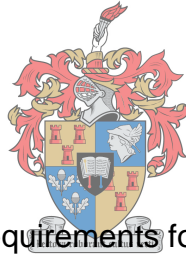


Finding Balance:

A Study of the Text and Context of Two Afrikaans Festival Comedy Scripts

by

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This study explores two critically acclaimed Afrikaans festival comedies, which are situational and predominantly located in a specific time and place, and the question how they can gain continuity in the wider theatre realm. Central to this investigation is the context in which these spectral productions have been formed and performed. Through a close analysis of the comedy texts that have enjoyed great success on recent festival circuits, this thesis seeks to identify aspects of these comedies that may account for their unusual endurance and acclaim within the festival context. A correlative aim of this research is to contribute towards creating an afterlife for the chosen scripts by making them available to other researchers.

To this end, the two original scripts, *N is vir Neurose* (2012) by Christiaan Olwagen and *Amper, Vrystaat* (2015) by Nico Scheepers, are included as addenda to this thesis. These texts are analysed within their respective original performance contexts. Given the context in which these productions have been formed, the festival space in general and the respective physical performance space in particular, have a powerful impact on the potential afterlives of the productions: these spaces are as transitory as the plays themselves. Comedy as a genre appears inherently ghost-like in this distinctly localised situation.

A contextual as well as thematic analysis of these two plays show a subtle balance between wit and taboo, as well as comedy and drama. The plays adhere to generic comedy characteristics as well as combining various techniques of humour to create refreshingly local dark comedy. These comic techniques, along with the inherent dark comedy qualities of the plays, transcend language and culture, thus increasing the potential for their continuity beyond the festival context.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie ondersoek hoe twee krities aangeskrewe Afrikaanse feeskomedies, wat omstandighedsgedrewe en meestal aan 'n bepaalde tyd en plek gebonde is, daarin kan slaag om kontinuïteit te verkry binne die wyer Suid-Afrikaanse teateropset. Sentraal tot hierdie ondersoek is die konteks waarin hierdie teaterproduksies gevorm en opgevoer word. Deur 'n noukeurige ontleding van twee komedietekste wat groot welslae behaal het tydens onlangse feeste, beoog hierdie tesis om aspekte van dié komedies te identifiseer wat hul ongewone uithou vermoë binne hierdie konteks kan verklaar. 'n Verbandhoudende doel van hierdie navorsing is om die rakleef tyd van die gekose tekste te verleng, deurdat die twee tekste hiermee beskikbaar gestel word aan ander navorsers.

Vir hierdie doel word die twee oorspronklike toneeltekste, *N is vir Neurose* (2012) deur Christiaan Olwagen en *Amper, Vrystaat* (2015) deur Nico Scheepers, ingesluit as addenda by hierdie tesis. Hierdie tekste word ontleed binne hul onderskeie oorspronklike opvoeringskontekste. Die gegewe kontekste waarin hierdie produksies gevorm is, naamlik die feesruimte oor die algemeen en die fisiese opvoeringsruimtes in die besonder, het 'n groot uitwerking op die moontlike na-lewe van die produksies: dié ruimtes is net so kortstondig soos die toneelstukke self. Komedie as 'n genre blyk inherent spektraal van aard te wees in hierdie besonder gelokaliseerde situasie.

'n Kontekstuele en tematiese ontleding van hierdie twee toneelstukke dui op 'n subtiele balans tussen skerpsinnigheid en taboe, asook komedie en drama. Die tekste voldoen aan generiese kenmerke van komedie, en verbind ook verskeie humortegnieke om verfrissende, plaaslike donker komedie te skep. Hierdie komedietegnieke, saam met die inherente eienskappe van donker komedie transendeer taal en kultuur, wat sodoende bydra tot die toename in die potensiaal vir hulle kontinuïteit buite die feeskonteks.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Question

This thesis investigates the conception and reception of two Afrikaans comedy scripts in the contemporary Afrikaans festival context. As a theatre practitioner working specifically in comedy, my primary aim is to identify and discuss the qualities that make for a successful comedy on the Afrikaans festival circuit. The appearance of art festivals and specifically the Afrikaans festivals during the past few decades created ample opportunities for young writers and artists to experiment with theatre productions which will either please or shock festival audiences, requiring a daring balancing act on a delicate tightrope tied on the one end to a handful of comedy strategies, and on the other to the daunting possibility of alienating the audience by transgressing taboos. The study encompasses two recent comedy scripts by young writers Christiaan Olwagen and Nico Scheepers, who have had notable success on the Afrikaans festival circuit during the past five years. With the permission of the authors, these unpublished scripts were made available for the purpose of this study.

Using *N is vir Neurose* (Olwagen 2012) and *Amper, Vrystaat* (Scheepers 2015) as examples of festival driven comedy I will be doing a genre and industry study within the specific context of the Afrikaans arts festivals within which these ephemeral productions were formed and performed.

Creating a comedic work for a variety of festivals across the country takes versatility and an understanding of your audience's needs and taboos. With the often rural, localised setting of the Afrikaans festival, any comedy production of this kind has to become a fine balancing act of context and wit. Humour, which is inextricably connected to comedy, will also be examined within this balance. Through a close analysis focussing on context,

structure, characters, themes and motifs I try to identify aspects of these dark comedies that may account for their unusual success and endurance in the challenging festival context. A correlative aim of this research is to contribute towards creating an afterlife for the chosen scripts by making them available to other researchers or theatre practitioners.

1.2 Definitions and Parameters

To set the scene for the theoretical discussion in Chapter 2, a few introductory remarks about the parameters of this study, as well as central concepts used in this study are pertinent.

This study focuses on Afrikaans, festival-driven theatre for two reasons: firstly, the festival realm is the context in which most Afrikaans theatre practitioners operate, and secondly, this context is always transitioning and reframing itself within the changing socio-political climate of the country.

Since the disbanding of the provincial arts councils after 1994,¹ the festival segment of the theatre industry has grown significantly. While a broader discussion of the history and characteristics of the festivals will follow in Chapter 2, it will suffice to mention in these introductory remarks that these art festivals are held nationwide annually and currently make up a large part of Afrikaans the theatre industry. The festivals are held for a limited period and the host town is transformed into a cultural hub for those few days, with all the

¹ The provincial arts councils were active in the four old provinces of South Africa from 1961, namely the Cape of Good Hope, Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal. The four councils were the Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB), the Natal Performing Arts Council (NAPAC), the Performing Arts Council of Transvaal (PACT) and the Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State (PACOFs). They provided stable work for artists and producers alike and also promoted works beyond the scope of drama, including ballets, musical productions and opera (Performing Arts Councils n.d.: Online). The arts councils provided commercial productions of high quality, funded by the apartheid government.

festivities disappearing afterwards. This reminds us of the transience of the theatre, which is the characteristic that differentiates it from other forms of literature.

South African theatre practitioner and scholar Temple Hauptfleisch describes the ephemeral nature of a theatre production as follows:

'n [D]rama [word] gevorm en hervorm [...] oor die loop van 'n sekere tydperk en [word] [...] dan aangebied [...] in 'n spesifieke plek, op 'n spesifieke tyd, onder spesifieke omstandighede. As daardie spesifieke oomblik en tyd verby is, is die opvoering verby – en dit bestaan nie meer nie (Hauptfleisch 1984: 36).

Hauptfleisch's description is all the more applicable to festival productions, where each new festival provides a new venue and performance time which the production must conform to, making each festival's performances unique. Studying theatre, especially comedy, where the humour is often contextual, can at times be like chasing a ghost. The Italian theatre maker and author Eugenio Barba describes theatre as ephemeral, something lasting only a day, or "that which changes from day to day" (Barba & Delconte 1992:96). Barba is, of course, talking about the theatre performance itself, yet it seems to be applicable to the wider South African theatre context. As much as the production becomes a ghost, so does the festival itself: a turbulent event, passing quickly, with only memories remaining.

Although Chapter 2 will deal with the theory of comedy and related terms, basic theatre terms such as 'production', 'performance' and 'performance event' need to be clarified from the beginning. 'Production' can be defined as the "particular artistic arrangement and interpretation of the text with a high degree of stability" (Balme 2008: 127). This includes everything that is used in the unique production, from lighting to set design to the blocking

of the actors. 'Performance', on the other hand, is the "particular version of the production, and it is unrepeatable" (Balme 2008: 127).

In the context of this thesis, when referring to 'the performance' I am referring to a specific performance at a specific festival. There are three levels of perception relevant to the performance: the text, the staging of the text, and the performance itself. This means that when referring to performance I refer to the full scope of the unique event being witnessed at the time (Balme 2008: 132). The 'performance event' includes the performance itself, but also the wider context of the specific day of performance in question. This includes a variety of factors such as the breaking news of the day, box office staff, the ushers and the personal circumstances of the audience members. It also includes the theatre building itself, which will be discussed later when looking at the relationship between theatrical space and performance, as well as any and all other inputs which might have an impact on the audience.

Another key concept of this study is the theatrical text, which in this thesis can be defined as "a structure of linguistic signs regulating the story and the characters" (Balme 2008: 127). This definition will be interchangeable with the term 'script'. Balme's description is useful in understanding the relationship between text and performance, which is one of intertextuality: "[T]heatrical texts are usually written with performance in mind, the performative aspect has already determined the text either consciously or unconsciously" (Balme 2008: 128).

As readers of play texts, we create the performance in our minds, yet it is still a stage performance we visualise, not a real-life situation such as we would imagine in a novel. Balme describes the relationship between text and production as an interconnected

process (2008: 129).² The theatrical text consists of written signs and is highly consistent, with various versions seldom differing. The theatrical event is also a structure, like the production. The production has a high level of consistency as well, but instead of using written signs, it uses stage signs. The performance then uses stage signs and is highly variable from performance to performance, as it is an event, not a structure (Balme 2008: 133). The audience experiences the structure and event simultaneously, and often without acknowledgement of the fact. Within this experience the audience is also aware of the genre of the play they are watching. This framing of the production through genre creates a set of expectations, in comedy most often the expectation of amusement.

When studying comedy it is important to distinguish between certain concepts that are often misinterpreted under the guise of comedy. Comedy is the genre with which we are dealing – a universal and recognisable category. By contrast, humour is the interaction between two or more parties where at least one participating party has the goal of making the other laugh. This can happen between individuals, between the writer and actors, or between actors and audience. Laughter is then the physical reaction to a humour-based stimulus (Weitz 2009: 2-3). The humoristic intention is the most distinct feature of comedy. Although this is the generally accepted outlook on comedy, it is important to note that just because something is humorous, it is not necessarily a comedy.

Weitz argues that just as a drama or tragedy is not only predominantly “sad”, so too a comedy is not exclusively “funny” (Weitz 2009:10). In his 2014 article, Tzachi Zamir

² We start with the text written as a script to be performed. From here, Balme states, it is split into the implicit stage signs, the main text that consists of the dialogue, and the explicit stage signs that lead to the secondary text. This secondary text is the stage directions in-between dialogues. According to Balme, stage directions can be linguistic or non-linguistic. Linguistic stage directions are the directions given to the actors on how to deliver lines, including intonation, dialect or rhythm. The non-linguistic stage directions are divided into two parts: character and space. The character descriptions can be about costume, makeup, props and gestures, where the space directions can give indications of the set design, lighting, general props and sound (Balme 2008: 129). All of these elements come together to create what we experience at the performance.

expands on this outlook of comedy and argues that there has to be a difference between the laughter reaction and the genre itself: “to reduce comedies to laughter risks distorting what the genre is about” (180). Now that these terms have been delineated, the relationship between them will be simpler to understand in the fluid festival context in which the texts under discussion have been produced.

1.3 The Texts

As pointed out above this thesis focuses on the original comedy scripts *N is vir Neurose* (2012) by Christiaan Olwagen, and *Amper, Vrystaat* (2015) by Nico Scheepers. The analysis of these texts follows in Chapters 3 and 4. The following remarks are a few introductory statements about them.

N is vir Neurose takes place in a living room on the night of Liz’s kitchen tea. Combining traditional dialogue with personal monologues, the three female leads work through their own personal issues while unearthing the rotten roots of their friendship. The single male character, a stripper called Japie, becomes the catalyst for this refreshing comedy as he himself struggles with an overbearing mother and an absent boyfriend. They drink champagne, laugh, dance, cry, and sing until they finally make peace with their anxieties and their mortality.

Amper, Vrystaat tells the story of three sisters returning to their hometown of Amper in the Free State province for their mother’s funeral. The family’s history and the sisters’ dynamics are laid out for the audience in monologue form. All the monologues lead up to the mother’s tragic death and the sisters’ reunion in the town from which they had so desperately wanted to escape.

These two productions have been chosen because both have been nominated for and won awards, and have had comparatively long runs in the context of South African art festivals. In using these texts for this study the potential is hopefully created for further research, or even, ultimately, new performances of these successful dark comedies.

CHAPTER 2 – THEORY, METHODOLOGY AND CONTEXT

2.1 Methodology

This research conducts an industry and genre analysis to contextualise the chosen productions, with particular focus on the festival context in which these works have been produced. To this end, I discuss the history and development of the festival context, the influence of space on the productions, and the undeniable parallels with the medieval carnivalesque, as described by Mikhail Bakhtin. I will also look at the genre of comedy and how it functions within contemporary festivals. Within the genre study, I will use Humour Theory³ to identify certain aspects of productions that have come to be synonymous with successful comedies, and within my thematic analyses of the plays, I will discuss the use and merit of these factors. In this regard, I will focus in particular on their original performance contexts, and will aim to determine the techniques and themes that contributed to their success as comedies and made them worth studying as part of this thesis.

2.2 The Festival Context

In South Africa the arts festivals provide the main channels of work for Afrikaans theatre practitioners. The festivals function both as patrons of, and as platforms for, the theatre and other performing arts. In the time directly following the abolition of the apartheid regime, the South African theatre industry underwent a transformation. There was a return to a more formal form of theatre after the largely improvisational, workshop-based style of the 1980s and the focus shifted back to theatre as a form of entertainment (Van Coller and Van Jaarsveld 2006: 78) and comedies became popular, as Van Heerden describes: “The choice of subject matter and dramatic style also tended to shift towards the lowest, popular

³ Specifically looking at the Superiority Theory, Incongruity Theory and Relief Theory.

common denominator. Easily digestible light comedy and even attempts at broad farce became very common” (2011: 200).

The Afrikaans arts festival has become both consumer event and cultural pilgrimage. The shift towards festival-driven theatre in Afrikaans was initiated by the founding of the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK) in Oudtshoorn, in 1995. Currently, the viability of the Afrikaans theatre industry seems to be almost inseparable from the arts festivals. After the gradual shutting down of the provincial arts councils from 1997 onwards, arts festivals became the only haven for regular performances. Besides KKNK, the other three major Afrikaans festivals are Stellenbosch University’s (SU) Woordfees in Stellenbosch, the Vrystaat Kunstefees (formerly Vryfees and Volksblad Kunstefees) hosted in Bloemfontein, and the Aardklop festival in Potchefstroom. With these four festivals spread throughout the year, theatre practitioners could plan ahead according to the curation of their productions for the various festivals.⁴

Establishing continuity through audience development has become a crucial part of the industry.⁵ In the festival context, this can be seen today in the Dagbreek Trust’s⁶ new initiative of audience development. It is significant to note that where audience development programmes were originally used as exposure for new audience members to

⁴ Here we should just take a moment to acknowledge two other Afrikaans-oriented festivals which have been gaining a following over the past few years, namely the Gariiep Kunstefees, established in 2001 in Kimberley (Gariiep Arts Festival n.d.: Online), and the Innibos Fees in Nelspruit, which has been operating since 2003.

⁵ With word of mouth being a strong marketing tool the continuity of a production into the daily popular culture of society will inevitably translate into profit for both the artists as well as the festivals (Hauptfleisch 2007: 264 – 268).

⁶ The Dagbreek Trust is a trust that has its roots in the printed media. It started as the politically independent weekly newspaper, *Dagbreek*, in 1947. Originally the newspaper set out to create unity between Afrikaans- and English-speaking South Africans. In 1953 the Afrikaans takeover of the newspaper started after that, and according to Die Vryburger, the Dagbreek Trust was greatly supported by Afrikaans nationalists, with significant bonds with the apartheid regime’s National Party. (Stigting van Dagbreektrust 2014: Online). According to their website the trust underwent an expansion between 2009 and 2010 by creating an infrastructure within which a wider group of Afrikaans speakers could benefit from the trust. In 2013 and 2014 they once again expanded making more resources available for bigger projects. In recent years the Dagbreek Trust has been known to support and fund many Afrikaans cultural events and initiatives, with the theatre audience development programme being one of them (Ons Agtergrond 2016: Online).

taboo subject matter and stories that they did not have access to in the apartheid years, the recent focus of audience development strategies seems to be on profit, and re-establishing the festival as a consumer event rather than an artistic platform (Marais 2016: 45).

The latest audience development programme from the Dagbreek Trust was undertaken in partnership with the National Afrikaans Theatre Initiative (NATI), starting with the translated French farce, *Hond se Gedagte* in 2016. Using a comedy as the first production of the audience development programme makes the theatre more accessible to audience members who might feel intimidated by heavier subject matter.⁷ It is significant for this study that the Dagbreek Trust chose a comedy over a drama, as this shows the importance of comedy within the festival context.⁸

According to an interview with the executive officer of NATI since 2016, Cornelia Faasen, NATI is “n befondsing- en ontwikkelingsliggaam vir verdienstelike teater” (Roggeband n.d: Online). The use of the word “verdienstelike” (worthy) theatre in their criteria for funding seems to be very subjective, and with the influence of the Dagbreek Trust on NATI, some sceptics wonder what lies behind this project because of the Dagbreek Trust’s connection with Afrikaner Nationalism, while others are merely overjoyed that the funding is available.⁹ For the first time the six major festivals in South Africa are working together as part of the ‘feesteforum’¹⁰ in order to curate and produce productions for festivals. With the

⁷ Comedies have always been popular on the festival circuit as they underscore the light-heartedness often felt at these types of festivals (Bain and Hauptfleisch 2011: 13), (Van Heerden 2008: 200).

⁸ Of course, *N is vir Neurose* and *Ampers, Vrystaat* were developed independently from any audience development programmes, giving their success even greater merit.

⁹ In the 2017 NATI production *Piekniek by Mpande neë Dingaan*, the topic was ironically raised as to whether it is fair to be funding the arts when people are suffering and homeless (Roggeband n.d: Online).

¹⁰ This forum was started after Repucom, a leading researching company focusing on sport and events, was approached in 2014 in order to give advice about sustainability to the six major festivals. According to Taalgenoot, the festival organisers were warned to stop seeing the festival industry as a competition and to rather work together to create a market for themselves within the greater entertainment market in South Africa (Marais 2016: 43).

partnerships of the festivals, it seems that this is a more sustainable model for both artists and organisers. Having given an overview of the current state of the festivals, what follows is a brief history and description of the major Afrikaans arts festivals in the country.

2.2.1 KKNK

In 1995 the Karoo town of Oudtshoorn hosted the first 'Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees' (KKNK). An arts festival is differentiated from any other cultural festival by a specific focus on the arts, both visual and performative. Arts festivals were initially developed to support the arts industry and also, as in the mission statement of the KKNK, "to promote excellence in the arts; to promote access to the arts; and to develop artists, festival attendees and entrepreneurs" (Pretorius, Viviers and Botha 2014: 160). A year after the first KKNK, the audiences attending the next one tripled. KKNK gave the Afrikaans language a platform to enrich its culture and language as well as to establish it as a serious competitor in the arts sector (Hauptfleisch 1997: 165). However, the original rationale for the KKNK was not based on creating an Afrikaans language festival. Herman Kitshoff writes that in an interview Rhodè Snyman, marketing manager of the KKNK just after its inception, stressed that the festival "should be an arts festival, not a language or cultural festival" (2004: 69). This has, of course, changed over the years, most significantly in 1999 when the festival's "Afrikaans over 100" theme marked the Afrikaans language centenary, celebrating all aspects of the language, its history and future (Kitshoff 2004: 71). It is significant that this also coincides with the year that all state funding for the festival was stopped (Kitshoff 2004: 72). Whether this was a coincidence or a direct attack on the festival and its Afrikaans origins, KKNK is still seen as a major Afrikaans-language festival that uses the arts to promote Afrikaans and its communities (Pretorius et al 2014: 178).

The KKNK remains a leader in its field when it comes to producing debut works. According to Pretorius, KKNK has been the developing platform for 70% of all new Afrikaans theatre productions since 1995 (2014: 160). With KKNK's big success and contribution to Afrikaans culture, more festivals were destined to follow with similar goals of developing, among other things, the Afrikaans theatre industry.

2.2.2 Aardklop

Following the success of KKNK, the Aardklop festival was established in 1998 (Aardklop n.d.: Online). The festival is held annually in September in Potchefstroom and since 1998 has grown into a festival that has attracted attendance as large as 150 000 during the week of the festival (Van Zyl and Querios 2009: 33). Initially Aardklop was seen as northern South Africa's answer to KKNK (Young 2001: 149). Elma Young says that it is ironic that such a progressive festival should be held in Potchefstroom, which has always been seen as a fiercely conservative town (2001: 149). The conservative setting of Aardklop cannot be denied, and Young refers to Deon Opperman's article on Litnet where he says that these 'arts' festivals are in fact purely regional festivals, with the local milieu having a great influence on the curation of productions and overall atmosphere of the festival. It seems that, even more than KKNK, the greater percentage of Aardklop festival-goers are not regular theatre attendees (Young 2001: 149). The organisers hoped that, by attending the festival, audiences might be exposed to unknown and interesting art forms that they might never have experienced were it not for the festival, and that these new theatre attendees will, in turn, translate into regular audience members. Of course, an influx of people does not always translate into ticket sales. As Saartjie Botha warns in her 2004 article for Litnet: "[b]ierdrinkende, roosterkoek-etende, tentsittende kunstefeesgangers laat die geld inrol vir elke skool, kerk en ouetehuis met 'n stalletjie, terwyl teaters en sale leër raak" (Online).

This is of great importance for the future of these types of festivals, which have been criticised for filling the beer tents and not the theatres. Aardklop was one of the first festivals to publicly feel the strain of dwindling audience members and a negative connotation of the festival within the community (Blackburn 2017: Online). In February 2016 after the withdrawal of a main sponsor it was announced that Aardklop in its current form will no longer exist and be replaced with the Aardklop Foundation. The chairperson of the foundation, Louise Barrett says “that after 18 years it was time to reevaluate whether the festival in its current format was still a suitable vehicle to support the arts” (Aardklop festival 2016: Online). After a public outcry and the support of major sponsors the Potchefstroom Arts Festival was founded and in May of 2016 the Potchefstroom Arts Festival announced that the upcoming festival in October of that year would once again be called Aardklop. This decision was made along with the Aardklop Foundation as an honouring of the eighteen year association of the brand name with the host town (Potchkunstefees 2016: Online). This scramble to save the festival by "taking it back to the people" is described on Maroela Media by the festival manager Alexa Strachan:

Die fees was nuttig en moes voortgaan, daarom kon dit nie bloot gestaak word nie. Maar daar was geen begroting nie, 'n negatiewe persepsie en slegs drie maande om die fees suksesvol te laat gebeur ... Die gemeenskap het gesê Aardklop was nie meer vir die gemeenskap nie. Ons moes vra dat mense ons hande vat sodat ons die fees weer terug na hulle kon vat. Die persepsie was dat ondernemings van buite die dorp geld gemaak het en die geleentheid van die plaaslike gemeenskappe vervreem is. Ons moes belof ons sal die fees weer na die mense neem (Blackburn 2017: Online).

Dewald van Breda, the chairperson of the festival in its new permutation as the Potchefstroom Arts Festival, trading under Aardklop, writes in the introduction to the 2016

festival programme that they are returning to their roots in the sense of returning to the original festival grounds as well as including the local community as an integral part of the organisation once again. Van Breda writes that: “Aardklop 2016 is ’n progressiewe fees waar die kunste behoorlik uitgestal word en die hele gemeenskap met entoesiasme omarm word” (Van Breda 2016: 2). Since then it seems to be business as usual with the 2017 festival chairperson, Japie Gouws, starting his opening letter of the festival with “Aardklop is nie dood nie! Lank lewe Aardklop!” (2017: Online). With the help of sponsors and the local community, Aardklop has been able to resurrect itself and, for now, remains a major player of the festival circuit.

2.2.3 Woordfees

The University of Stellenbosch’s Woordfees was established by Prof Dorothea van Zyl in 2000, initially as a 24-hour writer’s festival (Malan 2014: 29). Since then this festival has grown into a two-week-long celebration of Afrikaans literature and arts. Before the establishment of Woordfees, the only festivals focused on writers specifically were the Time of the Writer festival in Natal and small subsections of writers’ discourses at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival and at KKNK (Malan 2014: 29). Set in a university town, with the university as the main affiliate, the festival has always had a strong academic and literature-based undercurrent. The festival’s proximity to major cultural towns like Paarl and Franschhoek and the city of Cape Town opens up possibilities for Cape-based practitioners and audiences alike, since less money is spent on accommodation and travel, leaving more for attending productions. During the 2013 Woordfees 2 873 artists and speakers performed in 253 productions at the Woordfees, with 34% of them sold out (Malan 2014: 30).

Woordfees, because of its literary focus and an influence from the Netherlands,¹¹ has an international presence, which some other arts festivals have yet to achieve. In 2015 the well-known theatre producer and writer Saartjie Botha¹² took over from Van Zyl as festival Director. Since then the festival has grown more diverse, while still keeping its essence as a literary-based festival. In an interview with Naomi Meyer in 2015, Botha says that she hopes that the festival will become a place where artists will feel able to present daring and experimental work (Meyer 2015: Online). With the current troubled socio-political climate in South Africa as well as the festivals becoming more collaborative, artists are given the opportunity to experiment in more adventurous ways.

2.2.4 Vrystaat Kunstefees

By the turn of the millennium, festivals were booming and in 2001, a year after the first SU Woordfees was held, the Volksblad Festival was started on the campus of the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein. Since then this festival has gone through several permutations. It was renamed the Vryfees in 2011 and in 2016 the festival was renamed for the third time as the Vrystaat Kunstefees. According to the mission statement on the official website, the festival in its current form positions itself as:

'n Afrikaanse taalfees wat kreatiewe kragte tussen Engels en Sotho kulture saamsmee. Ons dra by tot die uitruil van idees rondom kuns, kultuur en die samelewing deur verbintenisse met ander nasionale en internasionale kreatiewe gemeenskappe (Vrystaat Kunstefees 2016: Online).

The inclusion of Sotho culture in their arts festival makes the Vrystaat Kunstefees arguably more inclusive of other indigenous cultures and languages than Woordfees or KKNK. Their

¹¹ Van Zyl and her husband studied in the Netherlands and witnessed how that country promoted its writers and literature (Malan 2014: 29) . Because of their academic contacts, the festival has always kept links with universities and literature societies in the Netherlands, often inviting them to participate in the festival.

¹² Botha had also been the coordinator of the Woordfees theatre programme since 2001.

mission statement indicates that this festival also aims to open up a dialogue with creative practitioners both nationally and internationally, giving their productions a farther reach and placing the Vrystaat Arts Festival on the global map.

Since the initial rise of the Afrikaans arts festival, artists have had a reasonably reliable source of work when productions are curated. Though the events that recently transpired at Aardklop might be worrying, it seems the festivals are in a transitional phase of becoming more collaborative with each other and inclusive of all cultures and languages. With a weak economy, the consumer event of the festival seems to be suffering, yet the lure of the festival is still strong, with many people still making the cultural pilgrimage to indulge in their own language festival.

2.3 Space

Considering the diverse elements of a performance, there are a few important factors that influence the text, performance, design and reception of it, as much as the space in which the performance takes place. As will be discussed the physical space also has psychological significance for the audiences involved. The re-appropriation of space during festivals combines the physical and psychological elements in order to create the performance space, which often influences the nature and reception of the production.

2.3.1 The Influence of Space

In the transitory atmosphere of the festival context described above, the relation between space and script is foregrounded, and the influence of space on script is particularly heightened. 'Space' might refer to the bigger context of the city, town or community, or can be as focused as the performance space itself. As the German literary scholar Wolfgang Iser describes it:

From the concrete realities of the organisation of space through urban planning and public works, to the abstract realms of mental and dream space, our conception of space both public and private has been revealed to shape our understanding of the world (2010: 66).

Our perception of our world is defined according to our sense of space. Whether demographic or geographic, we use space as a point of reference to interpret our situation (Iser 2010: 66). It goes without saying, then, that our performance spaces will ultimately influence an audience member's experience. According to Peter Brook's famous formulation, all that is needed for a performance is one person walking across an empty space with one other person watching them (1968: 7). Brook's concept suggests a very wide definition of a performance space. Marvin Carlson also believes that Brook's concept points to something before the performance space. It is not making theatre out of a void, but merely using a space that is now empty, that might not always have been (2003: 133). He believes that this gives the space a potential for "ghosting". This term is used here as a source of reference to the past for the audience member, whether it be the "ghosting" of an actor previously seen in a different type of role, or the performance space previously being used for a different purpose.

This last point about "ghosting" is particularly relevant in the context of the arts festival, where the performance space is not constant, as the productions are always housed in different spaces as they travel from festival to festival. More often than not, these performance spaces (e.g. school halls or churches) are not dedicated theatres and this adds an extra layer of history for the audience members watching the performance. Any factor influencing the immediate reception of the performance has an impact on the continuity of the play, as described by Hauptfleisch's metaphor of the theatrical event as

seismic event where we see a myriad of factors, from the playwright's reputation to the venue, influencing the continuity of the play. It creates a shockwave in society that relies greatly on perception and word of mouth conversations (2007: 264 – 268).

In the 1990s, after the disbanding of the provincial arts councils, several theatres closed their doors for good and alternative venues increasingly began to double as performance spaces (Van Coller and Van Jaarsveld 2006: 71). This shift, and the increased popularity of the festivals, necessarily led to theatre practitioners adapting the style of their texts and performances to this transitional context. Independent theatre companies, which rely mostly on ticket sales for their profits and sustainability, had to adapt to the travelling nature of the arts festival circuit and because of this the productions themselves underwent a transformation.

What has emerged is a set of informal “conventions” which typically restrict the size and scope of productions, limiting *inter alia* duration, number of cast members, sophistication of sets, props, costumes and technical requirements ... Such developments may hint at a radical decline in the need for sophisticated theatre spaces as they are understood from a Western or European tradition (Bain and Hauptfleisch 2001: 15).

As with the workshop-based political theatre of the 1980s, the use of and need for formal theatres has been declining as a result of a lack of resources and funding. School halls, community centres and churches, with a range of acoustics and seating arrangements, are often used at rural arts festivals for performances. Thus space has come to have a profound impact on how theatre practitioners perceive the possibilities of performance. The Vrystaat Arts Festival is the exception here, as the University of the Free State has

several auditoriums that can be used as fully-fledged theatres during the festival.¹³

However, this is an exception, and Afrikaans festival-goers have become accustomed to the use of alternative venues. Some more dilapidated or damaged performance spaces also influence the perception of the audience.¹⁴ Since the start of the arts festivals, great care has been taken to update the technical features of these halls, as well as building temporary tiered seating so as to create better sight lines.

Festivals that have dedicated venues according to genre use this trace of previous visits to create a returning audience.

Attending a play is so much bound up with the rather complex physical experience of finding and experiencing a particular physical location that subsequent visits to this same location will almost inevitably evoke traces of previous ones, which theatre managers seeking to attract repeat audiences will often encourage just as actors will repeat a character or character type of proven popularity (Carlson 2003: 153).

The Baanbreek venue at KKNK is a good example of the type of venue that Carlson describes, as it is a dedicated venue used every year for more experimental and emerging theatre productions. Going into this venue you expect to be challenged and to experience the shifting of boundaries. Arriving with this expectation opens you up to the experience

¹³ In 2015 the Scaena Theatre hosted six comedies including the critically acclaimed *Amper, Vrystaat*. The Mango-Willie Mouton theatre and the OFM-Albert Wessels Auditorium are also both professional theatres, which makes for a well-rounded experience for the audience members (Vryfees 2015: 28-31).

¹⁴ During the 2016 SU Woordfees the burnt-out shell of the Klein Libertas Theatre was used as a venue for *Moeder Moed en Haar Kinders*, an Afrikaans version of Brecht's *Mother Courage and her Children*. The ruins of the old theatre made the perfect setting for the war-torn milieu of the play and helped create an authenticity that would have been hard to recreate in a formal theatre setting.

instead of resisting its controversial nature. This general association with genre and venue can be seen throughout theatre history.¹⁵

Audience experience of the performance is also shaped by the pre-production space. Factors such as the form of marketing, as well as the places where certain marketing materials such as posters or branded items are found will all influence the type of audience that is reached, and will also serve to contextualise the performance for the audience. For example, Artscape Opera always has very prominent posters put up on lampposts in the city bowl of Cape Town. People have grown accustomed to look at these lampposts for information on the latest shows. A poster in a local library and convenience store will create different expectations about the quality of the production.

Another factor that influences audience perception is the physical reality of the space in relation to the fictional place represented. No matter what design is followed, in some way the stage is always present, fictionalizing the action on the stage (McAuley 1999: 91). In a festival setting, where stages can at times be more improvised than in a real theatre, this is even more applicable. Of course, practitioners working at festivals will be aware of the interference that occurs with a specific space and the underlying realities of a space ghosting the production. Most current festivals will give the practitioner a choice of venue upon entry to the festival. Considerations that are taken into account when selecting the venue include capacity (as an intimate sketch comedy might not work in a 500-seat school hall), design (a farce's box set would need a bigger stage area and auditorium in order not to feel overwhelming) and setting (the play's setting will eventually have to be merged with the festival space).

¹⁵ As an example, Napoleon made a law that certain theatres were only allowed to put on a certain genre of play, so as to control the political tool that was the theatre. Thus, the Théâtre Français was allowed to put on only tragedies and comedies, and the Théâtre de l'Opéra was reserved for musical and dance productions (Lacombe 2001: 245).

Other technical aspects can also be considered, for example, a smaller venue will inevitably have a smaller lighting rig, the need to use projections might also dictate choice of venue, and acoustics could play a part in a production with musical elements. In the end the production will inevitably have to be adaptable, as each festival's venues are different and the design will always have to adapt to the given space. This is what makes each festival performance a unique event.

2.3.2 The Festival Space and Carnival

The remote settings and great distances of these festivals in relation to each other have created a culture of festival-oriented travelling. Theatre practitioners and all involved in productions, as well as audiences, make a pilgrimage to the festivals. Carlson writes about the cultural festival in Bayreuth that is applicable to the South African theatre context as well:

It requires its audiences not merely to go to a different part of their city but to undertake a major journey to a location far from the areas they normally frequent and associated specifically with its theatrical offerings (2003: 156).

These types of festivals also nurture faithful audiences, who not only undertake the journey for the sake of the arts, but also for the event of making the pilgrimage and experiencing things outside of their everyday life. Pacey refers to KKNK as a 'residential' theatre as it is a festival that "mainly draws visitors from around the country who book accommodation to stay for several days" (2011: 231). This is true for KKNK and Aardklop, as both festivals are hosted in more remote areas of the country, although Aardklop does have several towns nearby and is also within driving distance of major cities such as Johannesburg and Pretoria, and does therefore also have quite a number of day visitors (Pacey 2011: 233). The Vrystaat Arts Festival could also arguably be classified as a

pilgrimage festival in its area. Bloemfontein is one of the only major cities in the province and consequently the festival will, besides city-dwellers, typically attract residents from the rural Free State areas. It can be said that Woordfees has not yet needed to develop as a residential festival in the way that KKNK has, perhaps because of its proximity to the Cape Town metropolis and other large towns in the vicinity, as well as the fact that many Afrikaans theatre practitioners live in the area.

The idea of a residential theatre and the pilgrimage made by theatre practitioners might also have an influence on how productions are perceived at the festivals. Audiences gather in a temporary liminal space for a limited duration of time and experience a transient performance event.

Going beyond the physical spaces of the performance areas, the audience members find themselves in a broader festival space. An unpublished chapter by Hauptfleisch is quoted in J.L. Coetser's article on the event of Afrikaans theatre and says that the whole frame of the event, the whole system, and not only the theatrical artefact of the production or performance, create meaning and engender communication (Coetser 2003: 11). When looking at our frame of the festival, we see that festivals "eventify occasions in a way similar to ancient festivals" (Coetser 2003: 10) by making everyday tasks into events made meaningful because of a response by those watching or involved in a specific context. Coetser believes that "time and space are major eventifying agents" (2003: 12). By attending a festival, audience members are automatically taken to the time and space of the festival, entailing the suspension of the everyday life, what Bakhtin called "the carnivalesque."

Our festival culture has an undertone of the carnival – a concept that dates back to the Middle Ages. The carnival was an important part of a community's life and functioned as

an official break from their everyday routines. The carnival was seen as a 'second life', a liminal space (Bakhtin 1984: 6). The carnival, as described by Bakhtin, "is the people's second life, organised on the basis of laughter. It is a festive life" (1984: 8). Some of the defining characteristics of the carnival are the breaking down of hierarchal power structures, from which stems a free interaction between classes. Because of this, we also see a change in the behaviour of the community, with certain behaviours becoming acceptable during the time of the carnival, which is also associated with a relaxed language used during the carnival (Bahktin 1984: 10).

The grotesque body is also seen as part of the carnival where "images of the human body with its food, drink, defecation, and sexual life, plays a predominant role" (Bahktin 1984: 18). Along with this we have the dual body – one part dying and grotesque and the other being resurrected through fertility rituals (Bahktin 1984: 26). Along with the idea of fertility is a sense of abundance and growth that goes beyond the individual and applies to the community and "the collective ancestral body of all the people" (Bahktin 1984: 19). New birth can only come after a death or suffering, so that the people can resurrect themselves from it and renew the community as a whole.

We see quite a few similarities between the carnival of the Middle Ages, as described by Bakhtin, and our South African arts festival tradition, which seems to give audience members a chance to experience a 'second life' where they enter a town that has been transformed for the purpose of the festival. As such, normal hierarchies are often suspended. This includes domestic constraints, as most people go to festivals on holiday, as well as more practical factors like the suspension of traffic. Within this space they can move freely in unfamiliar places and between people whom they normally would not meet. The festival carnivalesque rituals we see include choosing shows, eating street food, and

socialising with members of all different classes.¹⁶ Behaviour is also different during this liminal time as Afrikaans festival-goers indulge in food, drink and socialising, often leading to drunken behaviour and crude use of language. This links with the great sense of abundance that is felt during the festival time, where all needs are met in plentifulness (by those who can afford it). We see a certain degree of change in festival-goers, as they go about their days removed from their everyday routines, but it is difficult to say whether this is because of the carnivalesque elements of the arts festival, or because they find themselves in a new space, stimulated by exposure to different art forms.

Esther van Heerden, on the other hand, disagrees with the concept of the festival as a liminal carnival space, arguing that this is a limiting perspective in festival research:

Festivals take place during a liminal period – a time set apart from ordinary time. The literature on festivals generally assumes liminality to be a given, a taken-for-granted backdrop against which festivals unfold, and hence devote little attention to it ... This suspended liminal state, according to the literature, presupposes a number of things: a ‘different reality’; the insignificance of everyday concerns; the engagement in unusual activities; and the application of special rules (2011: 54).

Factors that create the liminal space of the festival are “extensive planning and preparation, different sense of time, the alteration of everyday routines, re-discovery and re-appropriation of private and public spaces, the activation of festival spaces, and the reworking of rules” (Van Heerden 2011: 55). According to Van Heerden, though we see these elements in our festival constructs, there seems to be a lack of the kind of freedom that is found in the Bakhtinian concept of the carnivalesque. Van Heerden goes on to

¹⁶ In most festival settings artists, cultural tourists and regular theatre goers would be integrated into the environment of the local members of the community, with some venues being in or near community carnivals in areas surrounding town centres.

argue that even though these factors of liminality are present in our South African festival context, it seems that it is a constructed liminal event, with very clear demarcations for festival areas and also strict trading hours and schedules. The spaces that are transformed into public spaces are often to the detriment of the local communities of the town where the festival is held as their roads are blocked, parking becomes a problem and often the local residents of the town leave during festival time in order to avoid the crowds. The need to ensure the safety of the festival-goers has also made the planning and infrastructure much more controlled, removing the spontaneous freedom associated with the liminal festival space of the carnival. The audience, as participants in this constructed liminality, are conditioned to act in a different way, yet it is a conditioning that they voluntarily embrace.

In seeking out the structured festival space, the audience also participates in the framing of the productions. Although the productions are received within this framework, it is a framework in which the audience is complicit, and they are able to unframe it at any time. Bakhtin highlights his point of the reality found in the carnival when he says that the “carnival does not know footlights” (1984: 7). Van Heerden’s position, in contrast, shows us that our festivals do indeed have footlights. As she rightly points out, the audience just chooses to ignore them and rather embraces the false sense of liberation that is associated with these types of liminal activities. Festival performances take place in this perceived ‘different’ time, which is not part of the audience’s daily routine and greatly influences the way in which the audience receives the performance at the time.

In agreement with Van Heerden, it should be underlined that although there is a certain sense of liberation during festival time, the festivals are still consumer events. It is expensive to attend these festivals and even more expensive to run them. Saartjie Botha

recently commented in an article for Maroela media that all festivals are suffering and that they are making less than a 10% profit (Blackburn 2017: Online). With sponsorships keeping the festivals afloat it seems to take away some of the pure freedom that was associated with the carnival. Nonetheless, the concept of carnival as Bakhtin describes it is useful in a study of comedy, as the carnivalesque can also be a source of comedy: since humour is often found in the reversal of power positions in society as happens during carnival. Comedic texts produced within this carnivalesque context will inevitably carry with it the liberated humour that is associated with the carnival time and with which the audience associates as festival attendees.

2.4 Comedy

Having thus established the contexts that shape the productions under discussion, it is necessary to consider comedy as a genre more closely in order to fully understand these plays. The term comedy itself is controversial in that it has become an all-encompassing term for various forms of drama, literature and performance making a concrete and simple definition almost impossible. Andrew Stott says that the reason for this wide scope of the term is because “comedy is as much a tonal quality as a structural one” (2005: 2). It is ironic how the term has developed from the ancient form of comedy with its very rigid conventions of chorus, song, dance and a festive ending. Zamir also offers an interpretation of comedy as tonal, by arguing that the objective mood of a particular offering is what defines it as a comedy:

While comedy does not progressively raise an emotion in the same manner as tragedy, it is nonetheless expected to achieve a particular effect: a mood. The mood established by comedy involves cheerfulness and a positive sense of life – the optimism arising from a fictional fulfilment of the hope that seemingly

insurmountable tensions can be resolved, and that obstacles to happiness may be overcome (2014:176).

Zamir distinguishes between emotion and mood, which are parallel concepts, yet distinguishable. Though we might experience emotions within a certain mood, the mood we are in will dictate how these emotions manifest. With an amused mood, as elicited by comedy, the audience member or reader will “regard potentially disheartening thoughts lightly” (Zamir 2014:177). Within this comedic tone or mood we can then come to understand darker comedies. These are works that, in structure and subject matter, might not be considered as typical comedies. However, when regarding comedy as more than just a set of generic conventions of a specific form, these works do elicit a comedic tone and mood.

