



**Interview with:** Thandi (29)  
**Interviewed by:** Nomkhosi  
**Date of interview:** 14 July 2016  
**Travel:** Ndwedwe – Durban – Inanda - Durban

**Nomkhosi:** You said your name is Thenji?

**Thandi:** I said it's Thandi.

**Nomkhosi:** Can I tell you something? I saw you in a newspaper. I said: "Hayibo! (laughing): I know this woman!"

**Thandi:** Why did you not bring it for me? Yes, I did take a picture.

**Nomkhosi:** The newspaper is in my office. I will bring it to you. Actually it was my colleague who saw it. She did not know you but she showed me the story because it was about Thokoza and she knows that I work here. Then I said: "I know this woman!"

**Thandi:** Yes. I did not hide anything. I said she could take a photo and I spoke to the lady. We spoke but I do not care.

**Nomkhosi:** Yes, but it is not a problem to talk about your life if you are not a criminal. If you are a criminal, you are scared to talk (Laughs).

**Thandi:** Yes, I am not.

**Nomkhosi:** (Laughs).

**Thandi:** Yes, I am not a criminal. I am Thandi. I was born in Thafamasi. Even now I am still officially at Thafamasi. I grew up in Thafamasi with my granny [*ukhulu*]. I never knew my parents. My grandmother told me my parent sent me to her when I was three months old. So I was raised by granny.

**Nomkhosi:** By granny do you mean *ugogo*?

**Thandi:** It's granny [*ukhulu*]. It's not my granny's mother. It's my mother's mother. *Ugogo* is my grandmother's mom, whereas *ukhulu* is my mother's mom. I was raised by my *ukhulu*. When I was grown up I went around and started working casual jobs. I started working when I was six years old. I used to go to people's houses working in their gardens.

**Nomkhosi:** How old were you?

**Thandi:** I was six years old.

**Nomkhosi:** How old are you now?

**Thandi:** I was born in 1963.

**Nomkhosi:** So you are still young.

**Thandi:** No, I am not young anymore.

**Nomkhosi:** I mean you are not very old, (*awugugile*).

**Thandi:** I am not young. I lived a painful life until I started working. Then I got a boyfriend and we got married. I gave birth to two children and my husband passed on.

**Nomkhosi:** You say you started working when you were six. Did you go to school?

**Thandi:** No, I did not go to school.

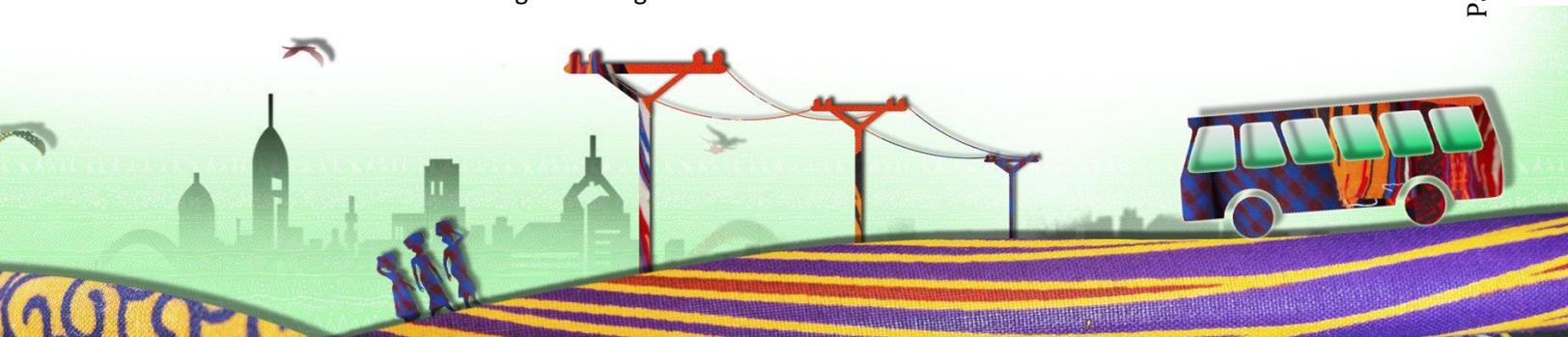
**Nomkhosi:** But it's not like you never set foot at school?

**Thandi:** I never did.

**Nomkhosi:** No!

**Thandi:** I did not.

**Nomkhosi:** You did not even get to the gate of the school?





**Thandi:** Not even in the gate.

**Nomkhosi:** Really?

**Thandi:** On my uncle's side, the granny who raised me did not have children. The granny who gave birth to my mom was also there. They were helping each other in life. I was not an only child. There were three of us. As regards education, I was taught by Jehova. I can only read the bible.

**Nomkhosi:** You can read the bible?

**Thandi:** From A up to Z.

**Nomkhosi:** It means you are quite educated if that is the case.

**Thandi:** No, not at all.

**Nomkhosi:** Do you know how to write your name?

**Thandi:** Yes, I know how to write it. When I came here to Durban in 1990, we went to night schools so that we could get some education.

**Nomkhosi:** Oh! Okay. Alright.

**Thandi:** So I was able to get the little education.

**Nomkhosi:** Now you can read the bible from start to end?

**Thandi:** Yes. The bible is my thing. It is something that I do all the time. When I am done doing what I am doing here (house chores), I will sit down and read my bible. It is the thing which shows me the way. It also gives me hope that one day I will be healed from how I am now.

**Nomkhosi:** It's good that you believe that.

**Thandi:** What is it like? I don't want people to come into this room and tell me that I am bewitched by so and so. Because that would happen if God willed that. There would be something I did wrong in the eyes of the Lord.

**Nomkhosi:** No, it can't be that.

**Thandi:** Me? You can ask about my life here in Thokoza ...

**Nomkhosi:** Is there any way you would like to see this room being changed for the better?

**Thandi:** I would say I am happy living in this room because the leadership said they did not have space to extend our rooms. So now I [am happy to stay] here like this because I am able to walk in and out with my wheel chair, even if I want to go take a bath.

**Nomkhosi:** When did you have the stroke?

**Thandi:** In 2012.

**Nomkhosi:** How many of you live in this room?

**Thandi:** Two of us: me and daughter, who is actually my granddaughter.

**Nomkhosi:** How old is she?

**Thandi:** She is twenty. She is now in a tertiary institution, studying something like nursing. She is studying for something [related to nursing] but she is not quite a nurse. But she has uniform like them.

**Nomkhosi:** Do you like cooking in this room?

**Thandi:** Yes, there is no other way.

**Nomkhosi:** What about the kitchen?

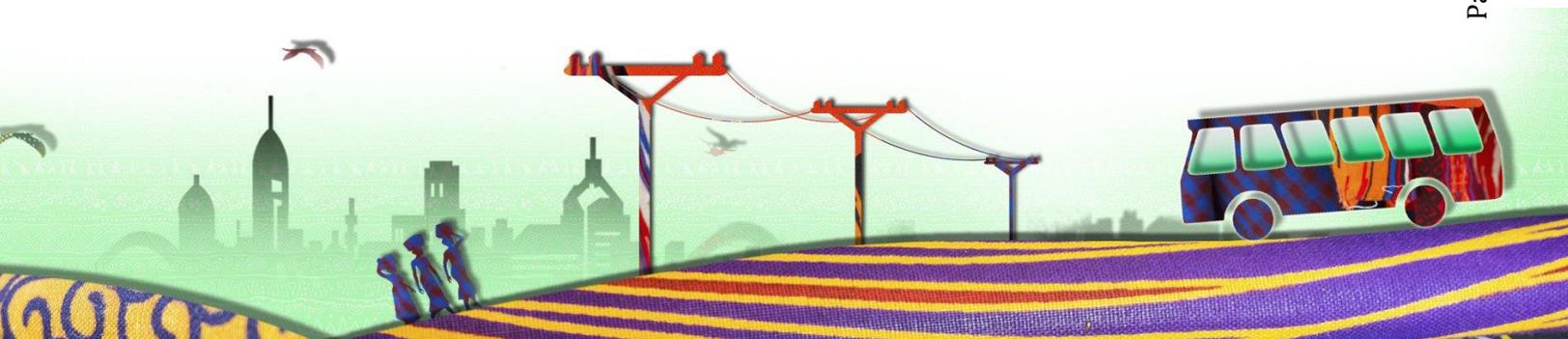
**Thandi:** There are no stoves in the kitchen.

**Nomkhosi:** Why do you not take your stove over there?

**Thandi:** Take the stove? So that I can burn myself? You must be joking.

**Nomkhosi:** Would you like to have your own bathroom here?

**Thandi:** I would like to, but there is no space.





(She allowed the researcher to take a picture of her and her room. She said we should have mentioned that we were coming and explained that we wanted the picture as natural as possible.)

**Nomkhosi:** Where are you from?

**Thandi:** Tafamasi.

**Nomkhosi:** You said you no longer have your home. What happened to your home?

**Thandi:** We used to have a home but it was located in a bad slope. Other people moved from there but we could not because we were based here. It was my grandmother who lived there died. My mother died as well. After I had a stroke nobody was left there. I was left alone. People were moving to a better place where they could access electricity and water. Now I can't walk.

**Nomkhosi:** So during Christmas you get stuck here?

**Thandi:** Yes. But now I am really feeling better. Before I used to just lie in bed.

**Nomkhosi:** Did you work before?

**Thandi:** Yes, I used to be a cleaner here at the hostel.

**Nomkhosi:** And now you no longer work?

**Thandi:** Yes. I can't work as my left hand and leg can't work properly.

**Nomkhosi:** So how is life in the hostel?

**Thandi:** It is ugly.

**Nomkhosi:** Your life?

**Thandi:** Yes, my life. It's not that I was a bitch. I never liked *ubufebe* (women who sleep around). I was not stealing. It's just that I was very rude. I was really rude.

**Nomkhosi:** But now you are so sweet.

**Thandi:** Who?

**Nomkhosi:** You.

**Thandi:** Heh! My child, in my absence you can just ask anyone.

**Nomkhosi:** When did you say you arrived in Thokoza?

**Thandi:** In 1990.

**Nomkhosi:** So people know you?

**Thandi:** Most of them are dead now. There are many new people here. I [know many people here]. It's just that I never go to people's rooms.

