

# THE Playbook

By Thabiso Tshowa

When Stormie discovers his older brother's 'Playbook', he thinks he has opened the doors to paradise. The book is full of tips and info on the girls in the neighbourhood. Stormie decides to put it to the test with not just one, but two, three, maybe four girls...

## CHAPTER 1

Ever since I was a little boy, I've heard all types of stories about my older brother, Don Boza. His first name is Christopher but I call him Don. Don is thirteen years older than me. He used to live with my grandmother at Ekuthuleni, but moved to Bloemfontein when I was small.

In a way I've always looked up to Don because the stories I heard about him were nothing short of legendary. I heard he had a bad reputation with the ladies. But I also heard people loved him because he has a kind heart and he helps those in need. He wrote short stories while he was at Ikhethelo Secondary School, where he graduated with highest honours. He also wrote his own local series titled, 'The Silent Witches of Roodepoort'.

When I was in Grade Five, Don came to Langelihle Primary School on award's day as a surprise. Everyone knew him and welcomed him with a warm heart and friendly smiles – even my teacher couldn't take her eyes off him, but I did not

recognize him. I turned to my mother. “Mom, who is that tall guy with the German cut and the skateboard?”

My mother turned to me, surprised. “Hau, mara Stormie, don’t you recognise your older brother, Christopher?” she asked.

I took another long look at him. “What! You’re telling me that’s the guy who used to push me on a swing as a baby? I remember that.” I paused and looked at my mother. “I want to be just like him!” I exclaimed.

Mom turned to me with a friendly smile, “That’s nice, my child, but I think it’d be better if you wished to find out more from him about his experiences. He’s been here thirteen years longer than you, so you’d better listen when he talks.” She sighed. “He’s certainly made mistakes along the way, but he learnt from them.” I wondered what she meant when we went over to greet him.

He smiled down at me and shook my hand. “Hey little brother it’s been a while, look how you’ve grown. I am so proud of you!”

My mother gave him a hug. “Hey Christopher, thanks for coming to see your brother receive his maths and literature awards.”

I grinned. “See, big bro, I take after you. I’m also good with words and numbers.” I hugged him. “Thanks for showing up, I hope to see more of you from now on, so we can spend time like we did when I was just a little boy.”

Don smiled, flashing his beautiful gold teeth. “I wouldn’t have missed it for the world. I would like to spend some time with you as well, just to find out what’s cooking in that head of yours.”

I gave him another hug but this time I held on longer, “Thank you so much big bro.”

I took my mother’s words to heart and did my best to learn from Don. He made it easy because he didn’t mind sharing his knowledge. But deep down, I always believed that somewhere, somehow, there was a quicker and easier way to be like Don, especially with the ladies.

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I struck gold when I graduated from primary school and had to attend AD Nkosi Secondary School in the location. I moved from my parents’ house in Extention Five to stay with Magogo in Ekuthuleni. I stayed in Don’s old room at Magogo’s and stumbled upon treasure after treasure there. I found old music mixing equipment, a leather jacket, a couple of old Lil Wayne and Kanye West posters, and a pair of hiking boots among other awesome hand-me-downs.

One Sunday evening in my Grade Nine year, I was in my room listening to Pop Smoke’s latest mixtape, waiting on my grandmother to dish up the chicken stew I could smell all the way from my room. I decided to check if Don’s old DVD player still worked. It didn’t, but when I unscrewed the top of the old machine, I found a little black book, a journal of some sort.

At first I had no idea what I was looking at. The journal had a black leather cover with the words, *The Playbook* written on the first page right above a quote which read: *Almighty, please grant me the strength to change what I can, the serenity to accept what I cannot change and the wisdom to tell the difference.*

There were photographs of girls, with their names, birthdays, personal information, addresses and even info on their parents and siblings. Some of the information was coded – for instance, I noticed that next to photographs of ladies who had large breasts the letters *P.T.B.* were written in a red marker. I wondered what it meant, but I soon realised I didn't even know where to begin decoding this book, because it wasn't even in chronological order.

After two hours, I decided to take a break from the journal and work on my maths homework, but I just couldn't shake the feeling there was more to that book than meets the eye. When I was done with my homework, I decided to go back and study the Playbook from cover to cover.

