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I am Impi

Part 8: Changing of the Guard

Writer: Bernadette Pienaar Artist: Jason Pienaar "In all of us a Psycho Chick crawls" ~Psycho Chick Run little dassie* run!
They coming with trap and gun!
The drum an irregular panicked beat
Whites show as irises brown roll in retreat.
Muscles taunt like a bow-string
Ache and burn as if a wasp them continuously does sting!

Lungs wheeze as the nostrils are smothered with the smell of fear.

Fear smells a lot like the sea, crashing waves of pungent salt, face wet with tear after tear.

Legs grow weak as the bow-string is stretched and snapped loose with every stride.

Run little dassie run, there is nowhere for you to hide!

Crashing, tumbling, feet roll over head, The smell of fear mingles with iron - blood! Are you dead?

No little dassie can outrun the red, white and blue dragoon!

The Mighty Zulu King from his throne is hewn!

*rock rabbit



I was young, I began to bloom along with the uMsini - the Coral Tree.

My cowhide skirt now oxblood red, my childhood from me did flee.

I tried to hide my shame; the water turns bright red.
Panic. Scrubbing. Fear. Please rinse off! Bloodied hands.
Heart filled with dread.

If they know, I will be expected to marry.
I am too young, he is so old and fat; this burden, I should
not have to carry.

My parents don't want to hear my complaints, my plight.
Why should they, their status will improve, a large labola*
is in their sight!

I must hurry, I must my shame hide!
I do not want to become a Cetshwayo's child-bride!
Then, my mother walks in on my murdered youth, in the
basin a bloodied crime scene.

She rejoices for I am illegible for marriage, the village is notified, my father celebrates, internally I scream!

*a bride price



This is not how it is supposed to be!
No romance, no love, just a sweating, smelly, old hippo
on top of me!

I cry "No!" He hits me. It hurts. I struggle. "No! No! No!" He continues. Go to another place: You're playing with your dolls. This is not happening. Time passes slow.

Our meeting wasn't exactly romantic:

He saw me swimming - still a child developing - his men grabbed me, I was frantic.

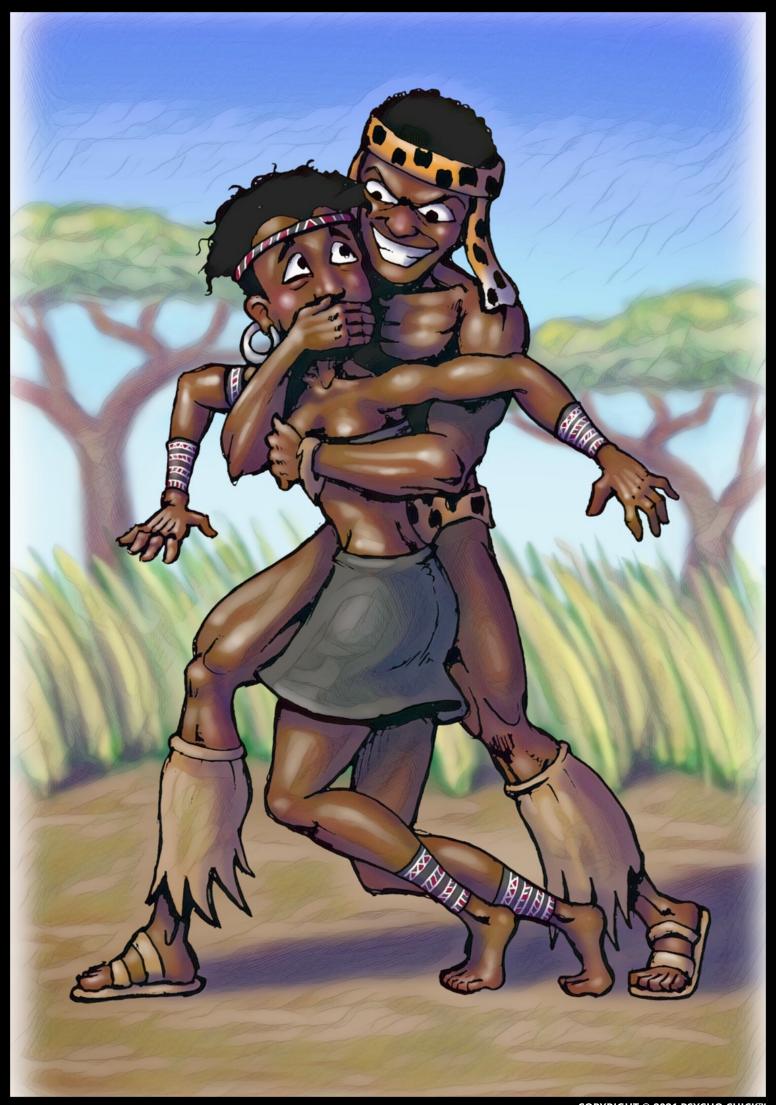
Even though I was kidnapped when my family were offered cattle, they accepted, selling me to the mighty Zulu king.

