

Conspiracy

By: Amelia House

Pretoria: Immorality Act; 1957 Session of Parliament increased the maximum penalty for illicit carnal intercourse between whites and non-whites to seven years imprisonment. It also became an offence to conspire to commit an act.

Amy stared at the window high in the wall. The row of windows met the ground level of the basement room. Through the ivy she watched the feet of passing students. A starling pecked at the window. The University of Cape Town nestled against the slope of the mountain at Rondebosch. The marble pillars of Jameson hall shone out over the ivy covered walls. Amy liked to stop at the entrance of Jameson Hall where she could look back and take a full view of the campus. All those steps leading up from the road – she always meant to count and never did: the student residences (for Whites Only); the playing fields (for Whites Only); and then she let here gaze go out to the horizon across the Cape Flats. This panorama she enjoyed again and again. Amy usually enjoyed working in the archives, but today she felt trapped inside the mountain.

As she sat trying to imagine from the books what the Cape looked like when Simon van der Stel was Governor, the view from the top of the steps kept obtruding. She could sit in this room undisturbed because not many students came to this section.

“How much would I have to pay to know those deep and profound thoughts?” Saimon broke into Amy’s reverie.

“You shouldn’t creep up on me like that. My heart can’t stand it.”

“Admit it’s my presence that sends your heart pounding. This six-foot Adonis makes his little five-foot and-a-dot mere mortal woman tremble.”

“The conceit of the caveman-not god. How did you know I was here?”

“Don’t I always know where to find you? I changed into a butterfly and peeped in at each window. You waved to me when I fluttered by five minutes ago.”

“A butterfly? Why not just send your spirit to inhabit Prof. Grayson’s poodle? It gets all over campus.”

“I know you like butterflies better. You’ll try to catch me and stroke my wings. You stroking my body – what a thought!”

Saimon held Amy’s hands and kissed her forehead, her eyelids, each cheek and then took her in his arms as she turned up her mouth to respond to his kiss.

“Enough. I might just forget how immoral we are and let you kiss me the rest of the morning.” Amy broke away hurriedly. Looked up at the windows. Only the passing feet; no eyes peering in. Even the starling had flown away.

“I managed to get two tickets for the Roman Catholic Students’ Annual Ball. So here, Miss Baptist, is yours, and this one is for Mr. Jew. I bet we’ll be the most devout Catholics present. I’ve also thought of a plan for us to meet on my parents’ boat.”

“Kristina and John are going to the dance. I can arrange for John to take me and you can escort Kristina. Nothing more respectable – coloured couple and a white couple – no immorality there.”

“You’ve become quite a schemer too. Want to see more of me, hey? Not content with kisses in the archives and pecks behind the book stacks? I’ll have to watch it. I think my downfall is being plotted.”

“I don’t have to take risks for you, Saimon Zolkov. There are any number of safe dates I can have.”

“Only joking, my little black bird.”

“An English literature major resorts to clichés. Even your Romantic poets could give you a better image. Black bird. Be careful where you call me that name. I’ve already been told not to allow myself to be insulted. You never forget my colour.”

“Why so touchy today? You know it was your raven black curls that first caught my eye. Shall I say, my little raven black bird?”

“I wish I was thousands of miles from this place. I want to laugh and run across a sunny beach with you. Not sneak around. A peck on the cheek behind the Social Science book stack. A quick squeeze near Humanities. I could write a paper on a catalogue of our courtship.”

"It's hard for me too. We're not ashamed. But we have to behave as if we are. Please, Amy, don't get bitter. Soon our exams will be over. Graduation will be over and we'll have a honeymoon on the Costa Brava." Amy was almost smiling. "We can't feel the warm sands of *these* beaches between our toes," Saimon pulled Amy close to him. "But I promise you, my little Amy, we'll run across the beaches of Spain."

"And no looking around for policemen to spring out like cockroaches from any crack."

"Mr. and Mrs. Zolkov in sunny Spain."

I didn't even want to think about that. "I'm glad your mother approved of me and will let you go to England. But then there's still your father."

"Amy, with him it's not colour. It's religion. You know that. He probably has a good Jewish girl in mind for me."

