BONES

Kay Adshead

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Bones

was developed with,
written for,
and is dedicated to
Lucinda Gane.
It celebrates her indomitable heart.

Production Notes

The circumstances surrounding the writing and producing of *Bones* have been unusual and dramatic.

I founded Mama Quillo with Lucinda Gane, who was my close friend for 20 years. We met as actresses in rep, I had always loved her work, and I looked forward, at some point, to writing for her. In *Bites*, our second production, I created a line of challenging parts around her, notably L in 'Ice Cream', the fifth of seven short plays.

But in July 2004 Lucinda was diagnosed with terminal cancer and given 18 months to live. It is an understatement to say this came as a shock. Lucinda's course of chemotherapy meant she would miss the first week of rehearsal for *Bites*, so, typically, she decided that the best thing was to drop out of the acting, but continue producing, with myself. Which she did, doing more than her fair share of the donkey work.

After the chemotherapy, and with *Bites* now finished at The Bush, Lucinda rallied.

I wondered if she had one more performance in her.

I had wanted to write a play about South Africa, after The Truth and Reconciliation Commission had long gone, for years. Lucinda had left South Africa to train at RADA, and her sister, Gill Gane, had been part of the struggle against apartheid, resulting in her deportation.

Using them both as primary sources (as well as others more bang up to date) I decided to write my play.

I wanted it to be hopeful, not another play about race hatred violence. I wanted it to be about the black South African population's astonishing willingness to reinvent their society, after the holocaust of apartheid. I felt, in this age of threats, retribution and revenge, they were an example to the so-called first world.

I decided to write a two-hander for Lucinda and Sarah Niles – a shining young black actress who had played the Bogus Woman in my play of that name at The Haymarket, Leicester.

Kully Thiarai had directed that production (with great integrity) and she invited me to take a first draft of the new play *Bones* to Leicester for four performances in October 2005.

I wrote three or four scenes at a time. We would convene around Lucinda's kitchen table, read and then discuss.

Lucinda and Sarah had the kind of rapport that exists between two really good actors working together, who respect and really like each other, and are interested in looking out for each other. For me, it was bliss.

Lucinda's beautiful bald head was replaced by surprising Harpo Marx curls – and we proceeded with hope.

I finished the play in late July 2005, not too far from our mooted September rehearsal.

Lucinda, looking a little frail, organised a reading of the final draft around the kitchen table, with Christopher, her husband as audience. She was, as always, the perfect hostess, albeit with one arm out of commission because of the cancer!

But more to the point she was utterly astonishing that afternoon as Jennifer. I wish we had taped it. Very sadly, and like something out of the play itself, it was her last acting performance.

Lucinda's sudden, and dramatic, decline took her first to the Middlesex Hospital and then to the Marie Curie Hospice.

Her life in those end weeks was simply extraordinary.

We, all her friends, would set out (me from rehearsing *Bones*) full of fear, only to find Lucinda, unexpectedly, radiant. We enjoyed all the usual titbits – baby bottles of champagne, perfect, black shiny cherries, best Russian vodka, blinis and caviar – around her bed, and we would all leave more cheerful than we arrived.

She was bald again and, cheerfully, all-knowing. It was like visiting the Dalai Lama.

The production opened in Leicester. Lucinda held on, suddenly battling and ferocious, in the hospice until the first night, and with her actress's perfect timing passed away the next morning.

In this production in October/November 2006, Pauline Moran, Lucinda's friend of 35 years, and a member of our Advisory Board, plays Jennifer. We had discussed this possibility and it become important to us in Lucinda's last weeks. Pauline has made Jennifer utterly her own.

Lucinda also bequeathed me Angie Sadler to take the post of Executive Producer in Mama Quillo, knowing that I like women with very loud laughs.

As well as being a wonderful actress, Lucinda was the most decent human being I have ever known. I hope this play and all future Mama Quillo plays honour her.

K A

Note: Mama Quillo, the company named in these notes and in the first-production credits, has since changed its name to Mama Quilla.

Characters

BOY / BEAUTY	*Young Black Woman*
JENNIFER	*White Woman, late 50s*
SINGER / DRUMMER / PERCUSSIONIST	*The voice of the Isinyanya*

The play is performed from the beginning in the pit. The bed is suggested by four bagged up rose bushes. All around are other rose bushes in bags, some are as high as 25 foot, supported by canes. The bags are suggestive of bags of bones – or body bags. Others, the tall ones, cast shadows that suggest the Isinyanya.

Boy and Beauty must be played by the same female performer. The boy does not leave the performing space until the end of Scene 6. Jennifer remains on stage during all the Boy's scenes.

All characters are South African.

The play is set in present day Johannesburg, apart from the Boy's scenes with the Interrogator which are set in 1969.

As audience enter, on tape, a little girl, perhaps a 10-year-old Beauty is singing and dissolving into laughter; interspersed is the live drumming, urgent and disconcerting.

In the Boy's scenes, the symbol ·:· is used to indicate points at which his interrogator speaks, unheard by the audience.

First Production

Bones was first workshopped at Leicester Haymarket Theatre in 2005. The play opened in Leicester on 3 October 2006 and received its London première at The Bush Theatre on 17 October 2006.

Cast (in alphabetical order)

Jennifer	Pauline Moran
Boy / Beauty	Sarah Niles

With live music by Joe Legwabe

Writer and director	Kay Adshead
Design consultancy	Mike Lees
Design concept	Mama Quillo
Lighting design	Lizzie Powell
Sound design	Sarah Weltman
Co-sound design	Matt Berry
Assistant director	Liz Gladwin
Deputy Stage Manager	Stacey Louise Dixon
Production / Administration for Mama Quillo	Sue Phelan
Producer	Angela Sadler
Press Representation	Alexandra Gammie
Graphic Design	Stem Design

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Scene 1

Breath.
Singing – terrible, beautiful. The Isinyanya call to the bones.
A young black BOY (aged 17) – his hands are tied behind his back, his legs are bound at the ankle.
He is lit as by a torch from the front. He is being interrogated.

BOY
I don't know
twenty maybe
twenty at first
∴

Yes
didn't I just
tell you
Baas?
∴

Water,
about the water
mainly,
other things of course,
but a child
had died
drinking
from the tap
they thought,

so

they called
a meeting.
∴

The leaders
∴

The leaders
of the Residents Association
∴

More agitated.

You know
who they are,
everyone knows.

It's no secret
who they are
∴

Of course I know her,
I am

her son.

I am
her son
⁘
No!
I don’t know
that person
⁘
No
I don’t know
his name
⁘
I…
⁘
I have
never
met him!
⁘
All the people
⁘
Yes
the residents
they…
⁘
Spilled
⁘
Yes, they spilled out,
onto the football pitch
⁘
Twenty at the meeting
but outside
there were…

others.
⁘
Just others
other people
⁘
At first,
they were all
young men
⁘
I don’t know,
maybe
a hundred

∴

Of course
I remember exactly
what they were doing

They were singing
and dancing
that's all

small boys
climbed
onto their brother's backs

bouncing
up and down
in fun

And one
old man,
thin as sticks,
rode his grandson
like a mule,
banging tins
like drums,
baring his gums
and laughing –
And so
they clapped
all of them
and danced

And some of them
they sang
Baas

Terrified.

Why am I here?
Why
have you brought me
here?

to this

terrible

terrible

place?

For the first time his eyes acknowledge two other men present.

I told you
everything, mybasé
at the police station

He looks up.

What
are you doing?

Truly,
I have nothing
to tell you

Truly.

Scene 2

Lights change to soft lamplight.
An elegant slim blonde woman in her 50s wearing a cream silk yele enters.
She addresses exactly the same spot as the BOY.

JENNIFER

Brightly.

Pieter?

A rattle from the drums.

I thought
I thought
I heard you call
darling

I fell asleep
on the couch.
Disastrous!
Means
I won't sleep
tonight.

Not a wink.

She moves over to her husband's bedside and looks down at him.
Softer still.

Can you
hear me?

I think
you can

Suddenly animated.

Did I tell you?

Softer.

Did I?

Four aces

and still I lost!

I partnered Dot
who was wearing
a dress
a size too small
and who
managed to fidget all
the way through
the first four hands

Myra wouldn't stop
yakking
I don't mean to be…cruel…
on and on
about
that foolish son
of hers

Ed's graduated
from Joburg Gen

But instead
of practising oncology
and then
quite possibly
saving lives

he's decided
to make novelty lamps
out of rock salt
and sell them
over the internet

Rubbing her shoulders.

Why is it
so cold
in here?

Oh, and I
didn't tell you
about
Steve and Dottie's
pool –

mosaics of Neptune
I ask you
fish tail
and a trident.
They'll be the laughing stock.

Pause.

