

Lobola and the Lost Offspring

A play by Ndimphiwe Bontiya

Part One: *A private hospital room in Johannesburg. Mandisa is a 30 year- old engaged woman and a daughter to Sophie, a forty-nine year old woman. Mandisa is in a hospital bed when her mother enters the room escorted by a nurse.*

Mandisa: 1, 2, 3 fff..., fff..., fff...

Mandisa counts while rocking back and forth

Mandisa: Where is Steve?

Sophie: Oh, mntanam (my child)

Mandisa: Where is Steve?

Sophie: Your uncle called him...

Mandisa: Mama, you cannot tell him about this, you can't let him know...

With tears streaming down her cheeks she pleads with her mother.

Sophie: Mandisa how long are going to keep this up, huh? Do you think that man is stupid not to know that...?

The door slides open, Sophie and Mandisa fix their eyes on the figure appearing.

Nurse: The doctor will be with you in ten minutes, Ms. Adams.

(Without saying anything to the nurse, Mandisa grabs her mother's loose sleeve and clutches it. The nurse disappears.)

Mandisa: The lobola is in 3 days, I have to marry him, mama. I have to marry him otherwise he will leave me.

Sophie: What is going to happen when he finds out after the marriage?

Mandisa: Let me worry about that, I will not lose him mama. I refuse, especially to that conniving snake!

Sophie: You have to tell him. If you do not, your father and I have given permission to your uncles to inform his family tomorrow. Baby, this is your fourth miscarriage in two years, you have to let go.

Sophie takes her one and only daughter in her arms and embraces her. Mandisa cries uncontrollably.

Mandisa: At age 30, mama!

Sophie: You can't keep lying to him sweetie, you simply cannot, and I cannot keep lying to your father, my baby. Losing your brother last year has made me appreciate the truth and Steve is a good man he will forgive you baby but you cannot keep lying to him.

Mandisa: He's going to leave me I just know it; he's going to leave me...

Mandisa reaches her hand under her hospital gown and reveals bloody forefingers. She looks up to her mother who is looking at the door, where Steve stands in shock.

Part Two: *The scene opens with Mandisa walking to her car, her walk is confident and her footsteps like hammers on the sidewalk. She appears to be emotional but concealing it.*

Mandisa: Where are my keys?

(She walks past a couple who are laughing, they stop laughing and with neutral blank expressions they turn to her while the man grabs her wrist.

Male & Female

voices: I'm sorry about what happened to you...

Mandisa: Who are you, what are you talking about?

The couple walks away.

Mandisa: Come back here, who are you?

A woman who appears to be in a rush stops in front of Mandisa. Another woman walks up to Mandisa.

Woman (1): I'm sorry about what happened to you.

The woman walks away.

Mandisa: Stop it! Nothing happened to me! Leave me alone!

Mandisa shouts at the woman.

Woman (2): I'm sorry about what happened to you.

The woman walks away.

Mandisa: Get away from me! There is nothing wrong with me and nothing happened to me. I did not lose my children! *(She holds her stomach.)*

The woman continues to walk on. In shock Mandisa drops her purse and the contents fall out.

Old lady: I was there once, give it time *mntanam*.

She hands her a flower and walks away. Mandisa looks down at her stomach.

Mandisa: I know I can get pregnant again, I just have to get pregnant and he will come back to me.

The lights fade to dark...