

# **An Issue of Women and Money**

**by**

**Michael Stanley**

This one is over a woman, Kubu thought, watching the silent faces around the body.

Whenever Kubu visited his parents and mentioned a case, his mother invariably had a strong opinion. “Remember, David,” she would lecture her son, a senior detective in the Botswana police Criminal Investigation Department, “murders are usually over women or money. That is what you need to look for.” Kubu had learned not to argue with his mother. “I’m sure you are right as usual, Mother,” he would say politely. “May I have another cup of tea? And, perhaps, another biscuit?”

The onlookers kept their distance, perhaps because of the officious constable, or perhaps they awaited action from the senior policeman. Joshua Madi was dead, lying on his back in the street with his fashionable clothes scuffed and torn, blood all over his face, and a knife sticking out of his chest. What would the policeman make of that?

Kubu was not happy. He had just sat down to a stew of young goat prepared with care and fine herbs by his wife, Joy. A bottle of South African shiraz, slightly chilled against the heat of the Botswana summer, was breathing – but not for long, because Kubu joked that the best way to get a wine to breathe was with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Now his dinner dried in the oven, and the wine warmed, while he looked down at the unattractive remains of Joshua Madi.

“Where’s the pathologist?” he asked the constable, watching the silent crowd.

“He hasn’t arrived yet, Assistant Superintendent.” The young man was at attention.

“Relax, constable.” Kubu sighed. “We may have a long night ahead of us. We’ll need to talk to all these witnesses. Get their names.”

As though this were a signal, the onlookers all started to speak at once. Kubu held up a hand. “All of your stories will be heard,” he told them in Setswana. “All in good time. Thank you.” Turning back to the constable he asked, “Where’s the culprit?”

“He’s in the car with Detective Tau.”

Kubu nodded. Going over to the police car, he opened the driver’s door, indicated to Tau that he should move to the back, and heaved himself into the seat. He jerked the seat to its most backward position to allow his substantial body to squeeze into the small vehicle. This elicited a yelp from Constable Tau, who had injudiciously chosen to sit behind Kubu rather than behind the prisoner. As he rubbed his bruised knee, Tau speculated on how well the nickname Kubu – Setswana for hippopotamus – fit the large detective, though he would never dare say so.

The remains of a take-away that had been Tau’s dinner were now scattered by Kubu’s battle with the seat, and the car smelled of fried chicken. Kubu tried to ignore it – it only sharpened his hunger – and concentrated on the man next to him. He, too, completely filled the car seat. A bull of a man, all muscle. His shirt was torn and

bloody – whose blood? – and he sported a black eye. The fight had not been entirely one-sided. Kubu nodded. The loser of a fistfight might well resort to upping the stakes.

Kubu addressed the suspect in Setswana. “What is your name?”

“Peter Moroka, Rra.”

“Now, Peter, did you kill that other man in the fight?” Kubu held his breath. A quick confession of a punch-up that got out of hand, and the matter could be wrapped up in the morning. Perhaps the goat would still be tender and succulent when he got home. The wine would certainly be fine. His mouth watered.

“No, Rra.”

Kubu’s heart sank. “Tell me what happened then.”

“That man – Madi – he’s a pig. He gets money and drink, and he goes looking for a woman.” Moroka shrugged indicating that this was a natural way for a Motswana man to behave. “But he looks for someone else’s woman! Why does he do that? There are lots of women. Why does he go for my woman?”

Kubu assumed this was rhetorical and nodded sympathetically, encouraging Moroka to embellish his motive.

“I found them together in the *shebeen* – the bar. He was giving her drink. He had his hand on her leg.” He shook his head angrily. “He had it high up her leg! Under her dress!”

“So what did you do?”

“I grabbed the bastard and made him come outside. You don’t fight in Mma Toteng’s *shebeen*.” He shook his head again. Everyone was scared of the bar owner. Some people said she was a witchdoctor. Moroka didn’t believe that, but why take a chance? “He’d already finished several beers. He thought he could fight me. Me!” Moroka made a fist that would shame no man, although it didn’t impress Kubu. “So he came with me! Fool!”