Stott believes that in approaching comedy it is not advisable to try and insist on a single theoretical framework or literary theory, but rather to approach comedy thematically “accepting what appears to be its bifurcated nature by treating it as a multifaceted and diverse series of events, rather than a generic totality, and evoking particular theories or concepts only whenever they might usefully help us to understand comic ideas” (2005: 14). Acknowledging the fluidity of the genre, we then rather look at the broad spectrum of themes, motifs, conflicts and devices that make up a comedy and create these series of events that evoke a certain tone.

Zamir notes several concepts which we can find in comedies and which I will also be discussing within my analyses so as to demonstrate the merit of the texts as comedies. Zamir writes that most comedies have young protagonists preoccupied by love and/or

tensions with the old. *Die Wagkamer* (2015)¹⁷ is a case in point, which demonstrates that this is not always the case, as it has two senior characters as protagonists, yet the tension between them and their younger children is often a source of humour. Secondly, all comedies “end in a note of continuity, often a marriage or the promise of one” (2014: 177). Next Zamir notes that characters in comedies are seldom dignified – not often inferior to the audience itself, yet not elevated above them. In this sense we see that peer recognition is of importance to the relatability of comedy. Within the acknowledgement of truth in a situation, the audience frames the scenario and gives the comedy a foundation from which to transgress. It is within these incongruous transgressions that the humour often lies, but without the shared frame, the audience cannot recognise these incongruities. In comedy there is often suffering and pain, yet death and the loss of a loved one is often avoided. If however, as we see in *Amper, Vrystaat*, the plot does involve death, it is as a means to an end, as explained by Zamir: “If they are introduced to us grieving, comic protagonists will soon find comfort. If they are suffering, such is typically a justly earned punishment for their own arrogance. If they are deserted by a beloved, the love itself was empty to begin with” (2014: 177). The development from the grief, heartbreak and suffering is what is important in comedy, not the act itself. In the same line of thought, antagonists often come in the form of the arrogant and will merely be humbled or reprimanded rather than severely punished or killed. Complications on the way to happiness usually come in the form of foolishness. Zamir describes some of these forms of foolishness:

Underestimation of a problem, overestimation of one’s control, obtuseness, pretentiousness, misplaced trust, the offhand dismissal of warning signs, narrow-mindedness, mistaking surface for content, or external behaviours for true feeling (2014: 179).

¹⁷ Written by Saartjie Botha and directed by Johan Engelbrecht.

Though the audience might also recognise some of these characteristics in tragic heroes, we do not respond emotionally as one does in a tragedy. Once again, because of the comedic tone that has been set, we know better than to indulge in these acts of foolishness and rather see them as faults on the way to a discovery. As was seen with the discussion of the carnival, we also see a reversal of expectations within various hierarchies: gender, class, politics, domestic norms and religions to name a few. Zamir also finally highlights the reversal of norms through language which includes puns and wordplay but also the way characters use their words – lying, getting confused by their own stories and saying something without realising its meaning, or intending a different meaning (2014: 179). As much as these broad conventions help us to understand any subgenre¹⁸ of comedy, Stott also believes that with the acceptance of comedy as a fluid genre it can be suggested that our understanding of comedy actually is an experience of humour (2005: 2). Accordingly, I will also be looking at the major humour theories in order to analyse the chosen texts (see further discussion of humour theory below in Section 2.5.2).

It is important to note that Afrikaans comedy is often farcical as can be seen with popular festival farces like *My Vrou se Man se Vrou* by Lefra Productions, or the popular NATI produced farce of 2016, *Hond se Gedagte*. The farce creates an absurd reality in which anything is possible, where characters can be either completely aware of their situation, or completely ignorant. Rather than alienating the audience, this heightened sense of reality creates a universe where the audience can relate to and identify with the absurd, and recognise their own actions within the actions of the characters. Farce stands out among other comedy sub-genres because of its heightened style, intriguing plots and fast pace. It

¹⁸ Including but not limited to farce, black comedy, parody, physical comedy, mockumentary, wordplay or sitcom.

is the epitome of consumer humour¹⁹ as it leaves the audiences out of breath and satisfied, yet unchanged. However, the works under discussion depart from the tried and tested structure of the farce, and for this reason they make for an interesting case study. Both *Amper*, *Vrystaat* and *N is vir Neurose* function with irony and satire, and can thus be read productively as dark comedies. The success of these comedies with Afrikaans festival audiences suggests that despite the departure from the more familiar farce, the comedic tone of these works is still intact.

2.4.1 Comedy at Afrikaans arts festivals: Perceptions and Receptions

Although many different genres of performance are found at arts festivals, it does seem that comedy is the most popular. In a 2012 article on Aardklop in *Beeld*, Dirk Jordaan notes that serious drama productions are not as well supported as the farces at arts festivals (2002: Online). From the point of view of audience development, one might argue that audiences need to be conditioned to attend theatre more often, and to this end farce is an effective addition to the programme. On the other hand, by privileging farce, festival organisers run the risk of creating a superficial theatre culture.

Van Coller and Van Jaarsveld say that there have been new trends forming in the past few years with regards to the Afrikaans theatre industry. They see a return to a more formal theatre, which borders on naturalism. Realistic sets and scripts expose audiences to a relatable theatre, which makes them re-evaluate their own circumstances (Van Coller and Van Jaarsveld 2006: 79). However, we find an emphasis on theatre as entertainment.

’n Opvallende verskynsel op die kunstefeeste is dat gehore geneig is om ernstige opvoerings nie goed by te woon nie. Daarteenoor trek dramas wat ’n ligte,

¹⁹ I use this term to describe the type of comedy that is produced within the festival context, with its main goal being to generate profit.

vermaaklike inslag, of werke wat as gevolg van sensasie vermaaklikheidswaarde verwerf, groter gehore (Van Coller and Van Jaarsveld 2006: 79).

This means that comedies, cabarets and one-person shows such as Marion Holm's *Die Kaap is weer Holms*²⁰ tend to be very popular. Of course, the main purpose of theatre has always been to entertain through the performance of a story with its attendant themes and messages. This desire for entertainment is at the root of the commercial success of comedies:

Die mens het 'n ingebore behoefte om oor dinge te wroeg, maar gelukkig ook om vreugde in sy bestaan te vind. Die nuwe komedie baan die weg vir 'n ongekompliseerde en genotvolle ontmoeting met die teks, tesame met 'n nuttige en soms ernstige lewensles daaragter verskuil. Met komedie word ernstige waarhede op 'n ligte, maklik-verteerbare manier oorgedra om uiteindelik 'n didakties-morele funksie te vervul (Van Coller and Van Jaarsveld 2006: 80).

In this quotation Van Coller and Van Jaarsveld point out a balance between serious truths and the light manner in which it is portrayed. This reassures the audience that even though the subject matter is sombre, they can find the humour in it.²¹ When audiences laugh together, they find an authentic sense of community, which acts as a kind of reconciliation between them. Productions that have a didactic function automatically create a continuity of the production as it is integrated as a dialogue in the community.

The compact structure of the arts festival, where hundreds of productions are performed within a short timeframe, also has an influence on what shows audiences will attend. Here we see the difference between the festival context and performances at a theatre in an

²⁰ Marion Holm has been performing comedic one-woman shows since 2004.

²¹ This reassurance once again points to consumer humour which is orientated towards superficial entertainment which is intellectually unstimulating.

urban area where the performance is the only entertainment for the night and it is not followed or preceded by any other stimulation (Jordaan 2002: Online). However, comedies are not often performed outside of the festival context and if they do get urban exposure, it might be for a once off performance to draw crowds to a theatre. The festival seems to be the natural habitat of comedy theatre, though stand-up has gained ground outside of the festival context. People who attend the festivals have taken time off from work to do so, and comedies underscore the sense of celebration and desire for fun that prevails.

2.4.2 Humour

As stated earlier, the concepts of humour and comedy will inevitably influence each other. Weitz says that a comedy can lead an audience member to humour, but cannot force them to laugh (Weitz 2009: 64). In other words, as an audience member, you must be willing to go on the journey with the plot and to see the comic situation as real-life, otherwise you will never achieve the positive reaction of laughter. This indicates a power struggle that is constantly present on the stage between the actors and the audience (Weitz 2009: 64). In order for comedy to reach its full potential, contextualisation is of the utmost importance and has been addressed repeatedly in the theories of comedy. Aristotle, one of the first writers on comedy, said that we only find a subject in comedy humorous if it is something we know or recognise as a norm within an absurd situation (1968: III, 14). Recognition leads to acknowledgement, which leads to an amused reaction when this truth we recognised is contradicted or functions in an incongruous manner. This means that even at its most basic level comedy relies on an audience to frame the jokes in the correct way so as to bring out the humour in the situation.

We have already established that one of the frames in which most Afrikaans comedies are perceived is that of the carnivalesque. Jones describes humour and “finding funny” as:

When I am serious, I am deeply focussed on my own concerns, my own expectations of how my life and the world are, will be, and should be. When I find something funny, in contrast, my expectations are less important to me; I have experienced a break in my attention to norms, rules or regularities (2006: 129).

Here we see a parallel between how we perceive comedy and humour, and the break from social constraints that happens during the carnival. Expectations of behaviour are altered and within this alteration we find a freedom, the second life that Bakhtin speaks of. If we presume that the audience members are already in this festive state when entering a production at an Afrikaans arts festival, even though it is a constructed state, then we see a further continuation of the carnivalesque essence within the perceived humour of the plays.

Humour and comedy go hand in hand, yet something can be humorous without it being a comedy, while a comedy cannot function without humour. As Weitz argues, humour is the intention of the production to elicit laughter or amusement, and laughter is then the validation of the humour. Weitz develops this distinction by noting the difference between recognizing an attempt at humour and deciding an attempt at humour is successful (2009: 64-65). As can be seen, humour is an elusive topic and extremely subjective.

Though there are many theories about what makes us find humour in a situation, and at times even react in the physical way of laughter, I will restrict myself in this thesis to a discussion of the three most prevalent theories: Superiority Theory, Incongruity Theory, and Relief Theory, as well as the possibility of an interaction between the three. My aim in this regard will be to establish a concrete foundation on which to analyse the themes and characters as seen in *N is vir Neurose* and *Amper, Vrystaat* so as to identify what structures of humour can be found in the successful Afrikaans comedy.

Superiority Theory was established by seventeenth century English Philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 1679) and is a direct result of how society was structured. In the dominant European society of his time, laughter and the comical were considered lower forms of entertainment and not fit for noblemen. As Bakhtin also says, “the essential truth about the world and man cannot be told in the language of laughter” (1984: 67). Laughter was not considered intellectual or proper. Andrew Stott describes Hobbes’s theory as “belong[ing] to the tradition that understands laughter operating within a moral framework that sees laughter as self-regarding and uncharitable” (2005: 134). Thus, the only way that the upper classes could possibly experience laughter was by the portrayal and ridicule of the lower classes, thereby validating their superior stance. Zamir describes the superiority theory as follows:

In laughter, we experience our own superiority in relation to another’s deflated pretension to being worthier than he or she is; or our superiority in relation to another’s folly, or in relation to another’s encounter of limits in controlling one’s world (2014: 180).

In terms of this approach, the audience finds themselves in a superior position to the characters and through this are able to distance themselves from the action and laugh at it. This way of thinking about humour is troublesome if considered as an essential defining feature of humour. As Sheila Lintott says, “[t]he theory then cannot account for the distinction we make every day between *laughing at* and *laughing with* others. As an essentialist theory of humour, the superiority theory fails terribly” (2016: 349). It is interesting to consider how this theory has then gained so much traction if it is so widely disputed. Lintott explains this in that Hobbes was speaking of humour “in terms of his views of human nature and the social and political arrangement best suited to it” (2016: 355). As such Superiority Theory was a valid explanation of humour at the time of

conception because of seventeenth century societal structures, yet as we have developed as a society, so has our understanding of politics, economics, human dignity and humour.

The Irish philosopher Francis Hutcheson (1694 – 1746) also argued that the Superiority Theory was too simplistic. As Stott explains Hutcheson's objections to the theory, "if a person can be moved to laughter by confirmation of his or her superiority, then any time they felt like laughing they need only look upon the animals" (2005:135). From the foundation of Superiority Theory we see the development of the Incongruity Theory. Taking into account what was learnt from Superiority Theory, Hutcheson tried to explain humour with a new impulse – incongruity. He believed that it is not the feeling of superiority that elicits humour, but rather the "juxtaposition of incomparable contrasts" (Stott 2005: 135). Though this has been interpreted in many ways, Telfer makes an important point that cuts to the root of the theory, namely that "perhaps the basic idea which Hutcheson requires is that of incongruity as impropriety, the failure (deliberate or accidental) to conform to some norm or canon of appropriateness" (1995: 361). This meant that incongruity theory arose from a social context in which more focus was placed on subjective experience.

Through incongruity we can form an ideal of the structure underlying comedic scenes. It is in the contrast where we find the humour. I would argue that incongruity can be interpreted into many aspects of the theatre – whether it be characters of a certain stance behaving in an incongruous manner, or language being used in a new way, costume, set and acting technique can all fall under the Incongruity Theory. This theory puts the emphasis of humour on structure, and not necessarily on content. However, with the development of psychology and psychoanalysis we have come to be more aware of the self and the subconscious. Within this vast realm of immeasurable differences between people's

psyches there grew a need for a different theory on humour, which was more content based.

This then brings us to Relief Theory, also sometimes called Release Theory. Though Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939) is credited as the founder of this theory, he was greatly influenced by the works of Herbert Spencer (1820 – 1903). Spencer saw laughter as a release of built up energy within the body, as Stott describes it: “Laughter, like released steam pressure, is a manifestation of the internal redirection of nervous energy” (2005: 138). The word “redirection” is important here, as this happens when there is a “lowering of anticipated ideas” (2005: 139). Freud then took Spencer’s idea a step further and argued that, instead of laughter being a release of built up physical nervous energy, incongruity rather lies within the self, a “division and struggle within the self, recognition, as it were of incongruous selfhood” (Stott 2005: 138). Such a recognition is a catharsis, a release or purging of emotional energy, which can happen within the characters or audience members alike. Adding this psychological level to humour theory, added a subjectivity that for the first time explained individual senses of humour. Each person has their own subjective internal and subconscious struggles, and also their own taboos according to their social contexts.

Though laughter can be cathartic, there first needs to be a build up or repression, otherwise by definition there is nothing to release. Laughter thus originates from the build-up of energy towards an idea, or cathexis as Freud put it, which can then be released with laughter, and through this re-establish the internal balance (Stott 2005: 140). According to Relief Theory, there is an escape we experience when releasing the mental tension that comes with finding something humorous (Jones 2006: 130). Here, we once again see a parallel drawn between the liberation of the festive life of the carnival and the freedom

found in comedy. Within this we see not only a balance of wit and taboo, but also the internal balance that is restored within each subjective individual through laughter.

Looking at these predominant theories of what makes us laugh and how we perceive humour, it seems, however, that there is still something missing. Superiority Theory can explain why we laugh at people's misfortunes, yet it cannot explain the humour in a pun. Incongruity Theory can explain the pun through an unexpected juxtaposition of language, but it does not take into account things that are incongruous, and yet tragic.²² The Relief Theory can explain the humour found in taboo subjects being brought to light, yet there was no explanation of subtler verbal wit.

Accordingly, in recent years, studies have focussed on inclusive humour theories, rather than exclusive new ones. With this in mind, Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo formulated the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH), which instead of excluding different theories of humour, includes them all in a sequential manner. The categories of the sequence are in order as follows, Social (for example Superiority Theory), Cognitive (eg Incongruity), Psychological (eg Relief Theory) and then the Physiological aspects of the physical laughter (Lowe 2007: 8). Practically, what this means is that we would firstly look at the context – the social tensions which are prevalent. Next, we would look at the text itself – the cognitive construction of it. Then just before the humour is taken into the physical act of laughter, there is the combining of the text and the context to look at the effect of the humour specifically in a psychological sense (Lowe 2007: 8-9). Jones thus correctly states:” [E]ven if we were to discover everything about the content of humour, we

²² With this realisation Peter Mc Graw and Caleb Warren set out to create the Benign Violation Theory (BVT) which also uses incongruity theory as its basis, yet defines the violations or surprising aspects of the incongruity more specifically. In their 2016 article they describe the conditions which preceded humour as: “(a) something must be appraised as a violation, (b) something must be appraised as benign, and (c) the appraisals must be simultaneously juxtaposed (2016: 410). A simple example is that of tickling – the physical contact is a violation to what we perceive as normal behaviour, yet we understand that there is no real danger in it. By juxtaposing these two concepts simultaneously we see the humour in the situation.

would by no means have a complete theory of humour” (2006: 129). With this in mind I will look at how the individual types of humour I have identified are used in the plays under discussion here, and how they function within the festival context and the backdrop of the carnival.

2.4.3 Laughter with a Tear

When we consider the underlying structures and themes of comedy, we often find that the mask of foolishness hides serious themes. Comedy writers often do not set out with the goal of getting the audience members emotionally involved, yet with their reaction of laughter, the audiences automatically agree with or recognise something in the writers’ work that they deem to be true. This emphasized the idea a tonal quality of comedy in which our emotions are manipulated in a positive sense according to the mood created by the writer. Writers can, however, create a mood that is hard to identify and set a dark tone for the play as can be seen in Styan’s description of dark comedy:

In the theatre many dramatists have recognized the usefulness of [...] ambivalence. In drama as in life, nevertheless, the impulse to laughter and the impulse to tears sit uneasily together. It is tantalizing, first, that artificial forms like those of tragedy and comedy should admit their opposites, and, second, that a dramatist, knowing the discomfort of juxtapositioning two discordant responses, should deliberately exploit the tension they set up when put together (Styan 1968: 279).

Both *Amper*, *Vrystaat* and *N is vir Neurose* are comedies by genre, but also fall into the sub-category of dark comedy. Using the naturally occurring tension between laughter and tears as described by Styan, Scheepers and Olwagen are able to create very distinctly human plays, i.e. plays which the audience can easily identify with on a human experience level. The subject matter is familiar as it reveals "human nature", and thus they can use

this tension to win over and ultimately satisfy the audience. Within this tension we see a parallel with Relief Theory. The audience has to suppress their emotions because of macabre subject matter and releases this tension within the comedic moment. This mixture of the comic and the dramatic creates a tension that is tangible. It takes a very precise text and very detailed performances to create this:

All the instinctive psychology of the man of the theatre is needed to achieve this particular tension: he must mix sufficient reality to hold our belief with sufficient unreality to have us accept the pain of others. At the point of balance, we are in pain ourselves, and the play is meaningful (Styan 1968: 257).

Styan speaks here of a balance; this seems to be one of the key factors when it comes to dark comedy. It can mean the difference between a successful and a disastrous performance. There is a balance between the self-awareness of the actor and the ridiculousness of the character, between an audience member relating to a situation and being offended by it. Without a balance there is no tension, and without a healthy sense of tension, there is no humour. The audience needs to experience the cathexis²³ and build up energies and ideas surrounding a character or scene in order for the release to come through laughter. When the balance is found, the audience takes from the play a cathartic experience.

An influence on the breaking down of traditional theatre and the need for darker comedy forms was the rise of psychology as a field of study in the nineteenth century. Alongside the development of the Relief Theory with its psychological foundation, humour became a more complex concept. The influence it had was to “destroy belief in an established norm of human nature and to begin this process on internalization in the theatre” (Corrigan in

²³ As discussed above, this is the Freudian concept of a concentration of emotional energy towards an idea or person which was functional in the Relief Theory which centred around a release of these energies.

Corrigan 1981: 224). This meant that characters in the theatre gained psychological depth and that the plot was no longer the device used to reveal inner conflicts, but rather the characters brought their inner conflicts to the plot.

The dark comedy is very responsive to the changing value systems of a society. What could be found humorous at one time could be very offensive and taboo ten years later. At all times, in order for the play to communicate a message, whether that message be comic or dramatic, there needs to be a shared morality or shared ideas among the audience. Styan says that though contemporary audiences are not as prejudiced to the dictation of genre or the sub-categories of it, they do however have other expectations:

In a modern play he will not be so disconcerted if the comedy becomes cloudy with feeling or the tragedy suddenly illuminated by witty breaks of sunshine. But he does expect to be in agreement with his fellow spectators when he laughs or when he suffers (1968: 254).

It is up to the writer (or the collective production process) then to find this commonality and see how to best communicate it. Without this commonality the play can be interpreted as merely bad taste with no tension being built up, and subsequently, no release. With the audience playing a role in this, we come to one of the elements that defines a dark comedy – involving the audience. Other qualities of the dark comedy that Styan identifies are dramatic irony, the comic-pathetic hero, as well as the dark tone of the production and a sense of balance that has already been mentioned (1968: 251-292).

The dramatic irony that Styan identifies can be connected with the Incongruity Theory of humour as well as the Relief Theory. Incongruous ideas, scenes and characters are juxtaposed and in this we find a building up of tension. Styan describes an audience

gaining energy through the incongruities which are portrayed, a cathexis if you will, “[b]ut now progression is more cautious, and he is on guard. He is charged with tension as a result of which he is a more alert and therefore responsive participant. This tension is one of dramatic irony” (1968: 262). This means that the audience is put in an amused mood, both by the incongruities as well as the frustration or build-up of tension caused by it.

Another characteristic of the dark comedy is the comic-pathetic hero, which reminds us of Zamir’s description of the foolish comic protagonist who is himself the obstacle in the way of his or her own happiness (2014: 179). It is a relatable fool who is not above the audience, yet also does not elicit pure pity. As Styan describes it: “a creature who at the crisis is so human as to remember and hope rather than heed and act, often tends to assume universal qualities through the very individual and contradictory details that go to make him up” (1968: 269). The incongruous self that Styan describes reminds us of the “internal division” (Stott 2005: 138) that Freud was describing within the Relief Theory from which an audience derives humour through recognition.

Having established in broad outline the context in which the majority of Afrikaans comedic plays are produced in contemporary South Africa, as well as the building blocks of comedy and dark comedy that captures an audience’s attention, we can now proceed to a discussion of the plays *Amper*, *Vrystaat* and *N is vir Neurose*. In each case I will start with a discussion of the text and context of the script, and then will proceed to an analysis of characters, themes and motifs.

CHAPTER 3 - N IS VIR NEUROSE

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Text and Context

N is vir Neurose debuted at the US Woordfees in 2012. Written and directed by Christiaan Olwagen, the play featured Fleur Du Cap winners Hannah Borthwick and Wessel Pretorius as well as Roeline Daneel and Mariechen Vosloo. It was part of the first trio²⁴ of productions from the then unknown Polony Theatre Collective, who introduced themselves as: “Polonie. Die kleinniggie van salami, die boetie van boerewors en die vriend van die Weense worsie” (Malan 2012: Online). Polony consisted of the above-mentioned artists as well as Cintaine Schutte,²⁵ De Klerk Oelofse,²⁶ Greta Pietersen,²⁷ Ludwig Binge,²⁸ Kelly-Eve Koopman and Roxanne Bain, all graduates from Stellenbosch University Drama Department (Malan 2012: Online).

Since 2012 the Polony Collective has grown and created many successful and controversial productions on the festival circuit. According to Malan, the collective originated from a group of like-minded students who wanted to create theatre that they would enjoy seeing themselves. They recognised the importance of peer-to-peer recognition within drama and as such made relatable theatre with a comic undercurrent that grew in popularity year by year. In Malan’s article, Schutte describes their style as “Spoeg-en-plak-teater. Ons wil relevante teater maak.” Their name came from the idea

²⁴ The other two productions at that year’s Woordfees being Wessel Pretorius’ one man show *Ont* and an adaptation of the Christopher Durang play *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You*.

²⁵ Fleur du Cap winner for best supporting actress in a play for her role as Masja in *Die Seemeeu* in 2016.

²⁶ Nominated in 2016 for best actor in a musical for *Liewe Heksie: Flower Power*.

²⁷ Winner of the 2016 Kyknet Fiësta award for best supporting actress for *Son. Maan. Sterre*.

²⁸ Winner of the 2016 Silwerskermfees award for best supporting actor for *Johnny is nie Dood nie*.

that polony is the most postmodern food available “’n mengsel van ’n klomp bestanddele, wie weet wat alles” (Malan 2012: Online).²⁹

N is vir Neurose was very well received at the US Woordfees and word of mouth started spreading about the fresh approach to comedy that speaks directly to twenty-somethings (and beyond). Its debut venue was the Klein Libertas Theatre in Stellenbosch, which could seat around 100 audience members. This intimate theatre had always been a platform for up-and-coming artists, with many school and university drama competitions presented there. In terms of the festival space, the Aan de Braak Venue had been the experimental performance space, while the Klein Libertas Theatre was highly sought after because of its intimate nature and excellent infrastructure. For *N is vir Neurose* it provided the perfect combination of being a popular venue on the festival circuit that would give the production exposure, as well as being a small enough space to draw the audience into the claustrophobic living room which is the setting for the play.

Bain and Hauptfleisch (2001: 15) say that festival productions have had to adhere to certain conventions in order to stay profitable. *N is vir Neurose* plays it safe with very basic technical requirements and a small, contained cast. Considering that this was one of the earlier Polony festival plays it makes sense that the festival setting would have had an influence on its conception.

With regards to the process followed with *N is vir Neurose*, a group-work ethic was already intact. Originally they wanted to do a translation of a famous American comedy for the 2012 festival circuit, but with copyright administration and other constraints Saartjie Botha, drama coordinator of Woordfees at the time, encouraged them to write an original piece

²⁹ Since first accessing this link in 2015, Netwerk 24 has become a paid subscription service, the central point for all major Afrikaans news publications online. Because of this, the link given in the reference will no longer work.

(Meyer 2012: Online). Olwagen had had some experience in writing at this stage and gladly took on the task. The production of the play fell on everyone and, as Daneel explains the process for Litnet:

Ons is almal oudstudee van die Universiteit Stellenbosch se dramadepartement wat intussen Kaapstad toe getrek het. Ons is vriende wat gereeld kuier (ek en Hannah is selfs woonstelmaats) en mekaar se werk ondersteun. Ons reken toe ons kan net sowel 'n projek saam aanpak. Almal dra dieselfde finansiële risiko en alle take, van rekwisiete opspoor tot bemerking doen tot plakkate opsit, word gelyk verdeel (Meyer 2012: Online).

As we will see with *Amper*, *Vrystaat*, this collaborative approach to all aspects of the production seems to be the most realistic way for young theatre makers to create an original work over which they all have ownership. In doing this, the plays naturally become more personal. By grounding the comedy in their own personal experiences, the writers are able to foreground the comedic truth that Aristotle wrote about, and thus the audience is more likely to recognise the norm within an absurd situation. Borthwick, 25 years old at the time of the debut of *N is vir Neurose*, said in a 2012 interview that the play deals with issues and feelings that she herself was still dealing with at the time, “something you can’t put your finger on, it’s a lost feeling, kind of a downer, a restlessness. I’m still trying to get the hang of it. I ask myself: ‘Is this it? Must I settle, must I get married?’” (George 2012: Online). This direct relation between the actors and the characters gives the play a verisimilitude that helps with the recognition of truth within the comedy.

With sold out performances, *N is vir Neurose* went on to be part of the Fees van die Uitverkooptes, which featured the most popular shows of that year’s Woordfees at the Baxter Golden Arrow Studio and the Klein Libertas Theatre in May 2012 (George 2012:

Online). In that year *N is vir Neurose* would go on to play at Aardklop and KKNK. At the 2013 Kyknet Fiësta awards *N is vir Neurose* was nominated in four categories and the play enjoyed wide coverage when a scene was performed during the live national broadcast.³⁰ The production was nominated in the following categories: Best Supporting Actor for Wessel Pretorius, Best Supporting actress for Hannah Borthwick, while the director, Christiaan Olwagen, was nominated for Best New Afrikaans Performance and Best Emerging Artist (Nominations 2013: Online). Even though *ONT*, by Wessel Pretorius of Polony, was the big winner on the night, there is no denying the success of *N is vir Neurose*, especially when considering that all of this success stemmed from the theatre collective's first attempt at the festival circuit. 2012 pushed the Polony Theatre Collective into the limelight and all the festivals wanted this emerging group of individuals on their programme.³¹

Despite all the critical acclaim and large audiences for this play, in five years it has become quite a task to find concrete information on the production, let alone a final script. When inquiring about the text, I received the very first draft of the script from Borthwick. This was the original script that went into rehearsal with the cast and has since then been changed immensely. After some effort, I managed to find the latest version of the script, which had merely been updated for the technical crew of the festival. Daneel, who had been doing most of the festival administration, had this version of the script. At the bottom of the front page it states: "Let wel: Hierdie teks is min of meer gemaak en laat staan soos hy geskryf is, so verskoon asseblief enige spel- en tikfoute want amper sekerlik nog daar is". As Balme stated, the theatrical text is the consistent and the performance the variable

³⁰ At the 2013 Fiësta Awards, the cast would perform a scene from the play in the very large State Theatre in Pretoria, mirroring the collective's journey so far from the obscure at the small Klein Libertas Theatre to popularity at the national level.

³¹ Six years later it seems that the young collective has become quieter on the theatre front, though still working together on various projects. Olwagen and most of the original Polony Collective have started working together making films, adapting plays into screen texts like Malan Steyn's *Johnny is nie Dood nie* (2015), as well as Anton Chekov's *Die Seemeeu* (scheduled for release in 2018).

(2008: 133). Here we see a script that might still be in a process of editing, and as such gives the actors the freedom to settle the dialogue into natural speech. This means that in the already varying state of the performances, the text also becomes less rigid. This script, left as is, has been added as ADDENDUM A to this study with permission from the author for future use by researchers and practitioners alike. Examples will be quoted as is from this text, with spelling mistakes and other irregularities included. The reason for this is to retain the authenticity of these unpublished plays, the raw texts which are the basis to work from – the words, before the actors create the worlds.

3.1.2 The Olwage 'Style'

Whether you are an admirer or not, there is no denying that Olwage has a very particular way of working. His style of drama can be seen as postmodern theatre, as he uses techniques of collective collaboration as well as pastiche in most of his productions. Postmodern theatre is highly self-referential as well as intertextual, and makes use of techniques such as pastiche and non-linear plotlines, as well as including the audience in the shaping of the play, as can be seen by the monologues in *N is vir Neurose*. Another characteristic is the use of workshop methods to create the script and a rejection of the norms of representation and of 'high' and 'low' forms of art, rather existing in its own universe, made up of allusions and appropriated ideas (Sharma and Chaudhary 2011: 189).

His early comedies portray mostly young characters who are ignorant of their own foolish faults. They struggle with their lives and their immediate surroundings until their internal struggle leads them to self-discovery. These are characteristics mentioned by Zamir³² as

³² See section 2.4.

universal comedic elements, which are all taken up by Olwagen in *N is vir Neurose*, pointing to his intimate understanding of the inner workings of humour.

In an interview with *Business Day* Olwagen admits that he is a child of the festivals, but sees this as a positive thing as it is the most sustainable platform for producing work currently in Afrikaans in South Africa (Kennedy 2014:Online). It is also a way of exposing wider audiences to theatre and to bring theatre to the people. Especially in recent years, arts festivals have become platforms for experimentation, opening up new possibilities for pioneering theatre makers.

Afrikaans arts festivals are renowned for encouraging and commissioning new, invigorating, ground-breaking work — a brave move, since such creations are not always easy on the palate of the conservative communities in which the events are held (Kennedy 2014: Online).

With the recent developments in the festivals working together to create new productions that are more culturally integrated and breaking ground with new audiences, Kennedy's opinion on Afrikaans festivals seems truer than ever. This appeals to a theatre-maker like Olwagen, who believes in challenging audiences by appropriating texts or genres familiar to them.

Along with challenging conventions, Olwagen is also very good at creating a tension between the comic and the tragic. As Styan noted, this is achieved with a mixture between believable reality, for example Liz's kitchen tea setting, and "sufficient unreality" (1968: 257). As will be seen in the discussion of *N is vir Neurose*, Olwagen balances out depressingly tragic monologues with absurdly funny situations creating a very dark mixture of comedy and drama. He has a very organic rehearsal process and is not afraid to

change the text if it feels awkward or out of place. Perhaps because he is a writer himself, he is not possessive of the text – if it does not work on the floor, it needs to be changed. He describes his creative process in an interview with *Rooi Rose* magazine as follows:

Elke proses is anders. Met party weet ek presies wat ek gaan en wil doen en met ander sukkel ek om iets te “sien”. Party verg instink en met ander moet ek baie navorsing doen. Die een konstante ding in my proses is dat ek lief is om saam met akteurs, ontwerpers, skrywers en verhoogbestuurders te werk om te skep. Ek hou nie van ’n eensame proses nie. Ek verkies ’n spanpoging – tien kreatiewe breine is beter as een (Rooiwarm 2015: Online).

Olwagen’s collective approach to his creative process creates a sense of camaraderie among the cast and crew, with everyone working towards the same goal, through their various roles. This gives each artist a sense of ownership over the production, which is bound to foster a healthy creative space and work environment. This collaborative style has a direct influence on a play’s seismic impact, as described by Hauptfleisch (2007: 264).³³ The more people who are invested in the outcome of the production, the more the word will spread about it.

3.1.3 Synopsis

The play itself takes place in Liz’s (Roeline Daneel) apartment on the night of her kitchen tea. Her friends Shani (Hannah Borthwick) and Rachelle (Mariechen Vosloo) attend the small gathering, but rub each other up the wrong way from the start. With Liz’s burglar alarm, installed by her over-protective father, going off at random intervals, and the wine flowing, the tension between the three women quickly rises. In one revealing scene, Liz is opening her presents. A food blender, the Bullet Express Trio, leads Liz to an anxiety

³³ The meaning of the seismic impact here is one that Hauptfleisch describes as the waves made outside of the performance event, the continuity, if you will, of its shockwave through the community and culture.

outbreak, and the unwrapping of a tazer results in an argument about politics, which ends with the imposing of “house rules” for the party.

A stripper, Japie (Wessel Pretorius), arrives dressed as a police officer, and the girls decide to indulge in the kitchen tea/bachelorette rituals of naked men and champagne. Interestingly we see a break from normal behaviour and patriarchal hierarchies within these traditions, with it becoming a sort of domestic carnival in its own right. When Rachelle, the only married character, exclaims: “Ek wil hom naai,” the night takes a strange turn. With alarms blaring, the girls awkwardly pay Japie and he leaves with his CD player and clothes in hand, only to return five minutes later to charge his phone to call his lift. After being persuaded to stay, Japie decides they need some music to help get the party going. Shani is livid at Rachelle for what she shouted during Japie’s dance and not willing to go on with the ruse. Liz has now been reduced from blushing bride-to-be to bitter friend, telling the girls that they can leave: “Julle het dit inelkgeval opgefok” (Olwagen 2012: 35).

Japie does not let this get him down and continues with his campaign to save the party. He succeeds in breaking the tension and bringing them back to their old selves by playing the Spice Girls song, “Wannabe”, and reminiscing about old children’s television shows which they all used to watch in simpler times. The crisis is thus averted by memories of the past, when they felt safe and whole and hopeful. The theme of “Wannabe” is repeated with their rendition of Disney’s Little Mermaid’s song: “I wanna be where the people are ... I wanna see, wanna see ’em dancing” (Olwagen 2012: 36).

This child-like longing that each character has for real social contact, for something free, or just to feel liberated and empowered in their own adult world, makes them all join in with the chorus: “Up where they walk, up where they run, up where they stay all day in the sun

... wandering free, wish I could be ... part of that woooooooooooooooooorld” (Olwagen 2012: 37). Olwagen uses songs from different genres to bring out underlying themes of the play. He is not parodying these songs, but showing them in a new context and creating new meanings for them. He is taking the song out of its Disney and Spice World contexts and appropriating it to depict the longing of these young adults for a different world, a new lover, a life where they would be free. The music means a lot to the characters who are emotionally drained by now.

After convincing Japie to leave his boyfriend, Henko, they are all finally miserable together. Japie has been integrated into their world of anxiety and neuroses, and is now also allowed to speak his truth. His monologue scene comes in the lead up to the end of the play. The characters are exhausted and create an alphabet for twenty-somethings. It is a simple, innocent way of identifying their problems, admitting to themselves that these problems exist, and ordering them in a way even a child could understand. In returning to a childlike state, they enable themselves to cope with adulthood. This displacement of their fears finally breaks their neurosis in that it becomes less of an obsession and more a matter of fact, easier to deal with.

3.1.4 Structure

In *N is vir Neurose* we see the characters breaking the fourth wall and addressing the audience. Olwagen extends the technique of a comic aside, creating long personal monologues that are in direct contrast with the action on the stage. After Shani has repeatedly assured the other women that she is not upset, and that her ‘perfect’ relationship is still fully intact and her marriage proposal is imminent, she turns to the audience and starts her monologue with “Ek is so bietjie ontsteld” (Olwagen 2012: 6). This juxtaposition of the surface reactions to the situation in comparison with Shani’s very

personal reaction expressed to the audience, creates an incongruity that is familiar to many people. The breaking of the social norm of politeness to address the audience also highlights the fact that these characters are not stereotypical Afrikaner women, though they are trying their best to conform to these ideals. They want to live up to the role that is expected of them as white Afrikaans females – that they must be wives, mothers, virginal, Christian, stable, loyal and of course beautiful and neat at all times (Mans and Lauwrens 2013: 50 – 51). Within the already crisis ridden identity of the white Afrikaner after the fall of Apartheid, these ideals seem to have stayed unchanged and are the root of a lot of anxiety for the characters and a catalyst for conflict in both *N is vir Neurose* and *Amper, Vrystaat*. In social settings, women are expected to act in a certain way, often making it difficult to express what they really feel. This creates frustrations and passive aggressive responses, such as we see throughout the play.

Letting the audience in on their frustrations creates a dramatic irony in which we find a lot of the humour – this is the first glimpse under the surface. This scene can be understood in terms of the Relief Theory of humour: first, the audience experiences the cathexis – the build up of tension on stage with the characters confiding completely in them. This tension gets released periodically with character recognition and relatability, and the audience is able to laugh at the characters and at themselves. Secondly, we see the tension and release happening for the characters on the stage. As tension builds within the dialogue, the characters are purging themselves and cutting themselves off from the other characters. They find a release in the longer monologues as they discover and admit their own faults.

Significantly, Japie introduces all the female monologues. As he is not an invited guest and is merely part of the celebrations by accident he seems to be on the periphery and is

able to act as a suitable, neutral mediator between the audience and the characters. He introduces the women's monologues and with his introduction comes a change in stage-lighting. Japie becomes the objective storyteller throughout, helping the audience to navigate the situation, and facilitating their focus and perceptions. The lights are dimmed on the frozen actors as the monologue pulls the focus downstage. Seeing the monologues framed by Japie gives the audience permission to bear witness to these personal rants. Japie addresses the audience directly and invites them to watch. Near the end of the play, when he finally does his monologue, the three women introduce him in the same way.

In the next section I trace the themes raised in the monologues by the individual characters in order to better map and understand the production. The understanding of the production according to its text will also highlight the elements of comedy and humour used by Olwagen and the cast.

3.2 Characters, Themes And Motifs

3.2.1 Liz: Bullet Express Trio

The audience witnesses Liz's night: it is her kitchen tea and the play takes place in her flat, her space. The stage is filled with her presents, although there are only two friends present.³⁴ The lack of friends, and the friends who are there fighting all the time, does not paint a happy picture of Liz's social life. Rachelle gives the first gift of the evening, a tazer. In this scene we see an important theme come to light that will recur throughout the play: fear and anxiety.

Rachelle: 'n Skokstok ... Ek't vir my ook een nou die dag gekry. 'n Meisie moet deesdae voorbereid wees. Mens weet nooit watse

³⁴ This is explained with the occasion being her second kitchen tea: one for family, one for friends. The audience would also perhaps be aware of the constraints of a festival production with regards to cast size.

“kreature” kruip in snaakse gate uit nie. Ek het eers gedink aan ’n rape alarm maar ek dink ’n *wapen* is beter...

Shani: ’n “Wapen”?

Rachelle: Ja Shani ’n wapen ... Hulle is oral op die uitkyk vir ’n onskuldige meisie ...

Shani: “Hulle” ...

....

Rachelle: Dis die realiteit Shani! Ek wou eintlik daai een gekry het met die tandjies wat so uitskiet, jy weet, dan mik jy hom vir sy crotch ...

Shani: Sies man. Ek dink dit stuur ’n baie negatiewe boodskap uit oor vrou-alleen wees. Moet ons nou vir die res van ons lewens in vrees lewe? Ons self “be-wapen”!?

Rachelle: Ja, want dis ’n oorlog Shani ...

Shani: O ja “die oorlog teen die witmens”?

Rachelle: Nee teen vroumense.

Shani: Ag asseblief! (Olwagen 2012: 12)

This scene raises several key issues of the play and will lead up to Liz’s monologue. First and foremost, it highlights the anxiety and fear felt by the characters, and also by the audience. Shani is unwilling to admit this fear at this stage, and chooses rather to turn it into another fight with Rachelle. Perhaps Shani is getting defensive because, unbeknownst to the other characters, she is now also “vrou-alleen”, after her relationship with Shaun has ended. Stating that there is a war on females, Rachelle automatically

makes the male the enemy. These are all generalised forms of fear that can be relatable to the audience.³⁵

The humour lies in this relatability of their neuroses, as we realise how ridiculous our own fears can be. Of course, in South Africa we do have a very real rape crisis that has been ongoing for years. I do not mean to detract from the victims' experience of those violent acts. But the paranoia that has seeped into society in general is what Olwagen seems to be pointing at. While the fear of violence is in itself not funny, the humour lies in the incongruity of the characters' naive and melodramatic reactions to this perceived violence, which is their own "gender war" that stands in stark contrast to the reality of violence against women in South Africa. They are arming themselves with tazers that shoot out 'teeth' at men's crotches and behaving as if they are at war, yet they are actually upper-middle-class ladies sitting in a comfortable home with a security system. Their trust is misplaced onto the tazer, their problems transferred onto an inanimate object to keep them safe.

Not wanting to dwell on this dark reality, Liz acts as the rule maker throughout the play, reinforcing her role as the teacher and mother hen of the group. The first rule of the night: no political talk, for as she states: "Ek dink nie ons weet genoeg om 'n opinie te hê nie" (Olwagen 2012: 12). This clarification of the rule shows a sense of insecurity about their role in society as well as their own knowledge about 'grown-up' things like politics. By making this rule she is also consciously deciding to remain ignorant. She does not want to know what is going on, so as to relieve herself of any responsibility.

³⁵ In 2017 violence against women is even more in the foreground than it was in 2012. Especially young women have been in the media in recent years with violent rape and murders in places like Tokai forest (Franziska Blochliger) and the less widely covered murder by her husband of Bongiswa Majikijela, the first black woman to gain the degree of BA in Drama and Theatre Studies from Stellenbosch University.