"I accept that. My mother is anxious to see me leave here. I don't suppose she'll ever sleep easy until I'm safely out of Cape Town."

"I forgot to ask. How did your passport interview go?"

"If Prof. Inskip were handing out acting awards, I could've won it for the acting I did at that interview. I was ever so humble and my mother did herself proud too. She went on about how she kept money from my late father's insurance to send me on this trip and what a good girl I was and how I deserved a nice holiday and I would be back to teach our coloured children. Our schools need good children and teachers. She went on and on. There the old man was, with his broken-down typewriter trying to fill in responses to his set questions: "What do you know about Communism? Do you belong to any banned organization? Why are you going? How long will you stay? How much money have you got?"

"You're not serious, are you? All those questions just to get a passport?"

Amy sat still a second or two. It struck her that Saimon really knew very little of the life of coloureds. Very little of her life.

"An interview at the main police station, Caledon Square, no less. You ought to have seen the poor old *Boer* trying to type with two fingers. I could hardly keep a straight face."

"A no-laugh pantomime, hey?"

"I wanted to laugh, but couldn't risk one slip. I was desperate for that passport and had to give all the correct responses. There was me, a History major, saying "Communism? I have no time to read rubbish!" with raised eyebrows and a suitably disgusted expression."

"Why didn't you give him a lecture on the ideological differences between Marx and Lenin?"

"He probably hadn't ever heard of those two gentlemen. I played it straight. I had a good rehearsal. John went for his interview last week. He briefed me. I passed, I guess, because the *Boer* said he would see that I get the passport as soon as I have my return ticket. My mother went to buy it today. I sail on the Windsor Castle seven days after Graduation."

I don't suppose you realize that I first declared my love to you one year ago today."

"Declared your love, no less. I'll excuse you that quaint expression considering you are busy with a paper on the Romantic Poets. Yes. I do remember being caught on the top gallery behind the History books. I also remember you stared at me a whole year during English II classes."

"But you stared back, you bold hussy."

"You found a timid little black bird behind the bold hussy."

"Not timid. Bold and ready to hold on to the worm she caught."

"I didn't see the worm putting up any fight. He was only too willing to be carried off to be devoured."

"I do believe there is something metaphysical about that image, or is it a metaphor?"

"A final year English student, doubting his images and metaphors?"

"Gosh. It's time for our lecture. We'll have a lecture on Revenge Tragedy if our dear Prof. remembers his topic."

"You go first. I'll follow later. I can't face any suspicious looks from our librarian."

"Will you be back here this afternoon?"

"No. I'll see you tomorrow in my History tutor's office. She'll give me a key. I don't want us to meet here anymore. I feel we're being watched. Kristina says to watch out for Mr. Alex."

"Mr. Alex?"

"You know him. The coloured man who sits at the back of the class."

“Oh yes, that old man. What about him?”

“Don’t you wonder why he’s taken six years for a three-year course?”

“I know he’s been around a long time, but judging by the questions he asks, I didn’t wonder why he took two years for each course.”

“That’s all part of his act. Do you know what his major is? He’s a government agent. Kristina told me. She should know. You know who her father is, don’t you?”

“Yes. Chief of Police. But I also think you mustn’t imagine surveillance. He’s probably here to report on the political opinions of the students.”

“No, Saimon. I’m not going to take a chance on that. Even if it’s not Mr. Alex watching us, I feel somebody is.”

“Okay. We’ll be careful.”

“Remember my History tutor’s office tomorrow.”

“See you then. Don’t forget the big ball. Save a few dances for me. The last dance. I’ll catch Kristina later. See her after class. Kolbe House at eight. Don’t fly away.”

“Stomp on any cockroaches you see.”

John and Amy joined the other students gathered around the two fountains in the center of the ballroom. Every year the engineering students rigged up a unique way of serving the wine. The previous year a big steam engine puffed away burning brandy. After the remarks about the waste, the planning committee promised to make every drop available for drinking. This year they had constructed two fountains – one spouting red wine and the other white wine. Mugs hung around the base of each fountain. Although John and Amy were as intrigued as the other students by the beautiful fountains, they were both more interested in trying to locate Saimon and Kristina.