It took me the whole night, but by morning I knew what the Playbook was – it was a cheat sheet on the lives of the women and girls Don had been interested in. I couldn't tell before, because of the coding in the text. What made me so certain, was that I recognised his high school sweetheart, Mbalenhle. The Playbook had all the information I could ever need about her family.

I tell you; Don really did his homework and kept the records to everything. But what really piqued my interest, was the

information about Mbalenhle's sister, Mpilo. She was right around my age and there was everything, I am talking down to her shoe size. I stared at Mbalenhle's high school picture. She looked so slim and had perky breasts and next to her pic were the letters P.T.B.

Again, I wondered what it meant until I came across a more recent picture. I chuckled, then laughed out loud. "No! Don, no!" I screamed in disbelief. 'P.T.B.' stands for 'prone to barrel'! Man, I'm going to have fun with this book!"

I closed the book to get a couple hours of sleep. As I was drifting into sleep a text came in.

### **Hi Stormie, you up?**

It was Ndo – she sometimes checked on me when she woke in the night. Ndo and I had been friends since we first met at the age of four years old, when I had come to visit my grandmother here in Ekuthuleni. Our grandmothers were friends, so we had played together and we've been friends ever since. Technically, she's the first friend I made in this neighbourhood. I thought about how Don would have described Ndo in the Playbook and felt a tinge of guilt – I wouldn't want anyone to write about Ndo in that way.

### CHAPTER 2

I decided to keep the news about the Playbook to myself until I was certain it could be used as a tool to get past the friend zone. To test it, I chose two girls from the Playbook, Sesi and Nomathemba, who had the nickname 'Ndudla'. They were next of kin to ladies Don had gone out with, so there was more than enough info on them in the Playbook. They were

both around my age and they were right under my nose, in Ekuthuleni. I had all the basic information I needed on the two girls from the Playbook and did some of my own research to make sure I was up to date. Even then, I knew the Playbook was only half the work – I still had to have a conversation with these girls.

On Monday morning, I decided to approach Ndudla first, because we attended the same class and we usually walked together in the morning. I never said a thing during those walks.

“Today will be different!” I exclaimed under my breath as I watched Ndudla slowly walk up to me over the dusty square between the school buildings. She had a new haircut like Rihanna’s and looked really hot, even in her school uniform. “It’s now or never,” I said to myself.

I greeted Ndudla and took her hand, looking deep into her eyes. “Hey Ndudla, can I speak to you?” I pulled her aside, out of the crowd. “Listen, I am tired of messing around. I am tired of acting a friend in your shadow,” I said in a low voice. “And before you say anything, just know that I respect you as a woman and you’ll always come first with me. I know this might seem to come from nowhere, but I want to do right by you. You deserve a guy who’s going to ask you how you feel and ask about your day. A guy you can do homework with and talk to about anything, because the mood is always right,” I said and smiled. “A guy who enjoys Lula’s music and would love to take you to his concerts.” I caressed her hand.

By that time I was going through the checklist in my head and realised I had used only four of the Playbook’s techniques: I

had made body and eye contact; I was ‘honest’; I had called her by her special nickname; and I was focused on what she wanted.

Ndudla let out a happy little sigh, grabbing my other hand. “Okay, Stormie you seem very sincere but this is a surprise. I’ll give you an answer after school.” She paused. “But I like what you’re saying and here’s your proof!” she put down her book bag and gave me the greatest first kiss I could have asked for.

I had never thought I’d experience anything like it. Up until that day, I had had a pretty tough time with the ladies. Every time I had to talk to a beautiful girl, I froze and became tongue-tied, unless we were clearly only friends. But now I had “proof” that the Playbook’s methods worked.

I decided to move on to greener pastures. During the lunch break I ditched my buddy, Mbij’ while he was showing off his new sunglasses, and went to find Sesi.

I found Sesi with her friends and they all looked curvy around the hips and thick around the waist. My heart beat fast when I looked at Sesi’s long chocolate legs, “*Nazo, phezulu!*” I said under my breath.