“And then?”

“Then I beat the shit out of the bastard!”

“What about your eye?”

“Lucky punch. I was careless. Bastard!”

“Is that when you thought he deserved to be cut a bit? Teach him a lesson?”

Moroka looked very solemn and shook his head. “I don’t have a knife. I don’t need a knife. A man fights with these.” He showed his fists again.

Suddenly there was banging on the car window. A large woman, her head covered in a brightly colored scarf, glared at Kubu. “When will you get this body out of here, hey?” she shouted. “You think I have all night? You think I don’t work? That people don’t need to drink?”

Kubu sighed and climbed out of the car. “And who are you?” he asked the woman. She had an appealing figure in a generous way and wore a traditional Tswana dress in browns and oranges. A necklace of beads, stones and purple seedpods hung round her neck. Heavy frown lines marred an otherwise open face and belied the generosity of her figure.

“Gracious Toteng. I own the *shebeen*. What are you going to do with him?” She nodded towards the police car.

Kubu ignored that. “Can you tell me what happened?”

“Moroka came into the bar and found Madi all over his girl, Bongi. She works for me in the bar. He was very angry and told Madi to come outside.” She shrugged. “Madi did, the fool.”

Kubu wanted more details, but he spotted Ian MacGregor, the police pathologist, examining the body. He headed over to him, dismissing Toteng with a nod.

“Ian! What have you got to tell me?”

“Kubu! They called you out at *dinnertime*?” The wiry Scot smiled at Kubu’s sour look. “Not much as yet. You can see for yourself the cause of death – stabbed in the heart. But there may be several wounds. Not a professional job, obviously.”

Kubu grunted. “Stabbed in the fight? Apparently he had a fist fight with the man we’re holding.”

Ian examined the dead man’s knuckles. “Yes, looks like he landed a few good blows.” He stood up, looking puzzled. “Not the way you defend yourself against a knife attack though. You would expect gashes on the arms from trying to fend off the attacker. Tell you what, let’s get this chap to the morgue and take a proper look at what’s under these clothes. I’ll get back to you tomorrow. Forensics should be able to pick up fingerprints on the knife, too.”

Kubu turned away. There was no option; he’d better start questioning the witnesses. Back to Mma Toteng, he thought without enthusiasm.

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The director of the Criminal Investigation Department looked out at Kgale Hill, which overlooked the CID offices in Gaborone. A rumpus of baboons was crashing through the trees, quarreling over *marula* fruit, and barking loudly. One of the youngsters misjudged a jump, missed the intended branch, and crashed into the lower foliage of the acacia thorn tree with screeches of hurt pride. Director Mabaku laughed. Sometimes he liked the baboons more than people. He turned back to Assistant Superintendent Bengu.

“Kubu, what’s the delay here? This man – Moroka? – has a fight with Madi. They’ve both had a few drinks, it gets out of hand, and one pulls a knife. Charge him with manslaughter.”

Kubu hesitated. “Director, there are some very odd aspects to this fight. Moroka denied having a knife, so I thought I’d catch him in a lie. The knife was quite distinctive. Detective Tau traced it to a shop on the Mall. It turns out it *was* bought there. But not by Moroka. It was bought by Madi.”

“So? You say Moroka is a big chap. Probably Madi felt he was losing and pulled the knife. Moroka took it away from him.”

“Well, that’s possible but it raises more questions. Why did Moroka deny it? He could claim self-defense. And at the autopsy MacGregor found two wounds on the chest at the wrong angle to go between the ribs into the heart. Certainly Madi wasn’t fending off the knife with his arms. It was razor sharp, and there were no cuts anywhere except the chest wounds. Also there were no fingerprints on the knife. It’d been wiped clean.”

Mabaku chewed his knuckles, watching the baboons move back up the hill to their rocky strongholds. “Perhaps he knocked Madi out and then stabbed him. That would make it murder, of course. But you’ll never prove it.”