Amy wore a long yellow organza sheath dress. Huge butterfly sleeves were an eye-catching feature. She had tied her waist-length black curls together at the nap of her neck with a big yellow bow. She wore no make-up and no jewelry. She was aware that she was getting second glances from many of the men.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, dinner is served. Stand not on the order of your seating, but be seated or words to that effect. As a Law student

I’m allowed to misquote Shakespeare,” boomed out Betram Davidson, the President of the Roman Catholic Students’ Union.

Kristina and Saimon sat at the other end of the table from John and Amy. Neither couple paid much attention to the speeches and food. They waited for the dancing to begin.

“As President of the Union, I wish to welcome all members and friends. Tonight we say farewell to Father McInnis who helped to keep Kolbe House truly Catholic and not just Roman Catholic. This is the only place at the University of Cape Town where everybody, regardless of colour and creed can mix freely. As we are here for festivities, I don’t intend making a political speech, but I would like everybody to be reminded of the greatness of Kolbe House. As a non-white on this campus, I know what it feels like to pay recreation fees for tennis courts and swimming pools I’m not allowed to use. Not to be welcomed at the Freshmen’s Ball because my colour denies me the right to a ticket. So I wish to propose a toast to Kolbe House, Father McInnis, and all true Catholics among us.”

“Hear, hear. Long live Kolbe.”

“I wish to thank all our friends for their continued support. Now to the dancing.”

John and Amy hurried to the ballroom and swung into a quick-step. Although they had to continue to be absorbed in each other, both looked around for Saimon and Kristina. Although Kolbe House boasted its liberal attitudes, all the mixed couple knew they had to tread softly. Spies and cockroaches hid in cracks.

“Good evening, Kristina, Saimon. Glad you could make it. Hope you enjoy yourselves. As a Roman Catholic member with a Baptist partner, I would like to welcome my Jewish friend with his Dutch Reformed partner. As our President said - a truly Catholic gathering. Could I have the next dance with your lovely partner?”

“Only if I’m allowed a dance with your lovely partner.”

Amy floated in Saimon’s arms totally oblivious to anybody or anything around her. To be held by him for such a long time sent a chill of fear and excitement through her.

“What’s that shiver for? Not scared again? You look so beautiful, I can’t bear to see you hanging on John’s arm. That was the longest dinner I’ve ever had to sit through. I don’t know what I ate.

“John is jealous of Kristina on your arm and so am I and I daresay Katrina doesn’t like me with John – but we have to fool the cockroaches.”

Kolbe House will be seeing a lot of us. I’ve agreed to join a symposium on Comparative Religions next week. They might convert me yet.”

“I’m glad you’ll be there. I offered to help Francis with the catering. See you there.”

“John invited Kristina and me to join the two of you on a tour of the grounds in half-an-hour. It’s the best time to go into the woods to see Father McGeown’s ghost.”

Amy became vaguely aware of other couples dancing around her. Some of them she had suspected of going together. She felt safer, knowing there were others like her and Saimon, but she could never shake off the deep fear of knowing what the penalty was if she and Saimon were ever caught.

Saimon returned a dazed Amy to John.

“Saimon, Kristina has agreed to view the ghost. We’ll meet you on the back verandah. Meanwhile the key word is, circulate. Nobody sticks to his partner so move around. Don’t forget to stomp the cockroaches!”

The game had to be played convincingly. Each one had to appear to be completely unattached and ready to play the field. Kristina and Amy did not see John and Saimon during the next hour. They were constantly claimed for one dance after the other.

“Time for a breath of fresh air, Amy,” John announced when he returned. “The ghost will be walking soon. Not scared I hope?”

Saimon watched John and Amy leave the ballroom hand in hand. He caught the pained expression on Kristina’s face.

“We can go out the front door and walk around the side of the house. There seem to be many interesting nooks to explore,” said Saimon as he led Kristina outside.

Chinese lanterns swung in the breeze on the front verandah. Bright coloured lights glowed in the two big oak trees at the gate. Kristina and Saimon were anxious to get out of the light to the dark side of the house.