As soon as I could bear children, they would me as wife to him bring!

I fight. I run away but they find me every time....
This should not be allowed, surely it is a crime?
I, Inkosazana, eventually lay still, the hippo grunts and is finally done.

Night after night, I fight, he beats me, but in my mind, he has not won.

He goes away to war and does not return, I am relieved!
Exiled to the Cape, I am safe for now, if he returns, a plan
to kill him I have conceived!



Three years after the all-women Ingcugce regiment were murdered and died as martyrs – Three long years, most of their murderers of the iNdlondlo lay dead or in hiding because of Psycho Chick's revenge charters.

When the British, the new overlord, had enough of this Zulu threat!

Spurred on admittedly by Psycho Chick and her warriors, Cetshwayo with the British's superior power was met!

In a last stand against the British, with one act of defiance, the Zulu King tumbled from his throne in shame,

Without hesitation he abandoned his people and ran like a coward, only to be hunted down like mere game.

It was while fleeing like a rock rabbit that Cetshwayo, the mighty King, the man of all Zulu men;

The killer of women, the easily offended by women's rights; was humbled again!
The British, stripped him of his titles and humiliated he to the Cape was exiled.
However, justice was not served because in a patriarchal society these Ingcugce sisters, in history, would always be reviled!



"No! No! No!" I will not go!

"No!" I am prepared for the long trip, I will be beaten again, I know!

Inkosazana! What a joke! I am no princess!

No dignity, no crown. A child sex-slave or less!

To Cape Town I've being summoned, for the King needs a wife or two, I'm the youngest, I have no say!

The other wives bicker among themselves as in a modern house they would like to stay.

For me, this is a death sentence, I thought I was from the blubberous hippo finally free!

"Take my place," I beg. I get hit across the face, no one cares about my plea!



Life as a political prisoner was too good for Cetshwayo, the women slayer, a King guilty of repeated femicide!

A debt still needed to be repaid from the last remaining members of the Ingcugce he could not hide!

To find him was easy, the colonists were abuzz with excitement with the savage king in their midst.

Psycho Chick, Edie and Sango scouted out his prison, his home, their revenge did persist.

At night their ghost-like faces were apparitions as the king from his windows would peer.

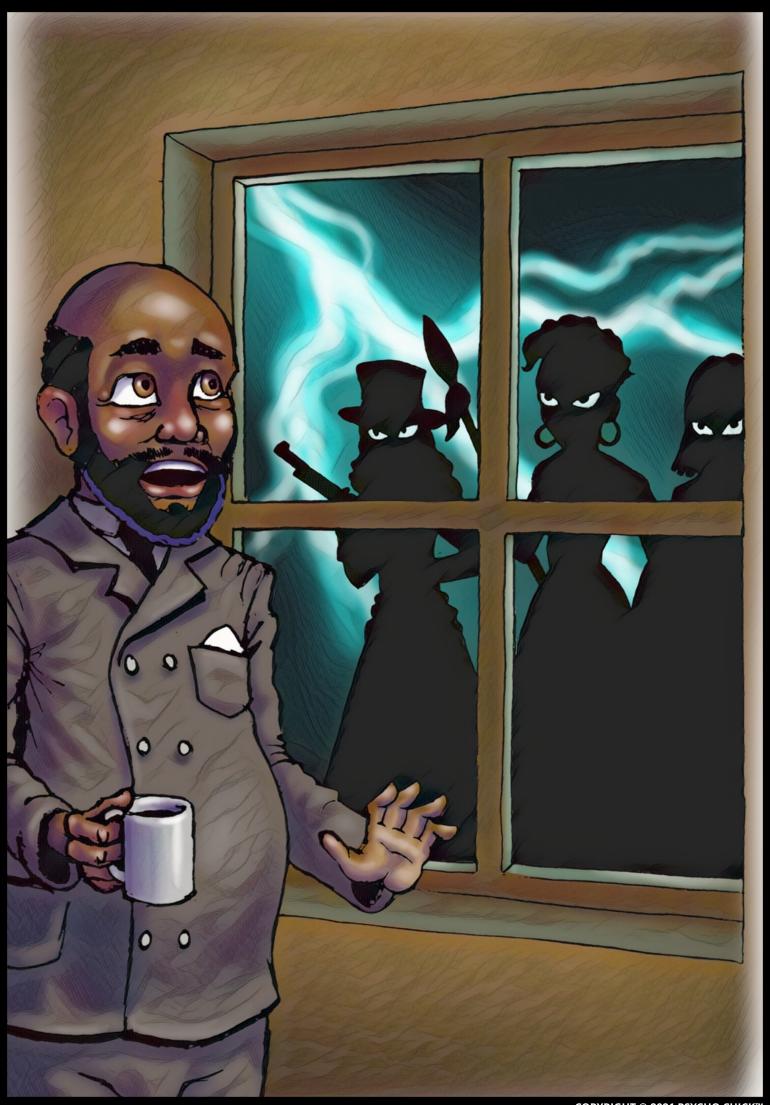
Disappearing again into the night, his nerves jangled as his mind filled with fear!