“Well, Ian noted a huge bruise on the side of Madi’s head. It certainly could have been a punch that knocked him cold.” Kubu looked dissatisfied. “But why stab him? Why not just break his neck? Something that could look like an accident. Stab him with his own knife, leave it in the wound and wipe it clean? Makes no sense.”

Mabaku lost patience. “Kubu, we expect people to do stupid things. That’s how we catch them. It probably made sense to Moroka at the time.”

“There’s something else. We interviewed the witnesses, and they agree with the *shebeen*-owner’s description of what happened. But there was much talk of Madi having a big win at the casino. Apparently, he gambled for high stakes. He came straight from the casino and was buying drinks all over the bar. Boasting how clever he was. Telling Moroka’s girlfriend how rich he was. Bought her champagne. Well, sparkling wine, really.”

“So what?”

“Well, neither Moroka nor Madi had much money on them. Just a few hundred pula.”

“Maybe the whole thing was made up to impress the girl.”

Kubu shook his head. “The casino confirmed his big win that night. More than twenty thousand pula.”

Mabaku whistled. That was a lot of money. Enough for a motive for murder. Why was Kubu always involved in simple cases that became complicated? He threw himself into his chair and thumped his desk with his fist. “All right, Kubu. Keep snooping around on this one.”

Kubu smiled, nodded, and left before his boss changed his mind.

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Kubu followed up with Ian MacGregor. The Scot was sitting at his desk, gazing at one of the watercolors he had painted and sucking with gusto on a heavy briar. The tobacco was carefully pressed down; all was ready bar the flame. Ian had given up smoking twenty years earlier.

“Kubu! What can I do for the CID this afternoon? A new body perhaps?”

“Don’t get excited, Ian. Nothing like that. I just wanted to go over the Madi case with you.”

“Well, I did get more information from forensics. Madi had some fibers in his right hand. Forensics identified them as some sort of dry plant material. Impossible to identify the type, but hardly what you’d expect to find at a casino. And then there was that stuff on his chest.”

“What stuff?”

“Some sort of oily material painted criss-cross on his skin. I guessed it was some sort of potion. Forensics produced an analysis of it, but I’m none the wiser. You’d best consult a witchdoctor!”

Ian had meant it as a joke, but Kubu took it up. While tracing Madi’s movements, the police had discovered that he had visited a well-known witchdoctor by the name of Msizi. Kubu was intrigued. First Madi bought a knife, then, no doubt, obtained supernatural help against his opponent. It seemed he was looking for a fight, either with Moroka or with someone else. Kubu decided he should pay Rra Msizi a visit.

Kubu found the witchdoctor sitting at a small table surrounded by an arcane collection of roots, herbs and curiously marked boxes. The grayness of age touched his hair and scraggy beard, but active eyes took in Kubu’s size and appraised the quality of his clothes. “What exactly is the problem, Rra Bengu?”

Kubu handed over his identification. The witchdoctor stiffened. Much of his business fell close to the line of illegality. "What can I do to help the police," he asked blandly. Without doubt it would be very little.

"Rra Msizi, I wish to hear about one of your...er...patients. Rra Madi."

Msizi handed the identification back. "You must understand, assistant superintendent, that my relationship with patients is confidential."

"Madi is dead. Stabbed. Murdered. I am here to discover if his visit to you was at all related to his death."

The witchdoctor looked shocked. "I will try to help."

"What did Madi want here?"

"It was a woman problem. Most men have problems with money or with women. This was a woman problem."

"A physical problem?"

"No. As far as I know, Madi could sow the mielies. He was in love with a girl who belonged to a bully. So he asked me to help with that. And to encourage the girl's affections for him."

"What did you do?"

The witchdoctor shrugged. "I prescribed a medicine. Something to build confidence and power. That's what was needed."

"How was this medicine applied?"

