

Since I started working on this testament, the first thing that came into my head was to write about all the events that took place in my life. At least all the events I could remember: about my home and my working life, about my problems, my joys, my crises, my disappointments. About everything, telling no lies and being as honest as I could despite the hurt.

In Durban, with my arrival, I felt I found peace, happiness and of course, a wife. But I realised there was no more difficult task than finding the right person to marry. As we say, in these drought stricken parts: "there is no river, without a frog". And in my case, I discovered that frogs were made for water as much as water was made for frogs. And I always despised and was frightened of frogs.

I was made to suffer by a beautiful woman - a woman I thought was to be my wife (and she made me think that she thought so too). Don't look at me now: when I first arrived in Natal, I was full of energy, handsome and out to have a good time with women. In the first year I had four girlfriends, but a fifth arrived with whom I fell in love. At first I tried to accommodate her alongside the others and continue with my life as normal. She found out but brushed it aside saying that she was not in love with my other girlfriends, but with me. She even added that I could go to them, she didn't mind, but she would wait for me. Before long, I was incapable of continuing as before and one by one my girlfriends got rid of me.

She somehow managed to quietly win out and I felt so guilty about the treatment I gave her at the beginning of our relationship that I tried to right the wrong by proposing marriage to her. I felt that she had suffered enough. So I sent my people to her home and her kin asked for their lobola. After the usual haggling we agreed on ten head of cattle, but also large pots, rugs and all that jazz.

My kin, myself included, were poor so all this was to be an incredible strain. Her parents wanted most of the cattle as money, but they insisted on four real ones. It was difficult to get the dreaded cattle. At that time most people were very reluctant to give up their cattle, even for good money. And the price of cattle was climbing high. After a lot of running around we found some at Ndwedwe. A message was sent to them to come and inspect their cattle but all of a sudden they declined to come.

Without warning she started clashing with me: that I was ridiculing her, making a fool of her since I had another wife back home in Pondoland. That was a lie. But overnight everything changed and from her caring self she became a vicious tormentor of my feelings. She badmouthed me in public and made me run around in the community explaining myself and trying to get the story straight.

In the midst of all this madness, she discovered she was also pregnant. Our relationship was deteriorating with her trying to assault me, and me trying to avoid the people's ridicule. But she would use every opportunity to verbally attack me, and like an angry wasp to try and sting me, claiming all kinds of double-crossing intentions on my part.

She wanted to go back with me to my rural home to check whether I did or didn't have a wife. By then though I was angry and not ready to cooperate. If my community heard of her suspicions and the doubts about my integrity they would have cooked me. So I refused.

As the period of birth approached she continued arguing and insinuating nasty facts about me. I kept on reminding her that when a woman was pregnant by any of the Miya men, she should not speak like that, because on the day of delivery she would face complications. It happened like that, when the baby was supposed to move downwards, it just moved upwards. There was general panic and she was operated on to save the

baby. The doctors gave up any hope that the mother would ever survive. They put the baby in intensive care and managed to save the mother too.

I used to visit her daily at the hospital. I could not see her during the whole first week, but at last I succeeded, after eight days. Her condition was very bad, and to add to all the difficulties her mind was not working properly. When I spoke to her about a particular thing she used to reply with irrelevant gibberish. I tried to show love and determination to her, trying to remove the picture in her mind, influenced by people wanting to make me her enemy. One day I visited, only to find that she was discharged. I had suggested that she should come to my home when she was discharged because there were rituals to be observed and supplications for the baby to prevent it facing problems. But she did not bother.

A day later she had to wake us up at midnight, desperate because the baby had not slept since she took it to her home. The baby also never stopped crying, but it was rather sluggish by then and it was losing its voice. My uncle asked her then to explain why she had avoided the rituals and supplications. She said that her mother had insisted that it was not necessary to do anything with the baby. And she accused us of wanting to do "something" to it as a ploy to see it or take it over. My kin were furious about her replies and her flouting of traditions.

My aunt took the baby and handed it over to my uncle. He took the baby and started to move from room to room with the baby in his arms, mumbling and incanting to himself, to the walls, to the air. He beckoned the ancestors of the Miya clan, generation after generation, he chanted their praise-names and implored them to forgive us. That is when I heard the entire poem of our clan.

He then set *impepho* alight and the herb's scent filled every corner of the house. Exhausted we all went to sleep. As if by a miracle the baby slept and woke up calm and continued to do so for the next three months. And throughout that period it remained healthy. On the third month I went out and bought a goat; I put it to the knife and offered it to my son. This, in our clan, is called giving the child a blanket. This is the welcome ceremony that marks its introduction to the ancestral chain.