By the time I was done talking to Sesi, we were in her class making kissy faces at each other. She asked me to walk with her to the shop, but when we were almost at the door, she grabbed my arm. “Stormie, *ngiyakuthanda,*” she said and gave me a kiss on the lips. She tasted like ripe strawberries and she had a vanilla aroma to her. Checkmate! I thought.

As I was walking home with Mbij' after school he turned to me, "Ek sê Stormie, where did you disappear to during lunch break? I looked for you everywhere but couldn't find you. Where were you?"

"You worry too much. Just relax, you're too young to give yourself a heart attack over me," I said with a mysterious smile.

When we parted, I hastened my steps. I had another target in mind: Phumelele, a chick with long silky black hair and skin with a golden hue, who lived in my neighbourhood.

### CHAPTER 3

I have to say, after I got a smooch from Phumelele, I got a little cocky. I felt like I was King Kong, I was most definitely walking tall. It was only four o' clock, so I decided to walk over to Ndo's place for a chat.

Ndo and I sat under the tree in front of her house, sharing an orange. She listened to my account of my day and frowned thoughtfully.

I liked Ndo and I respected her. She was into reading science books and doing experiments in her spare time. She was working on getting a full scholarship from Sasol before she even got to Grade Eleven. She worked hard to make that dream a reality but you couldn't tell that if you heard her laugh. Ndo laughed like a clown getting tickled with a feather. It was very funny and so was she, but she told mom jokes and I loved her for it.

"Stormie, I'm glad you've found yourself two ladies but please make sure nobody gets hurt. It would pain me to see



my friend get hurt or to watch him hurt other girls. Please, Stormie, be careful. You're my closest friend and I want what is best for you."

I nodded. "Don't worry Ndo, I am a big boy, I can take care of myself. But thanks for caring," I paused. "You're always looking out for me, you're like the sister I never had, I care about you too."

An hour later, I went home to text Ndudla, to see if I couldn't get another kiss from her. I took a page from the Playbook and sent her a heart-warming message.

**Hey Ndudla, I can't stop thinking about your smile. What can I do to make you smile some more?**

She replied and after a couple of texts, my strategy paid off.

**Hey Stormie, can you come over right now? Please I need you!**

I went over to her house as quickly as I could. I got there in less than a minute – granted her parents' house was just down the street. When I arrived at her house, I knocked twice on the door.

"Come in baby!" Ndlula called from inside.

I opened the door and looked around and saw no-one. I took another step into the living room.

“Hello baby,” Ndudla said. She was sitting on the couch in nothing but black lingerie.

Looking at her, I could feel all the blood draining from my head. Ndudla smiled and came to fetch me by the hand while taking off my t-shirt. I thought, Lord this is what heaven must feel like. She sat me on the couch and started kissing me. I have to say, I was in heaven. But a minute later, I heard a car driving into the garage and car doors opening and closing.

I panicked like a deer caught in the headlights and froze. Ndudla threw me my T-shirt. “That’s my father, he wasn’t supposed to get back before six!” she exclaimed. “Sneak out the back, we’ll continue this when we get some more alone time.” She gave me a kiss before she ran to her room.

I ran out into the backyard and soon enough I was back at Magogo’s house fiddling about on my phone trying to write a text to Sesi. To my surprise, when I sent her the first message, you could swear she was waiting on it because she replied right away.

**Hey Stormie, I’ll buy you a kota if you’ll come to my house and go with me to my friend’s house in Bhodlindlala xxxxx**

We went to the friend’s house first and then the three of us went to Chow Pozi, the food joint by the traffic lights, to buy the kotas. Then we went back to Bhodlindlala and chilled there for a while, listening to Amanda Black’s latest album while I was putting my moves on them. I figured if Sesi didn’t fall for it, perhaps her friend might. To my surprise, I got two birds with one stone.

Sesi was the one who initiated the whole thing. “Who here is a virgin?” she asked and they both looked into each other’s eyes and giggled.

I had just taken a big bite of my kota and almost choked on the bread. I started coughing.

“Eish sorry ladies, this bread is choking me!” I said shyly when I got my breath back.

We were sitting on a couch facing the TV, Sesi on my left and her friend at my right. Sesi giggled again and placed her hand on my left knee. “You know what we should do?” she asked.

I froze up because I was afraid to answer. But it’s a good thing, because her friend moved into action and by the end of that evening, I was no longer a virgin.