"Some swallowed, some painted." He gave Kubu a hard look, and added ambiguously, "That is my business."

Kubu had heard enough. Madi had walked out of this office believing himself invincible. And with a razor-sharp hunting knife for insurance. Kubu came up with another question, a typical Kubu question that seemed to come from nowhere but led somewhere.

"Who referred Madi to you, Rra Msizi?"

Msizi looked surprised. "A mutual friend. A colleague in a way. She works sometimes with herbs. Her name is Gracious Toteng."

"Thank you, Rra Msizi. You have been most helpful," said Kubu politely. He didn't believe in the power of witchdoctors, of course, but why annoy one unnecessarily? And the last answer had been very helpful indeed.

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Kubu made his way to the *shebeen*. It was on the outskirts of the city, and in the daylight he saw that the area was run down. The bar itself looked well-maintained, although it could use some paint, but the roads were dirt and needed repair. Chickens clucked and fed along the verges. Small houses crowded around. Kubu thought of his own neat house in a better part of town, with its pleasant garden of native plants from his beloved Kalahari. Perhaps Madi's big gambling win was a ladder to a better area and new friends.

He found Toteng in the storeroom behind the bar. She greeted him without enthusiasm.

"Assistant superintendent. What do you want? I'm busy."

Kubu sighed. Her demeanor had not improved in the two days since the murder. Yes, he thought, murder. Not manslaughter. He looked around, deliberately taking his time before he answered. Toteng was working at a

table stacked with papers. Cartons of various types of liquor were piled behind her. The opposite wall had a wide door with a heavy security grille on the inside. Kubu realized that it would lead to the alley where Madi had been killed.

“Is that door always locked?”

Toteng looked at him sharply. “Unless we have a delivery or some other reason to go out the back way.”

“Was it open when Madi was killed?”

“No.”

Kubu was sure she was lying. “And since then?”

“No.”

Kubu collapsed into a plastic chair similar to Mma Toteng’s seat. It squealed and bulged warningly. “Why did you send Madi to the witchdoctor?”

Toteng looked surprised. “He was my friend and asked for help with his problem with Moroka and Bongi. I suggested Rra Msize. So what?”

“But you tipped off Moroka when Madi was fondling Bongi.”

Toteng shrugged. “Moroka is also my friend. Madi had no right to do that here. In my *shebeen*. In front of my customers. And flaunting his money.”

“Tell me exactly what you did the night of the murder after Madi and Moroka went outside.”

“I’ve told you all that already! You’re wasting my time!”

“Tell me again.”

Toteng looked as though she would refuse, but saw no way of shifting Kubu’s bulk. “Very well. I was helping the customers. They all saw me. Then Moroka came back in and started boasting about beating up Madi. What a superman he was. He was disgusting. I came back here with Bongi to get some more cold beers, and we carried them into the bar. Moroka was buying everyone drinks as though he had lots of money. He was probably just trying to match Madi. Celebrating just after he’d killed him. Pig!”

“Were you and Bongi together the whole time?”

“Yes. She was upset so I kept her with me. Also, I needed her to help me with the beers.”

“How long were you back here?”

“Five or ten minutes.”

Kubu mulled this over. Five minutes was plenty of time to go through the side door, stab Madi, and get back with the beer. But Toteng’s story agreed perfectly with what Bongi had said when he had interviewed her. Too perfectly? Could they have done it together? If so, why? The money was a powerful motive if Madi had it with him. Or was there something else? When women murdered, Kubu wondered, was it always over money or men? He made a mental note to ask his mother.

He wandered around the room, looking behind the stacks of boxes and inside the chest freezer. He started humming a theme from *The Pearl Fishers*, partly because he liked it and partly because he thought it would irritate Toteng.

“Do you have a search warrant?”