After the passage of this time, we were supposed to be married, either in church or with traditional rituals, or both. But neither her kin nor mine could bring us together: delay followed delay and another trying and painful period arrived. My wife-to-be started a new round of accusations about having a wife in the rural areas and how many people were busy confirming such truths.

Swallowing my pride, I conceded that she ought to come home with me to check my credentials.

We became the source of much laughter and lots of gossip. Yet, however much I tried to ignore people's tales, they kept on arriving in my ears and it hurt a lot. Also, people used to come to me and say that I should give her up, because her homestead was run by witchdoctors with suspect intentions. And they insisted that they would find a new partner for me, more suited to my life. But I kept aloof from them too, desperately trying to make our relationship work. Everyday I would go to her, only to find her fuming at me, having to spend my time appeasing her.

Things had taken a dramatic turn for the worse since my marriage proposal and the lobola was agreed to. And although each night it seemed that she was appeased and ready to give us a chance, by the next meeting she was wearing her boxing-gloves.

The baby was born on the 22nd November 1967 and by mid-1968 we split. She announced she had another suitor, and that I had to go to get my lobola back from her father's place. And she boasted that her chances were good due to the large family she came from, unlike my situation which was one of being an orphan, single as a finger, and without say over my father's brother.

She said all this to me as if she was reading it from a piece of paper. She left me standing there dumbstruck and my heart drizzling blood from the pain. I worried about leaving behind yet another motherless child - just like me. But I stared: looking at her walking down the path through the sugar cane fields of Bhekani, and crossing the gum-tree forest near the foot of the hills. And then ascending again on the path through more canefields to disappear from my life.

Long after her disappearance I found myself still standing and staring for no rational reason. She had gone with her bitter crop that she sowed in her heart. And I found myself lost and tired. I sat down in the shade of a gum-tree; the weather was turning cold and the wind, I remember, started rattling the leaves. And the tree seemed to taunt me: I was jilted by the mother of my child. A beautiful child - for whose existence I thanked both God and the ancestors time and again

I went over the passions I hosted: my fears as she was being cut up, my worries that she was disabled for life, my anxieties that she was to die giving birth. I remembered the death-do-us-part promises and got up and walked home.

On my arrival at home I reported the matter to my relatives who refused to believe my story. They asked me what kind of insults I had been heaping upon her to anger her so. I tried to explain to them what had happened but it was difficult. To this day I cannot find the reasons. Had I been nasty to her, she would always have had my uncle's homestead to complain to, or demand that I was put in my place. But nothing of the sort ever happened. I was ditched and for months to come I was listless, getting thinner and developing a scraggy kind of look.

The community started buzzing once again with rumour. The new rumour was that I received a calling from the ancestors to become a sangoma. My diminishing appearance was a result of this calling and everybody inquired how severe the pains were. I attempted in vain to convince them that I was not in that kind of pain and that I was healthy.

One day, on my arrival from work my aunt called me "Mfana", (as she used to call me) and added that there was something she wanted to discuss after our evening meal. I knew immediately that it affected me somehow but she first prepared the supper and we ate in silence. After our evening prayer she searched her apron and took out a letter and ordered us all around her to listen to it.

That letter was written by the mother of my child; and the letter was full of insults directed against them - swearing at them, calling them animals and telling them that she did not love their "son" to whom they gave birth through their ribs. And as for their grandchild, they could come and take

him because she was very busy relating to "top" people in the area, people of substance, not rubbishes and nothings like us.

I cannot include all what she had written here. I do not like to reproduce all the insults, they are shameful. On the following weekend we sent people to go and inquire the aims of the letter written by my girlfriend. Our people returned immediately saying that she was extremely rude to them and she was not ready to communicate with anyone.

On the following Wednesday I got a summons calling me to appear at the Verulam court. I went there and found her waiting for me. We were three when we entered the court. Us two and the baby. The clerk there asked whether I knew that lady.

I confirmed that she was the mother of my child. His second question was why I shirked the responsibility of maintaining them. I told him that that was a difficult question to answer because the situation was not of my making. I was expecting to marry her and maintain her but they turned me down. He then inquired whether I had paid lobola and I told him that I paid everything they had requested. Cattle and all. He then turned to her inquiring whether I was telling the truth. She conceded that I was.

"Then will you be marrying this person?" he asked. And she said no, she did not love me anymore and that she got advice from home to avoid such a marriage. She was to marry someone from Swaziland instead.

The clerk then said that this issue was becoming too big for his authority and ordered us through another door. He took all his notes, from our statements and took them to the Assistant Magistrate. He described everything to the magistrate, and the magistrate in turn re-asked us all the questions. After that I produced all the receipts of my lobola expenditure totalling R2100. The magistrate wrote further summonses calling all the in-laws to court. Tempers were flaring when we all met the next Wednesday in court.

