Banda is walking home from school when he sees a group of fellow students crowding around a poster on a wall.

Town, town!

Ngoma Stars! Those guys are great!

Ngoma Stars... I have their latest DVD, man.

Oh, really, can I borrow it?

Sure, no problem. Now, get in guys... town town!
AFTER THE ARREST OF HER UNCLE AND AUNTIE FOR ILLEGAL BREWING, THE WELFARE OFFICER CONTACTED SHANI'S GRANDMOTHER AND ASKED HER TO COME AND LIVE WITH THE CHILDREN. SHANI IS EAGER TO START A NEW LIFE BUT STEVO DOES NOT AGREE.

Isn't this Stephen! You have grown to be such a big boy. Strong like a bull!

Hello, Grandma

Hey, Stevo, Grandma hasn't seen you in a year. Come back, she wants to talk to you.

How long is she visiting?

She isn't visiting. She's going to live with us, remember?

We're old enough to live on our own!

Stephen, here, I brought you some arrowroots.

It's Stevo, and I need to see my friends. Bye.
Banda, will you teach me to play the guitar? You are like, a guitar wizard!

Alright, but you also need to be very determined to learn.

Oh... how lovely! I am so like, determined!

Town, town!

Some of the students enter the matatu. Mercy, Amanda and a few other girls walk on.

Mercy is showing off her i-pod.

You are so lucky Mercy. My parents wouldn’t buy me such things.

I bought it myself, to watch the latest music videos.
JIM, A FORM FOUR STUDENT IN A DIFFERENT SCHOOL CYCLES PAST THEM.

Hi, Amanda!

Who's that guy? He's so hoooot!!

Amanda! Woooh!

That's Jim. We went to the same primary school.

Hot boyfriend, Amanda!

He's a friend, not my boyfriend, Lucia!

HAHAHAHAHAHA

MOTO IS TRYING TO CLEAN UP HIS LIFE BUT TROUBLE SEEMS TO FOLLOW HIM.
Edna!

My clothes! My designer clothes! Edna!

Solo, please help me with your jeans and T-shirt... the cleaning lady has stolen everything!

Listen man, he has HIV and you can't get it from touching him or his things.

No way, Moto. You always touch your sick brother... if you use my clothes I will get AIDS too.

Really? But he is infected.
Yes, but he is just a normal person. HIV is passed through bodily fluids like during unprotected sex or blood to blood contact.

Really?

Not only that, also from mother to child during childbirth.

Are you sure if you use my jeans I won’t get it?

100% sure!

MEANWHILE AT BANDA’S HOME...

Banda, a gift for you.

Thanks dad, these are great!
I want you to be as good as Maradona when you grow up.

Look Dad! My trophy for the best solo performance!

Yes Amanda, that's nice, now, I told you the moment you get home from school you help in the kitchen.

Amanda, there is water to be fetched, food to be cooked and you just stand there?

I just wanted to show you...

What's wrong with Dad?

What use are trophies? She needs to be a proper woman.

Dad, I'm off to band practise... we want to be as good as the Ngoma Stars.
No my son... you are a man. Focus on soccer, not singing!
I can do both.

Soccer is more manly and you need to concentrate more on your school work. Your report card wasn’t impressive. No band practise tonight.

But Dad, if I get to the top ten of my class, will you allow me to play with my band?

Yes, of course. Top ten!

Isn’t Santana a good name to baptise my guitar?

Huh?

Santana... after Carlos Santana. The greatest guitarist in the world.

Hmm...
Amanda, you sound bored.

I'm angry, not bored. You have all the free time in the world to think up names for your guitar while I'm made to work like a donkey.

You refused to let me help you.

Dad might see you and start yelling at me.

You know him. He can be so old-fashioned.

Oh no, you mean she was serious? Tell her I'm not around!

Lucia is here.

It's not right! I'm just as capable as you and more responsible. Why can't I do what I want?

Too late, she's already seen you.

Hi Banda. I'm here for our class. Like, where do we start?

Oh... yeah, you hold a guitar like this.

Umm... er... so nice. So tenderly? How lovely.
MEANWHILE AT MERCY’S HOME...

Turn the volume down. It’s too loud.

Daddy, I need to join a gym.

Hmm... we’ll find out about the cost.

I’ve already checked. That’s the brochure.