Never again, would this King be made to feel secure!

He became obsessed, with the three women's presence, no one could his safety assure!

Although he knew the women could not touch him while he was guarded by the Union Jack,

But psychologically their nightly appearances and the dead creatures left outside his door, started at his psyche to crack!



My senses go into overload as I visit the white man's kraal, their mighty city.

Gawking eyes, low whispers follow us from upright men and petal-puff dressed women, oh so pretty!

This place feels like a cage, smothering walls.

My bushand, the King is an obzing bean, now my warder.

My husband, the King is an oozing heap - now my warden – my skin crawls.

It's while hiding in the garden that I notice their ghostly form.

I see the hippo's fear, as he peers through the window, his dignity into a quivering, pathetic mass does transform.

He fears these women! Women? He is troubled at their mere sight!

I must know why. I must know how. I am drawn to their fight.

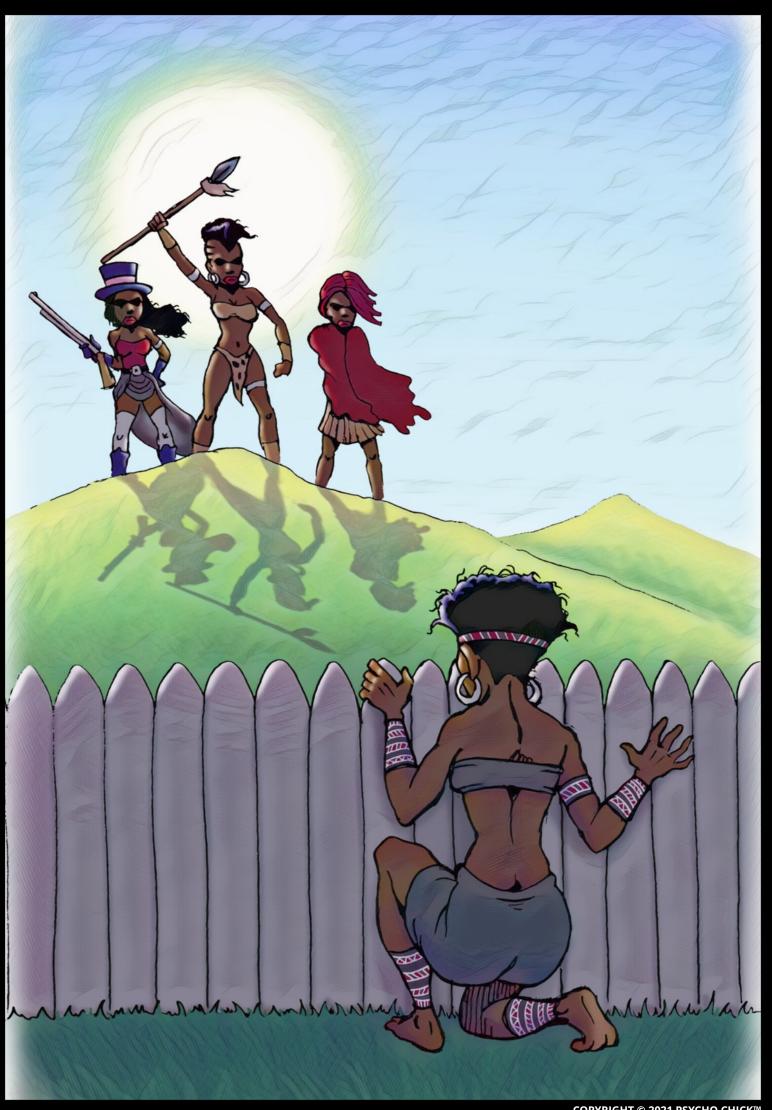
The women fill my every thought thereafter, I become obsessed. One like the white woman of the town is dressed.