**Nomkhosi:** Why? You thought you were better than them?

**Thandi:** No, it was not that. When I think about the life I lived when I was at home, I would sit and keep quiet. I was an IFP member and I used to beat people up. I would beat the hell out of people.

**Nomkhosi:** IFP members were known to be like that.

**Thandi:** They used to like provoking people (*Bebenochuku*). Only now, when I look at it, I say to the Lord: "Father we are sorry."

**Nomkhosi:** Mmmm.

**Thandi:** I really say now that we are really sorry, Lord. You must really punish me like this because you want me to be straight in your ways.

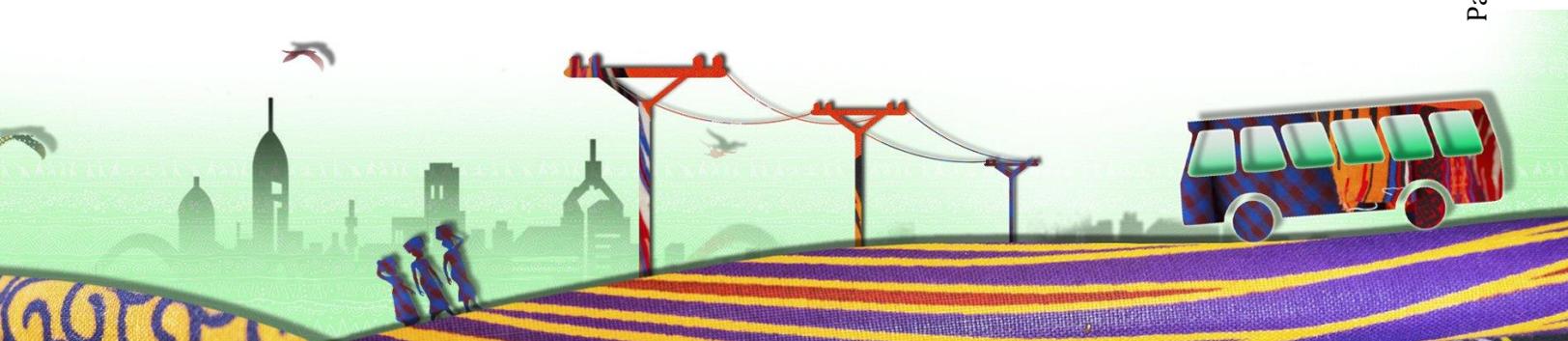
**Nomkhosi:** Which church do you go to now?

**Thandi:** I don't go to any church. I do not want to lie.

**Nomkhosi:** Where did you used to go to church?

**Thandi:** Me? How could a person that ate fire (*sidlamlilo*) go to church?

**Nomkhosi:** But who taught you to read the bible?





**Thandi:** I was told about the bible by a person who visited me as I was sleeping in the night (in a dream). He asked me if I could see that book and I said yes. He asked me what it was and I said it was a bible. He asked if I even read it. I said no. Then he said I should take it and read it. In the morning, a man called Makhathini came to my room.

**Nomkhosi:** Oh, that's my father's name (clan name).

**Thandi:** He went to a church called 'Back to God'. He came here.

**Nomkhosi:** Here to Thokoza?

**Thandi:** Yes, here to my room. He said: "Hawu, Thandi, you have become sick."

**Nomkhosi:** You had had a stroke by then.

**Thandi:** Yes. He said they did not tell me [about the bible]. He came to my room and he prayed and prayed and prayed. When we were done he spoke about the bible. I said Hawu! This man talks about the words that I read in the bible that was given to me by the person in the night. I said this in my heart. I said: "Oh no." Then I said: "Thank you, father." He asked me how I would feel if he were to give me a bible and I said I would be happy. He took it out. Ey! I took it out and opened it at Job chapter 2 and I read. I said: "Mmmm. There is no pain that I have felt compared to [the pain of] the man called Job. That man really felt pain." I read this book from the start to the end. I said: "Why not me?" I knew that I had done wrong in the eyes of Jehova. I was messing with the creation of Jehova and it was God himself that I was messing with. I was touching the creation of God and I did not respect people.

**Nomkhosi:** Tell me, what is it that you were doing when you say you were rude? From the way you were raised in your home, where did things change?

**Thandi:** I would be lying. People do believe, but personally I was never a believer because I was always a Zulu traditional woman who was only involved in traditional dance (*owayesina ingoma*).

**Nomkhosi:** Can you still do that dance? You can raise your feet and people open up space for you?

**Thandi:** Yes, I could do that if I was healthy. But I said that I should move away from dancing. What I have seen now is a beautiful God and I saw that traditional dance would send me back. Now I have to talk about God. I have to talk about the salvation of God, not the one which they have now. I have to talk about my own and the one I have seen. The salvation I have seen is now!

**Nomkhosi:** How is it?

**Thandi:** No, I don't like it.

**Nomkhosi:** Tell me, what is the difference between the salvation which is around and the one which you say you possess?

**Thandi:** I can see that I will do it when I am healed. My salvation [comes from] Jehova. In any church that I will join, people won't put on this thing (pointing to my pants).

**Nomkhosi:** People won't put on trousers?

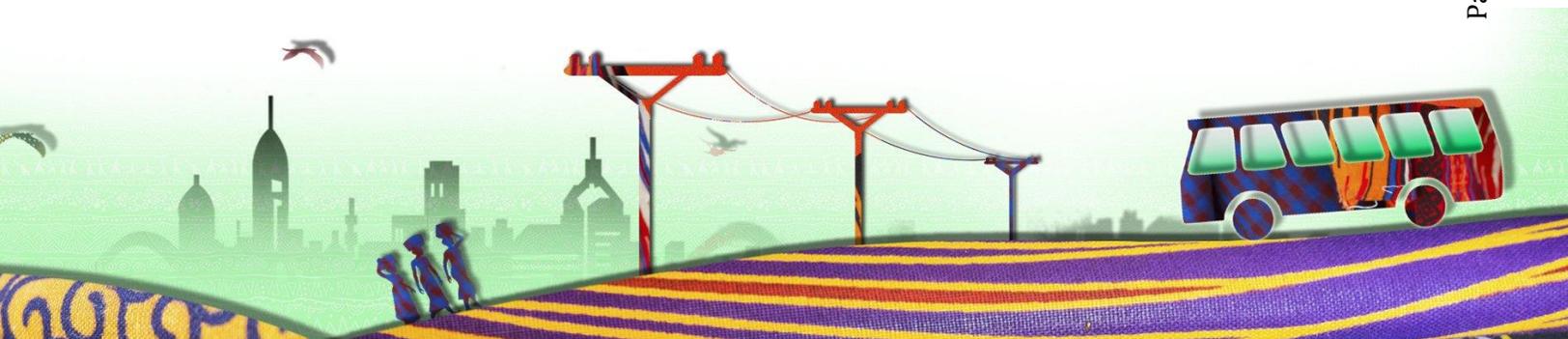
**Thandi:** No, they won't. And respect. People would have to stop gossiping in churches.

**Nomkhosi:** How do you know because you do not go to church?

**Thandi:** Well, I do visit most of the churches here and I see and I say: "Lord, please let this pass." I would ask God to let this *sitsha* (ordeal) pass. I look at women. In one of the churches, women do not wear pants. Even on the heads they wear headscarves. They show some respect because they are in a Gospel church. Even a small child covers her head.

**Nomkhosi:** You are still not happy? What are you complaining about?

**Thandi:** At church, my child, I am complaining about gossiping. You know when I sit at the back of the church I can watch everybody at the church. I see them doing things that I do not like. You have to





dress smartly; you have to have beautiful clothes. Personally, I do not have beautiful clothes to put on. I laughed the other day when another woman gave me two sets of clothes. She gave me a skirt as well.

**Nomkhosi:** What were you laughing at?

**Thandi:** I laughed and said to myself that this woman can see. I said thank you. My clothes were stolen when I had a stroke. I had washed clothes and hung them in four lines: skirts, t-shirts and dresses. Now I can't buy clothes because when I had a stroke. I was chased away from the hospital. They asked Smah, who was at home, and she said that because one granny had passed on I was now responsible for our household. And she was correct because I was really the one who was the head of the household. So she told that to the doctors and the doctors said they should be take me home so that I could die at home.

**Nomkhosi:** So that you could die at home? Were you dying?

**Thandi:** I could not talk. I was just a thing that had saliva and there was everything wrong with me. I would shit on myself and urinate on myself. I did not know how to ask them to give me something to shit on. I was like a dead body.

**Nomkhosi:** What helped you?

**Thandi:** I used a lot of *muthi*. Anywhere they said I could get help, I would go there or send a child to go there. I had the stroke in December 2012. In 2011, I was planning to buy a car to transport my granny to her church in Matebetulo.

**Nomkhosi:** Where were you working?

**Thandi:** I was working here at Thokoza. I had saved enough money.

**Nomkhosi:** Were you employed by the municipality?

**Thandi:** No, I was on contract. I told Khanyile (the supervisor) that I wanted to surprise my mom. That is how I called my granny. I wanted to take her in my own car and send her to Matabetulo. I asked him (Khanyile) to help me look for a second-hand car. They were selling these at weekends. That day never arrived. All that money that I had saved all got finished through trying different kinds of healing. That is why I said this year that December will be the last time I would touch *umuthi*. I will never use it again. I would not go to traditional healers again.

**Nomkhosi:** You mean this December (2016)?

**Thandi:** No, I meant last year. I had said I would never take *muthi* again and really I stopped taking it. I took it all and asked a child to throw it away. I wanted to test this man called God to see if [he really is the truth]. He is the greatest healer.

**Nomkhosi:** How was your situation last year compared to now? Or were you already like this?

**Thandi:** No, no no. You see here (pointing to the side of the mouth) I still had saliva coming out [of my mouth].

**Nomkhosi:** Last year?

**Thandi:** Yes, last year. You see, I could not stand up and do this (she stands up starting to make movements, walking forward). I could not do this. I would stop and rest here, and then start walking again, relying on furniture for support. Give me my walking stick. (I hand it over to her.) As you see, in this room I can walk around like this.