Oh, Daddy! The teacher said the fees balance is due tomorrow.

It’s this expensive?

Mama Mercy, will you pass by the school and pay it?
I can't, I will be in a meeting the whole day tomorrow.

Dinner is ready.

I'm not eating, I am slimming.

Days go by and life returns to normal for Shani, but she is still unsure of herself.

Shani, I was thinking that you should be class prefect?

Really... umm, thanks, but let me think about it.

Later on that day...
That was a nice musical script the teacher made us read.

Can you imagine if it was acted out?

Shani, maybe you should get people together and do it.

Really? But I can’t stand in front of people and direct them.

That’s what you do when you raise the flag... ordering everyone to stand at attention.

Do you think people would be interested?

If you involve them.

SHANI AND AMANDA PASS BY MOTO’S SECOND-HAND CLOTHES STALL.

Hi Shani! Come try these jeans.

No thanks, Moto.

It will show your figure... let me be your personal fashion advisor.

A no means no... I’m not interested.
He's right, Shani. You're beautiful.

Amanda! The boys talk about you in class.

Look, Mercy and Manmann!

They stop when they see Mercy chatting with Manmann.

On seeing them, Mercy hurriedly walks off.

Something's fishy. Why does she have to pretend when she sees us?
Wassup Stevo? Can I send you to my shortie, Mercy?

This is my friend Mark. He is the illest underground rapper, maan.

Illest?

He means I'm the toughest.

How's your parents case going?

Tell you what maan, maybe I can teach you to spin the matatu. Then you can be a driver man, and earn your own cash.

These days Shani and Grandma run the house. Anything I say, they want to do the opposite.

They're still in remand. I think Shani is the one who told the police we brew at home.
Then you can move out to your own house.

That would be cool. I'd be my own man.

Mercy... can you walk me to the shops as we discuss the maths exams we did today?

Can't it wait until tomorrow? It's late. Your parents won't approve.

They don't get home till midnight. It's okay.

It's Manmann who wants to see you.

I know. You're so clever.
Hi Shortie, look what I brought you.

Oh, this is nice! Music videos!

And dance videos for you to watch and learn the illest dance moves, babe.

When do I meet the Ngoma Stars guy you promised to hook me up with?

Soon, he's a busy guy.

Cool, I got to rush back home.

I'll be around so don't get so lost.

You convinced her that fast?

She's green. Give me a few more days and she'll know why they call me Manmann.
SHANI DECIDES TO TAKE ON THE DRAMA CHALLENGE.

What is that?

You? I don’t think it’s your thing.

I want to stage a musical play at the start of the holidays. Everyone is invited to join.

Hmm.. can I try out?

LATER THAT NIGHT MOTO GETS A VISIT FROM HIS NEIGHBOUR SOLO.

I hear the cops are looking for you.

Me? Why?
Edna is under 18 and hasn’t been seen at home or in school.

That girl!! She cheated me! She told me she was 20!

Why do you think she stole your clothes?

Well... I hadn’t paid her for cleaning the house the past two weeks. Look, can you please give these keys to my brother when he comes?

Yes of course. And get yourself a wife, Moto.

I have to hide till everything cools down.

MEANWHILE MAMA AND BABA BANDA DIFFER ON HOW TO TREAT THEIR CHILDREN.
Dad, I'm going for rehearsal. Shani is organising a community musical.

Dad, can I go to the rehearsal too? I've finished chopping the wood.

There must be other work for you to do around the house.

It's Banda you should be telling that. I don't like that girl Lucia. She is definitely much older than him and all those other girls coming around here.

That shows Banda has come of age. He's a man after all.

But he should be careful.

He can't get pregnant. I can't wait for Amanda to finish high school and stop paying her fees.
There’s college to think about.
High school is more than enough for her.

You’re wrong! Amanda is smart. She can go far.

SHANI IS ABOUT TO START REHEARSAL.

I hope everyone got their script.
Yes, we did.

Community musical? How dull!

Yo! Let’s make it cool. Is there a part for a rapper?

Let me drop you freestyle for this community musical something nonsensical with rhymes so lyrical, they’ll make you hysterical. Rap is the master to Shani’s project disaster.

No. You guys please give us some space.
Cute. Thanks. Now move so we can get to practise.