However, she a regal quality of power possesses, something I have never seen before.

A Sangoma is among them, surrounded by booming thunder and brilliant blue lightening.

She chants, she glows, she flickers and next to her I see a shadow, it is awe-inspiring but also very frightening! It is the third woman, I see her, I see myself, this is who I want to be!

She is strong, she is brave, she commands respect. A warrior – that is going to be me!!!



She says she is a princess married to Cetshwayo but, she is just little more than a child.

She did manage to find the three trained womenwarriors on her own, she is feisty and wild! It is in that moment that the mighty Psycho Chick awakens to a new idea....

They could do it all again! Crush the Patriarch, a new army of women whom men would once again revere!

Her mind had been foggy for so long by revenge, revenge is like a dark cloud.

This princess needed their help, Psycho Chick had women's suffering once again allowed!

Yes, this princess had her own ideas of how she wanted to kill this rapist, the revolting King.

Psycho Chick looked at Inkosazana, she looked into a mirror, she saw her self – the strangest thing!

Psycho Chick and the other two knew that they had to take the princess under their protective wing!

Intense training began as Inkosazana, was their new, direct channel to the king!
In this way, more affliction to him they could now subtly bring!



Ah, a political prisoner, a king with no title, no subjects his name to hail!

His kingdom – this house, his home his jail!
Inkosazana was an excellent spy and befriending her proved to be most advantageous.

With muti's* and potions to destroy his spirt, the women's psychological warfare turned rampageous.

Spirits entered the King's exiled home freely as spells locked in Sango's hair was put in secretive places.

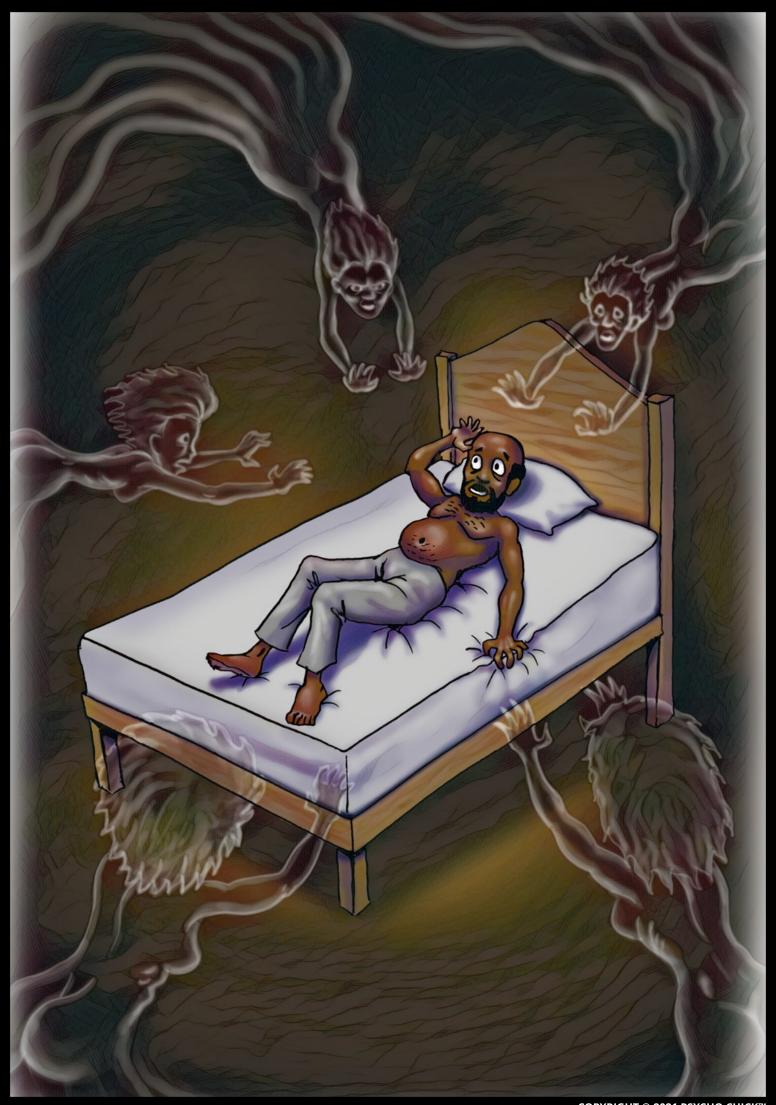
Nightmares robbed him of sleep, as the departed sisters of the Ingcugce spirits visited him night after night with rotting, distorted faces.

Daytime was no better and his prison became the four concave walls of his mind.