**Nomkhosi:** Since when?

**Thandi:** Since last year. In December I threw away all *muthi*. I started this year with standing on my own. I started standing and I gave praises to God. I told him he is worthy. Please help me move this thing (pointing to the brakes of the wheelchair). I started giving praises to God. I thank God, even now, that I have done my washing. I have soaked it over there. I have washed it and I am now waiting for





someone who will wring it for me. This is something I could not do last year, but now I can do it. Yes, I am grateful to God. I say this even as I carry my bible. There is another one which has been given to me by Sis Phile. She said: "Sis Thandi, this bible is getting old and worn out now." I said it has to be like that because I carry it only with one hand. You see, even now I don't have the strength to get about. I say to Jehova: "Those who have not seen you are still very far from seeing you." Even I knew that I had sinned before God. Yes, it is true that I had a stroke because of *muthi* but I know that Jehova had sent the one who did this to me. I told that person as well.

**Nomkhosi:** So you know that person as well?

**Thandi:** Yes, I know the person.

**Nomkhosi:** What makes you think that you did such wrong against God?

**Thandi:** Before God you must do soul searching. You must know that you were wrong in some of the things that you have done. I left home and Mr Shabalala took me and I went to live at Lindelani. My life was very bad. Our deeds were very bad, together with the brothers we were with.

**Nomkhosi:** What were you doing?

**Thandi:** Ay, it's not easy to say those things.

**Nomkhosi:** I know the name of Shabalala because I was also young those days. But I knew that there was a man at Lindelani who was shot.

**Thandi:** Ay.

**Nomkhosi:** But all of that has passed now. Even the IFP has become a normal political party.

**Thandi:** But eish ...

**Nomkhosi:** Did you hurt people?

**Thandi:** Too much.

**Nomkhosi:** ANC people or everybody?

**Thandi:** Especially ANC people.

**Nomkhosi:** You wanted to kill them? I know Shabalala was famous for killing.

**Thandi:** Ey! He would turn into an orange.

**Nomkhosi:** What is an orange?

**Thandi:** An orange is the fruit that you eat.

**Nomkhosi:** How? Because of the *muthi* that he used?

**Thandi:** Yes. But in all that, we never saw the presence of God. We only thought that he was killed by those that hated him.

**Nomkhosi:** So you have stayed at Lindelani before? You did not move here straight from Thafamasi?

**Thandi:** I moved from Thafamasi to [Thokoza]. I would go to Lindelani and then go back home to Thafamasi.

**Nomkhosi:** Were you working in Thafamasi?

**Thandi:** No, that is my home.

**Nomkhosi:** Yes, but did you have a job there?

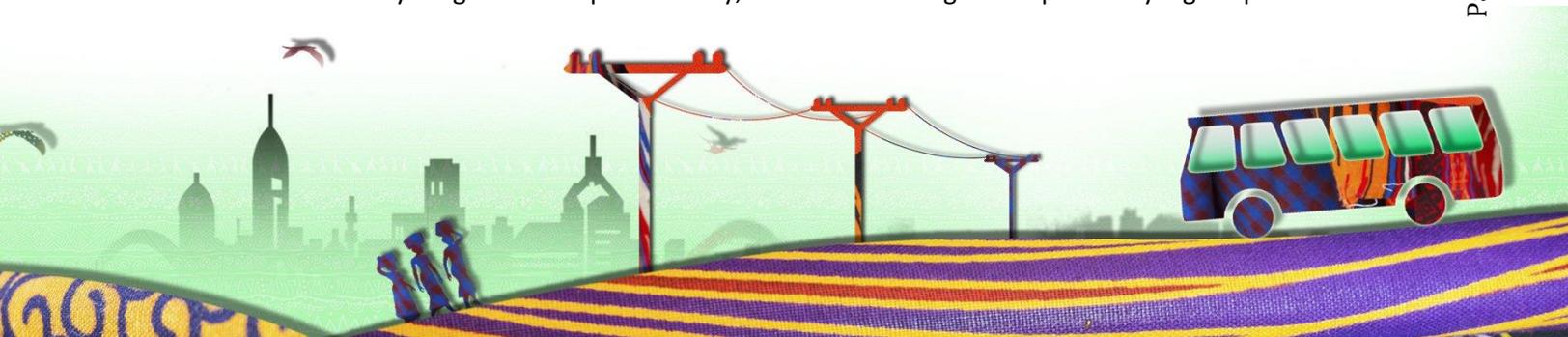
**Thandi:** No, I did not have to work. Shabalala was taking care of all our needs. I was a faithful servant.

**Nomkhosi:** How old were you then?

**Thandi:** I was very young. But, eventually I left those Shabalala issues, and I went and looked for a place at Mamba (Inanda). I found a space there. My uncle found it for me—a place where I could sell. So I went there and I started my own tuck-shop.

**Nomkhosi:** What were you selling?

**Thandi:** I sold everything. When he passed away, I continued selling and I opened my big shop.





**Nomkhosi:** You are a business person as well?

**Thandi:** Yes, a lot of people would come and buy alcohol, as well as vetkoeks. I was not too interested in those who bought other items. I wanted those who were going to drink alcohol and buy vetkoeks.

**Nomkhosi:** (Laughs)

**Thandi:** One weekend I had to go home and do a ceremony for my granny. When I arrived at home my small granny (the one I call mom) was already there and they had already bought a cow for the ceremony. We finished the ceremony. Everybody ate, even on Sunday. I stayed at home on Monday and on Tuesday I came back. When I came back I could not enter my house. When I arrived, there were guys who had taken over my shop—it was basically theirs. They had also found my pictures and IFP cards. They overturned every table. They knew everything about me. There was another girl who told them everything about me. *Yangimpimpa* (she informed/spied on me). She spied on me. She told them I was IFP.

**Nomkhosi:** Who were those guys?

**Thandi:** They were ANC. I just confessed to everything because they already knew everything about me. It was not going to help me to deny anything. I knew that I was going to die anyway, so I might as well say everything because I knew I was going to die.

**Nomkhosi:** It was difficult those days.

**Thandi:** Very difficult. It was around 4pm at that time. They caught me and kicked me. They kicked me into the car and I kept quiet—I just looked at them. They slapped me hard and said: “What are you looking at, *klova* (insulting name given to IFP supporters)?” I started wondering how my family would find my body. I did not think they would find me. I took out a pen and I started writing on my hand my name, surname and where I am from and my whole address.

**Nomkhosi:** On your hand?

**Thandi:** Yes, I wrote on my hand. The car went through Amaoti, through to Amaotana, heading to eTafuleni.

**Nomkhosi:** eTafuleni, the cemetery?

**Thandi:** Exactly in the cemetery. The graveyard is on top and there is a bush with *umhoshha*, *umhoshha* (crevices) with dead bodies. They asked me how many ANC people I had killed?

**Nomkhosi:** They asked you?

**Thandi:** Yes, and I said ... hoooo ... it's a lot. We were actually killing each other. It's not like I was just killing them.

**Nomkhosi:** Don't tell me that's how you answered them?

**Thandi:** I promise you I did. I was already expecting to die and I was always rude. I told them we were killing each other. There were many people I had killed and there were also a lot of IFP people that had died. A girl called Siya said: “You, girl, are rude.”

**Nomkhosi:** You knew some of them?

**Thandi:** Yes.

**Nomkhosi:** Is Siya still around?

**Thandi:** Wait, I am coming there. They said I was really rude. I told them I was not rude—I was just answering the question. I told them I did not kill people alone. We were killing each other because if they had found me they were going to kill me. With that, I got another hot slap as well as a good kick. I fell down and stood up again. By then I really believed that I was going to die. I had told my heart that this is it. I started talking to my ancestors asking them to welcome me. I also thought it was good that





I had just had that ancestral ceremony for my granny, so the ancestors were still satisfied with meat. I was saying all this in my heart, not spitting the words out.

They hit me, they beat me up, and I even could not talk anymore. Blood was coming out through the mouth. I could not hear properly. I could hear faint sounds. I could not stand up. I had a broken rib from being kicked and smacked. When it became time for me to be killed, the councillor said to his brothers that they could be punished if they kill their target before taking all her possessions. And I said to myself that my ancestors were with me. This man said, instead of killing her, its better we leave her here. There was no place that was not bleeding on my body. Blood was even coming out my ears. So they left me.

When I tried to stand up, I could not. I was not sure if I was still alive or not. Later that night a man came in a car. The car lights were not on but he knew the way. He lifted me up and put me in the car. He drove and drove. He stopped somewhere—I don't know where. He drove on again. I could feel that I was in the car.

**Nomkhosi:** What was the name of this man?

**Thandi:** I can't remember the name of this man but I knew he was a councillor. He put me out at the Durban station. The police there called an ambulance and said they didn't know whether I was dead or alive. The ambulance came and took me to King Edward. I was there for six months without being able to talk or open my eyes. In the seventh month, I opened my eyes and I asked myself where I was. I could not talk. I looked around and I did not know. A nurse came and asked me what my name was. I asked myself my own name. She told me that since I entered the hospital I have been unknown; my name and address were not known. She asked for my name again. The more she asked me my name, the more I remembered, but when I tried to speak, I could not.

There were so many wires [plaster casts and things] to help my broken bones. I tried to move and I could not move. I asked for a pen and they gave me one. I used my hand and so they gave me a piece of paper. I wrote: I wrote my name and that I was from Thafamasi.