**BANDA ENTERS WITH LUCIA AS MARK AND STEVO WALK OUT.**

---

She was here a few seconds ago!

Ok, everyone, the band is ready, so let’s start. Mercy?

---

**SO WHERE IS SHE DISAPPEARING TO?**

Did you watch the DVDs I gave you?

Yes! I can’t dance like them, I am too fat!
No, shortie! You aren't! You've got a sexy body!

Is that so?

Yes, babes. You are beautiful.

My rent bill. You know maan, I haven't been paid the past two months. Do you think you can lend a friend some cash?

I don't have any money at the moment.

A letter?

Sorry, I shouldn't have asked a shortie like you. But I can try and get some for you.

That would be sweet babes. I knew I could rely on you.
MOTO WALKS INTO THE ABUSI BAR.

Hello, moto!

How did you know it was me?

That's not the best disguise.

Just that the police are still looking for you.

Have you heard anything new?

I am not afraid of anyone!

SPASH

24
MEANWHILE AT MERCY’S HOME...

Dad! I didn’t expect you back today.

Hello, sweetie. The conference ended early. Why aren’t you in school?

I... I haven’t paid the fees.

What? But I gave you money to pay the fees. Didn’t you pay it?

Why not?

I... I had to buy some... girl things.

Which girl things cost a whole term’s fees?

Not all of it.
I... I bought my own costumes for the community musical. I am the lead actress.

You should have told me about it. It's wrong for you to divert school money to personal things.

Meanwhile Shani and her grandma begin to get closer.

My girl, look what I made for you!

For me? Thanks Grandma!

You have worked hard in school and at home. You deserve it.
Your boyfriend is waiting for you.

He's not my boyfriend.

He's always walking near our gate each day you are coming from school. He must be eyeing you.

You are yet to know men and their tricks. Moto! Shani says you can come in!

He likes girls of a different type.

THUD

HAHAHAHAHAH

TRIP
BANDA IS EXCITED TO SHOW HIS PARENTS HIS MID-TERM TEST RESULTS.

Dad!... 78% in maths

That is a great improvement. When I was in school I was always number one in maths.

Remember our promise?

About?

If I perform well in my exams...

Oh yes. I buy you a gift.

No... I can play with my band.

Yes Dad! And I'd like Amanda to join my band and perform at the community musical.

I said that?
Son, now you are pushing it!

Please. She is a really good singer.

Ok. But only if she finishes all her duties at home.

Thank you Dad.

Banda... you have like, been so scarce. When can we have more guitar lessons?

My evenings are busy with these rehearsals, but we can plan.

Oh, how lovely!

Ok Guys, everyone’s here. Act 2 Scene 1, everyone on stage.

Mercy! Mercy!

Mercy? She was here a minute ago.
Amanda, you didn’t perform well in the tests.

How did you know that?

I have friends in your school.

It doesn’t matter if I perform well or not. My parents won’t pay even if I do well enough to go to a college.

You shouldn’t lose hope. Just work hard and cross that bridge when you come to it.

I can help you with tuition if you want.

You are such a caring man, Jim.

See you later Amanda.
AMANDA RUNS INTO THE SOCIAL HALL.

Amanda, thank God you're here. Would you like to play the lead actress? Mercy is letting us down.

Oh, yes!

First rule: You have to be punctual for the rehearsals!

I will! I will!

Here, quickly read Act 2 Scene 1 lines, we will start rehearsal in ten minutes.

You're late, where did you pass?

AS AMANDA SITS DOWN TO READ HER LINES, BANDA APPROACHES.

MOTO APPEARS AT THE ENTRANCE.

I came straight here.

You're lying.

Hi beautiful, can I read a poem?
Listen my beautiful, you make my heart break paragasha! And my hands shake pingli pinglil! And my teeth tremble zingiri zingiri...

Moto, out!

Where are you coming from this late?

Well... we were having a rehearsal for the musical.

Tell them to finish their rehearsals early!

When is the play?

It better be good because we shall come to watch it. Won’t we, Mama?

I guess I have to make room for it.

The last Friday of next month.
3 DAYS LATER IN BANDA’S ROOM.

The way you hold your guitar, it's so lovely! Like you are holding a girl.

That's the way it's held.

Would you hold me like that if I let you?

Er... how?

Like this... silly!

Don't you like me?
I like you but...

Banda, I like you. More than you can imagine.

