ISABELLA

Isabella and Toby had fallen madly in love while studying at Wits University. Toby was studying Art, its history and practical courses in sculpture and painting, while Isabella had opted to major in History of Music and Piano Performance. After an idyllic wedding, they flew to Durban for a short honeymoon. Parents on both sides had chipped in to rent a flat in a modest block in Braamfontein. For a time, things went well. They hung out with their friends, played tennis, and went to visit their parents when they felt like their mothers' cooking – which was most nights. But soon, they couldn't explain why, Isabella was pregnant. The soon to be Gray and Brown grandparents were over the moon and began planning a baby shower. To their dismay, Isabella miscarried at four months.

Life resumed as normal. Toby was a gifted artist and there was not much he could learn from painting classes. He did not like still life or modern forms of painting, being much in the traditional school mode. On weekends, he placed his works on the main street of Braamfontein where there was a wall surrounding a park. As his prices were reasonable, he

sold most of his works, and in the following few weeks worked feverishly for his next sales day. Soon he had saved a tidy sum and invested it wisely. “We will want to buy a house as soon as we can,” he said to Isabella. Isabella had accepted an appointment at a private school as one of its piano teachers. Her hours were flexible as it had to fit in with her pupils’ classes. After a year of teaching, she found she was pregnant again but waited until the pregnancy was four months on the way. She prepared a special dinner, bought flowers and a good, sparkling wine and waited excitedly for Toby to come home. “Toby,” she said, “I have some wonderful news! I’m four months pregnant and we have a baby son on the way!” “Wow!” he exclaimed “that’s great!” The grandparents were thrilled but not over the name Toby and Isabella had chosen for him: Mozart, Cezanne Gray. “They will call him Mozzie,” said Grandmother Brown. And that is what happened as soon as he started school.

There were no more babies. Toby and Isabella had saved a sizable amount of money and bought a small house in

Rosebank with a pretty garden surrounding it soon after they graduated. It had three bedrooms, one of which became Toby's studio. As he kissed her when she left for work Toby said, "I won't be home today. I'm going to paint in the Wilds." On reaching the school, Isabella was very annoyed to find all her pupils had cancelled their lessons. "All these extra murals and school competitions are driving me mad!" she exclaimed to herself. "The girls don't practice their scales and set pieces, and although I have warned their parents, when they fail, I will be blamed." It was a short walk home. On the way she stopped at Woolworths and bought a bunch of daffodils, a couple of ready-made curries, a cheesecake and a bottle of their favourite wine. She left them in the kitchen and went to their bedroom to change into something pretty. Opening the door, she was shocked to see Toby naked in bed with a young blonde woman. She fled to the bathroom, locked the door, vomited and fell on the floor weeping uncontrollably. Toby ran to the bathroom and banged on the door. "Shut up, Isabella," he shouted, "it must have dawned on you by now that I have fallen out of love with you! I will file for divorce today and

marry Glenda as soon as it is done!" The Grays and the Browns were no longer on speaking terms. It was not an amicable divorce and Isabella had to move out of the house she had called home for so long and find a home for Mozart for the weekends and holidays he spent with her. He was furious with his father and called his stepmum Wrecker when forced to speak to her. No matter how hard Toby and Glenda tried to make friends with him by planning fun things to do, he refused to go with them and shut himself in his old bedroom, painting pictures of Glenda as a witch and leaving them on the coffee table in the lounge. The Court had awarded Isabella a generous amount of alimony, and she had rented a furnished two-bedroomed flat in a secure complex with a small garden in front. She went to her old home, did not greet Glenda, packed her belongings and half of Mozart's clothes, and called the removers. She drove to her new home, stopping to buy some roses for the lounge and sweet peas to plant in her garden. Her cell rang. "Hello, my darling," said her mother, "I am on my way to take you somewhere nice for lunch. Just think where you would like to go." "Nowhere I have been with Toby," Isabella answered.

“I’m starting a new chapter and will be doing new things!” After a delicious lunch on the other side of the city, they packed Isabella and Mozart’s clothes into cases her mum had brought. “These are for the church jumble sale,” she said. “Your Dad and I are going to buy you and Mozart new clothes! Be ready early, we’ll have a lot to do! Just as well you are no longer teaching music.” “I think I will start going to church. Toby and I never went. Maybe I can teach in Sunday School. I’d like to take organ lessons. My alimony is sufficient for all my and Mozart’s needs.” The following Sunday, Isabella went to the Anglican Church of Saint Margaret’s in which she had grown up. Mister Rycroft was practicing the voluntaries for next Sunday’s service. “Hello, Mister Rycroft,” she said. “Would you please teach me how to play the organ? I am a good pianist, so it probably won’t take me so long to learn the organ.” “I would be delighted to do so, Isabella,” he replied. “I’m eighty-one now and thinking of retiring.” Over the following Sundays, she met many old friends and introduced them to Mozart. Because she was so involved in church activities, she came to know Father Stephen well. She felt sorry for him. “Bridget, his

wife, died of breast cancer two years ago," said her best friend, Jane. "She was a lovely person."

Toby, meanwhile, was not too happy. He woke up one morning and was surprised to see Glenda was not in bed beside him. He went into the kitchen. There was a note on the table. He picked it up and read, "Goodbye, Toby, I have a new man in my life, a very rich man so you won't be required to pay alimony when we are divorced. Glenda."

Toby was shocked but not devastated. Things had not been too pleasant recently. She had yelled at Mozart when he broke a glass. When Toby sided with his son, she slapped him, went into their bedroom and locked the door. Toby began to regret that he had married her and remembered how happy he had been with Isabella. He bought a large bunch of red roses at Woolworths and drove to Isabella's flat. She opened the door but did not invite him in. He held out the roses, but she refused them "What do you want, Toby?" she asked. "I er, um," he stammered. "Can I try and

make up to you for all I did to you? It will mean everything to me?" "No," she answered. "I am marrying Father Stephen, the love of my life, next week." And she closed the door.