“I’m not searching,” said Kubu blandly. “Just looking around.” He went back to humming Bizet. He then came to the security door. Its lock panel covered the knob of the outer door, protecting it from handling. He turned his back on the bar owner and used his cell phone to call the CID. Finishing, he turned back to Toteng. “I’m getting someone here from forensics. To check this door.” He looked at his watch, which agreed with his stomach about it being lunchtime. But he wasn’t moving until the fingerprint person arrived. “Do you serve food?” he asked the *shebeen* owner.

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Kubu’s fishing expedition turned up a queer fish. One clear print of Bongi’s right hand on the inside door-handle and nothing at all on the outside handle. Toteng volunteered that she had cleaned the handles after a grubby delivery man had brought beer the Wednesday before Madi had been killed. No one had touched it since. She had no idea how Bongi’s prints came to be on the inside handle. Kubu made a note to trace that delivery man. In the meanwhile, he wanted some straight-talk from the young lady herself.

Seated in the interrogation room, Bongi looked very nervous. Kubu wasn’t unhappy about that, and cautioned her as if she was about to be charged. He then went through each step of her story again. At last he leaned back and asked: “If you were always with Mma Toteng, never alone, why did you go out from the storeroom into the alley where Madi was killed?” When she started to protest, he stopped her and told her about the prints on the door handle. “This is what I think happened. You knew about Madi’s money and his knife. When you heard that Moroka had knocked him out, you saw your chance, slipped through the back door, took his knife, stabbed him, and stole his money. You were content to let Moroka rot in jail for the killing. You are a dreadful woman! But you will spend a very long time in jail for your awful crime!”

Bongi shrank into her chair. She started gabbling, denying everything, contradicting herself, confused about the money and the knife. After a few minutes Kubu relented, calmed her down, and told her to tell her story from the beginning.

“Madi came into the bar and was all over me. I’m supposed to be working! Mma Toteng gets cross! But he bought us champagne and promised to pay her for my time. She seemed okay with that and left us alone. But a few minutes later she came back and said that Moroka was on his way, and he was drunk and angry, and Madi should run away. Madi was very cross. Said he would fight Moroka for me and win. He had medicine from the best witchdoctor in Gaborone which made him impossible to beat! Mma Toteng looked very unhappy and pulled me aside. She was afraid Madi had a knife, and that one of them would be killed. I was to take the knife from his pocket and give it to her. Afterwards she would say she found it on the floor. She also told me to suggest that he leave his money with her for safekeeping during the fight. And he did that. So when Moroka came he was ready. That’s when I took the knife from him and gave it to Mma Toteng.

“Ten minutes later Moroka came back, boasting and kissing me. But then Mma Toteng called me to the back room. She was very worried. Was Madi all right? She still had all the money – ten thousand pula, she had counted it – but someone had taken the knife. It had been on the table in the storeroom, and now it was gone! She told me to go to look for Madi, and she unlocked the back door. I was worried and started to go, but just as I was

walking out she pulled me back. What if Moroka came looking for me? Better I stay in the room and she would go. So I stayed, and she went out.”

“Did you open the outside door?”

“I think so. But then she pulled me back.”

“Was the door still open?”

“I suppose so.”

“All right. Go on.”

“Mma Toteng was back after only a few minutes. She said someone had stabbed Madi! He was dead! We were very frightened. We decided to let someone else find Madi’s body.”

“Why were you scared?”

“We were the only ones who knew about the knife! Maybe the murderer would want to stop us talking. It was best to stick together and say nothing.”

“And the money?”

“Oh yes. The money.” She hesitated.

“What happened to the money?”

“We split it. It wasn’t like stealing! Madi didn’t need it anymore. He isn’t married or anything.” She looked at the floor. “Anyway, he said he was going to give it to me,” she improvised.

“Where is your share now?”

“I have it with me.”

“You must give it to the police. Right now.”

To Kubu’s embarrassment, she unbuttoned the top of her dress, fished in each side of her bra, and dumped warm pula notes on the desk. When she buttoned up her dress, there was a noticeable decrease in her bust size.