“A bit spooky this old house. I won’t venture upstairs,” remarked Kristina.

“Won’t venture upstairs. A little spooky. But willing to see Father McGeown’s ghost walking in the woods?”

“I’m not afraid when I’m with John.”

“Thanks, kind lady. I thought all women felt protected in my presence.”

“Be serious. You know what I mean. In case I forget – thanks for escorting me here. It means so much to get to be alone with John.”

“No thanks necessary, Kristina. The score is even. You and John – Amy and me.”

Saimon and Kristina wondered who was left in the ballroom since they seemed to stumble over one couple after another, until their eyes got used to the dark. The back of the house was not lit at all.

“Thought you’d eloped with my girl. Amy is no company out here under the stars when all she talks about is Saimon, her man,” John teased. “We four have to go into the woods together and then we can pair off. Saimon, you’ll have to watch for a light in that top window. It’s Father McInnis’ signal for everybody to return to the ballroom. I’ll escort Amy back in, okay?”

“Thanks, John. Long live Kolbe. Come, my little black bird, off to the woods to build a nest.”

“Stomp the cockroaches,” John and Saimon chorused as they parted company. . . . seven years imprisonment . . . offence to conspire to commit an act . . .

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Amy approached the gate at the Table Bay Yacht Basin with outward defiance. She gave an extra tug at the turban she had tied around her head to hide her long curls. She hoped her old, lace-up brown brogue looked shabby enough. She made certain that her floral overall was longer than her coat. Although she never smoked, this afternoon she dangled a cigarette from the corner of her disguise, but she could not relax until she was past the guard and on the yacht.

“Where do you think you’re going? No hawkers allowed her. What’re you selling? I have to inspect that basket,” the guard growled at Amy.

“No, Baas, I’m not selling nothing. Young Master Zolkov’s having a party tonight on the boat. I have to clean up the rooms and prepare the table.”

“They usually send their houseboy. And they always let me know who’s coming.”

“The boy is busy at the house. The old Master and Madam is having a dinner. I work by the family next door. I said I would help Young Master Zolkov. Which boat is it?”

“The white and blue one second on the left. I’ll have to ask Mr. Zolkov not to forget to let me know who’s coming to the party. Security is my job.”

“Yes, Baas. You do your job good.”

Amy lifted her basket and tried to seem not too eager to get to the boat. As she reached the gangway, she noticed Saimon sunbathing on deck. She hoped he would not laugh at her disguise.

“Master Saimon. Security wants to know about your guests tonight,” she shouted. She made certain the guard heard.

“Go tell him I’ll be down later with the list. He was at lunch when I came through,” Saimon shouted back, hardly looking at Amy.

She did not really want to face the guard again but she had to obey her ‘Master Saimon.’

When Amy returned, Saimon had gone below. As she descended the stairs into the galley, Saimon doubled up with laughter.

“I’ll close my eyes and open my arms. I think I could kiss you if I keep my eyes closed.”

“No, Master Saimon, no kisses. I have to go up and clean the deck. I don’t want the Security to worry. No, no, Master Saimon, don’t forget about the Immorality Act. If the police catch you kissing a coloured girl who will be arrested?” Amy acted the shocked servant pushing off her boss’s advances. “Patience, Saimon. I have to clean the decks first. The guard might come around to see what’s happening. I’ll have to keep on my beautiful outfit.”

Amy collected the bucket of water and brooms and clattered up the stairs. She set to work with loud mumblings about having to waste her time cleaning when all those wild young people would only be messing everything with wine tonight.

Saimon returned from his talk with the Security Officer and started up the engine.

“Hey, Master Saimon, I’m not working on no moving boat. I don’t swim. Where’re you going?” Amy tried to sound indignant.

“I’m taking it around to False Bay to meet the Shapiros. You can work on the way.”

“Master Saimon, your mother said nothing about no trip. I’ll work inside while we go. No big wave is gonna knock me off the top. I’m going to ask for danger money,” Amy shouted as she hurried below. She collapsed on the nearest bunk, grateful that she need no longer play a role.

