change to jam and peanut butter sandwiches is one that is designed to envelop the target reader with a sense of familiarity that will hopefully ensure the success of the target text with its audience.

3.8.4 Metre taxis vs. minibus taxis

In the source text, Jake treats Serena to a romantic dinner for two at a Moroccan restaurant and then spirits her away to a surprise destination:

> She liked surprises as much as the next girl, but being dragged round half of London with a woolly scarf covering her eyes was too much. Jake had insisted on securing it round her head while they were in the taxi he'd hailed outside the restaurant. (Harper, 2007: 69)

In terms of the target audience, the understanding of the word 'taxi' varies greatly from what the target audience of *Blind Date Marriage* might intrinsically understand the word to refer to. In London, a taxi is understood to refer to a meter taxi and the image of London's taxis is immortalised by the black cabs that pepper all representations of London in the media for tourism purposes and the like. In South Africa, the imagery is, of necessity, vastly different.

In South Africa, meter taxis in the mould of London's cabs only account for about 10% of the taxi industry: the rest of the market is monopolised by the indomitable minibus taxi industry. The taxis used in the industry are minibuses that can accommodate up to 15 seated passengers and that travel along set routes. These taxis are popular among African commuters for various reasons: they run late-night services, commuters are picked up and dropped off close to their homes and they charge set fees that are affordable for the majority of South African's working classes (Arrive Alive: 2010).

To return to the translation, when Jake hails a taxi outside the Moroccan restaurant to transport him and Serena to the surprise destination, it is in fact a meter taxi that is in question. It is therefore not enough to merely mention that Menzi flags a taxi for him and Ntombi but extra

information is needed to clarify that the taxi in question is a meter taxi and not a minibus taxi, as would be the assumption upon mention of the word 'taxi' in a South African context. The translation of the above passage thus reads as follows:

> *UNtombi wayewathanda amasurprise njengawo wonke amanye amantombazane, kodwa ukudonswa iGoli lonke ebe evalwe amehlo ngesikhafu kwakungathi sekunehaba. UMenzi wayemvale amehlo ngesikhafu ngesikhathi sebegibele imitha teksi ayeyithole ilinde ngaphandle kwerestoranti.*

Back translation:

> Ntombi liked surprises like all other girls but being dragged around Johannesburg with a scarf covering her eyes was too much. Menzi had covered her eyes with a scarf when they were in the meter taxi that he had found outside the restaurant.

All of the examples provided above on the changes to the source text that are necessitated by the change in localisation have hopefully illustrated how the target text will incorporate elements of the target culture that will render the target text familiar to the target audience, thus hopefully increasing its resonance with them.

3.9 Omissions

In as much as it has been the objective of the translator to find a way to translate each and every concept into an equivalent one in the target language, this has at times proven quite impossible to achieve. In these instances, the only strategy that was available to the translator was that of

omission, simply leaving out the problematic word or expression where this has not adversely affected the overall translation of the word, phrase or sentence in question.

It is possible to categorise these omissions according to what kind of information is left out. The following is a listing of the different kinds of omissions that have taken place and an example of each in order to gauge if omission was the only solution left open to the translator and, if so, to illustrate how the omission affects the translation.

3.9.1 Expression not existing in the target language

The first category of omissions that we will consider is that of phrases or expressions that not only do not have an equivalent in the Zulu language but that do not exist even as a concept in the target language. The first example of this kind can be found on the very first page of the source text when Jake is making his way to the rendezvous point for the blind date and he indulges in a fantasy of what Serena looks like purely based on the sound of her name:

> Serena.
>
> Sounded kind of horsey. She probably wore jodhpurs. Mel had refused to comment on whether she was pretty or not, so she probably looked like a horse as well. He could see it so clearly: the gymkhana trophies, the chintzy bedroom. Serena wore her mousy hair in a bun and had too many teeth. (Harper, 2007: 7)

The second example of this kind can be found when Serena makes fun of the fact that she has come to Jake's rescue by offering him a lift home after splattering him with water whereas

western tradition would normally have it that it is the lady who is in distress and it is the gentleman who comes to her aid. She coins the term "Jake-in-distress" to refer to him (Harper, 2007: 14).

The third example of this kind is lifted from the source text when Jake organises a surprise excursion on the London Eye in celebration of Serena's birthday. She is blindfolded on the way to their destination and climbs into the pod without any idea of where she is. The experience of not knowing where she is or what she is doing disorientates her but she follows Jake's instructions to the letter and when he instructs her what to do,

> She nodded, suddenly feeling as she was about to walk the plank. The lapping of water was louder, almost beneath her feet. (Harper, 2007: 70)

These three terms proved to be really problematic for the translator. Firstly, the Zulu people are not a horse riding people. Horses have never featured in any way as a part of the culture: cows are revered as a sign of wealth and various uses have been found for their meat and hide when they are slaughtered for food or during traditional ceremonies. Horses, on the other hand, do not feature at all on the cultural landscape. That is not to say that Zulu people are ignorant of the fact that horses exist or of activities that exist around horse riding; rather, it is difficult to translate a source text passage that is based around a horse riding metaphor when the very activity of horse riding does not exist within the target culture. An alternative solution might have been to retain the use of the metaphor but with reference to a different animal that is used for recreational purposes by the Zulu people. Unfortunately for this solution, the only animal that the Zulu people have an enduring relationship with is the cow, as above mentioned, and the sort of

activities that they involve this animal in are really not suitable for our translation purposes. Therefore, omission ends up being the only solution left open to the translator.

Secondly, the metaphor of knights in shining armour and ladies in distress simply does not apply in an African context in general and in a Zulu context in particular: in this culture, gender roles are defined differently and they are rather narrow in scope. In the family structure, the man is the leader and his role is to protect and provide for his family. The woman is the nurturer and she takes care of the children. Outside of the family, Zulu males are known for their prowess in war in times gone by and many tales abound about the pursuits of King Shaka and his warriors in particular. Nowhere in the history of the Zulu people, though, is there reference to knights in shining armour who rescue damsels in distress. To have included the reference to a cultural peculiarity that does not exist in the target language would merely have served to alienate the target audience from the text. That is why omitting the reference to "Jake-in-distress" in the target text is the only strategy that is open to the translator in this case.

Lastly, in as much as Zulu people are not horse riders or knights in shining armour, they are also not a seafaring people. When Serena feels likes she is about to walk to plank, there is no correlating nautical imagery in the Zulu language, hence the translator resorting to omission as a suitable translation strategy.

3.9.2 Vocabulary with no target language equivalent

This category of omissions concerns those words in the source text that do not have a ready equivalent in the target language. The lack of equivalent words or expressions in the target

language can be explained by the fact that these words describe or refer to something that is not native to the target language and that was introduced to it through contact with other ethnic groups and which words were then assimilated into the target language through language contact. The first example of this can be found in the source text when Jake and Serena are enjoying their picnic and she wonders at the fact that not only has he prepared such a scrumptious picnic but the crockery that he has brought along is also of a really high quality:

> She picked up her place – china, no less – and pinched a stuffed vine leaf between thumb and forefinger. (Harper, 2007: 43)

It is possible to describe the word 'china' as *izitsha zesilungu zobumba* as the word 'china' is defined in the Scholar's Zulu Dictionary, but the translator felt that omission would be a better translation strategy in this instance. Insisting on translating word-for-word would render a translation that includes many explanations- including what a stuffed vine leaf is as this foodstuff does not feature on the list of the normal culinary fare that is enjoyed by the Zulu people. Omission, on the other hand, allows the translator not to get sidetracked by word-for-word translation but instead allows her to rather focus on the intention of the passage, which is to capture the overall mood of the picnic and its consequences.

Similarly, when it comes to the passage in the source text when Jake and Serena are each standing on one side of the line on the grounds which marks the Greenwich Meridian, it is possible but not really advisable for the translator to render "zero degrees longitude" as follows:

> *Amadigri angunothi kumudwa odwetshwe emephini yomhlaba ekhomba ukuthi indawo ethile imi kude kangakanani ngasentshonalanga noma ngasempumalanga kweGreenwich*
>
> - (zero degrees on the lines that are drawn on a world map that show that a certain place

> is situated how far to the east or to the west of the Greenwich) (Scholar's Zulu Dictionary, 1969: 148).

The above is not the only geographical term that posed a measure of difficulty for the translator. As they stand each on one side of the Greenwich Meridian, Serena thinks to herself:

> Never mind about separate hemispheres, they seemed to be the only two people on the planet. (Harper, 2007: 48)

In this instance, it is the word 'hemisphere' that poses a problem. The Scholar's Zulu Dictionary gives it the following translation into isiZulu:

> *Imbulunga yomhlaba inqunywe kabili* (the globe divided into two) (1969: 117)

The translator is of the staunch opinion that there would be a lot that is lost in translation if she were to stick adamantly to a word-for-word translation of this sentence, hence the preference for omission as a translation strategy.

CONCLUSION

The discussion thus far has provided a detailed analysis of the translation carried out by the translator as it was in carrying out this translation that the elements that need to be taken into consideration during the translation of romantic fiction into isiZulu manifested themselves. While the Theoretical Framework provided guidance in terms of the relevance theory that would assist the translator in employing a translation strategy that would facilitate the accessibility of the target text to the target audience, and Klingberg's theories of cultural context adaptation and recontextualisation were useful during the translation process in that they also helped orientate all of the translator's decisions around the aforementioned common goal of accessibility, it soon became clear to the translator that her innate knowledge of the target language and culture would be her strongest asset during the translation process.

Nowhere was this more evident than in the translation of the title. The leap from *Blind-Date Marriage* to *UNtombi nethambo lakhe leKentucky* could very well be viewed as a leap of faith on the part of the translator: faith that the Model Reader who forms part of the target audience will appreciate the intertextual connection that links an accepted part of Zulu popular culture in the form of Mbongeni Ngema's timeless classic, *Stimela saseZola*, with this unknown form of fiction that is being introduced into the literary system. The translator felt encouraged to make this leap precisely because of the intertextuality that it offers: if the unknown is presented in a way that references the known and the familiar, then the chances of it being entertained are that much greater than before and will hopefully lead to acceptance.

The translation of the characters' names, the use of colloquial language and the use of English words as well as the inclusion of ideophones appealed to the translator as translation tools to be used during the translation process because of the manner in which they bring the target text closer to the everyday spoken language of the Model Reader: our Model Reader is familiar with the popular names of Ntombi and Menzi, either through watching *Generations* where Ntombi is a main character and Menzi is the real name of the character who portrays Ntombi's husband, Menzi Ngubane, or through their own familiarity with Zulu names in general. The Model Reader is not a language purist and is thus not averse to slang being used in the spoken language, nor does s/he make a point of avoiding the use of English words. The incorporation of both these elements in a written text as well as the fact that the style of the written text makes an effort to mirror the spoken language will then hopefully narrow the divide between the spoken word and the written word and hopefully attract ardent practitioners of the former to the latter.

Another element that served to narrow this divide was considering the differences between western behavioural characteristics and those of black people. Cultural context adaptation and recontextualisation required of the translator that the realities of the target audience be incorporated into the target text in order to make the target text relevant to its members and for them to feel addressed by it. Considering such physical elements as the response of African hair to moisture as opposed to Caucasian hair, the rarity of blue eyes among African people from whence arose the need to endow our characters with brown eyes, and characters who are mindful of the need to respect their elders much as is the expected norm among the Zulu people – the simple fact of acknowledging all these point of difference by incorporating them into the recontextualisation of the source text will hopefully go a long way towards increasing the accessibility of the target text to its audience.

Lastly, localisation was another major element that contributed towards the recontextualisation of the source text. Moving the location of the story to the more familiar locale of Johannesburg will hopefully make the Model Reader feel closer to the action than if it remains set in the unfamiliar city of London. Localisation was achieved not only in terms of geographical location but also with reference to buildings, food and means of transport.

The above summary of the analysis of the translation is also a summary of the answer to the main question posed by this thesis in that it highlights the principal elements which need to be taken into consideration during the translation of romantic fiction into isiZulu. If we are to question the success of the translation, it is the opinion of the translator that given all the effort that has been expended into making the target text as close to the popular culture, spoken language and realities of the target audience, a substantial measure of success surely has been achieved. It can, however, be argued that the translator is inherently biased towards such an opinion of their own work and the truth of such an argument is self-evident. The onus is thus upon members of the target audience to provide constructive criticism of this work, the natural step to be followed if such a translation ever wishes to reach publication.

Translation is a useful means of introducing a genre into a literary system where it does not currently exist in that it allows the translator to choose from material that already enjoys proven success with its audience of origin. The popularity of Mills & Boon novels has already been discussed as well as the malleability of Zulu popular culture which accepts those foreign elements of which it approves to such an extent as to make them endemic to it. Given the lengths to which the target text will be adapted culturally, the greatest remaining impediment to the successful introduction of the translation into the Zulu literary system is the only unknown

element in the equation: the reaction of the Model Reader and our target audience. While it is possible to hypothesize about decisions taken to increase the chances of accessibility, it will nonetheless remain an unknown until definitive steps are taken to solicit the reaction of the Model Reader and the target audience.

If publication is ever reached, the look of a Zulu Mills & Boon would be an important element that would contribute to its hopeful success. In much the same way that the English versions have an archetypal cover – a dreamy scene depicting the couple in question, often in a loving embrace or staring lovingly into each others' eyes, with a dreamy romantic landscape in the background, the whole in vivid colour that grabs the eyes – a Zulu line of publication would have to establish its own archetypal cover, featuring for example a black couple, that will become representative of this type of genre for the intended female Model Reader.

As the target text is not yet available for mass consumption, it remains just as hard to speculate on its potential popularity. While the sales figures of its English counterpart are certainly impressive, the Zulu version would have to take into consideration the fact that reading is not such a popular activity among the Zulu people, and it thus follows that the purchase of books, especially those written in isiZulu - of which there is a considerable shortage when compared to the body of literature that is available in English - suffers accordingly.

If the translation of popular romantic fiction into isiZulu necessitates the introduction of a genre that does not currently exist within the Zulu literary genre and if its success and prolific sale are not necessarily guaranteed– why then advocate for such an exercise in the face of such adversity? What is accomplished by this translation? It seems to the translator that anything that contributes towards the creation and the promotion of an increasingly active reading culture

among the Zulu people, whether it be through translation or through the writing of novels that will have popular mass appeal, is well worth the effort regardless of whatever actual result that it might have.

It is nonetheless the fervent hope of the translator that Zulu people will enjoy reading a Mills & Boon novel written in isiZulu to such an extent that the introduction of the genre through translation would be validated. If their enjoyment of such a translation exercise does indeed prove to be real, it will hopefully lead to a situation where such novels are even conceptualised from the beginning in isiZulu, thus creating room for a new generation of writers who cater solely to the demands of popular culture and who feel the need to contribute towards the promotion of a reading culture among the Zulu people.

This research report has involved a study of the cultural issues arising in a proposed translation of a Mills & Boon novel which has been an interesting exercise in cross-cultural transfer. Further research is obviously needed to gauge the public interest of the Zulu target audience (and other language groups) in this type of literature. Such research could, for example, use focus groups to establish whether there is sufficient interest in this genre to warrant its translation or development in African languages. The translation produced for this research report would constitute an appropriate tool within such a study. Publishers could then be approached to discuss the publication of *UNtombi nethambo lakhe leKentucky,* other translations of this type of genre or the writing of romantic fiction in African languages.

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APPENDIX A

CHAPTER ONE

(Pg 7 – 15)

Jake knew only two things about the woman he was going to meet: her name was Serena and her father had money.

Serena.

Sounded kind of horsey. She probably wore jodhpurs. Mel had refused to comment on whether she was pretty or not, so she probably looked like a horse as well. He could see it so clearly: the gymkhana trophies, the chintzy bedroom. Serena wore her mousy hair in a bun and had too many teeth.

He stepped off the kerb of the busy London street and zigzagged through the gaps in the traffic. Headlights lit up his knees as he squeezed between the bumpers. A horn blared.

That was why he liked to walk. It gave him a sense of freedom in the midst of the cloying traffic. He wasn't about to take orders from anyone, especially not a pole with coloured lights on top.

Once on the pavement again, he stopped to shake the drizzled off his hair. It was more mist than rain, only visible in the orange haloes of the street lamps, but somehow he was wetter than if he'd been hit by big, splashing drops. He was going to look less than perfect when he arrived at the restaurant.

His long strides slowed as he contemplated the evening ahead. Should he be marching this briskly towards the unknown? Probably not. But he wasn't going to be late. He speeded up to his former tempo. This evening he would be polite, he would be charming, and then he would high-tailing it out of there as fast as possible.

As long as Serena didn't have a horsey laugh to match her appearance, he could endure the temptation of the pocket-sized window in the restaurant toilet. At least he hoped there was a window. Just for emergencies.

He should have checked.

In future he would do a reconnaissance of any potential venues when forced on blind dates by his meddling little sister.

Not that there was going to be a next time if he could help it.

He was still a bit hazy about how she'd talked him into going on this one. Mel had rung him at work and slipped in into the conversation while he was studying a balance sheet and saying

‘mmm’ and ‘yup’ at suitable intervals. Before he knew it, he was meeting a total stranger for drinks and dinner at Lorenzo’s.

One day he would have to put his foot down with Mel. She’d been able to wind him round her little finger ever since she’d bestowed her very first smile on him. He was pretty sure she knew he hadn’t been listening when she’d arranged this date. Most likely she’d planned the exact timing of her call to maximise his suggestibility.

He cut through a little part in the centre of the square rather than keeping to the busy street. It was a refreshing change from the unrelenting grey of the city. Not that there was much green within the park’s wrought-iron railing at this time of year.

At least it smelled like November – acorns and rotting leaves. He took a deep breath and savoured the warm, earthy aroma. That was when he became aware of the tramp, more noticeable by his body odour than his appearance. He might easily have taken him for a forgotten coat on the bench otherwise.

The old man was oblivious to the rain. Saliva trailed from his open mouth down his chin, and the wind rolled an empty beer can to and fro beneath the bench. Jake removed the copy of the *Financial Times* from under his arm and spread a few pages over the man’s shoulders and torso, making sure he didn’t accidentally touch his coat. Hopefully, by the time the pages were wet through, the old guy would be sober enough to move himself somewhere drier.

He hurried through the park age and re-entered the rush hour. The restaurant was only a few minutes away not. He didn’t go in for that kind of place much. Lorenzo’s was an odd choice for horsey old Serena.

According to the brief review he’d read on the internet, the restaurant was a small, family-run affair – nothing special is his book. He preferred places that were obviously expensive now he could afford them. Give him women with diamonds, men with fat wallets and waiters that bowed any day.

However, the food was supposed to be tasty, and then critic had raved about a cannelloni dish. Not that it would make any difference to Serena. She was probably going to push a couple of lettuce leaves drenched in balsamic vinegar round her plate and complain about how everything went to her rather expansive hips.

The escape window was sounding more tempting with every step. Perhaps he should pop round the back and check the exact dimensions before he went inside?

He was so lost in thought that he didn’t see the blocked drain. He didn’t see the deep puddle that had collected over the top of it. He also didn’t see the sports car driving up behind him.

He did, however, see the great tidal wave as the car met the puddle. He watched, helpless, as in slow motion tendrils of spray reared up and soaked him from head to foot.

She saw the wall of water in her rear-view mirror and gasped.

She'd been so busy daydreaming about the evening ahead she'd forgotten to manoeuvre around the small pond that always appeared on this corner in bad weather. Without thinking whether it was a good idea or not, she pulled the car to a halt, got out, and ran straight to the sodden figure on the pavement. He didn't look as if he'd moved at all. He was just staring down at his dripping suit with his arms aloft.

'Oh my goodness! I'm so sorry-'

He lifted his head and glared at her.

'Are you okay?'

One eyebrow shot up. At least she thought it did. It was hard to tell under the dark hair plastered onto his forehead.

'You're soaked! Let me give you a lift to wherever you were going. It's the least I can do.'

She'd been talking to him for a good fifteen seconds, but suddenly she had the feeling he was only just taking a good look at her. He was staring. Hard. She looked down at her suede boots and ankle-length skirt. Sure, she was getting a little soggy as she stood here in the rain, but it wasn't as if she'd come out with her skirt tucked into the back of her knickers. At she didn't think she had.

When she looked back up he was smiling. And not just the polite tilt of the mouth you gave the waitresses when they brought you a drink. This was a real one.

A shiver skittered up her spine. That was a great smile. She looked a little closer at the face it was attached to.

Nice.

This was one cute guy she'd drenched.

'You were saying...?'

She shook herself.

'Yes. It's just- I...I mean it's the least I can do. Drop you off somewhere, that is.'

'That's probably a good idea. I'm not sure if I'm in any fit state to go out to dinner like this'.

Her hands flew to her mouth. 'I feel awful...Well, that settles it, then. I've ruined your evening. I'm dropping you off somewhere dry and warm. Nor arguments.'

He looked her up and down, a crinkle at the corners of his eyes. 'No arguments from me. Shall we?' He motioned towards the car. 'Nice wheels.'

The drizzle was making a more concerted effort at proper rain, and a drop splashed on her forehead. Without talking further, the both ran to the low-slung metallic blue sports car and climbed inside.

She watched him share his head and run his fingers through thick dark hair as he sat in the passenger seat. He looked even better with it slicked back. She could see his face properly. How did eyes that cool blue manage to smoulder? And look at that firm jaw. He looked like a man in control of his destiny. She liked that.

'The car's not mine, actually.'

The smile was back. 'What did you do? Steal it?'

'No, of course not. Mine's being repaired. I borrowed this from my...a friend.'

She wasn't about to tell him she was riding round in her father's car. It had mid-life crisis stamped all over it. Not that her father's crazy behaviour had started is his fifties. He'd got a head start in his teenage years, and had never stopped long enough to mature.

She didn't like admitting to her parentage when she met a man who caught her eye. She'd learnt the hard way to keep dear old dad out of the picture until it was safe to drop the bombshell – and even then she was never one hundred percent sure if *she* was the main attraction.