Everyone

asked after you
darling

I said
no visitors
not now
I told them
we'd discussed it
with the doctors
we'd agreed

Pause.
Rubbing her shoulders.

the nurse
knows
you hate
the cold.

End of July
he'd always
light a fire
I said
always

Pause.
Very, very soft.

I had a dream
dozing
on the couch.

A curious dream.

At intervals – and very, very softly – drums underscore.

I'm five
four or five.

It's noon
and the
sun
is
high
and hot

I'm in
the shade
of
a tree,

digging
in the
red
earth

with a

stolen
kitchen knife.

Mummy's
inside,
baking

a
sponge cake
for tea

If
she saw
the knife
she'd be cross

I've made
a hole,

and

I'm
pouring water
from a
plastic
tea pot
to make
mud pies.

Suddenly

in my
murky
little well

something…

flutters…
and
splashes…

It is
a
butterfly

drowning!

I wonder
how it
got inside
my
mud
hole.

I

kneel

and lift
the beautiful
butterfly

onto the
sharp
blade,

hold it

up

to let

it dry,

hoping it

will fly

away –

And
as I
do so,
I see
in the
far
distance

against
the sky

on the
rusty
hillside

two figures

watching me;

warriors –

The drums signify their appearance.

a man
and a
fierce
robed woman
with a spear

Two figures
so tiny
they can
stand
on the blade
of the
muddy kitchen

knife

with the
giant butterfly

bronzy-blue
again
and brilliant

and
just about
ready
to flutter off,

when –

something else

bubbles

in

the

brown

mud,

bubbles
and
foams
and froths,

something…

bigger.

I hear
Mummy
behind me
running
over
the hot
dry grass

and I

feel a

scream
like a
shard
of glass

in my
throat

and

the warriors
stand
suddenly
over me

and

and

then…

Drumming stops.

Scene 3

The BOY is kneeling sideways, his head is at a strange angle, his hands still tied behind his back, his feet still tied. The BOY's eyes are glazed, his mouth froths blood. He breathes shallowly.

BOY
They started
To shoot
∴

He laughs.

Who
do you think?
∴
The police
Started to shoot

The BOY breathes.

∴

He mumbles.

Into the air
∴
Into the air!
Into the air!

The BOY starts to tremble, to whimper.

∴
Yes…
many people
many people
gathering
∴
Children,
women with babies
tied to their backs,

old sick men
with sticks.
∴
Why?
∴
I don’t know why.
They heard
the singing
and dancing
I suppose.
∴
No.

No one told
them to go
there
∴
I hid

in the backroom
of a shop
∴
Yes
behind a sack
of mealie meal

He laughs.

by a tower of
Illovo golden syrup tins,
two fell on my toes –
heavy, those tins.
∴
I didn’t
have to hide

I…

I…
∴
I was scared
of the shooting
and shouting

I thought
it would
only last
a few hours
perhaps

Then

I could go home

But
It went
on and on

I heard
feet running
screams
then groans

at last
it was
very quiet
and
I stepped out
∴
Yes
from behind
the mealie
meal

I pushed
open
the door

It creaked.

I saw
a small group
looking down
at something
on the ground

I knew
one of them
as my friend.
∴

Distressed.

I…
∴
I…

Almost shouting.

Xolite!
he is called
Xolite!

When I approached
they moved apart
∴

I
saw
lying on the ground

smashed
and bloody

the old man
the oupa
with the grinning gums
banging his tin can drums

And I knew
this
was a very bad thing

because
all the people
the many people

would
be angry
when they saw
the broken body
of this poor
old man.
∴

Panting, very distressed.

Am I, Baas?
Am I doing well?
∴
Yes..
A very
big crowd
now
∴
Yes
Silent yes
∴
No singing
and
no dancing
baas
∴
No, I
knew
no one
∴
Yes

but not by me

I never
threw
a stone
∴
No!
I didn’t
organise baas
No.
I couldn’t
I wouldn’t
Please baas.

My head
is hurting

Please baas
My eyes
Please…

He starts to cry.

Mama

I want my mother
Can I go home now?

She makes me
hot bean pot
on Mondays.

My baby sister
worries
if I’m late

Please…
I have
to go
to be
with my
sisi

Please
Have you
No one
you love
Baas?

Scene 4

JENNIFER is seated at Pieter's bedside. She is stirring a crystal tumbler of warm milk and whisky. She has one of Pieter's large cashmere jumpers draped around her shoulders, and sometimes she strokes this.

JENNIFER

Very soft.

I saw you
standing
in the frame
of the door

a shadow

I shivered

Drums. The BOY is being kicked, he gasps, flinches and rolls.

It's very strange,
and it can't
be true,

but apart
from Dad
and Johnson

you're the only man
I remember
as a child

standing

on the patio
at sunset.

Janey came
racing down
to meet me

yelling
that we'd been burgled –

again,

'cept this time
they'd taken
our christening mugs
and our
silver frame
baby pictures,

and Mother
was crying.

And
you stood there
drying

your hands
on the
dishcloth

The one
with the words
and the picture of daffodils

‘I wandered, lonely as a cloud
That floats on high…’

looking so handsome
in your uniform
strong
but shy,
I remember.

Anyway,
looking
like a man should
Mother said
grudgingly
long after

A real man.

Janey said
your eyebrows
were too bushy

and you smelled funny

Cigar smoke
I suppose

And she didn’t
like policemen.

Anyway
I knew
when you smiled

that you were mine
and mine only.

And it didn’t matter to me
that I was thirteen
and you were an old man
of twenty-three.

Drum rattle.
Looking at him.
She stands.

Are you trying
to wake
Pieter?

Drum rattle.

Are you trying
to speak?

Shall I get
the nurse
darling?

Pause.

No?
Just a bad dream.

Pause.
She paces.

You wouldn't
kiss me
till I was sixteen
remember?

On my sixteenth
birthday

we drove
down to Linksfield Ridge.

It was coming to dusk
and hot
we got out of the car

You held my hand
I was embarrassed
because I thought
It was…well…
damp
probably,
sweaty.

You sat me down
on a stump

of an

old fig tree

You knelt
and I could feel
my heart

pump and swell

and

from your back
trouser pocket
you took out
a dainty
heart-shaped box

opened it

and there
was a
gold ring

with the
tiniest diamond,

a fairy tear
you said,
a happy tear.

You put
it on
my finger

and asked
me to be
your fairy wife.

You kissed me
very gently
on the lips

And I said
‘Yes, Pieter’

and you put
your head
in my lap

you wept, darling

and I stroked
your brown bear
hair

And I lifted
your great head
like a stone
in my hands

And you kissed
me again,

but this time

you kissed
me
very hard.

You said
we'd have
to wait
of course

that the
whole world
would be
angry
with us

but that…

resistance…

would make
it all the better
in the end

Drums.
Pause.

all the better

Three slow drum beats, a drip, drip, drip

Scene 5

Darkness. A single spot of light. The BOY is hanging. He can hardly be seen. He can hardly speak. He is alone. Slow drumbeats throughout are a slow drip, drip.

BOY

His voice is husky, his words slurred.

Gone?
Have they
gone?

No…

I hear them

out there

finding wood

for a fire

are they?

Someone digging?

The earth
will be
hard
and red.

I once
planted
a
Dombeya Tree

helping my
uncle

In a fine
white woman’s
garden

I liked
the
forest lilies
with petals
like
dog’s ears
or
tears

the
aloes
which
bleed
white ooze
when you
squeeze

I liked
the creepers
with their
million
tiny blue
stars

One day
I would
like
to be
a gardener

like

my uncle

one day

Pause.
Someone has entered. He looks about.

Who's there?

A girl

Is it?

A young
woman
anyway?

Help me
please

Help me?

Scene 6

JENNIFER is standing holding her empty cup, still addressing the bed. In the background, the growl of mechanical diggers. Still the slow soft intermittent drip…drip drumbeat.

JENNIFER
No
No
that's unacceptable

BOY
Help me

JENNIFER
I told them

After 7 a m
I'd tolerate
but
not before

BOY
Cut me
down

JENNIFER
not a second
not a millisecond

'My husband's
sick'
I said
'very sick

he mustn't

be disturbed’

BOY
Help me

JENNIFER
‘by diggers
and workmen’

and you know
these people
a motley gang
will congregate
no doubt

on the other side
of the fence

or, worse still
outside the gate.

To stare
and…
sing perhaps
and…and…

BOY
Untie
my hands

JENNIFER
It’s awful
just too
…

BOY
My feet

She pulls herself together.
She goes over to the bed, speaking softly.

JENNIFER
Darling,

they’re digging
up the
rose garden

today.

You mustn’t
fret

Tsogo funerals
have been

given a
permit
apparently

to dig
for their

ancestors' graves

Under breath.

Why they have
to be
under our rose garden
I don't know.

Pause.

Why couldn't
they be
under
Steve and Dottie's
pool?