“Shouldn’t you be navigating this here vessel, Master Saimon? We can’t risk running aground.”

“Don’t worry. Zolly is at the helm. He was in the shower when you arrived so you didn’t notice. Now don’t get upset. Zolly has known about us even before I was brave enough to approach you. He has a girl-friend of colour too (as our Prime Minister says). Zolly knows how we feel.”

Amy stiffened for a moment but then relaxed as Saimon pulled off the turban.

“Let’s get the real Amy out from under all this. Everything off – including that hideous lipstick.”

Saimon took off Amy’s overall, while she untied her shoes. Both shivered with excitement. Amy wore a bikini under her overall. As soon as Saimon got the overall off, he stared kissing her all over.

“I still have to remove my hideous lipstick, remember?”

“To heck with the lipstick. We’ve waited too long to be together like this. We’ve waited. A whole year sneaking kisses behind book stacks and accidental hand brushing. This is our day.”

“Slowly. Have you forgotten the Roman Catholic Students’ Ball? What happened under the willow between a certain Jew and a Baptist?”

“We’re alone here and nothing to stop us.”

“Police patrol in boats too. I can’t help feeling a little afraid.”

“Zolly will signal long before any Coast Guard can come near.”

Saimon had removed the top of her bikini. Amy instinctively pulled her long, black curls over her breasts. Even if she was in love with Saimon and knew she wanted him to touch her, all the guilt of her strict Baptist upbringing caused her to stiffen in his embrace.

“I’m sorry, Saimon. I’m just too scared. No. I can’t think straight: guilt, fear, love. I want you. But I’m scared to go all the way. Let’s just stop right now. I’m bound to mess things up. Saimon, please don’t be angry. We can wait another three months. London doesn’t seem so far off. Graduation – London – us together without fear. Right now I’m scared stiff and that’s not how I want the first time to be. Please understand.”

“Speech over? We’ve had all the academic discussions about your virginity. I respect your views. So relax, little Amy. I’ll know where to stop. Just let’s enjoy what we can of each other.”

Amy relaxed as best she could with half an ear open for a Coast Guard whistle.

“Time to stop, Saimon. Have you forgotten the Shapiros don’t know about us? Can’t take any chances. I’d better get into my work clothes and finish the cleaning.”

“Okay. You get the food and table organized. I’ll check everything above.”

“Yes, sir. Right, young Master Saimon.”

Maximum penalty for illicit carnal intercourse between whites and non-whites increased to seven years’ imprisonment . . . also an offence to conspire . . .

“A gathering of the penguins” Amy bounced into Miriam’s room. There were eight others in the room, all trying to freshen up their make-up and comb their hair. All wore white dresses and black graduation gowns.

“What a day! I thought the graduation ceremony would never end. Especially as I was almost last. Miriam and Saimon Zolkov bringing up the rear.”

“Although Amy Abrahams went up first, I just wanted it to be all over. I only waited to see you and Saimon,” Amy remarked.

“I looked at that piece of neatly, rolled-up paper and couldn’t believe that that was what the three years of slogging was all about.”

“The great anti-climax is what graduation is all about,” remarked another girl.

“Maybe we will all feel less cynical tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow, tomorrow. I wonder how I will feel after tonight,” Amy thought out aloud.

“Cheer up, Amy. What about three weeks from tomorrow?” Miriam tried to be cheerful. “By the way, Linda, what did Prof. Smit find to talk about at dinner? You hung on his every word,” Miriam added trying to distract attention from Amy and her problems.

“He invited me to see his etchings.”

“That old line!” chorused all the girls.

“Miriam, why has Saimon decided to fly to London this evening instead of Sunday?”

“Yes. Isn’t that a sudden change?”

“Nothing sudden or sinister. The 10:30 tonight makes it more convenient for my uncle to meet him tomorrow evening instead of Monday. We’d better join the rest of the party now”, Miriam replied.

“I’ll be out in a moment. I need to repair my slip strap. Do you have a little pin for me, Miriam?” asked Amy.

“Be right with you. I’ll take everybody else in first to meet Mummy and Daddy.”