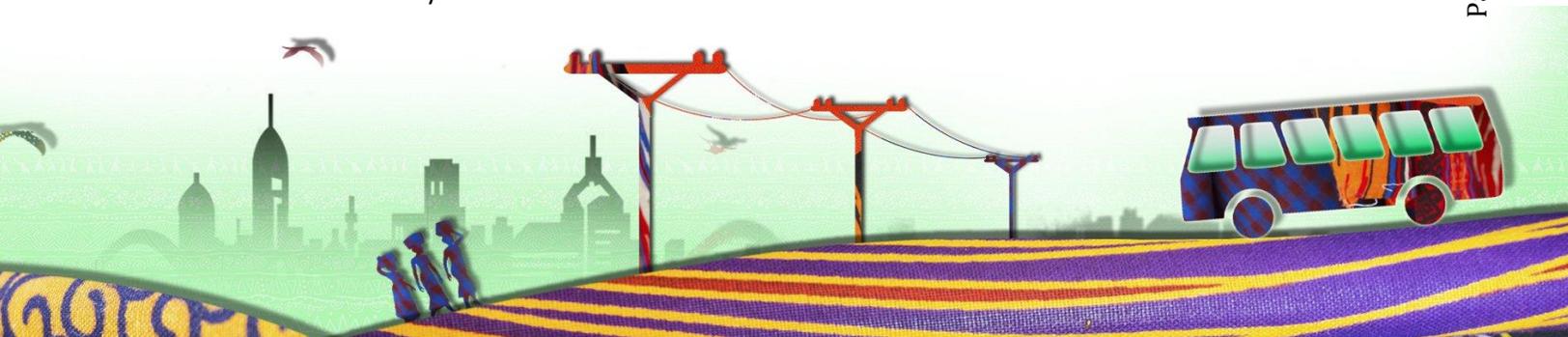
When she heard that I am from Thafamasi, she ran a mile going to fetch my aunt who was at the pediatric ward at King Edward. When my aunt saw me, she collapsed. They tried to bring her back. She was then sent to fetch my parents from home. What made my aunt collapse is that they had mourned my death at home and the mourning period had finished. They had spent three months mourning. When I came back, they were already in the process of forgetting about me.

I always tell [people] that it is not easy to kill me. A stroke is small business for me. People mourned for me and I came back just before they forgot about me. They had heard that I was taken by *amaqabane* (comrades) who killed me at eTafuleni. Everyone knew that nobody came back from eTafuleni.

My aunt brought the whole family in Mr Dingile's taxi to see me at King Edward. Everybody wanted to come and see if it was really me. They wanted to see this person who had been mourned for, for whom Zulu alcohol had been prepared and consumed. People were saying that Thandi had gone. Actually at home they called me Nano. But some said that they did a good job for killing me. They killed such a strong lady, a fighter. They did a good job by killing her.

So my family came and everybody was crying. I just kept quiet and I was looking at them. My tears also started coming down as I saw my family crying. They greeted me. They asked what they could buy me. The nurses said I could not eat anything except being fed with a pipe and taking liquids. They kept on visiting me, right until the end of the year. I got out of the hospital in January.

**Nomkhosi:** How many months was that then?





**Thandi:** It was the eleventh month. That was when I came out and came here. When you move to Thokoza for the first time, you sleep outside.

**Nomkhosi:** Why would you sleep outside? Would you sleep on the floor or outside?

**Thandi:** Because you did not have space to sleep, you slept in the passage, but I never slept like that. I came here through Mr Shabalala. He went straight to the office and he told them to give me a room. He explained that I had a problem where I came from, and they could see how I looked, I still had [plaster casts]. I was walking funny. When Benedida tried to say something, Shabalala asked him if he knew him. Benedida said no.

**Nomkhosi:** Was Benedida now IFP?

**Thandi:** He was, but not when he was at work. He told him: "I am Shabalala from Lindelani and I am requesting a room." He asked him where he lived. He said at Stanger. Shabalala told him he would not reach Stanger. Then Benedida went and looked for a room for me and he gave me room 141. Shabalala said he was giving him a few days to look for another room closer to the gate and easily accessible to other places. The following day this guy had found me a new room at 171. He also arranged that I saw a doctor constantly until I started to feel better. Then I went to Lindelani and I said: "Hey you guys, I am really alive!"

**Nomkhosi:** So were there also women in this team?

**Thandi:** Yes, there were seven of us.

**Nomkhosi:** Were they also fire eaters like you?

**Thandi:** Yes, they were also fire eaters from Lindelani. Two of them were from Pietermaritzburg. I said to them: "Hey, guys, I am alive!" They gave me *umuthi* and I brought it back with me to Thokoza. I ate it till I finished it. I could feel that I was well now. I went back to Shabalala. I got clothes that fitted me. These were police uniforms. There were seven of us in all.

**Nomkhosi:** Were you really police officers?

**Thandi:** How I could I ever be a police officer as *ibhinca* (an uneducated person)?

**Nomkhosi:** He gave you a police uniform?

**Thandi:** Yes, we always had them at Lindelani.

**Nomkhosi:** Did you have the police badges?

**Thandi:** No, we did not care about those badges. Once we were in our uniform, we were police. We would target you nicely with a gun, shoot and kill you and move on.

**Nomkhosi:** So you knew the people who did that to you?

**Thandi:** I knew all of them because this was the crew I lived with there. Those were my crew. I even used to give them food. When a person said they were hungry I would give them food.

**Nomkhosi:** So you went back to them?

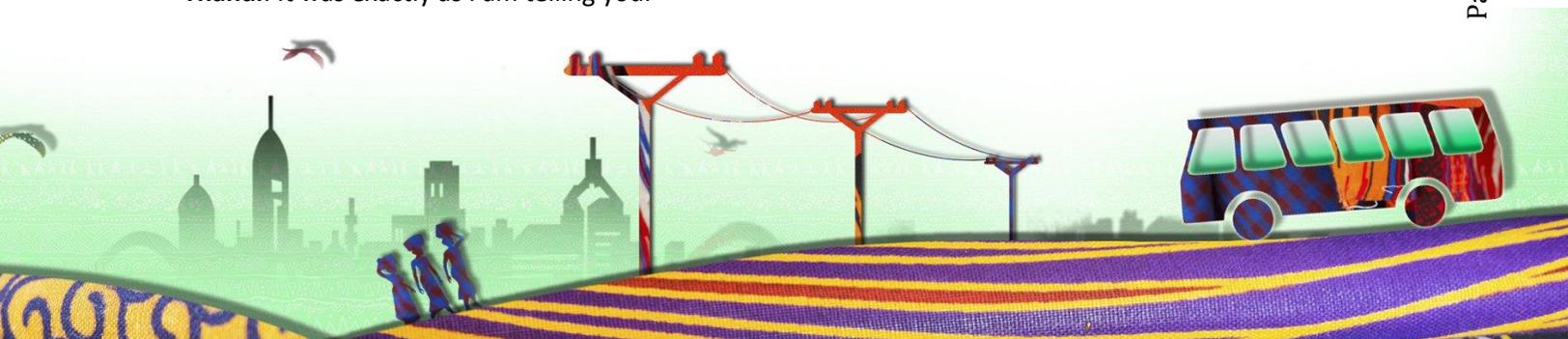
**Thandi:** Yes, I did. In one night I finished all their houses.

**Nomkhosi:** Killing them?

**Thandi:** I finished them at the last minute. I left with the guy who saved my life. After three months I went to see him with Shabalala. Shabalala asked me what I wanted to give him because he had shown humanity to me. So I took him gifts. I bought him two big blankets, shirts and groceries which I gave to his wife. He was so happy. He told me that the whole group that had hurt me died. I cried and asked what happened to them. He said people came in the night in their houses and killed them all. I said that was very painful.

**Nomkhosi:** No!

**Thandi:** It was exactly as I am telling you.





**Nomkhosi:** So was it you who killed them or you sent your friends to kill them?

**Thandi:** I never used to send people to do the job. I did things myself. I used to say that a person who harmed me would be harmed by me in return. This is why I am turning to God, my child. He is washing me of my sins. He is washing away all my dirtiness. As a woman who lived the life of a man, God is still cleansing me. When I see a person feeling sorry for me, I say: “No, no, no, don’t feel sorry for me. That’s not how God wants it.” I, the person who has had this stroke, am not feeling sorry

**Nomkhosi:** What was the cause of Shabalala’s death?

**Thandi:** He was killed by a very young boy. He shot him.

**Nomkhosi:** How do you know that he was killed by a small boy?

**Thandi:** I used to spend a lot of time at Shabalala’s place. He was really shot by a small boy. It’s a small boy if he was born in the 1980s.

**Nomkhosi:** Was that an ANC boy?

**Thandi:** I am not sure about that. I never really knew whether they were ANC or working on their own. But it is possible. If one did not do things as he promised, we had to kill him.

**Nomkhosi:** (laughs)

**Thandi:** Yes, we must kill you.

**Nomkhosi:** You never got into his wrong path?

**Thandi:** No, not me.

**Nomkhosi:** How was his wife?

**Thandi:** The older one?

**Nomkhosi:** Oh, so he had wives.

**Thandi:** Yes, he had three. I don’t even wanna mention the crowds and crowds of girlfriends, your age group. Some of them brought themselves to him. Some he took by force because they could not report him. Even if they reported him, most of the police officers were on his side. That man said I should come back.

**Nomkhosi:** Come back where?

**Thandi:** To Mamba. I said I could not go back. I had a very big house there. I had a six-room, built with blocks. So I came to live here at Thokoza. When I came here I also burnt fire [for the] IFP. Really a comrade (*iqabane*) would not speak to me.

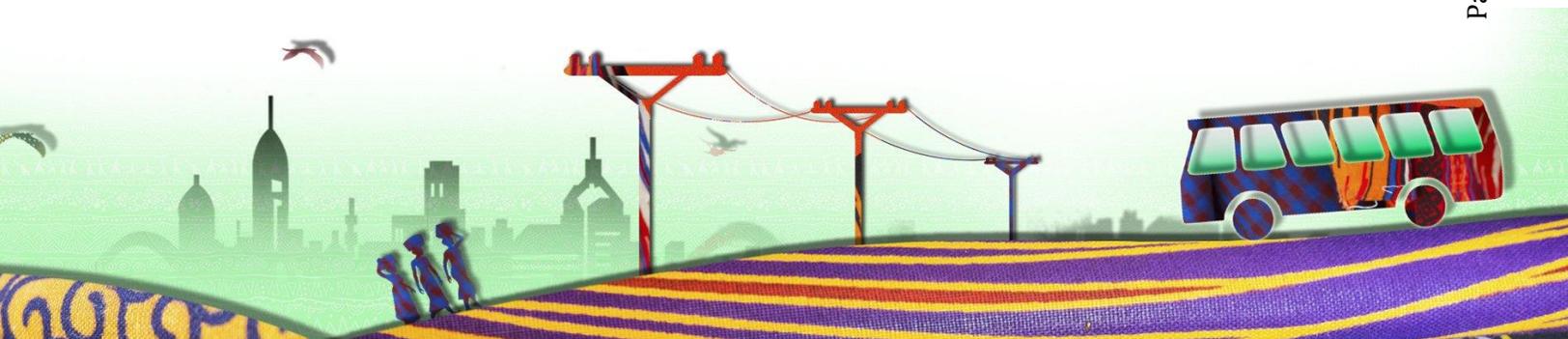
**Nomkhosi:** (laughs)

**Thandi:** Really, he would not. At voting time, I kept quiet but I could see that the ANC was getting the majority in the results. Here in Thokoza there were only ANC [supporters]. There was no IFP. When we called community meetings, the hall would be so full. When it came [to the election] I said the person who made your vote secret did a great job. I used to discuss this with the other guys. I would speak with them, not knowing if they would vote IFP. They would also agree with me, but I really did not trust anybody to be IFP at that time. In 2011, when Sis Bonie was a councillor here, I said that I would leave this thing behind because people were making a fool of me.