Anyway
it won't take long.

a couple of days
no more.

All the roses
have been
dug up
already

tagged
labelled
fed and watered

They said
they'd put
them back

exactly as before.

You know
how strict
I am
with planting

the border
of polyanthas
scrolled and frilled
pink as flesh

Charles de Mills
in the middle

blood-red and bursting

BOY
Help me

JENNIFER
The bower of
Félicité and Perpetué
takes the eye
with their double pompoms
flushed and dewy

down to the
stone folly
the lemon grove

the walled white garden,
and the
tennis courts.

Only a couple
of days
darling

that's all

a couple
of days
digging.

The dripping finally stops. Drumming and singing, the Isinyanya welcome the bones.

Scene 7

Early morning. JENNIFER sits, as before, on the small seat at Pieter's bedside, sideways on now, no longer looking at him. She is singing an old Scottish lament, rather soft, sweet and girlish. She seems far away.
In the near distance, the sound of mechanical diggers.
Beauty enters, dressed in a maid's uniform.

BEAUTY
Good morning, Mrs Joubert

JENNIFER jumps.

JENNIFER
Miriam
I…
I didn't
hear you
dear.

BEAUTY
I’m not
Miriam
Mrs Joubert

JENNIFER
Not Miriam?

BEAUTY
No
I’m Beauty.

JENNIFER
Really?

BEAUTY
Yes

JENNIFER
And
have we
met?

BEAUTY

Laughs.

Many times
Mrs Joubert
I’ve worked
here
seven and a half months

JENNIFER
Seven months

BEAUTY
Yes
just before
the baas
got ill

JENNIFER
I see

BEAUTY
My first day
was
Mr Joubert’s
70th birthday
‘brunchtime bash’

JENNIFER
Was it?
I…

BEAUTY
I served boerewors
and
herby mash

JENNIFER
I'm afraid
I can't remember

BEAUTY
My friend
Honor
Was on
Buck's fizz
she can smile
but without teeth

so

Jeffrey switched us
'cos I smile good
with plenty teeth

She smiles.

JENNIFER
The pretty
chatty
little girl…

BEAUTY
With the big smile…

JENNIFER
Yes
I remember now

BEAUTY
You gave me
a blanket
Mrs Joubert,
very kindly,
months ago,
pink and woolly
for my sister's
baby
who
by the way
says thank you

JENNIFER
But where's
Miriam?

BEAUTY
Miriam
has left
to go
to college

She wants
to be
a vet.

JENNIFER
Really?
Extraordinary
Miriam –
a vet!

BEAUTY
Anyway
an
animal
nurse.

A strange
vocation
I know
for a girl
who can't
abide
a
spider

or a
cockroach
or a songalolo

but then
spiders
never get
sick.

JENNIFER

Smiling.

Don't they?

BEAUTY
No
they get
trod on

very often,

but never
sick.

A spider
is either

alive
or
dead.

And
they never
need
a vet.

Pause.

JENNIFER
Why
are you
here?

BEAUTY
Why?

JENNIFER
Yes now,
here now.

BEAUTY
To change
Mr Joubert's
bed linen

JENNIFER
On your own.
You come
into
my husband's
room
every day
alone?

BEAUTY
I don't
come
in alone,

No

I'm waiting
for

Nurse Helen.

We have
to change
the bed sheets
before
the doctors
come
at eight.

JENNIFER
I see,
of course.

Pause.

BEAUTY
When they
didn't
find you
in your
room,

everyone
went
hunting.

I knew
You'd be
in here
with Baas.

JENNIFER
How?

BEAUTY
I knew

BEAUTY looks around.

Are all
these photos
you and Baas?

JENNIFER
Yes
we're very young.

BEAUTY

Referring to one.

You look
happy

JENNIFER
That was taken
on our honeymoon
in France.

BEAUTY

Referring to another.

That's funny.

JENNIFER
My
naughty nephews
buried him
in sand.

BEAUTY
And all
your pretty things?

Carvings
and
paintings

JENNIFER
I collect,

Pause.

Do
you like
the house?

BEAUTY
I like
it
very much

JENNIFER
I designed
the interior
myself

with help
of course

to set off
our many
treasures

The style
is
African Zen

That’s
what it’s
called

BEAUTY
I like
this style

when I have
my own home

I too
will fill it
with pretty things
like you.

JENNIFER
Will you?

A pause.

BEAUTY
With
African Zen

Pause.

Millie May
sent me
to say

she’d put
your tray on
the
first floor
balcony,

that way
you don’t
see
the diggers
Mrs Joubert.

JENNIFER
That’s very
thoughtful
of Millie
thank her

BEAUTY turns to go.

Ask Millie
to tell me
when
they plan

to leave
will you?

BEAUTY
Leave?

JENNIFER
The workmen
and
the diggers.

I want
to know
the minute
they plan
to go.

BEAUTY
I know that
Mrs Joubert.

They will
stop digging
when
they find

the
Isinyanya

The drum roll repeats Isinyanya.
Pause.

JENNIFER
I'm sorry?

BEAUTY
Our old people
who lie
beneath
the soil.

Pause.

JENNIFER

Agitated.

Really
this is…
this is…
unbearable.

Don't they know
how ill
my husband is?

Couldn't they
have waited
out of common
decency.
a day or two –
couldn't they –
a week.

BEAUTY
They have waited
a long time
Mrs Joubert
the Isinyanya,

The drum repeats Isinyanya.

a very very
long time.

Pause.

JENNIFER

Calmer.

Are there
people gathered
there?

BEAUTY
Yes

JENNIFER
And watching?

BEAUTY
Yes

My mother,
sister
and brother

all are watching
happily
outside the fence.

Also cousins
uncles and aunts
who have
travelled far
from Soweto

They are in
their best frocks
and hats,

the men in suits

I made them
sandwiches

And they
have brought
reed mats
to sit on

cold drinks

and a pack
of ginger nuts.

JENNIFER looks at her, incredulous, for a long time. She laughs.

BEAUTY

Alarmed.

Do you need
a
Doctor
Mrs Joubert?

JENNIFER
Don't tell me,
Dr Haines
is sitting
downstairs in
Millie's kitchen
tucking into
one of her
famous
English
fry-ups.

BEAUTY
He had
eggs
this morning

I believe

and smoked haddock
on buttery brown toast

a pot of coffee
and three
Marie biscuits.
Oh, and one naartjie,
He spits the pips
into

his empty coffee cup.

JENNIFER

Smiling.

You are
a funny little girl.

BEAUTY
Thank you.

JENNIFER
Tell Millie,
everyone

I'll be
a few minutes

will you?

BEAUTY
Yes, Mrs Joubert.

BEAUTY makes to go then stops, turns back.

They also
have bibles
as well
as the ginger nuts
and cold drinks.

JENNIFER looks puzzled.

My family –
and precious
family things

photos

like yours

Mrs Joubert

and certificates
and songs.

JENNIFER
I…
I didn't
mean
to be
disrespectful
of course.

BEAUTY
They'll sing,

to welcome
the
Isinyanya –

Drum repeats Isinyanya.

who may
scream,
when torn
from the
dark red soil
and flung
into the sunlight.

They'll sing
and dance
to soothe
the spirits.

The bones
of the
Isinyanya

Drum repeats Isinyanya.

will be lifted
put in bags
and carried
careful
to the trucks

And

in these
troubled hours
back
in the air

with their
spirits
free to roam

they will visit
their
children's, children's
children

and they
in turn
will bring
their babes,
the young
and fat,
and the
old men

with sticks
too
will tell
their tales.

And so
the spirits
of the

Isinyanya

Drum repeats Isinyanya.

Will be
amongst
us.

All of us.

It is
a
dangerous
time.

JENNIFER
Dangerous?

BEAUTY
Yes
you see
they may be
angry.

JENNIFER
That's…
preposterous.

BEAUTY
Perhaps.

Angry
to be
disturbed

from their
sleep
beneath the soil.

JENNIFER
Who told you
all this…?

BEAUTY
Nobody
told me

It is
the way
it is,
you see
I have the caul
I was born
at the very hour
my grandfather
died.

My Xhosa name
means
‘forefathers’ voice’

I speak
to the spirits,
and sometimes
in dreams,
or in strange
waking moments
when the world
stops and spins,
they kindly
speak to me.

Pause.

JENNIFER

Agitated.

You shouldn’t
say those things
not in here
not now
it’s…

BEAUTY
I spoke to
Zandile’s grandma
the other day
Zandile was grateful
for she
loved her gran
who died
and never said
goodbye.

She baked me
a pumpkin pie
and gave me a big comb
on a string
made of plastic sparkly stuff

to wear
around my neck.

She smiles.

Zandile
that is
not
her gran

Nomse's babe
came through
to me,

her stillborn
babe

who told me
to tell her mama
to plant white daisies
on her little grave

which she did.