Amy sat down at the dressing table recalling the day’s events. Graduation, lunch with the English Faculty, tea with the German Faculty, dinner with the History Faculty, and now Saimon’s farewell. Such a short one.

“Now let’s fix that non-existent broken slip strap. Since I’m soon to be your big sister, you might as well use my shoulder to cry on”, Miriam spoke as she came into the room.

“Do you think that we’re panicking for nothing? Saimon and I haven’t been alone at any time for the past two weeks. Do you think the police are still suspicious? Must he leave tonight? Can’t the 10:30 go without him? Will he be waiting for me in London?”

“Amy, you know you can’t take any chances. You’ll only be separated for three weeks. We have our spies too. We’ve been assured that the police are on to your involvement with Saimon.”

“I’m sure Kristina told her father when John broke off with her. She’s so bitter against coloureds now. The Chief of Police’s daughter crazy about coloureds!”

“No. It’s not Kristina. She’s also meeting John overseas. The break-off was a front.”

“So who could have spied on us? Oh, yes I know. It’s that old man, Mr. Alex. He told me he was a Government Investigation Officer. A fancy name for a spy,” I said. I’m sure I made him angry. You know the one that has been at ‘varsity goodness knows how long and nobody can figure out what his major is. How long does it take for a major in spying to graduate?”

“Amy there’s no use upsetting yourself like this. You are wasting precious time. Let’s join the party. Saimon leaves here for the airport in two hours. Don’t you want to be near him?”

“I’m sorry, Miriam. Parting is such sweet sorrow and yet I can’t say goodbye till it be morrow. We won’t even be alone before he leaves.”

“Cheer up. Good news. Join the party, then we can slip away down to the end of the garden to Isaac’s studio. I’ll show you his latest canvas until Saimon can get away.”

“You mean Isaac has decided to accept me into this family?”

“Everybody is batting for you. Saimon wants to tell Daddy tonight, but I think he shouldn’t. Mummy also wants him to tell to wait until after the wedding. Daddy will accept the deed done.”

“I’m ready to join the mob.” Amy bit back some tears. She hurried over to the bar. A drink would be something to hang onto. Only when she reached the bar, did she notice Saimon there. A slight panic made her pull up short. Above all, she must avoid obvious contact with him. There could be a spy at the party. Now she was face to face with him, she had to behave as casual as possible.

“Glad to see you here. I didn’t know whose party you were going to first. Did you hear I’m leaving for London this evening?”

“Miriam told me. She told me to come here first. I’ve three other parties tonight. Mine is tomorrow. We’ll have a week of parties if I survive tonight.”

“You can drink my health at some of those parties. I’ll be busy with interviews. I hope I get into Cambridge.”

“I thought you were going to get a job on your uncle’s newspaper.”

“No. He wants me to study at a British University for at least a year first.”

Amy had heard this all before, but she and Saimon had got used to this special casual public conversation.

“I have to go now. I see Miriam signaling to me. She’s going to show me Isaac’s new painting. I’m so excited. If you have to go

before I get back in, I wish you all the best. Good luck in England. I’ll be in England in three weeks’ time. Might bump into you at Speakers’ Corner or the tower of London. One never knows” Amy threw over her shoulder as she hurried to join Miriam.

Amy did not really see any of the pictures. It seemed like hours before Saimon came.

“No, Miriam. No need for all the lights. Light the lamp”, Saimon suggested.

“I’ll light some candles instead.”

As soon as one candle was lit, Miriam switched off the lights and hurried back to the house.

“My little Amy Abrahams. Three weeks hence, little Amy Zolkov.” Saimon held her close. “Shaking all over as usual. Still. Quiet, little black bird.”

“I’m trying not to cry. Tonight one-and-a-half hours and then nothing. Nothing for three weeks. Saimon, you’re sure you’ll be waiting for me?”

“Don’t doubt me now, Amy. Our love is the only thing that has meaning in this crazy country. My eyes can tell colours apart, but not my heart.”

“I wish I could fly away tonight too. I’m so very, very scared.”

“Come here. Sit on the floor. Can’t cast shadows on the windows then.”