The smouldering eyes were looking at her intently. 'A friend?'

Drat! He'd spotted the little detour in her explanation.

He sat back in the seat and smiled, a wistful expression on his face. 'That's too bad. Tell him I think he's got great taste in cars...and women.'

She fumbled with the keys in the ignition.

Come on, girl! Think of something sparkling and witty to say! Tell him he's got the wrong end of the stick.

'So, where can I drop you off?'

Great. Really smooth. Well done.

'Great Portman Street. Do you know it?'

'I know someone who lives down that way.' She indicated and pulled away. 'It's not that far from here, is it?'

'No, but in this traffic it could take a good twenty minutes.'

'I know. Sometimes I think it would be quicker if I walked.'

'My opinion exactly.' He pinched at his trouser leg and inspected it. 'Although I can't vouch for it being the drier option.'

She sighed and started to speak, but he warded the words off with a raised hand.

‘Please, don’t apologise again. You did me a big favour, in fact. I wasn’t looking forward to my evening, and you’ve given me the perfect excuse to bow out.’

‘Really?’

‘Yes, really. I was destined for a date from hell with a girl that looks like a horse – and I’m not sure whether it’s the front end or the back end she most resembles!’

Her laugh was loud and unexpected.

‘Well, consider me your knight in shining armour, then,’ she added, giggles bubbling under the surface.

He laughed along with her. ‘My eternal gratefulness, kind lady. In fact, I should thank you in some way. How about dinner?’

Since they were sitting at yet another red light, she shot a look across at him. ‘Have you forgotten why you’re in my car in the first place? You’re dripping wet!’

‘It wouldn’t take me long to get dry and changed. We could nip out somewhere local. We’d be in a public place. You’d be perfectly safe.’

‘How do I know that? We’ve only just met. I don’t even know your name.’

‘It’s Jake.’

‘Well, Jake, I still don’t know you from Adam – except that your name’s not Adam, that is.’ Oh, God, she was rambling!

‘Then why did you let met in your- I mean your *friend’s* car, then? I could be anyone. I could be an exe-wielding maniac, for all you know.’

She went cold. He was right. She’d been so busy feeling bad for him she hadn’t even considered basic personal safety. Her voice was braver than she felt when she answered.

‘Don’t be daft! I rescued *you*, remember? You’re a Jake-in-distress. You couldn’t possibly be an axe-wielding maniac!’ *Could he?*

Now it was his turn to laugh. Her shoulders untensed, but she stayed quiet and concentrated on the traffic. Quicker than expected, they drew up in Great Portman Street.

‘Which one?’ She leaned forward and peered down the road. One side was almost entirely occupied by a red brick block of Victorian apartments.

‘Right here. Top floor.’

‘Very posh.’

She kept her eyes on the road as the car came to a halt. Even without the tell-tale reflection in the windscreen, she'd have sensed he's turned to face her. Strange, she's always thought that being able to feel someone's eyes boring into you was a load of poppycock.

'Come inside and have the grand tour.'

'You're very forward, aren't you?'

'I know what I want, and I don't stop until I get it.'

The implication of that sentence made her cheeks burn. She was very proud of the wobble-free voice that came out of her mouth.

'Sorry, Jake-in-distress, I have a prior commitment. Maybe another time.'

'Couldn't you stand him up?'

A reply like that would normally have had her spitting, but he said it with such lazy charm she found herself laughing.

'No.'

But she wanted to. Miraculously, the prospect of an evening with Charles Jacobs seemed even greyer.

'Too bad.' The tone of his voice sais he respected her decision more than he cared to admit. 'At least give me your number.'

'Give my number? To an axe-wielding maniac? You must be mad!'

She smiled at him.

He smiled back

.Boy, those smiles got more brilliant with every outing. If she didn't get out of here quick, she was going to change her mind about dinner. Then Cassie would kill her for standing up the 'suitable' man she'd found for her, and that would never do. She was looking forward to the prospect of *another time* with Jake too much.

He reached into his pocket, fished out a business card and scribbled something on the back with a fountain pen.

'Have it your way. Here's *my* number, then.'

She took it from him. Even the little rectangle of card was soggy. She'd done a really good job with that puddle.

He looked her straight in the eye. 'Use it.'

Her gaze collided with his. He was so sure she was going to call. There wasn't a flicker of doubt in his expression. Women probably fell over themselves to follow his every whim on a daily

basis. Part of her felt like throwing the card out of the window and into the gutter; the other part wanted to tuck it inside her bra to make sure she didn't lose it.

Her lips pursed. She meant to look peeved, but somehow a small smile escaped.

'Maybe. Goodbye, Jake.'

She put the car in reverse and started to move out of the parking space. Before she had a chance to pull away, he pounded on the window. 'Wait!'

She pressed the button and enjoyed his mounting irritation as the window edged down bit by bit.

'You haven't even told me your name.'

'So I didn't.'

'Well?'

'I get the feeling you're the kind of man who won't let a tiny detail like that stop you. You'll find out – if you want to badly enough.'

With that, she rolled up the window and drove away.

(pg 41 – 48)

Serena stared out across the London skyline in an effort to distract herself from the fact that very soon her bottom was going to be frozen to the wooden slats of the park bench. The bench's position on the brow of a hill offered little protection from the wind, even though it circled a towering sycamore.

'It's lovely here. What a view.'

Jake smiled and offered her a plate full of goodies from the picnic basket balancing between them. 'A favourite haunt of mine when I was younger.'

'Did you live close by?'

'Not too far.'

She could imagine him living in Blackheath, the exclusive area south of where they now sat in Greenwich Park. Blackheath itself was a mile-wide expanse of flat grass, its only vertical feature the razor-sharp spire of All Saint's church. Along the fringes of the heath were creamy Georgian villas and she could easily imagine a young Jake bounding out of one of them each morning – grey shorts, school cap, laces undone.

'You can see it from here, actually,' he said.

She stared hard, but couldn't work out where he was pointing. The houses were too blurry and indistinct at this distance. 'You're looking in the wrong place.' He put an arm around her

shoulder and nudged her so she faced more to the west. ‘You can’t miss it. See the three tower blocks?’

‘Beyond them?’

‘No, *in* them. I used to live in the one on the far right. Fourteenth floor.’

She turned to look him in the eye. ‘Really?’

‘I could see this park from my bedroom window. A beautiful patch of green surrounded by pollution and concrete.’

She laughed. ‘Very poetic.’

‘Shh! You’ll ruin my tough businessman image.’

‘I’m not sure you’re as tough as you look, Charlie.’

He gave her a sideways look. ‘Why do you keep calling me that?’

‘I don’t know. It just seems to pop out of my mouth. It must suit you.’

His jaw hardened. “I prefer Jake.’

‘But it’s not your real name.’

‘Ah! So I get to use your given name as well, do I?’

‘Good point. Jake it is.’ She leaned back and looked up into the leafless branches above. ‘Didn’t you have a garden where you lived? Not even a shared one?’

She could hear him fiddling with the strap of the picnic basket. ‘Do we have to do the childhood memories bit?’

‘It’s only fair. Even though I’m not famous myself, I’m related to someone who is, and that’s good enough for the celebrity-hungry media. You could probably type my name into a search engine and find out what I had for breakfast last Wednesday.’

‘I can think of better ways of finding out what you like for breakfast.’ The edge in his voice was pure wickedness.

She rolled the back of her head against the tree trunk until she could see him. ‘Nice try, but you’re not going to throw me off track. I just want to know a little more about you. It’s hardly a crime.’

‘I normally get away with that kind of tactic.’ He grinned, willing her to take the diversion he offered.

‘I bet you do’.

His expression grew more serious. ‘You’re right. It’s not a crime. I’m used to fluffing over the details of my childhood. Some of my clients would faint if they thought a council estate yob was looking after their millions.’

Serena looked him up and down. How anyone could ever think of him as a yob was beyond her. Six-foot something of pure elegance was standing right in front of her, from his cashmere coat to his hand-made shoes.

‘There were hardly any trees on the estate, so I used to come here on weekends – on days when the prospect of school was just too bleak.’

She picked up her place – china, no less – and pinched a stuffed vine leaf between thumb and forefinger. Jake was staring at his old home, his eyes glazed with memories.

‘I’d sit on this very bench and plot and plan my escape from the tower blocks. I’d watch the rest of the city going about is business and dream I could become part of it one day.’

‘Is that why you got into accounting?’ She gave him a lazy smile. ‘All that rabid excitement?’

‘Ha ha. Don’t bother going down the all-accountants-are-boring route. I’ve heard all the jokes a million times. Anyway, at first I didn’t want to be an accountant. I knew I needed money to get away from the estate, so I decided I’d better lean to look after it properly. I got a job at a local accounting firm when I left school and it grew from there. Pretty soon I knew I’d found my niche, so I took the tests and worked hard until I qualified.’

‘It sounds like you were very dedicated.’

‘I wanted to get my mum away from there. She deserved something more than that.’

‘I’ve heard those accounting exams are really difficult.’ She sighed. I’ve never stuck at anything like that. We were always moving around too much. Dad was either on tour, or recording in some far-flung place.’

‘What did you do about school?’

‘Well, up until I was eleven or so my mum home-schooled me. My primary education was unconventional, to say the very least. By the time I was ten I knew all about trees and crystals and the constellations, but I was a little lacking in the maths and science department.’ She struck a pose. ‘But I was very good at improvisational dance and mime.’

Jake gave her another one of his heart-melting smiles.

‘What happened after that?’

‘Mum got ill and I was sent away to boarding school.’

His eyebrows lifted. ‘I can’t really see you in a starched school uniform, having midnight feasts with Lady Cynthia.’

‘If only! Have you heard of Foster’s Educational Centre in the West Country?’

He shook his head.

‘One of the Sunday

Magazines did a feature on it a few months ago- I thought you might have seen it. Anyway, it’s one of those so-called progressive schools, all fashionable psychology and no common sense. Complete nuthouse, if you ask me.’ She winked at him. ‘Needless to say, I didn’t fit in.’

‘No! Of course not. The thought never crossed my mind.’

‘Actually, I’m not joking. The other kids laughed at me because they thought I was weird after my mum’s special brand of education. And, since the teachers believed that expressing negative energy was important to our emotional development, it wasn’t hard for the other kids to find ways to torment me if they wanted to. Which they did. I was fresh meat.’

‘Ouch!’

‘I left as soon as I could, and fled back to Dad. He’d just come out of rehab for his drug addiction. I’m assuming you know about that; it’s pretty much common knowledge. He spent a few years living too fast and fast after my Mum died of cancer. He needed me home as much as I needed to get away.’

‘What about a career?’

She snorted. ‘Looking after Dad is a full-time job, believe me! I’ve been Dad’s manager for the past five years. Consider me a personal assistant, troubleshooter and babysitter all rolled into one. The band don’t do as much as they used to, but it can be pretty hectic at times.’

Jake handed her a glass of champagne. ‘What would you do if you could do anything? Travel?’

She took a small sip and shook her hear. ‘No, not travel. My life has been nomadic enough. Something completely different.’

‘Run away with the circus?’

She smiled at him and said nothing. It wouldn’t do to reveal her real desires for the future. Announcing that your greatest wish was to become a wife and mother was like a starter’s pistol for some men, and she wasn’t ready to see this one disappearing in a cloud of dust.

Jake ticked all the right boxes: stable job, successful enough not to be after her dad’s money, thoughtful, charming- the list was endless.

He put one hundred percent commitment into all he did, and everything he did was first class. Just look at this hamper of picnic food from London’s most exclusive department store. No ham sandwiches wrapped in an empty bread bag here.

But something inside her longed for ham sandwiches, lemonade, and children running down the hill with jam on their faces and grass stains on their knees.

She'd had enough champagne to fill a lifetime. It had lost its sparkle for her. Probably because she'd seen her father drink enough for two or three lifetimes. She'd been pushing him to get help for his drinking, and, although he denied it furiously, she thought he was almost ready to go back to rehab. The alternative didn't bear thinking about. Dad was the only family she'd got, and she was hanging onto him. Tight. Just entertaining any negative thoughts in that direction made her shudder.

'Cold?'

'A little.'

Jake put a protective arm round her and she leaned back on him. They said nothing more as they ate the last morsels of their picnic, but she took great care not to give Jake an opportunity to move away. The kind of heat he was generating had absolutely nothing to do with layers of jumpers and wool coats, and everything to do with the man inside them. If only she could hibernate like this, huddled up to him, until spring. It was wonderful to let someone else do the caring, just for a little bit.

When they had finished, Jake picked up the basket and offered a hand to help her up. Such a gentleman! He didn't release her hand when they started to walk down the path, and she didn't want him to. Even without the tickle of electricity that crept up her arm, the simple gesture of human contact felt good. It had been too long since she'd held hands with anyone.

They passed the Royal Observatory and took the little railed path that crossed the hill beneath it. Jake refused to release her hand as they negotiated the kissing gate there. It took quite a while before they untangled themselves enough to pass through. She had more than a sneaking suspicion that Jake had been deliberately clumsy with the hamper, just to keep them squashed up together while they swung the gate open in the confined space.

Once free of the gate, she was going to walk on, but Jake stopped moving and her arm tugged taut. She glances back at him, puzzled.

He looked gown at their feet and she followed suit. A brass strip was embedded in the tarmac, symbolising the point where the Greenwich meridian dissected not only the path, but the city. Jake hadn't crossed it, and they stood facing each other, as if at a threshold.

'Zero degrees longitude,' he said, looking deep into her eyes. 'A place of beginnings.'

If Jake thought today was only a beginning, it meant there was more to come. She couldn't stop her mouth from curling at the thought. 'Don't you think this is a bit surreal? We're standing so close, but we're in different hemispheres.'

'We're not *that* close.' He dropped the picnic basket by his side and took hold of her other hand. 'We could be closer.' In demonstration, he tugged her towards his so the fronts of their coats met and her eyes were level with his chin. She could feel his breath at her hairline. If she tipped her chin up just a notch his lips would be *so* close.

The heat of a blush stained her cheeks. No one had ever made her feel this way. The only point of contact was their fingers, yet her pulse galloped like a runaway horse.

‘Still feeling strange?’ he whispered into her hair.

‘I think it’s worse, if anything.’ She swallowed hard, and raised her eyes to meet his. They were impossibly blue beneath his dark brows, and he wasn’t smiling any longer. Deep in his eyes she saw a flicker of something previously hidden. Beneath the smooth-talking, city-slicker image, this was a good man, with a good heart.

His voice was warm on her cheek. ‘A few more millimetres and we could really set the world spinning on its axis.’

‘That was really cheesy,’ she whispered back.

Still, it didn’t stop her eyelids fluttering closed as his lips made the achingly slow journey to hers. In the moment just before they touched, she trembled uncontrollably.

It was everything a first kiss should be. Soft, sweet, full of promise. Never mind about separate hemispheres, they seemed to be the only two people on the planet. She clung to hum and buried her fingers in his thick hair – the way she’d been longing to ever since their lives had collided in the rush hour traffic only a few days ago.

His palms cupped her face and his fingers stroked her jaw.

Never had she been kissed like this. It had never been anything more than a clashing of lips and teeth with the drifters she’d gone out with when she had been younger, and stupid enough to believe they could fill the empty spaces in her heart. Kissing Jake was so different. The sensation travelled from her lips right into her very soul.

Too soon he pulled away, tugged her crocheted hat a little more firmly onto her head, and led her down the path towards his car. All she could focus on for the rest of the afternoon was when - please, let it be *when*, not *if* - the next kiss was coming.

(Pg 68 - 79)

‘Jake, I’m scared! I don’t know where we are!’

‘All will be revealed shortly.’

She liked surprises as much as the next girl, but being dragged round half of London with a woolly scarf covering her eyes was too much. Jake had insisted on securing it round her head while they were in the taxi he’d hailed outside the restaurant. As if dinner at a Moroccan restaurant, sitting on cushions and feeling pampered and exotic, hadn’t been enough, Jake now had something else up his sleeve. Something she was starting to wish would stay tucked up there.

She prised her fingers from the mental railing and let him guide her down a never-ending flight of stone stairs. It took all her resolve not to grab the rail and hang on for dear life. Every other

step she felt she was falling, but Jake's warm strong hand was there, steadying her, making her feel safe.

Finally her feet reached a large, blessedly flat area. 'Can I take this off now?'

Jake's hand swatted her fingers away from the knot behind her head. 'Not yet.'

The scent of his aftershave clung to the fibres of the scarf, overloading her nostrils. It was as if he was wrapped around her. Apart from the odd twinkle of what she presumed to be streetlights through the weave, she could see nothing. The gentle slap of waves against stone told her they were somewhere near the river – probably the Thames embankment.

Jake's arm circled her waist and he propelled her forwards into the unnerving clatter of footsteps that swirled around them. Wherever they were, it was busy. After a minute or so, he came to a halt.

'Wait here. I'll only be a couple of steps away.'

'No! Don't let go!'

'You'll be perfectly safe. I just need to have a word with this young man over here.'

She clutched onto him with her gloved hand, but he pulled away gently.

'Trust me. I'll be with you in less than a minute.'

She heard him take a few steps, and his murmured voice mixed with another. She shuffled slightly in his direction and bumped into someone.

'Sorry!' she exclaimed, not even knowing whether she was talking to the person she'd barged into. She didn't dare move again, so she just stood there, letting the crowds eddy past her.

His arm enclosed her again. 'This way.'

The hard stone beneath her heels gave way to a clanging metal ramp. Where on earth were they? Soon they came to a stop. Jake steered her to face a certain direction.

'Now, Serena, it is very important that when I say *go*, you take a big step forwards. Okay?'

She nodded, suddenly feeling as if she was about to walk the plank. The lapping of water was louder, almost beneath her feet.

'Ready...?' She clenched her elbows to her side, palms raised in front of her to ward off the danger she couldn't see.

'Go!'

She clamped her already blindfolded eyes shut and took the biggest step she could – feeling it was more a leap of faith – then clung on to Jake for all she was worth.

‘We’re moving!’ she squeaked, then gripped him even tighter as she realised they weren’t just moving sideways, they were climbing upwards too!

Jake just laughed softly, and kissed her forehead.

‘Happy Birthday, Serena.’ He prised his arms from her grasp, gently freed the knot in the scarf and pushed it back over her head.

‘You can open them now. It’s perfectly safe.’

She parted her eyelashes slowly, dazzled by the twinkling lights all round her. They were inside something. Her eyes just could not make sense of what she was seeing. Images jumbled into her brain. Lights...metal...glass. Then it all fell into place...

‘We’re on the London Eye!’

‘You said you’d always wanted to go on it that day we had lunch at Maison Blanc.’

‘How sweet of you to remember!’

She fell silent and took a good look around her. They were alone inside one of the egg-shaped glass and metal pods on the giant wheel almost directly across the Thames from the Houses of Parliament. She’s never seen London look so beautiful. It hardly felt as if they were moving, but slowly they were climbing into the night sky. A whole city of Christmas lights below twinkled just for them. She pressed her nose against the glass and stared.

The unmistakable pop and hiss of a champagne cork made her turn round. He was smiling that wonderful, hearth-melting smile of his, and pouring champagne into a pair of glasses that seemed to have appeared from nowhere, along with an ice-bucket.

‘How did you do all this?’

‘It took a little bit of planning, but it wasn’t impossible. I told you we had a little catching up to do to make you feel special.’

‘I think you’ve done it all in one night!’

‘What makes you think this is all there is?’

‘There’s more?’

‘You haven’t had your present yet.’

She looked past him to the ice-bucket. No brightly wrapped parcel stood beside it. She bent down and looked under the oval-shaped wooden bench in the centre of the pod. Nothing.

‘So where is it? No, don’t tell me – you’re having it helicoptered in when we get a little higher?’

He laughed and patted the breast pocket of his jacket. It’s right here, but I was going to wait until we got to the top to give it to you.’

Serena swallowed. It was getting hard to think.

Her present was obviously very special. After all, he was making the act of giving it to her a monumental occasion.

And it was small enough to git into his pocket.

It couldn't be...could it?

No. That was a stupid idea! It was far too soon.

Jake handed her a glass of champagne and stood beside her to survey the patchwork of the London skyline. They sipped in silence as the pod climbed higher, but she couldn't concentrate on the illuminations on Battersea Bridge, or St Paul's Cathedral. All she could think about was what might be sparkling inside his suit pocket.

It seemed as if the wheel had gone into slow motion. It took a torturously long time for their pod to reach the apex. Just as they watched the one above their start to descend, Jake turned towards her and looked deep into her eyes. The entire herd of butterflies resident in her stomach stampeded and came to settle, fluttering madly, in her chest.

'I want you to know you are the most fascinating woman I've ever met...'

Her mouth went dry.
'I don't think anyone has had the effect on me that you do. And, because of that, I want to give you something that is uniquely for you – something I've never given to anybody else.'

Her eyes followed his right hand as it slipped inside his jacket and reached into the pocket that covered his heart. When it reappeared, it was holding a small, velvet-covered jewellery box. Square. Ring-sized.

One hand flew to her mouth and she clutched the glass of champagne as if it were a lifeline. She was no longer aware of the motion of the giant wheel. It seemed to have stopped on her in-breath. The world paused as they floated high above a sea or sparkling diamonds.

He faced the box towards her and gently eased the lid open , to reveal the most wonderful...

CHAPTER FIVE

Earrings?

She looked up at him. His eyes held a question.

She checked the box again, just to make sure she was seeing straight.

No, she was right. It was definitely a pair of silver earrings sitting on the velvet cushion. Actually, they were the most exquisite design of interwoven ivy, completely unlike anything she'd ever seen before. They were really...*her*. They just weren't...

She ignored the fact that her stomach had plummeted from where they were suspended mid-air to the slime-coated riverbed below, and choked out the only words that came to mind.

'They're...earrings.'