One of the sources of anger was that the child kept on running to me in court and trying to play with me. She got cross and tried to prohibit it, but it cried and cried until it got its way. The child kept close to me for most of the court-case.

The assistant magistrate questioned my "father-in-law" first: he called me the husband of his elder daughter. The magistrate tried to clarify: husband or boyfriend? He meant a real husband because I had paid the lobola and the only deed outstanding was for him to go and inspect the live cattle I had bought.

The magistrate then inquired whether I had called him to see these heads of cattle. He admitted that I had. But he did not do so because he did not get an opportunity to do so. And had I in earnest asked for such a marriage, he inquired? The answer was affirmative: I had done so even before the birth of the child. So why did he not deliver his side of the responsibilities to seal the wedding? He replied that he did not get the time due to his job.

The magistrate, rather irritated, started enquiring into the inconsistencies of his story: he asked whether he knew that his daughter left me for another man.

When he said that he had heard of some such like talk at home, the magistrate asked why he had then sent his daughter to claim maintenance. He denied that he had done so. Yet she said he did.

As a consequence the magistrate was angered and concluded that: "I shall not demand your daughter to marry with this guy now, but I shall force you to pay back all the expenses he paid to you. He is only to pay for the baby. After that he can pay the maintenance of the baby until she is old enough to go to her father's home";

After this verdict her father changed his song completely and pleaded that he could not afford to pay me back because, as he said, the money he earned from the "Mohamedans" he was working for was little. He insisted on signing the marriage papers there and then. That is when she interrupted and argued that she was not to marry me under any circumstances. There would be no peace in our marriage and she was afraid that I was to avenge her for her stinging words and for the troubles she caused.

I was also asked to comment: I stressed that I was always fond of her but after her stinging insults to my parents, after her rejection I could not see how we could live together in the same homestead.

Finally the judge reprimanded her father for not honouring his commitments. He then gave us time to come up with a settlement that involved my compensation. My 'father-in-law' (who was not to be that) was cross: he got into the company car he was using and screeched away into the distance, alone.

The child and both of us parents rode the bus to Amauti. But after the bus ride the child would not leave me. So I accompanied them all the way home. Still she would not let me leave. The neighbours started gossiping about this but it had to be separated from me for the time being, however painful.

Over the weekend the whole family gathered to discuss the issue. We agreed that we wouldn't take anything from my wife's family. But, we decided, we would only let them bring the child up until she reached the stage when she would want to come home.

On that score the settlement was achieved: they wouldn't claim maintenance for the child and I would have a right to see the child anytime. If she wanted to come home she could and if I wanted to do anything for her, I could. The child's mother never married the other guy either, and in later years our child joined my family. We still greet each other when we meet and the years have made the pains disappear.

I then decided not to get married because I had tried to do what I was supposed to do but could not succeed. I couldn't trust women any more, I felt they are very good at robbing and pretending that they are in love when they are not. I told myself that I must work and keep my money as I had done before and forget about women. They are the crocks of love, they are beautiful for nothing.

I stayed alone for six months. Then, one night I dreamed of my mother. In my dream I was at home in Flagstaff where I was born and grew up.

We were at home with my brothers; my elder brother Vuyisile and younger brother Mtu, and my uncle Ernest. My mother had cooked very nice food for us that day and she started dishing it up. She served my uncle first and then herself, my elder brother and my younger brother. I was the last to be given food by my mother.



After I had thanked her for giving me food she said: "Eat and be strong. I want you to grow up to be a big man. You must be careful of things which can disturb your mind. Be wise, think before you do things."

"I know that the Mcanyane family has done wrong to you and you are angry for that. I want you to get a place for yourself, a home, so that when I come to visit you I will know where to find you. Even myself, I am very upset about this. But I must know where to visit you when I remember you."

I woke up. Oh! Was I dreaming? I started to think back to my dream. I was very happy about my mother's visit. I wished she would come again. The whole day I was singing and the other workers asked what was happening to me? Why was I so happy? When I told them about my mother's visit they just laughed at me.

Slowly it came to my mind what my mother meant by saying I had to get a place where she could find me when she remembered me. But that did not change my mind, to think of getting married again.

The year went on. On Good Friday 1969 I dreamed again. There was a sister born after me, who passed away soon after her birth. You could say I had only heard about her, because I was too young when she was born for me to remember or to recognise her now. But that night in my dream she was a person I knew, she was my little sister. She came with a lady I knew long ago, by the name of Nellie Nqunqa. We all grew up in the same area although Nellie was younger than me and I was in love with her uncle's daughter. I used to call her 'sister-in-law' but her sister left me and married somebody else. I respected her very much, just like a real sister-in-law.

In my dream I asked my sister where did she get my sister-in-law? But she did not answer my question. Instead she asked me a question: "Is she your sister-in-law?"