Liz is the most conservative character of the four, as can be seen in her big life plan which she shares with the audience in one of her monologues:

Liz: Matriek: 6 A's. Eerstejaar ontmoet ek my trouman. 23 moet ek by 'n skool werk. 25: trou. 27: eerste kind. 29: tweede kind. My eie instruction manual. Vir my lewe (Olwagen 2012: 35).

This way of planning out her whole life indicates the controlling side of her personality. The humour of this control lies in the fact that life hardly ever happens the way we plan it. Zamir mentions different forms of foolishness that stand in the way of a comic protagonists' happiness. An overestimation of one's control is one of them. Liz's controlling personality is the reason why she has not achieved happiness yet and the audience will recognise this. In doing so they will find a sense of superiority over Liz's ignorance and find humour in her foolishness. The fact that she is surprised that she has not achieved these goals step by step makes her naively endearing to the audience. They can recognise her obsessive neurosis and compare it to real life. Her main monologue of the play starts just after the Bullet Express Trio, a small kitchen appliance used for slicing, dicing and blending which she has received as a gift, has been switched on for the first time. She starts uncontrollably screaming, with the stage directions stating: "Die gil word 'n tipe asma aanval" (Olwagen 2012: 34). Her displacement of anxiety onto the kitchen appliance is humorous as she reacts to the blender as if it were a murderer in her house. The humour lies in the incongruity of her reaction to a household appliance – an inanimate object of no consequence. She calms herself down and after a beat, Japie faces the audience and announces her monologue: "Dames en Here "A is vir Angs"...". What follows is a careful outline of her unravelling plans.

Liz: Die Bullet Express Trio. Lewensgroot op die manual. FOR YOUR SAFETY CAREFULLY READ ALL INSTRUCTIONS. Hoekom kan hulle nie vir mens 'n

instruction manual gee na skool nie. HOW TO BE AN ADULT. Partykeer voel dit vir my asof ek in 'n mixer gegooi is. Ek moet koes of een van daai skerp lemme gaan my kop af kap” (Olwagen 2012: 35).

Once again, as with the issues around the tazer, there is an association between growing up and physical danger. Liz experiences a lack of safety and security in her life, and yearns for instructions to help her deal with it. The mixer as metaphor creates a spiralling image that goes back to the anxiety with which the monologue was introduced.

Immediately following this section that stands out like a warning sign, Liz goes into a child-like mode, repeating the rhyme from a well-known South African game:

Liz: Koljander koljander so deur die bos. My ma en pa kook lekker kos terwyl die kinders verstik aan 'n druiwe tros (Olwagen 2012: 35).

This is a children’s game where two players hold their hands up singing or saying the rhyme while the other players skip underneath their stretched out arms. The rhyme actually ends with: “die laaste een se kop word afgekap! Kiep, Kiep, Kiep, Kap!” Here we see a return of the imagery of Liz’s head being chopped off, and even though this line is not used in the play, most audience members will remember this game and realise where the rhyme is going. The term “kinders” is also used to substitute the word “boetie” which is usually used in the rhyme. This shows that the anxiety is a universal problem and not only localised to one child or one gender.³⁶ This reference to “kinders” also foregrounds the fact that the characters are acting more and more like children. As young adults, this regression into their childlike states are incongruous to the “grown-up” situation in which they find themselves, having to get married, starting a family and running a household.

³⁶ In contrast with the war on females which was discussed earlier, Liz’s anxiety is not gendered and rather universal.

Growing up has become a race between the characters. Liz confronts this race and once again goes into a child-like state as she remembers her days on the playground:

Liz: Die Bullet Express Trio. Comes with three speed settings. Op die oomblik is die dial na “spoed van lig” gedraai. Soos ’n skoppelmaai. ’n Skoppelmaai wat my ouers my altyd in gestoot het. Ek kan myself aan die gang skop, pappa. Moenie te hard stoot nie, mamma. Die kettings gaan breek en ek gaan in die liguim skiet (Olwagen 2012: 35).

Liz feels that her parents are just going on with their lives, while she is choking on her anxiety. Along with Liz, the other characters also mention their parents throughout the play, showing their influence on the characters. In her monologue, Liz wants to be independent and not have her father push her on the swing, yet in the same breath she admits her fear of the loss of this security. She is in conflict with her parents for not preparing her enough for the real world, as well as with herself, for still wanting to be under their authority. All the characters find themselves in a liminal space, they are neither child nor adult. Liz also finds herself in the liminality of being engaged. She is not yet married to her husband, yet also not released from her parent’s authority. Within the festival context in which the play is performed there is already a transitory atmosphere. Knowing the extent of the influence of this festival space on a production it can be said that the audience is able to relate to the liminality of the characters and find the humour within the release of this realisation.

Liz’s child-like use of language, including the archaic Afrikaans word for a swing, “skoppelmaai”, also emphasises this sense of innocence and purity, a longing for an “original reality”, for simpler times. This ties in with Zamir’s comments on the use of language by comedic characters as they often misspeak and intend a different meaning.

Liz is trying to show her independence and how she has grown up, but in doing so she rather creates a childlike image of herself. In doing this we are also reminded of the language use in carnival which breaks away from the norm and is freer, without pretention or influence, much like how a child would communicate. She refers to the swing in which her parents always pushed her, alluding to an image of a cradle. She wants to swing on her own, without her father's help, she needs to make it work on her own. Her comment about her mother could also reflect on their relationship and her mother pushing her too hard into situations like career or marriage. She is afraid of breaking her bond with her parents and being flung into the unknown where none of the old rules apply, where she is floating along in space.

A more violent undertone is felt during this last part of the monologue: "As julle my soek ek is in die kombuis. Ekt waarskynlik die kitchen timer ingesluk. Maak maar net 'n gat in my keel met die *julienne peeler* ek sal seker eendag weer bykom" (Olwagen 2012: 35).

Though the dark tone of the dark comedy shines through, the composition of the monologue does not totally undermine the comic mood of the play and Liz quickly juxtaposes these morbid sentiments with childish references. Liz refers briefly to the Koljander rhyme again saying "Moenie my kop af kap nie" (Olwagen 2012: 35). This shows a physical reaction to her sense of anxiety about the future. Liz and the other characters all still experience their anxieties in a child-like manner, even as young adults. The kitchen timer that she says she will inevitably swallow, refers to a passing of time as well as the association between women and the kitchen, which is still relevant today. By swallowing the timer, the ticking away of time until the next meal becomes part of her, she is constantly aware of the passing of time. Also, with the timer stuck in her throat, she is rendered useless, not being able to speak and slowly suffocating. Her solution to this, cutting open her throat with a peeler, provides an imagined release, yet not an instant one

– she merely hopes that she will eventually come to, eventually start breathing again, living again. Once again Relief Theory can be useful to highlight the dark humour of the scene. As with Liz’s release, the audience also gets to release the built up tension of this scene. Her description is so macabre that the audience cannot help but see the humour in it.

At the end of the monologue the lights change back to normal, the alternate state of Liz’s thoughts are turned back to her party and we hear the alarm beeping once again, followed by silence. The alarm underscores the panicked state of the characters, and the silence shows them ignoring it once again and moving on. Zamir’s description of foolishness in comic characters includes this ignorance of obvious warning signs (2014: 179). The audience will not be ignoring the alarm and this once again contributes to the build up of comic tension leading into the next scenes and monologues.

3.2.2 Shani: Woolies Free Range Chicken

Shani’s neurotic behaviour shows her playing the fool. She believes that she is more independent than the others, yet seems to suffer from the most anxieties. This pretentiousness on her part antagonizes her and creates tension between the characters, once again depicting a classic comic character fault as described by Zamir (2014: 179). Shani blames her unpleasant behaviour on her financial woes. Money and financial security is a theme seen throughout the play and is especially associated with Shani’s character. She feels constrained because of her financial state and her joblessness. She berates Liz, who tells her to go and pursue her dreams:

Shani: Ek is jammer maar *net* mense wat geld het, het die luxury om dit te kan sê ... Om te sê dit gan nie oor geld nie, mens moet jou drome volg. Dit gaan als oor geld. Net omdat ek ’n bietjie met verf kan speel beteken nie ek gaan my hobby my career maak nie. Mens kan nie

altyd net doen wat vir jou lekker is nie. Dis hoekom mens dit “werk” noem (Olwagen 2012: 38).

This is clearly a trigger point for Shani and through the dialogue we come to learn that all of the other characters are still in some way financially dependant on their parents. Shani is the only exception: “Wel, ek is honderd persent onafhanklik van my ouers. lewers moet mens groot word” (Olwagen 2012: 38). Shani is referring to being financially independent, though it can also seem that she has “birthed” herself as an adult by doing so. Shani has most probably had to emancipate herself from her parents for financial reasons. Shani sees financial independence as the measure of adulthood; she can budget, she can do it on her own. Japie is once again there to announce the next character’s monologue: “Dames en Here, W is vir Woolies Chicken”. The lights change on stage and the alarm beeps repeating the warning of the pending internal chaos.

Shani’s “Woolies chicken” is the through-line for this monologue. First and foremost she declares that even in her current financial state, she is not willing to budget or go without her free-range chicken from Woolworths. This in itself is an indication of Shani’s high middle-class background. Shopping at Woolworths is a sign of status. Shani is very obviously not making a lot of money, yet she is adamant that she will not lose out on her Woolies chicken. The chicken is about more than just a meal; it makes her feel accomplished when she uses a famous chef’s recipe, and it is comforting when she follows her mother’s recipe. As with Liz’s need for an instruction manual, Shani is also looking for a recipe, a guideline to adulthood. She is not ‘chicken’, she faces her problems head-on, unlike the other characters who seem to still be able to suppress their feelings about many issues. Shani is financially independent, she goes out and does a wide range of jobs and she leaves Shaun when she feels she needs a change in her life.

Through her monologue we see an awareness of her stagnant state, this false sense of freedom that comes with early adulthood. For Shani's sense of freedom is indeed false. She is not as free as she thinks, which emerges by the end of the monologue. She views herself as independent, having broken from the authority of her parents, only to be trapped by the authority of the capitalist system. Considering the performance context of the festival as consumer event, her naivety and ignorance of her situation is ironically mirrored by the audience's own false sense of liberation within the festival context.

Shani fears becoming an automaton just making decisions based on what she thinks other people want her to do, like the battery chickens that have no choice but to feed. It is in her fight for freedom that she also cages herself in with her ideals of what freedom means. Shani is trapped in her ideas of success and status. Because of her obsession with her finances and what people think of her, she has bought into the ideals of consumerism. The Woolies chicken that she yearns for also represents an idealistic outlook on the situation. Woolies is selling the idea of happy, free-range chickens, the idea that we can all do better than what we have, that we can be better people if we buy their chicken. Her disillusionment with the world, is mirrored in her feelings about the chicken she buys:

Shani: Die ander hoenders proe soos vismeel. Daai battery hoenders. Hulle proe soos vismeel. As jy hulle uit die plastiek uithaal dan ruik hulle sommer so na vis. Hoender moet nie soos vis ruik nie. Hoender moet nie soos vis proe nie. 'n Hoender is 'n hoender, nie 'n vis nie (Olwagen 2012: 39).

As horrifying as a chicken tasting like fish, Shani sees her current state of adulthood as another type of betrayal. She did not sign up for being this kind of grown up, living a stress-filled life with no real financial prospects and a failing relationship. She wants the Woolies chicken equivalent of life: the aesthetically perfect, free-range, tasting-of-chicken

life that she was promised by her friends and family, and she will settle for no less, as can be seen in the opening of her monologue: “Ek is jammer, maar as daar een ding is waarop en nie wil budget nie, is dit ’n Woolies chicken” (Olwagen 2012: 39). She associates it with freedom and a simpler life:

Shani: ’n Lekker free range hoender wat iewers op ’n plaas grassies en mielies gepik het ... ’n Hoender wat ’n lekker vol lewe gehad het. Dis die hoender wat ek wil eet. Ek beny daardie hoenders hulle eenvoudige lewens. Ek wil ook op ’n plaas bly en heeldag wurms uit die grond uit trek (Olwagen 2012: 39).

She wants to take up any and all opportunities, catch worms and be free. Yet she is stuck in her current situation of waiting. Like Liz, the liminality of growing up is causing her anxiety, as she does not see any way past this. She is trapped, she is not the free self which she envisioned:

Shani: Ons is nie woolies free range chickens nie ... Ons loop nie rond iewers op ’n plaas nie. Ons sit in ons flats, kantore en huise ... boksies ... hokkies ... soos batteryhoenders ... en ons wag (Olwagen 2012: 39).

Our modern lives, specifically the lives of Afrikaans women, are compared to the lives of battery chickens. Not free but trapped, leading unhealthy, force-fed lives. She feels that she is forced to keep perpetuating the history of the Afrikaans woman, even while resisting it. This commonality of the Afrikaans woman involves the audience who would be familiar with these expectations and gives them a basis from which the darker comedy stems. Unlike the other characters, Shani actively resists these expectations. Liz, though anxiety ridden is still willing to perpetuate the historic role of the woman as wife and mother.

Rachelle on the other hand is already defeated and is now struggling to find meaning within marital structures. Shani is giving up and suppressing her own self, yet she thinks she is liberated.

The image of the force-fed chickens constitutes part of the overall motif of food that runs through the play. The characters are starving for something to eat at the party, especially a Woolies chicken, yet in the wider contexts of their lives they are all force-fed with unrealistic ideals of an authentic, free lifestyle and unhealthy habits, waiting for the slaughter:

Shani: Dis wat ek gaan word. 'n Oorgewig batteryhoender wat sit in my flat en wag vir die resessie om oor te waai. Sit in my flat en wag om 'n werk te kry. Sit in my flat en wag om dood te gaan. Soos 'n battery hoender (Olwagen 2012: 39).

The imagery gets even darker when she starts expanding on the actual battery chicken process, with their legs cut off and lights shining on them all hours of the day to keep them awake and eating. They even start eating each other after a while. Shani draws a direct line between the cannibalism of the chickens and the “bitchy sekretaresse”: “Sy pik op my want ek gaan haar werk steel. Daar is nie genoeg mieliepitte op die werf vir ons almal nie” (Olwagen 2012: 39).

This use of dark imagery as part of comedic moments has come to be one of Olwagen's signature styles. He mixes not only incongruities in the text but also different styles so fluently that the audience cries from laughing, and then cries because they have laughed. On the assumption that comedy is recognition of the truth, we see him highlighting very real issues for these characters, yet making the situation slightly absurd with the very

extensive metaphor of the chickens. From their own statement, Polony wanted to make plays that they themselves would want to watch – in this sense the issues they are raising is also directly pointed at the audience for recognition, and through this the tension is broken. Shani ends her longest monologue with a very depressing final realisation: “Ek wil ’n free range chicken wees. Ek is ’n battery hoender” (Olwage 2012: 39). Shani’s own foolishness creates obstacles between her and her goal of liberation and happiness. Shani’s displacement of her neuroses onto the metaphor of the free-range chicken seems ridiculous, yet in the end the disparity is touching, once again balancing the dark with the light-hearted. With this, the alarm beeps again and we return to the party scene and the play’s reality.

3.2.3 Rachelle: Muis

Rachelle has her own set of anxieties, which are conveyed through her association with animals. She is accused of murdering her cat, after leaving fly-poison in a piece of chicken. Now she owns a miniature Doberman pincher, which Shani believes will also be gone soon. The dog is called ‘Muis’. All these animal connotations underscore Rachelle’s animalistic instincts. She is the one who cries out that she wants to “naai” Japie. This is not simply sexual desire, but a crude expression for pure instinctual mating. Through Rachelle we see the carnival body, free of social taboos and an instrument of fertility. The shocked reaction of the other characters brings her back to her reality and her role as the married woman.

The fact that her dog is called ‘Muis’ also shows a mild crisis of identity: what kind of animal are you really, a fierce dog, or a timid mouse? The conversation about Muis builds up into Rachelle admitting that she hates the new dog, having an almost irrational fear of it: “Julle ken haar nie. Sy is ’n psycho. Sy maak my bang. Ek hou niks van haar nie. In fact, ek haat haar!” (Olwage 2012: 41). As with the previous two women, Japie announces her

monologue: “Dames en here ... T is vir Troeteldiere” and with a panicked alarm beep, we are transported into Rachelle’s thoughts.

Rachelle recounts the day that Muis arrived at home. From the start it seems that she had a negative association with the animal. First, it was not her idea to get the dog; it was a surprise from her husband, Dirk.³⁷ She describes Muis as being “evil” with “wasige kraalogies”. She demonises the animal, using terms like “duiwelskots” and “duiwelshond”. As with Liz’s panic attack with the kitchen appliances, we once again see the transference of irrational emotion onto a non-human being. This raw emotion displaced onto an innocent puppy creates an incongruity that is amusing. She personifies the animal on two occasions:

Rachelle: Ons het so stip in mekaar se oë gekyk, haar bo lip het met so millimeter gelig en ek sweer dit het geklink asof sy se: “Fok jou”. Toe kots sy op my ... Sy het begin grom maar dit het geklink asof sy lag. “He he he ekt gewen.” Daai dag het Muis oorlog verklaar (Olwagen 2012: 41).

She is taking the dog out of the animal realm and creating a human-like creature, capable of declaring war and encroaching on her life in a malignant way. Rachelle creates a picture of a calculating creature that can manipulate Dirk’s feelings and instantly turn around and growl at her once he is gone. Throughout, she sets up the situation as one in which Dirk and the “Duiwelshond” are lined up against her. But of course, there is no devilish animal, no creature making her miserable on purpose – Muis is just a dog. She is projecting her own insecurities about her relationship onto the dog. This type of displacement is associated with neuroses and the foolish flaws which can be found in all three of the

³⁷ This is the first time in the monologues where a woman’s partner is directly named. With Rachelle being the only married woman of the three, this makes sense. Where Liz and Shani are still struggling with their personal neuroses, Rachelle’s neurosis has been integrated into her neuroses around her husband and their marriage.

characters and which makes them simultaneously relatable and incongruous to the amused audience.³⁸

Given her history with pets, Rachelle is worried about her lack of natural motherly instincts. She is past the point of trying to find a partner and is in the next phase of her adult life, which is to have children.³⁹ This is ironic as she is the only character in the play not to be associated directly with the theme of motherhood. She sees Muis as a cruel test that her husband has set for her, a test she is failing:

Rachelle: Die ergste van ALS is ek weet Dirk het haar vir my gebring as 'n toets ...
 'n Toets om te sien of ek kan kyk na iets wat lewend is. 'n Baba. Ons kind.
 Hy noem Muis dit. Ons kind. Hy toets my om te kyk of ek 'n goeie ma eendag
 sal wees vir sy kind (Olwagen 2012: 42).

It is uncanny how she refers to their future child as “sy kind”, his child. She would be carrying it inside her body for nine months and painfully give birth, yet she still sees it as ‘his’ child, not ‘theirs’. She does not only see Muis as a test by her husband, but as one bringing her insecurities about their relationship to light. She is worried about having married too young and wonders if Dirk is really the man she wants to spend the rest of her life with. She is not sure whether she even wants children. These thoughts seem normal for anyone who might have some anxieties in their relationships, but the presence of Muis the dog amplifies them into absurdity; “Alles normale gevoelens. Maar Muis laat my nie toe om te betwyfel nie, Muis grom as ek twyfel, Muis pis op die mat as ek aan myself vat” (Olwagen 2012: 42). Once again Rachelle’s liberated carnival body is made ridiculous by her self-created incongruities. Rachelle juxtaposes her own physical desires with Muis’s

³⁸ Also in *Amper, Vrystaat*, we see Liz displacing her desires into the form of fantasy play, becoming a Dungeons and Dragons champion, a very unlikely role for a mother in Pretoria.

³⁹ Once again we see a perpetuation of the ideal of the Afrikaner woman as mother and wife.

bodily functions, whether it be flatulence, throwing up or urinating, she sees them as a personal attack on her own doubts and desires.

At this time the audience or readers have quite a clear picture of her relationship with Muis as well as with Dirk. In the final part of the monologue we experience a turning point. She realises why she hates Muis so much, describing how she looks sitting with her on the couch: “Muis is ’n wrak ... ’n senuwrak. Sy bewe. Sy lyk heeldag en aldag aan die rant van trane. Sy grom vir alles en almal om haar” (Olwagen 2012: 42). Rachelle finally looks past her own projections of insecurity and sees Muis for the innocent, fragile creature she is. No longer is this a dog with supernatural powers of judgement, but a frail, nervous animal wanting to be loved in her own way. With this breakdown of the power that Muis had over her, Rachelle is finally ready to admit to herself where her hatred for the dog had come from all along, and through this both Rachelle and the audience have a cathartic experience and a temporary release within the amusement of it:

Rachelle: En toe tref dit my: ek is Muis. Of Muis is ’n simbool vir wie ek gaan wees oor ’n paar jaar van nou af. ’n Bewende, tranerige wrak, petite en klein soos my baas van my hou, ’n neurotiese, miniatuur weergawe van myself wat heeldag alleen in die huis sit en vreet en wag vir my baas om huis toe te kom. En as hy by die huis kom dan waai ek my boude in sy rigting om te wys hoe dankbaar ek is vir die dak bo my kop en die kos in my bak. Ek haat muis. Ek haat haar, want een van die dae gaan ek in haar verander (Olwagen 2012: 42).

Rachelle realises she is turning into a Muis figure. If nothing changes, she will be a neurotic, nervous wreck. She already sees the signs in herself building up; she also ‘growls’ at anyone who comes near and is dominated by her husband. She is not working, as she is ‘finishing’ her studies, so, like Muis, she sits and waits the whole day for Dirk to

come home. Her description of Muis wiggling her behind for Dirk in gratitude mirrors Rachelle's own sense of an unhealthy sexual relationship between her and Dirk, where she merely offers herself because she feels she has to. We see her feeling objectified in the same way that she objectifies Japie with her crude comment when he is dancing. This is also another justification in her mind for using the word "naai" when watching Japie dance. She sees herself transforming into an animal and does not seem able to stop the process. The desperate state of her life is signalled by the alarm sounding once again.

3.2.4 Japie : X, Y...

Until this point Japie has been a peripheral character, contributing to each scene, without drawing focus. This changes when he starts unpacking his issues with Henko. He is clearly very upset, with valid reason, yet when Shani speaks out and declares that he should leave Henko, he does not take it very well: "... Kyk na julle ... julle bitch en moan heelaand. Julle sal nie weet wat julle het as dit julle tussen die ore getref het nie. Bedorwe brokkies!" (Olwagen 2012: 45). He sees the way they behave and though he indulges it at times, he is still an outsider to the group, representing an objective point of view. With this statement from Japie, the girls suddenly have a common enemy and they turn on him, getting defensive and ultimately resorting to juvenile taunts about his homosexuality. When Japie brings them back to reality with the statement "Daar is mense in Uganda wat doodgemaak word omdat hulle gay is" (Olwagen 2012: 46), the alarm beeps and Liz is quick to put an end to the conversation. She has made a rule. It is necessary to abide by these rules. "Ek het gesê ons mag nie oor politiek praat nie. Dit maak my net angstig" (Olwagen 2012: 46). Her overestimation of her own control once again leaves her the fool. She is all for taunting someone, but within the parameters of her own rules.

Finally Japie is the one set up for a monologue, with the three female characters introducing him: “Dames en Here ... L is vir Liefde” (Olwagen 2012: 51). Japie uses the metaphor of love as a drug to carry the monologue. In his mind there is no difference between love and hate. He sees himself as seeking out unreciprocated love, falling into a pattern of love and hate. This is a classic example of Zamir’s depiction of a young comic character obsessed with love (2014: 178). Though the play is set at a kitchen tea which is usually filled with stories of love and marriage, ironically this is the first mention of true love.

He is the only character not directly associated with any animal, though he describes himself and the society that buys into this same love/hate pattern as “creatures of habit”.⁴⁰ This habit is the drug habit he refers to later in the monologue. Looking at this as a metaphor for the carnival, we are all creatures of habit in our everyday lives. It is through the carnival where the norm and habits are broken. In this sense the characters as much as the audience are experiencing a break in habit during the course of the play. Japie also sees love as a pattern, a type of algebra. This imagery appears early in the monologue and returns at the conclusion. Algebra also brings up images of school years, which are reinforced by the story of the two characters, X and Y, in the playground: “Algebra. Speelgrond.” (Olwagen 2012: 51). The use of X when referring to himself also creates an extra layer of meaning when it is spoken. He has just broken up with his boyfriend, so he is in fact now someone’s ‘ex’. In Olwagen’s typical style of collaging, there are many mixed references to popular culture throughout the monologue. Two references to songs, one a childhood song mostly sung in Bible class: “’n Dwase man bou sy huis op die sand”, which ties in neatly with the sandpit that X and Y are in. This is also a religious song about the idea that if you base your beliefs on something that has no real foundation, you are a

⁴⁰ Shani is associated with the free range chicken, which emphasises her longing for freedom. Liz is linked to childlike images of animals, like Daantjie Kat the safety officer, and later the zebra which features in the alphabet. Rachelle is obviously associated with Muis, the anxiety ridden dog wanting to please its master.

fool.⁴¹ Japie feels that that is how he approaches relationships, building them up, only to see them quickly destroyed:

Japie: Legos. Ons bou 'n huis. Ons huis. Y raak verveeld. Hy skop ons huis
stukkend. Hy loop. Vee my snot en trane aan my mou. Skraap die moed
bymekaar om van voor af te bou (Olwagen 2012: 51).

The rhyming and the rhythm of the last two lines remind the reader and audience of a rhyme someone might teach you in school to remember a lesson. This might indicate that Japie feels that these mistakes he keeps making in his love life are things he should have learnt to avoid a long time ago.

Yet it seems that this lesson is still far from being learnt. As mentioned before, Japie sees his streak of unrequited loves as a drug. “Die dwelm van die neentigs – Heroin of was dit cocaine? Wie gee om. Kort daarna Ecstasy. Acid. Tik. MDMA. Vandag is ons verslaaf aan unreciprocated liefde. Liefde as die dwelm” (Olwagen 2012: 52). He returns to the 90s here, showing the difference in drug culture and society from the time he grew up until now. He is now experiencing the passing of time, instead of denying it. Calling love a drug immediately brings up negative connotations of addiction, getting a fix, late nights and dark alleys. He juxtaposes this directly with another song lyric: “Liefeling, kan ons nie maar vergeet en vergewe”. This Afrikaans classic⁴² thrown in between all of the darker imagery creates a strong incongruity. The song was seen as a wholesome Afrikaans love song and is often heard on the festival grounds being covered by beer tent artists. Now, placed in between contemporary references and drugs, we see the lyric in a new light, an actual desperate request from one lover to the other. Juxtaposed with the drug imagery, there is

⁴¹ Along with the references to the garden of Eden later in the monologue, Japie portrays the gay man under the Christian dogma, often shunned from communities for their sexual orientation. During Carnival there is a breaking down of dogmas. In this festival driven play Japie is finally able to express himself freely.

⁴² Made popular in lyrical overtones by tenor Gé Korsten.

a sense of addiction in this love that creates a dark humour through incongruity. Perhaps Japie is alluding to his parents being to blame for his misrepresentation of love, that no one could live up to the high standards set by their parents and their romantic vinyls.

Japie: Liefing, kan ons nie maar vergeet en vergewe. Liefing, ek kan nie sonder jou lewe. My liefing is 'n dwelm. My liefing, as ek maar net jou in 'n pil kon verpak en daagliks neem (Olwagen 2012: 52).

The monologue takes a turn to the darker side here. Japie wants a love pill, perhaps to cure his unhealthy relationship with love. Yet, unlike the other street drugs mentioned previously, Japie sees the love drug as more of a medicinal item – taken daily within limits and with all the normal warnings found on any over-the-counter medicines we might take. “Moenie meer as die daaglikse dosis oorskry nie. Kontra-indikasies: oorsensitiwiteit, jaloesie en obsessie. Verslawing” (Olwagen 2012: 52). Even with taking only the recommended daily dose, Japie seems to believe that love has negative side effects. Of all four of the characters' long-form monologues, Japie's is surely the darkest and comes near the end of the play. Where the others use gruesome imagery and metaphors, Japie comes across as inconsolable and raging. This builds up the tension for the audience who are by now wondering whether it is still appropriate to be laughing. With this cathexis the inevitable catharsis at the end is even more satisfying. Japie is bitter and disillusioned by the realities of love. As Zamir states, characters in comedies who are heartbroken are not there to make us sad, but rather to take us on the journey to their self discovery (2014: 177). Japie resents the perfect ideals of love created by Hollywood and Shakespeare. In their tragic imperfections lies the crux of the situation: “Groot hartseer is nie gelyk aan liefde nie”. *Romeo and Juliet* is mentioned as the ultimate love story, yet it ends in a double suicide. “Dit moet 'n wroeging wees, anders is dit nie liefde nie” (Olwagen 2012:

52). Japie refuses to conform to this type of love, even though he contradicts himself by doing so.

Japie: Sou Romeo en Juliet steeds die grootste love story of all time wees as hulle actually survive het? Loopbaan, huis maak, gesonde sekslewe, kinders maak, miskraam, kinders kry, kinders grootmaak, aftree, op 80 in mekaar se arms vrek – dis 'n love story. Tragedie is nie gelyk aan liefde nie. Maar ons is verslaaf daaraan. Tragedie. Drama. Sentiment. Hartseer (Olwagen 2012: 52).

Here Japie references one of the best-known romantic plays in the world, that ends in great tragedy. Usually romances and comedies would end in a big wedding, with all the characters coming together to celebrate the couple and the journey they had to go on to reach this point. The audience is reminded of the situation in the play, that Liz is now preparing herself for what is to come with her own wedding, the happy ending and celebration she has been planning all her life. Japie's list of ideals of a love story are put in stark contrast with Liz's list of life goals which the audience has heard. Japie's opinion does not align with this idea of the perfect ending. He seeks out the disastrous relationships and holds on to them for dear life. Without disaster, it does not feel real, does not feel right. As he says later in the monologue: "Bloed, sweet, trane en drama verkoop, happiness is vervelig" (Olwagen 2012: 52). This is a meta-comment on the theatre and the types of stories we tell. Olwagen is aware of the festival context, and by referencing Shakespeare, the global context within which dramas are judged and comedies are enjoyed and then merely set aside. It is also ironic that this speech is articulated in a successful comedy at a festival. Japie as the love obsessed youth is of course referring back to the drama we indulge in and not theatre itself, yet it is significant that his character seems to latch onto these dramas he has been exposed to. We see this boredom with

happiness in all four characters. They are unsatisfied with their lives and loves in many different ways. Japie is the only character to admit openly that something is wrong, but with the influence of the suppressed women, his relationship ends even worse than he would have thought.

All these suppressed anxieties and frustrations have their roots in insecurity. Rachelle is insecure about her life choices and the stagnation of her university degree, Shani is insecure about her financial status, and Liz is insecure about her whole life spinning out of control and she tries to hide this from everyone. As Japie comments:

Japie: Die appel in die Bybel was nie wysheid, sonde of haat nie ... dit was insecurity. Na een hap kon nie Adam of Eva meer kaal in die tuin loop nie. Eva het vet gevoel en Adam was bang sy slang was nie groot genoeg nie (Olwagen 2012: 52).

Taking the start of their problems back to a story from the Bible, Japie is showing how deeply rooted their insecurities and neuroses are. The story of Adam and Eve tells of the creation of the human species according to the Christian religion. Japie directly connects this with the start of all their anxieties. The banishment that happened after just one bite of the apple and the sudden realisation of their shame connects with the characters' feeling that they were banished from their comfortable family houses, knowing too much and having to go out of their Edens and face the real world. This also mirrors the disillusionment of life after carnival, with the realisation that in the normal world certain behaviours are not possible. The knowledge gained through the eating of the apple was the downfall of Adam and Eve, just as the knowledge and associated anxieties of growing up will cause the downfall of these characters, if nothing is done. As young adults trying to fit into a grown up world, the characters have lost their confidence. All they want is for

everything to be okay, for their relationships to be easier, their decisions motivated and their secret desires to disappear, or perhaps be fulfilled.

For the conclusion of the monologue, Japie returns to the story of X and Y building a house on the playground. The basic story line stays the same, yet the added insecurities are now included in the narrative.

Japie: Nuwe scenario. Die werklike wiskunde som. X sit op sy eie in die sandput. Legos. Y wil saam speel. X is huiwerig maar hy gee in. Na 'n ruk raak X agterdogtig. Hoekom speel ons dan so lekker? Niemand wil ooit met my speel nie? X begin vir Y te terg. Y hou aan om huisies te bou. X voel Y gee nie genoeg aandag nie. As Y regtig daarvan gehou het om met X te speel sou Y meer ontsteld raak oor X met Y lelik is. X gooi tantrums. Y bou verder. Meteens besluit X die speletjie is nie meer lekker nie en skop hul huisie des poes toe. Y loop weg. X vee sy snotterige trane aan sy mou en skraap die moed bymekaar om van voor af te bou (Olwagen 2012: 52).

The story ends with the same rhyme, with X still in tears, yet willing to start building again at a later stage. The added insecurities and neuroses in this version of the X and Y story make it seem even more juvenile than the first. X is also the one to blame for kicking in the house that they built. Japie realises that he is at least in part to blame for destroying their 'house', their relationship, with his anxieties. Y in this version is much calmer, never engaging with X directly, merely reacting to the wild behaviour of X. Japie once again admits that he is X, yet this time he qualifies it by saying he wants to be X. He is resigned to the fact that he has broken up with Y, and sees no other future for himself. The alarm beeps once more. Having heard all four character's "confessions", the audience can now draw their own informed conclusions of their situation. The tension has built up to breaking

point as the dark subject matter of this last monologue gives way to the final scenes and ultimate reconciliation of characters, plot and audience.

3.2.5 ... and Z

The next sequence is the culmination of the play. All the characters have been faced with their own flaws and anxieties throughout the night, and are fragile at this point. They still yearn back to their school days, when things seemed much simpler. Liz comes up with the idea of the alphabet for twenty-somethings. In this alphabet all the characters' troubles and needs come out, with each one contributing their own examples as the list goes on. With Shani's contribution of "N is vir Neurose" we finally come to the title of the play. This is what they have been alluding to throughout and here it gets a name. Through this alphabet, Olwage highlights many problems facing the characters specifically, as well as twenty-somethings universally. They sail through the alphabet, briefly stopping at certain difficult letters, and then they get stuck on Z.

Japie: Moeilikste vir laaste ... Z?

Stilte

Japie: Zuma?

Hulle lag

Liz: By my skool is Z vir Zebrastreep. Dit was altyd zebra toe is 'n kind voor die skool raak gery...

Shani: Is die kind okay?

Liz: Ja net groot geskrik ... nou moet ons padveiligheid by die silabus inwerk.

Rachelle: Daai ou rympe ... kyk lings en regs en dan weer links...

Japie: Daai kat ... Daantjie het dit altyd vir ons geleer ... nou is hy nie meer daar om jou hand vas te hou nie.

Hulle raak stil (Olwagen 2012: 53-54)

Liz's seemingly arbitrary story brings up memories of Daantjie Kat, the safety cat who taught Afrikaans South African children watching TV about road safety.⁴³ Through their reminiscing about an ultimate alphabet, where things are simple, they stumble across what safety meant for them when they were younger. By realising what safety was, they can see what safety and security mean to them now. Daantjie (substituting a parent figure) is not there to hold their hands anymore. By laying out their problems all night and summarising them in an alphabet, they are able to face them. This seems almost like a session with a psychiatrist. They needed to work through their issues, in front of the witnesses of the audience, in order to come to this conclusion. The zebra crossing they speak of, which ultimately calms them down, can be seen as a transitional object. Crossing from one phase of their lives to the next, with no one to help them, they find solace in the fact that they might have made it across and are leaving the liminal space they have been stuck in. They were not run over by a car like the girl in Liz's story. They made it. They eat, talk of revolution, and fall asleep, at peace with the fact that they do not have everything figured out. The alarm blares for a while after they have fallen asleep, showing how the panic has no effect on them any more, an unnecessary warning sign.

The lights fade back up for the epilogue. This echoes conventions of teenage and college comedy films from the late 1990s and early 2000s, where a brief summary of each

⁴³ Also, within this story we see a demonstration of Benign Incongruity. The child being struck by a car is not in itself funny, but with them being unhurt and it being the catalyst for the rest of the story, we can find humour in it.

character's fate is given at the end of the film.⁴⁴ This technique gives the characters a verisimilitude and also provides closure for the audience. Each character is isolated by light, showing the audience what has happened to them after the night of Liz's bachelorette. Japie is still stripping, Shani is trying out a new recipe for her Woolies chicken and waiting for Shaun to come to dinner, Rachelle has resigned herself to Muis's anxieties, and Liz is adjusting to married life despite her blender exploding.

Liz still teaches her children the alphabet, the basic building blocks of learning and life. She goes all the way through to X and Y, reminding us of Japie's story, up to Z. Z is the most difficult of all, but with a sense of acceptance she realises Z is and will always be for Zebrastreep. Simple. Without any anxieties or panic, some things in life are still simple. In this we no longer see Liz as the foolish character obstructing her own happiness. Liz has grown through the course of the play and though we are not privy to the wedding celebrations as is traditional in comedies, we do however still feel the mood of continuity, the happy ending they have been wishing for and a return to an internal balance for both the audience and the fictional world.

3.3 Conclusion

N is vir Neurose was critically acclaimed in the field of comedy at the South African festivals. Despite its pervasive dark undertones, it succeeds in leaving the audience with a sense of light-heartedness at the end. This balance is achieved through the determination of the Polony Collective to make peer-approved theatre. If the audience does not have the shared view that, for example, society puts pressure on females to get married, then they will not understand the premise for *N is for Neurose's* comedic neuroses and will not get involved. This pressure becomes more universal towards all genders with the pressure of

⁴⁴ Examples of this are *Mallrats* (1995), *That Thing You Do* (1996), *Can't Hardly Wait* (1998), *Legally Blonde* (2001)

marriage being diluted into the pressure of love and the idea that without a partner your life is incomplete.⁴⁵ We see the familiar use of comic-pathetic heroes with whom the audience can sympathise, but also judge, and in the end laugh at the absurdity of the familiar behaviour. Without appearing superficial, Olwagen manages to find a balance between the anxieties of his troubled characters and the comedy of their situations. Olwagen's characters who have been trapped in the liminal space of young adulthood, mirrors the false sense of freedom that the audience has within the festival context. With his uncompromising style, Olwagen plays into the carnivalesque of the festival and is able to connect with his audiences despite controversial subject matter. He succeeds in fulfilling Styan's ideals of "[t]he dramatist who can swing between the extremes of tragedy and farce within the same framework" (1968: 282) and leaves the audience with an amused and satisfied mood, smiling at their own anxieties and neuroses.

⁴⁵ Shani in *N is vir Neurose* rejects these ideals and decides rather to be on her own, yet in the end we see her reunited with Shaun, making her revolution incomplete.

CHAPTER 4 – AMPER, VRYSTAAT

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Text and Context

Another contemporary comedy that succeeds in illustrating the balance between the comic and dramatic is Nico Scheepers's *Amper, Vrystaat*. The play deals with three estranged sisters who reunite for their mother's funeral in the fictional small town of Amper, in the 'Vrystaat' province, after her lonely death causes much speculation among townspeople. As in *N is vir Neurose*, the characters are also three females dealing with their own demons. The three estranged sisters are reunited by the death of their mother, and realise that no matter how hard they tried to fight it, they are bound to each other.

As with *N is vir Neurose* the cast took a collaborative approach to the conception of the play. The production is a good example of a work produced independently of any major production company. Nico Scheepers⁴⁶ is the director and designer, Antoinette Louw⁴⁷ is one of the lead actresses, the producer as well as one of the writers. The rest of the cast (Cintaine Schutte and Milan Murray)⁴⁸ are also all credited as writers.⁴⁹ Schutte describes the early stages of the play's creation in an article for Rooi Rose magazine. Louw and Murray had always wanted to do a play together and they approached Scheepers to direct it. He suggested to them that Schutte join the cast and from there they started

⁴⁶ With a background in acting and later directing ATKV Tienertoneel, Scheepers moved to Cape Town in 2014 after theatre maker Hennie van Greunen spotted his talent and gave him his first festival opportunity as the writer, designer and director of *Wentel* with Anna-Mart van der Merwe (Jansen van Rensburg 2017: Online). He has been making theatre at national festivals ever since.

⁴⁷ Louw initially gained fame with her role on the Afrikaans television series *7de Laan*. She considers her writing to be her strong point (Van der Merwe 2013: Online), although she has won a SAFTA for her role in Deon Meyer's *Die Laaste Tango* in 2014 and most recently won the Best Actress Award at the 2017 Cape Town International Film Festival (Antoinette Louw 2017: Online).

⁴⁸ With four publications, a journal about motherhood and three children's books (Green 2016: Online), as well as a pedigree in local television series including *Binnelanders*, *Transito*, *Die Byl* and most recently *Waterfront*, Murray is a household name within the Afrikaans community (Milan Murray 2015: Online).

⁴⁹ Given the collaborative nature of most productions developed for Afrikaans arts festivals, most debut productions could and should include a writing credit for the actors. They form and reform their lines as needed to breathe life into their characters.

conceptualising the story (Salzwedel 2017: Online). With the casting happening before the script, it might seem like a backwards process, yet in the Afrikaans festival setting it happens quite often. Even within the Polony Collective the casting is already often pre-determined with only some actors coming from outside the collective when needed.

The play was first performed at the Vrystaat Arts Festival in 2015 and received an award for best debut production at the festival in the same year. In 2016 Scheepers was nominated for an ATKV-Woordveertjie for best drama text for *Amper*, *Vrystaat* and *Rooivalk* (2016). Scheepers took home the prize for *Rooivalk*, establishing him once again as a serious force within the theatre world.⁵⁰ Since its debut in 2015 *Amper*, *Vrystaat* has had a very long run, having performed at all major festivals as well as breaking out of the festival mould and performing in independent theatres nationally. At the 2016 Fiësta awards an excerpt of the play was performed. At this same awards ceremony Scheepers won Best Design for *Amper*, *Vrystaat* and *Die Dag is Bros* (Kyknet se Fiëstas 2016: Online).

The version of the script discussed in this thesis and included as Addendum B was made available to me by the director and co-writer, Nico Scheepers. The text in its current form seems quite complete and well formatted, and is of great use to researchers and practitioners alike in that it is the final script, which often does not exist with plays that are developed from workshopping.

The serious themes of death, affairs, sexuality and addiction make this a darker comedy than *N is vir Neurose* but also still conforms to Styran and Zamir's conventions of comedy. Indeed, certain festivals categorise the production as a drama, yet the creators maintain

⁵⁰ Scheepers went on to win Best New Afrikaans Production and Best Production for *Rooivalk* at the 2017 Fiëstas.

that they intend it as a comedy, albeit a dark one. *Amper, Vrystaat* was once again to be seen at the 2017 Woordfees, two years after its debut.⁵¹

4.1.2 Synopsis

Through the use of personal monologues, *Amper, Vrystaat* tells the story of three estranged sisters and the death of their mother. The three characters are as different as sisters can be. Annatjie, played by Cintaine Schutte, also a member of the original Polony Collective, is the youngest of the three. She used to dream of becoming a marine biologist, but without proper qualifications, she is now content with working part-time at the Two Oceans Aquarium in Cape Town and waitressing at a trendy spot in Kloof Street, where she goes by the name Anne Van.