Jake frowned. He almost let that mask of his slip. Just for a split-second he looked really vulnerable. 'You don't like them?' He shook his head slightly. 'I was sure the designer's work was just your taste, but-'

'No, Jake. They're amazing. Really.'

He searched her face.

'Then why do you look as if you're just about to cry?'

She set her glass down on the bench, took his head in her hands and kissed away his frown. When she thought she's stopped shaking enough to sound convincing, she pulled away.

'Jake. The earrings are stunning. Nobody has ever given me a present that suited me so well. In fact, they don't just suit me, they sum me up.' And she didn't have to lie. They were perfect. He'd obviously had them made just for her. 'I'm just crying because I'm so...happy.'

The first of a hundred tears was poised and ready at the corner of her eye. She hugged him hard as it escaped down her cheek and screwed her face up against his shoulder, willing the other ninety-nine to stay put.

'Let me put them in for you.'

She moved back enough to remove the hoops she already wore, and dropped them in her coat pocket. Jake took one of the delicate earrings from the box between his fingers and aimed for the hole in her earlobe.

'Ow!' The spike of the earring stabbed tender flesh.

'I'm hurting you.'

'No. Well, a little. Maybe I'm better off on my own.' She forced the corners of her mouth upwards. 'Why don't you get me a refill?'

By the time he'd returned, with a full glass of champagne, both earrings were securely fastened in place.

‘You’re sure you like them?’

She pressed a delicate kiss onto his cheek. ‘I love them.’ *I love you.*

‘Well...okay. Good.’

They spent the last ten minutes of the ride in silence. He seemed a little distant. She hoped desperately that he hadn’t caught her awkward stutter when she’s opened the box. It didn’t matter that the little velvet cube hadn’t contained what her over-active imagination had conjured up. They’d been seeing each other less than a month. It had been crazy to think...

She would probably laugh about it in the morning when she spoke to Cass on the phone.

The pod reached the landing and the doors whooshed open. Back into the real world. Dirt, noise, pollution. Nothing like the fairytale scene from the top of the wheel at all, really.

Jake stood in front of the black-painted door and waited for the chime of the doorbell to fade. Part of him wished she wasn’t there, that the door would stay shut.

‘Hey! Up here.’

He squinted and looked up. Serena was leaning out of a first-floor window, looking extraordinarily beautiful, with her dark hair falling forwards and a huge smile on her face. She was so pleased to see him. He felt like an utter heel.

She pointed to a narrow passageway at the side of the enormous Chelsea townhouse. ‘Come round to the back door. I’ll meet you there.’

By the time he’d ducked under the ivy that threatened to block the path and pushed the heavy back door open, she was already in the spacious basement kitchen, filling the kettle. She heard the squeak of his soles on the tiles and left the tap running as she rushed over to give him a hug.

Her soft lips bushed his cheek. Touching her had seemed so natural only a few days ago, yet now he couldn’t find the proper place to put his hands. He eased out of her arms and sat down on a stool near a breakfast bar.

She turned the tap off and clicked the kettle on. ‘I’m very flattered you raced over here in your lunch break to see me.’

Jake shifted his weight on the stool. ‘I have some important news.’

News you’re not going to like.

‘Good news or bad news?’

He didn’t answer. She stopped getting cups out of the cupboard and took a good look at him. ‘Its’ bad news, isn’t it?’

‘Good news, really,’ he said, trying to smile. ‘It just feels like bad news.’

That was the truth. He didn’t want to do this, but he had no other option. He really liked her, and had hoped they’d continue to see each other for quite a while, but he’d seen the way she’d looked at the jewellery box the other night. It had taken him completely by surprise.

He’d thought he’d be safe from all of that with her. It had been short-sighted of him to go over the top with her birthday celebrations, but he’d enjoyed watching her face light up at each revelation.

So stupid of him to think he could do all that and not give her the wrong impression! She was a woman, after all. And just like any other woman, she wanted more than he could possibly give. He was almost cross at her for making him believe otherwise.

‘Jake, you’re starting to worry me! Is somebody ill?’

‘No. Nothing like that. It’s just...I’ve been thinking about this for a while, and I know the time is right...’

She waved him on. ‘And?’

‘I’m opening a branch of my firm in New York.’

‘But that’s wonderful!’ Pride in him radiated from her in bucketloads. He felt like something that should be scraped off on the door mate.

‘There’s a catch.’

‘Oh?’

‘I’m going to have to spend a lot of time over there in the next few months. In fact, I’m flying out tomorrow and I won’t be back until mid-January.’

Her cheeks paled. ‘Not even for Christmas?’

‘No. Mum and Mel might fly out for a visit, but I won’t be back.’

‘Then...when will I see you?’

‘This is what I wanted to talk to you about.’ He looked down at his bunched fists on the counter and deliberately splayed his fingers. Looking her in the eye was harder than it should have been.

He'd given similar speeches before, but he'd never felt this awkward. He took a deep breath and squared his shoulders. He wasn't going to wimp out now. 'I'm not going to have much time for anything but the new office for a while, so I think we should cool things off for a bit.'

Her mouth dropped open, then she inhaled and looked away. She hadn't seen that one coming. 'Just exactly how cold are we talking about?'

Cruel to be king, remember! Tell her.

'I don't think we should see each other anymore. Long-distance relationships never work.'

'They can if you want them to. And you're not going to be gone forever. There's the phone, and e-mail...' She trailed off. 'Oh. Stupid me. This is a brush-off.'

'I- '

'Don't bother, Jake. I can smell that kind of crap a mile off. I've heard it enough times to know when I'm sniffing the genuine article.'

He didn't know what else to say. All he could do was look at her angry, flushed face while his stomach turned.

'What's the real reason?'

'I'm going to be busy – '
She marched over to him and leaned across the counter to look him in the eye. 'I want the truth.'

He stared into her beautiful chocolate eyes. She was right. She didn't deserve side-stepping and half-truths. He could have waited a few more months to open the New York branch, and even then he needn't have stayed away for so long.

'You really want the truth?'

'I really do.'

'You're not going to like it.'

'I don't care. It's got to be better than playing second fiddle to four walls, and a fax machine! I thought we had something, Jake. Something special.'

'We do – we did. But it's just not going to work out. It's better to end it now, before anyone gets hurt.'

Her eyes narrowed. She bit her lip and shook her head.

Okay, that had been stupid. She was hurt already. He knew that. That was why he was cutting her loose, to make sure he didn't do any more damage. And yet this goodbye was almost as hard on him as it was on her. This time he wouldn't be walking away without a backward glance. He was really going to miss Serena – her sense of fun, her warmth and openness, the sense that there was always another mystery waiting to be unravelled.

Then he knew why ending it with her was so hard. He'd never felt like this before, not even with Chantelle. Never considered the possibility that there was a woman out there who matched him completely. But here she was, standing in front of him, and if anything it made walking away worse. It was easy to waltz through life, believing he had immunised himself against fairytales, but it wasn't so easy to walk away knowing that if things were different – if *he* were different – he could have had it all.

The phrase 'if only' kept echoing in his head. If only he could believe in fairytales. If only he could make her try happy. If only...

She wanted honesty? She was going to get it. Even if it left him feeling naked. He owed her that.

'You thought I had something else in that little black velvet box, didn't you?'

Her lips started to form a denial, but the words never left her mouth. She let out a puff of air. Colour crept into her cheeks and she stared at the floor.

'Is that so terrible?'

'No. It's just...' God, he wanted to haul her into his arms and tell her everything would be okay. But he couldn't. It never would be where they were concerned. 'I'm not the marrying kind, Serena. I don't have it in me.'

She looked up, shocked, as if she's never considered the possibility that, deep down, everybody didn't hunger for a soul mate.

'How do you know unless you try?' Her voice was soft and shaky. He knew it was taking all the guts she had to ask him that.

'I just know. It wouldn't be fair to carry on.'

She covered her mouth with her hand. A tear rolled down her face.

'If I really thought I could do the lifelong commitment thing, there's no one I've come closer to wanting it with –'

'Stop!' Her voice broke, and she took a large gulp before she continued. 'I don't want to hear any more.'

She walked over to the door and held it open for him. He hesitated, then decided to do as she asked. There was nothing he could do to make it better. She kept her head turned away from him. He kissed her lightly on the cheek, hoping it would say all the sorrys he wanted to. She squeezed her eyes shut as the tears started to run in thick trails.

He stepped through the door into the bleak winter sunshine. It slammed behind him, and as he walked up the alleyway he could hear her sobbing.

(Pg 94 – 99)

An hour later the music was still pumping. Kevin was performing a couple of songs, and Serena felt like t three-year-old without her security blanket. She jostled her way through the crowd to the non-alcoholic bar and grabbed a bottle of mineral water. Then, just as she was elbowing her way out of the crush, she came face to face with the man she'd been doing her best to avoid.

Why did he have to look so gorgeous? Couldn't he have grown an extra head or broken out in boils in the last couple of months?

'Hello, Serena.' That much was easy to lip-read.

Hello, worm.

'Hello, Jake,' she shouted back.

He said something else, but she couldn't make half of it out through the throbbing music.

'Pardon?'

He lent in close to speak into her ear. After eight weeks and five days of no contact, he was pushing into her sensory overload. Not only was his breath warming her cheek, but he smelled so good! Like crisp clean shirts with a hint of aftershave.

'How have you been?'

It was just as well his questions were as inane as the answers that whirred through her head. He was far too close to make sparkling repartee a possibility. She would just be happy if her mouth moved and sound came out.

'Fine. You?'

'Fine.'

Both their pants should be on fire, figuratively speaking. She'd never seen him look so tense. Where was the effortless charm? Had he checked it in at Customs when he returned?

'We can't talk here.' His voice was just that little bit too loud in her ear and she pulled away.

'Who says we've got anything left to say to each other?'

She gave him what she hoped was a scorching look then wove her way to the other side of the room. She undid the lid on her bottle of water and took a gulp.

'I don't want to leave things like this between us.' They were now far enough from the speakers for her to decipher his yelling.

She should have guessed he wouldn't give up that easily. On some level she'd wanted him to follow her, wanted a chance to vent her anger. The imaginary conversations she's been having with him since Christmas could now become a reality. Perhaps then the words would stop circulating her head as if it were a racetrack.

She screwed the lid back on her water bottle so tight the ridges burned her fingers. 'Don't pretend you care, Jake. You're the one who ended it, remember? Just be glad I'm moving on instead of stalking you.'

'Moving on?' He flashed a quick look at Kevin and the heaving mass of girls trying to storm the makeshift stage. 'You know it's not that I didn't like you –'

Serena lifted her chin and stretched her lips into a smile. 'Save it for someone who cares, Charlie.'

His jaw clenched so tight she thought his teeth would shatter. She'd hit a never. Good!
'You're a fake. Do you know that, Jake?'

She would swear she could actually hear his blood bubbling in response to that. Or perhaps it was the steady bass beat of Kevin

's song.

'*Me?* A fake?'

'Yes, you. You look like a decent, caring man, but –' her voice was getting shrill '- but underneath you're a commitment-phobic coward like the rest of your species!' She finished her tirade and froze.

Everyone was staring at them. At her. And the music had stopped. While her lips twitched and she wondered how to dissolve into nothing, Jake grabbed her arm and yanked her out through the door.

He didn't need to shout outside. The barely contained whisper he used next was far more lethal. Her confidence evaporated.

'I didn't ever pretend to be anything I'm not. What are us guys supposed to do? Wear little flashing neon signs saying "Husband Material"? You jumped to your happy-ever-after conclusions all on your own. You saw what you wanted to see.'

Words tripped over her tongue and fell flat before they passed her teeth. What could she say? Jake smiled, but not one of his heart-melting ones. This one was cold and brittle, but his voice still came out even and normal. She hated the fact he could do that when all she could manage were squeaks and screeches.

'Anyway, you seem to have *moved* on to new pastures – or should I say happy hunting grounds? I hope the poor sucker knows what he's letting himself in for.'

'You arrogant –' She stopped herself before she said something really unladylike. 'What's so wrong with wanting a husband and a family? It's hardly abnormal! Isn't that what everyone's searching for – a little love and happiness?'

Jake stopped smiling and looked sheepish.

All the rage was suddenly sucked out of her. Why couldn't it have been him? Life was so unfair! She took a deep breath and tried to disguise her quivering lip by bowing her head.

He gently tipped her face up again by lifting her chin with his finger. 'Let's not fight. It's pointless. I've told you before that you're a unique woman, Serena. You're right, you deserve the love and happiness you're looking for.'

Oh, this was worse! His anger she could handle, but his pity...?

'Just not with you.'

'No.'

'Why not?' If she was going to embarrass herself past the point of no return, she might as well get the whole lot off her chest.

'I wouldn't make you happy. I'd break your heart.'

Too late. It's a done deal.

'How do you know unless you try?'

'I did try once. It was a complete disaster. I'm not about to mess up anyone else's life like that.'

Her stomach clenched at the thought of Jake with someone else, of him loving someone else. It wasn't that he *couldn't* commit, just that he wouldn't with her.

'There's not much I can say to that, is there?'

Jake ran his fingers through his hair. 'Look, I'm taking time off work this week, to help with some of the workshops, and if we're going to be around each other we're going to have to find a way to co-exist harmoniously.'

She sighed and nodded. He was right again, and it made her want to box his ears for being all reasonable and logical when her heart was fracturing into cold, solid lumps.

'Okay. Truce.' She offered him a hand and he took it, but instead of shaking it he just stood there looking at it, his fingers blistering her skin. Then his thumb brushed against the back of his her hand, giving her a jolt of raw awareness.

They both continued to look at their joined hands.

He felt it too. He must do. For all his sane words, he was no more immune to the chemistry between them than she was. She looked up at him and saw the truth of it in his eyes as he leaned in to kiss her.

She knew she should push him away, but instead of resisting him with the hand that had flown to his chest, she slid it up behind his neck and pulled him closer.

Once they started kissing, they couldn't seem to stop. She'd kissed him many times in the few weeks they'd gone out, but this one had an edge to it. There was a hunger and a quiet desperation from him that had never been evident before. He kissed her like a drowning man gasping for air, as if he needed it to survive. Her foolish heart leapt at the knowledge.

It was Jake who dragged himself away first. She rested her head against his shoulder, eyes still closed, and tasked him on her lips with her tongue. The courage to open her lids and look him in the face was nowhere to be found.

'I'm sorry, Serena. I shouldn't have done that. It was wrong to let...'

His voice was heavy with regret. If only the concrete slabs beneath her feet would open up and swallow her.

'What I was trying to say...before...was that we should try to remain civil – be friends, even.'

Oh, he really had no clue, did he?

Still, she nodded, opened her eyes and stared resolutely at his chest. Her hand was pressed against it again. She snatched it away.

‘Of course. Friends.’

Then he turned and walked back inside, leaving her to prop herself up against the rough-plastered wall and wonder why she hadn’t noticed sooner how cold it was outside.

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The reflection in the glass of the restaurant door didn’t look great. Her hair was wavy on one side and straight the other. Her fingers curled around the door handle. It seemed a lifetime away since she’d been standing here ready to meet a different stranger.

This meant nothing, really. She wouldn’t even see the guy again. She was doing it to prove something to herself – a symbolic act to show that there was hope for the future. Far, far into the future.

‘Are you gonna stand there all night, love?’

She jumped, and her fingers sprang away from the door handle as if it were red-hot. ‘Sorry,’ she mumbled, hardly looking at the man who barged past her into Lorenzo’s.

Oh, get a grip!

She nipped inside before the door swung shut, and marched herself up to the bar.

‘Hi, Gino.’

‘Hey, *bambino*!’ His eyes twinkled. ‘Looking for love again?’

Serena snorted. ‘How’s Maria?’

‘Good. She’s in the back at the moment. I’d go and get her for a chat, but we don’t want to keep your fella waiting, do we?’

‘He’s not my *fella*.’

Gino just smiled.

The man who’d barged past her on his way in collected a couple of carrier bags from Marco, the chef – who winked at her – and swept back past her on his way out. At least he wasn’t her date. A bucketload of fun that would have been!

Gino herded her towards the main part of the restaurant. She turned the corner and stopped.

‘It’s empty!’

Gino chuckled behind her. She spun round to look at him.

‘It’s Saturday night. You should be packed.’

He shrugged. ‘Your fella wanted a little privacy.’

Oh, great! A date with a first-class bunny-boiler. Her eyes dated around the room and she did a quick calculation of how many seconds it would take her to reach the exit if things went pear-shaped.

‘Where is he, then?’ When she’d said the room was empty, she hadn’t been joking.

Gino led her to a table – her favourite table, the one she’d sat at waiting for Jake.

‘Could I sit somewhere else, please?’

Gino shook his head.

‘This place is deserted! Surely it wouldn’t matter?’

‘The gentleman was very specific.’ He pulled out a chair and she dropped into it, scowling. She was still in the same pose when Gino returned with two glasses of champagne.

This was a bad sign. She hadn’t even met the guy and he was already getting on her nerves. Far too smooth by half!’

‘Where’s this Mr Wonderful, then?’

Gino just winked at her and turned to smile at Maria, who was now behind the bar, hands clasped, eyes shimmering.

She pushed the champagne glass away. ‘Could you bring me a mineral water, please, Gino?’ She wasn’t touching a drop of anything alcoholic until she knew it was safe to let her guard down. Gino disappeared, and she stared at the tablecloth. Her date was obviously building up to a grant entrance, and that did not bode well. It told her he thought he was the icing on the cake. The last thing she needed in her life at the moment was a man addicted to drama.

She traced the pattern in the tablecloth with her finger. Gino was a long time getting her water. She craned her neck to see what he was doing, but she only had a partial view of the bar, and he and Maria were nowhere to be seen.

She guessed he wasn’t too far away, because the uncharacteristic silence had been broken by music, billowing chords that stroked the tension out of her shoulders. She smiled to herself as she imagined her date jumping out of a giant cake when the music reached its crescendo. There was something about this evening that was decidedly surreal.

Oh, well. She took at sip of champagne anyways – more for something to do than anything else. Mmm. Just another small sip.

She stilled and put down her glass. That vocal…it was so like…Max! That was Max's voice! What on earth…?

She tipped her head to one side and listened carefully. What was that he was singing? Something about being too scared to let a girl into his heart. It was beautiful. A sad tale of lost love and missed chances. She tried desperately not to mist over. Stupid, really, it just reminded her of what had gone wrong between her and Jake, as if he was singing their story.

When the instrumental break arrived she gave herself a stern talking-to. It would not be good if she was all red and puffy when Mr Right arrived. She swiped away some moisture with her finger and sniffed. Then, one by one, all the hairs on the back of her neck stood on end.

She didn't only recognise the voice; she recognised the tune. It was Jake's song! The one he'd played her in his flat the night he'd cooked her dinner. She just hadn't realised because with the other instruments and vocals it sounded fuller, more complete.

And now Max was singing about how he wanted to love her forever, to have and to hold, to cherish her and never let her go.

Tears rolled down her cheeks, but she was too lost in the song to remember to wipe them away. Then the final chords wove themselves together and faded. She reached for her glass, but her fingers trembled too much to risk picking it up.

'I finished it.'

Her head jolted up and there he was – Jake. She grabbed onto the table, sure the world had just rolled on its axis.

'I discovered all I needed was a little inspiration.' He was walking towards her, trying to smile, but a little nerve twitched in his cheek. '*You* are my inspiration, Serendipity Dove. I needed *you* to make it complete.' He arrived at the table and sat opposite her, all the time keeping eye contact. She needed to remember to breathe every few seconds, she really did.

He took her hand. 'I need you to make *me* complete too.'

That was it. The tears fell like torrential rain. Those clear blue eyes were full of everything she had ever wanted t see in them. She tugged at the elaborately folded napkin in front of her, intending to bury her face in it.

Something flew out as she pulled it open, and tumbled onto her lap. Her fingers reached for it. She looked at him and he swallowed.

Her fingertips brushed against velvet. She grasped it and pulled a little jewellery box from under the table into the light. The air around them fizzed with static electricity. She was still staring at the box when she realised Jake had moved. He was close beside her, but not touching. She met his gaze at eye level.

He was down on one knee.

A shiver ran through her and the little box slid from her fingers. Jake was ready. He caught it in one deft swipe and held it out to face her. Her eyes grew wide as he eased the lid open.

Inside was a stunning antique ring. A square-cut emerald flanked by diamonds set in white gold. She couldn't have imagined anything more perfect.

His face was slightly grey. 'Serendipity Dove – I won't call you Serena; it's not your name, and it's the real you I love – will you marry me?'

He lifted the ring from its velvet cushion and held it near the tip of her finger, waiting.

Finally her tongue remembered what it was for! 'But you don't want me!'

'I want you more than anything in this world.'

She shook her head. 'You left.'

His eyes clouded over and a shadow passed over his face. 'I'm so sorry.' His thumb reached out and brushed the tears from her cheek. 'I thought I was being noble, but actually I was just being very, very stupid. I thought I was saving you from me. I knew you were desperate for the whole package, husband and babies, and I couldn't steal that dream from you, so I left.'

'But now you're back?'

'Yes. To stay, forever – if you'll have me.'

If she'd thought her heart was beating fast before, now it doubled its efforts and sprinted off into the sunset.

'I thought you didn't *do* that kind of thing.'

'Only for you.'

She shook her head. This was all too much. She wanted to believe him, she really did, but he'd bolted on her twice before.

'Look at me.'

His deep blue eyes were earnest. She could see right inside, and there wasn't a shred of doubt or fear in them. 'I love you like I've never loved anyone else. I want to spend the next fifty years with you – or sixty, or seventy. I want to fight about who has the remote control and whose turn it is to change the next stinky nappy. I want you to remind me where I've left my false teeth when we're old and crusty. Please marry me. Say yes.'

She blinked, hardly daring to believe it was true. She'd better answer before this lovely dream evaporated.

'Yes. Yes, I'll marry you – *Charlie*.'