Going out became impossible, despite the British guard as several assassination attempts were made by an unknow sniper - Edie they would never find.

Insomnia led to delirium, delirium to madness. Sangomas visited and fled in fear, doctors came with their fancy degrees, even the clergy came – all left with pity and sadness!

*medicine



The King was going mad! I did not care, as long as he left me alone, his demise

made my heart glad!

I could concentrate on my training and I soon became very proficient.

From Edie I learnt marksmanship and weapons, I was naturally very efficient.

From Sango and her shadow-sister I learnt potions and poisons and minor spells.

She taught me new things about my ancestors, my destiny, my calling – I was meant to join these rebels! It was Psycho Chick that I felt most akin to, as we were by our very souls connected.

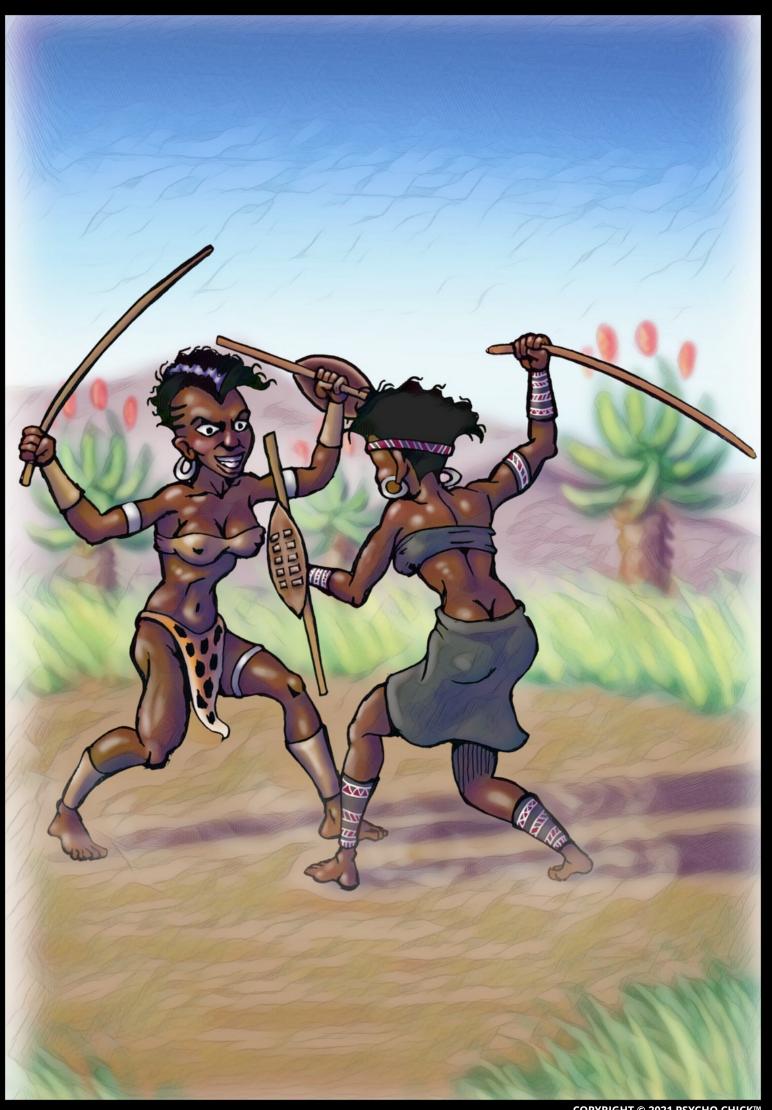
We were like twins separated by years but not by spirit, finally toward each other the Universe had us directed!

Psycho Chick's philosophy and teachings opened up my mind to new concepts, a new way of thinking.

Her main teaching that woman is equal to man, their status was just as important and to no man they should be shrinking.

I mimicked Psycho Chick's every move and it came to me as if I already knew, everything was already in my memory sorted.

We synchronized – in thought, in emotion, in action – I found my calling, my spirit soared!



The King ranted that his house, his prison was cursed. Maybe a Zulu cannot be caged, to the outdoors he has to burst!

Seeking a listening ear, he pleaded to see the Queen Mum.

A Bishop whom felt pity for him, managed to arrange a visit for him to London, a costly trip and to the crown a huge sum!

So Cetshwayo set off, finally escaping Psycho Chick, Edie and Sango's grasp once more.

To London he went to plead for his title and Kingdom back, he would promise no longer to cause any war.

