

# **CHOICES**

a one act family drama

By Shannan Browne

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Premiered at Pinetown Girl's High School Hall, 11 October 2008

## **ORIGINAL ALL FEMALE CAST**

**Mother** – Nqobile Nkosi

**Angel** – Mandisa Nduna

**Thami** – Nomfundo Mkhize

**Kay** – Nokukhanya Ngcobo

**Dee Dee** – Sithabile Ndlovu

**Norma** – Buyisiwe Ngidi

### Synopsis:

This is a play about a teenage girl who takes a lot for granted, only to learn too late that sometimes you don't get to say sorry, good-bye or thank-you.

Note from playwright: The play is set for teenagers in South Africa, but is adaptable for any teenagers around the world.

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## **CHARACTERS**

**Mother** – In her early forties

**Angel** – her 18 year old daughter, who is in her gap year

**Thami** – younger daughter, it's her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday

**Kay** – Thami’s long time friend, battling with a personal secret

**Dee Dee** – Thami’s long time friend from school, over the top, ‘popular’ one of the four

**Norma** – Thami’s long time friend, serious, conscientious character

*Set: A South African kitchen with a rectangular table and four chairs, one chair on stage left of table and one on stage right. Two chairs are centre of the table facing the audience.*

*Far stage left is a little table with a telephone on it {possibly a stool next it, should space allow}. At the back of the stage is a small preparation / storage table with 4 bowls, 4 mugs and 4 glasses on it to be used to set up meals. One box of cereal could be used, alternatively mimed. Far downstage right is where the backdoor to the street is situated, far upstage left is the doorway to the rest of the house {no real door is required on either side}, to be used for entrances and exits.*

**SCENE ONE:**

*Mother walks in downstage right with present in hand, taking off a jacket to reveal a nurse’s outfit underneath. She has just returned from her night shift to make breakfast for her two daughters and tea for herself. She hangs her coat on the back of a chair, places the present at one of the table setting areas and starts to put the bowls and glasses on the table at 2 centre chairs and stage left chair. Whilst she is preparing the table Angel walks in wearing her nightgown.*

Mother: Morning Angel

Angel: *(wiping her eyes she goes over to her mom and kisses her on the cheek)* Morning mom. *(She sits down and starts to eat breakfast)* How was your shift?

Mother: *(sitting down sipping a mug of tea)* There were two taxi accidents last night. All the wards and passageways were full again. Unfortunately two people died, and four are still in ICU. Oh my child, life is so precious.

Angel *quietly gives her mother a tender hug.*

Mother: We were lucky to be able to save the other passengers. Promise me you will only get into the taxis you know are safe. Promise me Angel.

Angel: I promise, mom.

Mother: Good. I haven't spent all my effort to have one of those drivers take you away from me. Now, why aren't you dressed for work? It's already 6 o'clock!

Angel: Ag mom, I'll be ready in time, I still have 20 minutes. Why are you home already?

Mother: Haikona, you children always rush, rush, rush. You should wake up earlier and then you wouldn't have only 20 minutes, you would have 30 minutes and get to work early instead of running out of here late to catch the first taxi you see!

Angel: Yes, mom (*Angel smiles*), but then we would be old people.

Mother: Just you wait my girl, one day you will be old too, and then we'll see if you still think you're funny. Where is your sister? I thought she would be awake already... (*sipping tea, she remembers Angel's question*) I'm home early because I organised with the head nurse to let me work a double shift on Sunday so I could be here for Thami when she gets up for her sixteenth birthday today. Where is she?

Angel: You really love that child too much, you always battle when you work a double shift, and she really doesn't deserve it.

Mother: Angel, how can you say that about your sister? I love you both more than anything, you know that. Now where is she?

Angel: I think she's still sleeping. She was up really late last night talking to Zee on the phone. I think she only went to bed around 2am.

Mother: 2 am! Angel, why did you let her stay up so late? It's a school night! You know she has to be in bed, or she will sleep all day in class.

Angel: Ah mom, I tried. I promise you I tried, but she started throwing a tantrum and telling me that I'm not her mother and that she is old enough to do whatever she wants to do. She told me that just because I've finished school I mustn't think that I'm better than her. I told her that I wasn't trying to be her mother, or be better than her. I told her I want her to do well in school so she can be better than me. She said I was talking nonsense and I was just jealous because she has a boyfriend and I don't. Mom she is so difficult. I can't talk to her; she doesn't listen to anything I say. She doesn't even listen to what you say anymore.

Mother: (*shaking her head*) Oh that one. You are right, she doesn't listen to me. She thinks she knows better than both of us.

Angel: Mom, I'm worried about her.

Mother: Don't you worry Angel. It will sort itself out. All we can do for the moment is pray for her. Pray that in some way the Lord can bring the old Thami back to us. That in some way He will show her that there is more to life than boys and clothes and being on the telephone.