She half expected him to wince, understanding now why he hated his name, but he was the one who'd started being picky on the subject. He laughed, a deep guttural sound, and slipped the ring on. It sat comfortably there, as if her finger had always been waiting for it.

And then they were standing, and she was in his arms, his lips pressed against hers, and she thought she was going to pass out from sheer delight.

Slowly, she became aware of other noises in the room: whispers, shuffling, and then, growing in volume, a round of applause. She pulled away and stared at the dozen or so people gathered near the bar.

'Cass! Dad! Mel? All of you! What are you doing here?'

Jake whispered in her ear. 'I hired the restaurant for our engagement party.'

She punched him on the arm. 'You were a little sure of yourself, weren't you?'

'Actually, no. I knew I'd hurt you badly, and I had no idea what you'd say. I was prepared to look like a fool in front of all of them if you made a different decision. I was so fixated on the idea I was going to repeat my father's history I didn't give *us* a chance. I didn't try to prove myself wrong. I'm sorry.'

Champagne corks popped in the background, but she didn't move her eyes from his face. 'I was stubborn too! It wasn't all your fault. I had this picture-perfect idea of my future, and I wouldn't accept anything that didn't fit the template. It was stupid. At first all I saw was your suit and your job, but then I fell in love with you and it didn't matter what you wore or what you did. I just wanted you – and way I could have you.'

'And now you've got me. I hope you realise there's a no returns policy?'

'Oh, shut up and kiss me.'

She pulled him close by the lapels and savoured the taste and the feel of him. She was home.

Someone in the room let out a wolf whistle – probably Cass. They pulled apart, grinning.

‘I suppose we’d better go and say hello to all our guests. After all, they made this possible.’

She looked at him, eyebrows raised.

‘Cass was a mine of helpful information – and, of course, got you to turn up. Your dad and Max have worked round the clock for the last few days, helping me put down the song. I finished it on the place journey back to London. It’s amazing how much clarity you get when you’re racing through the air, hoping to high heaven that you haven’t messed up the best thing that ever happened to you.’

‘The song is wonderful. You’re wonderful. I love you so much.’

Then the crowd descended on them, and there was much hugging and kissing and slapping on backs. Mel was in tears, and Cass was grinning away as if she was responsible for the whole thing – which she was, of course, but it would never do to admit that. Her head was far too large already.

Finally, they found each other again. Their fingers laced together and he smiled down at her. She sighed. She wanted so much to be alone with him, away from all the chatter and clamour.

He read her look and his pupils grew.

‘Later,’ he whispered, and placed a kiss in the hollow beneath her ear. ‘We’ve got the rest of our lives.’

APPENDIX B

ISAHLUKO 1

(Pg 7 – 15)

Zimbili kuphela izinto uMenzi ayezazi ngalo sisi ayezohlangana naye: igama lakhe nguNtombi futhi ubaba wakhe uyisigwili.

Liyahlupha nalo lelo gama. Amantombazane angoNtombi ayinkinga ngoba ngeke wazi ukuthi kuthiwa nguNtombi nje kwakwenzenjani. Ntombenhle? Ntombizodwa? Ntombifuthi? UMpumi wayenqabile ukuphawula ngoNtombi ukuthi muhle yini noma chabo, okwakusho khona ukuthi mhlawumbe wayengaphiwanga ngasebuhleni, kungcono avele alikhohlwe elikaNtombenhle.

Wehla kuphevumente yomgwaqo omkhulu odabula eNewtown owawuphithizela, waweqa ngokuhamba ezithunga njengenaliti phakathi kwezimoto. Amadolo akhe ayehamba ekhanyiswa ngamalambu ezimoto, kanti omunye umshayeli kwakungathi wavele walala phezu kwehutha yakhe nje ukucasuka.

Wayengenandaba uMenzi ngoba lena kwakuyindlela ayethanda ukuhamba ngayo. Kwakumenza azizwe ekhululekile engaxakiwe yilezi zimoto ezaziminyene emgwaqeni. Wayesekude futhi nokutshelwa omunye umuntu ukuthi makenzeni, singayiphathi ke eyokulalela amarobothi.

Esewele ngaphesheya komgwaqo, wama kancane wanikina ikhanda ngamandla enzela ukususa amathonsana emvula ayesemhleli ekhanda kanye nasemahlombe. Kwakungesiyona imvula etheni ngoba yayisankungu eyayibonakala kuphela uma umuntu ephakamisa ikhanda efuna ukubona izigxobo zikagesi ezazikhanyisa umgwaqo. Yize kunjalo, wayezizwa sengathi umanzi okwedlula uma ebekade ethelwe amathonsikazi emvula. Kwakusobala ukuthi uma efika lapho erestoranti, wayezobe engasesisona isithombe esincomekayo.

Wathanda ukunyathela kancane uma umqondo wakhe usujikela kuleyonto ubusuku obabumphathele yona. Kwakumele yini asheshishe kangaka ebe elibangise lapho engazi muntu khona? Mhlawumbe kwakungelona isu elihle lelo. Kodwa phela weyengeke afike leythi. Waqhubeka ngokuhamba ngamandla njengoba kade enza ngaphambilini. Wanquma ukuzimisela ukuthi uzozithoba, abe nomusa, kodwa ngaso sonke isikhathi abe ecophe ithuba lokukhala iphepha ngokuphazima kweso.

Uma lowo Ntombi engenaso isicefe esihambisana nokubukeka kwakhe, wayezokwazi ukuziba, angabaleki ngokuphuma ngefasitela ethoyilethe laserestoranti. Wayethemba nokho ukuthi likhona lelo fasitela.

Kwakumele ngabe uqale ngokufika azoqinisekisa ukuthi likhona yini ifasitela ndini. Kusukela namhlanje, kuzomele azenelise ngezindawo lapho angase aye khona uma udadewabo ephinda emphoqa ukuthi akhiphe amantombazane angawazi. Kodwa ngeke iphinde yenzeke lento uma kuhamba ngaye. Namanje wokuwayesazibuza eziphendula ukuthi wayetheni kangaka usisi wakhe aze avume nje. UMpumi wayemfonele emsebenzini, wase ekufaka nje lokhu engxoxweni yabo ngesikhathi yena Menzi esazifundela ama-balance sheets, elibele ukuvuma kancane kancane elokhu ethi “mmm” noma athi “yebo”. Ngokuphazima kweso wazithola esevumile ukuthi uzokhipha umuntu angamazi bayophuza iziphuzo futhi badle idina eMoyos.

Kuyodingeka ngelinye ilanga ayeke ukudlala uMpumi, kuke kukhale nje esakhe isicathulo. Kusukela ezalwa uMpumi ndini lowo, wayevele azizwe encibilika nje uMenzi, ikakhulukazi uma uMpumi emoyizela. Wayesola ukuthi uMpumi wayazi kahle kamhlophe ukuthi ubengamlalele ngesikhathi ehlela le-date. Kwakungafana naye ncamashi uma ebesikalile isikhathi sokufona ukuze avume konke. UMenzi wanqamula ipaki encane eyayisendleleni yakhe kunokuba alandele isiphithiphishi somgwaqo. Kwakujabulisa ukubona ubuhlaza bemvelo obuyivelakancane lapha edolobheni eligcwele usimende yonke indawo lapho ungaphonsa khona iso.

Kwabona lobu buhlaza babungagqamile njengoba kwakusebusika. Okunani lalikhona iphunga emoyeni elalikhomba ubusika, n amakhasi ezihlahla ayesewohloka. Wadonsa umoya kakhulu efuna ukulizwisisa lelo phunga lomhlabathi ayelithanda kangaka. Yilapho amnaka khona uhobo owayezwakala ngephunga lakhe ngisho amehlo wona engakamboni. UMenzi wacishe wamthatha okwejazi lomuntu elalitshingiwe nje ebhentshini lase liyakhohlwa khona lapho.

Umalalepayipini lona kwakungubaba omdala futhi wayengenandaba nemvula. Izindende zazizilengela esilevini sakhe, nomoya wawulokhu uphephezela ikani elingaphethe lutho ngaphansi kwebhentshi, ulinqekuzisa ngokuliphephetha. UMenzi wathatha iphepha i-Financial Mail ayelibambe ngekhwapha wandlala amkhasi ambalwa alo emahlombe nasemzimbeni wale ndoda, kodwa eqinisekisa ukuthi akalithinti ngisho nangebhadi ijazi lalo. Mhlawumbe kwakuyothi uma la maphepha esemanzi, utshwala nabo babuzobe sebuphelile egazini kulo muntu omdala abese ehamba ayokhosela endaweni efudumele.

Esekwenzile konke lokhu, waqhubeka nendlela yakhe. Kwasekusele imizuzwana emibalwa ngaphambi kokuba afike kule restoranti ayelibangise kuyo. Wayengazithandisisi izindawo ezifana nale restoranti. Empeleni, ukukhetha indawo efana neMoyos kwakuyinto eyayingamfaneli yena lowo Ntombi.

Wayezamile nokho ukuthola imininingwane ngale-Moyos ku-*internet*, wathola ukuthi yirestaurant encanyana eyayiphethwe amalunga omndeni owodwa – hhayi neze inhlobo yerestoranti emfanele uMenzi. Wayethanda kangcono izindawo owawuzibonela nje ukude ukuthi akudli noma ubani khona, njengoba phela ayesekwazi ukukhokha izimali zakhona.

Wayejabuliswa abantu besifazane abahlobe ngamadayimane, amadoda anezikhwama zemali eziqumbile kanye noweta abahlonipha baze bacishe baguqe ngamadolo.

Kodwa kuthiwa ukudla kwakhona kuconsisa amathe, futhi abantu ababebhale ngale-restaurant babekhale ngobumnandikazi bezinye izibiliboco eziphekwe ngenyama yangaphakathi. Kodwa uMenzi wayengaboni ukuthi lokho kuzokwenza mehluko muni kuNtombi. Wayembona nje ngamehlo engqondo, wayezovele azikhethele amakhasi kalethisi, awabhabhadise ngoviniga bese elibala ukuwadlalisa epuletini lakhe esikhundleni sokuba adle, abe elokhu ekhononda ngokuthi yonke into ayidlayo ivese iqonde iye kuma-hips akhe abanzi.

Engathi leliya fasitela ayekade elicabanga lizogcina lidingakele. Mhlawumbe uma esefika e-restoranti kuzomele agudle ngemuva ayobheka ukuthi likhulu kangakanani ngaphambi kokungena ngaphakathi?

Wayelibele ukuzicabangela lezi zinyoni zakhe, okwenza ukuthi angasiboni isitamkonko esasiblokhekile. Akabonanga futhi nokuthi sekunedanyana lamanzi elingaphezu kwaso lesi sitamkonko. Ngaphezu kwalokho, akayibonanga nemoto yakwanokusho eyayiza ngakuye.

Into ayibonayo igagasi elikhulu lamanzi eladaleka ngesikhathi leyo moto isihlangana nedamu lamanzi. Kulowo mzuzu, engasakwazi ngisho nokunyakaza, wabona sengathi yonke into yenzeka ngonyawo lonwabu, igagasi elaliza ngakuye lagcina ngokumthela umzimba wonke, kusukela ekhanda kuya ezinyaweni.

UNtombi wabona igagasi lamanzi esibukweni semoto, washaqeka. Ubekade elibele ukucabanga ngale dina aya kuyo, wagcina esekhohliwe ukungangeni kuleli damunyana lamanzi azi kamhlophe ukuthi lihlale lidaleka uma izulu lingelihle. Engakazibuzi nokuthi kuyisu elihle yini noma chabo, wamisa imoto, wehla kuyo wase egijima eqonda kulo muntu ayekade emthele ngamanzi. Wayengabonakali sengathi uke wanyakaza emuva kokuthelwa amanzi. Wayebuka nje isudi yakhe eyayisimanzi nte.

“Hhawu webakithi! Ngiyaxolisa -”

UMenzi waphakamisa ikhanda wase embuka ngamehlo ayegcwele okukhulu ukuthukuthela.

“Unjani kodwa?”

Wanyusa ishiya elilodwa. Noma mhlawumbe walinyusa - kwakungelula ukubonisisa ngaphansi kwezinwele zakhe ezase zinamathele esiphongweni sakhe.

“Umanzi nte. Thani ngikubeke laph’ya khona, iyona ndlela yami encane yokuxolisa leyo”.

Yayisidlulile imizuzwana eyishumi nahlanu elokhu ekhuluma naye, kodwa kwakuyima ezwa sengathi ima le ndonda iqala ukumbukisisa kahle. Yayimgqolozele, ikhiphe wonke amehlo ayo. Naye uNtombi wayesebuka amabhuthi kanye nesiketi sakhe esasifika emaqakaleni. Ok, naye

wayeseqala ukumanta kancane njengoba belokhu beme emvuleni, kodwa indlela ayembuka ngayo lo muntu ubungafunga ukuthi uNtombi uphume emotweni efake isiketi sakhe ngaphansi kwephenti enzela ukuthi singamanti. Wayethemba nokho ukuthi akakwenzanga lokho.

UNtombi wanyusa ikhanda futhi, wathola ukuthi le ndoda yayisimoyizela. Futhi yayingamoyizeli nje okomuntu obonga uweta oqeda ukumlethela isiphuzo sakhe. Wayemoyizela okwangempela.

Ukumoyizela kwale ndoda kwamthinta ngaphakathi, wathanda ukubukisisa lobu buso obabuphambi kwakhe obabumamatheka kangaka.

Yayinhle insizwa bo!

Ingazathi wayezikhethele insizwa enhle kabi ukuthi ayithele ngamanzi.

“Ubuthi…?” kubuza yona.

Wabuyisa ingqondo uNtombi.

“Hhayi cha, ukuthi nje- bengi…bengithi indlel’encane nje yokuk’siza. Ukuk’beka laph’uya khona ngemoto”.

“Ingathi umbon’ omuhle ke lowo. Ang’sabon’ ukuthi ngisasesimeni esifanele sokuthi ngiye ukuyodla idina njengoba senginjena”.

Isandla sikaNtombi sandiza savala umlomo wakhe, ethukile. “Kwaze kwakubi ke lokho…hhayi ke, ayisekh’eny’indlela. Sengik’moshele ubusuku bakho. Ngizokuhambisa ngemoto endaweni eyomile futhi efudumele. Ungabi nenkani”.

Le nsizwa yamthatha phansi yambuka ukunyuka naye, yaphinde yehla futhi nomzimba isambuka, ilokhu idlalisa umlomo sengathi izama ukuzibamba ingamoyizeli. “Cha, ak’simin’ ozok’phikisa. Singangen’ emotweni?” UMenzi washo ebe eyikhomba imoto. “Yaze yayinhle bo”.

Imvula yayisithanda ukuna ngamandla manje, kukhona amathonsana athela uNtombi esiphongweni. Ngaphandle kokumosha isikhathi ngokuxoxa, bavese bagijima bobabili baqonda emotweni, bangena phakathi.

Wayibuka le ndoda inikina ikhanda ngamandla izama ukususa amathonsi emvula, yase iphulula izinwele, yazimbambatha ikhanda njengoba isihleli esitulweni esiseduze nesomshayeli. Njengoba izinwele sezimbambathekile, wayesebubona kahle manje ubuso bayo. Ngabe enza njani amehlo ansundu kangaka ukumenza abukeke sengathi ungumuntu ofudumele kangaka? Yeka ke indaba yesilevu sakhe. Wayebukeka njengendoda ezethembayo, eyazi kahle ukuthi impilo yayo iyiphatheleni, kucabanga uNtombi.

“Empeleni ak’siyon’ eyami lemoto”, kuqhubeka uNtombi nengxoxo yabo yaphambilini.

UMenzi waqala phansi futhi wamoyizela. “Wenzeni? Uy’ntshontshile?”

“Hhawu bakithi, cha. Eyam’ imoto isegaraji. Lena ngiyibolekwe…umngani wami”.

Wayengazimiselanga ukumtshela ukuthi wayehamba ngemoto kababa wakhe. Wayezovese azibonele nje ukuthi imoto yomuntu ongafuni ukuguga. Okungasho ukuthi ukungafuni ukuziphathisa okomuntu omdala kukababa wakhe kwakumqale eseneminyaka engamashumi amahlanu. Kwakumqale kudala esasemusha, futhi kuyacaca ukuthi ubaba wakhe akazange ahlukane nalokho kungafuni ukuziphathisa okomuntu omdala khona ezokhula kancane ngokwengqondo.

Wayengathandi ukusho ukuthi ubani ubaba wakhe uma ehlangana nomuntu wesilisa omchazayo. Wayesifunde kanzima isifundo sokuthi angaxoxi ngoyise kuze kufike isikhathi lapho ezizwa eselungile ukuthi amtshele lowo muntu – nalapho wayefike angabaze ukuthi usathandelwa ubuyena noma ukuthi ubani ubaba wakhe.

Amehlo avuthayo ayenamathele kuye. “Umngani?”

Eish! Kanti ubemzwile ukuthi unokungabaza ngenkathi esachaza ngemoto.

UMenzi wanyakazisa uzimba esitulweni sakhe ehlalisisa kahle, kwaba sengathi kukhona into emphatha kabi. “Kwakumbi ke lokho. Ubomtshel’ ukuthi ngithi uyakwaz’ ukukhetha izimoto…kanye nabosisi”.

UNtombi wazilibaliza ngokucinga isikhiye khona ezodumisa imoto.

Ntombazane! Cabanga into ehlakaniphile futhi nehlekisayo ozophendula ngayo! Mtshele ukuthi isimo asinjalo nakancane, kucabanga uNtombi, kodwa wavele ezizwa esembuza uMenzi: “Awusho, ngingak’dropha kuphi?”

Kwakuhle. Kakhulu.

“E-Riviera road. Uyawaz’ angithi ukuth’ ukuphi lowo mgwaqo?”

“Ukhon’ umunt’ engimaziy’ohlala ngalapho”. Wa-onisa i-indikhetha wase efaka imoto emgwaqeni. “Akukude kakhulu uma silapha, angithi?”

“Cha, kodwa njengoba iz’moto zizininginga kangaka, kungathath’ isikhashana, mhlawumbe imizuz’ engu-20”.

“Ngiyazi. Ngesiny’ isikhathi ngike ngibone sengathi ngingabe ngizisizile uma ngihamba ngezinyawo ngob’ ikhona ok’sheshayo”.

“Umbono wami nam’ lowo”. Wahambisa izandla ebhulukweni lakhe elihlola isimo salo. “Kodw’ asikh’ isiqiniseko sokuthi iyona ndlela yokufika lapho oya khona ube ungamantanga”.

UNtombi wadonsela umoya phezulu elungiselela ukukhuluma, kodwa uMenzi wamnqanda ngokundizisa isandla emoyeni.

“Ngicel’ ungaphindi uxolise. Impela ngibona sengathi ung’sizile yize ubungaqondanga. Bengingenawo umdlandl’ omkhulu wokuya laph’ ebengilibangise khona, manje usung’nikeze i-excuse enhle kabi yokuthi ngingabe ng’saya”.

“Ngempela?”

“Ngiyakutshela. Bengine-date neny’ intombazane enobus’ obufana nobehhashi – kodw’ anginaso isiqinisekiso sokuth’ ibukeka njengobuso noma njengesiphundu sehhashi!”

Wavese waqhuma uNtombi wahleka kungalindelekanga.

“Hhayi ke, impela ngik’sizile um’ isimo sinjalo”, wabe esho, esalibele ukugigitheka.

UMenzi naye waqala ukuhleka. “Ukuk’bonga kwami akunasiphetho. Empeleni, kumele ngabe kukhona int’ engingakwenzela yona ukuk’tshengisa ukubonga kwami. Ungathand’ ukudl’ idina nami?”

Njengoba babemile kwelinye irobhothi elibomvu, waphenduka uNtombi wambuka emehlweni. “Ususikhohliwe yini isizathu sokub’ emotweni yami? Umanzi nte!”

“Ngeke kungithath’ isikhath’ esid’ ukusula nokushintsh’ izimpahla. Singaya nasendaweni yokudl’ eseduze. Sizobe sisendawen’ enabant’ abaningi. Uzob’ uphephile”.

“Ngizokwazi kanjani lokho? Sisandakuhlangana nje khona manje. Angilaz’ nokulaz’ igama lakho”.

“NginguMenzi”.

“Hhayi ke Menzi, ngisho sengilaz’ igama lakho, akush’ ukuthi wena seng’yakwazi”.

“Pho yingani ung’vumel’ ukuthi ngigibele emotweni yakho- noma angithi imoto *kamngane wakho*? Ngingaba inanom’ ubani. Mhlawumbe ngihamba ngibulala abantu nje ngembazo yam’ engiyiphethe ngaphansi kwaleli jazi”.

UNtombi wazizwa engenwa ukubanda okushaqimulisa umzimba. Wayeqinisile uMenzi. Ubelokhu emhawukela njengoba ebemthele ngamanzi, akazange azinike nesikhathi sokucabanga ngokuphepha kwakhe uma enalo Menzi. Uma esephendula, izwi lakhe lalinokuzethemba okwakudlula lokho ayekuzwa ngaphakathi.

“Mus’uk’ganga wena lapha. Imin’engisize wena, usakhumbula? Uwena obukad’ udinga ukusizwa, hhayi mina. Yingakh’ ungek’ ukwazi ukuba umbulali opheth’ imbazo ngaphansi kwejazi”. *Kodwa mhlawumbe wayeyiphethe?*

Manje kwasekuyithuba likaMenzi lokuhleka. Amahlombe kaNtombi athi ukuthamba kancane, kodwa waqhubeka nokubhekisisa umgwaqo lapho ayeshayela khona. Ngokuphazima kweso, base befikile eRiviera Road.

“Iliphi ibhilidi?” Wasondeza ikhanda ku-steering wheel khona ezokwazi ukufifiyela ngaphandle. Kwelinye isayidi lonke lomgwaqo kwakunebhilidi lamaflats lakwanokusho elalakhiwe nge-face brick ebomvu.

“Khona lapha. E-top floor”.