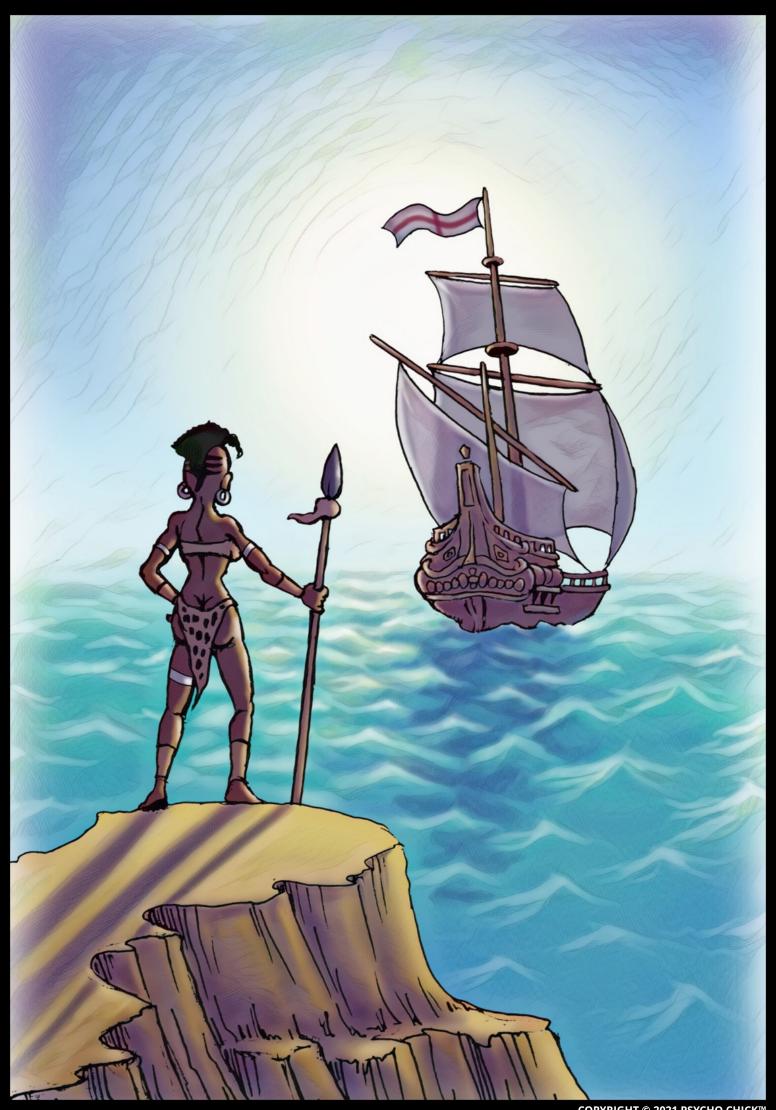
Word trickled from the island over the seas, of how the warrior King was well received and embraced.

The Queen and politicians were pressured by public opinion to reinstate Cetshwayo from being disgraced.

The Princess Bride was returned to the royal Zulu home.

And the three-remaining warrior-women went further north of Zululand, for an army they needed to roam. They knew of animosity, no secret, between Cetshwayo and his half-brother.

They would persuade him to denounce Cetshwayo's birth right with that of a stronger blood-right, the brother felt his right was higher than any other!



The excitement rustle in the kraal flutters past me.

My stomach ties in an all-familiar knot, "The King has returned, come and see!"

Servants scurry around to prepare for him, there will be a feast!

I cringe, I feel sick. I will not lie again with that filthy beast!

Then a calm comes over me as I grab such negative thoughts by their neck.

I am now a warrior; I am a woman! I am Psycho Chick! I will him this time wreck!

I never met the sisters of the Incugce but I know them all.
Their voices come to me, they strengthen me, I will be
strong, I will fight, I will never fall!

War will come to Zululand again, brother against halfbrother!

I know that Psycho Chick and company would strike in the morning, with pure force they would Cetshwayo smother!

I could not alert the others to my knowledge; I would play along in the expected dutiful way.

I could avoid the hippo, as he drank to his victorious visit in the UK and he was King, yes, just for this last remaining day!



They came covered in the grey of dawn.

Warriors like shadows advance, the darkness parts

to their mighty brawn.

A few morning lights began to flicker as fires by the women were lit.

However, most still lay asleep in their beds, this is the best time the village to hit.

Psycho Chick was on a beserkers rampage!
There was no stopping her, one aim filled her mind, she was filled with rabid rage!
Her charge through the soldiers, stumbling, blurryeyed out of their huts was magnificent; you could see she was frustrated.

