

## CHAPTER ONE

HAVE YOU EVER wanted something really badly? You can't just wait till it lands in your lap, but if you chase it too hard you might chase it away from you. Or catch something you didn't expect. I was maybe too hungry for love and ended up with murder on my plate.

It was a warm Saturday afternoon in March, and I was getting ready for dinner with Detective Lieutenant Henk Kannemeyer. A bokmakierie sang out in my garden, and a bird replied from a thorn tree in the veld.

I put a bowl of salad onto the stoep table. 'Ag, you look beautiful,' I told the salad.

I had made three salads and two puddings, for just two people. I guess that shows I was trying too hard.

Henk was bringing the potjie for the fire. The potato salad and coleslaw were in the fridge; the rocket salad with Brie, red figs and pomegranate pips was on the stoep table. There had been some gentle rain the day before that made the air so clean that I could see the red rocks on the Rooiberg and the purple folds of the Langeberge. But now was not the time to enjoy the view. There were still the butter dumplings to make, as well as the icing for the peanut-butter coffee chocolate cake.

Tonight was a special date because Henk was going to spend the night. We had discussed where Kosie, his lamb, was going to sleep. The lamb was a gift from Henk's uncle Koos, the sheep farmer, and was not meant to be a pet. But although Henk loved roast lamb, he didn't have the heart to do that to Kosie. In his own house, the lammetjie slept in the kitchen, but Henk agreed it was time the lamb learnt to be an outside animal, and it would sleep in the little hok behind the house with my chickens. It got on well with my chickens.

The idea of Henk spending the night made me nervous. I ate some of the potato salad with its cream-and-mint dressing. The bokmakierie was still singing in my garden. Most birds have just one hit single, but that shrike could make a double album with all its tunes. My favourite song is the one where it throws its head back, opens its beak and pumps its little yellow breast. It was singing that very song as I iced the cake with melted chocolate and coffee. Another bird that sings with such feeling is the fiery-necked nightjar. When there's a full moon, it sometimes sings all night. It makes a beautiful bubbling sound that is filled with such pleasure it can make you blush.

I cleaned the icing bowl with my fingers. Now I would need to scrub my hands before putting on my lacy white underwear. White, like it was going to be my first time.

It would be the first time since my late husband, Fanie.