“Yaze yaphucuk’ indawo yakho”.

UNtombi wayekade ebheke umgwaqo ngaso sonke isikhathi njengoba esepaka imoto phambi kwaleli bhilidi. Ngisho noma wayengamboni uMenzi esibukweni, kwakukhona into eyayimtshela ukuthi uMenzi wayephendukile esembuka ebusweni. Kwakummangalisa uNtombi ukuthi ngaphambi kwanamhlanje wayelokhu ecabanga ukuthi abantu basuke bezibhemele insangu uma bethi bayakwazi ukuzwa uma kukhona umuntu obabukayo ngisho bengamboni lowo muntu.

“Ngena, ngingajabul’ ukuk’bonisa ngaphakathi kweflat lami”.

“Sengathi uyilenhlobo yomunt’ othand’ ukujah’ izinto?” kubuza uNtombi.

“Ngiyazaz’ ukuthi ng’funani futhi akukho lutho oluzong’vimba ngingayitholi leyo nto”.

Uma ekucabangisisa lokho uMenzi ayesanda kukusho, wezwa igazi limshisa ebusweni. Wayeziqhenya kabi ukuthi uma esemphendula, izwi lakhe lalingenakungabaza.

“Ngiyaxolisa Menzi, kukhona umunt’ engiyohlangana naye. Mhlawumbe ngeliny’ ilanga”.

“Awukwaz’ ukuves’ ungafiki?”

Uma bekungomunye umuntu obesho njalo, wayezothukuthela aphele, kodwa uMenzi wayekhuluma ngendlela eyayimchaza, wazithola esehleka.

“Cha”.

Kodwa wayefuna. Uma ecabanga ubusuku ayezobuchitha noZenzele, kwakungathi kunefu elimnyama elidlula enhliziweni yakhe.

“Okwakho ke lokho”. Izwi lakhe lalikhombisa ukuthi wayesihlonipha isinqumo sakhe kakhulu. “Okungenani ke nginik’ inamba yakho”.

“Ngikunikez’ inamba yami? Wen’ohamb’ ubulala abantu ngembazo? Usuyahlanya ke manje!”

UNtombi wamamatheka.

Wamamatheka noMenzi ebe emmbheke emehlweni ngokunjalo.

Kwakungathi ukumamatheka kukaMenzi kuya ngokukhula ngokuhamba kwesikhathi. Kwakuzomele uNtombi asheshe ahambe ngoba, uma engenzanga njalo, wayezoshintsha umqondo wakhe ngale dina. Futhi noKhethi wayezombulala uma engafiki kule date ayemhlelele yona kanye nale ndoda “emfanelayo” ayemtholele yona, into okungamele neze yenzeke. Kodwa sengathi wayezizwa ehalela ngokweqile ukuchitha esinye isikhathi nalo Menzi.

UMenzi wafaka isandla sakhe ephaketheni, wakhipha ikhadi lakhe lasemsebenzi kwase kuba khona into ayibhalayo ngemuva kwalo ngefountain pen.

“Yenz’ okuthandayo ke. Kodwa nansi eyami inamba”.

Walithatha ikhadi kuyena. Ngisho naleli khadi lalimanzi nte. Okusho khona ukuthi wayemthelisise ngempela ngalawaya manzi.

Wambuka ezinhamvini zamehlo. “Uyisebenzise”.

Amehlo kaNtombi ashayisana nawakhe. Wayengave ezethemba bo uMenzi ukuthi uzomfonela. Kwakungekho ngisho nokuncane ukuzingabaza kuye. Kufanele ukuthi ukujwayele ukuthi abantu besimame bafeze inanoma iyiphi intando yakhe mihla namalanga. UNtombi kwakungathi angalintshinga lelikhajana likaMenzi ngefasitela lingene esitamkonkweni, kodwa aphinde afise ukulifaka kubhodisi wakhe khona ezoqinisekisa ukuthi angeke lilahleke.

Waqinisa umlomo. Wayefuna ukubukeka sengathi ucasukile kodwa wazithola efuna ukumoyizela.

“Mhlawumbe. Sala kahle Menzi”.

Wafaka imoto ku-reverse wase eqala ukuphuma kule ndawo ayepake kuyo. Ngaphambi kokuba athole ithuba lokungena indlela, uMenzi wagxumela efasiteleni lakhe. “Mana!”

UNtombi wacindezela inkinobho yokuvula ifasitele, ethokoziswa ukubona uMenzi ecasuka njengoba ifasitela lalivuleka kancane.

“Awukakang’tshel’ igama lako”.

“Uyaz’ uqin’sile”.

“Pho?”

“Ngibona sengathi awusiyona inhlobo yomunt’ wes’lisa ongavumel’ ukuth’ int’ encane kangako ingamvimbel’ ekutholeni lokh’ akufunayo. Uzol’thola igama lami – uma kuwukuthi uyafuna ngempela ukulithola”.

Emuva kwalawo magama, wavala ifasitela uNtombi wakhala iphepha .

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UNtombi wabuka idolobha lonke laseGoli njengoba laliphambi kwakhe, ezama ukukhohlwa ukuthi izinqe zakhe zazibanda ngalendlela eyayimenza ecabange ukuthi zinamathele ebhentshini. Ibhentshi elalizungeza isihlahla esikhulu somkhiwane lalibekwe endaweni eyayingakhoselekile emoyeni.

“Kwaze kwakuhle lapha. Idolobha lonke libonakala kamnandi”.

UMenzi wamoyizela, wase emupha ipuleti elaligcwele izibiliboco alithathe kubhasikidi wephikiniki owawuhleli phakathi kwabo. “Ngangithanda kakhulu ukuza lapha ngisasemncane”.

“Wawuhlal’ eduze nalapha?”

“Akukude kakhulu”.

Wayembona ngamehlo enqondo ehlala eHoughton, indawo yezigwili eyayiseningizimu naleli paki ababehleli kulo.

“Ungayibona noma sihleli lapha”, kusho uMenzi.

UNtombi wayezama ukubona, kodwa wayengaqondi kahle ukuthi uMenzi ukhomba kuphi. Izindlu zazikude kakhulu, zingabonakali kahle.

“Awubhekile ngakhona”. Wabeka ingalo emahlombeni kaNtombi wamphendula khona ezobuka ngasentshonalanga. “Ngeke ungaboni. Uyazibona leziya zindlu ze-RDP eziningi laphaya”

“Emuva kwazo?”

“Chabo, khona impela. Ngangihlahla endlini yokugcina esitaladweni sokuqala”.

UNtombi waphenduka khona ezombuka emehlweni. “Ngempela?”

“Uma ngihleli efasiteleni lami, ngangikwazi ukubona leli paki. Yayibukeka njengendawana enhle eluhlaza kodwa ezungezwe ububi bukakhonkolo kanye nokungcola”.

UNtombi wahleka. “Waze wakhuluma njengembongi bo!”

“Shh! Uzokon’ isithunzi sami njengosomabhizinisi”.

“Anginaso isiqinisekiso sokuthi uyinsizwa eqine ngalendlela othanda ukuziveza yona, Zenzele”.

UMenzi wambuka uNtombi ngokumtshontsha ngecala lehlo. “Yin’ ndaba ulokh’ ungibiza ngalelo gama?”

“Angazi. Livese liz’fikele nje emlonyeni wami. Kusho ukuthi liyakufanela”.

Wahlafuna umhlathi uMenzi. “Ngithanda elikaMenzi”.

“Kodwa akusilon’ ingama lakho langempela”.

UNtombi wahlehlela ngemuva wase ebuka amagatsha esihlahla ayengenamaqabunga. “Yayikhona yini ingadi lapho owawuhlala khona? Mhlawumbe enaniyisebenzisa ngokwabelana?”

UMenzi wayelokhu edlalisa intambo yokubopha ubhasikidi wephikiniki. “Kumele ngempela sixoxe ngobungane bethu?” kubuza uMenzi.

“Iyona nto eqotho. Ngisho noma abantu bengangazi kakhulu mina, kodwa ngihlobene nomunt’ owaziwayo, ohlal’ ehlaselwa osomaphephandaba. Um’ uthanda, ungabhala igama lami ku-Google uthole ngisho nemininingwane mayelana nokuthi ngidleni ngoLwesithath’ ekuseni”.

“Zikhon’ eziny’ izindlela ezingcono zokuthi ngaz’ ukuth’ uthand’ ukudlan’ ekuseni”. Ngokumlalela uMenzi uma esho lawo magama, kwakusobala ukuthi uqonde ukuganga.

UNtombi wajikisa ikhanda lakhe elalincike esihlahleni ukuze akwazi ukumbuka uMenzi. “Shame, uyazama khona kodwa ngeke ngilahl’ umkhondo. Ngifisa nje ukukwazi kangcono. Angiliboni icala lapho”.

“Ngivamis’ ukuba nempumelelo uma ngisebenzisa lendlela yam’ yokushintsh’ ingxoxo”.

“Kucacile”.

Ubuso bukaMenzi bashintsha bukhombisa ukuba nzima kuyena kwale ndaba. “Uqinisile, alikh’ icala. Sengajwayela ukungagcizeleli ebunganeni bami. Amany’ amakhasimende ami angas’ aquleke uma ezwa ukuth’ izigidi zezimali zawo zinakekelwa umunt’ owakhulela endlini ye-RDP”.

UNtombi wambuka uMenzi umzimba wonke. Wayengaboni ukuthi omunye umuntu angaqagela kanjani ukuthi wakhulela ekuhluphekeni. Phambi kwakhe kwakumi indoda ende ephuchukile, kusukela ejazini layo kuya ezicathulweni zayo ezibonakalayo ukuthi zithungwe ngesandla.

“Zazingekh’ izihlahla ngasekhaya, yingakho ngazijwayeza ukuza lapha njalo ngezimpelasonto – noma nangalezo zinsuku uma ukuya esikoleni kungiphula inhliziyo”. UMenzi wayegqolozele ikhaya lakubo elidala, amehlo akhe egcwele inkumbuzo. “Ngangihlala kulo leli bhentshi bese ngiplan’ ukuphuma kwam’ kulendlu ye-RDP. Ngangibuk’ abantu beqhubeka nezimpilo zabo, ngiphuph’ ukuthi nami ngelinye ilanga ngiyob’ omunye wabo”.

“Yileso isizathu sokuthi ube yi-accountant?” UNtombi wambuka emoyizela. “Khona uzophila impilo evusa inhliziyo?”

“Ha ha. Ungazimosheli isikhathi ngokungixoxela le ndaba endala yokuthi wnke ama-accountants anesicefe. Lezo zindaba sengizizwe izikhath’ eziphindwe kaningi. Nokho ekuqaleni ngangingafuni ukuba yi-accountant. Ngangazi ukuthi ngangidinga imali khona ngizophuma kuma-RDP, ngakho ke ngathath’ isinqumo sokuthi ngifunde ngokuzimisela. Ngathol’ umsebenzi kwenye inkampani ye-accounting eyayikhona lapho emuva kokuba ngiqed’ isikole, impilo yase iyaziqhubekela kusukela lapho. Ngashesha ngazibonel’ ukuthi ngase ngiwutholile umsebenzi ongifanelayo, ngase ngibhal’ ama-test akhona, ngaqhubeka nokusebenza kanzima ngaze ngaphumelela”.

“Kuzwakala sengathi wawuzimisele ngempela”.

“Ngangifun’ ukukhipha umama kuleya ndawo. Wayefanelwe ukuhlala endaweni engcono kabi kunaleya”.

“Sengake ngezwa ukuthi lawo ma-test okuba yi-accountant anzima kabi kabi” kusho uNtombi. “Min’ ang’kaze ngibekezele entwen’ enzima njengaleyo. Ngesikhathi ng’sakhula, isikhathi esiningi sasithutha. Ubaba wayehambela umculo wakhe emazweni, noma wayerekhod’ umculo wakhe ezindawen’ ezikude”.

“Wenzenjani ngesikole?”

“Ngafundisw’ ekhaya ngaze ngaba neminyak’ eyishumi nanye. Ngingasho nje ukuthi angifundiswanga ngendlela ejwayelwe izingane eziningi ezinaleyo minyaka. Ngesikhathi sengineminyak’ eyishumi, ngase ngazi konke mayelana nezihlahla, ama-crystal kanye nezinkanyezi, kodwa ulwazi lwami lwaluthanda ukuba bucayi uma kuphathwa izibalo kanye nesayensi”. Kodwa ngangiwumpetha emculweni nasekulingiseni abantu”.

UMenzi waphinda wamoyizela ngale ndlela eyayincibilikisa inhliziyo kaNtombi.

“Kwase kwenzekani emuva kwalokho?”

“Umama wagula, ngase ngiyiswa e-boarding school”.

UMenzi wanyusa amashiya. “Ngiyahluleka ukuk’cabanga ugqoke inyufomu efuthwe ngestashi, uhleli neziny’ izingane nidla ukudla phakathi nobusuku esikhundleni sokuba nibe nilele”.

“Awazi lutho wena! Wake wezwa ngesikole ekuthiwa i-Foster’s Educational Centre?”

UMenzi wanikina ikhanda.

“Ezinyangeni ezimbalwa ezadlula, kukhona imagazini ebhale ngaso lesi sikole – bengithi mhlawumbe uke wafunda ngaso. Hhayi ke, singesinye salezi zikol’ ekuthiwa ziphucukile, zifundisa isayikhologi kodwa akunamuntu khona osebenzis’ ingqondo yakhe. Isikole nje sezinhlanya, uma ubuza mina”. UNtombi wamcifela ihlo. “Asikho isidingo sokukutshela ukuthi angisithandanga leso s’kole”.

“Asikho ngisho nakancane. Lowo mcabango awufikanga nasekhandeni lami”.

“Angidlali njalo . Eziny’ izingane ezifunda khona zazingihleka ngoba zazicabang’ ukuthi angiphili kahle emuva kokufundisw’ ekhaya ngumama. Njengoba othisha babekholelwa ekutheni izingane kumele zingathukutheleli ngaphakathi ngoba lokho kwakungazilimaza ukukhula kwazo, kwakulula kab’ ukuthi lezi eziny’ izingane zithol’ izindlela zokungihlukumeza uma zithanda. Zazivele zithanda. Ngangiwumdlalo kuzona”.

“Nxese”, kwasho uMenzi.

“Ngashesha ngabaleka ngabuyela kubaba. Naye wayesanda kuphuma e-rehab, weyeye khona ukuyolashwa inkinga yakhe nezidakamizwa. Ngicabang’ ukuthi uyazi ngalokho – ababaningi abantu abangayizwanga leyo ndaba. Eminyakeni emuva kokushona kukamama, wake waphila impilo yotshwala nezidakamizwa. Wayengidinga ngibe sekhaya okufana nalendlela mina engangidinga ukubaleka kulesiya s’kole”.

“Umsebenzi wona?”

UNtombi wadonsa umoya sengathi uzothimula. “Ukunakekela ubaba kuwumsebenzi ophelele, awaz’ lutho wena! Kule minyaka emihlan’ eyedlule, bekuyimina imenenja kababa. Lowo msebenzi ngingawuchaza ngokuthi imin’ engingunobhala wakhe, ngimxazululela izinkinga ngiphinde ngibe umzanyana wakhe konke ngesikhathi esisodwa. Iqembu lakhe alisasebenzi njengoba lalisebenza ekuqaleni, kodwa ngeziny’ izikhathi kuba nesiphithiphithi nje int’ ongek’ uyiqonde”.

UMenzi wamdlulisela igilasi yeshampeni. “Uma ngabe kuthiwa ungenza noma yini oyithandayo emhlabeni, ungazikhethela ini? Ukuvakashela umhlaba?”

UNtombi waphuza kancane eglasini yakhe wase enikina ikhanda: “Cha, ngeke ngiketh’ ukuvakashel’ umhlaba. Sesibe siningi kabi isikhathi empilweni yami ngilokhu ngehla ngenyuka. Ngingakhetha eny’ into ehluke kabi kabi kunalokho”.

“Efana nokubaleka uyosebenzela i-circus?”

UNtombi wavele wamoyizela kodwa akashongo lutho. Kwakungeke kulunge ukuba axoxe ngezifiso zakhe zangempela ngekusasa lakhe. Ukumemezela ukuthi isifiso sakho esikhulu ukuba umakoti kanye nomama, lokho ebantwini besilisa kwakufana nokuthi uqhumisa isibhamu, babaleke. Wayengakazimiseli uNtombi ukuthi abone uMenzi eseyosithela ijubane.

UMenzi wayegcwalisa zonke izidingo zakhe emuntwini wesilisa: wayenomsebenzi osile futhi owawumnikeza izimali zakhe ezishisiwe, okwakukhombisa uNtombi ukuthi wayengafune zona izimali zikababa wakhe; wayekwazi ukucabangela omunye umuntu, wayenomusa – wayengamncoma kuze kuyoshona ilanga!

Kwakusobala ukuthi yonke into ayenzayo wayezimisele ukuthi iphumelele, futhi yonke into ayeyenzayo yayicokeme. Buka nje lo bhasikidi owawugcwele ukudla ayekuthenge kwesinye sezitolo zokudla ezibizayo zaseGoli. Kwakungekho zinkwa ezigcotshwe ujamu ne-peanut butter lapha.

Kodwa ikhona into phakathi kuye uNtombi eyayifisa ukudla isinkwa esigcotshwe ujamu ne-peanut butter, ehlise nge-Oros; wayefisa nokubona izingane zigcwele ujamu ebusweni kanye notshani emadolweni.

Ishampeni wayeseyiphuze wanela. Yayingasamchazi kangako. Mhlawume ingoba wayesebone ubaba wakhe eyiphuzela ukwanelisa amadoda amathathu kodwa ebe eyindoda eyodwa. Wayekade emcindezela ukuthi athole usizo ngokuphuza kwakhe: yize noma wayekuphika lokho ngenkulu inkani, uNtombi wayesembona sengathi uselungele ukubuyela e-rehab. Uma ecabanga ukwenza ngenye indlela, wayedumala. Wayesesele nobaba wakhe kuphela emhlabeni, futhi wayezobambelela kuyena. Wayezobambelela kuyena ngamandla. Ngisho ukucabanga omunye umphumela ngobaba wakhe kwakwenza umzimba wakhe uqhaqhazele.

“Uyagodola?”

“Kancane”.

UMenzi wamsingatha ngengalo yakhe sengathi ufuna ukumvikela emakhazeni, naye uNtombi wahlehlela ngakuye. Bayeka lapho ukukhuluma, sebeqedela ukudla kwabo kokugcina, kodwa uNtombi waqinisekisa ukuthi akamnikezi uMenzi ithuba lokuziqhelisa kuyena. Ukufudumala okwakuphuma kuyena kwakungahlanganise lutho nezimpahla ababezigqokile; kodwa kwakudalwa yile ndoda uqobo lwayo. Uma nje uNtombi wayengakwazi ukuhlala ubusika bonke kanje, egoqelene eduze naye, kuze kube sentwasahlobo. Kwakumnandi kabi ukuthi kube nguye onakekelwayo, ngisho noma isikhathi esincane.

Uma sebeqedile, uMenzi wapakisha ubhasikidi wase elulela isandla ngakuNtombi khona ezomsiza ukuthi aphakame. Isizotha esingaka! UMenzi akasidedelanga isandla sikaNtombi uma sebehamba, futhi naye uNtombi wayengafuni ukuthi asidedele. Ngisho noma eziba imizwa

eyayinyonyoba engalweni yakhe, ukuthintwa nje omunye omuntu kwakumjabulisa. Sasesisiningi kakhulu isikhathi esedlulile agcina ukubambana nomunye umuntu izandla.

UMenzi wenqaba ukumdedela isandla ngisho noma sebefike esangweni lokuphuma epaki. Kwabathatha isikhathi esiningana ngaphambi kokuba bakwazi ukuphuma khona njengoba besaqhubeka nokubambana izandla. UNtombi wayesola ukuthi uMenzi wayezenzisa ukuphatha mawala ubhasikidi khona bezolokhu becindezelene ndawonye ngesikhathi besadlula esangweni elincane.

Uma sebephumile esangweni, uNtombi wayezimisele ukuqhubeka nokuhamba, kodwa uMenzi wayenganyakazi, ingalo kaNtombi yadonseka. Waphenduka wambuka, exakekile ukuthi kwenzenjani.

UMenzi wabuka phansi ezinyaweni zabo, naye uNtombi wabe esebuka phansi. Kwakunolayini wothusi owawudwetshwe phansi etiyeleni, okwakubonisa lapho ulayini owawuhlukanisa ipaki kanye nedolobha owawuhamba khona. UMenzi wayengakaweqi ulayini; babemile manje bobabili bekhekene, sengathi beme emacaleni amabili ahlukene omnyango owodwa.

“Indawo yokuqala kabusha lena”, kusho uMenzi, ebe embuka ezinhlamvini zamehlo uNtombi.

Uma ngabe uMenzi wayecabanga ukuthi namhlanje ukuqala kwabo, kwakusho ukuthi kusasekuningi okuzayo! UNtombi akakwazanga ukuqinisa umlomo, wawuzwa nje usumoyizela. “Ikholakala kanzima ke lento yethu. Sime eduze kangaka, kodwa omunye nomunye use-caleni elehlukile ledolobha”.

“Asisondelenanga kangako”. Lapha uMenzi wabeka ubhasikidi ngasezinyaweni zakhe, wase ethatha lesi esinye isandla sikaNtombi. “Sisengasondelana ukudlula lokhu”. Khona ezomkhombisa ukuthi usho ukuthini, wadonsela uNtombi ngakuye amajazi abo aze athintana, futhi namehlo kaNtombi esesondelene nesilevu sikaMenzi. UNtombi wayewuzwa umphefumulo kaMenzi esiphongweni sakhe. Uma enyusa isilevu sakhe kancane nje, izindebe zikaMenzi zazingaba seduze kabi kabi.