Er... what are you doing?

We can do much more... you are not a kid.

Sex is a serious business, it can bring diseases or pregnancy.

I know a way we can’t get diseases... like if I kiss you all over your body.

Lucia, I’m not sure you are right about that...
You are such a boy! Come on... just lie back and relax.

NO! Today's training is over. OUT!

MEANWHILE, SHANI HAS SOMEONE TO ADVISE HER ABOUT SEX.

Shani, you have reached that age where boys stare at your chest. Just know that your body is your treasure.

I don't talk to boys!

There's nothing wrong with talking to boys. But don't allow them to touch you.

If anyone tries to go under your clothes just know they are after having sex with you... they might not really care about you.

Ok, Grandma.

Grandma, you talk about sex so openly.
Yes, because it has serious consequences if not practised safely.

You mean like STIs? or HIV?

And pregnancy too. You must be responsible and take care of yourself.

Shani, you set up my parents. Now they losht the case!

A DRUNK STEVO BARGES INTO THE HOUSE

Stephen, you stink of alcohol!

Six monthsh in jail... all because of yoush. I hate you!

One day you will pay for thish!
Don’t talk to us like that! Show some respect. We’ll talk later when you are sober.

What are we going to do about that boy?

Oh Shani, I almost forgot. Look what I found in your parents' suitcases when cleaning their bedroom.

Keep it safe. This is proof of your inheritance. With Stephen, you never know what he can do.

Our Title Deed for the land!

BANDA IS ALSO SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS...

Lucia... what does she really want?
BANDA TAKES A WALK TO COOL OFF.

Where is she going?

KNOCK KNOCK
Sorry, my parents don’t let me out at night. I had to sneak out.

It’s ok. Are you ready?

We can’t do it tonight.

GRRRRHH!

That was close!
Just give me the book to read and I will return it tomorrow.

Someone must be lurking around.

How will I get back home?

I can escort you.

What was Amanda after? Is everyone having sex except me?

I like Jim, but I'm worried. What if he asks for sex?

He hasn't asked, has he?

No, but you know most boys do.

If he does, tell him a firm no.

He will leave me!

If he cares about you he won't.

Oh yes, he will dump you.
Relationships are not about sex.

Hmmm? You guys are still virgins? How shady.

Smart girls wait until marriage. And why didn't you tell us you quit the musical?

I haven't. I'm coming today for rehearsal.

No need to. Amanda replaced you.

What? You kicked me out?

Well, it doesn't matter. I'm going to perform in the city and I am going to be a big celeb and you are going to regret ever firing me!

MERCY WALKS OUT IN A HUFF.
LATER THAT DAY...

Shani... I have something for you.

I don't want your letters.

We shall reply, if we feel like.

AT THE SOCIAL HALL AMANDA AND SHANI SIT DOWN TO READ MOTO’S LETTER.

“When I see you my heart jumps up and down like fried onions in a pan...”

Is that Moto mad?

“Shhh! The Scout Master is coming.”

Shani, how is the play going?

Mad about you... listen. “When I think of you I can’t eat...” No wonder he’s so thin. “Shani my shining star, I will love you until Lake Victoria dries...”
Ok. We have finished blocking.  

Good, Shani the teachers are proud of you. Your second test results were impressive.  

By the way, have you sorted out the costumes for the musical?  

Thank you.  

Yes, we agreed that the actors will provide their own costumes.  

---  

STEVO THINKS THE STREETS HAVE MORE TO TEACH HIM.  

Don’t step on the brakes that hard, man!  

Ok, Ok. Let’s do another round.  

That’s the attitude, man.  

From today I will drive matatus! No more schooling!
Banda has more to think about when his friends start advising him on sex.

Banda, you quit soccer?

Not really, I'm just busy with the band, for Shani's musical.

Giggle Giggle

What was that about?

You.

Everyone is speaking about it. Lucia wanted to go down on you and you fled.

I don't want to get an STI or anything else.

When a girl goes down on you, you don't get anything but pleasure.
To be safe, you can use a condom...

Well, I'm not ready yet.

Coward!

Oral sex can lead to sex. Be smart, use protection if you must have sex.

No, you are clever. Make responsible decisions. Like visiting VCT to know each other's status before having a sexual relationship.

Do you think I'm a coward?