You see
I made
her happy.

She stopped
taking pills
from the Doctor
and paid me
fifty rand
in three clean
and crispy bills.

Pause.

JENNIFER
Do you always
receive payment?

Pause.

BEAUTY
Always

JENNIFER
I see.

BEAUTY
It honours
the spirits.

Also
Mrs Joubert

I have
the power
to heal.

JENNIFER
Yes

BEAUTY
White people
in their big
shiny cars
drive
many kilometres
with their sickness
which I heal.

Pause.

JENNIFER
What…
sickness?

BEAUTY
Sickness of the mind,
of the body,
especially –
limbs, lungs
and liver

and
of the soul

I charge
a bit more
for the soul.

JENNIFER
Listen

There is silence.

The diggers
have stopped.

Drum. BEAUTY takes out an apple, which she eats.

Scene 8

BEAUTY

Calling off.

They're in
the second drawer

Nurse,

I swear
I put
them there

Drums stop.

crisp and
white
and
freshly ironed,

folded in
quarters,

just like
Miriam showed,

and smelling
like…
lemons.

She looks down at Pieter lying.
Softly.

This pump
takes
away the pain

does it?

I don't
think
it works
Mr Joubert,

I'll tell
the nurse;

your brow
makes…

creases,

Pause.

And that
tube
feeds you?

You were
better
fat

That's for
sure.

I never

liked your
laugh

Honor
didn’t like
your…

tread

your step

in the dark,

your

breath.

I wonder
if you
can hear
me?

I wonder
if you’ll
open your
eyes
ever?

I wonder
if you’ll

Speak again?

She whispers.

I wonder
if the
journey back
for you

has already

begun?

Lights change. Drums. BEAUTY looks at the audience, mischievously, she sets about changing the scene, pulling the rose bushes about leaving weals in the earth. With ceremony, she moves the stool.

Scene 9

Late afternoon, dappled sunshine.
JENNIFER enters; made-up and coiffeured, elegant in an African inspired cocktail outfit and large African jewellery.
She is speaking into a mobile phone which is clamped between her shoulder and ear, and trying to put high heels on at the same time. She has a dress over one arm and a tiny bag.

JENNIFER
It is
a
bad show

a fault
on the line
perhaps

I don't know,

I'll ask Jeffrey
to look at it
tonight
I promise.

Pause.

No change,
they say
he's comfortable
today,
that's something.

No, he can't
eat biscuits

BEAUTY enters briskly, she seems to be en route.

He's not really
drinking
at the moment,

To BEAUTY.

Oh…
dear…

BEAUTY stops.
Into phone.

well, water

of course
but only
a sip

I mean
he's on a
drip!

She throws the dress to BEAUTY.
Into phone.

Prayers?

Pause.

I'm not
sure
Pieter would
want prayers.

I…
I…

I suppose
he would.

I…

Pause.

Goodbye

To BEAUTY.

Now er…

BEAUTY
Beauty

JENNIFER
Oh yes, yes

Tell Jeffrey
the landline
goes straight
onto answer
will you?

That's the
fifth
call on my cell
in half an hour

Of course
it's nice
to know
so many people
care

so many well-wishers

but

it’s exhausting
all the same
and…

I can’t help
feeling
it’s a trifle…

BEAUTY
Spookish?

JENNIFER

Surprised.

Yes,
yes
exactly.

Pause.

BEAUTY
You told Jeffrey
to put
the home phone
straight
to answer
Mrs Joubert

Pause.

JENNIFER
Did I?

BEAUTY
Yes
you worried
that the
phone ringing
all the time
was disturbing
Baas.

You told
Millie you’d
pick up
messages
at night.

JENNIFER
Did I?

Right
Well, I…

I don't remember

She rubs her head.

I don't remember

Pause.
BEAUTY stares at her with naked curiosity – it's almost insolent.

JENNIFER

Sharply.

What are you
looking at?

BEAUTY
… Nothing

Pause.

JENNIFER
You can
have
the dress

I put it
on one side
for Miriam.

It doesn't
suit me now

It will suit
you perfectly.

Pause.

It's linen

Pause.

It's not too
fancy
is it?

A
Sunday dress
I thought

Of course,
I cut off
all the buttons

but
you can sew

can’t you?

BEAUTY hands the dress back.
Surprised.

Don’t you
want it?

BEAUTY
No, thank you
Mrs Joubert
I don’t
want
the dress.

Pause.

JENNIFER
Oh, right.
Right.

Pause.

Are you
going up
to
Mr Joubert?

BEAUTY
Yes.

JENNIFER
Who’s sitting
with him?

BEAUTY
The
red-haired
nurse,
with the
big feet.

JENNIFER
Tell her
I’ll only be
an hour
or two.

She’s got
my
cell phone
number.

BEAUTY
Yes.

JENNIFER
I'm
five minutes
away.

Any change –
she calls me –
those
are her instructions –
tell her

BEAUTY
Right

Pause.

JENNIFER
At least
It's quiet

Pause.

They've gone
the mechanical diggers,
the workmen?

BEAUTY
No

Pause.

JENNIFER
I thought
they had,
I thought
I heard
Millie say
they'd finished
for the day.

BEAUTY
No,
they're still
there.

JENNIFER
Did they
find
anything?

BEAUTY
Yes, yes
they did

Pause.

They did
find something

JENNIFER
Don't tell me
they found
the graves
did they?

Pause.

BEAUTY
They found
a big
grave
yes

a…pit

with many
bodies
in it.

But

they do
not think

these are
the graves
of the
old people.

JENNIFER
What
do you mean?

BEAUTY
It is
not
an ancestral
burial ground
Mrs Joubert.

JENNIFER
No…?

BEAUTY
No…

they
have found
plenty bones

but

in shallow
graves,

not buried
with honour
or respect

some

with their hands
and feet tied

JENNIFER
What?

BEAUTY
Others
with ropes
around their necks

Their heads
In plastic bags

Some
of the bones
are bits

Some are
burnt.

Pause.

JENNIFER

Finding it hard to breathe.

What?

BEAUTY
I said
some
of the bones
are…

JENNIFER
I heard you
I heard you
you…
foolish girl

What
do you think
I'm deaf?

Pause.
JENNIFER is pacing.

How dare you
come in here,
today,
of all days!

How dare you
share
these horrors
in this
abrupt
and…
insolent
way!

Miriam
wouldn't have
done this.

Miriam
would have
spared me.

Where's Miriam?
Where's Miriam?

She is panting.

BEAUTY

Quietly.

Shall I get
Doctor
for you
Mrs Joubert?

JENNIFER
Are
the police
there?

BEAUTY
Yes.

JENNIFER
I saw
the cars

BEAUTY
Also the priests.

JENNIFER
Right.

BEAUTY
They're putting
the bones
in bags,

very careful,
and labelling
them

taking them
back
to the police station.

There are…
forensic people
too

in white coats,
with little brushes
plastic caps,
aprons
and gloves

JENNIFER
Is
everybody watching?

BEAUTY
They've put up
scaffolding
and screens.

JENNIFER
But there's
quite
a little gathering
I bet.

Your friends
and family
must be
delighted.

A
more thrilling
day out
than they'd

bargained for
I'm sure.

I hope
they bought
their primus stoves,

their water's
bubbling
for a brew

Perhaps
Millie
should take out
a tray
of drop scones

I hope
they've got
their
instamatics.

Pause.

BEAUTY
Everybody
is
very quiet
Mrs Joubert

very…
upset.

Pause.

Some people
are angry!

JENNIFER
Angry?

BEAUTY
Yes, angry

Pause.

JENNIFER
Whose are they?
the Bones?

BEAUTY
Do you
want me
to say?

JENNIFER
Yes,
If you know
Yes.

BEAUTY
Jeffrey told us
years ago
this land
used to be
a farm.

JENNIFER
A what?

BEAUTY
An old
farm
Didn't
you know?

JENNIFER
No…
I didn't know
I…

I
didn't
know

BEAUTY
That p'raps
out on the edge
of the farm
there was
a bad place

an out-house
an old cattle stall

quite big.

Police
brought our people
here,
from the police station
many years ago
to question them
where their
screams
could not
be heard

to torture them
to kill them

Sometimes
they
burnt the flesh
then
buried the bones

in a pit behind
where the soil
was soft
and didn't
take much digging

Away from
prying eyes.

Pause, JENNIFER is pacing.

JENNIFER
Jeffrey told you this?

BEAUTY
Jeffrey
is
very old.

JENNIFER
Jeffrey
knew
of this?

BEAUTY
Yes,
Jeffrey knew
and the old folk too.

Pause.
JENNIFER puts her hands over her head, she sinks to the ground.
BEAUTY watches.

JENNIFER
Such a…
long time.

Such a
very long
time.