Igazi lamshisa ebusweni. Akekho omunye umuntu omenza abe nale mizwa. Babethintana kuphela ngeminwe yabo, kodwa inhliziyo yakhe yayishaya sengathi wayesanda kugijima ibanga elide.

“Namanje awuyikholi lento yethu?” uMenzi wahlebela ezinweleni zakhe.

“Sengathi kanzima okudlula ekuqaleni”. UNtombi wagwinya kanzima, weyesephakamisa amehlo khona ezohlangana nawakaMenzi. Ayensundu impela, futhi uMenzi wayengasamoyizeli. UNtombi wayebona into ayeqala ngqa ukuyibona kuMenzi. Uma unganaki isithombe ayesikhomisa somuntu wasedolobheni, lena kwakuyindoda elungile, enenhliziyo eqotho.

Izwi likaMenzi lalimfudumeza isihlathi. “Uma sisondelana futhi kancane nje, singazamazamisa idolobha lonke”.

“Usuyabheda ke manje”, waphendula ngokuhleba naye uNtombi.

Yize kunjalo, lokho akumvimbelanga ukuthi amehlo akhe azivalekele ngesikhathi izindebe zikaMenzi zehla kancane kancane ziza kwezakhe. Kulowo mzuzu ngaphambi kokuthi zithintane, wezwa umzimba wakhe uqhaqhazela ngamandla.

Kwakuyiyo yonke into ukhisi wokuqala okwakufanele ube iyo. Kwakuwukhisi owawuntofontofo, othambile, ogcwele izithembiso eziningi. Wawungafunga ukuthi kwakuyibona bobabili kuphela abantu abasemhlabeni. UNtombi wabambelela kuMenzi, iminywe yakhe wayihambisa ezinweleni zikaMenzi – wayenza konke ayekade efisa ukukwenza kusukela kuloluya suku behlangana emgwaqeni ezinsukwini ezimbalwa ezedlule.

UMenzi wathatha ubuso bukaNtombi ezandleni zakhe, iminwe yakhe idlalisa umhlathi kaNtombi.

UNtombi wayeqala ngqa ukuqatshuzwa kanjena. Wayevamise nje ukuthi ukhisi nalaba bafana ayejole nabo esasemncane kube ukushayisana kwemilomo namazinyo, ezikhohlisa ukuthi kwakuzigcwalisa lezo zikhala ezazikhona enhliziyweni yakhe. Ukuqabulana noMenzi kwakwehlukile. Lo khisi wayewuzwa usuka ezindebeni zakhe kuya emphefumulweni wakhe.

UMenzi washeshe wazehlukanisa kuye, wamqgokisa kahle isigqoko sakhe esasesitshekile, wase eholela uNtombi ngasemotweni yakhe. Emuva kalokho, ilanga lonke uNtombi wayeselokhu ecabanga into eyodwa, ukuthi ukhisi olandelayo uzolandela nini.

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“Menzi, ngiyesaba! Angaz’ ukuthi sikuphi!” kubabaza uNtombi.

“Ungakhathazeki, konke kuzokucacela maduze” kuphendula uMenzi.

UNtombi wayewathanda amasurprise njengawo wonke amanye amantombazane, kodwa ukudonswa iGoli lonke ebe evalwe amehlo ngesikhafu kwakungathi sekunehaba. UMenzi wayemvale amehlo ngesikhafu ngesikhathi sebegibele imitha teksi ayeyithole ilinde ngaphandle kwerestoranti. UMenzi wayebona sengathi kwakungenelanga ukudla idinner erestoranti epheka ukudla kwaseMorocco, bebe behlezi emakhushinini ngokulingisa injwayelo yakulelo lizwe, uNtombi ezizwa ephethwe okwesitatanyiswa. Kwakusobala ukuthi kukhona okunye uMenzi ayesephezu kwakho manje, kodwa uNtombi wayeseqala ukuphelelwa uthando lwamasurprise.

Wadedela insimbi ayekade ebambelele kuyo wavumela uMenzi ukuthi amhole ukwehla izitebhisi okwasekungathi azisoze ziphele. Kwathatha onke amandla akhe uNtombi ukuthi angabambeleli unomphela ensimbini. Uma enyathela wayezwa sengathi uyawa, kodwa isandla sikaMenzi, esifudumele nesinamandla, sasikhona ukumsingatha, simenze azizwe evikelekile.

Emva kwesikhashana, bafika endaweni eflat. “Sengingasisusa manke?” kubuza uNtombi ngesikhafu.

Isandla sikaMenzi saphebeza iminwe yakhe eyayisifuna ukuqaqa ifindo elibophe isikhafu emva kwekhanda. “Cha, hhayi okwamanje”.

Iphunga elimnandi le-aftershave kaMenzi laligcwele isikhafu sonke, uNtombi elizwa yonke indawo. Kwakusengathi uNtombi wayesongwe ngaye uMenzi. Ngaphandle kokukhanya le na le kwalokho ayezitshela ukuthi amalambu akhanyisa esitaladini, uNtombi wayengaboni lutho. Umsindo wabantu abaningi ababehla benyuka kwakumkhanyisela ukuthi babesendaweni eyayiphithizela, igcwele abantu nezingane.

Ingalo kaMenzi yamzungeza ukhalo, waholela uNtombi phambili phakathi naso leso siphithiphithi sabantu esasimthusa ngoba engakwazi ukusibona, ezwa nje ngomsindo ukuthi kugcwele abantu. Emuva kwemizuzwana, uMenzi wayese ema.

“Ngilinde la. Angiyi kude, ngizonyathela kabili noma kathathu khona la phambi kwakho”.

“Hhayi-bo! Mus’ ukung’shiya wena!”

“Ngek’ uvelelwe yilutho. Ngidinga nje uk’khuluma nalo bhuti lona”.

UNtombi wabambelela kuMenzi ngesandla sakhe esigqoke iglove, kodwa uMenzi wasisusa isandla sakhe ngesikhulu isineke waze wamdedela.

“Ungesabi Ntombi, ngeke liphele iminithi ngingakabuyi kuwe”.

UNtombi wamuzwa uMenzi enyathela kabili kathathu, weyese ezwa izwi lakhe likhulumela phansi kanye nelomunye umuntu.Uma uNtombi ezama ukusondela kuye ngokushudula izinyawo, wezwa eshayisa omunye umuntu ngomzimba.

“Ngiyaxolisa bandla” kubabaza uNtombi, engazi noma usakhuluma naye yini lowo muntu ayeqeda kumshayisa. Wayesebona kahle manje ukuthi akangalokothi anyakaze, wavese wama nse khona lapho, evumela abantu ukuthi bamdlule ngokumzungeza.

Wayesezwa ingalo kaMenzi imzungeza futhi. “Woza ngalana”.

Amatshe ayekade ewanyathela ashintsha manje kwaqina sengathi usehamba phezu kwento eyakhiwe ngensimbi. Ingabe babekuphi? Emuva kwesikhashana base bema futhi. UMenzi wamjikisa uNtombi khona ezobheka endaweni ethize.

“Lalela-ke Ntombi, kubaluleke kakhulu kabi ukuthi uma sengithi *manje*, uthathe isinyathelo esikhulu ushone phambili. Kulungile?”

UNtombi wavuma ngekhanda, esamangele namanje ukuthi ingabe kwenziwani.

“Usuready?” UNtombi waqinisela izindololwane zakhe ngasemzimbeni wakhe, izandla zakhe ezinyusile ngaphambi kwakhe ukuzivikela engozini angakwazi ngisho nokuyibona.

“Manje!”

UNtombi wavala wona lawo mehlo ayembozwe yisikhafu wayese ecishe egxumela phambili, indlela isinyathelo sakhe sasikhulu ngaso, wayesebambelelisisa kuMenzi.

“Siyanyakaza!” kubabaza yena uNtombi, wayesebambelela kakhulu futhi kuMenzi uma esezwa ukuthi lo mshini abakuwo wawunganyakazeli eceleni kuphela kodwa wawuya naphezulu!

UMenzi wahlekela phansi, embeka ukhisi esiphongweni.

“Happy Birthday, Ntombi”. UMenzi wazikhulula kuNtombi owayesambambile, waqaqa ngesineke ifindo lesikhafu wayese esisusa ekhanda lakhe.

“Usungawavula manje amehlo, sekulungile”.

UNtombi wawavula kancane amehlo akhe ayehlatshwa ugesi owawukhanya yonke indawo eduzane naye. Kukhona into ababeyigibele. Amehlo akhe ayengayiqondisisi kahle lento ayibonayo kodwa ngoba ingqondo yakhe yayisadidwe iyo yonke into ayibonayo. Ugesi…insimbi…iglasi. Konke kwase kuyamcacela…

“Sise…. Gold Reef City!”

“Wawushilo ukuthi awukaze ugibele i-ferris wheel futhi kudala ufuna ukuyigibela”.

“Waze wayisithandwa ngokukhumbula lokho!”.

Wathi ukuthula kancane uNtombi ebuka yonke into. Babegibele bobabili vo kuleli kalishi le-ferris wheel elimise okweqanda elakhiwe ngeglasi kanye nensimbi. Wayengakaze alibone iGoli lilihle kangaka. Wawungaphika nokuthi ikalishi labo liyanyakaza, kodwa kancane kancane lalinyuka liya phezulu nesibhakabhaka. Wacindezela ikhala lakhe egilasini wabukisisa isithombe sedolobha esasiphambi kwakhe.

Esenza njalo, kwaba nomsindo wokuqhuma kwebhodlela le-shampeni uma livulwa owenza ukuthi uNtombi aphenduke. UMenzi wayemamatheka ngaleyo ndlela yakhe eyayincibilikisa uNtombi inhliziyo, ethela ichampagne emaglasini amabili aleso siphuzo owawungeke ubone ukuthi uwatholephi, konke kuhambisana nebhakede lakhona eliphethe iqhwa lokupholisa isiphuzo.

“Uyenze kanjani yonke lento, Menzi?”

“Kudinge ukuthi ngihlele kahle yonke into, kodwa bekungekho ngaphezu kwamandl’ ami. Ngikutshelil’ ukuthi kungingi okusamele sikwenze khona uzozizwa ungumuntu o-special nawe”.

“Ngibona sengathi usukufezile lokho ngalobu busuku obubodwa banamuhla!”

“Ubani othe yilokhu kuphela?”

“Kusasekhona nokunye?”

“Awukakasithol’ isipho sakho”.

UNtombi wameqa uMenzi ngamehlo ebheka ibhakede eliphethe ama-ice. Kwakungekho sipho esigoqwe ngephepha elimabalabala esasime eduze nalo. Wagoba uNtombi wabuka ngaphansi kwebhentshi elaliphakathi nekalishi. Lutho.

“Siphi phona? Hhayi, mana kancane – sizofika ngebhanoyi uma leli kalishi lethu selinyukile kancane futhi nesibhakabhaka?”

Wahleka uMenzi wabe esephaphatha iphakethe lebhantshi lakhe ngasesifubeni. “Silapha isipho sakho, kodwa bengilinde ukuthi size sifike phezulu phezulu ngaphambi kokukunika sona”.

UNtombi wagwinya amathe. Kwase kuthanda ukuba nzima kuyena ukucabanga.

Kwakusobala ukuthi lesi kwakuyisipho esibalulekile kakhulu kabi. Nangu phela uMenzi ekwenza umcimbi ongaka ukumnika sona.

Futhi lesi isipho esincane kangangoba senela ephaketheni lebhantshi lakhe.

Ngeke kube…ingabe iyona?

Cha. Akukho nje konke lokho, kuziphendula uNtombi. Basanda kuqala nje ukwazana.

UMenzi wamnikeza iglasi yeshampeni wayesema eduze kwakhe khona naye ezolibona idolobha laseGoli linekiwe ngaphambi kwabo. Bengakhulumi, omunye nomunye wayeziphuzela isiphuzo sakhe, kodwa uNtombi wayengasanake lutho oluphambi kwakhe. Wayesejule ngomqondo, ezibuza eziphendula ukuthi ingabe yini mhlawumbe ecwebezela ephaketheni likaMenzi.

Kwakusengathi ikalishi lase lihamba ngonyawo lonwabu, indlela elaselihamba kancane ngayo ngaphambi kokufika phezulu ngaphambi kokuthi i-ferris wheel ingene indlela ebuyela phansi. Uma ikalishi elingaphambi kwelabo seliqala ukwehlela phansi, uMenzi waphendukela kuyena wayese embuka ezinhlamvini zamehlo.

“Ngifuna waz‘ ukuth’ akekh’ omuny’ umunt’ wesifazane engake ngahlangana naye owake wangichaza ngalendlel’ ongichaza ngayo wena Ntombi…”

UNtombi wavele waphelelwa amandla.

“Angiboni ukuthi ukhona omunye umuntu owake wathinta impilo yami ngale ndlela oyithinte ngayo wena. Yingakho-ke ngifuna ukukunika isipho esingesakho kuphela, akekho omunye umuntu onaso umhlaba wonke – into engikakaze ngiyiphe muntu”.

Amehlo kaNtombi alandela isandla sikaMenzi ngesikhathi singena ngaphakathi kwebhantshi lakhe sase singena ephaketheni elalingaphezu kwenhliziyo yakhe. Uma esesikhipha isandla sakhe, sase siphethe ibhokisi elincane le-velvet. Ibhokisi eliyisikwele. Elifanele ukuphatha indandatho.

Isandla sikaNtombi savese sandiza savala umlomo wakhe, esinye sabambisisa iglasi yakhe sengathi uyaminya futhi iglasi kuphela engase imsindise. Wayenganakile manje ukuthi ikalishi linyakaza kanjani. Kwakusengathi lavese lama ngesikhathi edonsa umoya ngamandla. Umhlaba wonke wavese wama nse ngesikhathi besantanta emoyeni ngaphezu kwedolobha elalicwebezela sengathi amadayimane.

UMenzi waphendula ibhokisi khona lizovulekela ngakuNtombi wase elivula ngesikhulu isineke, ekhombisa igugu elihle ngendlela emangalisayo…

ISAHLUKO 5

Amacici?

UNtombi wabuka uMenzi, wabona ukuthi amehlo akhe agcwele imibuzo.

Wabukusisa ibhokisi futhi khona ezoqinisekisa ukuthi lento ayibonile iyona ngempela engaphakathi nebhokisi.

Cha, wayebone kahle. Kwakuyiwona impela amacici akhandwe ngesiliva, ehlezi phezu kwekhushini yevelvet. Empeleni, kwakungamacici amahle kakhulu kabi, wayengakaze awabone amacici akhandwe ngale ndlela. Ayemfanela *ncamashi*… Ukuthi nje ayengesiwona...

“Ama…cici”.

UMenzi waswaca ebusweni. Kwakusele kancane ukuthi aveze imizwa yakhe yangempela ebusweni bakhe. “Awuwathandi?” Wanikina ikhanda. ‘Benginesiqiniseko sokuthi uzowuthanda umsebenzi wale designer, kodwa-”

“Cha, Menzi. Mahle kakhulu. Ngempela”.

UMenzi wambukisisa ebusweni.

“Yinindaba pho ubukeka sengath’ ufun’ uk’khala?”

UNtombi wabeka phansi iglasi yakhe ebhentshini, wabamba ikhanda likaMenzi ngezandla zakhe wase emqabula khona ezoyeka ukuswaca. Ngesikhathi esezizwa sengathi useqedile ukuqhaqhazela ngokweqile, wayeseqhela kuMenzi.

“Menzi. La macici mahle ngendlel’ emangalisayo. Akhekh’ umunt’ owakhe wangiph’ isiph’ esingifanela kangaka. Empeleni awangifaneli nje kuphela kodw’ angichaza min’ uqobo lwami”. Sasingekho ngisho isidingo sokuthi uNtombi aqambe amanga. Ayemfanela ncamashi. Kwakusobala ukuthi uMenzi wayecele esitolo ukuthi akhandelwe uNtombi. “Isizathu sokuthi ngikhale ukuthi nje…ave ngijabulile”.

Unyembezi lokuqala olayinini omude wezinyembezi wawusulindile ekhoneni leso likaNtombi. Ukuze alifihle ngesikhathi selehla, uNtombi wamsingatha uMenzi ngezingalo zakhe zombili, wabambelela kuye namgandla akhe onke, eqinisa ubuso khona lezi ezinye izinyembezi ezozivimba kangcono ukuthi zingehli nazo.

“Thani ngik’fake wona” kusho uMenzi.

Wahlehlela ngemuva kancane uNtombi khona ezokwazi ukukhipha lawo macici ayewagqokile, wase ewafaka ephaketheni lejazi lakhe. UMenzi wasusa elinye lamacici ebhokisini ngeminwe yakhe wase walikhomba endlebeni kaNtombi lapho kwakubhobozwe khona.

“Ashu!” Icici lalisanda kumgwaza inyama ethambile yendlebe yakhe uNtombi.

“Ngiyakulimaza”.

“Cha…mhlawumbe kancane nje. Kungaba ngcono uma ngizenzela”. UNtombi waziphoqa

ukuthi amoyizele. “Yini ngani ungangigcwaliseli iglasi yami?”

Ngesikhathi esebuya uMenzi neglasi egcwele ichampagne, womabili amacici wayesewagqokile uNtombi.

“Uyawathanda ngempela?”

UNtombi wathi ukumanga kancane uMenzi esihlathini. “Ngiyawathanda”. *Ngithanda wena.*

“Hhayi-ke…kulungile”.

Imizuzu eyishumi elandelayo bayichitha bethule du belinde ikalishi ukuthi lifike ekupheleni kwendlela. UMenzi wayebonakala ejulile ngomqondo, ekude noNtombi. Wayethemba uNtombi ukuthi uMenzi wayenganakanga ukungabaza kwakhe Ntombi ngesikhathi emvulela ibhokisi. Kwakunganamsebenzi ukuthi leli bhokisana levelvet belingaphethe lokho ayezicabangela khona ngomqondo wakhe ogijimela phambili ngokweqile. Yayingakapheli ngisho nenyanga bezwana. Bekuwubudididi nje ukuthi aze acabange ukuthi…

Empeleni wayezozihlekela nje ekuseni uma esexoxela umngane wakhe uKhethi ngaloludaba ocingweni.

Ikalishi lafika lapho liphelela khona, neminyango yavuleka. Ukungcola nomsindo. Isithombe lapha phansi sasingafani nakancane nesithombe esibonakala uma umuntu ephezulu esibhakabhakeni. Kwakusho khona ukuthi basebebuyile empilweni yangempela.

UMenzi wama phambi kwesicabha esipendwe umbala omnyama walindela ukuthi bamvulele, kodwa kwakukhona ingxenye yakhe eyayifisa sengathi uNtombi angabi bikho ekhaya, ukuthi umnyango ungavulwa yimuntu.

“Ya Menzi! La phezulu!”

UMenzi wabheka phezulu efifiyela. UNtombi wayevele ngefasitela eliku-first floor, emuhle ngendlela eyayimqeda amandla uMenzi, izinwele zakhe ziwela ebusweni bakhe futhi emamatheka kakhulu. Kwakusobala ukuthi wayejabule kakhulu ukumbona uMenzi. UMenzi yena wayezizwa njengomkhulu udoti.

UNtombi wamkhombisa iphaseji encane eyayihamba eceleni kwendlu. “Woza uzongena ngomnyango wangemuva. Ngizokuhlangabeza khona”.

Ngesikhathi uMenzi esegobele ukudlula ngaphansi kwentandela eyayithanda ukuvimba indlela wase esewufuqa umnyango wangemuva osindayo, wamthoma uNtombi esefikile ekhishini eliku-basement elikhulu, esegcwalisa amanzi eketeleni. Uthe uNtombi angamuzwa uMenzi eqhamuka ngasemnyango wavese washiya kanjalo umpompi engaquvalile, wagijimela kuMenzi khona ezoziphonsa ezingalweni zakhe.

Izindebe ezithambile zikaNtombi zathintathinta isihlathi sikaMenzi. Ukumthinta uNtombi kwakuyinto ayeyizwa sengathi iyona elungile kulezinsuku ezimbalwa ezedlule, kodwa khona manje uMenzi wayesehluleka ukuthola indawo elungileyo yokubeka izandla zakhe emzimbeni kaNtombi. Wakhetha ukuzihlehlisa aze aphume ezingalweni zikaNtombi wase ehlala phansi esitulweni ngasetafuleni lokudlela ibhulekifasi.

UNtombi wavala umpompi wayese e-onisa iketela. “Ngaze ngajabula ukuthi ugijimele ukuzong’bona nges’khathi sakho selunch”.

UMenzi wanyakanyakaza esitulweni sakhe. “Nginendaba ebalulekile okumele ngiyixoxe nawe”.

Indaba ongeke uyithande neze neze, kuzicabangela uMenzi.

“Indaba emnandi noma embi?” kubuza uNtombi.

UMenzi akaphendulanga. UNtombi, owayekade ekhipha izinkomishi ekhabetheni, wama nse eyekela lokho ebekade ekwenza, wambukisisa uMenzi. “Indaba embi, angithi?”

“Cha, empelen’ indaba enhle” kuphendula uMenzi, ezama ukumoyizela. “Ukuthi nje ngibuye ngizwe sengath’ indab’ embi”.

Wayekhuluma iqiniso uMenzi uma esho njalo. Wayengafuni ukukwenza lokho ayeze ngakho layikhaya, kodwa yayingekho enye indlela. Ubemthanda ngempela uNtombi, futhi ubenethemba lokuthi bangase baqhubeke nokubonana isikhathi eside, kodwa wayeyibonile indlela uNtombi ayebuke ngayo leliya bhokisi levelvet ngalobuya busuku khathi emkhombisa lona. Lokho kwakummangaze kakhulu kabi uMenzi.

UMenzi ubecabanga ukuthi uphephile kukho konke lokho uma enaye uNtombi. Kuyakhombisa ukungajuli komqondo wakhe ngesikhathi ehlela umcimbi wokugubha usuku lukaNtombi lokuzalwa, kodwa wayekujabulele ukubona injabulo eyayisebusweni bukaNtombi ngayo yonke into ayemtshengisa yona.