Bea, the middle sister, ran away from home when she was very young to pursue her greatest love, Louis, a married man who has no intention of ever leaving his wife. She lives a false life, deceiving her family into believing that she is a jetsetter travelling the world, when in fact she lives on her own in an apartment in Wonderboom, Pretoria, just a few kilometres away from Liz, her eldest sister.

Liz has five children from three different marriages and is a typical bored housewife. She has a love of fantasy fiction, which her mother introduced her to as a child. Liz believes that her ambitions in life had to be sacrificed, for if she were ever to get a job, the whole household would fall apart.⁵² Liz is the only sister who is still in direct contact with their

⁵¹ At the 2017 Vrystaat Kunstefees, Scheepers debuts the 'brother' piece of this play, *Nêrens Noordkaap*, starring comedy actors Albert Pretorius, De Klerk Oelofse and Geon Nel. Creating a sequel once again establishes the continuity of this original script.

⁵² It is ironic that this character reminds us so much of Liz in *N is vir Neurose*, almost as if it is a glimpse into her future. When looking at the greater trope of Afrikaans comedies, the neuroses and anxieties experienced by both these Liz characters in *N is vir Neurose* and *Amper, Vrystaat* can be seen as mutual in their functionality. As in *N is vir Neurose*, the Liz character is also a strong mother figure. Liz in *Amper, Vrystaat* is secretly scared of turning into her mother, which is also a trope in *N is vir Neurose*. This is a universal theme felt by many women, and

mother. Although Annatjie receives a phone call every Sunday at five from her mother, it is Liz who visits the mother in Amper and also takes her back to her own home once a month. Bea has no contact with their mother and has no intention of salvaging the relationship.

The play unfolds gradually. The audience is eased into the style of the play, which comprises a series of monologues directed at the audience. As more of each character is revealed, the monologues become shorter, yet do not turn into dialogue until the Christmas lunch scene and later at their mother's funeral. At Christmas the characters are gathered together for the first time in years and, as it sometimes happens with family gatherings, there is instant conflict. Each character is antagonistic in her own way – Annatjie about her sexual orientation, Bea about their mother's appearance and behaviour, and Liz towards Bea because of her judgements of the family. After this scene of dialogue at the Christmas lunch the characters seem even more estranged.

After the sudden death of her lover, Annatjie wants to talk to her mother, to put her at ease about her sexual orientation. Annatjie fantasises about open communication with her mother, what she would say to her if she could talk openly. Annatjie decides to make this conversation a reality by going to visit her mother, but when she arrives, she is already too late: she finds her mother's body in the kitchen, where she had died alone without anyone noticing. The sisters now need to return to Amper and face each other and the community they grew up in, once again.

We see the characters come to life through their opinions of each other and their perceptions of themselves. Unlike the monologues in *N is vir Neurose*, we have no Japie

when considering the conservative background of the traditional Afrikaner, it makes sense that this inner conflict with your origins might be a universal theme among Afrikaans women.

figure mediating or framing the speeches, the audience is directly confronted with the women and their stories. Through their unmediated monologues, the characters create a history for the audience, giving evidence of their own version of the story, and leaving the audience to form their own opinions about the characters and situations. In terms of the humour of the play, the audience's involvement with each character also creates the comedic irony for each scene, as the different versions of the same situation are discussed and compared. The incongruous nature of these juxtaposed views give the play its comedic mood in between the darker subject matter.

4.1.3 Settings and Space

When considering the staging, Scheepers has made a very conscious decision not to impose any specific setting on the design, by not specifically portraying Amper or any other town. Rather, the audience is confronted with an abstract space that is filled in with the character's description of it. The fact that Amper itself is never represented gives the play a universality and also acts functionally within the travelling festival context. Once again we see a play conforming to Bain and Hauptfleisch's ideas surrounding festival conventions with limited cast size, props and costuming as well as a functional, yet aesthetically pleasing set design. With a smaller cast than *N is vir Neurose*, and a minimalist design, the play is made to travel with ease. The lack of a formal set, replaced with three islands of rocks and a hanging lightbulb isolating each one, underscores the themes of loneliness and isolation, as the three women float on their islands on the stage. This shows that the set is representational of the psychological space in which the characters find themselves, rather than trying to represent any physical space.

The debut venue at the 2015 Vrystaat Arts Festival was the Kyknet Scaena theatre, with a capacity of around 300. The use of the larger venue for such an intimate comedy could

also be a contributing factor to its eventual continuity, as it gains more exposure and a wider audience. At the 2016 Potchefstroom Festival the play was staged at the Potchefstroom Gimnasium school hall. This is a good example of the space influencing the reception of the play as the stage is set higher than the audience's eye line and the design of the islands of rocks were lost on the audience. Along with this, reviewer Lida Krüger commented on the venue: "behalwe dat die plek vir my slegte hoërskoolherinneringe oproep, is dit ook nie geskik vir toneel nie" (2016: Online). For a play already dealing with themes of escape and a conflict with your home town, this comment from Krüger seems applicable and highlights the influence that a performance space can have on an audience, bringing up old memories and framing the audience's mood before the performance has even started. Though the stage signs, as Balme described it, stay constant, the performance is an event and as such is variable according to the changing factors of each festival. This kind of ghosting of the performance space is what makes performance reception at festivals fluid, as each venue brings its own set of connotations with it.

For the audience, the fictional town of Amper becomes an almost mythical place, a fusion of rural towns across South Africa. Amper can be said to be the fifth character in the play, with the absent mother being the fourth. The town has shaped each character in a very specific way and they all felt the need to escape. The Afrikaans idiom "amper stamper", meaning almost but not quite, also comes to mind. They almost also died there. It also creates a sense of limbo and opportunities just missed. In the same sense, they almost escaped, yet they are returning for the mother's funeral and have to confront the things that they fled from in the first place, making their inner conflict come full circle, and perhaps finally freeing them of it. Within this liberation that the characters experience, the

audience also feels the release, within humour, from the tension that often built up between the character's monologues.

4.1.4 Structure

When analysing *Amper, Vrystaat* it is important to note the style in which it is written. The text consists of character monologues with very few dialogue scenes between the three women. This use of long-form monologues makes the dialogue moments between the characters stand out, especially in the final scene at the mother's funeral. It seems that this play's structure is an inverse of *N is vir Neurose*. In Olwagen's play the dialogue was leading up to the monologues, whereas here the monologues pave the way for the dialogue scenes near the end. Though reviewer Krüger felt that the use of monologues directed at the audience was overused in Afrikaans theatre at the time (2016: Online), this inversion of the structural approach draws the audience in and makes them confidants of the characters as well as driving the plot. The character's inner struggle becomes a plot device, in stead of the plot dictating the internal struggle. Once the dialogue scenes are reached, the audience is able to make an informed judgement on the situations playing out in front of them, because of their preceding knowledge of the characters and the relationships between them. This also creates the dramatic irony that Styan sees as a characteristic of dark comedy. The monologues are spoken directly to the audience and as the audience is implicit in theatre, Julia Jarcho argues that these types of monologue become dialogical in their interaction with the audience: "It thus becomes easy to imagine that monologue, as speech liberated from conversation between characters, functions as a kind of 'dialogue' with the audience" (2014: 296). In *Amper, Vrystaat* even more so than in *N is vir Neurose*, the monologues create a free flow of ideas and emotions which the characters offer to the audience, creating a cathartic dialogue with them.

The order of the monologues is non-sequential in terms of narrative time. They do not follow a specific linear or logical sequence, yet in their totality they constitute the history of the family and characters.

Traditionally, the monologue was used to reveal the inner conflicts of a character, in order to give the audience insight into some of their actions, or to let the audience in on a secret, which would create dramatic or comedic tension (Jarcho 2014: 295). The comic aside, where, between dialogue scenes, a character throws lines to the audience that the other characters do not hear, is also a way of drawing the audience into a certain character's story. *Amper, Vrystaat* takes this even further, with almost the whole play consisting of monologues, utilizing the idea of the 'aside' and giving it a cathartic function as the characters purge themselves of their personal emotions with the audience bearing witness to these confessions. This is seen more directly in *N is vir Neurose*, as the characters in *Amper, Vrystaat* are often ignorant to the depth of their feelings, but is still interesting to note as the quick juxtaposition of the sisters' monologues has the same function.

Dialogue, on the other hand, is a social act. It is by nature an interaction with another and reveals relationships between characters through style, tone and subject matter. The monologues are kept up throughout the play, underscoring the characters' isolation from one another. The audience gains insight into the relationships and lives of the characters through their opinions of each other, and experience a building up of dramatic irony.

4.2 Themes and Motifs

4.2.1 Communication

The theme of communication is predominantly underscored by the structure of the play. Only in a very few instances do the characters speak directly to each other. Within this

non-communication we see a manifestation of Zamir's conception of the conventions of the use of language in comedy (2014: 179). Going beyond the usual concepts of pun and wordplay, we see the characters often being ignorant of the meaning of their words and also using incongruous intentions to express themselves (2014: 179). The root of this is usually that the sisters talk at and about each other, with many contrasting opinions being juxtaposed.

This also leads to a release of the audience's built up tension and therein lies the humour. As Krüger puts it: "Tragiese gebeure is uitgebeeld met net genoeg komiese verligting om die gehoor se simpatie te wen sonder om stroperig te raak – soos wanneer Bea met 'n luiperdjas en donkerbril by hul ma se begrafnis opdaag" (2016: Online). Krüger's observations mirror Styan's characteristic of a balance between laughter and tears that is found in the dark comedy, as well as the balance between sympathy and sentimentality. The final scene at their mother's funeral seems to be the culmination of the whole play, and is also the only sequence that relies fully on dialogue instead of monologues. In her eulogy Liz admits that everyone dies alone. She realises she will also die alone, despite the large family she has created for herself. Stylistically it is interesting to note that this speech she gives at the funeral can be seen as a monologue in dialogue territory. The sisters have just started interacting with each other in dialogue, and here we see Liz once again being a lone voice. The difference here, of course, is that the speech is not intended for the audience alone; it is for all in mourning for her mother; it is for her sisters and, in a way, it is for the deceased mother. The audience becomes part of the funeral gathering and with the whole history of the Van Emmenis family having been shared with them, they are also able to mourn the passing of the mother along with the characters.

The incongruity that often arises between their opinions and perspectives brings out the comedy of the way that families sometimes work, as can be seen at the Christmas lunch scene that combines dialogue with shorter speeches directed towards the audience:

Liz: Ons sit in stilte. Die opskeplepel lui teen die koperpot soos 'n klok. En
 –

Bea: En ma dam beesstert in haar bord op.

Annatjie: Skep, Maretha. Moenie skaam wees nie.

Liz: Tipies Annatjie om 'n ongenooide gas te bring na 'n familie-Kersfees.
 Maryke, Marietjie –

Annatjie: Maretha

Liz: Marli, Marinda –

Annatjie: Maretha (Scheepers, Louw, Schutte and Murray 2015: 20)

The character's communication seems to be disconnected. This disconnection is supported by the design and structure of the play. Also in this scene we have the present, though physically absent, mother. Everyone seems to be talking about the mother and never directly to her. She is physically absent in this scene as she is absent in their lives. Bea has not spoken to her mother in years. Annatjie speaks to her mother over the phone once a week at exactly the same time. This makes it seem more of a routine than actual communication, and Annatjie also experiences it as such:

Annatjie: Elke Sondag vyfuur, klokslag na die Angus Buchan broadcast bel sy om te preek en om te hoor hoe dit gaan. 'n Halfuur van onvoorwaardelike liefde – vermom as 'n check up (Scheepers et al 2015: 4).

Annatjie's perception of the weekly calls as unconditional love disguised as a check-up is a humorous observation of mother-daughter relationships. The phone calls to their mother form part of the through line when looking at the circumstances around her death, as communication with her had been cut off and no-one knew she had passed away until her body was discovered in her kitchen a week later by Annatjie. Liz is the one with the most direct communication with the mother, yet she now blames herself for not reaching out before her death. The broken line of communication between the characters is restored after the mother's death. For the first time we hear of Annatjie phoning Liz directly to break the news to her. This all leads up to their direct communication at the funeral and the possible reconciliation of their relationships, according to Annatjie, at the end.

The tenuous communication between mother and daughters is similarly reflected in communication between the sisters. Liz's oldest daughter, Amorentia, is the only person who has a direct relationship with Annatjie.

Liz: Amorentia was die naweek in die Kaap. Sy't by Annatjie gaan kuier. Sy sê dit gaan goed met Anna. (HAAL HAAR SKOUERS OP) Gister 'n poskaart van Bea ontvang. Saint Tropè. Dis net Louis Louis Louis Louis en 'n 'Hallo, Sussa!' en 'n vet rooi soen op die seël. Classy (Scheepers et al. 2015: 6).

This speech illustrates how none of the sisters communicates directly or truthfully with the others. Bea, as the audience will soon find out, is not in Saint-Tropez, yet this is how she communicates with her family, with illusions and short, vague messages to avoid the truth, namely that she is stuck in her one bedroom apartment.

Liz, though she tries to keep up a front of being a successful mother and housewife, also faces her own problems with communication within her own home. Liz's daughter

Amorentia, though close with Annatjie, does not want to talk to Liz about anything significant. Communication has come a long way since Liz was growing up in Amper, and though she is older, she is making an effort to understand the latest technologies and to use them to try and make a breakthrough with her daughter: “Ons praat nie eintlik nie. So ek stalk haar op twitter. Sy weet dit nie” (Scheepers et al. 2015: 28). She feels that, as Amorentia’s mother, she cannot find an open channel of communication, yet through her fake Twitter handle, they are able to connect. This alludes to the context of the mediated reality in which this play was written. With social media being part of our everyday lives, we are able to create an online persona for ourselves. Liz uses this opportunity to create a fantasy character that is relatable to her daughter. Amorentia even refers to this person on Twitter after having a fight with her mother. She tells her mother: “Ag ma, jy sal nie verstaan nie. Daar is hierdie girl op Twitter. She gets me” (Scheepers et al. 2015: 29). It seems that the only thing standing between these two is Amorentia’s idea of Liz as a mother. The fact that the sisters also have such bad communication habits with their mother is a sign of a cycle that will continue into the next generation if nothing is done to improve it, as it has already been done between Liz and her mother. Relationships are based on trust, and without communication, there is no basis on which to build this trust.

The obvious lack of communication is quite ironic when looking at the style and structure of the play. The characters cannot seem to stop talking to the audience, yet are incapable of communicating with each other. Jarcho believes that it is only in terms of dialogue that we see a lack of speech as a breakdown of communication and that in the monologue communication is intensified: “communication with the present audience is what constitutes theatricality proper and ... stage monologue is best understood as a heightened moment of this communication” (2014: 297). The presence of the audience is implicit in the theatre, and according to Jarcho the interactions in the theatre “are no longer

between fictional characters but between performers and audience” (2014: 297). In *Amper, Vrystaat* we see this heightened communication with the audience as underscoring the lack of communication within the dialogue and the isolation of the characters.

This incongruity makes for a subtle humour that runs throughout the play. The audience’s role evolves beyond merely being witnesses to becoming the soundboard and confidant of the characters. As Styan suggests, the involvement of the audience is crucial for the dark comedy (1968: 254). The audience sits with all the information, even though that information might be subjective, and are able to watch the play with multi-layered knowledge. Within this knowledge the humour is structured so as to give relief to the audience and keep the balance of the dark comedy intact and to create dramatic irony. Without the contrasting opinions of the sisters, the audience might consider the play too tragic and lose the amusing mood or tone that the writers intended.

4.2.2 The mother and identity

Mother figures and mothering are a prominent theme in *Amper, Vrystaat*. The mother emerges as matriarch, the one with the power to divide and unite. The presence of the mother figure in *Amper, Vrystaat* is felt very strongly, despite her physical absence from the stage. The tension between the young sisters and the elderly mother is also a source of comedy. This conforms to Zamir’s characteristic of young characters in comedy obsessed with the tension with the elderly (2014: 179). This tension of age can also be seen between the sisters and the conflicts they have between them. As can be seen in *Amper, Vrystaat*, the loss of their mother has a ripple effect on the lives and relationships of the sisters in that it eventually reunites them.

All three sisters have experienced a 'death' of their mother before her physical death. Bea had as a child already recognised the symbolic death of her mother in her eyes as she separated herself from her by rejecting her ideals and running away. Annatjie too, after the discussion about her sexual orientation, had mentally separated herself from the idea of her mother as a supportive figure. Liz had experienced this to a lesser degree than the others, yet she speaks openly about how she was ignored as a child and fears turning into her mother, indicating a paradoxical kind of separation. The neuroses and anxieties of all three characters can be said to come from the forced separation from their mother. All of them felt the need to get out of Amper and they did so in their own way, thus consciously separating themselves from their mother and the chokingly conservative ideals that came with their childhood home.

As discussed, the use of the word "Amper" in the title alludes to something that is just not quite there, or has almost happened but did not. It points to a missed chance, which is felt by all three characters upon the news of the death of their mother. They missed the chance to be with her when she passed away; they missed the chance to have a relationship with each other because of her. The mother is such a rich source of material that it 'almost' feels as if she is there.

The relationships that each character has with the mother differ greatly. Annatjie, the first sister we come across, is young and glad to have left Amper. She resents her upbringing for making her an outsider in her chosen city life.⁵³ "Ek het maar redelik vinnig uit die Vrystaat gefokof. Dit was baie moeiliker hier as wat ek gedink het" (Scheepers et al. 2015: 2).

⁵³ Although the other family members think that Bea has escaped the furthest from home, it is in fact Annatjie who went the extra mile to move to Cape Town, while Bea languishes in her flat in Pretoria.

With her strong convictions about her past, it is endearing that her first mention of her mother is one of concern. “Ek worrie bietjie oor my ma. Sy’s nou alleen in daai aaklige ou huis. Sy sal nooit uit Amper uit trek nie” (Scheepers et al. 2015: 4). Her mother’s inability to leave Amper has been interpreted by Annatjie as a weakness, as ignorance about the rest of the world, which Annatjie has been brave enough to go and explore. The house itself is seen as a trap, something that has been closed up, unvisited for years. Annatjie’s discovery of her mother’s corpse a week after her death reiterates this. No one goes there, no one leaves.

Liz, the only sister who has maintained her relationship with her mother, is most shocked by the death. Liz is the only sister who is also a mother, so the parallels between her and her mother are obvious to the audience. Her mother helped her to escape the oppression of Amper by introducing her to fantasy books and stories. Through this, her mother helped shape her identity. Yet with her mother’s untimely death, Liz feels that the illusion she had created of the immortal caring figure has vanished. She sees a glimpse into her own future as a forgotten mother of a family who never understood her, and it is a hard reality to face. Her relationships with her children are not the best and she feels disconnected from her husband. Given the way that her mother’s life and death turned out, her concerns about her own family situation are foregrounded.

The disillusionment with their mother that happens for Liz and Annatjie at her death seems to have occurred years ago for Bea. Even though her own life is built on lies, she has always seen her mother for what she is. As a little girl she used to deny her mother’s existence because she was embarrassed by how overweight her mother was:

Bea: Ek het al haar fotoalbums gaan uitkrap. Ek moes. Ek wou weet of sy nog altyd vet was. Sy was ’n vaal, maer meisietjie. Groen skoolrokkie en hare wat

in al die rigtings staan. Nes Liz. En nes ek. Sy't op die bank gesit met 'n berg tissues en 'n bak bobotie op haar skoot. Ek het brons gekry by die SA's. Het trots met die medalje om my nek voor haar gaan staan. Sy't opgekyk, en afgekyk, en gesê as ek ook wil hê moet ek 'n vurk gaan haal. Sy was alleen en het nooit ophou huil nie. Huil en vreet. Huil en vreet. Ek was daar en ek was nie goed genoeg nie. Ek het myself belowe ek sal nooit soos sy word nie (Scheepers et al. 2015: 32).

That was the moment of Bea's disillusion with her mother. She was no longer under any sort of impression that her mother might be supportive of her, or even acknowledge her. Although she was determined never to end up like her mother, the inevitability of that eventuality is brought home in the shock of recognising herself and Liz in the photo of their young, skinny mother. In retrospect she recognises her mother's loneliness and can relate to it in her own situation. She scolds her mother for over-eating, because she feels that if she herself had been able to overcome loneliness and deal with it, her mother should be able to as well. With the grotesque image of her mother's eating habits we are reminded of the overfed battery chickens that Shani speaks of in *N is vir Neurose*. The mother is also trapped in her cage of Amper, and would stay there, unhappy and eating until her final breath. The death of her mother leads to Bea facing her own reality, which is an unhappy, disconnected one, stuck in her flat and being kept by a man. In this sense she is also in a cage, though her way of dealing with it is through lies and deception. She is able to face this and see it for what it is and, with this realisation, make peace with it. Referring to the theories of humour that have been outlined, we see here the incongruity of self that Freud talks about within the Relief Theory, and which is prominent in the comic-pathetic hero of the dark comedy. From the discovery of self, the audience can also be relieved of built up tension as they experience the comedic side of Bea's character.

4.2.3 Loneliness

Loneliness is found as a motif with every character in their own way. Annatjie is lonely in the city, struggling to make new friends, and the people she does meet, she finds very strange, almost impossible to relate to. She is too different from the city dwellers:

Annatjie: ... 'Hallo! Ek is Annatjie, van Amper,' en ek kan aan die mense se gesigte sien hulle kan die plaas aan my ruik. Ek het nie geweet wat 'n *flat white* is nie. En ek het *honestly* gedink vintage beteken *fucked*. Al die meisies dra seunsklere en ... andersom. En ek het *seriously* geen clue hoe oud enige van die mans is nie, want almal het baarde (Scheepers et al. 2015: 3).

This description of Cape Town life has a duality in its humour. For one, Capetonians would be able to relate to this strange culture of gourmet coffees and bearded men, which might seem like the norm to them. This commentary of it from an outsider will give them a sense of recognition in which they would be able to find humour. Also through Annatjie's ignorance they will feel superior to her small town observations and find the humour in it. On the other hand it is important to consider the rural settings of most of the Afrikaans festivals. A lot of the audience members might share Annatjie's ideas about the intimidation of city life, underscoring Styan's point of the dark comedy hiding within the prevailing common opinions of the audience. All of these aspects isolate an already lonely character even further away from her surroundings. That is, until she meets Maretha. She relates to Maretha in a way that seems to emphasise her loneliness even more; Maretha can do all the things that Annatjie wishes she could do: she is a marine biologist and open

about her sexuality. Annatjie thinks this is a sign of their compatibility, but she is also living vicariously through Maretha. When Maretha suddenly dies, Annatjie no longer feels that she is a lesbian; she was just in love with this one person, at a certain time in her life. This underscores Annatjie's identity crisis.

Bea ran away from Amper at a young age and has been with Louis, a married man who refuses to leave his wife, for twenty years. Her unwillingness to see her own reality makes her foolish in the eyes of the audience. Within the liberated subconscious of the festival context, her sad existence is starkly profiled. When Bea first describes Louis, he is merely an outline. She describes his sleeve, his suit and his jawline, yet never goes into the nature of the man himself. The first thing Louis says to Bea after meeting her outside of the Spur in Amper is: "Jong bokkies moenie alleen in die veld rondloop nie" (Scheepers et al. 2015: 9). This imagery of hunting is unsettling and puts Bea in the position of a lone victim, caught out. It is now twenty years later and Bea is still wandering through life alone. Of course, from her own perspective, she is not alone; she is taken care of, she is loved, but not in any real way. She cannot start a family, she cannot move out as she has no job and has been taken care of by Louis all her adult life.

Liz was able to start a family, three in fact, and yet it seems that there is still no real companionship in her life. As stated earlier, her eldest daughter has no interest in their relationship, the twins she had with her second husband are going through the awkward phase of puberty, and the last two children are still too young and high maintenance for her to find companionship with them. It seems that of all the characters, Liz is the one who is surrounded by the most people. She is constantly either at a busy family dinner, or a karate class or a rugby match. Liz's latest husband, Phillip, is underwhelming to say the

least, and ironically the only one of her three husbands to have gained the approval of her mother:

Liz: En nou's ek by Phillip. Phillip. Hy's boring, maar hy's ... boring. My ma is natuurlik mal oor hom. Dit was die eerste een van my troues waar sy van blydschap gehuil het. Boekhouer. Geld, maar niks anders nie. Hy aanvaar dat ek die septer swaai in onse ou kasteeltjie, en hy meng nie in met my ander kinders nie. Drukkies vir my en sy kinders kom in die vorm van note, vars uit die OTM (Scheepers et al. 2015: 11).

Liz finds her husband boring, yet it is the first husband her mother approves of. In this lies the ironic comedy of family politics. In her comment about this being the first wedding where her mother actually cried of happiness, we find humour in this incongruous image of a mother crying out of despair at her own daughter's wedding. There is further irony in the fact that when she finally gained the approval of her mother's blessing, she finds herself bored and unhappy in marriage. Liz and her husband have no real relationship to speak of and it seems that she is very lonely in her suburban life, not aware of the fact that her older sister lives just a few kilometres away. As in *N is vir Neurose*, Liz's monologues reveal her preoccupation with a consumerist lifestyle. She talks openly about the fact that her husband is only good for his money. She creates a relationship with him that works on the basis of financial transactions. Her description of herself as the one who swings the sceptre in their little castle suggests that she exercises control in their marriage. However, this is an overestimation of her agency and in this also conforms to the foolishness Zamir identifies in comedic characters. This foolishness stands in the way of her happiness and in a more direct sense, her admission of loneliness.

With the discovery of their mother's corpse, it seems that all three sisters become aware of their own solitude. At the funeral they are being watched, seen, by the community of Amper. This makes them uncomfortable in their own way:

Bea: Almal kyk vir ons ... Almal kyk vir ons.

Liz: Almal kyk vir jou, want jy dra 'n roofdier.

Annatjie: Mense kyk, want Mamma is alleen dood (Scheepers et al. 2015: 36).

At the funeral they find themselves being scrutinised by the mourners, as well as the audience. In her own way, each daughter blames herself for their mother's final loneliness. Annatjie with her fight about her sexual orientation, Liz for being too busy with her own life to call, and Bea for abandoning her mother in Amper years ago. Dying alone is undignified, according to them. Liz says that only homeless people die alone, not a mother of three. Their mourning seems to be incompatible with comedy, yet as Zamir notes, comic characters that are grieving will soon find comfort. It is within this found comfort that we also see another characteristic of the comedy – a note of continuity. Through all the loneliness and despair found throughout the play, we see the sisters reunited and their relationships restored. The balance found in this continuity is crucial to the reception of the dark comedy.

4.2.4 Death

Death is one of the most prominent themes throughout the play. In facing death and the inevitability of time passing, accompanied by very poignant social observations, we find a darker form of comedy.

Bea is the first one to break the silence after the tense Christmas lunch with a monologue on death. Stylistically the characters return to their monologues after the brief use of short dialogue in the Christmas lunch scene. They are no longer interacting with each other; they are back on their islands. Louis has given Bea a copy of the Goya painting “Saturnus verorber sy kind”.⁵⁴ As Bea describes it:

Bea: Vieslike ding. Die ou man hurk half op een been, die kind tussen sy vingers, senings en bloed wat slierte tussen kop en skouers trek. Die lyfie hang slap, kniekies teenmekaar en die linkerarm halfpad ingesluk. Die ding hang nou maar bo die bed. Louis hou daarvan. As ons liefde maak, kyk hulle diep in mekaar se oë, hy en Saturnus (Scheepers et al. 2015: 26).

The painting symbolises the conflict between youth and age, as well as the devouring characteristic of time, creeping up on all of us. Here again we find an illustration of the comic protagonist’s conflict with age, as described by Zamir. Bea describes the painting in gruesome detail, not considering its artistic merits. She calls Saturn an old man, strengthening the association she makes between Saturn and Louis. He is older than her and that has been one of the main issues with their relationship. Her identification of Louis with Saturn suggests that she feels as though she is being devoured by Louis and by time, by the inevitability of death after a non-life. The painting hanging above their bed, where Louis comes to devour her in her prison, shows the relation between the gruesome imagery of death and Louis the lover. Here we are reminded of the tone of resurrection that is associated with the carnival as well as the body as symbol of fertility during this time. Though Louis is making love to Bea, he is staring at the painting, devouring her as

⁵⁴ This painting is one of Goya’s black paintings that he made on the walls of his villa a few years before his death. They were never meant for public display, yet it was transferred to canvas and became part of his collection. Mortality was obviously on his mind while painting it and the darkness of the painting as well as the subject matter support this idea of death. The painting depicts Saturn eating his child, because he feared that his children would overthrow him (Saturn n.d.: Online). Saturn is the Roman incarnation of the Greek god Kronos, the god of time. The painting in Bea’s apartment is a constant and grotesque reminder of the passing of precious time in her life.

time devours the little child. It is through the help of her sisters and the reconciliation of her family that she is able to start resurrecting herself from the symbolic death she has experienced for years.

In this same monologue Bea mentions the death of Maretha for the first time, establishing the connection between Annatjie and death. In Liz's subsequent monologue we find out that Maretha's death was caused by some kind of accident. Maretha's death has a very big effect on Annatjie. With her fight with the family, and Maretha dead, she has no one. The death of her lover is juxtaposed with her speaking to her mother directly, telling her that she does not need to worry any more. Her daughter is no longer a devil's child, a "duiwelskind". With the death of Maretha came the death of her sexual desire for women. After the rift at Christmas, she feels no need for silence towards her mother any more. She imagines in her mind's eye her journey to Amper to go and see her mother. She describes it as a ghost town, a "spookdorp", continuing the imagery of death. Her imaginary visit to Amper turns into a real visit. But she is unable to talk to her mother to reconcile their relationship. Her mother is dead. She died alone in Amper.

Liz characteristically makes the death of her mother a practical thing, something she can control. The funeral must be arranged. She feels the guilt of her mother dying alone, yet finds a way to move on, to cope. Bea, having had the least contact with their mother throughout their lives, is more concerned with the gruesome details. She has little remorse for the body of her mother, reminding us of her gruesome description of the Goya painting:

Bea: Ek wonder hoe Ma gelyk het, op die vloer. Hoe lyk 'n mense wat 'n week lank al lê en vrot? 'n Week se rotkos, met haar arms om haar Kelvinator en haar dunderm uiteindelik met rus (Scheepers et al. 2015: 32-33).

After being presented with this gruesome image, we find ourselves at the very well-organised and proper funeral. This incongruity is what makes darker comedies work. Realities are juxtaposed and made absurd, leaving the audience chuckling about morbid subjects and finding the balance between the tragic and the comedic within this incongruity.

The comedy lies in the mundane features of the funeral. The minister cannot be there as he has diarrhoea and Bea could not find any flowers for the coffin because they were all sold out: “Blykbaar het almal besluit om hierdie week dood te gaan” (Scheepers et al. 2015: 34). With this line, some tension is broken, yet we touch on the inevitability of death. The sisters are back in their hometown all together for the first time since they were children. Despite the guilt they feel at their mother dying alone, the dress in which she is buried not fitting, the super-sized coffin and everyone staring at them, they are fine. They have finally found common ground in their sisterly relationships, the death of their mother and the return to their place of origin. They abandoned Amper at different times and now they return together. The illusion of their hometown is broken, and they no longer need to hold onto it; they can live in a reality where they are freed from Amper, a mythical place which at one time was the only thing they had in common. Liz struggles through her eulogy and decides to end it with a quote from one of the most famous fantasy writers.

Liz: Dalk is dit beter dat ek iemand anders se woorde gebruik om mee af te sluit. Tolkien s'n. J.R.R. Tolkien. My ma sal verstaan. “I wish it need not have happened in my time,” said Frodo. “So do I,” said Gandalf. “And so do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us.” Ek weet nie wat om te sê nie. Hier lê Hester van Emmenis. Onthou haar soos julle wil (Scheepers et al. 2015: 38).

Ending a eulogy with the words of perhaps the most prolific fantasy writers of our time, Liz alludes to the world her mother exposed her to. She also shows a sense of inadequacy, not trusting her own words to be able to capture what she is feeling. The Tolkien quote highlights the dread of death, as well as the unfortunate reality that time is passing for all of us, and that the only choice we have is what to do with this time before it is too late.

4.2.5 Time and Remembrance

Liz brings up the idea of time in her eulogy. Living out your time, the times they are living in, time being finite and simultaneously infinite. As with Saturn devouring his children, so time devours all lives. Time is finally back to normal, it seems; there are no more a-chronological monologues blurring the lines of time. Remembrance is also an important motif being touched on here. Throughout the play they were remembering each other, their mother and their hometown. Now at the mother's funeral, in a time of remembrance, Liz ends off the eulogy with a feeling of release. She asks everyone to remember her mother as they want to, with no influences from the family. Her mother has always been a memory to them – the person she was before their father died, before Bea ran away, before Annatjie came out as a lesbian. She was never present, even when she was physically there. She never spoke a word throughout the play. The tension of the sombre mood left by Liz's speech is broken when Bea stands up and invites everyone to tea, because that is what you are supposed to do, and what is expected at funerals. Liz's raw emotion is comically offset by Bea's sudden adherence to social expectations and it is in this incongruity that the cathartic humour lies as described in Relief Theory.

Annatjie concludes the theme of death with her final speech, once again directly spoken to the audience, with no dialogue with the other characters. She ties together the final loose

ends of the play as well as emphasising the main themes of death, loneliness and communication:

Annatjie: Maretha het altyd vir my gesê, as die Loodswalvisse by Cape Vidal uitspoel, as hulle stadig op die strand lê en doodgaan, sing hulle vir mekaar. En as hulle alleen iewers uitspoel, dan sing hulle maar vir hulle self. Ek en Liz was laasweek by Bea se flat in Wonderboom. Ons het haar help verf. Dit was cool. Die stok is darm nou al halfpad uit Liz se hol uit. O en Bea bel my nou elke Sondag 5hr klokslag, sy praat maar meestal net oor haarself, maar shame, sy probeer (Scheepers et al. 2015: 39).

Annatjie's memory of Maretha and her stories about the whales provides a comforting conclusion to the tragic events of the play. If the sisters are the whales, they are finally singing together again, comforting each other in their slow demise. The imagery is set against the sisters coming together after the funeral as well as Liz now phoning Annatjie weekly. The humour lies in the observations made by Annatjie about her sisters, with Bea still being self-involved and Liz stuck up. By now the audience has grown to know and accept the characters and this final sisterly taunt from Annatjie ends the play on a light, hopeful note.

4.3 Conclusion

It is evident that with such deep roots in the morbid that *Amper, Vrystaat* might easily be mistaken for a sombre drama. Scheepers goes beyond the witty darkness of *N is vir Neurose* and creates a serious drama disguised as a comedic text with less blatant humour than in *N is vir Neurose*. Bea's underestimation of her entrapment with Louis,⁵⁵ Liz's overestimation of her control over her children and family, as well as Annatjie's

⁵⁵ Styan notes that in dark comedy affairs often do not conclude and rather function as a mirror of likelihoods for the audience in similar situations (1968: 285).

youthful naivety give us three characters that adhere to Zamir's idea of foolish characters. Their foolishness stands in the way of their happiness and they become comic-pathetic heroes unable to help themselves. It is through their mourning that they discover these incongruities within themselves and are able to move past it and reconcile their family, and themselves as individuals with their own incompleteness. Within this reconciliation the continuity of this dark comedy is found and the audience can leave with a light mood. Conceptualised within a festival context and well received nationally, *Amper, Vrystaat* is an example of a balance on many levels, from the balance between independent theatre makers and commercial success, the beautifully designed and the practical, and ultimately the comic and the tragic.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

Considering the specific context of the Afrikaans arts festival and its often rural, localised setting, theatre makers have needed to adapt to the conventions of the travelling theatre industry in which they find themselves in contemporary South Africa. Both *N is vir Neurose* and *Amper, Vrystaat* have been conceptualised, designed and produced with the festival in mind. With small casts and practical designs, these plays moved away from traditional realism, and instead challenged audiences with their own brand of theatre and humour. Because of the ephemeral nature of theatre, and even more so in festival productions which only exist in a liminal space for a specific and limited time each year, the traces of these productions are fading fast. In studying the constant written signs of the text, as well as looking at the variable stage signs of the performance, I have been able to identify certain aspects that added to the success and possible continuity of these plays.

The situational nature of the comedy might seem the obvious reason for the lack of continuity of comedic plays, with jokes and gags often becoming dated. However, it seems that it is the universal found in the specific that makes for a comedy that can stand the test of time. *N is vir Neurose* and *Amper, Vrystaat* are localised and specific to South Africa, yet this does not mean that they are incapable of being remade in a new timeframe, in a new context, or perhaps even in a new language. The characters and plots speak to a wide range of people and have many universal themes. The stylistic use of monologues in both these plays also creates comedic tension which transcends the boundaries of language and setting. The inverse use of the monologue as a means of involving the audience shows the dynamic styles of these young writers, whose characters are all trying to find themselves within their ramblings. The audience is able to make informed judgements on the character's behaviour, and to bear witness as the fourth wall is broken and they as audience members become complicit in the plot. These comedies depart from

more traditional forms of comedy, and can be classified as dark comedy. In this sense, it seems that eventual continuity may not necessarily be based on innovation of genre, but rather on the quality of performance and design working together with a well-written, witty script.

Another obstacle that these two festival productions have successfully overcome, is the relation between the space and the performance. With festival productions travelling from space to space, audiences at Aardklop might experience a performance differently than at KKNK or Woordfees. The influence of space on the performance is varied, yet significant. The use of makeshift performance areas that are not dedicated theatre spaces outside of the festival context will automatically place the audience in a different mind-set than when watching a performance in a formal theatre. Of course, without these makeshift venues, festivals might not exist, and in recent years a lot of effort has gone into creating a true theatre experience for audiences at festivals, with raked seating for better eye-lines and air-conditioning added, a process that is called venue mapping. The space influences the afterlife of the production in the sense that it places the performance in different contexts at each festival. The ghosting of a building will have an impact on the audience's experience, either good or bad. Travelling theatre always has this factor of changing venues, and it is up to the cast and crew to create the most stable, highly repeatable type of performance so as to work against the constraints of the space.

As discussed, these physical spaces find themselves within the greater festival space which, though having some similarities to the medieval carnival as described by Bakhtin, have predominantly been turned into consumer events which merely offer a false sense of liberation to attendees. This does not however stop the audiences from framing the

theatrical event in a festive way, which explains the popularity of the lighter entertainment of comedy.

When considering theatre as an ephemeral medium, comedy as genre is even more spectral with contemporary theorists suggesting a dismissal of generic sub-categories and rather arguing for a movement towards comedy as a tonal quality. Combined with the mood that is already set within the festival context we see both *N is vir Neurose* and *Amper, Vrystaat* being well received as comedies in spite of their dark, witty undertones demonstrating the fine balance which is characteristic of a dark comedy. In the field of Humour Studies, there is also a movement towards an inclusive theory and as has been discussed, these plays rely on a combination of all three major humour theories in order to reach the comedic moment and leave the audience amused. With prevailing elements of foolishness, dramatic irony, love obsessed youth, suffering leading to discovery of self, incongruous use of language, the involvement of the audience through monologues, as well as the fine balance between the comic and the tragic, both of the plays discussed in this study are examples of versatile productions adaptable to any festival context, space and audience, with a real potential to also have an after-life beyond the festival.

This study has focused specifically on Afrikaans festival-driven comedies and how they can acquire continuity in an industry reliant on festivals and future projects for their survival. It seems that there is a lack of academic research on contemporary Afrikaans comedy plays, and the inaccessibility of these plays to both researchers and practitioners after their initial stage productions is also an issue. As a researcher, I hope that through this study others might find this glimpse into the contemporary Afrikaans theatre industry a useful source of information for future research projects. I also hope that with the

discussion above, and by adding these two unpublished scripts in their unedited form as addenda to this thesis, they might achieve a greater continuity.

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ADDENDUM A – N IS VIR NEUROSE

N is vir Neurose

Deur Christiaan Olwagen

Let wel: Hierdie teks is min of meer gemaak en laat staan soos hy geskryf is, so verskoon asseblief enige spel- en tikfoute want amper sekerlik nog daar is.

Karakters

Shani

Rachelle

Liz

Japie

Die sitkamer van 'n flat iewers in Kaapstad.

Al die aksie van die toneelstuk vind in hierdie sitkamer plaas.

Die geselskap is almal in hulle twintigs.

Liz se flat. Die sitkamer. Sitkamerstel. Koffietafel. 'n Boekrak. Bo-op die boekrak 'n hoop toegraaide persente.

Shani, Liz en Rachelle sit styf teen mekaar op een bank. Liz is besig om 'n persent baie versigtig oop te skeur.

Liz: En wat kan hierdie wees?

Sy bestudeer die boks.

Rachelle: Maak dit oop.

Shani: Ek hoop jy hou daarvan.

Sy begin dit baie versigtig oop te skeur

Rachelle: Moenie dit so versigtig skeur nie.

Liz: Ek wil die geskenkpapier hou.

Shani: Hou jy ook geskenkpapier?

Liz: Altyd.

Rachelle: Maak gou ek is nuuskierig.

Shani: Kan ek vir iemand nog lemoensap ingooi?

Liz: Vir my asseblief.

Rachelle: Wanneer maak ons die sjampanje oop?

Liz: Bietjie later.

Shani: Maak die persent nou oop.

Sy maak dit oop.

Liz: 'n Teestel!

Shani: Vir tee!

Liz: 'n Teestel vir tee.

Rachelle: Sjoe dis mooi.

Shani: Vir ons koek en tee Woensdae.

Rachelle: Nee donderdae. Yoga het geskuif na Woensdag toe.

Liz: Baie dankie, Shani.

Shani: Hou jy daarvan?

Liz: Ek is mal daaroor. Ons moet hom sommer volgende week Woensdag...

Rachelle: Donderdag.

Liz: ...Donderdag uit toets.

Stilte.

Shani: Sjoe. Ek is nogal honger. Ons gaan nog eet, ne?

Liz: Ek maak 'n hoender.

Shani: 'n Woolies Hoender?

Liz: 'n Woolies Hoender.

Rachelle: Oe Lekker.

Liz: Ja.

Shani: Kan nie wag nie.

Kort stilte.

Rachelle: Wys gou weer die ring?

Liz: Hierso!

Shani: Wow, dis so mooi.

Liz: Dit was sy ouma se ring.

Rachelle: Myne was ook die ouma se ring.

Liz: Rerig?

Rachelle: Ja, maar ons het intussen nuwe diamante laat insit.

Liz: Sodra Gert 'n verhoging kry gaan ons nog 'n diamant laat insit.

Shani: Ek dink nie Rachelle kan nog diamante op daai ring pas nie.

Rachelle: Ja nee kyk die ding is massief. Ek kan nie kla nie. Dirk se ouers rol in die geld.