Back at home I found a bunch of text messages from Ndo. I was worried for a moment, wondering what she’d think of me if she knew what had happened, because she and Sesi were second cousins. Hopefully she wouldn’t find out.

#### CHAPTER 4

Seeing that the Playbook worked wonders with me, I decided to share its power with my friend, Mbij’. One day after school, I invited him over to our house to show him what I was really up to. Mbij’ was in awe of the Playbook and he asked to have a look at it and see if he too could find missus right. I left him with the book and went to do my chores.

By the time I came back, Mbij’ convinced me that he was fully immersed in the Playbook, even taking pictures of some

pages. He handed the book back to me. “Tjo boy I am about to do some serious damage *lankambini!*” he said excitedly. “This book sure will bring change to my game.”

Mbij’ and I went down to Phuthuma’s bottle store. so we could spot girls walking to the shops.

Nandi was the first girl to walk past, Mbij’ was the one who jumped up first and attended to her.

“Hey *muhle,*” he said, grinning nervously.

“Excuse me?” Nandi exclaimed.

“I just want to tell you that you drive me crazy and I want you to be mine,” he said in a shaking voice.

Nandi cocked her head back. “*Mara mfana ungizwani ye?*” she asked.

Mbij’ panicked. “No, I know that you like rib burgers, so I was thinking that some day I can buy you one.”

“Why, because I can’t afford to buy one myself?” she asked, hands on her hips.

I stepped in. “Hey Nandi, I like your dress, it really compliments your figure.”

She smiled. “Thanks!”

“I read those whimsical posts of yours on Facebook,” I smiled. “You really know how to do social media, there certainly is a

bright future ahead of you. But it's those smoky dark eyes of yours that has really caught my attention," ,” I said confidently and winked.

Nandi smiled, pleased. “See wena, Stormie, you know how to talk to a lady, you should teach your friend, *ngoba uyabona ukuthi kuyabheda.*”

We both chuckled. “*Ngizo zama*, I promise I will do my best,” I laughed.

I saw a devilish look on Mbij's face, but I didn't think much of it, I was too pleased with myself.

After I said my goodbyes to Nandi and even got her digits, I decided it was time I headed back home and leave the rest of the ladies for another day. Mbij' was not happy about that, he still wanted to chase after girls.

“No bro, I've had enough for the day!” I said and walked off, leaving him hanging.

About an hour after I got home, my phone was going off nonstop with texts from girls wanting an explanation about the Playbook.

Mbij' had put a post on Facebook:

**Mrova girls watch out! A boy named Stormie Tshowa from Ekuthuleni has acquired a Playbook and he is using it on unsuspecting young girls from our Kasi. Please be on the**

**lookout for him; you have been warned! Here are some pictures of the Playbook.**

He had posted the pictures he had taken of some of the pages in the Playbook below the message. I should have known he would retaliate but what he did really hit below the belt. I started thinking that I may have been selfish and not considered Mbij's feelings when I left him hanging. Clearly he had been hurt and now he was hitting back.

Another text came in on my phone. It was Ndludla.

**Ye wena Stormie you will reap what you sow!**

As I sat on the living room couch, I felt my heart beating wildly. How was I going to get out of this mess?

#### CHAPTER 5

I thought the storm would never pass, because I got so many hot claps from the girls I had been involved with. I had been ducking Ndudla on our morning walk to school but she managed to find me after Mbij' ratted me out.

It was after school and everyone was at the main gate. "Stormy you low life!" she shouted, rushing to confront me. She beat at my chest with her fists. "Stormie, you're a dog! I wish you just drop and die. I never want to be friends with you again. You truly broke my heart."

I made no move to stop her, just put up my hands to protect my face, while the other girls cheered her on. For a second, I wished for Don to appear in front of me and tell me that everything was going to be all right.

Sesi didn't take it lightly either. When she found me at the shop, she cussed me and I took a knee to the groin.

I realised I needed help, so I decided to go to Ndo's house after school to get her advice. I found her under the tree, reading a book. It was a sunny afternoon and Ndo was rocking her favourite yellow summer dress that showed off her shapely legs.

"Hey Ndo," I said to her as I sat down.