Wayeyisithutha uMenzi ukucabanga ukuthi angakwenza konke lokho ngaphandle kokwenza ukuthi uNtombi abone izinto ngelinye iso! Phela lona umuntu wesifazane esikhuluma ngaye. Futhi ngokufana nabanye abantu besifazane, wayefuna ukuthi uMenzi azinikele kuyena ngendlela eyayimhlula uMenzi. Kwakusengathi akamcasukele uNtombi ngokumenza ukuthi acishe ambone ehlukile kunabanye abesimame.

“Menzi, usuqala ukungethusa. Yini, kukhona umuntu ogulayo yini?”

“Cha, akulutho olufana nalolo. Ukuthi nje…senginesikhathi ngicabanga ngalokhu futhi sengibona sengathi isikhathi sesilungile manje…”

UNtombi wambuka uMenzi. “Sokwenzani?”

“Ngivula ihhovisi lebhizinizi lami eKenya”.

“Hhawu, izindaba ezimnandi lezo!” Wawungazifundela nje ebusweni bakhe ukuthi uNtombi uyaziqhenya ngoMenzi. Wayengave ezizwa sengathi uwudoti uMenzi ngaleso sikhathi.

“Kodwa kunenkinga encane”.

“Oh?”

“Kuzomele ngichith’ isikhath’ esiningi khon’ eKenya kulezi zinyang’ ezimbalw‘ ezizayo. Ngiyagibela nje ibhanoy’ eliya khona kusasa, ng’zobuya phakathi noJanuary kuphela”.

UNtombi wavese wadumala. “Ngek’ uz’ ubuye ngisho nangoKhisimuzi?”

“Cha. Mhlawumbe uMama noMpumi bangase beze bazovakasha, kodwa mina ngeke ngibuye”.

“Manje…mina ngizokubona nini?”

“Yilokh’ ebengifuna ukuk’xoxa nawe”.UMenzi wabuka isandla sakhe esasesiyinqindi, waziphoqa ukuthi aneke iminwe yakhe phezu kwetafula. Ukubheka uNtombi emehlweni kwavese kwaba lukhuni kabi ngokweqile. Wake waba nazo izingxoxo ezifana nalezi ngaphambilini, kodwa akakaze azizwe engaphathekile kahle ngale ndlela. Wadonsa umoya kakhulu wase eqondisa amahlombe akhe. Ngeke asakwazi ukuba yigwala manje. “Ngeke ngibe naso isikhath’ esiningi seziny’ izinto ngaphandle kokuba sehhovisini kula maviki azayo, yingakho ngibona sengathi kungcono sith’ ukuyek’ ukubonana okwes’khashana”.

UNtombi wavele wakhamisa ukumangala, waye esedonsa umoya ngamandla eqhelise amehlo akhe kuMenzi. Hhayi-ke Ntombi, ubungakulindele nhlobo lokhu! wayezicabangela.

“Ingabe sikhuluma ngesikhashana eside kangakanani?”

Kungcono ngimzwise ubuhlungu obuncane manje khona ngingeke ngimuzwise obukhulu kunaloku ngokuhamba kwesikhathi, kuzicabangela uMenzi.

“Ngibona kungcono s’vese s’yeke uk’bonana. Ukuthandana kwabantu ababili abangahlali ezweni elilodwa ak’sebenzi”.

“Kungasebenza uma labo bantu befuna. Futhi ngek’ uhamb’ ingunaphakade. Kunocingo, kune-email…” Izwi lakhe laphelela endleleni. “Oh, ngiyabona. Ngaze ngayisithutha. Umtheth’wakho uqond’ ukung’lahla”.

“Ngi-”

“Sal’ usuyeka. Ng’yakwaz’ ukuyibona lenhlobo yengxoxo ngish’ ingakasondeli kimi. Zining’ izikhathi laph’ engayizwa khona, sengiyakwazi nokwehlukanisa okuyiyona eqotho kunaley’ eyiwumbhedo”.

UMenzi wayengazi ukuthi kumele athini. Okukodwa nje ayengakwenza ukubuka uNtombi ebusweni owayecasuke egane unwabu, uMenzi yena isisu sakhe sibe silokhu sibophene ukukhathazeka.

“Sithini isizathu sangempela?” kubuza uNtombi.

“Ngizobe nginomsebenzi omningi-”

UNtombi weza ngakuMenzi, wazineka phezu kwetafula elalibahlukanisile khona ezombuka ezinhlamvini zamehlo. “Ngifun’ iqiniso”.

UMenzi wambuka emehlweni akhe amahle ansundu. Wayeqinisile uNtombi. Kwakungamele azame ukumkhohlisa ngento engesilona iqino. Empeleni wayengalinda izinyanga ezimbalwa ngaphambi kokuvula ihhovisi laseKenya, ngisho nalapho sasingekho kangako isidingo sokuthi ahambe isikhathi eside.

“U-sure ukuth’ ufun’ iqiniso ngempela?”

“Ngi-sure”.

“Ngek’ uz’ ulithande”.

“Anginendaba. Kumele libe ngcono kunokuhlala lapha ngilokhu ngizibuza ngiziphendula. Bengithi kukhon’ esikwakhayo phakathi kwethu, mina nawe. Into ebalulekile”.

“Kukhona- bekukhona. Kodwa ngeke kusasebenza. Kungcono sivele siyeke khona manje ngaphambi kokuthi kube khona ozwiseka ubuhlungu”.

Amehlo kaNtombi athi ukufifiyela kancane, waziluma udebe wayese enikina ikhanda.

Kulungile-ke, kucabaga uMenzi, ukusho lokho bekungakhaliphanga. UNtombi yena vese uselimazekile.UMenzi ubesekwazi lokho. Yingakho ayemlahla ngalendlela uNtombi, khona ezoqinisekisa ukuthi akamzwisi ubuhlungu ngaphezu kwalokho okudingekayo.Yize noma kunjalo, lokhu kuhlukana nomuntu kwakunzima nakuyena uMenzi ngendlela elinganayo noNtombi. Uma esehamba lapha, ngeke ahambise njengomuntu ongashiyanga lutho emuva. Wayezomkhumbula ngempela uNtombi – indlela ayekujabulela ngayo ubumnandi, indlela ayengumuntu ofudumele ngayo, indlela ayemukela ngayo abantu, indlela owawuzwa sengathi uhlale ufunda into entsha ngaye ngaso sonke isikhathi.

Yileyo into eyayenza ukuthi uMenzi azi ukuthi yini indaba kube nzima kangaka ukuhlukana naye ngale ndlela. Wayengakaze azizwe kanjena ngomunye umuntu ngaphambilini, ngisho noma esathandana noThembi. Wayengakaze ayicabange nokuyicabanga nje into yokuthi kukhona omunye umuntu wesifazane lapha emhlabeni omfanelayo ncamashi uMenzi. Kodwa manje wayelapha, eme phambi kwakhe, okwakwenza kube nzima kakhulu ukwehlukana naye. Kwakulula ukuphila impilo yokuzikhohlisa ukuthi akakholelwa ezinganekwaneni, kodwa kwakungelula ukuhlukana noNtombi azi kahle ukuthi ukuba izinto zazime ngenye indlela – ukuba yena Menzi wayekhandwe ngenye indlela – wayengayithola yonke injabulo ekhona emhlabeni.

Engqondweni yakhe uMenzi wayelokhu ezitshela ukuthi: ukuba nje wayekholelwa ezinganekwaneni. Ukuba nje wayezokwazi ukumthokozisa okwangempela. Ukuba nje…

UNtombi wayefuna iqiniso? Makalithole-ke. Ngisho noma ezizwa sengathi unqunu emuva kokumtshela lona. Okunani akamshiye nalokho.

“Ubucabanga ukuthi kukhona enye into kuleliya bhokisi levelvet, angithi?”

Umlomo kaNtombi waqala ukubumba amazwi okuphika, kodwa akazange awaphimise lawo magama. Esikhundleni, wadedela umphefumulo owayekade esewubambile. Igazi lagijimela ezihlathini zakhe, wagqolozela phansi.

“Manje kukubi ngaleyo ndlela yini lokho?”

“Cha. Ukuthi nje…” Yayimangalisa uMenzi indlela ayehalela ngayo ukudonsela uNtombi ngakuye, amsingathe ngezingalo zakhe bese emtshela ukuthi yonke into izolunga. Kodwa wayengakwazi ukukwenza konke lokho. Ayikho into eyayiyophinde ilunge phakathi kwabo bobabili. “Angisiyona leyo nhlobo yomuntu oshadayo mina, Ntombi. Anginakho kimina ukufun’ uk’shada”.

Wawumbona kubhalwe ebusweni ukuthi uthukile uNtombi, kusengathi akakaze akucabange ukuthi akusiyena wonke umuntu owayefisa ukuhlangana nalowo muntu omfanelayo.

“Uzokwazi kanjani uma ungazami?” Izwi lakhe laliphansi futhi liqhaqhazela. Wayebona uMenzi ukuthi kumthatha sonke isibindi sakhe ukuthi ambuze lowo mbuzo.

“Ngiyazi. Ngeke kulunge ukuthi siqhubeke”.

UNtombi wamboza umlomo wakhe nesandla. Unyembezi olulodwa lwazehlela esihlathini sakhe.

“Beng’cabanga ukuthi nginakho kimina ukuzinikela ekuthandeni umuntu oyedwa impilo yami yonke, akhekho omunye umuntu engike ngazizwa sengathi ngihalela ukuzinikela kuyena ukwedlula wena -”

“Yima lapho!” Izwi likaNtombi lalihlephuka, wadonsisisa umoya ngaphambi kokuqhubeka nokukhuluma. “Angisafun’ ukuzwa luth’ okunye”.

UNtombi waqonda kumnyango wamvulela wona uMenzi. Wathi ukungabaza kancane uMenzi, wayesebona ukuthi kungcono ahambe njengoba uNtombi ayesemcela ukuthi ahambe. Yayingekho enye into ayengase ayenze ukulungisa izinto. UNtombi akazange aphenduke ambuke uMenzi. Uma esedlula ngakuye, uMenzi wamqabula kancane esihlathini, ethembela ukuthi lokho kuyomxolisela ngendlela ayefisa ukuxolisa ngayo. UNtombi wavalisisa amehlo akhe ngesikhathi izinyembezi sezithi wu zigobhozela ebusweni bakhe.

UMenzi waphuma emnyango ephumela ngaphandle lapho ilanga lalikhanya kancane. Umnyango lowo wakhahlazwa emuva kwakhe, futhi uma esenyuka iphaseji leyo encane, wamuzwa uNtombi ekhala emuva kwakhe.

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Emuva kwe-hour lonke, umculo wawusaduma. UNtando wayecula amaculo akhe ambalwa, uNtombi yena kuthi akakhale njengengane encane abayiphuce ingubo yayo yokulala. Waphusha indlela kule nqwaba yabantu waze wafinyelela ku-bar yeziphuzo ezingenatshwala, lapho wathola khona ibhodlela lamanzi. Kwase kuthi, uma esezama ukuphuma kuleso siminyaminya sabantu, wazithola ebhekene ngqo naleyo ndoda ayekade ezama ngawo wonke amandla akhe ukungahlangani nayo.

Kwakufanele ngani ukuthi abe muhle kangaka uMenzi? kuzibuza uNtombi. Kutheni engamilanga elinye ikhanda noma avese aqubuke nje amathumba umzimba wonke kulezi zinyanga ezimbili ezedlule?

“Sawubona Ntombi”. Kwakulula ukufunda umlomo kaMenzi uma esho lokho khona uNtombi ezoqonda ukuthi uthini.

Sawubona, siphukuphuku-ndini.

“Sawubona Menzi”, waphendula ememeza uNtombi.

UMenzi washo okunye kodwa kwakunzima ukumuzwa ukuthi uthini ngenza yomculo owawudlalela phezulu.

“Angizwanga?”

UMenzi wasondela ngasendlebeni kaNtombi khona ezokwazi ukumuzwa ukuthi uthini. Emuva kwamasonto ayi-8 nezinsuku ezinhlanu bengaxhumani, ukuba seduze kangaka noMenzi kwakumxegisa amadolo uNtombi. Umphefumulo kaMenzi wawumfudumeza isihlathi sakhe kuphela, kodwa wayenuka kamnandi! Wayenuka njengeshethi elisanda kuwashwa, kuxutshwe ne-aftershave khona khona lapho.

“Unjani?”

Kwakukuhle ukuthi imibuzo kaMenzi yayingathe shu okufana nezimpendulo ezazigcwele ikhanda lakhe uNtombi. UMenzi wayesondele kakhulu kuye, wayengakwazi ngisho nokucabanga into ehlakaniphile angayiphendula ayisho. Wayengajabula nje ukuthi uma enyakazisa umlomo wakhe kuphume izwi lakhe.

“Ngikhona. Wena?”

“Nami”.

Wayengakaze uNtombi abone uMenzi ephatheke kabi kangaka.

‘Asikwazi ukuxoxa lapha”. Izwi likaMenzi lase linomsindo endlebeni yakhe, wahlehlela emuva kancane uNtombi.

“Ubani othe kusasekhon’ esingaxoxa ngakho mina nawe?”

UNtombi wambuka uMenzi ngendlela ayethemba ukuthi imkhombisa ukungabi nandaba naye okukhulu, wayeseqhubeka nokuphusha indlela esiminyaminyeni eya kwelinye icala legumbi. Wavula isivalo sebhodlela lakhe lamanzi, wawaphuza kancane.

“Angithand’ uk’shiy’ izinto zingale ndlela phakathi kwam’ nawe”. Base beqhele ezipikheni ngokwanele ukuthi amuzwe uNtombi ukuthi uMenzi umemeza uthini.

Kwakumele avese abone ukuthi ngeke uMenzi ayishiye phansi kakula yonke lento. Ngelinye icala, wayekade efuna uNtombi ukuthi uMenzi amlandele, wayefuna ithuba lokumthethisa khona ezokukhiphela kuye konke ukucasuka kwakhe. Zonke izingxoxo phakathi kwabo bobabili ayelokhu ezicabanga engqondweni yakhe kusukela ngoKhisimuzi zase zisofezeka manje. Mhlawumbe lawo magama ayefisa ukuwasho asezoyeka ukumzungeza ekhanda sonke isikhathi.

Wavala isivalo sebhodlela lakhe, waqinisisa ngale ndlela yokuthi wazilimaza iminwe. “Ngicel’ uyek’ ukwenza sengath’ unendaba nami, Menzi. Uwen’ owath’ asihlukane, angith’ uyakhumbula? Ngicel’ ujabule nje ukuthi ngiyaqhubeka nempilo yami esikhundleni sokukubangel’ isicefe”.

“Uqhubeka nempilo yakho?” Wajeqeza uKevin ngamehlo kanye nenqwaba yamantombazane ayezama ukufinyelela kuye esteji. “Uyazi ukuthi akusikhona ukuthi ngangingakuthandi –”

UNtombi waphakamisa isilevu wayesenweba izindebe zakhe sengathi uyamoyizela. “Tshela umuntu onendaba ngalokho, Zenzele”.

Indlela uMenzi ahlafuna ngayo umhlathi, uNtombi wayecabanga ukuthi uzoqhephuka amazinyo. Lento ayishilo kukhona lapho imthunuke khona uMenzi. Kwakuhle lokho!

“Awuve ukhohlakele, uyakwazi lokho, Menzi?”

UNtombi wayengafunga ukuthi wayelizwa igazi likaMenzi libiliswa yilamagama akhe. Noma mhlawumbe kwakuwumculo kaKevin owawusadlala ngamandla.

“*Mina*? Ngikhohlakele?”

“Yebo, wen’ impela. Ubukeka sengathi uyindod’ eqotho, enesimilo, kodwa –” izwi lakhe lase liqala ukuntswininiza, “kodwa ngaphansi kwakho konke lokho ufana ncamashi nabo bonke abany’ abantu besilisa abesaba ukuzinikezel’ ekuthanden’ umuntu oyedwa!” Waqeda inkulumo yakhe uNtombi wangabe esanyakaza.

Wonke umuntu egumbini wayebabuka. Babebuka yena Ntombi. Kanti nomculo wawusuphelile. Ngesikhathi umlomo wakhe usanyakaza uNtombi ezibuza ukuthi angancibilika kanjani avese angabi ilutho, uMenzi wambamba ngengalo wamdonsela ngasemnyango abaphuma ngawo.

Sasingasekho isidingo sokuthi amemeze ngaphandle. Indlela ayekhuluma ngayo sengathi uyahleba yayenza umonakalo omkhulu ngokweqile. Ukuzethemba kukaNtombi kwavese kwanyamalala.

“Angikaze ngithi kuwe ngiyint’ engingasiyona. Kumele senzeni thina bantu besilisa? Sigqoke isayini esiphongweni ethi “Umyeni Olungile”? Uwena owazifikela kuleyo mibono yakho yokuthi sizophila kamnandi impilo yethu yonke, wena wedwa ngokwakho. Uwen’ owazibonela lokh’ owawufun’ ukukubona”.

Amagama agcwala umlomo kuNtombi kodwa wavese waphelelwa umdlandla ngaphambi kokuwaphimisa onke. Wayengase athini vese? UMenzi wamoyizela, kodwa hhayi ngendlela uNtombi ayeyijwayele eyayimncibilikisa inhliziyo. Manje wayemoyizela ngendlela ebandayo, kodwa izwi lakhe laqhubeka nokuphuma ngokwejwayelekile. UNtombi wafikelwa ukumzonda uMenzi ukuthi yena akwazi ukukhuluma ngesikhathi yena Ntombi ekwazi ukuntswininiza nokumemeza kuphela.

“Hhayi-ke, kusobal’ ukuthi *usuqhubekele* emadlelwen’ angcono noma mhlawumb’ angith’ endaweni yokuzingela engcono? Angethemb’ ukuthi lomlisa wabant’ uyaz’ ukuthi’ uzifak’ esimeni esinjani”.

“We silima somunt’ esizitshelayo –” waphelela lapho uNtombi ngaphambi kokuba asho into engamfanele njengomuntu wesifazane. “Yin’ ewrong uma umunt’ efun’ umyeni nezingane? Akusikho yini khona lokho okufunwa yiwo wonk’ umuntu – uthando nenjabulo?”

UMenzi wayekela lapho ukumoyizela, wabonakala sengathi useyazisola.

Konke ukucasuka kwavele kwaphela khona lapho kuNtombi. Yingani kungabanga uMenzi omfanele yena Ntombi? Impilo yayingekho fair! Wadonsa umoya, wazama ukufihla umlomo wakhe owawusuqhaqhazela ngokugobisa ikhanda.

Ngesikhulu isineke, uMenzi wamphakamisa ikhanda ngokuphakamisa isilevu sikaNtombi ngomunwe wakhe. “Asingabe sisakulwisa lokh’ esikuzwayo. Sizichithel’ isikhathi. Bengike ngakutshela phambilini Ntombi ukuth’ akekh’ omuny’ umunt’ ofana nawe. Uqinisile, kumele uluthole lolo thando nenjabul’ oyifunayo.

Hhayi-ke, lokhu kwase kuba worse. Wayengammela uMenzi uma emcasukele, kodwa ukuthi amhawukele…?

“Kodwa hhayi nawe”.

“Cha”.

“Ngobani?” Uma ezozihlaza, kungcono avese azihlaze ngenhliziyo yakhe yonke.

“Ngeke ngikuthokozise. Ngingakuphul’ inhliziyo".

Too late. Kudala sekuvese sekwenzekile lokho.

“Wazi kanjani um’ ungazami ngisho nokuzama?”

“Ngake ngazama ngaphambilini. Yonke into yavese yamoshakala. Angifun’ ukuphinda ngimoshe impilo yomuny’ umuntu ngaleyo ndlela”.

Isisu sikaNtombi savese sabophana nje uma ecabanga uMenzi enomunye umuntu, ethanda omunye umuntu. Okusho ukuthi uyakwazi ukuzinikela kumuntu, inkinga nje ukuzinikela kuNtombi.

“Hhayi-ke, akukh’ okuning’ engingakush’ emuva kwalokho” kuphendula uNtombi.

UMenzi wazinwaya ikhanda. “Uyaz’ ukuthini, ngizobe ngi-off emsebenzin’ isikhashana kuleli sonto khona ngizokwaz’ ukusiza ngamanye alamaworkshops. Uma kumele sisebenze ndawonye kuzomele sithol’ indlela yokuzwana”.

UNtombi wavuma ngekhanda. Wayeqinisile uMenzi, okwakwenza uNtombi afune ukumfaka inqindi – yini eyayenza uMenzi akhulume into enengqondo nezwakalayo ngesikhathi yena Ntombi inhliziyo yakhe ibe iqhephuka ngaphakathi?

“Kulungile. Siyavumelana”. UNtombi wamnika uMenzi isandla sakhe khona bezoxhawulana phezu kwesivumelwano sabo, naye uMenzi wasithatha, kodwa esikhundleni sokusixhawula wavese wama nje esibuka, isandla sakhe sibe sishisa esikaNtombi sengathi uzophuma amabhamuza. UMenzi wayesenyakazisa isithupha sakhe phezu kwesandla sikaNtombi, kwafana nokuthi kukhona omshoke ngogesi.

Bobabili baqhubeka nokubhekana nezandla zabo.

Naye uMenzi wayewuzwile lowo gesi. Ngisho noma angakhuluma into esile kangakanani, naye wayehluleka ukuziba lento eyayikhona phakathi kwabo njengoba naye uNtombi wayehluleka. Uma embuka emehlweni, uNtombi walibona lelo qiniso libhalwe khona emehlweni akhe uMenzi ngesikhathi esondeza ubuso bakhe kuNtombi khona ezomqabula.