**Nomkhosi:** Was Bonnie an IFP councillor?

**Thandi:** She was ANC. I went to her and told her that I wanted to join the ANC. She cried and said: “No, Sis Thandi, they will kill you—the very people that are your friends.” I said: “No, they won’t kill me. I don’t want the IFP—they are making a fool of me.”

There are few IFP members here and there are many ANC supporters. I asked why the ANC won elections all the time. She said: “No, hold on.” I said: “No, the ANC always wins—there is not a single





time when the IFP won.” I asked her for a membership card. She said she would give me one but it would have to be our secret.

So when IFP called meetings, I would just remain in my room. They would come to my room and ask why I am not going to the meeting, I would tell them to leave me alone, as they thought I was stupid. I told them to leave me alone.

Sis Bonie told me that they had an ANC meeting by the beach and I went there. I started attending ANC meetings. I loved the ANC but it was not like IFP. The reason I loved the IFP more was because I am uneducated—I am *bhinca*. When we had our meetings, we would put on our traditional attire and we would fill up busses and sing our songs. These people [the ANC] do not put on traditional clothes. This is the main thing I liked about IFP. I did not necessarily know much about IFP as a political party. Even when I lived at Lindelani, I did not know much, I only knew how to fight and how to shoot.

**Nomkhosi:** Who taught you how to shoot?

**Thandi:** We learnt it at Lindelani.

**Nomkhosi:** Did you undergo formal training in shooting?

**Thandi:** It was not formal. It was just for us. They taught us how to shoot to kill a person. They would put up a target that we had to shoot. If you missed it five times, you would also get five lashes (being beaten).

**Nomkhosi:** Who hit you?

**Thandi:** The big guns of the organisation.

**Nomkhosi:** Why have you never lived at the KwaMashu hostel?

**Thandi:** I have never lived there. At KwaMashu, if you are a woman, you only lived there if you had a man. Even at Lindelani, I never had a man. We were like soldiers for Shabalala and we were not having affairs. I saw that if I had to live with a man, he would have been enslaved—he would have to cook and wash. I wouldn’t know the difference between us. I just know I have a vagina and he has testicles. Otherwise, I do not see a difference.

**Nomkhosi:** Can I ask this: has your perception of men changed since then?

**Thandi:** Yes, it has changed. But anyway I got sick even though I was not interested in marital affairs.

**Nomkhosi:** How many children do you have?

**Thandi:** I have two. They are old and have their own houses. Xolani lives at eMatikwe.

**Nomkhosi:** Is he married?

**Thandi:** No, but he has paid *lobola* and he has built his house there. Smah is cohabiting with her boyfriend at Umlazi. I do not know where that it.

**Nomkhosi:** How old is Smah?

**Thandi:** She is the older one.

**Nomkhosi:** What are their age groups?

**Thandi:** Leave me alone—I do not know their ages.

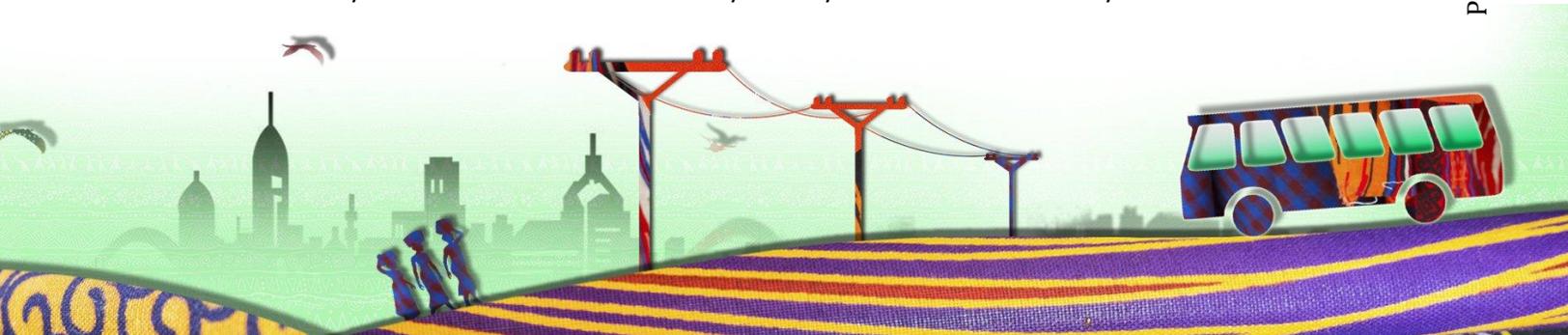
**Nomkhosi:** You do not even know the years they were born?

**Thandi:** I do not know them.

**Nomkhosi:** When did you last see them?

**Thandi:** Xolani was here last week. Today is what? Thursday. He came on Friday. He comes here often because he is studying to become a security [guard] here at the Durban station. Smah—I have not seen her for a month. I live with her daughter.

**Nomkhosi:** Smah is old enough to have a daughter who has finished matric and studying in town. I remember you told me this when I first met you. Do your children know that you used to shoot?





**Thandi:** That I was a fire eater? They do not play around with me. They know very well the kind of life I lived.

**Nomkhosi:** At what time of life did you give birth to your children?

**Thandi:** I gave birth at the right time because I was still married to Ngidi.

**Nomkhosi:** When was that?

**Thandi:** Leave me alone—I don't know.

**Nomkhosi:** (laughs)

**Thandi:** I gave birth to them quickly, one after the other, and then their father passed away. Xolani does not know his father.

**Nomkhosi:** Where did you live when you gave birth?

**Thandi:** I was living at home.

**Nomkhosi:** At Thafamasi. Was the father from Thafamasi as well?

**Thandi:** No, he was from Zwathini.

**Nomkhosi:** Where did Smah and Xolani grow up?

**Thandi:** At home.

**Nomkhosi:** Do they get along?

**Thandi:** Very much. They get along too well. I also get along with them very well. Except that, I do not like wrong things. I cannot take it. I will eventually send [Smah's] child Sthah away from here because I am able to do things for myself.

On Saturday she left here with her uncle's wife (*ephelzele ukhulu owumalumekazi*). I was expecting her to come back on Sunday and go to school on Monday. And she left.

I then heard from ukhulu, uncle's wife, that they arrived at Ndwedwe. She left everything there and went back. But she did not come back here until Sunday afternoon. When she came she cleaned and then she told me that she was going to her mom. I asked her if she was not supposed to be going to school and she said she was off for a whole week. So I asked why she had to come back from her [uncle's place] and she did not give me an answer. Today when I called her mother and asked where Sthah was. She said she is at Ntuzuma. I asked her why the child is going around all over the place.

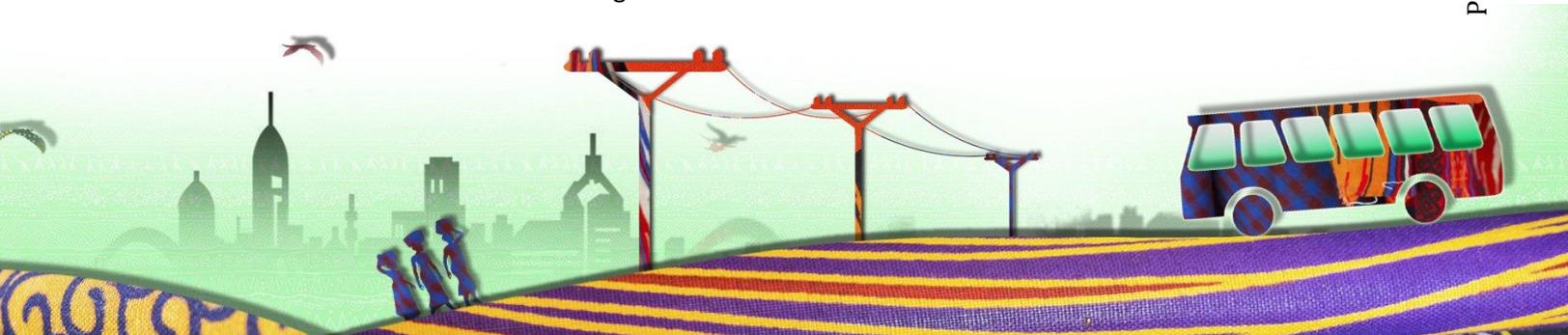
At home they said they would not give me an RDP house because I do not already have any kind of a shelter. So now I am busy pouring out cash, building a two-room which is never finishing. They tell me that now there are six spaces before the house can be finished. I asked [Smah] if she would like me to remain at the hostel. She said: "Ey sisi, I did not know." I said: "Smah, maybe you have forgotten what kind of a person I am. I really believe in God but I do not take (shit) rubbish" (*Ngiyakholwa ukukholwa kodwa amasimba angizwani nawo*). Even now I really do not like it. I don't take rubbish. She said she would come and see me and I told her there would be no good reason to come. I said: "When your child comes back here, she will have to pack her bags and leave me in peace. This is my house, here at Thokoza, because I am the one who is renting." She never answered me.