Liz: Wat doen sy pa nou weer?

Rachelle: Hy besit een of ander Supermark.

Liz: 'n Supermark?

Rachelle: Ja 'n supermark.

Shani: Watse supermark?

Rachelle: Julle sal dit nie ken nie die teikenmark is vir die...“anders kleurige” gemeenskap.

Shani: Anders kleurige?

Rachelle: Ja.

Shani: Wat bedoel jy?

Rachelle: Uhm...Swartmense.

Shani: O.

Liz: Sjoem maar daar is seker baie geld daarin.

Rachelle: Ja...

Stilte.

Shani: So kom ons maak die ander oop.

Rachelle: Jy het so baie persente ons gaan heeldag hier sit. Ek onthou met my kitchen tea het ons drie swartsakke nodig gehad vir al die geskenk papier.

Liz: Ja ek het vanoggend saam my ma hulle ontbyt gedoen. Vir die familie en niggies en so aan. My ma het gese ek kan maar my geskenke vannaand saam met die vriendinne oopmaak.

Shani: So dis eintlik jou *bachelorette*?

Liz: Nee, nee, nee. Julle weet ek hou nie *bachelorette* nie, te veel grilligerige konnatasies.

Rachelle: Okay jy het twee kitchen tea's een vir familie en een vir vriende.

Liz: Ja.

Shani: Dis 'n baie slim idee.

Liz: Jy moet dit ook doen.

Rachelle: Aai Shani... Het hy jou nogsteeds nie gevra nie?

Shani: Ekskuus?

Rachelle: Ons is so onsensitief. Ons praat oor my ring en haar ring en hier sit jy sonder 'n ring...

Shani: (*ongemaklik*) Nee hy het my nog nie gevra nie... Maar een van die dae.

Liz: Hy moet nie te lank wag nie. Hoe langer hy wag hoe langer gaan dit vat om kinders te kry en dan kan ons kinders nie met mekaar speel nie. Ek bedoel maaitjies wees nie.

Shani: Ja... Maar ek is seker hy gaan my een van die dae vra.

Rachelle: Miskien moet ek vir Dirk vra om met hom te praat...

Shani: Dis regtig nie nodig nie.

Liz: Ja en ek sal vir Gert vra...

Shani: Asseblief moenie.

Rachelle: Ons sal dit baie "sneaky" doen...

Liz: Ja, "sneaky"...

Shani: (Skielik sterk) Ekt gesê nee!

Stilte.

Liz: Ek is seker hy gaan jou een van die dae sommer op sy eie vra.

Rachelle: Ja...

Liz: Ek meen julle is...julle.

Rachelle: Julle is bedoel om saam te wees.

Liz: Julle is Shani en Shaun.

Rachelle: Shaun en Shani.

Hulle almal lag baie ongemaklik.

Stilte.

Rachelle: Is jy nou ontsteld Shani?

Shani: Glad nie.

Rachelle: Ek kan sien jy is ontsteld.

Liz: Praat met ons vriendin.

Shani: Ek is rerig nie ontsteld nie julle.

Rachelle: Het ek nou weer my mond verby gepraat?

Shani: Glad nie.

Liz: Was dit iets wat *ek* gese het?

Shani: Ek belowe ek is nie ontsteld nie.

Shani aan gehoor.

Shani: Ek is so bietjie ontsteld. Dit was 'n stekie. 'n Kleintjie maar nogsteeds 'n stekie. Ek is nie verbaas nie. Rachelle doen dit altyd. Ons is al van skool af vriende en sy doen dit altyd. (*Maak Rachelle na*) "Ag *shame* vriendin, het hy jy *nog nie* gevra nie". Ek is nie ontsteld oor Shaun nie. Dit gaan oor *hoe* sy dit doen, die *manier* waarop sy dit sê, *hoekom* sy dit doen. Ek klink seker belaglik! Nee, ek's jammer, sy doen dit. Stekie. (*Haal diep asem*). Ek gaan nie toelaat laat dit my ontstel nie. Vanaand gaan oor Liz. Haal asem Shani. (*Sy doen*) Vanaand is Liz se aand. Ek is nie ontsteld nie.

Terug by die geselskap.

Shani: Ek is *rerig* nie kwaad nie.

Liz: Ja sy is nie.

Rachelle: Kwaad?

Shani: Ja.

Rachelle: (Sy lag) Ekt nie gesê kwaad nie. Ekt gesê ontsteld. Waaroor is jy kwaad?

Shani: Ek het bedoel ontsteld. *Ontsteld*. Ek is nie ontsteld nie.

Rachelle: O maar dan is ek bly.

Shani: Waaroor is jy bly?

Rachelle: Ek is bly jy is nie ontsteld nie.

Shani: Ek is bly jy is bly ek is nie ontsteld nie.

Rachelle: Ek is bly jy is bly.

Shani: Ek is bly jy is bly ek is bly.

Liz: Yeah...Ons is almal bly!

Stilte.

Shani: So Rachelle, hoe maak getroude lewe met jou? Hoe is dit om getroud te wees?

Liz: Ja... dis nou al amper...

Rachelle: Ses maande.

Liz: Is jy en Dirk al *ses maande* getroud, dis amazing.

Shani: En?

Rachelle: Wat bedoel jy?

Shani: Gaan dit goed?

Rachelle: Natuurlik! Hoekom?

Shani: Ek vra maar net.

Rachelle: Dit gaan fantasties.

Shani: Ek is bly.

Kort stilte.

Rachelle: Ons het 'n baba hondjie gekry.

Liz: Aaaah...

Shani: Cute.

Rachelle: Ja...

Shani: Watse tipe hond is dit?

Rachelle: 'n Miniatuur Doberman.

Liz: Ek love hulle!

Shani: Wat is sy naam?

Rachelle: Haar naam is "Muis".

Shani: Muis?

Rachelle: Ja "muis". Ek het vir Dirk gese dit lyk...sy lyk soos 'n vlermuis...Toe besluit ons op "muis"...

Liz: Dis baie oulik. "Muis". "Kom hier muis"....dit werk nogal lekker...

Shani: Jy moet mooi na haar kyk.

Rachelle: Ja Shani ek sal. Ek het al 'n troeteldier gehad.

Shani: Ja maar julle het 'n kat gehad.

Rachelle: En?

Shani: Katte kom en gaan. Honde het baie aandag nodig. En...

Rachelle: En wat?

Shani: Dinge het ook nie lekker uitgewerk vir daai kat nie.

Liz: O ja...wat het nou weer gebeur?

Shani: Hy het gif in gekry.

Liz: Siestog...Wat was sy naam?

Rachelle: Felix....

Liz: Aai shame.

Shani: Ja... Shame.

Kort stilte.

Rachelle: Luister ek is nou *baie* lus vir daai sjampanje kan ek dit maar oopmaak?

Liz: Kan ons nie nog so klein bietjie wag nie?

Rachelle: Nee *nou*.

Liz: Okay.

Shani is intussen op haar selfoon besig.

Liz: Shani ons het 'n reël gemaak: niemand mag op hulle selfone wees vanaand nie.

Shani: Ek soek net gou iets op Google...O...hier is dit...Rachelle luister gou... (sy lees) "How to take Care of your Miniature Pincher...Wil jy hoor?"

Rachelle: (deur haar tande) Ja lees maar.

Shani: "...the miniature pincher is very bright and learns quickly" (sy lees verder)...Uhm... (vind die deel wat sy soek) o hierso... Jy mag hulle GLAD NIE "spoil" nie...(lees verder) Blah blah blah...O...Het julle haar al gevat vir haar inspuittings?

Baie kort stilte.

Rachelle: (Sug) Nee.

Shani: Oe...Ja wel hulle sê hier mens moet hulle laat "vaccinate"...

Rachelle: (Irritasie bereik breekpunt) Okay..Shani...ek sal more na daai artikel gaan kyk kom ons kuier nou nog so bietjie...Ek wil nie hê "Muis" moet die aand monopoleer nie.

Shani: Ek sê maar net, honde is baie verantwoordelikheid.

Stilte.

Liz: Sit nou daai selfoon weg Shani.

Shani: Ek maak net gou vinnig 'n facebook status.

Liz: Oe! Wat sê jy? Maak dit iets crazy, soos: "Dinner met die girls. Whoop whoop!"

Shani: Uhm...nee...ek maak dit maar net: "Awesome aand met Liz en Rachelle. Gotta love em!" En dan 'n smiley face.

Liz: Aaah dis baie sweet. Is dit nie sweet nie Rachelle?

Rachelle: Mmmm...baie. (Vat 'n groot sluk sjampanje)

Liz: Love you too vriendin...

Shani: Love you more "vriendwah"! Liz en Shani gaan lekker tee drink in Liz se nuwe teepot.

Liz: Tee in 'n pot!

Shani: 'n Pot tee!

Liz: Tee in 'n pot is gelyk aan 'n teepot.

Hulle lag.

Rachelle vat sommer 'n sluk uit die bottel.

Rachelle: Wie wil sjampanje hê?

Shani: Ek asseblief...

Liz: Ek ook...

Sy gooi vir hulle sjampagne in en gee vir elkeen 'n glas.

Liz: Dankie vriendin.

Shani: Dankie Rachelle.

Rachelle: Plesier Shani.

Aan gehoor.

Rachelle: Dis nie 'n plesier nie. Dis definitief nie 'n plesier nie. Ek hoop sy stik aan die borrels! Shani is al van skool af so beter weterig. Impliseer dat ek nie na 'n hond kan kyk nie. En ek kan nie glo sy het Felix opgebring nie. Felix was my kat en hy is so jaar gelede...oorlede. Dit was nie my skuld nie. Daar was vlieë. Ekt gif uitgesit, daai wit kassie goed, want dit het my geiriteer. Nie die kat nie die vlieë. Hoe moes ek weet die simpel ding gaan die gif vreet. Ek kan nie glo sy het haar selfoon uitgeruk en die hond "geGOOGLE" nie. Wat het dit met haar te doen? Smile net Rachelle. Ten minste is die sjampanje nou oop.

Terug by die gesprek

Rachelle: Mmmmm... dis nogal lekker.

Liz: Hierdie borrels gaan reguit na my kop toe!

Shani: Nee man, drink maar net stadig.

Rachelle: So Shani hoe gaan dit met die werk soek?

Liz: Ja. Any luck?

Shani: (*Geirriteerd*) Nog nie.

Rachelle: Soek jy hard genoeg?

Liz: Soos ma my altyd sê: soek en jy sal vind.

Shani: Ek soek. Ek kry maar net niks nie.

Rachelle: Shame vriendin. Jy moet maar vasbyt.

Liz: Ja, moenie moed verloor nie. Jy moet maar net probeer en probeer en weer probeer. Probeer is die beste geweer – soos ma my altyd sê.

Rachelle: Dis nogal ironies. Na universiteit het ons almal gedink jy gaan sommer dadelik in 'n werk in stap. Ek meen jy *het* bemarking geswot...

Liz: En jou punte was altyd so goed!

Shani: Ja, toe nou nie.

Rachelle: Toe nou nie.

Shani aan gehoor.

Shani: *Dit was definitief 'n stekie.* Okay the gloves are off!

Terug by die geselskap.

Shani: So Rachelle...

Rachelle: Ja?

Shani: Hoe gaan dit met die geesteswetenskappe?

Liz: O ja, jy moet nog graad vang!

Rachelle: Ek moet nog net 'n Antieke Kulture taak in gee.

Shani: Regtig? Is dit nie een van jou eerstejaarsvakke nie?

Rachelle: Ja...

Shani: Jy moet maar die taak gouer as later in gee. Kry dit net klaar.

Liz: Waaroor is die taak?

Rachelle: Die “*Bacchanal*” ...

Liz: Die wat?

Rachelle: Dis basies hierdie ritueel vir “*Dionysos*”...

Shani: Nee, nee, nee Rachelle moenie vir ons vertel nie... Skryf dit!

Rachelle: Sy het gevra!

Shani: Ja en ons kan hoor jy weet waarvan jy praat... maar dit help nie jy vertel dit vir *ons* nie, jy moet dit skryf. Ek is jammer vriendin, maar jy kan nie dit nie aanhou uitstel nie.

Liz: Soos my ma altyd sê: van uitstel kom afstel!

Rachelle: Julle is seker reg...

Rachelle aan gehoor.

Rachelle: Beterweterige... Skeinheilige... Ughh! Iemand moet my keer want ek dink ek gaan haar te lyf gaan!

Terug by die geselskap.

Rachelle: Dankie julle dit was *net* wat ek nodig gehad het.

Shani: Dis net ‘n plesier. That’s what friends are for.

Liz lig haar glas.

Liz: Tjorts julle!

Rachelle: Cheers!

Shani: Cheers!

Almal klink glase. Die sjampanje word elkeen onderskeidelik in een sluk afgesluk, almal vir verskillende redes.

Stilte.

Liz: Julle, ek wil nou nie selfgesentreerd klink nie maar... (*in ‘n baba stemmetjie*) Nie een van julle het al vir *my* gevra hoe dit by *my* werk gaan nie?

S+R: Aaaaaah...

Shani: Hoe aaklig van ons...

Rachelle: Ja jammer Lizzy!

Rachelle en Shani aan gehoor.

S+R: Dit gaan *altyd* oor haar.

Terug by die geselskap.

Shani: (*Vals*) So vertel vir ons hoe gaan dit met die skoolgee?

Rachelle: (*Vals*) Ja, wat vang die *kids* nou aan?

Liz: Dankie laat julle *uiteindelik* vra. Wel...dit gaan *baie* goed met die boekwurmkompetisie.

Rachelle: Boekwurmkompetisie?

Liz: Ek *het* julle al daarvan vertel...(sug) Maar in elk geval... Ek maak vir elke kind in die klas ‘n wurm uit papierborde. Vir elke boek wat hulle lees kry hulle ‘n sticker...die een wat teen die einde van die jaar die meeste stickers het wen ‘n prys. So vêr loop Michelle voor met 14 boeke... Wow! Die een met die minste boeke sover is Khetiwe maar Afrikaans is nou nie juis haar eerste taal nie.

Rachelle: Hoe weet jy hulle het die boek gelees?

Liz: Hulle moet vir my die storie kom vertel...

Shani: Wat as hulle net die synopsis Google?

Liz: Ek dink darem nie een van hulle sal dit doen nie...

Rachelle: Ja party mense is mos lief vir *Google*.

Shani: Wel dit is handig veral as mens 'n taak moet doen.

Rachelle: Of 'n werk moet soek.

Liz: Julle kom ons maak nog persente oop!

Liz aan gehoor.

Liz: (*Babbel*) Hallo. My naam is Liz. Welkom by my flat. Vanaand is my kitchen tea...nommer twee. Ja ek het twee...amazing! Ek is 25 jaar oud. Of 25 jonk soos my ma altyd sê. (Besef skielik) Shani en rachelle. (Sy lag) Dit gebeur elke keer. In elk geval...Ek trou binnekort. My rok is flippen mooi. Dis so "off shoulder" tipe nommer met 'n beading patroon wat in so wave afloop. Dit is die vrou wat destyds my matriekafskeid rok gemaak het. Sy gaan 'n honderd duisend kralletjies vaswerk...met die hand. Kan nie wag nie! Die venue gaan "stunning" lyk. Ons gaan met 'n "peach" en "lemmetjiegroen" kleurskakering. Ek hoor dis komplimentêre kleure. Dit gaan 'n baie tradisionele troue wees. In 'n kerk. Ek het op 'n stadium aan 'n strandtroue gedink maar die idee van kaalvoet trou gril my so klein bietjie. My verloofde se naam is Gert. Hy gaan *eendag* 'n prokureur wees. Ek is super excited om te trou. Almal vertel my hoe moeilik dit is om "groot te word" maar ek LOVIT!

Terug by geselskap.

Liz: Okay persente!

Rachelle: Hierso maak myne oop!

Liz: Wag net gou julle... Ek wil net gou ietsie sê: Baie dankie vir vanaand, julle. Julle is baie spesiaal vir my, hoor? Kyk na ons, julle. Ons is nou groot. Ek lig my glas op julle. Op ons. Op groot word.

Almal: Op groot word!

Hulle vat elkeen 'n sluk.

Liz: Kom ons maak nog persente oop.

Rachelle: Hierso maak myne oop. (*sy gee vir haar 'n boks*)

Shani: En wat van die ander een?

Rachelle: Later. Dis oppad.

Liz: Watse *ander* een?

Shani: Ons het vir jou *saam* iets anders ook gekry. Maar dis 'n verassing.

Liz: AH. Julle! Wat is dit? Ek raak skoon angstig. Julle weet ek "cope" nie met verassings nie. Wat is dit?

Shani: Jy moet maar net wag en sien...jy gaan dit *love*!

Rachelle: Wel, dit was *my* idee.

Shani: Nee, ons het *saam* daarop besluit.

Rachelle: Oorspronklik was dit *my* idee en toe wou jy deel wees.

Shani: *Jou* idee was iets *anders* en toe stel *ek* hierdie idee voor.

Rachelle: Is nie!

Shani: Is!

Liz: Hierdie een is van Rachelle.

Shani: mmmm...

Liz: En dit is 'n...

Sy maak dit oop.

Liz: Wat is dit?

Rachelle: 'n Skokstok...Ek't vir my ook een nou die dag gekry. 'n Meisie moet deesdae voorbereid wees. Mens weet nooit watse "kreature" kruip in snaakse gate uit nie. Ek het eers gedink aan 'n rape alarm maar ek dink 'n *wapen* is beter...

Shani: 'n "Wapen"?

Rachelle: Ja Shani 'n wapen...Hulle is oral op die uitkyk vir 'n onskuldige meisie...

Shani: "Hulle"...

Rachelle: Dis nie wat ek bedoel nie. Ek het ook een en ek voel baie veiliger om aande na my kar toe te stap, baie dankie.

Liz: Hoe werk die ding?

Rachelle: Kyk jy sit om hier aan...(sy druk die ding)

Shani en Liz gil soos wat hulle skrik.

Liz: Dis verskriklik!

Rachelle: Ja hy gaan twee keer dink voor hy... jy weet...

Shani: Kom ons hou op praat hieroor.

Rachelle: Dis die realiteit Shani! Ek wou eintlik daai een gekry het wat die tandjies so uitskiet, jy weet, dan mik jy hom so vir sy crotch...

Shani: Sies man. Ek dink dit stuur 'n baie negatiewe boodskap uit oor vrou-alleen wees. Moet ons nou vir die res van ons lewens in vrees lewe? Ons self "be-wapen"!?

Rachelle: Ja, want dis 'n oorlog Shani...

Shani: O ja "die oorlog teen witmense"?

Rachelle: Nee teen *vrouemense*.

Shani: Ag asseblief!

Liz: Julle kom ons praat eerder nie politiek nie! Ek dink nie ons weet genoeg om 'n opinie te hê nie. Nuwe reël: Ons mag nie politiek praat nie.

Rachelle: Al wat ek sê is *rather safe than sorry*...

Shani: Loop jy maar rond met 'n skokstok...ek gaan my lewe eerder *geniet* baie dankie...

Liz: Ek weet ook nie so mooi nie Rachelle...

Rachelle: Goed. Wees *julle* maar naïef...Maar ek sê julle...Hulle kan selfs net hier buite die flat staan reg om ons te bespring...

'n Klop aan die deur. Al drie van hulle gil.

Shani: Wie is dit?

Liz: Gaan kyk wie dit is!

Shani: Gaan kyk jy, dis *jou* flat?

Rachelle: *Ek* sal kyk wie dit is...

Shani: Vat die "skok ding" saam!

Rachelle: O *nou* is dit goed genoeg...

Weer 'n klop aan die deur.

Hulle gil weer.

Shani: Okay dit raak nou belaglik... (*Sy roep*) WIE IS DIT?

Stem: Dis die polisie... maak asseblief die deur oop...

Shani: Die polisie!?

Stem: Ons is opsoek na *Liz*.

Liz: Wat het *ek* verkeerd gedoen?

Rachelle: Ek maak nou oop!

Shani: Wat doen die polisie hier?

Liz: Ek weet nie.

Rachelle gaan af.

Ons hoor hoe maak sy die deur oop.

Rachelle: (*Af*) Goeienaand, Sersant, kan ek help?

Stem: (*Af*) Ja, ek is opsoek na *Liz*...

Liz: *Ek* is *Liz*...

Japie kom die vertrek binne. Hy het 'n "polisie-uniform" aan.

Japie: (*aan Shani*) *Liz*?

Shani: Nee daar sit sy!

Japie: *Liz*?

Liz: Ja...

Japie: Your under arrest...

Liz: Wat?

Japie: For being extremely sexy!

Japie begin sy klere uit te trek. Rachelle het intussen sy CD aan gesit.

Rachelle: Watter een?

Japie: Track 4!

‘n Liedjie begin te speel. Japie begin op die maat van die musiek sy klere uittetrek.

Rachelle: Surprise Lizzy!

Liz: Is dit die verrassing?

Shani: O... Surprise! (*Aan Rachelle*)

Liz hou intussen vir Japie fyn dop. Japie is onseker of hy moet verder dans want niemand gee regtig aandag aan hom nie.

Liz: Gaan hy...jy weet...als?

Rachelle: Ja.

Liz: (*sy begin te giggel*) Nee...

Rachelle: Relax bietjie! Dis ‘n *bachelorette* tradisie!

Shani: Dis net een aand Liz!

Liz: (*sy gee in*) Okay... Kom ons doen dit... Ons wees bietjie “stout”!

Japie staan eenkant heel ongemaklik in die hoek.

Japie: Uhm... kan ek maar aangaan?

Rachelle: Ja, waarvoor wag jy, trek uit!

Shani: Ja komaan!

Liz: Trek *als* uit!

Shani, Rachelle en Liz begin te giggel.

Japie sit die musiek harder, sit sy CD speler eenkant en begin te “dans”.

Nota: Die dans kan of ongelooflik “goed” wees, of baie “sleg”, hy kan of baie ongemaklik wees of te oorgretig. Solank die situasie ongemaklik is. Japie kom voor as effe onvoorbereid en baie groen.

Gedurende sy ontkleedans giggel die meisies en maak o.a “WHOO WHOO” geluide. As Japie net in ‘n g-string is begin hy vir Liz ‘n “lapdance” te gee.

Rachelle: Ja *Baby!*

Shani: Whoo Whoo! Go Liz!

Liz: Wat moet ek doen, wat moet ek doen?

Rachelle: Sit vir hom ‘n geldjie in sy onnie!

Liz: Ekt nie kontant by my nie...

Shani: Hier is servette!

Liz druk ‘n servet in sy onderbroek.

Liz: Weer, ek wil weer!

Shani: Ek wil ook!

Rachelle: Los vir my ook een...

Hulle al drie begin servette in sy onderbroek te druk.

Japie: (*Probeer baie hard om sexy te wees*) Julle *like* dit net, né! Pappa gaan julle almal *arresteer!*

Rachelle en Shani raak effens ongemaklik. Liz se mond hang oop soos 'n kind in 'n speelgoed winkel.

Japie: Wie van julle was *stout* gewees?

Liz: (*Liz spring op*) Ek! Ek is stout! Ek is baie stout!

Japie: Julle is almal *stout* en ek gaan julle toesluit en dan 'n vet *pakslae* gee! Moet net nie laat Pappa sy rewolwer uithaal nie...

Rachelle: Okay, hou op praat.

Shani: Dans eerder net.

Japie gaan na sy sak toe.

Liz: Nee moenie gaan nie!

Japie: Ek kry net gou iets...

Japie haal baba olie uit sy sak uit.

Meisies: WHOO WHOO! OLIE!

Hy begin dit in sy lyf in te smeer.

Rachelle: Smeer dit! Ja ja...

Liz: Smeer jou bo-arms!

Shani: Nee, jou bors!

Rachelle: Sy wors?

Shani: BORS!

Hulle al drie lag. Stadig maar seker hou hulle op met lag. Die situasie raak ietwat donker. 'n Kombinasie van wellus, ang en onsekerheid. Japie voel aan hoe dinge nou net te vreemd raak maar hy hou aan met dans.

Na wat voel soos 'n ewigheid kom die liedjie tot 'n einde.

Rachelle: (*dit spoeg onverwags by haar mond uit*) Ek wil hom naai.

Stilte.

Shani: Wat het jy gesê?

Die alarm gaan af.

Almal druk hulle ore toe en begin baie hard te praat.

Shani: WAT GAAN AAN?

Rachelle: DIS DIE ALARM!

Japie: KAN JY DIT DALK AFSIT?

Liz: EK KAN NIE ONTHOU WAAR OM DIT AF TE SIT NIE! DIT IS NUUT, MY PA HET DIT NOU DIE DAG INSTALLEER.

Shani: DIT MAAK MY MAL!

Rachele: HOE LANK GAAN DIT AANHOU?

Liz: EK WEET NIE.

Kort Pouse.

Shani: EK GAAN VAN MY KOP AF RAAK!

Japie: MISKIEN MOET JULLE DIT SOEK?

Hulle begin die alarm te soek.

Na 'n rukkie hou die alarm op.

Shani: Eks bly dit is verby. Het een van julle die keypad gekry?

Rachelle: Nee.

Liz: Nie ek nie.

Rachelle: Ek het nie geweet jy het 'n alarm nie Liz?

Liz: Ja my pa het dit installeer so paar dae gelede, wou hê ek moet veilig wees in die stad. Ek kan nie onthou waar die keypad is nie.

Shani: Wat as dit iemand was wat probeer inbreek?

Rachelle: Dit was nie iemand wat probeer inbreek nie.

Liz: Ten minste het ons 'n polisieman saam met ons...

Hulle lag. Dan raak dit stil en ongemaklik

Shani: Ek wil weet hoekom jy dit gesê het?

Rachelle: Wat?

Shani: Dat jy hom wil...

Rachelle: Ek weet wat ek gesê het...

Japie: Dames...

Shani: Wag jy net gou...

Rachelle: Los dit net Shani.

Shani: Ek gan dit nie los nie.

Liz: Dit was net 'n ou grappie gewees, né Rachelle?

Rachelle: Ja dit was net 'n grappie Shani.

Shani: 'n Grappie is veronderstel om snaaks te wees. Dit was nie snaaks nie.

Liz: Ek dink dit is nogals snaaks.

Japie: Dames...

Shani: Bly gou stil.

Rachelle: Moenie hom stil maak nie.

Shani: Dit was nie 'n grap nie.

Rachelle: Drop dit net okay!

Shani: Ek gaan nie!

Japie: Dames... uhm... is daar enige iets *anders* wat julle wil hê ek moet doen?

Stilte.

Liz: Baie dankie vir *als* maar ek dink jy kan maar gaan.

Begin sy klere op te tel.

Japie: (*Vir Liz*) Het ek iets verkeerd gedoen?

Liz: Nee glad nie, jy't net jou *werk* gedoen. Dit was 'n... mooi... dansie.

Japie: Okay, maar dan is ek oppad.

Kort stilte.

Shani: (*Kyk nie eens vir hom nie*) Okay, bye!

Rachelle: (*Vermy oog kontak*) Baie dankie!

Liz: Dit was "lekker" om jou te ontmoet. Baie dankie vir die "vertoning"...

Stilte.

Hy bly net daar staan.

Shani: En?

Japie: (*Baie ongemaklik*) Uhm... Ek moet nog betaal word?

Rachelle: O ja...

Rachelle gaan na haar handsak toe en haal haar beursie uit.

Rachelle: Toe Shani gee jou helfte...

Shani: Ekskuus!

Rachelle: Jy het my gehoor...*jou* helfte.

Shani: Nee, nee, nee... wag net gou... Ek was bereid om te betaal toe dit *ons oorspronklike* idee was...

Liz: Wat was die *oorspronklike* idee?

Shani: Ons sou met 'n superman gegaan het...

Rachelle: Ja wel, dit was nou nie die *oorspronklike* idee nie...Gee net asseblief jou helfde!

Shani: Nee!

Rachelle: O, so jy is 'n roofkyker?

Shani: Ek weier om vir jou Gigolo te betaal!

Rachelle: Hy is nie my Gigolo nie!

Shani: Wel jy wou hom *naai*!

Rachelle: Fok jou!

Shani: Nee fok jou!

Liz: (*Die juffrou in haar kom nou uit*) Julle ASSEMBLIEF! Dit is nou genoeg. Kan julle asseblief net die man betaal dat hy sy ry kan kry en dan kan julle later hieroor baklei. Nee man!

Kort stilte.

Liz: Hoeveel was dit?

Rachelle: R800

Shani: Wat!?

Liz: Shani...

Rachelle: Jy hoef net R400 te gee.

Shani: Jy kan bly wees ek het kontant op my... (*gooi dit*)

Rachelle: Moenie dit nie vir my gooi nie!

Liz: Gee net vir my julle geld!

Liz gee vir Japie die kontant.

Liz: Hierso... 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 800 rand. Baie dankie vir als. Jammer vir die ongerief.

Japie: Baie dankie. Technically het julle nie die hele package gekry nie... So hierso is R200 terug...

Liz: Nee, asseblief vat dit. Ons het so baie van jou tyd gemors. Ek stap sommer saam jou deur toe.

Shani: Moenie jou baba olie vergeet nie...

Japie: Dankie.

Japie gaan haal dit.

Japie: Totsiens julle.

Hulle kyk nie een vir hom nie.

Rachelle: Totsiens.

Shani: Bye.

Liz en Japie af. Ons hoor hoe hulle by die deur groet. Die deur gaan toe. Liz kom terug.

Stilte.

Liz: Dit was nou vir jou 'n "debakel".

Stilte.

Liz: O, so nou gaan julle heel aand stil stuipe hê?

Stilte.

Liz: Dit is so onregverdig. Dit is my kitchen tea. Ek is nie van plan om te skei nie so hierdie een is veronderstel om amazing te wees. Hoe gaan ek dit onthou? My twee beste vriendinne in die hele wereld wat heel aand mekaar BITCH! En kyk hoe laat julle my vloek! Ek vloek nooit nie...FOK!

Stilte.

Shani: Jammer Lizzy.

Rachelle: Sorry Liz.

Shani: Ons is besig om baie selfsugtig te wees.

Rachelle: Maar dit stop nou. Vanaand is *jou* aand. Niemand gaan dit spoil nie.

Shani: Niemand nie...

Rachelle: Wat wil jy doen?

Shani: Huh, vriendin?

Stilte.

Rachelle: Ons is *regtig* jammer.

Shani: Vergewe ons...

Stilte.

Liz: Belowe my dat julle nie weer vanaand gaan baklei nie?

Kort stilte.

Liz: Belowe!?

Shani en Rachelle: Belowe.

Liz: So als is nou vergeet en vergewe?

Rachelle: Ja.

Liz: Shani...

Shani: Wat moes ons nou weer vergeet?

Hulle lag.

Aan gehoor.

Shani: Natuurlik het ek nie vergeet nie! Haar woorde was "EK WIL HOM NAAI" ... besef niemand anders die erns van die situasie nie?

Rachelle: Natuurlik gaan ek nie vergeet nie! Shani het 'n bohaai opgeskop oor fokol. Oor 'n blierie grappie!

Liz: Natuurlik gan nie een van hulle vergeet nie. Ek sê julle wat hulle wel vergeet het. Hoekom ons hier is vanaand. Vir my kitchen tea!

Terug by die geselskap.

Almal lag weer.

Liz: So julle belowe dat ons nie weer daaroor gaan praat nie.

Shani: Ons het mos nou net belowe.

Liz: Nog 'n ding... wat is dit met al die vloekwoorde vanaand? Julle weet hoe ek oor kru taal voel. Nuwe reël: As iemand vloek moet hulle 'n boete betaal en dit in die voelvark gooi. 'n Rand per vloekwoord.

Rachelle: (*Soek in haar beursie*) Hierso is myne.

Shani: (*Sy doen dieselfde*) En hier is myne.

Liz: Ek het ook perongeluk 'n woord of twee laat glip, so hier is myne.

Hulle gooi almal hulle rande in die bak.

Liz: Sien. Niemand vloek nie. Niemand praat weer oor die insident nie. (*Hoopvol*) Ek dink dit gaan actually 'n lekker aand wees.

Stilte.

Shani: Al wat ek wil weet is hoekom jy dit gesê het, dan sal ek dit los...

Rachelle: Ek het geweet! Ek het geweet jy kan dit nie laat gaan nie!

Liz: Julle het belowe!

Shani: Watse mens praat van naai!?

Rachelle: Kom oor dit... NAAI NAAI NAAI NAAI!

Liz: Stop dit!

Alarm beep.

Shani: Wat was dit?

Rachelle: Ek het niks gehoor nie...

Liz: Ek is jammer maar Shani jy skuld 'n rand en Rachelle jy skuld vier!

Shani: Shhhhhhh!

Alarm beep.

Shani: Daar's dit weer!

Liz: Dis die alarm...

Rachelle: Die alarm?

Alarm beep.

Shani: Julle moenie uitfreak nie, maar ek dink iemand is besig om in te breek...

Liz: Wat!?

Rachelle: Moenie belaglik wees nie... niemand is besig om in te breek nie...

'n Klop aan die deur.

Hulle al drie gil en gaan kruip agter die bank weg.

Shani: WIE IS DIT?

Stilte.

Rachelle: *(Fluister)* Gaan kyk Shani!

Shani: Ek gaan nie kyk nie, gaan kyk jy!

Rachelle: SHHHHH! *(fluister)* Wil jy hê hulle moet ons hoor?

Shani: *(fluister)* Ek gan nie kyk nie. Netnou sny hulle my keel af...

Rachelle: Liz, dis *jou* flat gaan kyk jy?

Weer 'n klop.

Liz: Net nou verkrag hulle my!

Rachelle: Niemand sal jou verkrag nie... vat die skokstok saam.

Liz vat die skokstok en stap deur toe.

Ons hoor hoe dit oop gaan.

Stem: EINA FOK!

Shani: Liz!

Rachelle: Liz!

Liz en Japie kom die vertek binne.

Japie: Eina... eina... weet jy hoe seer was dit!

Liz: Ek is rerig jammer! Rerig! Sit hierso...

Japie gaan sit.

Rachelle: Wat het gebeur?

Japie: Sy het my geskok!

Liz: Dit was 'n ongeluk!

Shani: Sien jy Rachelle, ek het jou gesê die ding is gevaarlik!

Rachelle: Nee, jy het nie!

Liz: Ek is rerig jammer!

Japie: Eina! Dit brand nog steeds!

Shani: Okay maar wag net gou... Wat doen jy hier?

Japie: Ek?

Shani: Ja jy!

Liz: Shani!

Japie: Ek wou net my foon kom charge. My battery is pap en my lift het nog nie opgedaag nie.

Shani: Jou storie is baie fishy!

Rachelle: Ek stem saam.

Japie: Ek belowe. Ek het my kar vir my flatmate geleen en hy moet my kom haal maar nou is my battery pap.

Shani: Sjoe, maar jy's vrygewig.

Liz: Stop dit nou julle. Wat is jou naam?

Japie: Japie...

Liz: Hallo Japie, Ek is Liz en dit is Rachelle en dit is...

Shani: Zaandre...

Liz: En dit is Shani...

Shani: Liz ek wou nie vir hom my regte naam gee nie!

Liz: Japie, ek is regtig jammer dat ek jou geskok het. Ons was net bietjie paranoïes. Jy kan enige tyd jou foon charge.

Shani: Wag net gou... Kom ons bel net sy company en hoor of hy legit is?

Japie: Company?

Shani: Rachelle! Waar het jy op hom afgekom?

Rachelle: Op Gumtree...

Shani: WAT!

Rachelle: Hy was die goedkoopste, okay.

Shani: Ek kan jou nie glo nie! Liz gee vir my daai ding...

Sy gryp die skokstok en gaan staan by Japie wat nog steeds in pyn is.

Liz: Shani!

Japie kyk op.

Japie: Wat doen jy?

Shani: So Japie... as dit jou regte naam is...

Japie: Natuurlik is dit my regte naam!

Shani: Ons soek antwoorde Japie.

Liz: Shani dis belaglik!

Rachelle: Ons wil net weet dat hy *is* wie hy sê hy *is*...

Liz: Nie jy ook nie!

Japie: Ek het vir julle gesê ek is net hier omdat ek 'n oproep wil maak!

Shani: Sit stil of jy kry nog bietjie skokterapie! Hoe oud is jy?

Japie: Vyf en twintig!

Shani: Wat is jou flatmate se naam?

Japie: Henko. Ek verstaan nie hoekom jy my hierdie vrae vra nie.

Rachelle: Ja, Shani jy het geen manier om te bewys of hy die waarheid praat of nie.

Shani: Goeie punt. Okay Rachelle soek sy sak deur... kyk of hy enige wapens het!

Rachelle gaan sy sak deur.

Rachelle: Okay, hier is 'n melk, 'n brood, 'n polony, 'n carton camel lights en ... twee bokse wyn.

Shani: O, twee bokse wyn...het jy gedink jy gaan 'n paar onskuldige meisies dronk maak vanaand...en dan advantage neem!

Japie: Dis groceries. Vir die flat! My flat! Ek het dit by die Friendly op die hoek gekoop met die geld wat julle my gegee het.

Rachelle: Hier is 'n ID!

Shani: Gee dit hier!

Liz: Julle hou net op!

Rachelle: (*Sy gee vir Shani die ID*) Ek is jammer Liz maar ons kan nie net 'n verkrachter in die huis in laat nie.

Shani: Wat is jou...Geboortedatum?

Japie: 1986.

Shani: En die maand?

Japie: Ek is gebore 21 November 1986 in die Groote Schuur Hospitaal, dit was 10h die oggend, my ma het 'n natuurlike geboorte gegee. Ek het 2 dae te vroeg gekom en die dokter was besig om gholf te speel. Hy het in sy gholfklerke my gevang en ek het hom nat gegee. Ons het toe ek 2 was Pretoria toe getrek meer spesifiek Pretoria-Noord. Florauna. Bergsiglaan. Toe ek 12 was het ons Durbanville toe getrek. Drommedaris 17. My sterreteken is die Waterdraer. Ek eet alles behalwe broccoli. Enige iets anders?

Shani: Nee.

Stilte.

Liz: Gee net vir my daai ding! (Sy gryp die skokstok by Shani) Ek sit hom hier bo op die kas. Nuwe reel: niemand raak weer vanaand aan hom nie. Ek is regtig jammer oor die kruisverhoor Japie.

Japie: Dis okay. Ek is net bly dit is verby.

Liz: Is jy nog seer?

Japie: Nee ek het als weg geskrik. Sjoe maar julle is nogal paranoid.

Liz: Ja. Die alarm lui heeltyd. Ons was maar net bietjie bang so vrou alleen, jy weet.

Japie: Ek belowe ek is nie 'n *verkragter* nie.

Kort stilte.

Liz: Jy wou jou foon charge?

Japie: Asseblief, as jy nie omgee nie. Blackberry?

Liz: Ja. Daar by die hasies.

Japie staan eenkant. Liz terug by die ander twee.

Liz: Julle behoort julle te skaam! Dit was soos 'n fokken chapter uit *Lord of the Flies!*

Sy sug en gooi 'n Rand in die "vloekbak".

Liz: Nee man, wat gaan aan met julle vanaand?

Japie kom terug.

Liz: (*saggies*) Wees vriendelik julle.

Japie: Hy moet net nog so bietjie ... charge ... Okay, dit behoort nou fine te wees.

Japie bel.

Na gehoor.

Japie: Hallo Henko dis weer ek. Dit is die sewende voicemail wat ek al gelos het. Ek staan nou in die klient se huis en bel van haar foon af want my foongeld is op. Ses voicemails doen dit nogal. Ek is jammer as ek ongeskik geklink het. Ja dit is my kar maar jy kan dit enige tyd gebruik. Ek verstaan net nie hoekom jy nie jou foon op tel nie! Soos wat jy kan aflei uit my vorige boodskappe ek het vroeg klaar gemaak, so ek wag vir jou. Ek hoop jy het 'n baie goeie rede hoekom jy nie die foon op tel nie. Jy sal nie die aand glo wat ek gehad het nie. Anyway. Maak gou! En tel jou foon op. Jaap.

Japie: Dit was op voicemail.

Liz: Aggenee.

Japie se foon lui.

Japie: Oe! Ek dink dit is hy.

Na gehoor.

Japie: Hallo? ...Hallo ma. Goed en self... Ekskuus ek was besig gewees... Okay maar ma het verniet geworry ek is fine... Ja ek het gesien. Dankie vir die huur geldjie ma... Ja ma, baie lief vir ma... Is dit? ...Ja, en toe? ... Regtig! ... Ja maar dan sal ek hom seker moet proe as ek kom kuier... Nee hy het nog nie 'n werk nie ... Ma asseblief moet nou nie weer begin nie. Hy soek, daar is niks nie... Dit het niks met ons te doen nie ... Okay maar dan hoef ma nie meer groceries te koop nie... Ek sal... Wel ek doen odd jobs hier en daar ... Okay maar ek kan regtig nie nou met ma oor hierdie goed praat nie ... Want ek is besig ... Ma asseblief moenie onsteld raak nie... Ma... (sy sit die foon neer.)

Japie: Jammer...

Liz: Nee jy hoef regtig nie jammer te sê nie.

Die telefoon lui weer. Na gehoor.

Japie: Hallo!? ...Nee ma...Natuurlik waardeur ek als wat ma vir my doen...Ek is jammer...Ek sê ek is jammer...Ma moet net nie die foon in my oor doodruk nie ma weet ek haat dit...Okay maar ek is jammer. Ons gaan nie weer oor Henko baklei nie. Dis sy lewe laat hy nou maar doen daarmee wat hy wil ... Ja ma maar hy probeer... Okay kom ons los dit net asseblief ek wil nie weer baklei daaroor nie. Ma ek kan regtig nie nou praat nie ek is by mense ... Vriendinne van my ... Ma sal hulle nie ken nie. Dis *nuwe* maatjies ... Asseblief nie ma ... Okay ... (Haal die foon van sy oor af) My ma stuur groete en sê ons moet lekker kuier...

Liz: Dankie Tannie!

Japie: Tevrede? ... Nee ma hoef nie nog geld in te sit nie ... Ons het genoeg van alles ... Ja ek sal lekker kuier ... Okay bye ma ek moet nou gaan ... Love you too... Bye... Bye... Okay bye.

Liz: Jou ma bel baie...

Japie: Ja... sy doen dit. Ek dink ek gaan maar by die Friendly vir Henko gaan wag.

Liz: Nee bly. Wat sal jy nou so in die donker daar buite gaan staan en wag. Jy bly net hier...

Japie: Dis regtig nie nodig nie.

Liz: Ek gaan nie *nee* vir 'n antwoord vat nie.

Japie: (*Hy gee in*) Okay, baie dankie. Ek is seker hy gaan nie lank wees nie. Hy gaan nou een of ander tyd sy voicemails check en dan is ek uit julle hare uit.

Liz: Jy is heelaand welkom.

Japie: Dankie.

Stilte.

Liz maak haar keel skoon.

Shani: Jammer dat ons gedink het jy is 'n *verkragter*.

Japie: Nee dis doodreg.