UNtombi wayazi kahle ukuthi kumele amfuqe uMenzi ukumqhelisa kuye, kodwa esikhundleni salokho isandla sakhe esasizihlalele esifubeni sikaMenzi kunokuba simfuqe, savese sanyuka ukuyomsonga intamo, samdonsela ngakuye.

Sebeqalile ukuqabulana, kwakusengathi abasakwazi ukuphinde bayeke. Zaziningi izikhathi lapho ayekade emqabule khona uMenzi ngalesiya sikhashana besajola, kodwa kulokhu kwakehlukile. Kwakukhona indlala kanye nokuphelelwa yithemba endleni ayemqabula ngayo okwakungaze kube khona ngaphambilini. Wamqabula okwendoda eminzayo edinga umoya, sengathi udinga ukumqabula khona ezokwazi ukuphila. Isilima senhliziyo yakhe sazigxumela uma ekubona lokho.

UMenzi owaziqhelisa kuqala. UNtombi wabeka ikhanda lakhe ehlombeni likaMenzi, amehlo esawavalile, esamnambitha ezindebeni zakhe ngolimi lwakhe. Isibindi sokuvula amehlo ambuke uMenzi ebusweni savese sanyamalala.

“Ng’yaxolisa Ntombi, bekungamele ngikwenze lokho. Bekuyiphuth’ ukuthi…”

Izwi likaMenzi laligcwele ukuzisola. UNtombi wayefisa sengathi umhlaba ungavese uvuleke phansi kwakhe bese uyamgwinya.

“Ebengizama ukukusho…ngaphambilini…ukuthi kumele sizame ukuphilisana- njengabangani”.

Oh, Nkosi! Yingani uMenzi kumele abe yisilima kangaka? kuzibuza uNtombi.

Yize noma kunjalo, uNtombi wavuma ngekhanda, wavula amehlo wase egqolozela isifuba sikaMenzi ngokuzimisela. Isandla sakhe sasisahlezi phezu kwesifuba sikaMenzi. Wasihlwitha isandla sakhe uNtombi.

“Yebo. Abangani”.

UMenzi wayesephenduka ebuyela ngaphakathi, emshiya uNtombi ngaphandle esancike odongeni ezibuza ukuthi yingani ebenganakanga ngaphambilini ukuthi kubanda kangakanani lapha ngaphandle.

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Isithombe sakhe uNtombi ayesibona kumnyago weglasi werestoranti sasingamjabulisi. Izinwele zakhe kwakungathi zilele phansi ngokolunye uhlangothi, bese kuthi ngolunye uhlangothi zibe zimile zibheke phezulu sengathi akazikamile. Iminwe yakhe yabamba isibambo somnyango. Kwakungathi kwedlule ikhulu leminyaka kusukela esikhathini sokugcina emi lapha elindele ukuhlangana nomunye umuntu ayengamazi.

Kodwa lokhu kwanamhlanje kwakungasho lutho olutheni. Wayengeke aphinde ambone futhi lomuntu ayeze ukuzohlangana naye. UNtombi wayelapha nje ukuzozifundisa isifundo esisodwa – ukuzikhombisa ukuthi lisasekhona ithemba lekusasa mayelana nezothando.

“Manj’ uzoma laph’ ubusuku bonke yini, wesisi?”

Wethuka uNtombi, neminwe yakhe yadedela isibambo somnyango sengathi besivutha bhe.

“Ngiyaxolisa”, kwasholo phansi uNtombi, engayibuki nokuyibuka lendoda eyamgudluza endleleni isingena eMoyos.

Phaphama ntombazana!

UNtombi wangena naye phakathi ngaphambi kokuthi umnyango uvaleke, waqonda e-bar.

“Sawubona Zweli”.

“Ya muntuza!” Amehlo kaZweli ayebhalwe ukujabula ngokubona uNtombi. “Uzofun’ uthando futhi?”

UNtombi wavese wangamnaka. “Unjani uMaria?”

“Usaphila. Usasengemuva okwamanje. Ngabe ngiyahamba ngiyomlanda kodwa manj’ asifun’ isoka lakho likulinde isikhath’ eside, angithi?”

“Akasilon’ *isoka* lami”.

UZweli wavele wamoyizela.

Leya ndoda eyayimgudluze endleni ngenkathi ingena yalanda amaphakethe amabili kuMarco, umpheki wale restoranti –owacifela uNtombi iso – yaphinde yamedlula futhi isiphuma. Okunani akusiyona idate yakhe. Wayengafuni ngisho nokucabanga ukuthi bekuzoba mnandi kangakanani lokho uNtombi!

UZweli wamholela egumbini elikhulu lerestoranti. Wajika ekhoneni uNtombi wase ema nse.

“Akunamuntu!”

UZweli wahleka emva kwakhe. Waphenduka uNtombi efuna ukumbuka ebusweni.

“UMgqibelo ebusuku namhlanje. Kufanele ngabe kugcwele abantu lapha”, kubabaza uNtombi.

UZweli waqhikiza amahlombe. “Isoka lakho lithe lithanda kube yini nobabili kuphela”.

Hhayi-ke, kwakuhle ke lokho! Idate lokuqala nomuntu othanda ukubukisa. Amehlo kaNtombi abuka irestoranti yonke ecabanga ukuthi kungamthatha imizuzu emingaki ukufinyelela emnyango uma kwenzeka ukuthi izinto zingahambi kahle.

“Uphi-ke?” Ngesikhathi ethi irestoranti yayinganamuntu, wayekade engadlali.

UZweli wamholela etafuleni – itafula elithandwa uNtombi kunawo wonke amanye lapha, lapho ayehlale khona ngaloluya suku ngesikhathi elinde uMenzi.

“Ngicela ukuhlala kwelinye itafula”.

UZweli wanikina ikhanda.

“Kodwa akunamuntu njena! Kufanele ukuthi akwenzi mehluko?”

“Lo bhuti uthe ufuna noma kanjani uhlale lapha”. UZweli wamkhiphela isitulo uNtombi wavese wazilahla kusona, eswacile ebusweni. Wayesahlezi kanjalo ngesikhathi uZweli ebuya ephethe amaglasi amabili echampagne.

Kwakungathembisi konke lokhu. Wayengakamboni ngisho nokumbona lomuntu wesilisa kodwa wayeseqalile ukumcika. Sengathi wayezitshela kakhulu nje!

“Uphi-ke lo Mr Wonderful wakho?”

UZweli wamcifela iso wase ephendukela kuMaria owayesemi ngemuva kwebar, amehlo akhe ecwebezela sengathi uzokhala inoma inini.

UNtombi waphusha iglasi leshampeni eyisusa eduze kwakhe. “Ngicel’ ungilethel’ iglasi yamanzi, Zweli”. UNtombi wayezimisele ukungaphuzi lutho olunotshwala ngaphambi kokwazi ukuthi ubani lona azohlangana naye. UZweli waphinde wanyamalala, uNtombi wasala ebuka indwangu emboze itafula. Le date yakhe kwakusobala ukuthi yayifuna ukukwenza umcimbi omkhulu ukungena kwayo, futhi lokho kwakungamthokozisi uNtombi. Kwakutshengisa ukuthi lona umuntu wesilisa ozitshelayo. Into yokugcina uNtombi ayeyidinga empilweni yakhe ukwazana nomuntu wesilisa onehaba.

UNtombi wadlalisa umunwe wakhe elandela imidwebo ekulendwangu yetafula. UZweli wayehambe isikhathi eside bo ukuyolanda amanzi akhe. UNtombi wazama ukumbona ukuthi wenzani kangaka kodwa wayengayiboni kahle i-bar yonke, futhi uZweli noMaria babengasabonakali ndawo.

Wayeqagela kodwa ukuthi akakude kakhulu, ngoba lokhu kuthula okungajwayelekile okungaka lapha erestoranti kwaphela ngesikhathi sekudlala umculo omnandi, opholile, owenza ukuthi uNtombi azizwe ekhululekile kunasekuqaleni. Wamoyizela uNtombi ngesikhathi ezicabangela ukuthi mhlawumbe le-date yakhe izogxuma iphume ekhekheni elikhulu ngesikhathi umculo

usudlale waze wafika lapho onamandla kakhulu khona. Kwakukhona into ngalobu busuku obabumenza azizwe sengathi uyaphupha.

Oh-ho. Waziphuzela kancane ishampeni yakhe – enziwa ukuthi uswele into angase ayenze. Mmm, yamnandi ichampagne, mhlawumbe akaphuze futhi kancane nje.

Wamoyizela uNtombi wabeka phansi iglasi yakhe. Lowo muntu oculalo…izwi lakhe lifana njengo…Ntando! Izwi likaNtando lelo, noma kungathiwani! Ingabe kwenzakalani…?

Watshekisa ikhanda lakhe kancane khona ezolalela kangcono. Uculani uNtando? Ucula ngokusaba ukuthanda intombazane ethize ngenhliziyo yakhe yonke. Lalimnandi iculo, lixoxa ngendaba ebuhlungu yabantu abaphuthelwa uthando namathuba okuluthola. Wazama ngawo wonke amandla uNtombi ukuthi amehlo akhe angagcwali izinyembezi. Ubulima bodwa nje lobu, kodwa leli culo lalimkhumbuza ngakho konke okumoshekile phakathi kwakhe noMenzi, sengathi likhuluma ngodaba lwabo bobabili.

Uma sekuphele ikhorasi, uNtombi wazithethisa kancane. Ngeke kulunge ukuthi abe enamehlo abomvu uma sekufika uMr Right wakhe. Wazesula izinyembezi ngomunwe, wadonsa umoya.

Kuwo wona lowomzuzu, wavese washaywa uvalo olukhulu uNtombi.

Kwakungasilona izwi eliculayo kuphela ayelaziyo; wayazi ngisho neculo uqobo lwalo! Kwakuyiculo likaMenzi! Leliya culo ayemdlalele lona ngesikhathi emphekele isupper endlini yakhe. Kube nzima nje ekuqaleni ukuthi azwe ukuthi yilo ngoba bese kuxutshwe namanye ama-instruments kanye namanye amazwi aculayo ndawonye, konke okwenza ukuthi iculo lizwakale sengathi seliphelele.

Manje uNtando wayesecula ngokuthi wayefuna ukumthanda ingunaphakade, ukumbambela eduze angaphinde amdedele ukuthi amshiye.

Izinyembezi zase zizigobhozela manje ebusweni bakhe, kodwa uNtombi wayejule kakhulu kuleli culo kunokuthi akhumbule ukuzisula. Amanothi okugcina eculo adlala, lase liyaphela kancane kancane. Isandla sakhe sazama ukubamba iglasi yakhe kodwa iminwe yakhe yayiqhaqhazela kakhulu ukuthi akwazi ukulibamba.

“Ngiliqedile iculo”.

Ikhanda likaNtombi lathi hluku ephakamisa ikhanda, wayesebona uMenzi phambi kwakhe –. Wabambelela etafuleni, enesiqinisekiso sokuthi umhlaba uyazamazama.

“Ngithole ukuth’ into ebengiyidinga nje umdlandl’ omncane”. Wayesondela ngakuye uMenzi ebonakala ukuthi uzama ukumoyizela kodwa ukudikizela kancane kweso lakhe kukhombisa ukuthi inzima kabi kuyena lento ayenzayo. “*Uwena* Ntombenhle onginika umdlandla. Bengidinga *wena* ukuthi ngilenze liphelele”. Wafika uMenzi etafuleni wahlala phansi ebhekene

noNtombi, sonke isikhathi embuke ezinhlamvini zamehlo. Kwakumele azikhumbuze ngaso sonke isikhathi uNtombi ukuthi kumele aphufumule.

UMenzi wathatha isandla sakhe. “Ngidinga wena ukuthi ungenze *mina* nami ngiphelele”.

Hhayi-ke, uma esesho njalo, izinyembezi kwaba sengathi kukhona ovule umpompi wazo. Amehlo awumbala onsundu okhanyayo kaMenzi ayesho zonke izinto ebekudala uNtombi ayefuna azisho nayefisa ukuzibona kuwona. Wadonsa indwangu yokusula umlomo eyayiphambi kwakhe eyayigoqwe isimanga, efuna ukuzimboza ubuso nyago.

Kwaba khona into endizayo uma evula le ndwangu, yawela ethangeni likaNtombi. Iminwe yakhe yasondela ngakuyo. Wabuka uMenzi, owavese wagwinya amathe.

Iminwe yakhe yathinta ivelvet. Uma eyibamba leyonto eyisusa ngaphansi kwetafula khona ezoyibona kahle ekukhanyeni, wathola ukuthi ibhokisi levelvet elifana njengaleliya lasekuqaleni. UNtombi wayebuka ibhokisi ngesikhathi esenaka ukuthi uMenzi wayesesukile lapho ebekade ehleli khona. Wayeseme eduze naye manje, kodwa engamthinti. Uma embuka uMenzi, wathola ukuthi kanti useguqe phansi ngedolo elilodwa.

UNtombi wavele waqala ukuqhaqhazela, nebhokisi lelo laphunyuka eminweni yakhe. UMenzi wayekulindele konke lokhu. Walibamba ibhokisi lingakawi, waliphendula khona lizobheka ngakuNtombi. Amehlo kaNtombi kwangathi ayakhukhumala ngesikhathi uMenzi elivula.

Ngaphakathi kwakukhona indandatho emangalisayo. Yayinetshe le-emerald elalisikwe isikwele, likakwe amadayimande bese indandatho yona yayakhiwe ngegolide elimhlophe. UNtombi wayeyibona njengendandatho enhle ukudlula zonke ezinye ezake zakhandwa umhlaba wonke jikelele.

Ubuso bukaMenzi kwaba sengathi buyaphasha nje kancane. “Ntombenhle – ngicela ungishade?”

Wayiphakamisa indandatho kukhushini wevelvet ebikade ihleli kuwo, wayibambela eduze nomunwe kaNtombi elinde impendulo yakhe.

Ulimi lukaNtombi lwagcina ngokukhumbula ukuthi kanti kumele lwenzeni! “Kodwa awungifuni nje!”

“Akukho munt’ engimfunayo emhlabeni wonke ukwedlul’ indlel’ engikufuna ngayo wena”.

UNtombi wanikina ikhanda. “Wangishiya”.

Amehlo kaMenzi agcwala ukuzisola. “Ngiyaxolisa”. Wayese esula uNtombi izinyembezi ngesithupha sakhe. “Ngangithi ngenz’ int’ elungile, kodw’ empeleni bengiyis’phukuphuku nje kuphela. Bengithi kungcono ngikusindise kumina. Bengaz’ ukuthi wen’ ubukufuna konke,

umshado nezingane, futhi bengingakwaz' ukukuphuca lelo phupho lakho, yingakho ke ngavele ngakhetha ukuk'shiya".

"Kodwa manj' usubuyile".

"Yebo. Ngibuyel' ukuzohlala naw' ingunaphakade – uma uzongivumela".

Uma uNtombi ubecabanga ukuthi inhliziyo yakhe ishaya ngesivinini esikhulu ngokweqile, manje yavese yasinyusa leso sivinini kwangathi sizovese siqhume isifuba.

"Bengith' *awuyenzi* wena leyo nhlobo yento".

"Ngiyenzela wena kuphela".

UNtombi wanikina ikhanda. Yonke lento manje yayisingaphezu kwamandla akhe.Wayefuna ngempela ukumethemba uMenzi kodwa zimbili izikhathi lapho uMenzi wayekade emlahlile ngazo ngaphambilini.

"Ngicel' ungibuke Ntombi".

Amehlo kaMenzi ansundu ayekhombisa ukuzimisela kwakhe. Kwakungathi umbona ingaphakathi lakhe uMenzi, futhi kungekho kungabaza noma ukuzithandabuza kuyena. "Ngikuthanda ngendlel' engingakaze ngithand' omuny' umuntu ngayo. Ngifun' ukuthi mina nawe sibe ndawony' iminyaka engu-50 elandelayo…noma engu-60 noma 70. Ngifuna sixabanel' ukuth' uban' ophethe iremote yetv noma ukuthi sekuyigemu likaban' ukushintsh' ingan' inabukeni. Ngifun' ungikhumbuze ukuth' amafalse teeth ami ngiwabeke kuphi uma sesigugile. Ngicel' ungishade. Vuma phela".

Wacwayiza uNtombi, engakwazi ukukholwa ukuthi yonke lento yenzeka ngempela. Kungcono avese aphendule, leli phupho elimnandi kangaka lingakanyamalali.

"Yebo. Yebo, ngizokushada – Zenzele.

Wayelindele ukuthi uMenzi athunukale njengoba eseqonda uNtombi manje ukuthi kungani engalithandi leligama lakhe, kodwa uyena Menzi owayeqale lengxoxo engemnandi yamagama abo. Wavese wazihlekela uMenzi, ebe emfaka indandatho ngaso leso sikhathi. Indandatho yazihlalela kamnandi khona, sengathi umunwe wakhe wawudalelwe ukugqoka yona nje kuphela.

Emuva kwalokho bazithola sebemile, uNtombi esezingalweni zikaMenzi, izindebe zikaMenzi zicindezeleke kwezakhe, wabona uNtombi ukuthi uzovese aquleke indlela ayejabule ngayo.

Kuthe khona lapho, kancane kancane, uNtombi waqala ukuzwa eminye imisindo khona lapho ababekhona: abantu abahlebayo, izinyawo ezinyathelayo kanye nehlombe elaqala lashaywa

kancane laya ngokukhula ngomsindo. Waziqhelisa kuMenzi efuna ukubona kahle labo bantu abacishe babe yishumi nambili abasebeqoqene ngase-bar.

“Khethi! Baba! Mpumi? Nenzani nonke lapha?”

UMenzi wahleba endlebeni kaNtombi. “Ngiqashe irestoranti yonke namhlanje khona sizogubha kahle ukuba engaged kwethu”.

UNtombi wamdlalisa ngokumshaya engalweni. “Ish dade, waze wazethemba bo!”

“Empeleni chabo. Bengaz’ ukuthi ngakuzwis’ ubuhlungu kakhulu, futhi bengingaz’ ukuthi uzophendul’ uthini. Bengizimisel’ ukuphoxeka phambi kwabo bonke laba bant’ uma kuwukuthi ubuzongala. Bengijule kakhul’ ekutheni ngizophind’ amaphutha enziw’ ubaba wami ngaze ngahluleka ukuthi ngiphe uthando lwethu ithuba lokuphumelela. Angizamanga ngisho nokuzikhombis’ ukuthi anginjalo. Ngiyaxolisa”.

Kwakukhona umsindo wamabhodlela echampagne avulwayo igumbi lonke, kodwa uNtombi akazange awasuse amehlo akhe kuMenzi. “Nami futhi benginenkani! Bekungesiwena wedw’ obunephutha. Benginalesi sithombe esincomekayo sekusasa lami, futhi bengingafuni lutho olunye uma lungahambisani nalesi sithombe. Ekuqaleni ngabona isudu lakho kanye nomsebenzi wakho, kodwa uma sengiqal’ ukukuthanda wen’ uqobo lwakho, ngavele ngayeka ukuba nendaba nokuthi ugqokani noma usebenza msebenzi muni. Bengizifunela wena wedwa nje – inanoma iyiphi indlela ebengingakuthola ngayo bengizoyivumela”.

“Manje usungitholile. Ngiyethemba ukuth’ uyaz’ ukuthi le mpahl’ eyimi awukwazi ukuyibuyisela esitolo?”

“Oh, awuthule wemuntu ungiqabule” kwaphendula uNtombi.

UNtombi wabamba ishethi likaMenzi wamdonsela ngakuye, ejabuliswa ukumuzwa eduze kwakhe kanye nokumnambitha ezindebeni zakhe. Wezwa sengathi usegcine ngokufika ekhaya.

Omunye walaba abaserestoranti kanye nabo washaya ikhwela – mhlawumbe uKhethi. Behlukana-ke uMenzi noNtombi kodwa bemoyizelana.

“Mhlawumbe kumele sihambe siyobingelel’ izivakashi zethu, ikakhulukazi ngoba yibon’ abasize ukuthi bufezeke ubusuku banamhlanje” kusho uMenzi.

UNtombi wanyusa amashiya, ekhombisa ukuxakeka.

“UKhethi uyen’ ongisize ngokungitshela izint’ eziningi – futhi uyen’ owenze sure ukuthi uzofika lapha namhlanje. Ubaba wakho kanye noNtando basebenze kakhulu kabi kulezi zinsuk’ ezimbalw’ ezedlule, bengisiz’ ukuqedela leli culo. Ngiqede ukulibhala ebhanoyini ngesikhathi

ngibuy’ eKenya. Kuyamangaz’ ukuth’ ingqond’ ivuleka kangakanani um’ umunt’ endiz’ emoyeni, um’ uthandazel’ ukuthi awukakayimoshi leyo nto emangalisayo ekuvelele”.

“Iculo lakho liyisimanga. Nawe uyisimanga. Ngiyakuthanda kakhulu Menzi”.

Zase zifikile kodwa izivakashi zabo kubona, kwaba khona ukwangana nokuqabulana okuningi phakathi kwawo wonke umuntu. UMpumi wayehla izinyembezi, futhi uKhethi wayemamatheka sengathi uyena ohlele yonke into namhlanje – ngisho noma lokho kuyiqiniso, kwakungeke kulunge ukukuvuma lokho kuyena ngoba ikhanda lakhe laliyovese likhukhumale into emangalisayo!

UMenzi noNtombi bagcina ngokutholana futhi. Babambana izandla, uMenzi wase emmoyizelela. UNtombi wadedela umoya sengathi uphatheke kabi. Wayefuna kabi ukuthi bazithole sebebobabili kuphela, ungasekho wonke lomsindo.

UMenzi wambheka, wakufunda konke lokho kubhaliwe ebusweni bukaNtombi.

“Maduzane nje,” wahleba endlebeni kaNtombi ebe emqabula ngaphansi kwendlebe. “Sinezimpilo zethu zonke ngaphambi kwethu ukuthi sibe ndawonye”.