**Nomkhosi:** Who lives at Ntuzuma?

**Thandi:** My little sister. In the evening I will load airtime and call her to ask if she is with Sthah over there. I will tell her: "How are you feeling about it? Is it really nice to have her there? I do my washing with one hand. I am eating porridge and washing dishes with one hand. Is it nice that she is there?" I will ask her if it's nice that Smah is there.

**Nomkhosi:** Why are you making her the guilty one now?

**Thandi:** No, I want them to be always on their toes. I don't want them to relax about my case. They can't relax with me. I am not a hair straightener.





**Nomkhosi:** (laughs)

**Thandi:** No, they can't use me like that. I am not a relaxer. I am not a relaxer at all.

**Nomkhosi:** Since you live here, where do you say your home is?

**Thandi:** It is at Thafamasi, where I was born.

**Nomkhosi:** This is where you are building so you can get an RDP?

**Thandi:** Yes, we are moving up from the bottom. All the other houses have moved and we are the only ones who are left.

**Nomkhosi:** Is your sister at Ntuzuma married?

**Thandi:** No, she is not. She has her own house.

**Nomkhosi:** So she does not take care of your home?

**Thandi:** No, she would be taking care of it if she had a better job. She has also given birth to many children. She likes to live with a man and he does not work. She has three children. The oldest is in matric, so now she has many things that she is taking care of. Her finances are very busy.

**Nomkhosi:** How many siblings do you have?

**Thandi:** There were eleven of us, but now I am only left with Themba and Mantombi and Nti—the one at Ntuzuma.

**Nomkhosi:** Where is Themba?

**Thandi:** He goes around living everywhere.

**Nomkhosi:** Where does he live now?

**Thandi:** I have heard that he lives at Mzinyathi but I am not sure.

**Nomkhosi:** And the other one?

**Thandi:** She lives here in the hostel.

**Nomkhosi:** At Thokoza?

**Thandi:** Yes, she is my blood sister.

**Nomkhosi:** What is her name?

**Thandi:** It is Ntombi.

**Nomkhosi:** Do you get along with her?

**Thandi:** Yes we do, but the thing with me is that I look carefully at things and I do not like *ihlazo* (disgrace), so it is difficult to get along with me. So, in her case, she is close to *ihlazo* because she is cohabiting and she does not take care of our home.

**Nomkhosi:** Where is she cohabiting?

**Thandi:** At Umlazi.

**Nomkhosi:** Oh, so she still has a room here.

**Thandi:** Yes.

**Nomkhosi:** How old is that person? She seems old. She can probably do whatever she wants to do because she is old.

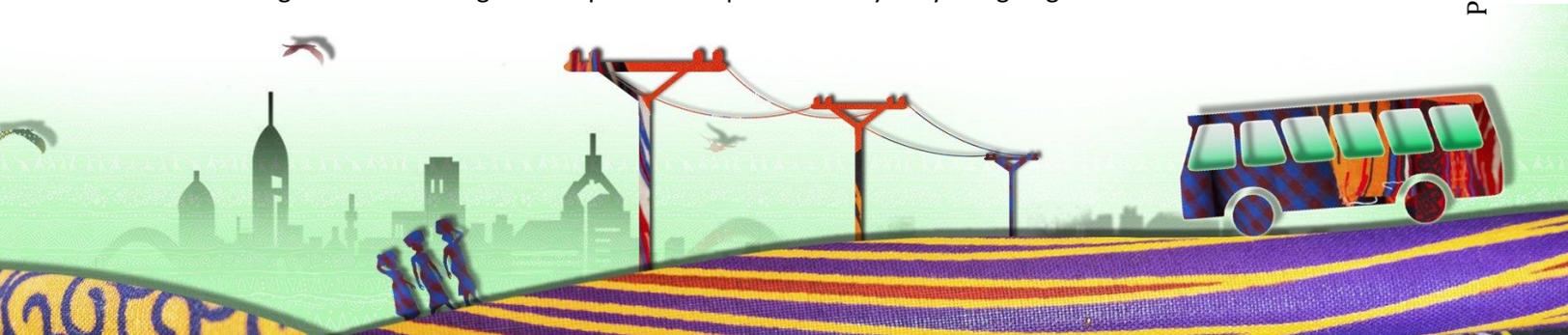
**Thandi:** Yes, she is quite old.

**Nomkhosi:** Is she older or younger to you?

**Thandi:** She is younger. My child, these days you cannot do whatever you want. There are diseases. I will recover from this stroke—this is only temporary. I will build that house at home. When I am done building it I will go home. When you get sick, where will you go?

**Nomkhosi:** One would definitely have to go home.

**Thandi:** You say this because you do not know me. Which home will you go to? I lived here at Thokoza for a long time even though it was painful. People would say they are going to their homes and I would





really feel pain deep in my heart. When I heard somebody saying they were going home, I would also wish that I could go home but there was no home. If I wanted to go home, I would have to take a taxi and jump off at Eskhaleni and a child would have to carry me in a wheelbarrow to my home. At home I would live with snakes. You hear me?

**Nomkhosi:** Why do you say there are snakes?

**Thandi:** There are snakes at home. There is this thing they call ... what is this animal ... it's like a dog. It bites and is dangerous but we have a lot of those at home. I live with snakes. At some stage I had an *imfezi* (cobra). I looked at it as it moved away while I was in bed. It was this big. I watched it until it left the house. I did not know how many there were or where it came from. Nobody lives there now.

**Nomkhosi:** Who helps you with the building of your home?

**Thandi:** The wife of Macija.

**Nomkhosi:** Is that a neighbour or a relative?

**Thandi:** It's a neighbour but the Macija household is part of our family. She is our neighbour, but the Macija household is also our home. She is the one I send money to and they are building a mud house. And what are you telling me? You are telling me that you will get there and relax at my house, when you are sick from HIV (*uma selikubambile iqhoksi*) (laughs). And it will hold you down. And men run away when you are held down by HIV. They really run away. You get left behind. They say: "Take me outside; take me inside, *awe nkosi yami.*" But because I have a good heart, I will nurse them.

**Nomkhosi:** You have a good heart?

**Thandi:** No, I do have [a good heart]. I do feel sorry when a person gets sick. Even my own child has it. It's not like she [is sick] right now, but she still has it. I was called when I was here at Thokoza. My mom (granny) called me. She was still alive at that time. She said, "Nano, Smah has been bewitched where she is cohabiting at Nxumalo, and I do not know what we are going to do about this." I said: "No, it's okay, mom. Tell me when she is dead so I can come and bury her. There is no problem."

**Nomkhosi:** You said that about your own child?

**Thandi:** Yes, I said it about my own child. My mother cried so much. I felt sorry for her and I went home in the evening. She told me all about it. I asked if this is not AIDS. She said it wasn't. At that time my aunt had died just two months previously. My mom and other aunts said that they would not bring her dead body to the house because she had died because of HIV. When I arrived, coming here from Thokoza, I asked if they had bathed her dead body. They said they had not bathed her. When I asked why they said because she had this thing (showing 3 fingers to symbolise HIV). I went to another granny and told her that my aunt had not been bathed. She said: "Hayibo!"

**Nomkhosi:** Why did they not put on gloves?

**Thandi:** They had gloves but they were too scared to use them. So I stood up and asked all the uncles to leave the room where she lay. I also asked all the women to leave the room because the HIV would fly from the dead body and stick to them (she was being sarcastic). They all left the room in a hurry. I washed my aunt very painstakingly. I slanted the coffin to the side and I let her fall out. She was wrapped in a plastic sheet that was tied on top and in the bottom. I took a knife and cut it off.

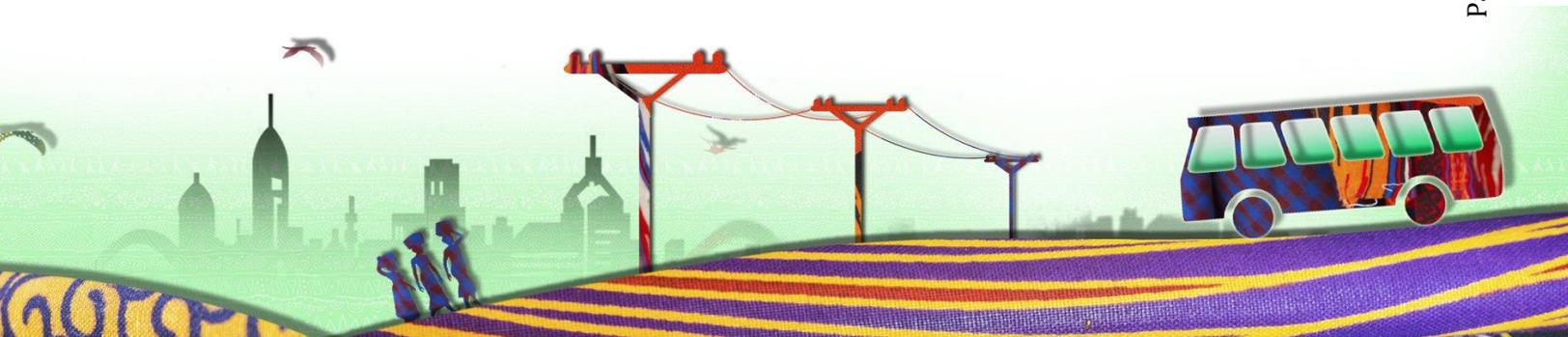
**Nomkhosi:** Why did you cut it?

**Thandi:** You think my aunt was going to go without clothes on?

**Nomkhosi:** Oh, you mean the plastic which covered the whole body?

**Thandi:** Yes. I cut it. I cleaned her and I clothed her. I clothed her while I held her with my thighs so that she would not fall.

**Nomkhosi:** You are a brave woman.





**Thandi:** I clothed her and I combed her hair.

**Nomkhosi:** There was nobody there to help you?

**Thandi:** No, they were all scared of HIV. I took a head scarf and wrapped it on her head. I made her sleep. I prepared the coffin for her. I put down a blanket and a sheet so she could sleep nicely. She was really tiny by then. I wrapped her nicely and I asked my uncles to come and pick her up and put her back in the coffin.