Pause.
JENNIFER is still.
Then, quite suddenly, she stands, dusts herself down. From her little bag she takes out a compact, she fixes her hair.
BEAUTY watches.
From off stage, there is a sudden commotion, doors opening, raised voices, shouting.
Softly.

Go and see
what that
commotion
is about

will you
Beauty?

BEAUTY leaves. JENNIFER stands, completely still.
Pause.
BEAUTY rushes back in.

BEAUTY
Come quick

It's Mr Joubert.

He's
stopped
breathing.

Drums. BEAUTY changes the scene, pulling the bags she recreates the bed.

Scene 10

Lights change, shadows, coming to dusk. Drumming stops.
Outside, but close by, a massing crowd, occasionally singing, spontaneous prayer.
JENNIFER sits by Pieter's bed, her shoulders slumped, her hands clasped in her lap. She strains forward, looking intently at Pieter. She is breathing heavily.
BEAUTY enters.

BEAUTY

Softly.

Mrs Joubert

JENNIFER
Yes.

BEAUTY
Millie

sent me
to say

Miss Dottie
rang
for the fifth time
today.

She said
if she
couldn't
speak to
you
on the
telephone

she planned
to come
in person.

JENNIFER

Distressed.

No, no.
I won't see
anyone.

You hear

talk
to
anyone

I have
to be
alone.

BEAUTY
Millie
told her
the Baas
was still
holding on –

just,

but

worse

that you
thanked
everyone
for their
good wishes,

but…

Pause.

JENNIFER
Yes…?

Pause.

BEAUTY
I forget
The rest.

JENNIFER laughs, softly.

JENNIFER
And outside?

BEAUTY
Outside?

JENNIFER
Yes

BEAUTY
The crowd
is
getting
bigger.

Pause.

JENNIFER

Stands…snapping.

Tell Jeffrey
to call
the police.

BEAUTY
But…

JENNIFER
Now,
do you
hear me?

BEAUTY
I…

JENNIFER
I don't
want
excuses,

it's
outrageous;

my husband,
my…
darling husband
of forty-two years

is dying,

tonight
perhaps
I'm kindly
told.

Doesn't
he deserve
some peace
and quiet?

BEAUTY
Mrs Joubert.

JENNIFER
They're
on my
property –

virtually,

almost
in my
garden –

anyway,

making
a nuisance
of themselves –

certainly.

I'm told
they're at
the front gate
now.

Cars
can hardly
get in
or out

I'm under
siege.

It's upsetting,

deeply upsetting –

I find their
presence…
threatening.

Call the police.

BEAUTY
But,
Mrs Joubert
the police
are here…

JENNIFER
Here?

BEAUTY
Yes
10
or 20
of them
at least

They have
built platforms
to view
the bones
in the pit.

They have
set up
floodlights

and one or two
take pictures
now with
flash cameras
at dusk.

JENNIFER
Why?

BEAUTY
Because
it is
a
‘crime scene’.

JENNIFER
What?

BEAUTY
So you see

if you
wish to
speak to
the police

all you have
to do
is to go
downstairs
through the kitchen
onto
the patio
and step into
your garden.

Pause.

JENNIFER

Starts to cry.

I'm frightened.

What
if they
decide
to climb
the fence?

BEAUTY
They'd be
electrocuted.

JENNIFER
Dig
under the
palisade?

BEAUTY
The same.

JENNIFER
You say
there's
ten or twenty
police

but

they're
outnumbered.

There are
hundreds
out there
I am told,

maybe
thousands:

they could
charge
the gate
and
kill us
every one.

It's happened
before
I'm sure

I know.

Pause.

BEAUTY
The crowd
sing
that's all

sway
and moan
perhaps.

Sometimes
they pray

An old man
an oupa

is carried
on his
grandson's back;

and as
each
bag of bones
comes up

he sighs;
so does
his neighbour,
and the next.

Sighs,
passed

are good

for easing
troubled
souls

JENNIFER
You speak
to
the dead

you said.

BEAUTY
The spirits
yes…

JENNIFER
Well…
tell the spirits
to send
the crowd
away.

BEAUTY
I'm sorry

JENNIFER
Make
them go,

the old grandpa
the women
in
their best
frocks
the men
in hats
the children

make them go.

Pause.

I'll pay you
I'll pay you
very well

Four thousand rand

A tinkling sound.
Pause.

BEAUTY
Eight thousand rand

A louder tinkling.
Pause.

It is
a
big crowd,

JENNIFER
Eight thousand rand?

BEAUTY
What
if the spirits
want
the crowd
to stay?

JENNIFER
Don’t you know
if
that’s the case?

BEAUTY
Of course not.
How would
I know that?

I haven’t
spoken to them
yet.

Pause.

I will charge
Four thousand rand
down payment

which is
reasonable
indeed

for troubled
souls

who are
more difficult
to reach,
like these,

and who
don’t like
to speak.

Another four thousand
if I get

the crowd
to go

What do you say?

JENNIFER
Anything.

BEAUTY
And no
cheques
please.

JENNIFER
There's cash
in the drawer
there,
I don't know
how much.

BEAUTY
I trust you
Mrs Joubert

The crowd gets louder.

JENNIFER

Agonised.

Quick, please
you have
to help
me,
do you
hear?
They can't
be
out
there
when
my poor husband
dies.

You have
to make
them go

The crowd gets louder, closer.

BEAUTY
I don't know
Mrs Joubert
it will take

powerful magic

against
so many
living souls

made strong
by
one another

JENNIFER
Please

BEAUTY
I'll need
your help
to reach
the spirits

JENNIFER
Anything
Anything

BEAUTY
Hold
my hand

JENNIFER
Your hand?

BEAUTY
Yes,
both my hands.

The crowd gets louder.
JENNIFER holds BEAUTY's hands.

We have
to close
our eyes

and breathe
as one

feel
the rhythm
of our breath
through fingers

In –

and

out

like this.

They breathe together.
BEAUTY jerks back her head, the drums accompany, JENNIFER opens her eyes and watches. BEAUTY stiffens, her eyes roll in her head. She starts to speak 'in tongues'. It is a version of Xhosa. It is exotic, impressive and a bit scary. She appears to be asking questions in one voice, answering in another.
She speaks, louder and faster and more ferocious. She drops hands with JENNIFER, her whole body is shaking, the movements, seemingly involuntary, become a kind of dance.
Light change – darker as the sun goes down.
Outside the crowds are starting to sound softer, and far away. The crowds are dispersing.
BEAUTY's 'dance' starts to wind down, softer and softer, she is drenched in sweat, exhausted, almost falling over.
Drumming stops.

JENNIFER
Are they leaving?

Pause.
Incredulous.

They're leaving!

I think
they're
leaving.

JENNIFER is sick with relief, trembling, ecstatic.

You did it

You made
them go.

BEAUTY

Hoarse.

The spirits
said
the eyes
had seen
enough.

JENNIFER
So
you have
power?

BEAUTY
Yes

JENNIFER
Truly.

BEAUTY
Truly

JENNIFER
Heal my husband.

I will
pay you
anything
you ask

BEAUTY
Anything?

Pause.

JENNIFER
You like
this house
don't you,
Beauty?

BEAUTY
Yes, I
like this
house
very much

JENNIFER
I
will give
you
this house

if you can heal
my husband.

Drumming.

Scene 11

JENNIFER is by Pieter's bedside. She paces. Absolute silence.

JENNIFER
They're gone
darling,

The wailing
crowds

Silently

and

orderly.

It's…
miraculous.

Pause.

This

girl

is

miraculous.

Pause.
She paces.

Remember
that
Christmas

We'd been
married
just
five years,

and trying
for a
baby

all that
time,

I was so
sad

So
you sent
everyone
away –

everyone.

You cooked
Christmas dinner,
turkey
and all
the trimmings

You
rubbed
salt
and cider
into the
turkey
skin

to make
it specially
brown
and crispy…

specially juicy,

I laughed
at you,
remember,
Piet?

in your
funny
chef's hat
and
frilly apron –

for
the first time
in months
I laughed

We
picnicked

in the garden
by the pool
under a
jacaranda
tree.

You laid
a cloth

on the
hot
grass,

I started
to freckle
in the
sun

you draped
your towel
over my
shoulders,

we drank
ice cold
champagne

and
afterwards

well
you remember
what happened
afterwards

Remember
Piet?

We'd
been married
five years.

Pause.
She paces.

I was
always

too…

curious

wasn't I?

with
my
fairy questions

I couldn't
wait
at home

like all
the other

fairy wives

wait

safe inside…

BEAUTY bustles in, without ceremony; she has a shopping bag.

BEAUTY
Excuse me
Mrs Joubert.

JENNIFER
You
startled
me!

BEAUTY
We have
to rush,

a cloud

has just
passed
by the
bright
full moon

leaving
a trail
of two
goat's horns

JENNIFER
Is that good?