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Detective Tau might have enjoyed the handing over of the loot, but he was at The Happy Drinker Liquor Company which supplied drink of the non-homemade variety to Mma Toteng. He easily found the man who did the deliveries. The man also took the orders, loaded the van and seemed to handle most other aspects of the business. He needed a good memory, and Tau was pleased to find that he had one.

“Yes, I did a delivery for Mma Toteng on Wednesday. She needed beer and some spirits. A case each of brandy, whiskey, vodka and gin. We were a bit short of brandy on Wednesday, so I took over a case on the Friday. Left it on the bar with Bongsi because I found the delivery entrance locked, and Mma Toteng wasn’t around to open it.”

Detective Tau wrote it all down carefully. He was very proud to be working with the Assistant Superintendent and didn’t want to miss anything.

Meanwhile Kubu was pondering Bongsi’s story. It neatly explained some issues, and overall it seemed so unlikely that it could hardly be invented. But was Bongsi really dumb enough to fall for a story about some mysterious murderer stealing the knife from in front of their noses? The obvious deduction – surely even to Bongsi –



was that Toteng herself was the murderer. And where was the rest of the money? Hidden elsewhere on Bongi's body? It all seemed very far-fetched.

Mma Toteng was next. She was a tougher nut than Bongi, but when she heard that Bongi had changed her story, she cracked too.

"I knew nothing about Madi having a knife. I didn't take it from Bongi or Madi. The first time I saw it, it was sticking out of Madi's chest!" She offered a theatrical shudder. "Madi did give me his money for safekeeping. I would've given it back to him too, if he'd asked, every thebe of the ten thousand pula. But he wasn't going to need it anymore, was he? So I split it with Bongi. After all, we were his friends." Kubu indicated that Mma Toteng would need to return the money as soon as possible, half fearing another striptease. But she just nodded, saying that her share - five thousand pula - was safely locked away at the *shebeen*.

"When did you split the money?"

"After Bongi came back and told me Madi had been stabbed."

"She went out to look for him?"

Toteng nodded. "I sent her to see how he was. I unlocked the back door and she went out that way so that Moroka wouldn't see her. I waited in the storeroom in case he came looking for her. A few minutes later she was back saying that Madi had been stabbed. That Moroka must have had a knife. We were scared of Moroka, so we let someone else find Madi's body. Then I called the police."

Kubu got up with a grunt and left the room. Obviously one of the women was lying; *perhaps* the other was telling the truth. Toteng's story was more believable. The implication was that Bongi *did* take the knife and, knowing about the money, hoped that Moroka would finish Madi off. When he didn't, she did the job herself, with Toteng covering for her. Bongi would need to be very stupid to fall for Toteng's wiles if her story were true. Toteng's story made sense; Bongi's did not. It seemed he had no option but to charge Bongi with the murder of Joshua Madi. And yet...

Back in his office he reviewed the file, going over his notes, rereading the reports from forensics and Ian MacGregor, looking at the photographs. There was one of Bongi taken the night of the murder. She was wearing too much make-up and too little skirt. Dressed to attract men and tips. Kubu dumped it on the table and picked up one of Toteng. Her perennial frown made her look managerial, despite her traditional dress, scarf, and necklace. Kubu placed her next to Bongi. He moved the pictures around, looking for something overlooked or a clue missed. Suddenly he grabbed one of the pictures and stared at it. Just then the phone rang interrupting his train of thought, and he answered with a trace of irritation. It was Detective Tau, and soon Kubu was keenly interested in what he had to say.

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Mabaku was impressed. "Well, Kubu, I must congratulate you. How did you catch Toteng when all the evidence pointed to Bongi?"

"It was all a set-up. Toteng used Bongi's natural stupidity to get her to fall into trap after trap, while she kept all Madi's money except for five thousand pula needed to pad a bra." Mabaku raised his eyebrows but didn't interrupt. "Take the door handle. She opened the security gate, wiped the handles clean, and then persuaded Bongi

to open the door only to call her back. And the evidence that Bongi was the one who went into the alley where Madi was lying unconscious gets carefully preserved behind the locked security door.”