Angel: Oh mom, you have so much faith. Sometimes I worry about you too!

Mother: My child you make me smile. It is not your job to worry about me either. You just need to worry about deciding what you want to study next year. You can't waitress forever.

Angel: I know I can't, but I've given up hoping that I'm going to figure out what I want to do with my life. There are so many things I want to do. I don't even know where to start! Work and study, just work, just study, do an apprenticeship, do a learnership? And if I can ever decide that, then what career am I going to do it all in? There's just no hope. There are too many decisions to make and they all confuse me.

Mother: If we don't have hope and faith, then what do we have? Hmm Angel, what do we have?

Angel: Not much I guess, not much.

Mother: Yes, so today we are going to leave our worries behind and help your sister have a very happy birthday. I have her other present in my room; I must fetch it before she wakes up.

*(Mother goes out to fetch the present. Angel puts her dishes back on the back table, Mother returns and both packages wrapped in brown paper next to Thami's place setting, she looks very proud. One present is a Dictionary and the other is a patchwork blanket).*

Angel: Two presents! Mom, you don't have the money for two presents.

Mother: *(smiling)* I have been walking the last stretch of my trip to work for two months, so I'd save the money to buy Thami a dictionary. Her teacher says that she can do very well if she improves her vocabulary. I think that this will help her to read and write better. When the other nurses at work heard that I was saving for Thami's birthday, they thought she needed something better than a dictionary, so for six weeks they have been knitting squares which they finished sewing together last night. Now Thami will have a blanket for the winter this year.

Angel: *(giving her mom one last hug and sharing her excitement)* Those are wonderful gifts. You really are an amazing woman, we are so lucky to have you as our mother.

Mother: Haibo Angel, the presents aren't for you. Now go and get ready for work, before you are 20 minutes late!

Angel: Yes mother *(she rushes off to get changed)*

*(Mother is humming “happy birthday to you” and putting her bowl back at the back of the stage as she turns back Thami walks in yawning, she stands at the table and pulls out her chair.)*

Mother: *(as she walks up to Thami and starts singing)* Happy Birthday to you, Happy birthday to you, Happy Birthday dear...

Thami: *(cuts her mom off)* Morning mom. Please don't sing to me. I'm sixteen now, I'm too old for singing.

Mother: *(shocked and hurt)* Oh, ok little one. . . Happy birthday.

Thami: *(slumps down in the chair)* I'm not little any more mom, you can't call me little one now, I'm sixteen. Why don't you listen to me?

Mother: I did. I stopped singing Thami. No matter how old you are, you must respect your mother.

Thami: You always say that, but you don't respect me.

Mother: Thami, today is your birthday and I don't want to fight with you. So please don't start.

Thami: *(makes a gesture and sound that looks and sounds like she is going to talk back to her mother, but she stops when she sees the presents on the table)* Are these my presents?

Mother: *(sitting down next to her, smiling)* Yes, little, *(she stops herself)* ... Yes, Thami, they are. I think they are lovely presents. I hope you like them.

Thami: *(already starting to rip the paper in the middle of her mother's sentence. She has opened the Dictionary, her face drops)* A Dictionary? Mom? A Dictionary! Mom, what were you thinking? What am I going to do with a book? Maybe you can give it to Angel

and she can find a job to study in here *(she laughs to herself)*, but I don't want this. Here *(she hands it to her mother)*. *(She goes straight to the next present and rips it open, the blanket opens)*. A homemade blanket? *(her expression is a frown, she looks at her mom, there is a pained silence, then she decides to put it on her lap and starts eating)*.

Mother: What's wrong?

Thami: Nothing.

Mother: Thami, answer me properly.

Thami: Well it's my sixteenth birthday and all you got me as a dictionary and a homemade blanket. I thought I was more special than that to you. I know we don't have money, but couldn't you at least have saved some money for a present? For something special?

Mother: *(devastated)* Thami... I ...

Thami: *(she gets up, kisses her mom on the cheek as she's about to go)* Thanks for the presents anyway mom. I'm not going to have breakfast here; I want to get to school quickly because I think the girls have planned something really cool for my big day today. Oh and mom, please don't forget that they are all coming here for a sleep over tonight. I'll see you on Sunday, because I'll probably sleep all day tomorrow. *(She leaves to get changed into school clothes.)*

Mother: *(she slowly sits down)* No, little one, you won't see me tomorrow; I have to work a double shift.

*(She lowers her head into her hands and softly says The Lord's Prayer. Angel comes in and sees her mom. She walks to her mom. She rubs her mom's back with her hand, looks up to the ceiling and shakes her head. Then she brings her eyes back to her mom as she squeezes her mom's shoulder. Her mom looks up at her.)*

Angel: Don't worry mom, I'll be in tonight to look after the sleep over. I'll make sure they all behave.