BEAUTY
Don't ask me
I can't
read clouds.

They are
a
big mystery.

Children
read clouds best,

girl children
under three
are
world experts
I believe…

Now –

She takes out a small wooden pot from her bag.

JENNIFER
What's that?

BEAUTY
You mustn't
ask
so many
questions
Mrs Joubert.

It stops
the magic.

BEAUTY removes the lid and takes a pinch of white powder.
Drumming.
She starts to hum, and then to intone a note. She sprinkles the white powder at arms' length, all over Pieter in the bed, from head to toe.
BEAUTY speaks/incants 'in tongues'; it is Xhosa-sounding but different, she is very focused.
Drumming stops.

There

She is sweating.

Where
does the
good doctor
think
his
sickness…
stems?

JENNIFER
The brain,
he has
a
tumour
in his
brain

they tried
to
cut it out
and he
went blind.

The oxygen
is keeping
him alive

He hardly
moves,
but he
can hear

we think.

BEAUTY
And speak?

JENNIFER
He hasn't
spoken now
for several
weeks

BEAUTY
He seems
to sleep
deep
and
dreamless.

JENNIFER
That's
the drugs.

BEAUTY
Mrs Joubert
I have
to hold
Mr Joubert's
head.

Do
you mind?

JENNIFER
Anything.

BEAUTY holds his head.
Pieter's eyes open suddenly.
Drum rattle.
They jump.

Darling…
Darling…!

We're here
You're safe.

BEAUTY
His breath
is short
and fast.

JENNIFER
I'm here.

BEAUTY
His spirit
calls you.

BEAUTY connects with his open eyes. Drumming. She speaks soft and low 'in tongues'. Finally she stops.
Drumming stops.

JENNIFER
You've brought
colour

to his cheeks

Who'd
have thought
it?

To his
soft
lips.

BEAUTY
And look –
his
blind eyes
hold
memory.

JENNIFER
Yes.

BEAUTY

Softly.

His
grey
glass eyes.

BEAUTY is still holding his head. She starts to move his head in her hands as if involuntarily, like a water dowser.
Drumming
She stops, let the head go.
She slumps, as if exhausted.
Then, her head bowed, she starts to incant intensely. Her hands trace all of Pieter's body, in the air, and sometimes the hands seem to meet resistance, forcing them up, and BEAUTY has to aggressively press down. This happens especially over the head, they eyes and the mouth.
Drumming stops.
Silence and stillness.
BEAUTY stars intently into Pieter's eyes.
She puts one hand to his right ear and from it pulls out a long rat's tail.
Triumphant, exhausted.

Got it!
See!
I got it!

JENNIFER

Aghast.

Oh
my God

what
is it?

BEAUTY
The tail
of
a rat!

The Baas's
pain
is because
he has a
rat
gnawing
at his brain.

See,
here's the
tail.

One dark
night

rats
copulated
and the rat egg
rolled into his
ear.

The
infant rat
is still
in there

it gnaws
his skull

nibbles
his brain

into
a
bloody
ragged
mess.

JENNIFER

Rising hysteria.

No, no
this is
…
nonsense.

No.

I…

Go away

No!

BEAUTY
Quick

we have
to move
him
to the
pit!

JENNIFER
The pit?

BEAUTY
Where
the bones
are buried.

JENNIFER
The bones?

BEAUTY
Yes.

JENNIFER
Why?

BEAUTY
I don’t
know why.

Except his
tormented
spirit
tells me to
take
his body
there.

JENNIFER
No…
it isn’t
possible,

anyway

the shame.

I'd rather
let him
die
here in bed

I'd rather…

BEAUTY
There is
another way

JENNIFER
Well…?

BEAUTY
Take a
clipping
of his hair
nail
and
a scrape
of spit

down
to the pit

and exorcise
the evil things
he did
in life.

JENNIFER

Soft, trembling.

Evil?

BEAUTY

Firmly.

Yes.
Evil.

JENNIFER
I…
I don't
know
what
you mean

BEAUTY
Don't you?

JENNIFER
No
you talk
…
nonsense
…
mischief

And it's
impertinent

It…
frightens
me

BEAUTY
His spirit
Speaks,
his
troubled
spirit

JENNIFER
Will this
make
my husband well?

BEAUTY
Well?

JENNIFER
Will
he live?

BEAUTY
I'm sorry
Mrs Joubert

You don't
understand.

Keeping him
alive

is not
the
job now.

JENNIFER
No?

BEAUTY
We battle

for
his soul

JENNIFER
His soul?

BEAUTY
And
one thing's
sure,

if we
don't
obey
his spirit

his
tormented
soul
will be
gnawed
by the
Devil-rats
into an
agonised eternity!

JENNIFER

Pacing.

A lock
of hair?

BEAUTY
A nail
and

spit!

Breath – tinkling sounds. Singing – the Isinyanya come closer.

Scene 12

The pit, a broad beam of a floodlight.
BEAUTY and JENNIFER arrive via the viewing platform.
They whisper.

JENNIFER
My poor

rose garden…

BEAUTY
It’s smaller
than
I thought…

JENNIFER
How deep
is it?

BEAUTY
and shallower

JENNIFER
I can’t
see
properly
in the
dark…

BEAUTY
Not
deep
at all

It’s as if
they tossed
the bodies
in

like trash

JENNIFER whimpers.

To cast
my spell

You must
climb down
to the
bottom
of the
pit,

and mix
with
the soil

the Baas’s
hair, nail
and spit.

JENNIFER
I can’t,
I’m afraid,

I can't
climb down

it's
preposterous
at my age,

I'm scared
They've left…

things
down there.

BEAUTY
Things?

JENNIFER
More…

BEAUTY
Horrors.

JENNIFER
Yes.

BEAUTY
The small
bone
of a finger
p'raps,

JENNIFER
Don't, please.

BEAUTY
A toe,

A tooth!

Pause.

JENNIFER
You'll have
to do
it.

BEAUTY
What?

JENNIFER
I'm paying
you
aren't I?

I
order you.

BEAUTY
It
won't work
through me

Mrs Joubert.

To exorcise
the evil
Mr Joubert
did in life

it has
to be
his wife.

JENNIFER
Evil again!

BEAUTY
You must
seek
forgiveness
for him

in the pit.

That's what
his
sleeping spirit
says

JENNIFER
Forgiveness,
from whom?

BEAUTY
Don't you
know?

Pause. JENNIFER stares at BEAUTY.

JENNIFER

Stifled, desperate.

All right,

I'll do it

All right.

Gingerly, and very slowly, JENNIFER starts to shin down into the pit. A tinkling sound.
She is panting, whimpering, shaking; BEAUTY watches.

BEAUTY
Best not
disturb
the soil
too much.

JENNIFER
I'm
trying
not to

but,

it's as
dry
as dust.

BEAUTY

Surprised.

And smells
of rain.

JENNIFER

Looking up.

Look!

A drum rattle.

BEAUTY

Looking in the same direction.

What?

JENNIFER
In the
far distance,
on the hill
two figures
the warriors
from my dream.

Can
you see
them?

BEAUTY looks.

The man,

and the
fierce
robed woman
with a spear.

BEAUTY

Humouring her.

Oh yes.

JENNIFER
Who
are they?

BEAUTY
Don’t you
know?

JENNIFER shakes her head.

They are
our
ancestors

come

to protect
the bones
of the
Isinyanya
in the pit,

from

scavengers.

JENNIFER

Whispers.

Do they
think
I’m a
scavenger?

BEAUTY
Yes!

JENNIFER shakes.

We must
be quick.

Take the
hair first

In your palms.

JENNIFER
Like this?

BEAUTY
Just
like that,

exactly
like
that.

BEAUTY stiffens, her eyes glaze, she starts to sway, and wails as if in pain, this then turns into a terrifying song. Then:

Bury
his hair
in the
earth.

JENNIFER does so. A tinkling sound.

Do
you feel
the
sudden
heat?

JENNIFER
Yes
Yes.
Don’t let me
be
burnt alive!

BEAUTY
Quick,
take the nail
now,
and
plant it
like a seed.

JENNIFER does so. A tinkling.

Place
the scrape
of spit

next to
your

heart.

BEAUTY starts to hum, she seems to 'grow' – possessed by the spirits.
Drumming.
JENNIFER watches terrified.
In gruff, spirit voice.

You're back.

In her own voice.

He thinks
you've
been here
before.

JENNIFER
Who
is
he?

BEAUTY
I'm
not sure,
some ancestor
or other,

a big
knob

on
the other
side.

JENNIFER says nothing.
In gruff spirit voice.

Answer
me!

JENNIFER

Softly.

Yes…
yes…
I'm back.

BEAUTY

In gruff ancestor's voice.

You mean
back
in your
rose garden?

