

Disaster at Gogo's Spaza

Salamina Mosese

Illustrated by
Vian Oelofsen



Human & Rousseau



For Tshepo, Tumelo and Thato.
Your love for me is my most important teacher.
Tumi, I hope I captured a little bit
of your magic in this book.
— S. M.

Chapter 1

Tumi was lying on her back staring dreamily up at her Gogo's patterned ceiling.

"I wish I ran my own spaza shop," she said, lost in thought.

Mpho rolled her eyes at her cousin's musing. "Stop daydreaming and play. It's your turn."

"I'm just saying . . ." Tumi murmured, reaching for the dice, but before she could get her hands on it Lefa grabbed it and made to roll it onto the board.

“Too late, slowcoach,” Lefa teased. “It’s my turn now,” he laughed.

“Stop cheating, Lefa. I was still playing,” Tumi wailed as she lunged towards him. But Lefa was too quick and expertly threw the dice and then moved his token defiantly. Tumi looked at Mpho for help, but she just shrugged her shoulders. “Sorry, Tumi, you skipped your turn,” Mpho said.

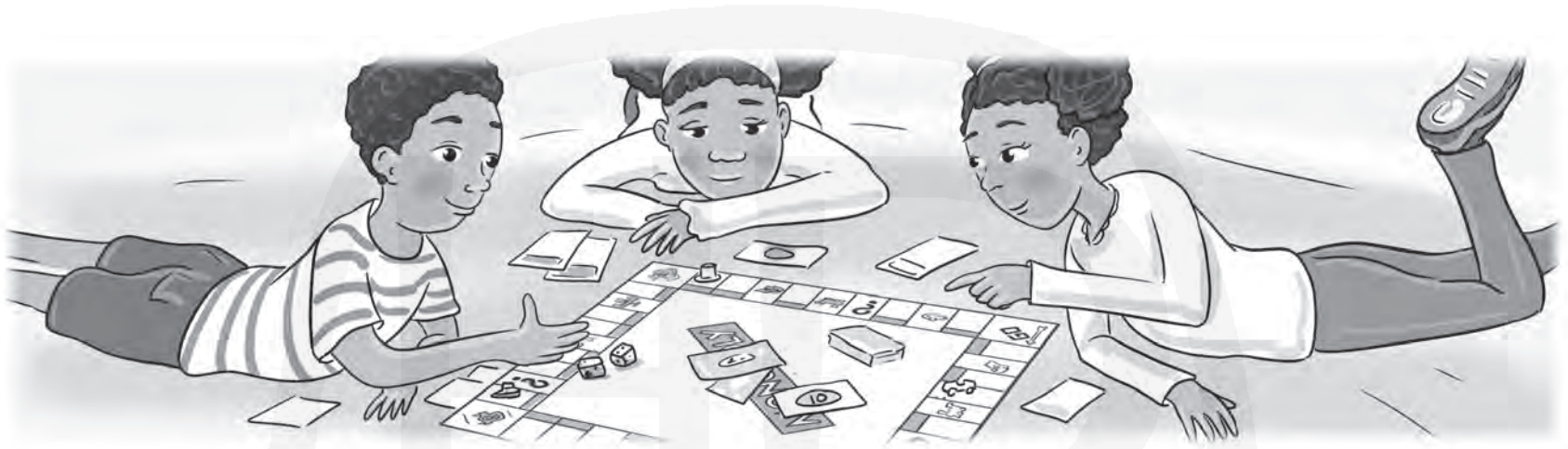
It was the June school holidays and, as always, Tumi was visiting her Gogo in Soweto. Gogo lived in Diepkloof with Tumi’s cousins and Sisi. Her home was in a cul-de-sac of neat houses made of red brick, shining in the afternoon sun.

The children were sprawled on Gogo’s lounge floor playing their favourite game, Monopoly. When the children weren’t inside playing board games, they were working with Gogo in her shop.

It was one of the oldest shops in all of Soweto. Gogo’s Goodies was Gogo’s pride and joy.

Gogo Tina had a puffy grey Afro that made Tumi think of a halo. Her hands were soft and broad, and they always smelt like cocoa butter.





Whenever the children were helping out in the spaza shop, packing, cleaning, sorting and counting, Tumi liked to imitate Gogo peering over her tiny rectangular glasses as she counted the money.

“When are we starting with this year’s saving challenge?” she enquired, chewing on a fingernail as she sat back up to face her cousins.

Rubbing his hands together in glee, Lefa collected R200 from the bank as he passed

Go again. Then he looked up: “Gogo said we could start tomorrow.”

“I’m obviously going to win again this year,” Mpho boasted.

“It’s not *that* obvious,” protested Tumi. “I dreamt that I won this year.”

“Only in your dreams, cuzy. You don’t actually stand a chance,” Lefa smirked. “Mpho has been practising. Why do you think she always wants to be the banker when we play Monopoly?”

Eyes wide, Tumi looked from Lefa to Mpho. What? Is that why she had never won their saving competition? she wondered.

“But you guys never let *me* be the banker,” she complained.

“Yes, well, that’s because you take too long to count out the money,” Mpho said, smacking her own forehead.

Lefa laughed, jumping up from the floor. He patted Tumi on the back. “You see? That’s why you’ll never win Monopoly or ever beat either one of us at the saving challenge.”

He left the girls to pack up the game as he headed outside with his soccer ball tucked snugly under his arm.

Tumi was speechless, while Mpho sat like a smug cat next to her. She slouched out of the lounge in search of Gogo. Gogo

would know just what to say to cheer her up. That’s why people came from near and far to buy from Gogo’s spaza shop. She always knew what to say to put a smile on a person’s face. Well, it was that and her delicious vetkoek. She was famous for them!





Gogo's cellphone rang as Tumi made her way down the passage towards Gogo's bedroom. As Tumi approached, she could hear Gogo's voice growing louder and louder. What was making Gogo so excited? Something was going on.

Sisi was taking out Gogo's favourite suitcase as Tumi walked into Gogo's room.

"What's going on?" Tumi asked, throwing herself onto Gogo's now untidy bed.

"Sssh!" Sisi shushed her loudly.

Gogo's eyes danced as her phone conversation continued.

"We don't have a lot of time," she responded, nodding. "Yes, of course, I am packing right now," she continued while winking at Tumi, who rolled around impatiently in the mess.

Gogo ended the call and turned to face

her grandchild: “My Tumi-tums, guess what?”

“Tell me, Gogo, please,” Tumi begged.

“The Golden Gogos Choir are going to represent Soweto in the National Choir Finals!” Gogo beamed. “We leave the day after tomorrow, and we won’t be back until Friday.”

“That’s amazing! Well done, Gogo!” Tumi clapped. “Does this mean your choir is going to be on TV like when people go to *Idols*?”

Gogo and Sisi couldn’t help but chuckle. “Something like that. If we win, then the newspaper people will come to take our picture,” Gogo replied.

Tumi could hardly believe her ears. “Gogo, you are going to be a famous singer like you have always wanted! I think the newspaper people will also want to know

who your grandchildren are,” she added excitedly to the sound of Gogo and Sisi’s laughter, as she rushed out of the room to share the news with her cousins.