Rachelle: Ja, ons was baie simple. Ons kan mos sien jy lyk nie soos 'n *verkragter* nie.

Shani: O... hoe *lyk* 'n *verkragter*?

Rachelle: Ek weet nie...

Shani: "Anderskleurig"?

Liz: Ons gaan nou nie weer met die rassedeбат begin nie, dankie.

Stilte.

Japie: Ek is nogal dors.

Shani: Ons het sjampanje.

Rachelle: Dis op.

Shani: Het jy nou weer *als* opgedrink?

Rachelle: Julle het ook daarvan gehad!

Shani: Nie so baie soos *jy* nie.

Japie: As julle drank soek... Ek het mos wyn...

Liz: Nee, ons kan nie jou wyn drink nie.

Rachelle: Kan ons asseblief van jou wyn drink?

Liz: Rachelle!

Japie: Vat vir julle met liefde daarvan. Ek meen ek *is* die ongenooide gas after all.

Rachelle: Ek sal vir ons ingooi. Soek jy ook wyn Japie?

Japie: Ek weet nie of ek moet nie.

Rachelle: Ja man... 'n glasie rooi sal niks aan jou doen nie.

Shani: Ek dink *jy* het genoeg glasies gehad.

Rachelle gooi vir almal in behalwe Shani. Sy gee vir almal 'n glas.

Shani: Waar is myne?

Rachelle: (*Vals*) Skuus, ek het vergeet.

Shani gooi vir haarself in.

Liz: Op Japie...

Japie: Op my?

Liz: Ja dis die minste wat ons kan doen nadat ons jou geskok het...

Shani: Nadat *jy* hom geskok het...

Japie: Wel ten minste weet ons nou ek is nie 'n *verkragter* nie...

Rachelle: Op Japie wat nie 'n *verkragter* is nie...

Almal: Cheers!

Almal drink.

Shani: So Japie... is dit nie vir jou weird dat Rachelle gesê het sy wil jou naai nie? Of kry jy dit baie?

Rachelle: Ek het geweet dit gaan weer een of ander tyd opkom, jy is soos 'n blerrie staffie kan net nie 'n ding laat gaan nie!

Shani: Jy's die hittige hond hier rond! Het jy gedink ek gan vergeet?

Rachelle: Nee... 'n olifant vergeet mos nooit nie.

Liz: Julle het belowe. Beteken 'n belofte niks vir julle nie?

Shani: Ek sal dit los as Rachelle erken dat dit verkeerd was om so iets te se.

Rachelle: Nee, ek gaan nie. Ek sien niks verkeerd met wat ek gedoen het nie.

Liz: (*Smeek*) Los dit net asseblief.

Shani: Ek gaan nie. Ek wil weet hoekom sy so iets gesê het.

Rachelle: Ons was almal stout en simpel en ons het goed geskree wat niks beteken nie.

Shani: Als wat 'n mens sê beteken iets. Niks is *random* nie. As jy dit sê dan dink jy dit en as jy dit dink dan kan jy dit doen.

Rachelle: Dis nie waar nie.

Shani: Okay...maar erken ten minste net laat dit verkeerd was en dan los ons dit...

Rachelle: Nee ek weier!

Liz: Ek kan nie meer nie.

Japie: Is dit altyd so?

Liz: Ja altyd!

Rachelle: Ek verstaan jou nie, Shani. Als is altyd 'n issue.

Shani: Daar is goed soos reg en verkeerd. Dis baie eenvoudig.

Rachelle: Wel ons opinies oor reg en verkeerd verskil.

Liz: Julle is baie ongeskik om so voor ons gas te baklei? Kyk hoe ongemaklik is hy!

Japie: Ek is fine!

Shani: Liz, ek is jammer maar dit is nou tyd laat jy 'n kant moet kies?

Rachelle: Ja, jy kan nie net heel aand 'n draadsitter wees nie!

Liz: Ek gaan nie kante kies nie! As ek Shani se kant kies gaan Rachelle vir my kwaad wees. As ek Rachelle se kant kies gaan Shani vir my kwaad wees. Either way gaan ek 'n blomme meisie in die proses verloor!

Shani: Ek verstaan nie hoekom niemand van julle kan onderskei tussen reg en verkeerd nie.

Rachelle: Dis jou eie subjektiewe opinie oor wat reg en verkeerd is.

Shani: Okay goed kom ons kry dan 'n "objektiewe" opinie... Japie...

Japie: Huh...

Shani: Japie, wat dink jy van hierdie situasie?

Japie: Ek wil nie betrokke raak nie.

Rachelle: Niemand gaan kwaad wees nie, wees net eerlik.

Japie: Almal het geldige punte.

Liz: Nee jammer...

Shani: Dis 'n cop-out... Okay fine ons skets 'n hipotetiese scenario... Kom ons sê jou girlfriend het vir 'n ander ou gesê sy wil hom naai wat sal jou reaksie wees as jy daarvan uitvind...

Rachelle: Maar jy weet ook sy het 'n grappie gemaak...

Liz: En dis haar vriendin se Kitchen Tea... maar sy en die ander vriendin baklei die heelyd...

Almal: Wat is jou opinie?

Japie: Dis moeilik.

Almal: Antwoord dit net!

Japie: Ek het nie 'n girlfriend nie.

Die volgende spreekbeurt is gelyk.

Shani: Dit maak nie saak nie of jy 'n girlfriend het nie...

Rachelle: Dit gaan nie oor die girlfriend nie...

Liz: Sê net vir hulle, hulle is besig om belaglik te wees....

Japie: Ek is gay.

Stilte.

Shani: Is jy gay?

Japie: Ja.

Rachelle: Het jy 'n... boyfriend?

Japie: Ja, Henko is my boyfriend.

Liz: Die flatmate vir wie jy wag Henko?

Japie: Ja.

'n "Dit maak skielik als sin"-oomblik.

Almal: O.

Stilte.

Hulle almal gaan sit weer op die rusbank. Ietwat stom geslaan.

Liz: Is jy regtig gay?

Japie: Ja...

Rachelle: Jy lyk nie gay nie...

Japie: Okay...(weet nie of hy dit as 'n kompliment moet neem nie) Dankie?

Liz: Hoekom is jy gay?

Japie: Wat bedoel jy?

Shani: Wil jy nie *kinders* hê nie?

Japie: Ja ... maar ek kan aanneem.

Stilte.

Japie: Ek dink ek gaan weer vir Henko probeer bel.

Liz: Jou...maatjie?

Japie: Ja...

Aan gehoor.

Japie: (*Wag so paar minute*) Henko...as jy vir my lief is sal jy my kom haal! Okay... dit was bietjie manipulerend... Maar honestly waar de fok is jy? Dit raak nou bietjie belaglik... Jy moes my al *lankal* kom haal het... En jy is altyd laat! Ek hoop nie jy kuier nie! As jy kuier moet jy my maar eerder nie kom haal nie... Nee... Nee kom haal my asseblief...Asseblief! Lief jou. Nee. Ek is nie baie lief vir jou op die oomblik nie... Bye.

Hy bel gou terug.

Japie: Nee dit was lelik... Ek is baie lief vir jou. Maar kom haal my net asseblief! Dis weird hierso. Hulle baklei heeltyd. So kom haal my... Bye!

Hy bel weer terug.

Japie: Nee hulle is baie nice. Ek is seker hulle is nie so nie. Ek trek dit terug. Lief jou. Bye.

Die foon lui.

Japie: Hallo Henko? ... Hallo ma. Nee ons kuier nog lekker, dankie. Nee ma het net altyd so manier om te bel wanneer ek vir 'n oproep van Henko wag. Nee, dis niks nie. Nee hy kom haal my bietjie later. Ma... O regtig... Ja, Sean Penn is baie goed daarin. Ma hoef regtig nie elke gay flielik op die mark uit te neem nie. Daar is niks om te verstaan nie. Dis baie eenvoudig. Okay, ma ek gaan nie nou met ma hierdie gesprek hê nie. Bye. Love you too. Bye.

Japie gaan sit weer. Stilte.

Liz begin te lag.

Japie: Hoekom lag jy?

Shani: Liz... dis baie ongeskik.

Liz: Nee Japie ek lag nie vir *jou* nie, ek sweer ek doen nie.

Rachelle: Hoekom lag jy dan?

Liz: Niks nie.

Shani: Iets is obviously baie snaaks.

Liz: Nee dis niks nie. Kom ons los dit net.

Oomblik se stilte en dan bars Liz weer uit van die lag.

Japie: Okay...waaroor lag jy?

Liz: Dis absurd. Die hele situasie is absurd.

Japie begin saam te lag.

Shani: Ek vang dit nie.

Rachelle: Ek ook nie.

Liz: Jy het gedink sy... En sy het gesê sy... en toe fight julle heel aand... en hy is ...

Sy bars weer uit van die lag.

Shani: Dis nie snaaks nie.

Rachelle: Glad nie.

Shani: Ek dink dis Rachelle se straf omdat sy rond kyk!

Rachelle: Nee dis jou straf! Jy het heelaand aan gegaan oor iets wat glad nie 'n issue was nie!

Japie: Okay julle ek is niemand se *straf* nie!

Liz: Soos my ma altyd sê die blinde sambok bly getrou! (*Val om soos sy lag*)

Shani: Of hy nou 'n gay is of nie, feit bly staan jy wou hom naai!

Rachelle: Dit was 'n donnerse grappie!

Shani: Ek is jammer maar ek kan nie vriendinne wees met iemand wat vir hulleself lieg nie.

Rachelle: Ek kan nie vriendinne wees met iemand wat vir my wil voorskryf hoe om my lewe te leef nie.

Shani: Okay so na vanaand is ons nie meer vriende nie.

Rachelle: Dis fine met my!

Liz hou op lag.

Liz: Okay hoek toe!

Shani: Wat?

Liz: Hoek toe!

Rachelle: Is jy ernstig?

Liz: Ja! (*Juffrou is terug*) Shani gaan staan jy in *daai* hoek en Rachelle jy gaan staan in *daai* een... En dan dink julle *mooi* oor wat julle verkeerd gedoen het!

Shani: Dis belaglik.

Liz: Ek is dood ernstig.

Rachelle: Ek weier. Ek is nie 'n kind nie!

Liz: As julle dit nie doen nie kan julle maar julle handsakke vat en loop. Ek en Japie sal heerwaarskynlik 'n lekkerder tyd sonder julle hê. Ek gaan tot 3 tel. EEN, TWEE...TWEE EN 'N HALF...

Hulle doen dit.

Liz: Julle kan weer deel wees van die grootmense se gesprek wanneer julle ophou met julle kinderagtige gedrag.

Stilte.

Liz: Ek kan nie glo my kitchen tea het in so disaster ontaard nie.

Japie: Miskien moet jy vir wys watse persente jy gegkry het dan gan jy dalk beter voel?

Liz: Dankie. *Baie Dankie.* Ten minste een persoon wat besef waarom vanaand gaan. Okay... Exciting!

Sy gaan haal die persente.

Liz en Shani kyk.

Liz: Nee nee nee, julle mag nie loer nie. Julle moet vir die hoek staar totdat julle julle les geleer het... Ek kan sien hoe jy loer Shani... Jy ook Rachelle...

Japie: Is jy nie bietjie hard op hulle nie?

Liz: Dis al hoe hulle gaan leer!

Die alarm beep.

Liz: Tannie Hester het vir my 'n stainless steel ketel gegee...

Japie: Hier is 'n briefie aan... Bybel vers.

Liz: Watse een?

Japie: Korinthiers...

Liz: O..."liefde is blind"...daai een...sy het hom al 7 keer die afgelope maand vir my gesms.

Japie: My ma sms elke dag vir my 'n bybelvers.

Liz: Omdat jy gay is?

Japie: (*Ongemaklik*) Nee...sy doen dit maar net... Omdat sy vir my lief is. Haar manier om te sê sy dink aan my...

Liz: Dis oulik.

Die alarm beep.

Liz: Karen het vir my Braun Multiquick 3 hand processor gegee.

Die alarm beep weer.

Shani: Hoor julle nie dit nie!

Liz: Shani julle *timeout* is nog nie verby nie...

Shani: Ek is jammer maar daai alarm gaan my mal maak.

Liz: Ek kom dit nie eers agter nie.

Rachelle: Dis regtig *baie* irriterend.

Japie: Kan jy dit nie afsit nie?

Liz: Ek weet nie waar die keypad is nie.

Shani: Okay maar kan ons dit ten minste soek?

Rachelle: Ja asseblief!

Die alarm beep nog 'n keer.

Liz: Goed. Maar julle gaan nie weer begin strei nie!

Shani: Ek gee op. Dis haar lewe. Sy kan doen daarmee nes sy wil.

Rachelle: Sy is reg. Dit is my lewe. Ek gaan dit ten volle geniet. Ek hoop eendag sy leer om dieselfde te doen.

Die alarm beep weer.

Shani: Kan ons asseblief net daai blerrie alarm gaan soek!?

Liz: Okay, maar nie 'n word nie.

Hulle begin in die sitkamer te soek.

Liz, terug by die persente.

Liz: 'n Luminarc 7-piece whiskey karaffie en glase stelletjie

Japie: En jy het 'n Jiale cookie cutter...

Die alarm beep weer.

Shani het 'n draad beet.

Shani: Ek het 'n draad... ek dink hy gaan na iets toe... na die lampie toe. Shit.

Liz: Moenie vloek nie asseblief.

Sy gooi 'n rand in die vloek bak.

Japie: 12 Cup Muffin Pan.

Liz: 'n Carrol Boyes melkbeker.

Rachelle: Wag ek dink ek het iets? Nee dis net 'n fokken plug.

Liz: Nog 'n rand dankie.

Rachelle gooi 'n rand in die vloek bak.

Liz: 'n Brita Marella extra large water purifier.

Japie: Hoe werk dit?

Liz: Man, dis bitter handig. Jy gooi sommer gewone kraanwater...

Rachelle en Shani loop slaapkamer se kant toe.

Liz: (*Kyk nie eens op nie*) Waarnatoe gaan julle?

Shani: Ons wil in die res van die flat kyk!

Rachelle: Dis definitief nie in die leefarea nie.

Die alarm beep weer.

Shani: Ek dink ek gaan begin huil.

Rachelle: Dis regtig genoeg om 'n mens mal te maak!

Liz: Wanneer laas het julle iets gehad om te eet?

Shani: Vanmiddag.

Rachelle: Vanoggend.

Liz: Sien *dis* hoekom julle so geïreerd die heelaand is. Gaan kyk of die hoender al reg is.

Shani: O ja!

Rachelle: Ja miskien is die alarm in die kombuis!

Liz: Okay...maar nie 'n piep nie.

Hulle gaan af. Alarm beep.

Liz: Dis goed om hulle met *iets* besig te hou.

Japie: 'n Home Discovery coffee plunger.

Liz: 'n 16-piece Hanging Cultery set.

Japie: 'n nylon pastry brush.

Liz: Carel se meisie... Cheapskates.

Japie: En jy het 'n koekroller.

Liz: My ma het vir my *Boardmans se non stick cooking set* gekoop. Dis die groot een. Dis in die kombuis.

Japie: Hier is 'n boks wat jy nog nie oopgemaak het nie!

Liz: Laat ek dit gou oopmaak.

Sy doen.

Japie: Wat is dit?

Liz: Ek weet nie. Daar is geen labels nie?

Japie: Wag kom ons kyk na die instruction manual...

Liz: Wat sê dit?

Japie: Dis in Chinees.

Liz: Is daar nie 'n engelse weergawe nie.

Japie: Hier is die Spaanse een.

Liz: Wat is die ding?

Japie: O hier is dit... *Bullet Express Trio!*

Liz: O dis daai Glomail mixer!!!

Japie: Ja, 'n Glomail mixer...Met *drie* speed functions!

Liz: Hy kan shread en slice en mix en dice! Dis amazing! Ek wou nog altyd een gehad het.

Japie: Kom ons toets ons hom uit...

Liz: Okay...

Japie: Lees *jy* die instructions en dan sit ek hom aanmekaar...

Liz: Okay, Okay, Okay. (*sy lees*) "Important Safeguards and cautionary information"... "For your safety, carefully read all instructions before operating bullet express trio."

Alarm beep.

Japie: Klink scary!

Liz: Ja dit doen...

Japie: Ons sal dit later lees. Kom by die "how to assemble uit"!

Liz: "Assembling the bullet express trio"... "Put the slicer shredder on the motor body and then place the slicer, shredder bowl on the slicer shredder gear body, be careful not to damage the slicer shredder disc..." Ek verstaan nie wat dit beteken nie...

Alarm beep.

Japie: Is *dit* die "slicer shredder body" (*Hy lig dit op*) en *dis* die "slicer shredder bowl"? (*Lig die ander een*)

Liz: Ek dink *daai* is die "slicer shredder disc"...

Hulle raak soos 'n getroude paartjie.

Japie: Is jy seker?

Liz: Nee...

Japie: Kyk na die prentjie...

Liz: Ek verstaan nie die prentjie nie...

Japie: Wat bedoel jy, jy verstaan nie die prentjie nie?

Liz: Ek verstaan dit nie!

Japie: Gebruik jou oë!

Liz: Moenie op my gil nie!

Japie: Ek gil nie...maar jy is die een met die manual in jou hand...

Liz: Ek kan nie kop of stert daarvan uitmaak nie.

Japie: Gee dit net vir my...

Hy kyk.

Japie: Okay. Hierdie is die disc en hierdie is die blade.

Liz: Ek gaan 'n glas wyn drink.

Die alarm beep.

Japie: Gan jy my nie help nie?

Liz: Nee dit maak my angstig.

Japie: Okay maar geniet jou glas wyn terwyl *ek* al die werk doen.

Liz: Moenie op my gil nie.

Japie: (*gil*) Ek gil nie!

Shani en Rachelle is terug. Hulle lyk briesend. Terwyl hulle praat sit Japie die mixer aanmekaar.

Die alarm beep.

Shani: Okay ons het *nie* die keypad gekry nie.

Rachelle: Ons het oral gesoek.

Die alarm beep weer.

Shani: So dit was actually die *goeie* nuus.

Rachelle: Die slegte nuus is...

Japie: Dammit kan julle nie *sien* ek probeer konsentreer nie!

Liz: Wat is die slegte nuus?

Rachelle: Wys vir haar Shani.

Shani haal die rou hoender wat sy agter haar rug weggesteek het uit.

Liz: Nee!

Shani: Jy het nooit die hoender in die oond gesit nie!

Liz: Wat!

Rachelle: Die *een ding* wat jy vanaand moes doen!

Shani: Jy het die audacity om *ons* soos kinders te hanteer!

Liz: Ek is jammer julle, ek het heeltmal vergeet...

Rachelle: Nee moenie jammer sê nie!

Shani: Weet jy hoe lus was ek nou vir hierdie hoender?

Rachelle: Het jy enige idee!

Liz: Moenie op my gil op my kitchen tea nie!

Rachelle: Ag shutup nou oor jou donnerse kitchen tea!

Shani: Dis al waaroor jy die hele aand kan praat! Soos 'n regte Barbie pop!

Liz: 'n Barbie pop?

Shani: Ja, Barbie pop...*Barbie en Ken se dream wedding.*

Rachelle: Jy is die een wat moet groot woord en ophou huis huis speel...

Liz: Ek is nie Barbie nie...ek is nie eers blond nie!

Shani: Ag komaan, Liz... enige persoon met 'n halwe breinsel kan sien daai bruin kom uit 'n boks!

Liz: Julle is besig om so vieslik te wees!

Rachelle: En hou op om in 'n babastem te praat.

Shani: Jy gee nie genoeg om oor ons vriendskap om ten minste 'n opinie te hê nie.

Liz: Ek het nie een nie.

Rachelle: Barbie gaan breek in enige konflik situasie!

Liz: Stop dit! Julle haal nou *julle* fight op *my* uit!

Shani: So hier is dit nou Liz... 'n rou hoender... die simbool vir wat ons vriendskap eintlik vir jou beteken.

Rachelle: Salmonella vriendskap.

Shani: Als gaan oor jou...

Rachelle: ...en jou simpel troue!

Shani: Dit het jou hele lewe geword.

Rachelle: Ons ken jou nie meer nie.

Shani: Jy was *nooit* so selfgesentreërd nie.

Liz: Ek kan nie glo julle sê hierdie goed vir my nie! Oor 'n blerrie hoender!

Shani: Moenie worry nie Liz... Ons sal fine wees...

Rachelle: Ons het 'n komkommer en twee tamaties in die yskas gekry...

Shani: ...Ons sal *dit* maar eet!

Die alarm beep.

Shani: En watse mens weet nie waar die fokken alarm is nie!

Hulle gaan sit.

Japie het uiteindelik die mixer aan mekaar gesit.

Japie: YES! YES! EK HET DIT GEDOEN! FOK JOU BULLET EXPRESS TRIO! JYS MY BITCH NOU!

Al drie meisies staar net die mixer aan.

Japie: Kom ons toets hierdie baby uit... Gee sommer daai tamaties hierso...

Japie druk die tamaties in die mixer. Hy sit dit aan.

Japie: DIT WERK!

Liz gil.

Liz: AAH!

Die gil word 'n tipe asma-aanval.

Japie sit die mixer af.

Sy doen dit. Na 'n ruk kalmeer sy.

Liz: Ek's jammer...Ek weet nie wat my makeer nie. Dis daai DING! Daai ding maak my MAL!

Japie: Dames en Here "A is vir Angs" ...

Ligte verskuif.

Aan gehoor.

Liz: Die Bullet Express Trio. Lewensgroot op die manual. FOR YOUR SAFETY CAREFULLY READ ALL INSTRUCTIONS. Hoekom kan hulle nie vir mens 'n instruction manual gee na skool nie. HOW TO BE AN ADULT. Partykeer voel dit vir my asof ek in 'n mixer gegooi is. Ek moet koes of een van daai skerp lemme gaan my kop af kap. Koljander koljander so deur die bos. My ma en pa kook lekker kos terwyl die kinders verstik aan 'n druiwe tros. Ek het hopeloos te veel druiwe in my mond gestop nou weet ek nie hoe om als af te sluk nie. Groot word voel soos 'n resies. Ons moet so vinnig as moontlik na universiteit groot word. Verantwoordelikheid aanleer. Verantwoordelik wees. Lisensie. Flat. Huur. Tax. Self inkopies doen. Self wasgoed was. Self kook. Werk. Werk. Werk. Werk. Geld maak. Tyd maak vir sosiaal bly. Goeie verhoudings kweek. Trou. Dis 'n resies koljander en die laaste een se kop word afgekap. Ek geniet dit. Die adrenalien van groot word. Maar dis so vinnig. Ek kry nie tyd om behoorlik te beplan nie. Ek hou van beplan. Ek is goed daarmee. Matriek: 6 A's. Eerstejaar ontmoet ek my trouman. 23 moet ek by 'n skool werk. 25: trou. 27: eerste kind. 29: tweede kind. My eie instruction manual. Vir my lewe. Die Bullet Express Trio. Comes with three speed settings. Op die oomblik is die dial na "spoed van lig" gedraai. Soos 'n skoppelmaai. 'n Skoppelmaai wat my ouers my altyd in gestoot het. Ek kan myself aan die gang skop, pappa. Moenie te hard stoot nie, mamma. Die kettings gaan breek en ek gaan in die ligruim skiet. Of 'n rondomtalie. Geverf met al die kleure van die reenboog. 'n Rondomtalie wat nie stop nie. Die seuntjie op die speelgrond speel nie mooi nie. Hy stoot hom vinniger en vinniger. Ek wil afklim. Die reenboogkleure smelt as saam en word bruin. Bruin soos poef. Rondomtalie draai die ou wereld. Ek wil afklim. Dit gaan te vining, ek gaan opgooi. Toe ek al my persente uitpak toe trek my bors toe. Dis 'n kombuis. 'n Kombuis. Ek gaan heeldag en aldag in die kombuis wees. Ontbyt – roereiers in my nuwe *Boardmans stainless steel pan*. Roosterbrood in my *four slice Mellerware toaster*. Vars lemoene appels en pere in my *Bullet Express Pro*. Skottelgoed. Middagete. Haal uit die *Upperware*, ek pak vir ons Blueberry muffins wat ek die vorige aand gebak het in my *6 cup muffin pan* in. Dis goedkoper om kos saam te vat werk toe. Skottelgoed. Aandete. Hoenderborsies gevul met bokmelkkaas en kruie in my *@Home casserole dish*. Tyd vir ons sepies. Skottelgoed. Skottelgoed. Skottelgoed. Bed. Wekker opstaan. Nuwe dag. Kombuis toe. Ek moet my *nylon pastry brush* uit probeer – vir fok weet wat. My kop draai. Ek gaan my hele lewe in die kombuis spandeer. Daar is nog te veel goed wat ek wil doen. Ek wil leer Spaans praat. Ek wil gedigte skryf. Ek wil vadersnaam eendag AGAAT klaar lees. AS julle my soek ek is in die kombuis. Ekt waarskynlik uit verveeldheid die kitchen timer ingesluk. Maak maar net 'n gat in my keel met die *julienne peeler* ek sal seker eendag weer bykom. Swak beplanning Lizette, soos my ma sou se. Te vinnig. Als is te vining, Koljander. Moenie my kop af kap nie. Ek kry nie eens tyd om die instruction manuals te lees nie. Ek hou van beplan. Ek hou van my lewe kompartementaliseer. My appels apart. My pere apart. My lemoene eenkant. My lewe is gedonner in 'n blender. Ek is in 'n blender. Rondomtalie draai die ou wereld. Ek wil afklim.

Ligte verskuif na normaal. Alarm beep.

Stilte.

Japie: Ek weet wat jou gaan opcheer... 'n Liedjie... ek speel vir ons 'n liedjie... dit is 'n party after all.

Japie gaan na die CD speler toe.

Japie: Wat is die?

Lig 'n paar rooi duiwelshorings met liggies in.

Rachelle: Liz was veronderstel om daarmee uit te gaan. Deel van haar bachelorette pakkie.

Liz: Dis nie 'n bachelorette nie.

Rachelle: Nee dit is nie. Ek wens dit was maar ons sit mos heelaand en drink lemoensap en praat oor trou.

Shani: En eet rou hoender!

Liz: Julle kan loop as dit nie vir julle lekker is nie. Julle het dit in elk geval opgefok.

Rachelle: Dis vir niemand lekker nie.

Japie: Ek geniet myself. (*Japie sit die duiwelshorings aan*). As Henko my nou moet sien. (*Hy lag vir homself*)

Hy soek 'n CD.

Japie: (*Vind iets*) WAT!!!! EK kan nie glo julle het dit nie!

Hy speel Spice Girls se "Wannabe"

Japie: Komaan julle kom dans bietjie! Liz?

Liz: Ek wil nie...

Japie: Rachelle?

Rachelle: Ek is nie lus nie!

Japie: Shani?

Shani: Fokof!

Na 'n ruk gee hy op en sit die liedjie af.

Japie: Okay fine, wees maar so.

Japie bel weer vir Henko.

Japie: WAAR IS JY HENKO!?

Hy sit die foon neer. Alarm beep.

Japie: Ek mis die 90s.

Rachelle: Ek ook.

Japie: Veral die kinderprogramme... soos Brakenjan.

Liz: Mina Moo.

Shani: Haas das.

Rachelle: Wielie walie.

Japie: Moomin.

Liz: Heidi.

Shani: Dawie die Kabouter.

Rachelle: Gummi Bears.

Japie: Alladin.

Shani: Hoor hier, *enige* Disney movie...

Japie: Toe hulle nog sing-alongs gehad het...

Liz: Ek huil as ek daai Disney movies nou kyk...

Rachelle: Lion King...

Japie: Little Mermaid was die beste...

Shani: (*sing, kan goed of baie sleg wees*) I wanna be where the people are... I wanna see, wanna see 'em dancing... walking around on those... whats that word again...

Japie: Feet!

Almal: Up where they walk, up where they run, up where they stay all day in the sun... wandering free, wish I could be... part of that woooooooooooooooooorld.

Liz: Kinderpartytjies was die beste. Springkastele en rooi koeldrank.

Rachelle: Marshmallows en jelly tots... toe ons nog hoog op suiker geraak het...

Japie: Teen die einde van die partytjie was daar altyd kaaskrulle in die swembad.

Shani: Nee Graad 5 partytjies was beter. Swem heeldag. En as dit donker raak het almal in hulle handoeke in die lapa gaan dans.

Liz: Terwyl die oom vir ons braai het ons choreografie op Vengaboys uitgewerk.

Rachelle: As daar 'n vasdans nommer gespeel het, het onsge-“close gedans”...ek het my eerste vry op Goo Goo Dolls se Iris gehad.

Shani: Die musiek! Die musiek in die 90s was die beste.

Japie: Als was great in die neentigs.

Liz: Egoli was nog opi tv.

Shani: Toe mens Egoli nog kon kyk.

Rachelle: Toe Tannie Nora nog klere gemaak het.

Liz: Toe Tarien en Bientjie nog in die huis gebly het.

Japie: Toe Bertie nog oulik was en nie scary nie.

Stilte.

Alarm beep.

Shani: Die 90s... toe Rachelle nog nie 'n slet was nie.

Rachelle: Toe Shani nog nie 'n bitch was nie.

Shani: Ek is nie 'n bitch nie.

Hulle almal lag.

Liz: Jammer Shani maar jy is 'n bitch.

Rachelle: Dankie!

Shani: Wat?

Liz: Voordat ons vriende was op skool was ek bang vir jou.

Japie: Toe ek vanaand in hierdie flat instap was ek bang vir jou.

Shani: So ek is 'n bitch?

Rachelle: Ja.

Shani: Ag fok julle almal.

Shani gaan steen eenkant.

Liz probeer gesprek maak.

Liz: Japie, wou jy nog altyd 'n “eksotiese danser” wees...

Japie: Natuurlik nie.

Liz: Wat wou jy doen?

Japie: Dis simpel.

Liz: Nee vertel!

Japie: Ek wou 'n akteur wees. Wel ek wil nog steeds.

Rachelle: Regtig?

Japie: Ja. Ek dink dit was 'n kombinasie van Desembermaande by Pretoria-Noord se Video Den werk en Drama Eisteddfods.

Liz: Hoekom pursue jy nie dit nie!

Japie: Te bang. Ek weet ek moet seker 'n agent probeer kry, ek kom net nie daarby uit nie. Oh well. Stripping is goeie geld.

Shani: So ek is 'n bitch?

Rachelle: Ja jy is 'n groot bitch.

Shani: Fine, dan is ek 'n bitch. Julle sal ook *bitches* wees as julle onder dieselfde finansiële druk as ek was.

Rachelle: Hier kom dit alweer..."*Ek werk vir my geld*"

Liz: "Ek is onafhanklik van my ouers"

Rachelle: "Ek moes op 'n studielening swot"!

Shani: Dis als waarheid!

Rachelle: Ja maar *als* gaan nie oor geld nie Shani...

Liz: Ja Shani partykeer moet mens jou drome volg! Soos Japie!

Japie: Wat?

Liz: Jy moet 'n agent kry, en famous word en op sewende laan kom! Jou drome volg!

Shani: Ek is jammer maar *net* mense wat geld *het*, het die luxury om dit te kan sê...Om te sê dit gaan nie oor geld nie, mens moet jou drome volg. Dit gaan *als* oor geld. Net omdat ek 'n bietjie met verf kan speel beteken nie ek gaan my hobby my career maak nie. Mens kan nie altyd net doen wat vir jou *lekker* is nie. Dis hoekom mens dit "werk" noem.

Rachelle: Geld maak mens nie noodwendig gelukkig nie.

Shani: Se iemand wat geld het. Jy kry nog sakgeld.

Rachelle: Ek swot nog so hulle help my uit! Fucking sue me!

Liz: My ouers help my ook so nou en dan uit.

Japie: My ma betaal alles.

Shani: Wel, ek is honderd persent onafhanklik van my ouers. lewers moet mens groot word.

Liz: Ja maar dis nie asof jy op die broodlyn lewe nie...

Shani: Nee, maar ek budget. Ek doen odd jobs wat nie vir my "lekker" is nie. Maar ek moet teen die einde van die maand my huur kan betaal. So ek suck it up en doen dit want elke bietjie help.

Rachelle: Shame Shani... mens kan nie so lewe nie.

Shani: Moenie my jammer kry nie! Moenie my fokken jammer kry nie! Ooh, maar jy love dit! Don't fucking patronise me!

Rachelle: Al wat ek sê is mens kan nie so ingat lewe nie, Shani. lewers moet mens onthou om die lewe te geniet.

Shani: Ek lewe baie lekker dankie. Ja, ek *budget* maar daar is 'n paar luxuries wat ek myself gun.

Japie: Dames en Here, W is vir Woolies Chicken.

Ligte verskuif. Alarm beep.

Shani: Ek is jammer, maar as daar een ding is waarop ek nie wil budget nie, is dit 'n Woolies chicken. Ek sal eerder one ply in plaas van two koop as ek ten minste my Woolies chicken kan bekostig. Die ander hoenders proe soos vismeel. Daai battery hoenders. Hulle proe soos vismeel. As jy hulle uit die plastiek uithaal dan ruik hulle sommer so na vis. Hoender moet nie soos vis ruik nie. Hoender moet nie soos vis proe nie. 'n Hoender is 'n hoender, nie 'n vis nie. Daar is net geen hoender wat proe soos 'n Woolies hoender nie. Die ander hoenders, die battery hoenders word vol hormone gepomp. Eks jammer maar ek wil my Woolies chicken kan bekostig. Ek maak hom met 'n Jamie Oliver resep, jy druk 'n suurlemoen in sy... jy weet... dan loop al die juices in die hoender in. Of ek maak my ma se sjerrie hoender - dis net so lekker. Jy kan net daardie resepte maak met 'n Woolies hoender. Ek budget. Ek vergelyk pryse. Ek sal by *die* winkel dit koop, maar by *daai* dat. Maar ek koop altyd Woolies se chicken. Hoekom? Want dit is fokken lekker. 'n Lekker free range hoender wat iewers op 'n plaas grassies en mielies gepik het...'n Hoender wat 'n lekker vol lewe gehad het. Dis die hoender wat ek wil eet. Ek beny daardie hoenders hulle eenvoudige lewens. Ek wil ook op 'n plaas bly en heeldag wurms uit die grond uit trek. Ek wil nie in 'n kantoor gaan sit en wag vir my hoeveelste interview by die hoeveelste company met nog 'n ongeskikte sekretaresse nie. BITCH. Ek is meer gekwalifiseerd as jy. Wel, ek sal eerder in 'n kantoor sit as in my flat sit en wag vir die oproep... Die oproep wat weer eens se ons "soek nie nou vir mense nie." Hoekom moes ek dan kom vir 'n onderhoud? "Jy het ongelukkig nie genoeg ondervinding nie." Wanneer gaan ek ondervinding kry as julle nie vir my die werk gee nie? Mens moet werk om ondervinding op te doen. Maar mens moet onthou: "ons is in 'n resessie". Ek weet nie eens wat dit beteken nie. So ek wag maar. Ek wag in die kantoor. Ek wag dat die bitchy sekretaresse van haar foon af klim. Ek wag vir haar om te se ek moet nog wag. Ek wag vir die interview. Wag. My hele lewe bestaan uit wag. Wag in die fliekry. Die popcornry. Die toilets. Wag in traffic. Wag by Binnelandse sake. Wag in die tax-ry. Wag in die Woolies ry....Ons is nie soos woolies free range chickens nie... Ons loop nie rond iewers op 'n plaas nie. Ons sit in ons flats, kantore en huise... boksies... hokkies... soos batteryhoenders... en ons wag. Soos battery hoenders prop ons onself vol kos met niks voedingswaarde nie en te veel hormone en maak onself lekker dik. Dis wat ek gaan word. 'n Oorgewig batteryhoender wat sit in my flat en wag vir die resessie om oor te waai. Sit in my flat en wag om 'n werk te kry. Sit in my flat en wag om dood te gaan. Soos 'n battery hoender. Ek't gelees hulle sny hulle pote af en sit hulle in 'n piepklein hok. Dan skyn hulle 'n lig op hulle sodat hulle heelyd vreet. Dis verskriklik. Party van hulle begin mekaar te vreet. Die hormone maak hulle mal. Soos die bitchy sekretaresse. Sy pik op my want ek gaan haar werk steel. Daar is nie genoeg mieliepitte op die werf vir almal van ons nie! Ek doen odd jobs hier en daar. Ek merk vraestelle oor Desember. Ek waiter by fancy restaurante. Ek pak rakke by Pick 'n Pay. Ek het by 'n universiteit gaan swot for fuck sakes. Ek het 'n graad. 'n Graad waarborg nie 'n job nie. Ek het 'n job. Freelancer. Klink soos 'n vloekwoord. 'n Odd job. Dit se dit als. "Odd" Job. Daai odd jobs gaan nie vir my 'n Woolies chicken waarborg nie. Ek wag maar vir my break. Dit gaan een van die dae kom. Ek moet net vasbyt. Ek soek. Ek soek 'n werk. Ek soek my Woolies free range chicken. Ek wil 'n free range chicken wees. Ek is 'n battery hoender.

Stilte. Alarm beep.

Rachelle: Is als okay tussen jou en Shuan?

Shani: Wat?

Rachelle: Ek vra of als okay is tussen jou en Shuan. Jy is al heelaand edgy.

Shani: Wel as daar was het dit definitief *niks* met *jou* uit te waai nie!

Rachelle: Ek vra maar net...

Shani: Hoekom? Is als okay tussen jou en Dirk?

Rachelle: JA!

Shani: O, ek wonder maar net want jy het vanaand gese jy wil iemand anders naai!

Liz: Hier begin dit al weer.

Rachelle: Weet jy wat, Shani? Dalk is die rede hoekom jy nie 'n werk kry nie, *nie* omdat daar nie werk *is* nie, maar omdat niemand jou wil aanstel nie. Jy is 'n beteweterige bitch!

Shani: Wat sê jy vir my?

Rachelle: Ek sê jy is 'n beteweterige bitch! Ek kan jou nie eens vertel van my nuwe hond nie dan sal jy op jou selfoon klim en my probeer reg GOOGLE.

Shani: Ek was net besorg oor julle nuwe hondjie...

Rachelle: Jy is altyd "besorg"...

Shani: Ja, Rachelle want jy is nog 'n kind!

Rachelle: Ekskuus!

Shani: Jy is 'n kind. Jou ouers het jou bederf en indulge en nou doen Dirk presies dieselfde. Ek dink partykeer jy weier net om groot te word. Ek meen hoe moeilik kan Antieke Kulture 178 nou regtig wees!

Rachelle: Sien dis waarvan ek praat... Bitch!

Shani: Wel ten minste is ek nie 'n rassis nie!

Liz: Ek gee op. Ek gaan net drink!

Japie: Julle hou bietjie op om te baklei toe!

Shani: Bly julle twee net hier uit!

Rachelle: Ek is nie 'n rassis nie!

Japie: Ons is almal so klein bietjie rassisties!

Shani: Mens praat nie van "anderskleuriges" nie, Rachelle!

Rachelle: Wat is ek veronderstel om te sê?

Shani: Wel, jy sê in elk geval net wat jy wil. Jy besit oor geen sosiale filter nie... soos 'n kind!

Rachelle: Jy is definitief nie my ma nie, so hou op om my te prober opvoed. Ek weet hoe om na 'n fokken troeteldier te kyk.

Shani: O, sê dit vir Felix!

Rachelle: Dit was 'n ongeluk!

Japie: Wie is Felix?

Liz: Lang storie...

Rachelle: Felix was ons kat. Ek het vlieë gif uitgesit... toe eet Felix per ongeluk daarvan...

Japie: Is hy okay?

Shani: Nee, hy is dood.

Japie: Dis verskriklik.

Rachelle: Dit was nie my skuld nie.

Shani: Jy het die gif in hoender toegedraai!

Rachelle: Ek moes hulle op een of ander manier na die gif lok...

Japie: Jy is 'n moordenaar.

Rachelle: Nee ek is nie.

Liz: Dit is pretty much moord.

Rachelle: Ja okay... ek het hom vermoor!

Shani: En sy is nie eens vir een oomblik spyt nie.

Rachelle: Jy is reg, ek is nie. Ek hou nie van fokken troeteldiere nie.

Japie: Watse tipe mens hou nie van troeteldiere nie?

Rachelle: Ek! Dis abnormaal vir mense om diere aan te hou. Hulle is vuil, harig en hulle stink!

Liz: Jy's 'n monster!

Shani: Ek hoop maar net daai nuwe hond kom nie iets oor nie!

Liz: Muis!

Japie: Wie is muis?

Liz: 'n "Miniature Pincher".

Rachelle: Weet jy wat, ek sal nie omgee as daai fokken hond gif in kry nie!

Liz: Rachelle!

Rachelle: Ek is ernstig.

Shani: Rachelle the Ripper strikes again.

Liz: Dis net 'n hondjie!

Rachelle: Sy is 'n terror!

Japie: Is 'n miniature pincher nie daai klein mini Doberman goedjies nie?

Rachelle: Ja, dis muis!

Japie: Hoe kan daai klein ding 'n terror wees?

Rachelle: Julle ken haar nie. Sy is nie normaal nie. Sy is 'n psycho. Sy maak my bang. Ek hou niks van haar nie. In fact, ek haat haar!

Japie: Dames en here... T is vir Troeteldiere.

Alarm beep.