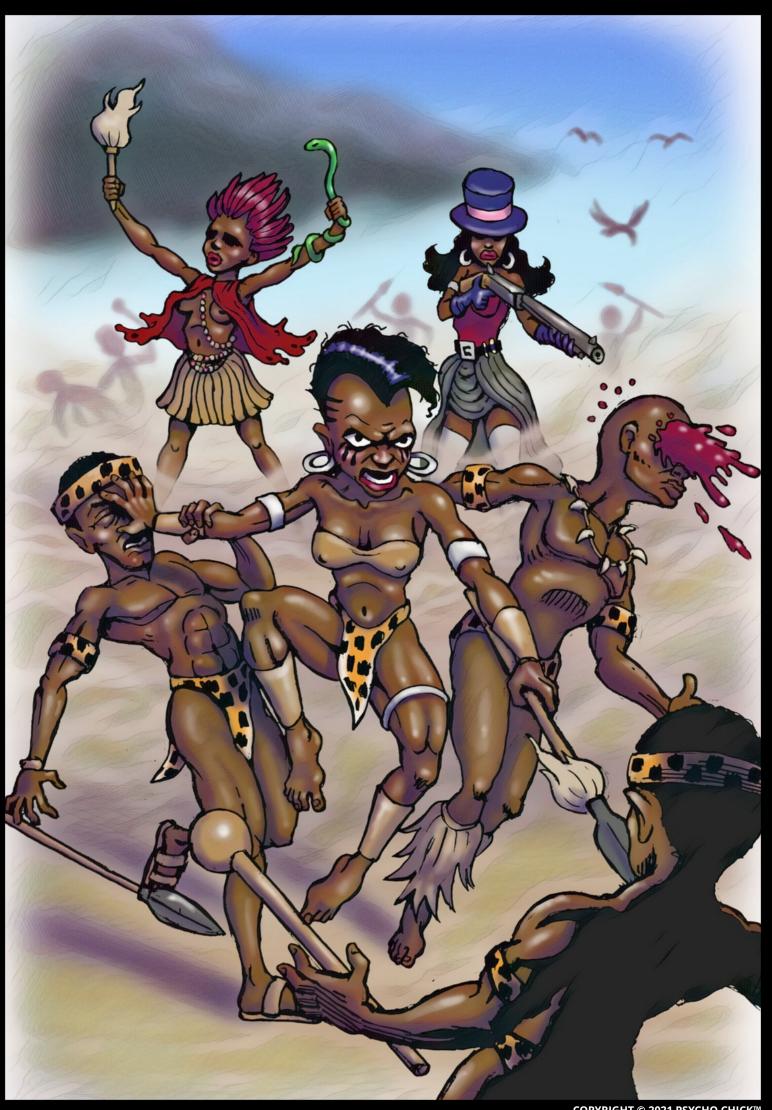
Sango was summoning the weather, Edie loaded and reloaded her gun - hot with firing and re-firing - this all took time and Psycho Chick kept running and became isolated!

Sango suddenly stopped her chanting, her sister sped up ahead!

She called to Edie: "Something is wrong!" They both ran past the many dead!

Inkosazana screams. Her hands bloodied – Psycho Chick oozes precious blood!

Disappointment and a sense of self-loathing over Psycho Chick's face did flood.



Psycho Chick's breath was shallow as air escaped an exposed lung, her life hanging on my mere fingertips! Sango chanted and summoned, her sister hovered, but healing someone so close to death, her powers did eclipse!

Edie's fine skirt, lay in pools of crimson, as she cradled Psycho Chick's head in her lap!

Edie prayed to her white, Christian God and the everelusive Jesus for a miracle from this tragic mishap.

Inkosazana was devastated, her face streaked with black ash as from her eyes escaped the tears!

Psycho Chick wheezed: "I stabbed him twice... leg... Too many... so... many spears!"

"I... fail!... Sorry..." she turned to her protégé, Inkosazana, the Princess Bride;