“Except...?” Mabaku had played this game with Kubu before.

“Except that Toteng claimed she cleaned the door after the big delivery on the Wednesday before the murder. But I traced the delivery man. He was there on Wednesday afternoon all right, but he was back on Friday afternoon, the day Madi was murdered. He had to deliver one case of brandy. He tried the side door, but it was locked. So he brought it through the bar.”

“I see! So what happened to his fingerprints on the outside door? They were cleaned off when Toteng prepared her fingerprint trap for Bongi. Makes sense, but that’ll never convict her!”

“No, but Ian’s fibers will. The fibers in Madi’s hand are from terminalia pods. Toteng was wearing a necklace with them that night. When she stabbed Madi, he must have come round and grabbed it. But at that moment she found the right angle between the ribs and forced the knife into his heart. Madi would have died at once, and then she could pry his fingers loose. And I’m sure we’ll find much more money than five thousand pula when we search her place.”

“Will she stick to her story?”

Kubu shook his head with a broad smile. “I persuaded her that we had her cold. The funny part is that she blamed it all on Moroka! Said that she was sure he’d kill Madi after the stories she made up about him and Bongi. Moroka always got aggressive when he had too much to drink, and he always had too much beer on a Friday night. But he blew it. You can’t trust a man to do anything properly, is what she said.”

Mabaku started to laugh. “Well done, Kubu. Excellent. Now I want to review that other case...”

But Kubu was already heading to the door. “It’s our wedding anniversary, Director. We’re having a small celebration at home. Joy’s cooking my favorite meal. And we’re having a bottle of champagne, not...”

“Yes, I know,” Mabaku interrupted, “the real stuff, not sparkling wine. On your way, then. But be in my office at eight tomorrow morning. Sober!”

Kubu waved, but nothing would shift the grin from his face. The best part of the day lay ahead.

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Bongi felt she had got off lightly, a slap on the wrist. A stern lecture from the big policeman everyone called ‘Hippo,’ and two nights in a holding cell. She understood it had been wrong to take the money, and she should have realized that Toteng was the murderer. Perhaps Toteng had placed a spell on her? That was probably it. She was relieved that her dubious behavior could be explained by black magic.

She hailed a minibus taxi, and squashed into the crowded vehicle. It was old and rusted, and she could see the road moving beneath her through a hole in the floor. Such things were normal to her, and she was soon chatting to the other passengers. She was on her way to see Moroka. Madi and his money were gone forever, but Moroka would be lonely and happy to see her.

But Moroka didn’t look happy. He let her in and gave her a drink, but then ignored her. He sat brooding, drinking beer. Apparently not his first. Not boastful, not amorous.

Bongi was frightened. This was not like him.

“You and that bitch Toteng set me up, didn’t you?” he said at last. “To get Madi’s cash. I was in that stinking jail while you enjoyed his money!”

“No, Moroka, it wasn’t like that! Toteng told me he was dead. That someone had murdered him. I’m sorry, darling. Love me. Make it all right.”

“Where’s the money?”

“The police took it. We each had five thousand pula. That superintendent made us give it to him.”

“There was a lot of money! Much more than ten thousand.” The veins stood out on Moroka’s head and his neck. “At least thirty thousand, maybe forty thousand! Where’s the rest? I want my share! I earned it beating Madi! And rotting in jail while you and Toteng had fun.” Suddenly he was quiet, still.

Bongi felt chill fingers of terror. She looked for escape, but Moroka was between her and the door. “Moroka, there was no more money! I swear!”

Moroka finished his beer in one gulp. The veins threatened to burst, and his muscular arms ended now in fists.

“I want my share!” he shouted, as he moved towards her.

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#### Glossary

Mma	Respectful term in Setswana used when addressing a woman
Mielie	Local name for corn
Rra	Respectful term in Setswana used when addressing a man
Shebeen	Neighborhood bar
Terminalia prunioides	Tree with striking purple pods