Rachelle: Ek haat Muis. Dis seker irrasioneel van my. Maar ek kan julle waarborg sy haat my ook. Van dag een af het ek en Muis nie van mekaar gehou nie. Ja, okay, ek moet erken ek hou nie van diere nie, maar vir Muis haat ek. Muis is anders, sy is evil. Moenie lag nie. Ek is ernstig. Die dag toe Dirk haar daar aan bring... "Surprise!"... Ek was nie seker hoe om te reageer nie... So toe maak ek maar of dit die beste ding in die wereld was. Hy het Muis op my skoot gesit... ek sal dit nooit vergeet nie... haar wasige kraalogies... haar hele lyf het gebewe. Ons het so stip in mekaar se oe gekyk, haar bo lip het met so milimeter gelig en ek sweer dit het geklink asof sy se: "Fok jou". Toe kots sy op my. Dit was nie normale kots nie, dit was sulke groen goed. Duiwelskots. Dirk het eers gelag en toe raak hy bekommerd. Nie oor my nie, oor Muis. Hy wou haar veearts toe vat. Maar 'n paar minute later het sy in die flat rondgehardloop. Dit was eers toe hy badkamer toe is dat sy op die bank gespring het en langs my kom sit het. Sy het begin grom maar dit het geklink asof sy lag. "He he he ekt gewen." Daai dag het Muis oorlog verklaar. Sy grom amper elke dag vir my. Nie altyd nie. Sy is slim, sy grom nie as Dirk by is nie, dan is sy sweet en sy kom sit op my skoot en laat haar tongetjie so uithang want sy weet Dirk dink dis oulik. "Kyk bokkie muis is lief vir jou." Sodra hy loop dan grom sy weer. As ek voor die rekenaar sit dan kom staan sy by my voete en dan ruik ek ewe skielik net so suur stank wat van onder af kom dan besef ek dit was Muis wat gepoep het. Sy is aspris. Sy doen dit nooit as Dirk daar is nie. Sy kou al *my* skoene nooit Dirk s'n nie. Duiwelshond. Ek haat haar. Die ergste van ALS is ek weet Dirk het haar vir my gebring as 'n toets... 'n Toets om te sien

of ek kan kyk na iets wat lewend is. 'n Baba. Ons kind. Hy noem Muis dit. Ons kind. Hy toets my om te kyk of ek 'n goeie ma eendag sal wees vir sy kind. Nie net is Muis sy kind nie, sy is 'n spioen. Sy kan my gedagtes lees. Sy grom spesifiek altyd vir my as ek betwyfel in my en Dirk se verhouding. Almal twyfel nou en dan. Dit is normaal. Ek wonder of ons te vroeg getrou het. Ek wonder of ek vir die res van my lewe met hom wil wees. Ek wonder of ek wil kinders he. Alles normale gevoelens. Maar Muis laat my nie toe om te betwyfel nie, Muis grom as ek twyfel, Muis pis op die mat as ek aan myself vat... Ek haat Muis. Maar ek het eers nou die dag besef hoekom ek haar haat. Ek't so gesit en kyk na haar op die bank. Muis is 'n wrak... 'n senuwrak. Sy bewe. Sy lyk heeldag en aldag aan die rant van trane. Sy grom vir almal en alles om haar. En toe tref dit my: ek is Muis. Of Muis is 'n simbool vir wie ek gaan wees oor 'n paar jaar van nou af. 'n Bewende, tranerige wrak, petite en klein soos my baas van my hou, 'n neurotiese, miniatuur weergawe van myself wat heeldag alleen in die huis sit en vreet en wag vir my baas om huis toe te kom. En as hy by die huis kom dan waai ek my boude in sy rigting om te wys hoe dankbaar ek is vir die dak bo my kop en die kos in my bak. Ek haat muis. Ek haat haar, want een van die dae gaan ek in haar verander.

Kort stilte. Alarm beep weer.

Shani: Ja wel, die hond is nou jou verantwoordelikheid so jy moet nou maar mooi na haar kyk. Verantwoordelikhede is nie altyd lekker nie. Maar dis nou maar hoe dit is!

Rachelle: Haal net die blerrie wortel uit jou hol uit man! Jy raak nes jou ma!

Shani: Hou jou bek van my ma af!

Rachelle: My ma hulle nooi nie eens meer *jou ma* brunch toe nie want jou ma is snobbish, snooty, stuckup en beteweterig. Niemand wil met so persoon vriende wees nie, nog minder hulle by 'n werk aanstel.

Shani: O regtig, Rachelle? Dis ironies, want my ma sê dat hulle nie meer jou ma na enigiets toe nooi nie, want sy is loud, drink te veel, se net wat sy wil en sy is kommin. Dis waarnatou jy oppad is: iemand met geen sosiale filter nie wat weier om groot te word. 'n Kommin, kinderagtige slet nes jou ma!

Rachelle: Wel ten minste is ons ryk!

Shani: Wel, trou nou maar vir geld nes jou ma, maar ten minste het *my ma* 'n graad!

Rachelle: Wat sy deur *Unisa* gekry het!

Shani: My ma is baie beter as jou ma.

Rachelle: My ma is die beste!

Japie: Is julle ma's ook vriendinne?

S+R: JA!

Japie: Ek dink nie dis baie gesond nie.

Liz: Ja wel, soos my ma altyd sê...

Rachelle: Ons gee nie om wat jou ma te sê het nie!

Liz: My ma is 'n baie wyse vrou!

Shani: Jou ma is nes jy, 'n fokken koek!

Japie: Whoa! Ek dink nie julle moet mekaar se ma's aanval nie!

Shani: Maak nie saak wat jy oor my of my ma sê nie, jy het vanaand gesê jy wil iemand anders naai. Niks wat ek doen kan ooit so fucked up wees nie.

Rachelle: O, so dis hoe jy van nou af elke fokken argument gaan wen - deur *dit* op te bring!

Shani: Ja!

Liz: Ek is jammer, maar julle besoedel my ore nou al heel aand en skuld al amper vyftig rand vir die vloekvark!

Japie: Vloekvark?

Liz: 'n Rand 'n vloek!

Shani: Ek het nie meer geld nie

Liz: Gebruik dan ander woorde! Meneer vark, watse ander woorde kan hulle gebruik... hmm? FOP?... Hoor julle: Fop!

Rachelle: Fine...Ek foppen haat jou Shani.

Shani: Ek foppen haat jou meer.

Liz: Julle haat *my* die foppen meeste!

Japie: Julle is foppen kinderagtig.

Die alarm beep.

Shani: Ek is honger. Die hoender is rou so ek sal nou maar die komkommer eet.

Rachelle: Nee die komkommer is myne!

Shani: Die *tamaties was jouné!*

Rachelle: Nee jy wou die tamaties gehad het so de gaan drink jou sap!

Shani gryp die komkommer. Rachelle gryp dit terug. Raak 'n "tug o' war".

Shani: Los dis myne!

Rachelle: Nee dis myne!

Shani: Los!

Rachelle: Los jy!

Japie gryp die komkommer en gooi dit in die mixer.

Japie: Nou is dit niemand se foppen komkommer nie!

Kort stilte.

Shani: Ek was regtig honger. *(Sy begin te huil)*

Rachelle: Ek ook. *(Sy begin te huil)*

Liz: Sien jy nou wat het jy gedoen?

Japie: Hoe is dit nou my skuld?

Liz: Jy het hulle komkommer in die blender gegooi!

Japie: Want hulle het baklei daaroor!

Liz: Nou moet ons luister hoe hulle tjank!

Japie: Dis *jy* wat nie beheer oor hulle het nie!

Liz: Moenie op my gil nie!

Japie: Ek gil nie!

Liz begin ook te huil.

Japie: Ek kan nie meer hierdie malhuis hanteer nie. *(Hy huil nou ook)*

Hulle almal huil. Alarm beep.

Na 'n ruk hou die meisies op maar Japie huil voort.

Rachelle: Okay jy kan nou maar ophou!

Shani: Have a little self respect.

Japie: (*Huil*) Ek kan nie meer nie.

Liz: Wat kan jy nie meer nie?

Japie: Ek kan nie...

Shani: Is dit Henko?

Japie: (*Kan nie uitmaak wat hy sê nie*) Blhy...schmaak... my... schlo...onslikig.

Rachelle: Wat sê hy? Dit is Henko, né?

Deur sy trane knik hy net sy kop.

Shani: Nee, mens kan nie so aangaan nie.

Japie: (*Huil*) Maar...

Liz: Kalmmer net gou. Soek jy suikerwater?

Japie: (*Huil*) Nee...

Rachelle: Okay, hou nou op!

Hy hou op huil.

Japie: Ek's jammer...

Shani: Wat pla jou?

Japie: Hy is nog steeds nie hier nie.

Rachelle: Henko?

Japie: Ja. Ek het al amper 'n 100 voicemail gelos. Wie doen dit? Hy los my by vreemde mense se huis...

Liz: Ons is nie meer vreemdelinge nie...

Shani: Dis nie die punt nie, Liz!

Japie: Hy vat my kar...wie weet waar hy is. Hy werk nie. Hy verdien nie geld nie. Ek betaal *al* die huur, wel my ma doen. Ek maak skoon. Ek koop kos. Ek maak kos. Ek doen *al*s vir hom. En ek gee regtig nie om nie...maar mens kom op 'n punt waar mens gee en gee en gee...en mens ontvang net niks terug nie...en dan is jy leeg getap. Ek verstaan dit net nie, ek sal nooit aan hom doen wat hy vanaand aan my gedoen het nie.

Sy foon lui.

Japie: Hallo...Hallo ma! Ek kan nie nou praat nie! Hoekom bel ma alweer? O. Nag vir ma ook. Lief ma ook. Bye.

Japie: Nooit nie. Ek sal dit nooit aan hom doen nie. Miskien is hy besig... Maar as ek besig is dink ek konstant aan hom, waar hy is, wat hy doen, by wie hy is... Hoe kan hy net van my vergeet!?

Shani: Hy klink soos 'n asshole!

Rachelle: Soos 'n regte slagpat doos!

Japie: Julle hy is rerig nie 'n slegte ou nie...

Liz: Was hy veronderstel om jou al te kom oplaai?

Japie: Ure terug... Hy tel net nie sy FOPPEN FOON OP NIE! Ek weet nie eens hoekom hy 'n foon het nie!

Rachelle: Ek's jammer, maar as Dirk dit aan my gedoen het... Die see sal hom nie kan afwas nie.

Shani: Ek dink jy moet hom los!

Japie: Wat?

Rachelle: Sy's reg... Los hom.

Japie: Ek gaan hom nie los nie. Is julle van julle koppe af!

Liz: Julle, ons moenie betrokke raak nie.

Rachelle: Jy wil *nooit* betrokke raak nie!

Shani: Hoekom kan jy hom nie los nie, hy hanteer jou soos... kaas!

Japie: Want... Sommer... Julle sal nie verstaan nie! Kyk na julle... julle bitch en moan heelaand. Julle sal nie weet wat julle het as dit julle tussen die ore getref het nie. Bedorwe brokkies!

Shani: Jy ken ons nie eers nie!

Rachelle: Kyk hoe kom die ware kleure nou uit!

Liz: Ek kan nie glo jy sê dit nie!

Shani: You don't know nothing about me!

Japie: Ek het genoeg gesien om te weet watse goed julle is!

Rachelle: Man, wat weet jy!

Shani: Jou ma betaal als vir jou?

Liz: Jy's 'n stripper!

Shani: Nie eers 'n goeie een nie!

Rachelle: Jy is te skytbang om te doen wat jy eintlik *wil* doen!

Liz: Heelaand probeer jy Mr. Nice Guy speel...

Shani: Jy is wat fout is met mans van vandag!

Liz: Ruggraatloos!

Rachelle: En jy's gay!

Stilte.

Hulle bars uit van die lag.

Rachelle: Hy's 'n gay! GAY!

Shani: Wat noem Shuan hulle... 'n Boudkapper!

Rachelle: 'n Hol hings!

Liz: 'n Poephol pilot!

Japie: Ek het *geweet* julle is homofobies!

Shani: Ag asseblief man... Jy's chauvinisties!

Japie: Moenie woorde gebruik wat julle nie verstaan nie.

Shani: O, ons verstaan dit nie want ons is vrouens!

Japie: Homofobiese jokes is nie snaaks nie.

Rachelle: Kry bietjie 'n sin vir humor!

Liz: Dis als net grappies Japie...

Japie: Daar is mense in Uganda wat doodgemaak word omdat hulle gay is.

Shani: Ag fokof man!

Rachelle: Boohoo!

Liz: Is daar regtig mense in Uganda wat doodgemaak word?

Japie: Ja.

Hulle hou op met lag. Alarm beep.

Japie: Mmmm... die situasie in Uganda is toe nou nie so snaaks nie.

Liz: Ek het gesê ons mag nie politiek praat nie. Dit maak my net angstig.

Stilte. Japie bars weer in trane uit.

Shani: Japie... jy is 'n goeie ou. Jy verdien iemand beter. Ek weet jy dink nie nou so nie. Maar dis nie veronderstel om mens ongelukkig te maak nie.

Rachelle: Jy kort iemand wat jou gaan waardeer...

Shani: Wat mooi na jou hart gaan kyk...

Rachelle: Iemand wat net so lief vir jou gaan wees soos jy vir hulle...

Japie: Julle is reg. Ek hoef nie meer sy stront op te vreet nie. Hy maak my net... kaas voel oor myself.

Rachelle: Weet jy hoe vinnig gaan jy iemand anders kry?

Shani: Ek ken 'n paar ouens wat more met jou sal uitgan!

Rachelle: My haarkapper sal mal wees oor jou.

Japie: Ek meen my ma hou nie eens van hom nie!

Shani: Sien!

Rachelle: Mens se ma is altyd reg oor sulke tipe goed.

Liz: Julle dis nie ons plek nie. Ons weet nie wat in hulle verhouding aangaan nie.

Japie: Hoekom wat dink jy moet ek doen?

Liz: Dit klink asof hy jou baie ongelukkig maak. Ek weet nie wat ek in jou situasie sou doen nie... so ek kan nie eintlik vir jou sê wat om te doen nie... doen maar net wat jou hart vir jou sê.

Shani: Dit was 'n baie vague antwoord.

Japie: Dis presies wat my ma sou sê. Okay... Ek gaan dit doen.

Shani: Jy kan dit doen...

Japie: Okay hier gaan ek... (*Hy druk die nommers in*)... Ek weet nie.

Rachelle: Doen dit net.

Die meisies klap almal vir hom hande en spoor hom aan. Clichés soos: “WHOO HOO”, “GO JAPIE!”, “JY KAN DIT DOEN” en “NOU OF NOOIT”.

Japie maak hulle stil.

Japie: Okay... (*Hy druk die nommer in*)... Dit lui... Okay, hier is dit... Ek ken dit al uit my kop uit...”Hallo, dis Henko, jy weet wat om te doen”... (*Skrik vir die beep*) Hallo... Hallo Henko. Dis ek. Jaap. Jou boyfriend. Dis voicemail nommer... ek weet nie meer nie. Ek is gatvol, Henko. Ek hoef nie meer opgeskeep te sit met jou... (*aan die girls*) Julle ek waardeer wat julle doen maar dit maak my net deurmekaar...

Shani: Okay...

Rachelle: Sorry...

Japie: Ek kan iemand kry wat vir my net so lief is soos wat ek vir hulle is. Nee, ek *verdien* iemand wat vir my net so lief is soos wat ek vir hulle is. So... Ek breek op. Dis verby. Vanaand was die laaste strooi. Jy is selfsugtig. Jy is ‘n kind wat net weier om groot te word. Ek soek ‘n boyfriend; ek wil nie iemand se pa of ma wees nie. Ek hoop jy kry vir jou gou weer ‘n meal ticket... ek wil hê jou goed moet gepak wees wanneer ek by die huis kom. Ek wil jou nooit weer sien nie. Jy’s seker die selfsugtigste mens wat ek ken. En jou asem stink...

Liz: Okay, dis nou genoeg...

Japie: Okay, totsiens Henko. Geniet jou lewe. O, en een laaste ding... Ek het gejoj... ek *haat* Glee!

Hy sit die foon neer. Alarm beep.

Stilte.

Shani: Hoe voel jy?

Japie: Goed. Ek voel goed. Dit was die regte ding om te doen. Dit kom al ‘n lang tyd. Dit bou al ‘n lang tyd op. Nou is ek single. Ek is Japie en ek is single. Single. Dit was die regte ding om te doen.

Shani: Ja dit was.

Rachelle: Ek dink ook dit was.

Liz: Mmmmm...

Japie: Dalk het hy ‘n baie goeie verskoning hoekom hy nie die foon optel nie...

Shani: Man hy is ‘n asshole en hy raak seker dronk saam met sy vriende!

Rachelle: Wie weet dalk was hy besig om op jou te cheat.

Shani: So jy dink as iemand op jou cheat is dit ‘n goeie rede om met hulle op te breek?

Rachelle: Ja...

Shani: Okay... So se nou maar Henko sit nou iewers in ‘n bar en ontmoet ‘n aantreklike outjie en hulle chat mekaar op...

Rachelle: Ja?

Shani: En sê nou maar hulle gesels lekker, en dans lekker, en drink lekker... en iewers in die loop van die aand... sê Henko vir hom...

Rachelle: Wat?

Alarm beep.

Shani: DAT HY HOM WIL NAAI!

Rachelle: Ek het geweet! Ek het geweet dit gaan weer daarop neerkom... Jy is so deursigtig!

Liz: Hou net OP!

Shani: Wel, jy't nou net erken dat jy met iemand sal opbreek wat cheat.

Rachelle: Ek het nie gecheat nie! Dis nie hoegenaamd dieselfde situasie nie! Jy kan dit nie eens vergelyk nie! Bly net stil, ek kan nie meer jou stem hanteer nie.

Japie: Dink julle Henko sit en 'n bar en sê vir iemand dat hy hom wil naai?

Liz: Nee... miskien lê hy in 'n koma in die hospitaal.

Japie: Wat!?

Liz: Ek weet nie meer wat om vir jou te sê om jou te laat beter voel nie.

Shani: Moet niks sê nie. Hy het die regte ding gedoen. Nou is hy single. Ons is in elk geval hopeloos te jonk om in sulke ernstige verhoudings te wees...

Japie: Ek is single.

Rachelle: Wat het jy gesê?

Shani: Wie ek?

Rachelle: Ja, jy...

Shani: Ek dog jy wou nie my stem hoor nie.

Rachelle: Jy het nou net gesê ons is te jonk om in sulke ernstige verhoudings te wees...?

Shani: En wat daarvan?

Japie: Ek is single.

Liz: Wat bedoel jy daarmee, Shani?

Shani: Presies wat ek sê. Ek bedoel wat ek sê en ek sê wat ek bedoel. Ek is nie soos Rachelle nie.

Liz: Dink jy regtig ons is te *jonk* om in ernstige verhoudings te wees?

Shani: Ja...

Japie: Ek is single!

Rachelle: O so *nou* kom ons agter die kap van die byl.

Shani: Daar is geen kap en geen byl nie.

Rachelle: Die rede hoekom jy so aangaan oor die naai-storie is omdat jy ontsteld is oor iets...

Liz: Het iets met jou en Shaun gebeur?

Shani: Ek wil net hê dat jy moet erken dat jy dit nie *net gesê het nie* jy wou dit actually doen! Al was dit net vir 'n split sekonde. Jy wou dit doen!

Rachelle: Ons praat nou oor jou en Shaun...

Shani: Ek wil nie daaroor praat nie.

Japie: Ek is single?

Liz: Het iets gebeur Shani?

Rachelle: Is dit oor die hele trou ding?

Shani: Ja...

Liz: Jy moet net geduldig wees vriendin, hy gaan jou een van die dae vra...

Shani: Asseblief stop dit!

Liz: Hy is seker besig om klaar 'n ring uit te kies. Hy het heel waarskynlik 'n tafel bespreek vir julle twee by julle gunsteling restaurant...

Shani: Asseblief...

Liz: Hy gaan die ring in die sjampanje-glas gooi...

Rachelle: Liz, stop dit.

Japie: Ek is single.

Liz: Of in die poeding!

Shani: Liz!

Liz: Malva Pudding...

Japie: Ek is single.

Liz: Nee, Crème Brulee!

Shani: ONS HET OPGEBREEK!

Stilte.

Liz: Wat?

Shani: Ons het opgebreek.

Liz: Is dit omdat hy jou nog steeds nie gevra het om te trou nie?

Shani: Hy het my gevra. Ek het nee gesê.

Rachelle: Ek dog dis wat jy wou hê... Hoekom het jy nee gesê?

Shani: Ek is te jonk. Dis te vroeg. Ek het nog nie eens 'n vaste werk nie. Ek het drome. Ek kan nie nou met hom trou nie. Dis nie die regte tyd nie. Saam intrek. Huis opsit. Kinders maak. Ek is 25. Ek is nog 'n kuiken. Sopas uit die nes geskop. Die idee van nes maak met iemand anders... Ek het drome. Ek sien nie op die oomblik vir Shuan in daardie drome nie.

Liz: Maar julle is Shuan en Shani... Shani en Shuan.

Shani: Nie meer nie.

Liz: Jy het sy hart gebreek.

Shani: Per ongeluk.

Japie: Ek is single.

Alarm beep.

Rachelle: Ek weet hoe jy voel.

Shani: Hoe weet jy hoe dit voel? Jy is getroud. Dirk aanbid wat die grond waarop jy loop. Jy wil nie regtig 'n beroep hê nie. Julle is gelukkig.

Rachelle: Nie altyd nie.

Liz: Rachelle...

Shani: Ek gaan jou een laaste keer vra. Het jy dit *bedoel* toe jy gesê het jy wil hom naai?

Liz: Los dit net in vadersnaam uit, Shani!

Shani: Asseblief... gee my net jou eerlike antwoord.

Rachelle: Ja.

Liz: Nee!

Shani: Ek het geweet.

Rachelle: Gaan jy dit invryf?

Shani: Nee.

Japie: Ek is single.

Shani: Hoekom?

Rachelle: Ek weet nie. Ek *wonder* heelyd. Hoe dit is? Met ander mans. Dirk was my enigste. Ek het niks om dit mee te vergelyk nie. Ek twyfel. Gereeld. Ek het "naai" gesê want ek bedoel "naai". Ek wil hê 'n man wat nie my man is nie moet my naai dat ek nie weet wie ek is nie. Ek is ek omdat ek by Dirk is. Ek wil nie meer ek wees nie. Ek wil ophou twyfel. Ek wil ophou wonder. Ek wil weet.

Alarm beep.

Liz: Julle bedoel nie regtig hierdie goed wat julle sê nie.

Shani: Ons is net eerlik.

Rachelle: Dis wat wyn doen. Maak mens hopeloos te eerlik.

Stilte. Alarm beep.

Liz: Dit is die aakligste kitchen tea ooit.

Shani: Ek gaan nie met jou daar stry nie.

Rachelle: Jammer Liz.

Japie: Ek is single.

Liz: Al wat ek wou hê is 'n rustige aand van persente oopmaak en hoender eet. Ek trou oor 'n paar dae. Ek trou. Dit was nie die plan nie julle. Ons was veronderstel saam te trou. Saam te kraam. Ons kinders was veronderstel om saam skool toe te gaan. Dis hoekom mens beplan. Beplanning maak dat mens nie kan twyfel nie.

Alarm beep.

Shani: Dinge werk nie altyd uit soos mens beplan nie.

Liz: Kak! Dit doen. As jy goed genoeg beplan!

Rachelle: Liz. Moenie ons as voorbeelde gebruik nie.

Shani: Jy en Gert is bedoel om saam te wees.

Liz: Ek is bang. Ek is so bang. Ek wil nie hê dit moet uitfok nie. Julle belowe my dit gaan nie uitfok nie!

Shani: Belowe.

Rachelle: Belowe.

Japie: Ek is single.

Stilte. Alarm beep.

Japie: Ek is single... Wat doen ek? Wat het ek gedink? Ek maak die grootste fout van my hele lewe! Ek moet hom terug bel... ek moet vir hom sê ek het dit nie bedoel nie...

Shani: Moenie dit doen nie!

Rachelle: Jy het die regte besluit gemaak.

Japie: Ek gaan nie weer vir julle luister nie. Dis julle skuld dat ek in hierdie situasie is. Ek gaan vir Henko bel. Want ek weet wat ek het. Ja hy behandel my soos kak soms. Ja, hy is lui en hy vergeet partykeer om tande te borsel. Maar hy is 'n goeie ou. En hy is lief vir my op sy manier.

Shani: O so nou settle jy maar?

Japie: Ons almal settle op die ou end.

Liz: Japie...

Japie: Ek gaan nie meer met julle strei daaroor nie. Ek gaan hom bel.

Rachelle: Wat gaan jy sê?

Japie: Dat ek 'n fout gemaak het. Of dat ek dronk was. Dat hy net die vorige boodskap moet ignoreer. Hy het tien teen een nie een van hulle gekry nie. (*Hy bel*) Dit lui...Dit lui nogsteeds...(*Hy sit die foon neer*)

Stilte.

Shani: Wat nou?

Japie: Hy het opgetel en doodgedruk.

Rachelle: Is jy seker?

Japie: Doodseker. Ek kon hom hoor. Hy is in 'n kuierplek.

Shani: Dalk het iemand sy foon gesteel.

Japie: Sy woorde was..."Ek wil nie met jou praat nie" toe sit hy die foon neer.

Liz: En?

Japie: En... dit beteken dat hy die voicemail gekry het.

Liz: Jammer, Japie.

Japie: Wag net gou... Hy het al my voicemails gekry... hy is by sy foon... hy is in 'n kuierplek... met my kar...

Hy gooi 'n vyftig rand noot in die vloekvark.

Japie: DIE POES! DIE FOKKEN GROOT POES! KONT! MA SE POES! EK HAAT HOM! EK FOKKEN HAAT HOM! Ek fokken haat hom. Ek haat hom. Ek haat hom. Ek haat hom omdat ek so lief is vir hom. Ek haat hom. Ek is lief vir hom. Ek haat hom. Ek is lief vir hom. Ek is haat vir hom.

Stilte. Alarm beep.

S+R+L: Dames en Here... L is vir Liefde.

Japie: Wie kan die verskil tussen haat en liefde onderskei? Ek kan nie. Dit gaan hand aan hand. Dit voel dieselfde. Dis dieselfde gevoel. Seer. Is liefde veronderstel om so seer te wees. Hoekom anders sal Cupid jou met 'n pyl en boog skiet? Ek doen dit elke keer. Elke keer weet ek dat 'n persoon sleg gaan wees vir my. Ek weet hoe dit gaan uitdraai. Selfde storie. Creatures of habit. Patroon. 'n Wiskunde som. Patroon herhaal homself oor en oor. Algebra. Speelgrond. X: Ek op my eie in die sandput. Lego blokkies. Y kom nader en smee my om saam te speel. Ek huiwer. Ek gee in. Ons bou saam. Legos. Ons bou 'n huis. Ons huis. Y raak verveeld. Hy skop ons huis stukkend. Hy loop. Vee my snot en trane aan my mou. Skraap die moed bymekaar om van voor af te bou. 'n Dwase man bou sy huis op die sand. X+Y=Hartseer. Dis wie ek is: 'n X. Hartseer. Ek is verslaaf daaraan. Ons is almal verslaaf daaraan. Liefde. 'n Sekere tipe liefde. Liefde wat in hartseer uitdraai. Unrecipocated liefde. Die dwelm van die neentigs – Heroïne of was dit cocaine? Wie gee om.

Kort daarna Ecstasy. Acid. Tik. MDMA . Vandag is ons verslaaf aan unreciprocated liefde. Liefde as die dwelm. Liefing, kan ons nie maar vergeet en vergewe. Liefing, ek kan nie sonder jou verder lewe. My liefing is 'n dwelm. My liefing, as ek maar net jou in 'n pil kon verpak en daagliks neem. Moenie meer as die daaglikse dosis oorskry nie. Kontra-indikasies: oorsensitiwiteit, jaloesie en obsessie. Verslawing. My oë brand om jou te sien. My tong is geswolle met manipulerende liefdesverklarings. My hande juk om jou te sms, bel, klap, vas te hou. Is dit moontlik om verslaaf te wees aan die comedown? Ons is verslaaf aan die fokop. Dit moet 'n wroeging wees, anders is dit nie liefde nie. Shakespeare se Romeo en Juliet. Fok jou Dicaprio. Hoekom moet jy vrek voor die happily ever after? Fok jou Hollywood. Groot hartseer is nie gelyk aan liefde nie. Die harde werk kom na die honeymoon. Sou Romeo en Juliet steeds die greatest love story of all time wees as hulle actually survive het? Loopbaan, huis maak, gesonde sekslewe, kinders maak, miskraam, kinders kry, kinders grootmaak, aftree, op 80 in mekaar se arms vrek – dis 'n love story. Tragedie is nie gelyk aan liefde nie. Maar ons is verslaaf daaraan. Tragedie. Drama. Sentiment. Hartseer. As dit nie vanself gebeur nie, manufacture ons dit. Ons elkeen wil Marlon Brando wees wat sy hemp van sy lyf af skeur en "STELLA" in die naglug skree. As dit nie in 'n fokop uitdraai nie maak ons seker dis 'n fokop. Dis te maklik om te kry wat jy wil he. Jy wil he wat jy nie kan kry nie. Must buy, must want, must have. Rejection is gelyk aan insecurity. Om iemand te kry om jou ego te streel is nie liefde nie, dis selfhaat. Insecurity is the root of all evil. Die appel in die Bybel was nie wysheid, sonde of haat nie... dit was insecurity. Na een hap kon nie Adam of Eva meer kaal in die tuin loop nie. Eva het vet gevoel en Adam was bang sy slang was nie groot genoeg nie. Hoor hoe herskryf ek die Bybel. Ons is almal die skrywer in ons eie simpel storie. Bloed, sweet, trane en drama verkoop, happiness is vervelig. Ons almal projekteer eintlik net ons selfhaat op mekaar. Dis tog so lekker om die victim in jou eie sopstorie te wees. Nuwe scenario. Die werklike wiskunde som. X sit op sy eie in die sandput. Legos. Y wil saam speel. X is huiwerig maar hy gee in. Na 'n ruk raak X agterdogtig. Hoekom speel ons dan so lekker? Niemand wil ooit met my speel nie? X begin vir Y te terg. Y hou aan om huisies te bou. X voel Y gee nie genoeg aandag nie. As Y regtig daarvan gehou het om met X te speel sou Y meer onsteld raak oor X met Y lelik is. X gooi tantrums. Y bou verder. Meteens besluit X die speletjie is nie meer lekker nie en skop hul huisie des poes toe. Y loop weg. X vee sy snotterige trane aan sy mou en skraap die moed bymekaar om van voor af te bou. 'n X, dis wat ek is, dis wie ek wil wees, dis wie ek altyd gaan wees.

Stilte.

Die alarm beep.

Liz: Dis als so complicated. Skool was maklik. Jy leer jou ABC's en daar gat jy!

Shani: 'n Lys *do's* en *don'ts* sou beter gewees het.

Liz: Ek gaan 'n Alfabet vir 20-somethings uitbring.

Japie: Kom dit met 'n instruction manual?

Liz: A is vir Angs, B is vir Bipoler, C is vir...

Shani: Chicken... die enigste vleis wat ons kan bekostig.

Rachelle: D is vir Drank.

Japie: E is vir Eletrisiteitsrekening.

Liz: F is vir Flat.

Shani: G is vir Geld.

Rachelle: Of Graadkry! H is vir... Huwelik!

Japie: Of Homoseksueel. Of nie.

Liz: I is vir...

Shani: Dis moeilik...

Japie: I is vir Insecurity.

Rachelle: J is vir Jags.

Liz: K is vir Kook.

Japie: L is vir Liefde... M is vir...Masturbasie.

Shani: N is vir Neurose.

Rachelle: O is vir Oefening.

Shani: P is vir Parking!

Liz: Q is vir...

Shani: Shit, dis moeilik...

Liz: Ek weet... Quarter life crisis.

Japie: Nice... R?

Rachelle: Rassisme.

Shani: Registreer.

Liz: Rekening.

Rachelle: S is vir Seks... Nee seksueel aktief...

Japie: Of nie...

Shani: T is vir Tax.

Rachelle: Of Troeteldiere.

Liz: U is vir Uitbarsting.

Japie: V is vir Vet word.

Shani: W is vir werk soek. Of Woolies.

Rachelle: Nee, W is vir wyn.

Liz: X?

Rachelle: Xanax.

Shani: XOXO.

Japie: X is vir X.

Liz: Y is vir... Y is vir ons generasie... die Y generation...

Shani: Is dit wat hulle ons noem?

Liz: Ja. Hulle noem ons ook die Lost Generation...

Rachelle: Fok hulle!

Japie: Moeilikste vir laaste... Z?

Stilte.

Japie: Zuma?

Hulle lag.

Liz: By my skool is Z is vir Zebrastreep. Dit was altyd zebra toe is 'n kind voor die skool raak gery...

Shani: Is die kind okay?

Liz: Ja net groot geskrik... nou moet ons padveiligheid by die silabus inwerk.

Rachelle: Daai ou rympie... kyk lings en regs en dan weer links...

Japie: Daai kat... Daantjie het dit altyd vir ons geleer... nou is hy nie meer daar om jou hand vas te hou nie.

Hulle raak stil.

Liz: Enigiemand vir bietjie komkommer- en tamatiepulp?

Rachelle: Okay.

Shani: Asseblief.

Japie: Ja, gee maar.

Sy gooi dit vir elkeen. Hulle reageer op dieselfde tyd. "Mmmm", "Nie sleg nie", "Kort sout", "Lekker". Hulle sip in stilte.

Hulle sip verder. Almal sit gelyk hulle glase neer.

Rachelle: Kom ons drink eerder net...

Liz: Jy's reg...

Shani: Ek's klaar dronk.

Japie: Eks van my gesig af.

Die alarm beep.

Almal: FOKKEN ALARM!

Liz: Vanaand was 'n fokop...

Shani: Miskien moet ons selfmoord pleeg?

Rachelle: Nee. Kom ons drink net.

Japie: Ja, kom ons raak puza-faced...

Liz: Dan gaan dans ons bietjie...

Rachelle: Dan naai ons almal mekaar...

Shani: Ja fok, kom ons naai net almal...

Japie: Orgie...

Liz: Ons stig 'n rebellie...

Shani: Ja: Occupy Parliament Street...

Japie: Rewolusie...

Hulle slaap. Die alarm gaan af. Die alarm lui vir 'n hele ruk.

Alarm uit.

DIE EPILOOG:

Ligte op. Al vier na gehoor.

Japie: Hallo ma. Goed en self? Dankie vir die geldjie ma. Belowe. Elke dag beter. Ja, ma, "this too shall pass" en al daai goed. Luister ma, ek kan regtig nie nou praat nie. Ek het 'n casting. Ek bel ma later. Love you too. Bye. (*Sit aviators aan. Lui deurklokkie*)

Shani: Ek het 'n nuwe chicken resep. Jy druk 'n heel hoender vol gate en stop hom met creamed spinach. Jy kan dit net met 'n Woolies chicken doen. Ek het nou een in die oond. Shaun kom vanaand by my eet. Ek love my Woolies chicken.

Rachelle: Ek het nogal lief vir Muis geraak. Ek hou nie van haar nie, sy's 'n klein teef, maar ek is lief vir haar. Ek weet nie hoekom nie, sy piepie as sy angstig raak, blaf net wanneer sy wil, loop rond, en as mens haar te styf vashou kan sy mens vieslik byt. Ek dink ek verstaan haar.

Liz: Krisis. Die mixer het in my gesig ontplof. Te veel goed te vinnig. Dit het Gert 'n halfuur gevat om my te kalmeer. Kalm. Gert maak my kalm. Dit moet vir iets tel. Ek gaan elke dag deur die alfabet met my Graad 2s. A is vir Appel, B is vir Boek... reg deur tot by X, Y, Z ... Z is vir Zebrastreep.

Ligte uit.

AMPER, VRYSTAAT

Regie en ontwerp: Nico Scheepers

Teks: Nico Scheepers, Milan Murray,
Cintaine Schutte, Antoinette Louw

ANNATJIE gespeel deur Cintaine Schutte

LIZ gespeel deur Milan Murray

BEA gespeel deur Antoinette Louw

- AMPER, VRYSTAAT IS VIR DIE EERSTE KEER OPGEVOER IN JULIE 2015 BY DIE VRYSTAATSE KUNSTEFEEES

ANNATJIE: Ek en Maretha is in Elandsbaai, op die rotse gesit en dit was piskoud en dit was donker en sy't my hand vasgehou. Ons het onder dieselfde kombes gesit en sy't patrone in haar *gumboots* met 'n mosselskulp sit en kerf. Sy's maar 'n weird girl. Sy't geruik soos *basil* en Darling Brew en skielik het sy opgekyk en net daar voor ons in die water, reg voor ons, het 'n walvis sy stomp kop uit die see gelig. Dit was so groot en onbekend. Ons kon *actually* net sy neus sien, het nie geweet hoe ver sy gladde lyf onder die water in gaan nie... Soos 'n blink swart ysberg. En toe begin die walvis sing, ek wou amper op sy rug spring en Maretha ho my styf vas en sê, "Nee, nee, nee jy gaan hom skrik maak, jy gaan hom weg jaag." En sy fluister iets in my oor, iets oor die 'kanaries van die see'. Sy't haar *harmonica* uitgehaal en toe probeer sy speel wat die walvis sing. Ek het vir haar gesê dis belaglik, maar sy't aanhou sukkel en dis *stupid*, maar dis toe ek weet... Daai oggend in Elandsbaai... Sy's oukei.

Ek bly nou in die Kaap. Kaapstad. Ek het maar redelik vinnig uit die Vrystaat gefokof. Dit was baie moeiliker hier as wat ek gedink het. Almal in die Kaap ken mekaar, ek dog waar ek vandaan kom is *incestuous*, maar die CBD is vrot van die kliëks. So as jy niemand ken nie, is dit donners moeilik om vriende te maak... Wel, om nie soos 'n creep te lyk terwyl jy dit doen nie.

'Hallo! Ek is Annatjie, van Amper,' en ek kan aan die mense se gesigte sien hulle kan die plaas aan my ruik. Ek het nie geweet wat 'n *flat white* is nie. En ek het *honestly* gedink vintage beteken *fucked*. Al die meisies dra seunsklere en . . . andersom. En ek het *seriously* geen *clue* hoe oud enige van die mans is nie, want álmal het baarde. Ek *waiter* nou by hierdie plek in Kloof Nek waar die *locals* lyk asof daar elke dag 'n *costume* paartie is. *I kid you not*. En ek moes my naam ook verander om in te pas. In Amper is ek *Plain Jane* Annatjie van Emmenis, maar om by Power & Glory te *waitress* met 'n *name-tag* wat sê 'Annatjie' is *hospitality suicide*. So in die Kaap *rock* ek dit as Anne. *Anne Van*. Lizz kry die horries as sy dit hoor.

O, Lizz, dis my sussie. Ek het twee, Lizz en Bea, en hulle is albei *crazy*. Bea is die tipe mens wat by jou huis sal uitstorm, kamma met 'n *rash*, want jy't vergeet sy's allergies vir sewentien voedselgroepe. Ek weet nie waar sy is nie, ek weet net sy's nog steeds by daai *creepy lover* van haar, *Louis-something*. Hy's getroud, met drie kinders, en die afgelope twintig jaar al suig sy soos 'n Weskus-mossel aan die kant van sy seiljag vas. Liz het vyf kinders. By drie verskillende mans. Ek weet nie hoekom die lewe haar so vrugbaar moes maak nie. En sy val altyd vir rokjagter-mans wat die lewe met hulle flippen piele *navigate*. *Anyway*. Ek dink sy bly nog in Centurion...

Ek worrie bietjie oor my ma. Sy's nou alleen in daai aaklige ou huis. Sy sal nooit uit Amper uit trek nie. Elke Sondag vyfuur, klokslag na die Angus Buchan *broadcast* bel sy om te preek en om te hoor hoe dit gaan. 'n Halfuur van onvoorwaardelike liefde- vermom as 'n *check up*. Hoe gaan dit daai kant? Eet jy? Hoe gaan dit met die visse?

Ek wil 'n *marine-biologist* word, want ek het hierdie *cool documentary* in die mediasentrum gekyk oor hierdie *dude* wat olie uit half-dood pikkewyne se vere uit kam. Sy naam was Aqua Mike en hy was *amazing* en kak *hot* en hy't dolfyne gered so hy was *basically perfect*. My ma dink ek's belaglik. En ja, my punte was nie goed genoeg vir die kursus nie, maar darem bly ek ten minste nou al by die see. Ek *intern* elke skoolvakansie by die Two Oceans Aquarium en vertel die klein *kiddies* oor ekosisteme en *pollution* en probeer keer laat die klein ettertjies teen die glas tik. Dis oukei. Ek wag nog vir Aqua Mike om op te daag, maar al wie gewoonlik saam my die middag-skof doen is Patrick wat die seekatte voer. Patrick lyk soos een van daai mense wat altyd groet en heel *nice* is en van wie jy nooit iets verwag nie en dan hoor jy skielik eendag hulle het soos twaalf lyke in sy tuin gekry... Maar nee, *shame*, ek's seker hy's heel *nice*.

Ek het Maretha by die akwarium ontmoet. Sy swot *marine biology* by UCT, soos in *legitly*, en ons bly nou al drie jaar saam. Haar *flat* is befok. Dis in Tamboerskloof, reg teen Signal Hill en ons gaan pluk elke naweek wilde kruie in die veld agter die gebou. Sy hang dit oral in die huis op om droog te word.

Ek dink dit stink, maar sy hou daarvan... So dis oukei.

LIZ: Net 'n oomblik... R1500... My dogter hanteer my soos 'n *piggy-bank*, klein Dawie moer die ander kinders by die kleuterskool met stokke - bel hoof - en Lika het laasweek haar vyfde veter ingesluk.

Nee sit, sit asseblief. Moenie almal gelyk opspring om my te kroon as Moeder-van-die-Jaar nie. Amorentia, my oudste, is nou by Tukkies vir boekhou. Sy is die oorskot van my eerste huwelik. Die tweeling, by Derrick, is nou in die hoërskool. En die twee kleintjies, by Phillip, my derde - en hopelik laaste - man. Dawie is vier en Lika is sewe maande. Die tweeling is nou vyftien, en die Here hoor vir my ek het nou genoeg gehad. Ek weet *Egyptian cotton* is sag en gemaklik, maar dis geen rede om jou lakens te *dry-hump* nie. Ek smee en ek soebat en ek koop die *tissues*, vir elkeen sy eie boksie, en sit dit subtiel op hulle bedkassies. Maar die Vader-alleen-weet hoekom hulle nie die donderse goed gebruik nie. Die lakens is soos

sinkplate wat ek eers in die middel moet knak voor ek hulle in die masjien kan kry. Dis suf, man! So daai twee moet of bykom of hulle kan in die tuin gaan draadtrek.

Elke ding het sy plek. Die kinders weet presies wat van hulle verwag word, en op watter uur van die dag. As ons nie by die skedule hou nie, is daar chaos. Ek *run* hierdie plek met 'n *highlighter*. Die bure moenie dink hierdie is die *Honey Boo Boo*-huis nie. Phillip dink ek en my lysies is belaglik. Hy wil hê ek moet terug gaan werk toe. (LAG) Alles sal uit mekaar uit val. En naweke is 'n ander *storie*. Amorentia was laasnaweke by haar pa op Worcester, klein Dawie moes by die karate opgetel word en ek moes die tweeling by die Boys High rugby kry, want Phillip was weer op die gholfbaan en net voor ons in die kar kon klim toe't Lika weer haar kot vol stront gesmeer. Dank die Heer vir Wetwipes en chardonnay. Ek wonder of my ma tussen my en Bea en Anna ook skelm 'n knertsie in haar rooibos nodig gehad het om deur die dag te kom.

Amorentia was die naweek in die Kaap. Sy't by Annatjie gaan kuier. Sy sê dit gaan goed met Anna. (HAAL HAAR SKOUERS OP) Gister 'n poskaart van Bea ontvang. Saint Tropé. Dis net Louis Louis Louis Louis en 'n 'Hallo, Susa!' en 'n vet rooi soen op die seël. *Classy*.

Die Louis-ding sal ek nooit verstaan nie. Sy was nog altyd baie soepel, 'n natuurlike gimnas. Net jammer sy't haar splits op die rugbyspelers ge oefen. Ek en my vriende het haar 'Die Wisseltrofee' genoem. Haar rompies was so kort dit was meer advertensie as uniform, 'n koek-pelmit. Sy kon net sowel 'n *free-parking sign* op haar *panty* geplak het. So toe Ma ons die een Sondag in die naaldwerkkamer verduidelik oor die feite van die lewe, toe weet Bea natuurlik meer as die boekie wat my ma by die CNA gekry het: *Waar Willie Woeker. Die Storie van 'n Klein Blou Spermpie wat op die dag van die Groot Resies op Reis gaan in 'n Vreemde Pienk Grot.*

Bea was laasmaand in Bermuda. Ék was by die tandarts besig om klein Dawie se voete vas te hou sodat hy nie vir Dr. Van Der Walt tussen die bene kan skop elke keer as die man wil begin boor nie.