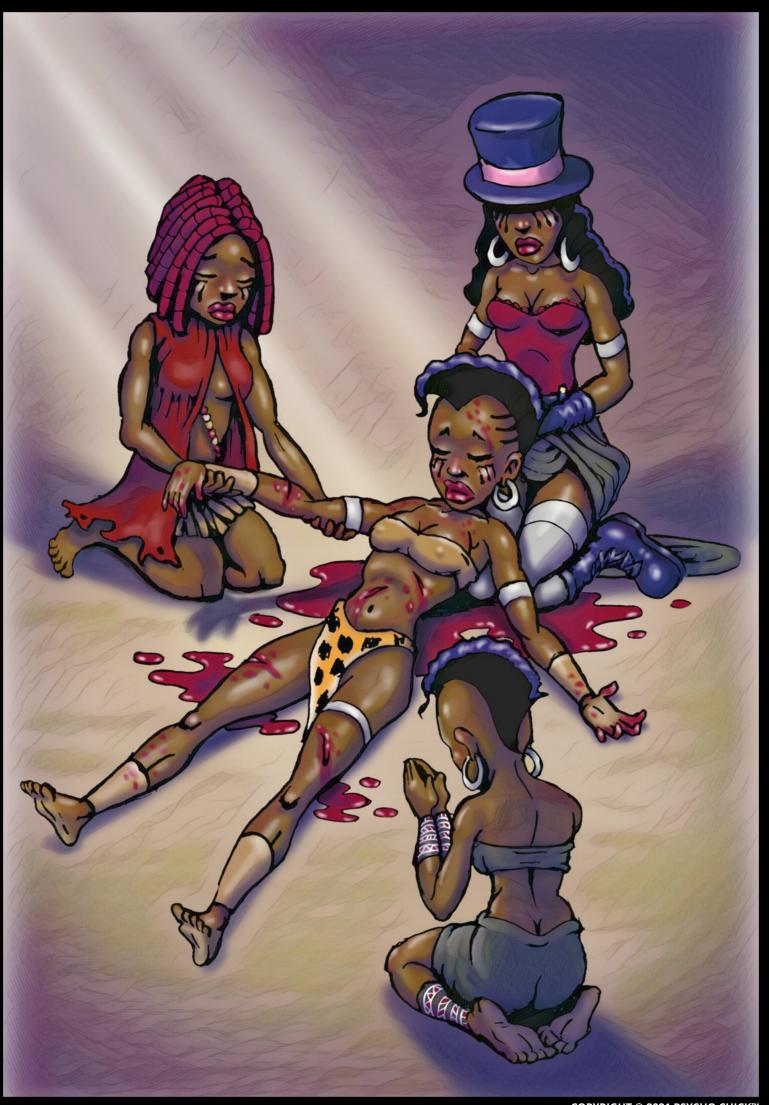
"You... carry... this mantel now... my blessing....
My...Curse... wear it... with... pride..."

"We did good.... My sisters..." Filled with grief they somehow knew that they would meet again!

Edie stroked Psycho Chick's hair: "Go to our sisters now, you die the greatest woman warrior to have lived, your sacrifice was not in vain!"

The moon's shadow covered the sun, a darkness blanketed the African escarpment, fear filled all of mankind.

The ancestors opened their arms, guiding a great sprit home to a crescendo of women crying, saluting their leader, one of a kind!



I have but one mission, my mission from the very start. Cetshwayo will pay for all your lives and the lives of San, Somahlaya, in vain you did not depart.

Sango and Edie will guide and protect me. They are my guardians; they are my guides.

It was fate that made this despicable King notice me by the river, it was fate that put me as a wife by his side! I am sent for, like a good wife I shall to him go, his crimes against all women will him finally cost.

When I arrive, I find that the two wounds inflicted by my predecessor, have gone gangrenous and his leg is nearly lost!

He is happy to see me but he is shocked at my transformation.

In the back of his mind, I probably remind the King of someone else, this reduces his elation!

I waste no time and give hm a special drink, to ease his pain and calm his worried mind.

A goblet of death, raises up the ghosts of all the women he has killed, his own demise will be long and the pain very unkind!

I watch as his face contorts with every remembered face, His mouth I have gagged to muffle the pain screams, eventually the cause of his death will from his lips evaporate without a trace!

As a last vision before he exhales his last breath,
Cetshwayo, the Zulu King, the hater of women sees the
indignant faces of Psycho Chick, Somahlaya and San.
I whisper the last words that he will ever hear, "You
should never have messed with a woman!"



We sit under the uMsini Coral tree, it is finally done.
So many women's lives lost, precious every one!
So much hurt, so much pain through these three
women DOES course.

Sango, Edie and new Psycho Chick continued, though, with their freedom-fighting work, as the world around them changed.

Labelled with all the negative things, with pride they knew that to be told you were a psycho never made you estranged.

We came into this world covered in blood and screaming;

Our daughters are pulled from our wombs, in our blood gleaming.

From that first day we are born into a struggle, a never-ending conflict,

Because of our gender, with discrimination men will us afflict.

Even though we are the life-givers and the mothers of all children, we still fight for justice and equality for all females.

The whole of society our gender completely fails!

Africa's women are grown strong!

Women have fought against oppression and for equality for so long!

The fight is not over, it will never be over until every woman and girl are completely free.

To those who have come before us, to those warriors today and those whom come after us we salute thee!