I have heard about you and Lucia.

What?

She is too old for you. She is not a good girl. Don't be walking with her.

Hey, don't get all preachy with me. What about Jim?

Jim? He is my friend.

I followed you the other day. You sneaked out at night to go to his place.

To study.
Why did you sneak out then?

You know Dad wouldn’t allow me to see anyone, and not at night. Are you the one who disturbed the dogs?

Don’t try to change the topic Amanda.

Ok Banda, but don’t let your friends pressure you into risky behaviour with Lucia.

Amanda, has Jim mentioned sex yet?

No... he hasn’t. Does that mean there is something wrong with me?

No. That means he is a good guy. My Grandma says you can have a relationship without having sex.

By spending time with him like watching movies, studying together, anything positive. That shows you care about him.

Guys, change into your costumes. Today is dress rehearsal.

How will I show him that I love him?

These are our costumes?

Some of your costumes are either too small... or, look at you, that size is too big.

What?! No one is dressed the way we agreed.

Maybe, I can help.
Moto, please this is a serious situation. The show is tomorrow.

I deal with clothes, remember? If you tell me exactly what you want, I can help.

Ok, show us what you can do.

The big day is here. People are arriving for the community musical.

At least Mercy won't be accusing us of not being supportive anymore.

But Mercy has her own plans.
MEANWHILE BACKSTAGE...

Lucio, you better leave. Someone might find us.

You, my love. Are you ready?

What do you want?

What do you want?

Banda, don’t be such a small boy. I just want to kiss you. You know that song? “I got to kiss you under your navel...”

I said NO!

No!

We have ten minutes before the band goes on stage. We can do it.

MANNAN AND MERCY JOIN MARK IN A NIGHTCLUB.

Get me a beer, and a packet of cigarettes.

Soda please.

Come on shortie! Are you afraid your parents will know when you are drunk?

No, they are on a business trip for the weekend. They won’t notice. I just want to dance the whole night.
THE COMMUNITY MUSICAL IS COMING TO AN END.

CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP

Wow! Your cousin has done a brilliant job with this musical.

Shani couldn't have done it by herself, it must be luck.

How come it's over and Mercy hasn't made an appearance?

Maybe she was just bragging to us.

BACK AT THE NIGHTCLUB.

Excuse me, I'm going to the ladies.
What's that?

Just something to make her drunk, man.

Won't she taste it?

No. She won't know what hit her.

MERCY'S PARENTS ARE WORRIED.

I am only getting Mercy's voicemail.

She must be at home then.

Stevo, we are looking for Mercy. Have you seen her?

No... I haven't seen her in a while.

MEANWHILE BABA AND MAMA BANDA TALK WITH THE SCOUT MASTER.

Congratulations. Your kids did a good job.
Banda and Amanda were just wonderful!
They take after me. Singing was always my passion.

Hello? I work for the National Newspaper. Are you the parents of the talented twins tonight?
They are my son and daughter.

I wish to do an interview with them. Maybe I can interview you too?

ACROSS TOWN MARK DRIVES THE MATATU WHILE MANMANN HOLDS ONTO MERCY WHO HAS PASSED OUT.

Of course.

I've never been to your house so stop shouting!

You gotta be fast before the drug wears out and this shortie wakes up.

MARK SWERVES HARD TO AVOID AN ONCOMING TRAILER.

Watch it, you drunkard!
This is my son Banda. Banda, this is a journalist. He wants to make you famous.

I will break that young man's neck!

It's better to talk to her about the dangers of bad relationships rather than keep threatening her. She is no longer a kid.

You are right Mom. Jim is a good friend to Amanda.

Mercy told us she was in the musical tonight and we haven't seen her.

Oh, Mercy quit the play three weeks ago and we had to replace her with Amanda.

That girl! Where did we go wrong for her to lie to us?

Thanks, Moto, everyone is saying this costumes were the best!

Because you bring out the best in me.

There you go again.

Er... do you... I mean I am still waiting for the reply to my letter.

Your letter? Let me put it to you straight.
Ok, ok, no need to go on. I know, you hate me, right?

Actually, yes.

I'm sorry for bothering you.

I hate you because you are such a coward. You should have just asked me if I could be your friend. And my answer would be YES!

She said yes!

CRACK

Now that is what they call falling in love.

TO BE CONTINUED.