(SUG) Ek klink soos my ma.

BEA: Ek het nou die aand gedroom ek gaan in 'n sneeustorting dood. Tonne en tonne sneeu wat my begrawe. Iewers in die Alpe. Mont Blanc... of Matterhorn. Iewers baie *fancy*. Ek het bietjie gesukkel om asem te haal toe ek wakker word, maar toe drink ek 'n G&T en rook 'n sigaretjie en toe's ek reg vir die dag.

(POUSE)

In my drome sterf ek elke aand in 'n ander land. Laasweek deur 'n haai gevreet in Bali. My ma het op die sand gesit met 'n *ice cream* en geglimlag toe ek in stukkies op die strand uitspoel.

Ek droom. Ek sterf. Ek word wakker in my eenslaapkamer-woonstel in Wonderboom en daar is bruin vlekke op die plafon, maar Louis sal dit nog kom regmaak. Daar's gekraakte glas in die stortdeur, maar Louis sal dit nog kom vervang. En daar's 'n tas vol klere al vir twee weke onder my bed, want ek en Louis sou Parys toe gaan. Maar Jeanette het die vliegkaartjies in sy inbox gesien. So nou sit Jeanette en teug met haar tert lippe aan die sjampanje wat ek en Louis sou deel. Dit is vandag die twintig jaar herdenking van ons eerste sonde saam. Twintig jaar en daai dom teef dink nog steeds ek is 'n intern by Louis se firma.

Ek het Louis ontmoet buite die ou Spur in Amper. Ek het in die middel van my *shift* uitgeglim om 'n siggie te rook en om weg te kom van my klasmaats op tafel veertien. Ek kon nie my *lighter* in my voorskoot kry nie toe 'n mou met silwer *cuff-links* 'n vlam na my toe uithou. (SY LEUN VOOROM OM 'N DENKBEELDIGE SIGARET OP TE STEEK) "Cheers." Ek het die strepies van die *custom suit* al die pad op gevolg tot by 'n kakebeen waarmee jy 'n blik kon oopsny. Ek was sewentien en ek het by 'n Spur

gewerk in Amper en hier staan 'n *vision* met sout-en-peper hare en 'n kar wat meer kos as ons huis. En hy sê, "Jong bokkies moenie alleen in die veld rondloop nie."

(POUSE).

Ek het nie my *shift* klaargemaak nie. En twee weke voor my eindeksamen het hy my kom haal. My ridder met sy silwer koets skelm in die middel van die nag. En ek trek Pretoria toe. Na hom toe. Hy betaal nou nog vir hierdie woonstel. My kos. My klere.

Liz weet nie ek is hier nie. Sy en Derrick... Of is dit Phillip? Wieookal, hulle bly nou in Faerie Glen. Louis bring vir my geskenke van sy vakansies saam met Jeanette, maar ek stuur dit aan vir Liz en Annatjie. Laat hulle maar dink ousus is 'n *jet-setter*.

Gisteraand was ek in Siberië op 'n slee agter honde wat soos die wind kon hardloop. Ek was toegedraai in 'n ysbeerpels, my wange blos van die koue lug. Ons het oor die dun ys gegly toe dit skielik kraak en al die honde onder die water in verdwyn. Ek het vinnig gesink, die pelsjas soos 'n anker, en toe ek opkyk sien ek 'n roeiboot, met my ma in 'n nagrok, kneukels wit teen die hout en sy kyk net hoe ek sink, sink, sink. En toe sterf ek en ek word wakker en ek maak my oë oop in 'n

eenslaapkamer-woonstel in Wonderboom met bruin vlekke op die plafon.

LIZ: Komaan Parkies, het julle pap in julle hande!? Hulle is dan 'n spul rooinekke!

Ek verpes dit om tussen die ander ma's te wees. Halooo! Met hulle poniesterte en draftekkies, kospakkies, en Hettie Brits-boeke. *Tupperware*. Tandepasta. Benilyn. Pleisters en Pampers. En dit alles in een *Mary Poppins-moonbag* om die middel wat hulle heeldag saam hulle dra. *Mý kit* is in die kattedak in plastiekhouer B. Die kinders weet hoe om hulle self te help as hulle hoes of bloei of iets. Ek dra dalk die uniform, maar *soccer-mom* is die laaste ding wat ek op my CV gaan sit. Ek is niks soos hulle nie.

Ag, daar is net een bal hoe moeilik kan dit wees!? Kan nie onthou wanneer laas ek 'n Saterdag vir myself gehad het nie.

Ek het swanger geraak met Amorentia toe ek negentien was. Ek was in my eerste jaar... Dit was ook my laaste jaar... My ma het gehuil. Dit was per ongeluk. Ek was van my kop af verlief op Deon. Deon was 'n droom, en toe die baba kom, 'n nagmerrie. Ek het op daai stadium nog 'n ruggraat gehad, en toe bel ek die prokureur. Toe huil my ma eers.

My tweede man Derrick het ek by 'n diens in Moreleta Park ontmoet. Hy het sy blink Harley teen die kerkmuur gepark en vir almal kom vertel van sy verslawendheid en sy sondige leefstyl en hoe hy nou op die regte pad was. Hy het 'n reuse baard gehad en *tattoos* oor sy hele lyf. Alles uit die Bybel uit. Jy kon hier agter sy linker oor Genesis begin lees en al die pad om en af oor sy naeltjie tot by... Salomo en die koningin van Skeba. Hy't basies soos 'n wit Mr. T gelyk. Ek het ná die diens met hom gaan praat. Binnekort was ek, met Amorentia op my skoot, in die *side-car*, sendelinge op reis deur die Noord-Transvaal. Dis toe My ma begin ween. Die tweeling het daai eerste *trip* al hulle opwagting gemaak. Waar Woeker Willie? Herhaaldelik, in 'n klein twee-man tentjie aan die voet van Mapungubwe. Derrick het 'n huis gehad langs die dominee s'n by die N.G Moedergemeente in Louis Trichardt. Hy bly nog steeds daar. Die tweeling ry elke vakansie bus soontoe en kom terug met die een of ander diervel of kopbeen of biltong wat hulle self gemaak het.

En nou's ek by Phillip. Phillip. Hy's *boring*, maar hy's... *boring*. My ma is natuurlik mal oor hom. Dit was die eerste een van my troues waar sy van blydschap gehuil het. Boekhouer. Geld, maar niks anders nie. Hy aanvaar dat ek die septer swaai in onse ou kasteeltjie, en hy meng nie in met my ander kinders nie. Drukkies vir my en sy kinders kom in die vorm van note, vars uit die OTM. Phillip het ook 'n roetine wat ek haarfyn vir hom

beplan het. En hy hou daarby. En hy weet van my geheim en hy is... Oukei daarmee. As die *soccer-moms* moet uitvind... My geheim, dis... moeilik om... Hulle sal sê dis duiwels.

Ek, Liz van Wyk, is verslaaf. Ek is 'n volslae geek. Ek lees *fantasy*, ek verorber dit, en ek kan nie ophou nie. Ek belowe ek het al probeer maar hoe nou gemaak met gewone boeke. My ma het vir my 'n kopie van *The Hobbit* gekoop toe ek vyftien was. Dit was my eerste boek wat ek nie by die regering gekry het nie, en dit het my brein gesmelt. Toe vat sy my vir my verjaarsdag na waar Tolkien se huis in Bloemfontein was. Ek sal dit nooit vergeet nie. Tussen Bea se *boyfriends* en Anna op haar heup het ek nie gedink sy sien my raak nie. Pa kon minder omgee of ek met my kop in die wolke loop, my wiskunde punte was goed. Maar Ma... Sy't hierdie vir my gegee. Hanna Hoekom se avonture is glad nie so fokken *ongelooflik* as jy eers *Harry Potter* gelees het nie. Skies ek vloek. Wys my 'n storie wat nie beter gemaak kan word met 'n *unicorn* of twee nie. En ek lees nie net die goeie *fantasy* boeke nie, ek lees en kyk sommer enige kak, selfs daai vreemde Japanese stories waar die helde vir vier of vyf episodes net op mekaar staan en skree. Ek love dit. En daar's al hierdie blogs op die internet vol... *erotic fantasy*. Ek wou eers nie daarop *click* nie, maar ek kon myself nie help nie en nou is ek *hooked*. Seks is net soveel *sexier* as die man eers 'n draak moet doodmaak voor hy jou

rok afskeur. Fok *Fifty Shades of Grey!* Skies. Maar die gelesery was net die begin. Ek sien toe eendag 'n link op Facebook vir 'n winkel iewers in Arcadia.

Die *Outer Limits*. Hulle spesialiseer in *fantasy* en *science fiction*. En een Vrydag toe ek 'n uurtjie vir myself het, skraap ek uiteindelik die moed bymekaar om te gaan kyk wat daar aangaan. Na ek klein Dawie by karate afgelaai het en vir Lika by die dagmoeder gelos het, en die tweeling op Greyhound Limpopo toe gestuur het, trek ek een van philip se ou hang ten hoodies aan, n sit my sonbril op. Ek was so bang iemand herken my. Ek het die Pajero ses blokke van die plek af gepark. Dit was vreeslik opwindend.

Toe ek die plek kry het ek eers 'n koffie by die Vida gaan drink om eers alles van 'n afstand af dop te hou. Daar het gereeld mense by die deur ingegaan, almal vol puisies, en het gelyk of hulle nooit die son sien nie. Toe dit stiller raak, glip ek gou oor die pad, stoot die deur oop... En bevind myself in Mecca. *Final Fantasy*, *Miyazaki*, *Naruto*, *One Piece*, *Batman*, *Wonder Woman*, *She-Hulk*, *fantasy fantasy fantasy* en ek kyk nog rond en keer dat my oë uitval en kom agter die plek is leeg. Waar is al die mense dan? Dis toe dat ek die pers gordyn agter in die winkel sien. Ek het versigtig nader gestap en huiwerig die gordyntjie teruggetrek... En daar sit hulle almal om 'n groot

tafel met dobbelsteentjies. Daar was kaarte en muntstukke en ranglyste. *Dungeons & Dragons*. Ek was in die hemel.

En... ja. Die studente het aanvanklik gedink dis *weird* dat hierdie 'tannie' van Faerie Glen hulle *game* wil *join*, maar hulle het gou gewoond geraak. So nou gaan ek elke Vrydag. In die geheim. En eet pizza en drink bier en speel 80's RPG saam met 'n klomp kinders. En dis great. Jy kyk nou na die 2015 *Dungeon Master* van Pretoria-Oos.

ANNATJIE:

Ek was vyf toe Bea die eerste keer van die huis af probeer weghardloop het. Dit was baie laat in die nag en ek kan onthou iets het my wakker gemaak en ek het opgestaan en toe ek my deur saggies oopmaak, sien ek Bea met haar groot swart Cyndi Lauper-sak in die gang af loop. Ek het nie geweet of ek vir Mamma of Pappa of Liz moet wakker maak nie...

So toe agtervolg ek haar en kruip weg toe sy die voordeur saggies oopmaak. Daar het motte om die stoeplig gekoek en sy stoot die deur toe en sukkel by die trappe af... Maar ek het uitgegaan en agter die trapreëling gaan wegkruip... Sy moes my gehoor het. Bea het doodstil by die heining gestaan met haar hand op die hekpaal en haar voet op die onderste draad. Ek was te bang om asem te haal. Om iets te sê. Ek kan onthou ek was kwaad, want sy't gesê ek kan die Cyndi Lauper-sak kry as sy eers

uit die skool uit is en ek het geweet as sy met hom wegloop sien ek haar of die sak nooit weer nie. Sy't vir lank net so gestaan... en die slapende dorpie om ons... Mens kon die huise hoor asem haal.

Skielik het sy opgekyk, die sak oor haar skouer gegooi en terug gedraai huis toe. Sy't reguit na my toe geloop, haar gesig afgevee en met 'n glimlag haar nat vingers deur my hare getrek. Dit was asof sy my vir die eerste keer raak sien. "Kom Anna-Patatta. Kom ons gaan slaap."

Ek onthou die aand toe Pappa dood is, daai selfde jaar. Bea het gesê dis Amper wat hom doodmaak, dat die dorp ons almal nog sou versmoor. Liz het gesê ek moenie vir haar luister nie. Pappa se hoes was nat en vol sukkel. Soos borrels in die modderbank by Kromvlei. Ons was almal om sy bed. Mamma met die koffie koud, wat in haar hand wag. Bea by die deur, so ver van die bed af as moontlik. Liz in hoek met haar huiswerk en haar *highlighters*. Skei-nat en wiskunde. Ek het op die vensterbank gesit en geluister hoe die kriekies vir hom sing. Mamma bid, Bea kruip weg, en Liz pak die dood met Post-It's aan.

Daarna wou Bea weer weghardloop. Pretoria toe saam met Louis. Maar hierdie keer het Bea my kom wakker maak. Eenuur, half twee se kant. Sy't my saggies geskud. Sy't haar *backpack* by haar gehad en sy't

gesê sy's lief vir my en sy belowe alles gaan Oukei wees en ek moet haar help. Ek moet die deur agter haar sluit. En ons moet saggies wees sodat Mamma ons nie hoor nie.

Ek kan onthou ek was nogals excited..en toe ons op die stoep kom druk sy my en sy soen my en sy draai om en loop by die trappies af. Die groot, silwer kar het twee huise af in die straat gestaan en *idle*. Bea het vinniger begin loop en oor die hek gespring. Ek het geskrik toe ek Mamma agter my by die huis hoor uitkom. Sy't Bea se naam geroep, oor en oor en oor. Sy't my eenkant gestamp en kaalvoet oor die gras gehardloop. Maar Bea was klaar in die kar. En hulle was klaar besig om weg te ry. En my ma het in haar nagrok in die middel van die pad gestaan toe die bure buitentoe kom om te kyk wie so skree...

En ek was gehok. Sy't my gestraf, vir wat Bea gedoen het. Bea het vir my gelieg. Daar was nie 'n brief vir my gelos om jammer te sê nie... Maar daar was 'n brief in die yskas wat gesê het as Mamma die polisie bel dan kom sy nooit weer huis toe nie, maar as sy haar los, as sy haar uitlos... dat ons haar dalk weer Paasnaweek sou sien. My ma het vir 'n week gehuil. Liz het niks gesê nie.

Sy't al Bea se goed in bokse gepak en die kamer vir haarself gevat. Sy't die deur toegemaak en eers weer uitgekom toe sy universiteit toe is.

Mamma het my al hoe stywer begin druk en my nooit weer op my eie gelos nie.

Maretha wil he ek moet vir Bea bel. Al is dit net om *closure* te kry. Ek weet nie. Mamma sê Bea belowe sy gaan hierdie Kersfees daar wees. Al haar kinders weer onder een dak. Haai shame, sy's baie opgewonde.

BEA: Ek en Louis sou hierdie Desember vir 'n week Oostenryk toe gaan. Maar nee, hy en Jeanette is in Paternoster by haar ouers. Liz karring al die heel jaar aan my oor Kersfees, en toe sê ek ja. Om vir Louis te *spite*. Ek het ook planne. *Anyway*, dit kos my toe 'n fortuin om van Wonderboom na Liz se nuwe huis toe te uber. Ek sit vir 'n oomblik in die kar en hou die huis dop. Dubbelverdieping. *Water feature. Icebergs en lavenders.*

LIZ: So, Kersfees. Eers bel Bea my 'n maand voor die tyd om my te laat weet dat sy haar bes probeer het, maar toe nou uiteindelik nie by ons sal kan aansluit vir Kersfees nie. Iets van vlugte en visas... En 'n week later bel sy weer, in haar tipiese Bea stem om te sê sy kom! sy kom!, en sy bring vir Louis saam. 'n Paar dae later bel sy my weer net om te hoor of ek nie tog asseblief 'n wit kersboom wil koop hierdie jaar nie, aangesien sy nou haar *white Christmas* moet opgee om by ons te wees. *I mean*, ek stres oor 'n drie-gang maaltyd vir sewe mense en vyf kinders almal met hulle eie

voorkeure en afkeure en Bea dink alweer net aan Bea. En natuurlik het Louis nie opgedaag nie. As sy en Ma net die vrede kan hou tot *pudding*...

ANNATJIE: Ons bly vir 'n rukkie in die kar sit voor ons uitklim. Ek skraap die moed bymekaar om my familie te gaan *face* en Maretha giggel oor die grasdak en die *sleeper bar* en die blou ballas wat aan Phillip se Hilux hang. Ma kom uit om te groet en vra of ek haar whiskey onthou het. Dis rerig lekker om haar te sien lag Sy gryp die whiskey uit my hand uit en gee my 'n vet soen en 'n druk.

BEA: Net toe ek wou uitklim kom Annatjie en 'n vriend daar aan. Ma waggel uit, en dit lyk of sy nog 'n mens ingesluk het, en omhels haar soos die verlore dogter. (BEA DRINK 'N PIL) Ek klim uit en Liz se trop stoepkakkerkies probeer my soos 'n boom klim toe ek aan die deur klop. Leer sy nie haar kinders maniere nie. (SUG) Moet ek nou vir Ma soengroet?

LIZ: Phillip het gister vir Ma gaan haal. Sy kyk al heeldag met afkeur na my naellak wat afdop, en lig haar wenkbroue as die kinders my 'jy' en 'jou'. Bea lyk natuurlik fantasties. Annatjie kom daar aan en lyk soos 'n werklose. Ek weet nie watse *statement sy* probeer maak deur klere te dra wat drie *sizes* te groot is nie. Ek sê nie sy moet op *dress* vir Kersfees nie, maar sy hoef darem nie soos 'n Bantoe te lyk nie. Moet my nie verkeerd verstaan nie, ek is nie 'n rassis nie.

Ek en Phillip het baie swart vriende... Oukei,
 nie regtig nie, maar dit is nie die punt nie. Sy
 kon darem 'n poging aangewend het.

Ek's trots op ons huis. Ek en Phillip het hierdie huis gekies want dit is in 'n *amazing* skole-distrik. Net naby genoeg aan Hoërskool Menlo Park en net ver genoeg van Die Wilgers af. Phillip het sy lapa. En al my kinders kan om dieselfde tafel sit en eet.

BEA: Wat het geword van die wit kersboom waarvoor ek so mooi gevra het. Sy weet *pine* irriteer my kliere. Ek het my celestamine pille vergeet, so ek reël solank dat die kinders onder mekaar baklei oor wie vir Tannie Bea hospitaal toe gaan vat. Die tafel lyk oukei. Selle *sad* ou Carol Boyes-bakke wat oorloop van die ham en die tong en die sousies.

ANNATJIE: Maretha trek die heeltyd die mou van haar hemp oor die *tattoo* op haar gewrig. Dis twee pikkewyne wat op hulle tone staan en 'n hartjie maak. Ek haat die blerrie ding, maar sy't dit gekry voor ek haar leer kots het oor die *corny* goed in die lewe. Ek weet mens kan van 'n myl af sien my ma is nie *tattoo-friendly*-tannie nie, maar ek wens sy wil ophou oor dit worrie en fokus op die bom wat ek en sy op die kerstafel gaan drop.

LIZ: Die tafelpote kreun onder die feesmaal wat ek alleen voorberei het. 'n Ark se diere ingelê en

uitgeskep, skoongeskrop en gaar gekook met sout en salie. Niemand sê iets oor die kos nie.

BEA: Mmmm...

LIZ: Ons sit in stilte. Die opskeplepel lui teen die koperpot soos 'n klok. En -

BEA: En Ma dam beesstert in haar bord op.

ANNATJIE: Skep, Maretha. Moenie skaam wees nie.

LIZ: Tipies Annatjie om 'n ongenooide gas te bring na 'n familie- Kersfees. Maryke, Marietjie -

ANNATJIE: Maretha.

LIZ: Marli, Marinda -

ANNATJIE: Maretha.

LIZ: Waar's haar familie? Ek kan nie die hele wêreld se afvlerk-vinke voer nie.

BEA: Ma sit ingenome agteroor en maak die boonste knoop van haar denim los om plek te maak vir nog 'n rondte.

ANNATJIE: Stadig met die wyn, Bea.

BEA: Ek maak my keel skoon om kommentaar te lewer en Liz stop my met een van haar kyke, maar ek ignoreer haar.

LIZ: Los dit.

BEA: Ek verstaan nie hoekom ons nou rondom die *issue* moet *pussyfoot* nie. Ma is vet. Kyk na haar.

LIZ: Bea!

BEA: Mens weet nie uit watter ken sy volgende gaan bulk nie.

LIZ: Jy kan nie so met haar praat nie!

ANNATJIE: Ma sit net haar vurk op die rand van haar bord neer en kyk af.

LIZ: Is dit nou regtig nodig?

ANNATJIE: Phillip vat die kleintjies sitkamer toe.

BEA: Die vrou gaan haarself dood vreet. Sien julle dit nie?

LIZ: Sorry, Ma.

ANNATJIE: Maretha gryp my hand onder die tafel.

BEA: Sy huil haarself honger en dan vreet en vreet en vreet sy. Asof dit gaan help.

ANNATJIE: Ma se niks!

BEA: Wie gaan na haar kyk die dag as nie meer vir haarself na sorg nie?

ANNATJIE: Hoekom sê sy nie iets nie?

BEA: Wie gaan haar bad? Nie ek nie.

LIZ: As jy op 'n *mission* is om hierdie dag vir almal op te neuk -

ANNATJIE: Hou op!

LIZ: - hoekom vat jy nie jou goed en loop nie? Hoekom het jy dan in die eerste plek gekom?

ANNATJIE: Mamma is doodstil.

BEA: Dis julle wat so aangegaan het.

ANNATJIE: Maretha hou my hand nog stywer vas.

BEA: 'Dis Kersfees, kom huis toe.

ANNATJIE: Bly net stil!

BEA: 'Mamma wil jou sien.' Ek kon nou in die Alpe gesit het!

LIZ: Nou maar spring dan op 'n vliegtuig en gaan terug na Louis toe, waarookal hy is. Ek is seker hy en Jeanette sal vir jou plek maak in hulle bed.

BEA: Louis is al vir twintig jaar die een liefde in my lewe. Die een persoon wat -

LIZ: Liefde? Noem jy dit liefde?

BEA: Jou eerste man het jou met blou kolle gelos. Derrick het jou langs die pad gelos. En nou's jy *basically* jou man se P.A. Dis nie liefde nie. Dis *sad*.

LIZ: *Wake up, Bea. Louis -*

BEA: Louis is die een wat my uit Amper gered het. Van julle gered het.

LIZ: Hy's nie lief vir jou nie, Bea. Jy's 'n getroude man se *fuck-buddy*.

(STILTE)

ANNATJIE: Bea vlieg op en gaan badkamer toe. Ma is doodstil. Liz vat die toring borde kombuis toe. Amorentia gooi 'n kom-ons-gaan-rook-kyk na Maretha se kant toe. Sy kan ook sien dat Maretha gered moet word

van hierdie *ticking time bomb*. Vyf minute *smoke break*. Baie dinge kan in vyf minute gebeur in die Van Emmenis-gesin. Vyf minute is fokol.

LIZ: Haal asem, tel tot tien. Wat het jy verwag, Liz. Dis Bea.

BEA: Ek weet nou nie hoekom my vuil wasgoed voor almal gewas moet word nie. En voor 'n gas! Ek kan ook nie lekker uitfigure of Annatjie se vriend 'n seun of 'n meisie is nie?

LIZ: Ek skaam my om te dink wat hierdie Marietjie/Maryke-girl van ons familie moet dink. Waaroor praat sy en Amorentia in die tuin... Ek hoop sy sê vir haar dit gaan nie altyd so hier nie.

BEA: *Speaking of which*, dit/sy/hy kyk al die hele middag lank onderlangs vir Anna. En toe, besef ek: hierdie *girl* is 'n lesbiër! Moenie verkeerd verstaan nie, ek het niks teen *gay* mense nie, ek het baie *gay* vriende. Oukei, nie regtig nie, maar dit is nie die punt nie. Arme Anna-Patatta is salig onbewus van hierdie *girl*/dit se intensies.

ANNATJIE: Ma sit doodstil. Bea kom ingewals en *laser* in op my en vra kliphard uit oor Maretha. Ma lig haar kop. Maretha asseblief... Ek het jou nou nodig. Kom Amorentia, *maak gou*. Ek hoop sy't vir Maretha in in die tuin *geprep* vir wat op haar wag.

- BEA: Die lesbiër kom saam met Amorentia weer in die eetkamer in, en sy en Anna-Patatta gaan staan by die kaggel en maak keel skoon. Hulle hou hande vas...
- LIZ: En toe ontplof die bom, en Anna gooi die nuus van haar seksuele oriëntasie soos 'n emmer koue water oor Ma uit.
- ANNATJIE: Ek staan daar en ek voel hoe hulle ons *judge*. En ek wil verduidelik. Ek sien My ma se oë en dis asof daar 'n laaste iets in haar breek en ek wil haar vashou en sê dit hoef nie, dis oukei, ek is lief vir Maretha. Ek wil my mond oopmaak en dit verdedig. Want ek is seker.
- Want sy kyk op as ek in die kamer instap. Want sy luister Tom Waits en steek haar hand op as sy nie iets weet nie. Want sy lees boek in die middel van 'n vol vertrek. Want die ander mense sien haar nie raak nie. Want sy's sag. Want haar een oor is groter as die ander een. Want sy sê sy wil 'n skrywer wees, en dan lag ek, en sê, nou skryf dan, en dan skop sy my onder die tafel. Want my hele lewe lank al leer julle my om weg te kyk. Want ons het die walvisse gesien. Want ek het gedink julle sal van haar hou. Maar ek sê niks van hierdie goed nie en ek gryp net Maretha se hand en ek trek haar terug kar toe en ek draai by die deur om en ek sê. "Maretha is die enigste mooi ding in my lewe wat

myne is. Die enigste mooi ding en ek wou nie gehad het dat julle dit ook moes opfok nie.”

LIZ: Dis die laaste keer wat ons almal saam om 'n tafel was.

(MUSIEK SPEEL. KOSTUUMVERANDERING.)

BEA: Louis het vir my 'n *painting* gegee. 'n Afdruk. Original copy. Dit was nie geraam nie, dit was opgerol en met 'n Waltons rekkie vasgebind. Ek het by die huis gekom toe lê dit onder die deurmat met 'n halfdood roos in die tube ingedruk. Francisco Goya. 1820. *Saturnus verober sy kind*. Ek moes dit google. Vieslike ding. Die ou man hurk half op een been, die kind tussen sy vingers, senings en bloed wat slierte tussen kop en skouers trek. Die lyfie hang slap, kniekies teenmekaar en die linkerarm halfpad ingesluk.

Die ding hang nou maar bo die bed. Louis hou daarvan. As ons liefde maak, kyk hulle diep in mekaar se oë, hy en die Saturnus... Louis belowe nou Griekeland. Laasjaar was dit Oostenryk, vir Kersfees, en ek was by Liz se huis in Fairie Glen toe Annatjie vir almal vertel het sy hou nou van tieties. En die afgelope ses maande is dit maar ek en Louis elke tweede naweek op die *fancy Loads of Living* lakens wat hy vir my gekoop het.

Louis het gister verjaar. Hy't 'n selfie op Facebook van hom en Jeanette gepost. Sy arm is om haar en om sy arm is die horlosie wat ek vir hom uitgekies het. Hy kon nie by my wees nie toe gaan *treat* ek myself.

Ek verkies Menlyn. Veral Saterdag aan die einde van die maand. 'n Doolhof van kinders, ma's en roltrappe waar ek net kan verdwyn. Ek stap by Woolies in en glimlag vriendelik vir die sekuriteitswag by die ingang. Ek maak seker dat ek hom groet. "Dumela, aubuti." En ek het hom. Die vriendelike wit vrou wat die moeite doen om hom te groet. In sy taal, nogal. Hy groet terug en hou sy oë op die tieners met hulle groot sakke en los hempde. Ek stap doelgerig na die grimering- en parfuumafdeling. Kop om hoog. Ek weet wat ek wil hê. As iemand die moeite doen om regtig na my te kyk sal hulle die sweetdruppels op my voorkop sien lê. My asem jaag. My hart klop.

"Het julle die nuwe Issey Miyake?" vra ek die jong studentjie agter die toonbank. "Die Estee Lauder is te soet vir my. Ek hou van subtiele sitrus en jasmyn. Met 'n tikkie vanilla en mirre."

Haar oë is groot, en ek het haar.

"Natuurlik, Mevrou."

Mevrou.

"Ek gaan roep gou die bestuurder. Sy sal u kan help."

Sy verdwyn om die hoek. My hand steek uit na die pienk boksie met die goue letters. Ek laat val dit in my handsak. Ek stap uit en groet weer vriendelik die sekuriteitswag. En ek leef.

Ek sien vir Liz en haar twee kleintjies in Checkers. Ek draai weg net voor sy my sien. Ek kan nie nou in Checkers wees nie want ek is in Hong Kong. Sy't laasweek gebel en 'n boodskap op my foon gelos. Ek kan nie als mooi onthou nie, maar dit was iets oor Annatjie se lesbiër wat dood is.

LIZ:

Amorentia is alweer hierdie naweek by Anna in die Kaap. Hulle is die enigste twee Van Emmenis vroue wat nog nie mekaar se oe wou uitkrap nie. Ten minste het hulle verhouding die berugte Kersfees oorleef.

Ek's bly sy's by Anna. Nou na die Marietjie, Maryke... se ongeluk. Ek het probeer bel, maar sy wil steeds nie met my praat nie.

Ek weet nie waar ek my dogter verloor het nie. Sy is nou so oud soos wat ek was toe ek haar gehad het.

Ons praat nie eintlik nie. So ek stalk haar op twitter. Sy weet dit nie. Volgens haar is haar ma tegnologies gestrem. Sy dink @Cybersass95 is net nog een van haar 178 volgelinge. Ons bitch saam

oor FeesMustFall, en ons skep die ongelooflikste hashtags oor sosio ekonomiese ontwikkeling. Sy is soveel wyser as wat ek was op 19...so tussen die selfies deur.

Na nou-die-aand se braai, na nog 'n fight storm sy uit en brom onderlangs: Ek wonder wat Cybersass95 hieroor sou chirp?

Ek het vir 'n oomblik gedink ek is uitgevang. Maar toe draai sy om, rol haar oe en se: Ag Ma, jy sal nie verstaan nie. Daar is hierdie girl op Twitter. She gets me.

Vreemdste ding, nou die dag in Checkers begin Lika histories gil: Ta Bie! Ta Bie! So asof sy rerig vir Bea sien. Die Here alleen weet hoekom dit die eerste woord was wat sy geleer het. Sy't daai vrou letterlik net daai een Kersfees gesien.

Ek wonder of Anna oukei is...

ANNATJIE:

Jy weet, ek sal nooit kan verstaan hoekom die lewe altyd op jou kak as jy klaar op die grond lê nie. Ek kon nog daarmee deal toe ek nie saam met die ambulans mag ry nie. Ek kon nog daarmee deal toe Maretha se ouers my nie by haar wou toelaat in die hospitaal nie. Maar toe haar ouers aspris vir my die verkeerde datum van die begrafnis gegee het... *Hands up, julle wen.*

Sy's weg, Mamma. Sy's saam met die walvisse weg. Sy's 'n vinnige swemmer. Was nog altyd. Jy hoef nie meer vir dominee te gaan sien oor jou duiwelskind nie. Mamma hoef nie meer te wonder

waar Ma verkeerd gegaan het in my grootword jare nie. Mamma kan my nou maar weer op Sondag begin bel. Mamma hoef nie meer te jok oor dat ek nie kan kom kuier nie. Mamma hoef nie meer te huil nie. Sy's weg. Dis weg Mamma.

Ek speel die gesprek soos 'n pap *tape* oor en oor in my kop. Ek *imagine* ek kom in Amper aan en dit lyk soos 'n spookdorp. In my kop park ek my poegie by die hek en spoel eers my gesig af by die kraan. Oukei, ek's skoon, *any trace of lesbo-geid* áf.

Ek sal stadig maar versigtig teen die trappe opklim. Mamma hou van haar middag *naps* en ek wil haar nie met die eerste intrapslag af *piss* nie. Ek sal stadig die deur oopmaak en warm, welkom roep, "Mammie, ek's hier. Hallo!" Ek sal haar in die kombuis vind met die reuke van lasagne en whiskey en RSG. Dit sal die perfekte oomblik wees om haar van agter af te druk en te fluister, "So bly om Mamma te sien."

Dan dadelik yskas toe glip om haar glas vol ys en whiskey te pak soos ek my senuwees in My maag bymekaar maak. "Mammie, ek het die beste nuus. Ek is hier om Mamma se dag te maak."

Maar ek doen nie een van hierdie goed nie. Want ek kom in Amper aan en daars nie antwoord nie. Ek lui oor en oor die deureklokkie, maar daar is niks. Ek loop om, agter toe. Ek kan nie die agterdeur oop

kry nie. Daar's iets in die pad. Ek stamp en stamp en stamp die deur en toe ek die deur oop kry sien ek vir...

LIZ:

Tot hoeveel tel 'n mens? As ek die kinders wil waarsku dan tel ek tot drie. As ek kwaad word tel ek tot tien. Ek weet nie tot hoeveel om te tel nie. Ek was nie alleen toe Anna my bel nie. Ek was in 'n Dojo saam met twintig ander ma's besig om bo die geskree van die katas my eie skree te smoor. Ek het nie bedoel om haar nie te bel nie. Ek was net moeg. Tussen die tweeling se eksamen en die *geyser* wat gebars het... Ek het net hierdie een keer die bal laat val. Ek het haar gaan haal. Een maal 'n maand gaan haal vir 'n Sondag kuier, drie ure Vrystaat toe en terug. Moes ek iets vermoed het? Was daar tekens?

Ek voel soos 'n seekat wat vang en keer en stut en bymekaar hou. Ek is net een mens, demmit. My gesin eet vyf brode op 'n dag. Vyf brode! Ek moes My ma terug gebel het. Ek moes haar terug gebel het. 'n Week, so? Liewe Here, hoekom het niemand gaan klop nie?

Natuurlik sal ek die begrafnis reël. Uit die aard van die saak sal ek die begrafnis reël. Ek moet 'n gastelys by Tannie Kittie kry. Die dameskring sal kan help met die verversings. Saag. Oom Bertie moet saag speel as die kis ingedra word. Wie gaan die kis dra? En daai lied... Ma het gehou van...

Dis boemelaars wat alleen doodgaan. Nie mense met kinders nie. Ek het nie van haar vergeet nie. Ek het haar nie vergeet nie. Ek was net moeg.

BEA:

Op laerskool het ek vir die ander kinders gesê sy's nie my ma nie. Vir hulle gesê die sog by die skoolhek werk net by ons, my ma is oorsee. En jok was maklik. Soos om asem te haal. As jy jou ma se nagrok as 'n komberstent kan inspan, leer jy maar vinnig om stories op te maak. Ek het al haar foto-albums gaan uitkrap. Ek moes. Ek wou weet of sy nog altyd vet was.

Sy was 'n vaal, maer meisietjie. Groen skoolrokkie en hare wat in al die rigtings staan. Nes Liz. En nes ek. Sy't op die bank gesit met 'n berg tissues en 'n bak bobotie op haar skoot. Ek het brons gekry by die SA's. Het trots met die medalje om my nek voor haar gaan staan. Sy't opgekyk, en afgekyk, en gesê as ek ook wil hê moet ek 'n vurk gaan haal. Sy was alleen en het nooit ophou huil nie. Huil en vreet. Huil en vreet. Ek was daar en ek was nie goed genoeg nie. Ek het myself belowe ek sal nooit soos sy sou word nie.

Ek wonder hoe Ma gelyk het, op die vloer. Hoe lyk 'n mens wat 'n week lank al lê en vrot? 'n Week se

rotkos, met haar arms om haar Kelvinator en haar dunderm uiteindelik met rus.

(LIGTE VERANDER. LIZ EN ANNATJIE STAAN VOOR IN DIE KERK EN KYK NA DIE KIS. BEA 'IN'.)

BEA: Sorrie sorrie sorrie. Waar's Dominee Flippie?

LIZ: 'Skies?

BEA: Dominee Flippie. Gaan hy nie preek nie?

LIZ: Nee.

BEA: Hoekom nie?

LIZ(SUG): Tannie Kittie het *quiche* by die Dopper Kerk gekoop en nou't dominee Flippie loopmaag.

BEA: Maar hy was Ma se dominee. Hy moet preek.

ANNATJIE: Sjuut.

LIZ: Hoe wil jy hê die man moet preek, hy sit al die hele oggend op die troon.

BEA: Arme man. Hy's seker al vier keer deur die kerkbode.

ANNATJIE: Hou net op!

BEA: Broek om die enkels, en oë op die hemel.

LIZ: Bea!

BEA: Julle kon hom op 'n emmer agter die kansel gesit het.

ANNATJIE: *Not funny.*

LIZ: Jy's laat.

BEA: Ek moes eers stop vir die kisruiker.

LIZ: En waar is dit?

BEA: Hulle het nie meer begrafnisblomme oorgehad nie. Blykbaar het almal besluit om hierdie week dood te gaan.

LIZ: So daar's nie blomme nie.

ANNATJIE: Moes jy daai foto gekies het?

LIZ: Wat's fout daarmee?

ANNATJIE: Jy kon 'n beter foto gekies het.

BEA: Wat het sy aan?

LIZ: Wat?

BEA: Wat het sy aan? In die kis.

LIZ: Die geel *crimplene* rok.

BEA: Pas hy nog vir haar?

ANNATJIE: Sy was mal oor daai rok.

BEA: Die kis is vieslik.

ANNATJIE: Maak dit saak?

BEA: *Peach? Met brass fittings?*

LIZ: Dis die grootste kis wat hulle by AVBOB in
Bethlehem kon kry.

ANNATJIE: Liz!

LIZ: Wat? Ma het nie in die standaard 84 x 28 gepas
nie. (SIEN IEMAND. GROET.) Tannie Kittie -

(BEA EN ANNATJIE GROET 'TANNIE KITTIE'. ALDRIE SUSTERS VOLG HAAR
MET HULLE OË SOOS SY UITLOOP.)

BEA: Sy groet nie eers nie.

ANNATJIE: Sy voel baie sleg. Ek dink sy en Mamma het
vasgesit oor iets.

BEA: Wie's daai vrou?

ANNATJIE: O. Dis Oom Boet.

BEA: Oom Boet?

ANNATJIE: Ja. Hy het sy erfgeld gebruik vir die operasie.

(POUSE)

BEA: Almal kyk vir ons... Almal kyk vir ons.

LIZ: Almal kyk vir jou, want jy dra 'n roofdier.

ANNATJIE: Mense kyk, want Mamma is alleen dood.

(STILTE)

BEA: Ek dog jy en Phillip het haar elke nou en dan kom haal.

(LIZ GEEN REAKSIE)

BEA: Liz?

LIZ: Laasmaand was eksamen. Ek kon nie- Anna het sy jou nie probeer bel nie?

ANNATJIE: Nee.

LIZ: Is jy seker? Sy't laas gesê. . . oor Kersfees, dat sy sleg voel oor wat gebeur het, dat sy-

ANNATJIE: Sy het my nie gebel nie, Oukei.

(STILTE)

BEA: Is julle seker dit was 'n week?

ANNATJIE: Ja.

(STILTE)

LIZ: Ons moes haar gebel het...

Sakke pakke sout en peper gee my stoom dan loop ek beter...

Die laaste begrafnis waarby my ma was, was my pa s'n. Sy't fout gevind met alles. Die begrafnisblaadjies was verkeerd gedruk, die orrelspel was te trekkerig. 'Skies, Tannie Dot... Sy't my 'n lysie laat maak van alles wat ek beter moes doen vir haar begrafnis. Ek het nie die lysie gehou nie. Natuurlik nie. My ma sou vir ewig lewe.

Ek't die meeste van julle gebel om te hoor wat dit is wat julle van haar sal onthou. Entosiatiese koorleier. Voorslag bakker by die basaar. Vundisi koördineerder. Kampvegter vir die DBV. Titels, is dit nie? *Labels* eintlik maar. As jy mooi daaroor dink. Balkies. Soos op 'n blazer- net onder die wapen. (LAG) Hester van Emmenis. Skriba by die

kerk! Hier's vir jou 'n goue sterretjie! Nog 'n
batch bobaas pannekoek. *Goue sterretjie!*
Vrywilliger by die kinderhuis? Goue sterretjie!

(BEA SE MOND VAL OOP. ANNATJIE FRONS ONGEMAKLIK.)

Ek't 'n paar aanhalings oor die dood gaan soek.
 Hier's een: Morkel van Tonder het gesê, en ek haal
 aan, "Al wat ek eendag saam my wil vat is dit wat
 ek hier op aarde weggee het. En Hester van
 Emmenis het gegee. En gegee en gegee en gegee.

En wat het dit haar in die sak gebring? Fokol.
 (LAG) *So what's the point?* Sy't in elk geval
 alleen doodgegaan. Mens gaan alleen dood.

(BEA WIL OPSTAAN. ANNA HOU HAAR HAND SUBTIEL UIT OM TE KEER.)

'Skies. Jammer, Dominee. Sakke pakke sakke pakke...

Dalk is dit beter dat ek iemand anders se woorde
 gebruik om mee af te sluit. Tolkien s'n. J.R.R
 Tolkien. My ma sal verstaan. "*I wish it need not
 have happened in my time,*" said Frodo. "*So do I,*"
 said Gandalf. "*And so do all who live to see such
 times, but that is not for them to decide. All we
 have to decide is what to do with the time that is
 given to us.*"

Ek weet nie wat om te sê nie. Hier lê Hester van
 Emmenis. Onthou haar soos julle wil.

(LIZ DRAAI HAAR RUG EN BEA NEEM HAAR PLEK)

BEA: Dames en Here. Oom Boet... Ons nooi julle almal vir 'n koppie tee en verversings na afloop van die diens.

ANNATJIE: Maretha het altyd vir my gese, as die Loodswalvisse by Cape Vidal uitspoel, as hulle stadig op die strand lê en doodgaan, sing hulle vir mekaar. En as hulle alleen iewers uitspoel, dan sing hulle maar vir hulle self.

Ek en Liz was laasweek by Bea se *flat* in Wonderboom. Ons het haar help verf. Dit was *cool*. Die stok is darm nou al halfpad uit Liz se hol uit. O en Bea bel my nou elke sondag 5hr klokslag, sy praat maar meestal net oor haarself, maar shame, sy probeer.

Aqua Mike het nog steeds nie opgedaag nie, maar ek's darem nou al *junior manager* by Power & Glory.

Ek dink ons gaan oukei wees. *Fucked*. Maar okei.

DIE EINDE.