**Nomkhosi:** When was all this? Before or after you had the stroke?

**Thandi:** It was way before. The stroke only hit me in 2011. When I had finished with her she was buried nicely. Then two months passed and in the third month Smah fell sick. I asked my mom if this was not HIV, but she was quick to say, no it wasn't (gogo was being protective of her granddaughter).

**Nomkhosi:** Why don't you talk to Smah about this?

**Thandi:** Smah lives at Umlazi which is quite far and she has her own house now. When my aunt passed away, my mom said the children should put water into a big bowl for me so that I could wash off the HIV because I had been touching an HIV-positive person. She told the children to give me a soap and Jeyes Fluid. That's really what the children did. They gave me all those things. I took off my clothes and I washed. I was told that I had to leave my clothes which I had been wearing outside.

**Nomkhosi:** Do you not know that HIV is infectious?

**Thandi:** I know.

**Nomkhosi:** Did you wear gloves?

**Thandi:** No, I did not. I have washed many people who have died from it and I don't have it. I still don't have it.

**Nomkhosi:** But that is risky.

**Thandi:** It's not a risk, unless I have an open sore somewhere.

**Nomkhosi:** But you do not always know if you have openings in your body.

**Thandi:** No, I know myself.

**Nomkhosi:** It happens that you get a cut and don't pay attention to it.

**Thandi:** Who would be cutting me? That thing will not happen.

**Nomkhosi:** You claim to be a hero but you will get hurt (*isiskhokho esibhedayo*).

**Thandi:** There are so many people from this hostel who pass through my hands. Some of them are dead. [Some of them are sick]. Some of them would be neglected even with their own mothers and I would wash them. Their very own parents neglect them. I would wake up early on the morning, bathe the person and clothe them. One time I saw something hanging out of the vagina. I pushed it back into the vagina, because when I tried to pull it, she cried it was painful.

**Busi:** What piece of skin was that?

**Thandi:** I don't know—maybe it was *amalebe* (part of the genitalia).

(We all laugh. A friend, Busi, has joined the conversation).

**Busi:** It must have been, since it became painful.

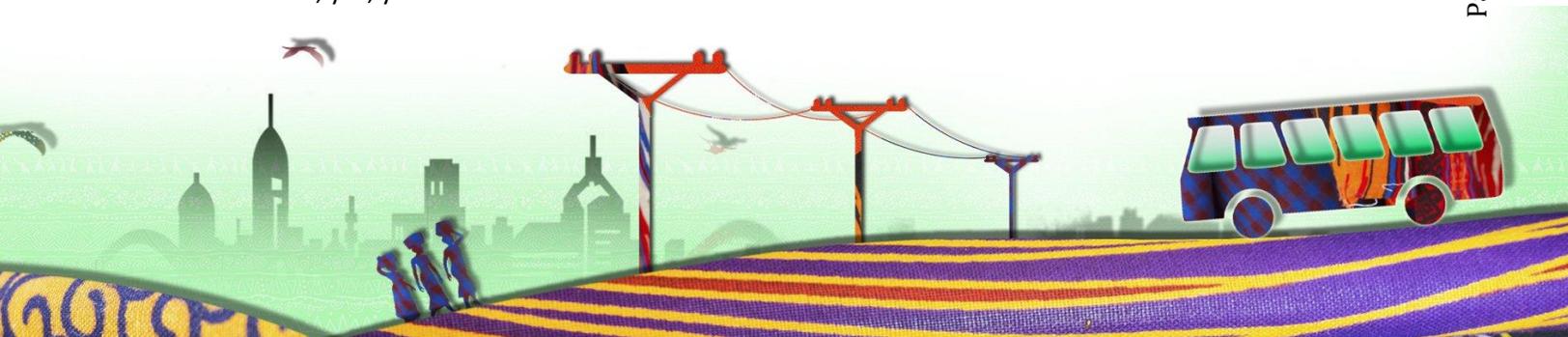
**Thandi:** *Hawu!*

**Busi:** Yes, some other things hang out.

**Thandi:** I just thought it was a piece of skin from vagina. When I pulled it, she cried and said it was painful so I pushed it back. I felt so sorry. My heart was sore.

**Nomkhosi:** But you say you would not do that for you own daughter, but you are busy washing and cleaning other sick people.

**Thandi:** Yes, yes, yes.





**Nomkhosi:** Why?

**Thandi:** Because I sent her to school and she failed. Instead she chose men. She even went and stayed with a man without my permission and without the family discussing the issue. She just went and lived there. I used to ask: "Mom, where is Smah?" It used to bother me so much to see my mom do everything for herself: she would collect wood and water on her own. Sometimes I would even send money so that she would pay someone who could help her with those chores. There are also too many snakes around our house. So when she (Smah) fell sick, she called me to say that Smah had been bewitched. I said: "Oh! How has she been bewitched?" She said it was those people where she was cohabiting. She said they envied her; they knew she was a powerful woman.

When she came there, there was only one room and now there are many rooms. I laughed a bit and said: "Aha!" I went to grandfather Jama and asked him to lend me the car. I called Smah and told her to get ready with her partner as I was coming. I told them to stand on top of the pathway because there was no road for the car. When I saw the partner, I wondered what this was. He was in a wheelbarrow.

**Nomkhosi:** Who was in the wheelbarrow?

**Thandi:** It was Smah's boyfriend.

**Nomkhosi:** Why was he in a wheelbarrow?

**Thandi:** He was not well and had lost a lot of weight. When I saw him, I just laughed and buried my face on the steering wheel of the car. I noticed that these people had been sick for a very long time. They were loaded into the car. It was a Venture belonging to Baba Jama.

**Nomkhosi:** So you can drive?

**Thandi:** (She looks at me and smiles).

**Nomkhosi:** Hey, am I reminding you of olden days?

**Thandi:** I just drove straight to Montebello hospital. When I got there, I found a nurse and explained things and asked her to help me with the people I had with me. I said if I was told to take them home I was not sure that they would still be alive by the time I got there.

**Nomkhosi:** They were both sick?

**Thandi:** Yes, but the man was worse. He turned around and asked Smah if he could pee. She asked him how she could lift him because she was not strong enough either. I watched them and just kept quiet. She then told him to try and move to the side so he could hang to the side and pee while in the car. I just looked the other direction.

Then another nurse pitched up and I again asked her to help me. I told her that I am with two very sick people. She said their shift has not started. And I changed and said: "*Ekse wena!* (tsotsi taal). Look at who you are talking to! I am Nano. I am telling you that the people that I am with in the car are sick. What is it that you are telling me?" She saw that I was not playing anymore. I went and fetched a stretcher bed. I told Smah to stand up so we could lift this guy up onto the bed. I told this guy that I did not care if he peed on himself. I put him on the bed. I then asked Smah if she could walk and she said she would try.

**Nomkhosi:** But they have since been better?

**Thandi:** Wait ... I sent them inside the hospital. I just stood there, waiting and looking at these nurses. I saw the one I asked first. I said: "Hey, sis, I asked for your help as I am with very sick people." I raised my voice. "Sis, I have asked you." She said: "Now you mean I have to stop helping all the other patients." I said: "You can see that these people are sick." "I can see that these people are sick but they are not as sick as the two who are with me." She said she would come back to help. I pulled her uniform





and it tore. I said, “*Ekse*, I am talking to you. Don’t you hear me?” She went straight to another doctor called Mkhize. This doctor came and asked me why I am being violent. I said: “Doctor, am I really violent? Look at these people that I am with and then tell me if I am violent.”

**Busi:** I wonder whose fault it was that they were not brought to the hospital earlier.

**Thandi:** The doctor said: “Hayibo! You look like somebody I know.” I said: “I look like who?” He said I looked like Joe’s sister. Joe was a police officer and I was also a police officer. He said: “You also used to be very rough. I remember in one funeral you wanted to eat people.” I told him that now I am a believer and I do not do those things. And he said: “But what were you saying now to the nurses?” I told him I am a believer, but yes it was me.

He then asked me what was wrong with the kids. I told him that I didn’t know what was wrong with them. I did not know what they ate—whether they ate food from below or they ate poison from the top. I said there are two types of poison. One you can eat through your mouth, and the other you eat through the bottom. I said: “I really do know not; you can ask them.” Then he said: “It is not allowed for people to take the HIV test in the presence of other people.” I told him that when these things die, they will be buried by me. I really need to know what it was that they ate. I said: “I want you to test them and find out what kind of poison they ate.

Then he helped me carry the boyfriend. They were both found to be HIV-positive. I cried out loud, saying: “You are busy claiming that people have bewitched you whereas you are the ones who have bewitched yourselves!” The doctor left me as I was shouting. He put him on a drip.

**Nomkhosi:** Excuse me, mah. I will have to leave in about 15 minutes. I have an appointment at 1pm.

**Thandi:** So what is it exactly that you wanted us to talk about in such limited time?

**Nomkhosi:** Let me see if I can cancel my appointment. Okay, you can continue.

**Thandi:** The boyfriend was admitted to the hospital and Smah was let out. They said she must take her treatment correctly. The boyfriend was too weak. I came back with Smah, and we used to visit this boyfriend until he came out. Now they are back at Umlazi and they have given birth to a child.

**Nomkhosi:** How old is their child?

**Thandi:** I think it’s about a year old.

**Nomkhosi:** The girl that you live with is not from this boyfriend?

**Thandi:** No, she is not. So, now tell me, what is it that you want to know about, my child.

**Nomkhosi:** As you have lived here at the hostel for a very long time, do you regard this as your home? You have already said that this is your house.

**Thandi:** The room is mine because I pay rent for it.

**Nomkhosi:** So you do pay rent?

**Thandi:** Yes.

**Nomkhosi:** And you are faithful at it?

**Thandi:** Yes.

**Nomkhosi:** Was there a time when you did not rent ... say, in the years when the majority was not paying rent?

**Thandi:** When we could not rent here at the hostel, I used to go and pay rent at the Shell House municipal offices because I always knew that I do not own this place. When they were rioting and would not pay rent, I would also join them but on the side I would be going to Shell house to pay my rent.

**Nomkhosi:** (laughs) What made you join them and still go and pay rent?

**Thandi:** I was thinking that when I do not pay rent for a long time or if I fail to pay it when the sum was too large, I would be blacklisted.