“You’re still scared too, aren’t you, Saimon? Just hold tight. I don’t want you to let go of me.”

Amy responded to Saimon’s kisses as she had never done before. For the first time she wanted to give herself to him completely. She took off her graduation gown and spread it on the floor.

“Tonight I can’t believe in my Baptist doctrine. I might never see you again. I can’t help feeling as if you’re going off to war. You might be killed on duty. Separation. Death. It’s the same.”

“I’ll be waiting. I’ll be at Southampton when the Windsor Castle docks. My wife.”

Saimon blew out the candles then returned to their place on the floor.

“Come here, my wife.”

“Yes. Your wife. I’ll be that tonight. I’m not scared anymore. We can stay in this studio for an hour at the most and you’re not going to forget this hour ever.”

“Promises. Promises.”

Amy stopped any further remarks from him by kissing him. She wrapped her tongue around his. Ticked his palate. Ran her tongue along his gums. Gently sucked his tongue into her mouth.

“I’m not dreaming still, am I? My little Amy, you do surprise me.”

“I’d better stop, if you object.”

“More. More . . .”

“Well, I must live up to the idea of being a hot, black woman. Isn’t that why you fell for me? For the promises?” Amy tried to be flippant.

“Amy, my Amy, I love you. We don’t have time for analysis now. Don’t ever forget I love you – not because of colour. I love you – you the person – my little black bird.”

“Deep down I know that. Sometimes I just can’t think it’s all true. I believe in my love for you. Yes. I do believe in your love.”

Saimon ran his fingers over her face and down her arms. Clapped her hands between his and kissed each cheek. Soon Amy had discarded her white dress and Saimon was in his underwear. Amy felt free, but still afraid to enjoy her freedom. “I’m frightened. Will it hurt? I want you. I’m not cheap. I love you. Love you . . . love you. Don’t hurt me.”

“You know I’ll be gentle.” Saimon suddenly became very quiet as he tried to make certain he had not heard some movement outside.

“Somebody’s outside, isn’t there?” Amy could hardly get the words out.

“No. It’s just the dog. Relax, Amy, relax.”

Amy lay still for a few moments to reassure herself that there was nobody out there.

“You have to relax, little bird. There will be some pain when I go in, but not much if you relax.”

“Pain. A sweet pain. I want to be your wife tonight. You believe me, don’t you?” Amy tried to reassure herself. She had been running her tongue over his body but stopped suddenly. “I don’t know now though. Perhaps we should wait another three weeks,” Amy mused for a second or two. “No. No. It’s right for it to be now. You love me? Don’t you? Saimon?”

Saimon sat up because he thought he had heard some steps on the gravel. He crawled over to the window, tried to peer outside. He

could see the party guests in the house and on the porch dancing, eating and laughing.

“Nobody anywhere near here. Miriam will see to that. I see her on the porch.”

Saimon and Amy settled back on their spot. Amy felt the need to keep talking. “Wait until you’re married. The man will lose respect for you.” She pictured her mother giving her that oft-repeated advice. “If he loves you, he’ll wait. You have to be extra certain, remember he might be playing a trick on a coloured girl. They use you, but they marry their own kinds.” Amy recalled her mother’s very earliest remarks. Does he really love me? She lay with her legs tight together, but as he rolled onto her, he pushed them apart without resistance from her. She was not going to allow herself to be haunted. Saimon was in no hurry. He wanted Amy to be at ease. The music from the party drifted down to them. They were far from the crowd. They had time just to explore each other.

Saimon was ready. He thrust, deep. Beautiful pain. Amy yelled. Flashlights. Flashlights through the window. The door kicked open. Lights . . . more lights. Saimon and Amy lay in the middle of a sea of brilliant lights. Their world caving in around them. Two very tiny people viewed by giants in boots. Lights. Policemen everywhere like cockroaches. Even more lights. More cockroaches.

Saimon could hear his mother and Miriam screaming down the path. The music from the party drifted on. Saimon tried to wrap Amy in the cloak as he grabbed his clothes.

The shiny 10:30 South African Airways bird left for London on time. One passenger did not make it.