Mother: It's not the other girls I'm worried about.

Angel: Keep your faith mom. *(She kisses her mom's forehead goodbye)*. Bye mom. Enjoy your sleep.

Mother: Thanks Angel *(just as she has reached the door)* ...and Angel!

Angel: *(she stops mid step and turns back)* Yes, mom?

Mother: Don't worry, you will get your answers soon and find a wonderful, happy career.

Angel: *(she smiles, nods and whispers)* Thanks mom *(she yells to Thami as she leaves)*  
See you later Thami.

*Thami has changed and comes into the room on her way out.*

Thami: *(Rushing past & out the door)* Bye mom.

Mother: *(to the closed door)* Bye Thami, have a good birthday.

*(Mother picks up the ripped paper and the left over bowl and puts them at the back. She then comes back to the table, picks up the dictionary, looks at it for a while, and then places it under the telephone. Then she turns and walks to her bedroom. Lights fade out to black.)*

## SCENE 2

*Lights fade back on as voices are heard from outside the home, talking about the school day and the movie they have watched.*

*Into the kitchen walk Thami, Kay, Dee Dee & Norma giggling. They spend their time in the kitchen standing and sitting.*

Dee Dee: I still can't believe that he gave you a ring Thami! That is so awesome! I guess this means that you and Zee are official now.

Thami: *(looking at the promise ring on her finger a bit wearily)* Yes. I guess we are.

Norma: You don't sound too convinced.

Thami: Well, he's my first boyfriend, so I'm not sure what it means. I'm already his girlfriend, so why would a ring make a difference?

Dee Dee: Duh! Now it means that you two will be sleeping over at each other's places.

Kay: Yes, that's true. When Sbu gave me a ring I didn't know exactly what it meant either, until he told me that I couldn't go home, because I had promised him I would stay over when I accepted the promise ring. So I had to sleep with him. I was really uncomfortable for a long time, but I got used to it in the end.

Norma: But you two aren't together anymore.

Kay: *(sarcastically)* Thanks for stating the obvious Norma! I found out that he was sleeping with Busi as well. He gave her a promise ring too. Sorry ladies, but I ain't sharing my man!

Dee Dee: *(giving her a high five)* You go girl!

Kay: I'm a one man woman, and my man better be sharing my ideas or he ain't gonna be my man!

Dee Dee: How did you find out?

Kay: The slut left her bra in his jacket pocket. You know the D cup polka dot bra she wears under her school top. Who doesn't know that bra? That one. In his jacket pocket! I found it when I borrowed the jacket because it was raining and I had to rush out of his house. The jacket was on the couch by the door. I got into the taxi and needed a tissue, instead I found her bra. I was so angry and embarrassed. When I asked Sbu he said that I mustn't worry because it had been going on a while and it hadn't bothered me before!

Norma: No! He didn't! Hau Kay that's ridiculous. Of course you didn't know he was sneaking around behind your back!

Kay: Exactly; but at first I thought that he was right and it was ok. Then I saw Busi at school and I knew it wasn't ok, no matter what he said I could never share anything with her, ever! Do you remember when we did that project with her in grade 9 and she said she was the only one who did any work and we got zero while she got an A. Do you remember?

Thami: Yes, I remember that! We spent the whole weekend putting our information together for that geography project, while she sat there painting her nails.

Dee Dee: Yes, and talking about her, her latest boyfriend. What was his name? Slick, Trick, Mick?

Norma: Dick!

*(All laugh)*

Thami: Yes, that was his nickname, short for Richard, is what Busi said. She couldn't do our class project this term either because she had to spend time with him. I can't believe she lied to the teacher, got away with it and left us hanging.

Norma: And got us in detention at the same time remember?

Dee Dee: She did too! Hau and my Dad gave me such a hiding for that. He said I had been out partying and not doing the geography project! I was so angry!

Kay: Exactly! Very angry! So was I when I saw her. I can't trust her and I can't trust a man who has been with her.

Norma: Well said Kay. I think you definitely made the right decision. There are so many good guys out there. You deserve one of the best.

Kay: Ah thanks Norma (*they hug*).

Dee Dee: Well Zee still gave Thami that ring and I want to know what you are planning now girlfriend?

Thami: (*uncomfortable, fiddling with the ring*) I'm thinking about it. . . Does anyone want a drink?

Dee Dee: Oh – alcohol?

Thami: No Dee Dee, my mother doesn't keep alcohol in the house.

Dee Dee: Oh, what a drag, all the parties I go to have alcohol. Drinking makes things fun.

Norma: Whatever Dee Dee. Your body is too young for alcohol.