**Nomkhosi:** Tell me what you think about the presence of children here. Do you want them here? But you cannot say you do not want them because you also have one here.

**Thandi:** No, I have a grown lady here. You are now talking about a young lady who is training to get a job. I spoke to superintendent so she could come and live here and take care of me.

**Nomkhosi:** Does she have a permit?

**Thandi:** Yes.

**Nomkhosi:** Oh, it makes sense since you have a problem. So she is here lawfully?

**Thandi:** Yes.

**Nomkhosi:** Does she pay rent?

**Thandi:** Yes.

**Nomkhosi:** How much does she pay?

**Thandi:** She pays half of the amount I am paying because I am paying ... (She looks for receipts.)

**Nomkhosi:** Now you want to show me the evidence.

**Thandi:** Yes. (She keeps on looking.) I pay R41 and she pays half of this amount. Living here with kids is bad. Why is it bad? Because children take on many things from here.

**Nomkhosi:** Like what?

**Thandi:** Like sicknesses. People here are very sick and they are also untidy and unclean. These kids go to the toilets and use the toilets and touch toilet seats. They leave the toilet without washing their hands and their parents are not there because they are at work.

Another side to this whole thing is this: the reason people come to live with their children here is because they do not have places to live. They are not being given RDP houses. People who get RDP houses are the ones with no children. And you find that those who have kids do not get RDP houses. That is the main problem with Thokoza. If people with children were being given RDP houses, these kids would not be filling this space like this.

I personally left home and said that I was going to look for a job. I did not say that I was going to look for an RDP house. Looking for a job and looking for an RDP house are two different things. Now, here, some people have fetched their kids from the rural areas. You find that their parents have passed on and their parents were the only people they had. When they pass on, these women from here have to go fetch their kids from the rural areas. For example, Khona (her friend) does not have anyone at home who can take care of their kids and they are working. Winnie has the same problem. However, if they can be given RDP houses, they can peacefully leave this place and go live there with their kids.

**Nomkhosi:** What if they say it's better and easier to live here in the city because they do not pay at all or pay much for transport, whereas if they get RDP house in a township, it will get expensive for them to maintain that life?

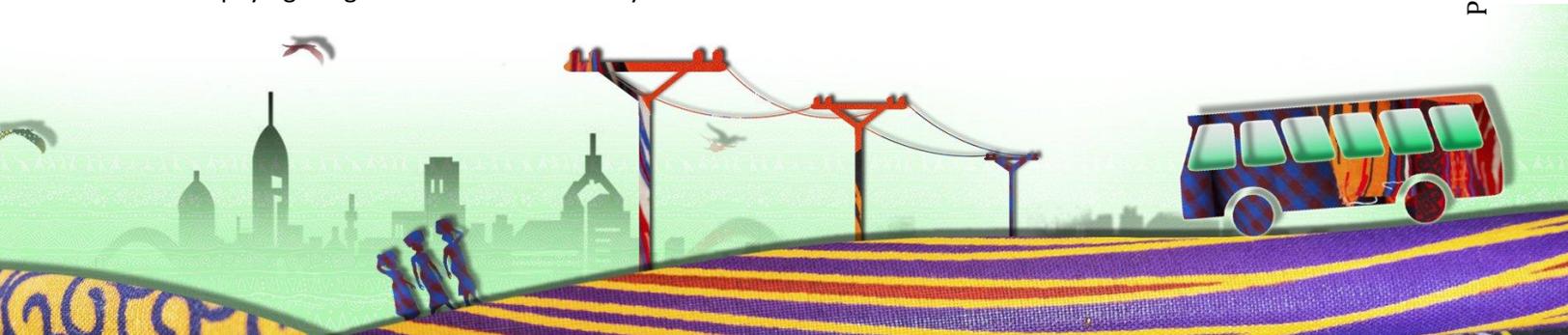
**Thandi:** No, they would not.

**Nomkhosi:** In an RDP house they would also have to buy electricity which is something that they do not have to pay for at all when they live here.

**Thandi:** No, the ones that I am talking about would not say that. I know these people very well. They would never say that because they are renting space for their kids in Mansel Road.

**Nomkhosi:** Oh, so their children do not live here at the hostel?

**Thandi:** They are renting for their older male children. Here they live with the small ones who go to crèche. If they can get RDP houses, they can fetch the children who live at Mansel and put them together with the small children and they can all live together. They are paying a very high rent at Mansel. Khona is paying a high amount where her boy child lives. She would not refuse an RDP. She would never.





**Nomkhosi:** What are the things you like about living in a hostel?

**Thandi:** Like about it?

**Nomkhosi:** Yes.

**Thandi:** No, there is nothing.

**Nomkhosi:** (Laughs).

**Thandi:** No.

**Nomkhosi:** You would have left long ago if that was the case.

**Thandi:** Yes, that's true. I would have left long ago. I don't like it. I am here because of being sick.

**Nomkhosi:** But that only happened like yesterday (only few years back).

**Thandi:** The main reason I am here is because of work. You see, if you are working, it is easier because you do not have a man. You live on your own. When you come back from work very tired, you can go and get a hot shower and then go straight to bed. That is the beauty of living here.

**Nomkhosi:** You guys don't prepare water. You must warm water but you guys are not bothered by that?

**Thandi:** You must do it because you are doing it for men as well. I am sure you are married and you have a man. There is also ironing waiting for you. Whereas with us, we come here. Busi chops the cabbage for us; we buy ready chopped cabbage, which already has carrots.

**Nomkhosi:** So basically what you like about this place is that it allows you to be lazy? You do not have to prepare water. You do not have to chop cooking ingredients as you buy ready-made. You get everything close by. Do you like it here as there are no men, or do you wish that it was like the KwaMashu hostel?

**Thandi:** Yoh, I like it the way it is. It is very nice without men.

**Nomkhosi:** What about the fact that women are always fighting when they are on their own? They are always fighting.

**Thandi:** No, we don't fight.

**Nomkhosi:** Maybe you have stopped now.

**Thandi:** No, there were never fights among us. Why would we fight because when you go out, you would be going to your man and you guys go wherever. From there you are not allowed to come inside. Sometimes even if you find another person's man outside, you can just take him and go with him, as long as the other woman did not see you.

**Nomkhosi:** Taking another woman's man?

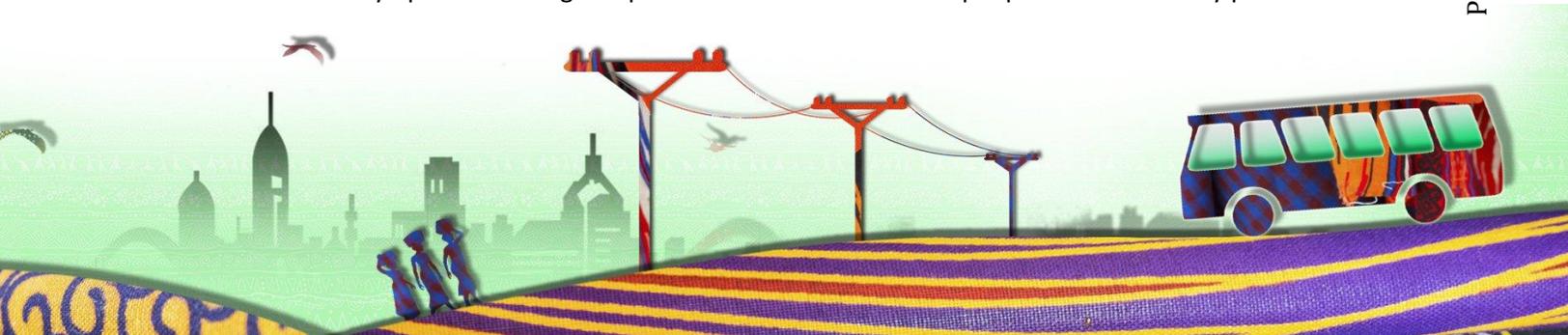
**Thandi:** Oh yes, we used to have a lot of that in this place—stealing each other's boyfriends. This was one of the main problems.

**Nomkhosi:** Was that intentional or by mistake?

**Thandi:** It was always intentional. It's impossible not to be jealous when a man gives money to one person and you don't get it. You would want that man as well. That is why we say it's nice because they end up outside. If men were allowed to come inside here, there would be many people who are dead by now. People would be stealing each other's man. He would not reach your room—he would be stolen before he reaches your door. When the other one hears that, she would leave her room with a knife, and she would come and stab you badly. But now they are not allowed inside and it's very nice. They take them from outside. They would take him even before you saw him outside. Things would go wrong if they were allowed inside.

**Nomkhosi:** What are some of the things that you do not like about the hostel?

**Thandi:** *ubunuku* Untidiness, uncleanliness—I really do not like that because when I was well, I would choose to stay up late cleaning this place because I did not want people to live in a dirty place.





**Nomkhosi:** Oh, because you were working here as a cleaner.

**Thandi:** Yes, I was working here as a cleaner.

**Nomkhosi:** When did you start working here as a cleaner?

**Thandi:** Those men, the contract owners, kept changing us and taking turns with us. I am not working anymore. I was chatting to another girl who works here as a cleaner. She was saying that they only got paid yesterday, instead of the end of the month. They got paid on the 20th. I asked her if they now get paid on the 20th, she said no. What else can I mention? I don't think there is anything else. There is nothing that you can say about this place—Thokoza. You live in your room. When you are hungry, you are in your room.

**Nomkhosi:** But when you are hungry and you don't have food, are you able to go to your neighbour to ask for help for food?

**Thandi:** No, I do not go to my neighbour. I go to Busi's room. Sometimes I ask her to give me the stuff she sells on credit.

**Nomkhosi:** Does she give you on credit?

**Thandi:** She never refuses to give me credit.

**Nomkhosi:** She is scared of you.

**Thandi:** No, she is my friend and I would pay later. Also when she has cooks she dishes for me and when I cook I would dish for her as well. I can cook very well for myself. I cook with one hand. I invite her to eat with me, and she would also invite me to eat with her. She would come straight in my room, take a bowl and go dish for me.

**Nomkhosi:** Where does she live?

**Thandi:** She stays on the ground floor room 38.

**Nomkhosi:** Thank you. This is the end of our interview.