JENNIFER
I think
p'raps
I was
here before

long
long
ago

though
I'm not
sure.

Here,
or
hereabouts

one

dreadful

night.

BEAUTY

Curious, her own voice.

You have
to tell
the spirit.

JENNIFER

Gently, weakly.

Do I?

BEAUTY

Curiously.

Yes.

JENNIFER

Weak, strange.

Yes,
I have to
after all
these years,

I have to,
I have to,

finally –

to save

my husband's

soul.

BEAUTY

Softly.

And
perhaps
your soul
Mrs Joubert.

JENNIFER
Pieter and I
had been
married

5 years,
5 happy years,

we'd been
trying
for
a baby
without luck,

but then

I conceived
one Christmas
and
we were
so happy
both
of us

looking forward
to being
a
real family
at last.

Pause.

Pieter worked
long hours

at the
police station,

always
had done,

his work
often
seemed to

go on
long
into the
evening,

through
the night
sometimes

he'd come
back
in the
early hours,
I'd wake
to
the patter
of the
downstairs
shower

He'd fall
into bed
smelling
of soap
and…
eucalyptus

BEAUTY
What
of his
clothes?

JENNIFER
He'd put
them out
for
the girl
to wash

Pause.

He had
a couple
of
special friends.

I didn't
like
these men.

Every evening
after a few
beers,

they'd
head off
together
to some
place
or other –

following
tip-offs,
Piet said,
pursuing
leads,

standard
police cop
stuff.

'No need
to bother
your
pretty head

Jenny Wren.'

I was 23
and
pregnant.

I wanted
my husband
home
at night.

I worried.

Perhaps,

they were
going
to bars

BEAUTY
Picking up
women.

JENNIFER
Yes.

Pause.

Of course

Yes.

One night
I borrowed

a friend’s
old car.

A car
I knew
Pieter
wouldn’t
recognise.

I waited
in the
car park

of the

Sports Bar
on Bonsile
Street.

When they
came out,
the three
of them,

all merry –

I followed
keeping
a safe distance,

careful,
sly even,
in disguise
hat, glasses,
coat.

I smiled
at
the funny
stranger
in the
car mirror.

They went
back to the
police station

and after
15 minutes
came out
through
a back door

dragging –
kicking

and screaming
a young
black boy –

stuffed him
into
the car boot

and then
drove off
into the night.

I should
have gone
back home,

he wasn't
seeing
women
after all,

but

I was curious
about my
husband's
work,

about
his secret
life.

I wanted
to see

what kept
him
from me

night
after
night,
after night

and so
I
followed.

Pause.

They drove
to an
old farm,

Not too
far

from home
about 20 miles
that’s all

but

it was
dark

and the
road
twisted

And quickly
I was
lost

I turned
off
a side road

more
of a
dirt track

and waited
where
I could
look out

waited
for them
to come
back.

I waited
hours.

I don’t know
why.

Anyway,
I fell asleep

and when
I woke
It was late –

3 a m

I was
sure
Pieter
was still
there.

I thought

I must
go home now.

I'll stop
Someone,
someone
respectable

Ask
where
I am

If I leave
straight away
I'll be back
before him,
get into bed,

ruffle my hair,
pretend
I'd been there
all night.

But instead
I got out
of the car,
and walked
silently
trying not to
snap twigs
underfoot

up the track,
past the deserted
farmhouse

to where
his car
was parked.

Pause.

I could
hear my
heart
thump.

A dim
green light
came
from what
looked like

an old
cattle stall.

For some reason,

I don’t know
why,
I don’t know
why
to this day,

I stepped
inside.

It was big
and bare,
smelling of
straw.

There was
no one
there,

that’s what
I thought
at first.

Then
I heard
a drip drip
sound,

steady
and rhythmic.

I looked up.

Suspended
from
the ceiling

tied with rope

was the
young
black boy,

his belly
exposed,

whipped
into
a piece
of
raw meat

and

the dripping
was

his blood,

which

made a
sickly pool

on

the
straw floor.

I couldn't
scream.

His eyes
looked at
me.

He spoke –
I think
he spoke –

I think
I…
can't remember

if he spoke.

Did we
speak?

I heard
footsteps,

voices…

Pieter's voice.

I slipped
into
the shadows,

squatted
on my
haunches
in a
cattle stall.

The black
boy's

eyes

must have
followed
me,

I think

but they
didn't
see
me

as they
cut
him down

groaning

and dragged
him out
into
the dark

still
I didn't
move.

I heard
fire crackling,

and saw

flame
dancing
shadows.

There was
one
last bout
of
terrible screams

and then

silence.

Pause.

After a while
they
came back

in

and
sat down
on
hay bales

I heard
them…

Pause.

This
I have
tried hard
to forget

this
I can
hardly
say

I heard them

open beers

I swear

laughing,

joking…

joking…

and it…
went on

for what
seemed
to me,
to be
eternity.

Pause.

What's that
terrible
smell?

BEAUTY
Burning flesh
is it?

JENNIFER
I was
calm
at first

quite calm,

trying not
to breathe.

I thought
they'll be
gone soon

off in

the
car.

Pieter will
be worried
when he
finds I'm
not at
home.

I'll get
Janey
to ring

say

I felt
a bit
unwell
that day,

decided

to stay
the night.

They won't
find
the car
parked
in the
lane.

All
I had
to do

was wait,

stay still
and quiet

and everything
could have
gone on

perfect
as before,

but

the air
was dry
with dust
from the

straw,

and I
sneezed.

Pause.

BEAUTY
Go on
Mrs Joubert.

Finish your
story
please.

JENNIFER
Pieter sent
the men
away.

He asked
me
what I'd
seen.

I told
him.

We walked
together
to his
car.

He said
he'd send
a rookie
to pick up
Pat's car
In the lane
tomorrow.

He didn't
hold
my hand.

His face
was
very pale

like wax,

covered in
beads of
sweat

bubbles

of

sweat.

I realised
I had
seen
this man’s
wax face

before

but not
the dead
glass eyes.

He didn’t
shower

He didn’t
change
his clothes

He slept
downstairs
on the
big settee.

I begged
him
to come
to bed.

He cursed,
then cried,

told me
the black boy

was bad
all through,

a bad
lot,

that
he’d tried to
inform

against
some good
cops;

that he
was withholding

valuable
information,

he knew
names,

top names

of rebel

parties

responsible
for

serious insurrection
in
the townships.

He
became

very angry
with
the bad
black boy.

Pause.

All the time
pouring
whisky

from a
crystal
decanter

into an
English
teacup,

drinking
cup
after
cup.

He told
me
in a
strange
voice

a voice
I hadn’t
heard
before

I swear

he told

me
and I've
tried
so hard
to
forget this

so hard

for so
long

but
I couldn't…

I can't
forget this

he
told me
a body
took about
7 hours
to burn,

he'd often
gone back
he said

and found

the buttocks

still roasting.

'Imagine that'

he said

and laughed.

He laughed.

Pause.

I miscarried
that night,

nothing
dramatic
you understand,

cramps
blood and
a blob
of jelly

in the

upstairs
toilet.

Pause.

Next morning
he went back,

I know
because
he told me.

He went
back
to bury
the
black boy’s
bones
with other bones
and
bodies
in the pit

from
other nights.

Of course
I must
never speak
of what
I saw
he said,
as if I would

Pause.

Pieter never
slept
with me
again.

To my
shame
that was
his choice
not mine.

BEAUTY looks astonished.

That
surprises
you?

BEAUTY
No, Mrs Joubert,

horrifies me.

JENNIFER
He was
my husband
and I
loved him

Pause.

BEAUTY
Then
your husband
was a
devil

JENNIFER
I loved him
so much

BEAUTY
Then,
you loved
the Devil.

Pause.

JENNIFER
Will he
be
forgiven?

BEAUTY
Sorry?

JENNIFER
The spell.
I'm paying
you
to cast
a spell
to save
his soul
from hell

remember?

BEAUTY

Softly.

Oh yes
I remember now,
Eternal and Agonising

Hell.

JENNIFER
Well… ?

Long pause.

BEAUTY
There
is no
spell

Mrs Joubert.

Pause.

JENNIFER
What?

BEAUTY
Oh,
it's quite
true

I was
born
at the
very hour

my
grandfather
died.

It's true
my Xhosa
name
means
forefather's
voice

but sadly

I am
a
disappointment
to
my mother

I
was not
born
with the
caul.

I have

never
been
in touch

with ancestors,
spirits,
ghosts or

spookies

of
any
description.

I
cannot
cast
spells.

I
do not
believe
in magic.

I have
no
supernatural
powers

In fact
as
human beings
go

I
might appear
to be
pretty
powerless
Mrs Joubert.

JENNIFER
No
No!

BEAUTY
But

it seems
to me
if ever

there was
a
dying soul

condemned
to
eternal
hell
and suffering
it is
that
wretched man

your husband.

