

Living in her “*kaya*” out back, servant must be on call six days out of seven and seven nights out of seven. South Africa. 1960s.

The text from Chapter 4, ‘The Cheap Servant’, explains that living in a ‘kaya’, a hut behind the main house, this servant is on call six days out of seven and seven nights out of seven. She lives a lonely life apart from her family. In white suburbs there are no recreation centres open to black servants.

In this black and white portrait format photograph, a middle-aged black woman sits facing to the right, resting her left elbow on her bed, covering eyes with her hand in a state of exhaustion. She wears a buttoned cotton uniform, with short sleeves, a v-neck collar and white piping on the hems of sleeves and pockets, with a white scarf tied over her hair. A white towel is spread over her knees.

Behind her, more clean and pressed uniforms are hanging on the wall. The bed is covered by a white sheet, with two tartan wool blankets neatly rolled up against the wall. There’s a newspaper on the bed, with a pair of glasses alongside it as if they’ve just been removed.

The woman sits on two crates set one on the other to create a stool, and her bare feet rest on a sheet of newspaper laid to cover the floor. Her left foot sits atop a news article featuring a white woman standing in a new kitchen accompanied by the headline ‘Westvall’s new dream kitchen’.