"Oh, hey Stormie, I haven't seen you in a while. I heard you were busy turning heads la Mrova," she said neutrally.

"Eish, Ndo I know hey, but perhaps I took it too far. I've destroyed friendships that really meant a lot to me and now Ndudla won't even talk to me," I sighed.

Ndo turned to me. "*Enhlek* Stormie, what did you hope for when you started this?" she asked quietly.

"Eish Ndo, *nawe bowubona ukuthi kuyabheda*. I just wanted to feel special and perhaps get a girlfriend in the process, but Mbij' messed it all up!" I exclaimed.

Ndo looked at me seriously. "No Stormy, you did this to yourself. What were you thinking trying to play girls like that? Can't you see you're not a player but a sweetheart?" she asked.

I smiled, surprised. "A sweetheart? *Mina?*"

She smiled back. “Yes, you’re a sweetheart and I know you’re going to do right by those girls. What you did to them wasn’t fair. If you did something like that to me, I would probably kill you.”

I nodded, ashamed but also strangely relieved. “Thanks, that really means a lot coming from you Ndo. Now please tell me, how do I make amends?”

She looked at me. “You start small by writing a letter to each of the girls, telling them nothing but the truth about what happened and professing your sincerest apologies.”

I thought about it, then nodded. “Yeah, that might work, thanks Ndo.”

I left and went home to get started on the letters.

*Dear Ndudla ...*

I wrote a whole page and then tore up the piece of paper. I decided to go straight to the heart of the apology:

*Ndudla, I can't say I know how you feel about me but I understand. I understand because what I did was unacceptable, which is why I am not asking for you to forgive me but to know the reason I did what I did. I was envious of my older brother and I wanted to prove that I really am Christopher Tshowa's brother. He set the bar pretty high, especially with the ladies and I have no game. I have been trying to fill his shoes since age eleven. When I saw how well the Playbook worked, I felt I had to make up for lost time and I didn't think about your feelings. I hope to be friends with you*



*in the future because there's nothing I value more than your friendship. Thanks for taking the time to read this letter.*

I read it over and over until I was satisfied with it, then I moved to the next letter. I hoped the girls wouldn't punch me in the face when they saw me again. I'd just have to trust that they wouldn't, even though I deserved it.

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Three days after handing out the letters, I went to visit Ndo at her house again. I found her mopping the front porch. It had rained in the morning before we went to school.

As soon as Ndo saw me, she smiled excitedly, like she had been dying for me to come by.

I looked at her with a grin on my face. "Hey Ndo, I came to tell you that the deed is done. I submitted the letters and now we just wait ..." I paused. "Actually, now its back to square one," I sighed.

Ndo laughed. "Well you're not all the way back to square one," she said, her eyes warm. "There's something I wish to tell you. I've been in love with you since the Sixth Grade. I never said anything before because I only realised how much you meant to me after I saw how easily I could lose you to other girls."

I was taken by surprise but when her words sank in, I couldn't help but grin.

“Ndo, I didn’t know that’s how you felt! To be honest, I feel the same way about you. I’ve always been too shy to say something because I was afraid of how you’d take it. I didn’t want to put our friendship at risk, you mean too much to me.”

Ndo grinned and took a step closer to me. “Hau, mara Stormie let us stop messing around and let fate fall into place,” she said and held my hand.

We looked into each other’s eyes. I smiled, “Are we really doing this?” I asked.

“*Ufuna ukubona?*” she exclaimed and gave me a gentle kiss on the lips.

Her lips were so soft, none of the other girls I had kissed had lips like that. I felt a connection with Ndo that I hadn’t felt with any of the other girls – I liked all of her body and mind.

When we ended our kiss, I gave Ndo a big hug. “I never want to let go of you; you make me a better person. I don’t even care about surpassing Don anymore because he never had what I have with you. I guess I had to find that out the hard way. But I’m glad I made those mistakes because they led me straight into your arms!”

After more hugs and kisses, we said goodbye and I headed home. When I got to my room, I took the Playbook outside and threw it in the rubbish bin.

“Thanks, but no thanks,” I said to it. “I’ve found my one true love, no thanks to you,” I said and turned my back on it. Then

I walked into the house to chat on my phone with Ndo, my one and only.

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