I answered her: "Yes, but I was unloved by her uncle's daughter."

My sister said: "She is the one who is going to build us a home. You have to go home to get her".

I woke up and I started to think that I was dreaming again.

At that time my girlfriend was busy with a new boyfriend, always passing nearby my home, showing off. I proposed love to one girl, Janeth, of the Mazibuko clan who was my girlfriend's neighbour. I won her love. I used to pass by my girlfriend's home. The whole family used to come out of the house and watch us walking slowly by. Sometimes we would stand under a tree in the shade for a long time. Sometimes she would walk half-way with me, then we would stand for another hour, then I would take take her back half-way again before we could leave each other.

After some time my old girlfreind went to my new girlfriend, Janeth, and shouted at her, asking why she was in love with me while she knew that I was the father of her child?

Janeth answered her: "I love him because you have failed to love him. So do not worry me about him, he is mine now. I will shut your big mouth with a stick if you come and talk about him again."

We pushed our love very much. But even though Janeth loved me so much there was a thing which was ringing in my mind; do not trust a woman, women have not got real love, they always pretend. The other thing that warned me was my sister's dream, which sometimes came three times a week, saying the same words: "She is not your sister-in-law. She is the one who will build a home for us. You will go back home to fetch her."

So her dream became my daily bread while I did not want to get married. One day Janeth came to me and said: "I want to tell you something. I know that you are not ready to get married. There is somebody who wants to marry me. What must I do? I know that you love me but this man has been worrying me for a year now and some of my family feel I should marry him. If you say I must marry him I will do so, but if you say I must not I will not. I love you, Alfred, and I am still prepared to love you if you want me to do so."

I said to her: "Yes Janeth, I love you. You know that I love you but I stop you from going on to build your future. I thank you very much for the time you spent with me, and also for telling me the truth of what is in your mind. I am still confused but I do not want to confuse you. I wish

you all the best. The respect you gave to me, double it to your husband. You know what Mavis has done to me. You must not do that to your husband, Janeth. Please."

It was our last day together. After a week, pushed by my sister's dream, I decided to visit Transkei. I told Uncle and Auntie that I wanted to go to Flagstaff to see the people. On Friday, after I had finished at work, I took a bus to Transkei.

I was in a hurry to be in Flagstaff; to see if Nellie was still around, not married. We left Durban at 6pm. I was in Flagstaff at 12pm. When I went home there was great joy at seeing me but some people asked if I was sick? I said: "No, I am well," but I was thin like a sick person.

I started to ask people about Nellie: "Is she still around, not married?" They said she was not married and I slept well that night. The following day I went to see her, meeting her on her way to fetch water from the river. It was very nice to see her. We started to tell stories of long ago, of our good times years back, and criticising the present times. She told me she was going to go to town. I told her I was going to join her. On the way to town I started my story of love, although I did not propose marriage. I hate the idea of proposing marriage to a woman just to catch her. Most men like to do that, when all they want is love.

Then there was a big battle between the two of us. She told me that it was impossible for her because people were going to say that she was taking her sister's man. And because she took me as her brother. She said I knew that I was the one who had always sent her to my other girls, that she had helped me to propose love to other girls. That was the truth. It was a long battle, until I returned to work. After that there were letters carrying proposals from my side to her side and from her side to mine, for about three months. Then we came to an agreement. I was very happy.

After I met her it was the end of the dream about my sister. After six months in love with Nellie, I changed my statement to her. Early in 1970 I visited Nellie with a new idea: that I wanted to marry her. But she would not believe me - so it was another battle again. She told me that she did not want to marry because of her mother.

Nellie is her mother's only daughter. In fact there are two children, but with different mothers. Her older brother was born of her father's first wife, who ran away because he did not support her. When he was away at work he used to forget that there were people in the rural areas who he was supposed to maintain. So his first wife left Nellie's elder brother to the family. After some years her father came back and married Nellie's mother, while she was pregnant.

When Nellie's father passed away she was brought up by her mother. She did not want to marry because she wanted to be able to look after her mother. But after I worked hard to make her understand that I was preparing for her future, she agreed at last.

Again I sent the people to her parents and I started paying lobola. In 1971 her family told us that we must prepare for the marriage. The whole of 1971 I worked hard to get all that we would need for marriage. During the last three weeks in December our names were called in church - so that anybody who opposed our marriage could come up with their problems before the marriage took place. No-one came forward - so on the second of January, 1972, we were married.

It was a great day. Neither of us will ever forget the hundreds of people who were there to see us stepping to a new life. It was her first day of getting a new person to rely on, other than her mother who brought her up, and who gave her everything.

On the third of March, 1973, our first-born, Noduma, was born. She was followed by Msawenkosi in April 1975 and Nokukhanya in August 1977. That is how I came to be a married man and a father of three.