JENNIFER
You have
power.

BEAUTY
No.
I am
a
fraud.

JENNIFER
I saw
you
send
the crowd
away.

BEAUTY
A
trickster.

JENNIFER
Five hundred
strong,
they left
at your
command.

BEAUTY

Laughing.

It was dusk.

I know
the ways
of
our people.

At
the very
moment

when
the sun
sets

they leave
a burial site.

To stay
is
disrespectful,

to stay
means
mischief.

Pause.

JENNIFER
The tail –
the rat's
tail!

BEAUTY
What
about it?

JENNIFER
I saw
you
draw it
from
my husband's
ear.

BEAUTY
You are
a
foolish
woman.

If

you really
believe
a rat
nibbles
your husband's
brain?

JENNIFER
I thought
It was
magic…

I thought
it was…

a metaphor…

BEAUTY laughs.

a…

psychic
manifestation…

BEAUTY laughs louder.

I thought
it was
black magic.

BEAUTY

Laughing.

A simple
conjuring
trick.

JENNIFER
Why?

BEAUTY
To make
money
Mrs Joubert.

I have
established
a
successful
little
healing practice

The men
of course
don't like
a girl
Isangomo

In fact
they
hate it

And would
have me
destroyed

But
my successes

spread
by word
of mouth

satisfied
customers
tell their
sick
and troubled
friends

who beg
me
to make
all well.

Today
was a
particularly
successful
day

I earned

Eight thousand rand.

That is
three months
maid’s salary.

Pause.

I have
no intention
of spending
my life
in a
township
shack,

dusting

a silly

white woman’s
expensive knickknacks.

Pause.

JENNIFER
Why bring
me here?

BEAUTY
To the
pit?

JENNIFER
Yes.

BEAUTY
At
the dead
of night?

JENNIFER
Yes!

BEAUTY
I think
you
deserved it!

Pause.

JENNIFER
You
must give
me
the money
back

d'you hear?

I am
not
a rich woman
anymore.

BEAUTY
No
Mrs Joubert

Indeed
I think
you should
pay double
for my time

another
eight thousand rand
if you
please.

Pause.
JENNIFER paces.

JENNIFER
Or
you'll tell
people

I suppose.

BEAUTY

Astonished.

Tell
people?

Everyone
already
knows!

JENNIFER
Knows?
Knows what?

BEAUTY
That
the Baas
used to
beat our
brothers
and our sons,
torture
them

to death;

sometimes
in
police stations

sometimes
at night

in

evil places;

that when
the commission
people

tried
to call him
to account

he fled,

you fled
together
for a while.

JENNIFER
How dare

they
inflict
their
rough justice
on us!

Try to
humiliate
and
shame us.

Don't they
know

how we

suffered!

all these
years.

How I
suffered

Truly!

Long pause.
BEAUTY looks incredulous. She laughs.

BEAUTY
How
did you
suffer?

JENNIFER
For the last
thirty-seven years
my life
has been
a hateful sham

Pause.

Can you
imagine,

sitting opposite
each other
at the breakfast
table,

letting

the wireless
fill
the silence

opening
mail

discussing
share prices

Dottie’s
Tummy tuck

Steve’s
Drink problem.

Living together
like
polite shadows

our
lost love a
ghost
between us.

One time
his hand
brushed mine
accidentally
underneath
the table,

he snatched
it away
as if scalded.

BEAUTY
Why
didn’t you
leave him?

JENNIFER
I couldn’t
I felt…

sorry…
for him.

BEAUTY
Sorry?

JENNIFER
He
was so
ashamed

BEAUTY
Ashamed

of what
he'd done?

Pause.

JENNIFER
Ashamed
of what
I'd seen

BEAUTY
After that
night,
did the
killing and torture
continue?

Pause, JENNIFER paces.

JENNIFER
Yes.

I had
years
waiting
for him
to come
home

with

blood
on
his shoes,

I suppose

smelling
of
burnt black
flesh

and
death

I imagine

always
making for

the
cut glass decanter,

swigging
whisky

from an

English teacup.

BEAUTY
Most people
think
your husband
enjoyed
hurting
our people.

Pause.

JENNIFER

Softly.

Maybe

BEAUTY
My God!

JENNIFER
I don’t know

BEAUTY
You never
asked him

Pause.

JENNIFER
No.
I never
asked

Pause.

BEAUTY
But you
stayed
married
to this
man.

JENNIFER
I told
you
I had
no choice

BEAUTY

Very angry.

No
Mrs Joubert
you had
a choice.

You had
a
choice!

You had
a
choice!

JENNIFER

I paid
the price
didn’t I?
I paid
with thirty-seven
precious
years of
life.

I paid
with
my life

Listening
every night
in
my dreams
to that
poor boy’s
screams
of agony

Listening
to him
plead

plead
with me

to save
his
life.

Pause.
Something is happening to BEAUTY, her body is in the throes of a strange force. Contractions rack her body, wave after wave. She is screaming, but silently.

What is it?

What's happening?

What's happening
to you?

BEAUTY's body twists and contorts, as if in agony.
A sudden anguished silence, stillness.
Then.
A drip, drip sound, from the drum.

BEAUTY *AS BOY*
Help me.
Help me

please

Help me

JENNIFER
I…
I don't
know
how

BEAUTY *AS BOY*
Cut me down

Cut me down

JENNIFER
I
cut you
down

BEAUTY *AS BOY*
Untie me
Untie my
hands

JENNIFER
Yes
Yes
untie your
hands

BEAUTY *AS BOY*
My feet,

untie me

JENNIFER
Yes,
yes.
Your feet
yes

Drumming. BEAUTY as the BOY starts to untwist. It is strange, like a dance.
Finally he stands tall. JENNIFER and the BOY stare at each other.
Drumming stops.
Pause.

BEAUTY *AS BOY*
You've changed

JENNIFER
Yes
I have
changed

BEAUTY *AS BOY*
Where
is the
wide-eyed
fair-haired
girl
in sandals?

JENNIFER
Gone

BEAUTY *AS BOY*
It's strange
to have
flesh
on my bones.

Pause.

JENNIFER
Can you
forgive me?

Pause.

BEAUTY *AS BOY*
Yes

JENNIFER

She is crying.

How?

When I
can't
forgive
myself.

Pause.

Can you
forgive
him?

BEAUTY *AS BOY*
I met
under the soil

brothers:

one died
with
'Nimi'
on his
blue lips

this was

his
sweetheart's

name.

One
felt his
sister's
sweet breath
on his neck
whispering
girls' secrets;

another,
in the silence
between
the crack
of the
horse whip

heard his
mother call

and
another
and

another
and
all
the others

But

the last
thing
we all saw

before

the end
through
black blood
was
your husband's

grey glass
eyes.

Pause.

JENNIFER
Can you
forgive
him?

Blackout.
Drumming, singing. The bones speak.

Scene 13

BEAUTY and JENNIFER. They sit together in the audience, between them the musician, who drums softly through the scene. They look at the empty stage.

JENNIFER
He's dead.

BEAUTY
Who?

JENNIFER
My
husband.

BEAUTY
Is he?

JENNIFER nods.

How

do you
know?

JENNIFER
I
feel it

BEAUTY
Yes
I feel
it too!

At last.
We have
all waited
a long time
for that
man
to die.

Pause.

And the
boy
lives
it seems
through
me

She laughs.

It would
appear

I have
the caul
after all.

Pause.

JENNIFER
I knew
you were
powerful

Pause.

BEAUTY
What
will you
do?

JENNIFER
Do?

BEAUTY
Yes
do now
with your
life?

Now
you are
free

JENNIFER
I don't
know

I like
to collect
things

BEAUTY
They
collect
dust

JENNIFER
I like
to grow
things

They both look at the land.

BEAUTY
I don't
want
the roses
back

JENNIFER
No

BEAUTY
They're
greedy
for
water

JENNIFER
What kind
of garden
would you
like?

BEAUTY
I would

like big
pink flowers

JENNIFER
Bougainvillea?

BEAUTY
I don't
know
their name

JENNIFER
They're greedy
for water
too

BEAUTY
And the
creeping
purple ones

JENNIFER
Bolusanthus?

BEAUTY
Yes
I will have
a lot
of
Bolusanthus

JENNIFER
You'll need
some ground
cover

BEAUTY
Will I?

JENNIFER
Hypoxis?

BEAUTY
What
for shade?

JENNIFER
A Cestus
Africana

BEAUTY
And I

will
plant a stone
for every
lost
and tortured
soul

JENNIFER
Or Lithops
which are
living stones
flowers spring
from
cracks

Long, long pause. The drumming louder and more vibrant, then suddenly stops.

What
are your
plans

for

the

house?

Blackout.
Drumming and singing. The Isinyanya and the bones rejoice.