



ON MY MIND NEW YEAR, NEW ME!

Tshiamo Modisane always knew that she was a girl despite her assigned birth gender. It's never too late to start again, she writes.

“Ten! Nine! Eight! Seven! Six! Five! Four...”

Have you ever wondered what it is about those last three seconds that gets the heart beating faster, the palms sweaty and that deep-down feeling of anxious-excitement? It's as if the countdown chant pulls us into a kind of limbo, until the time leap of tomorrow takes hold, and all of a sudden, we're in the new year. Feelings of regret, disappointment and discouragement are juxtaposed by optimism, faith, and hope, all in the same breath.

I, for one, have always bought into the concept of 'New Year, New Me.' Call it blind optimism or outright naivety, but the idea that with each year, I'm granted the opportunity to begin again, fix my mistakes and, well, give it my best, has always granted me the freedom not only to dream, but to dream even bigger than I did before.

But, all this was challenged when death came knocking and claimed the lives of two of the most important people in my life – my mother and her mother.

As one can imagine, this left me paralysed with grief. My world was turned upside down, and I was faced with the task of embracing a new reality; one that, given half the chance, I would have fought tooth and nail to prevent.

Yet amid all the pain and disbelief, I found *myself*. Not knowing where to turn, my only

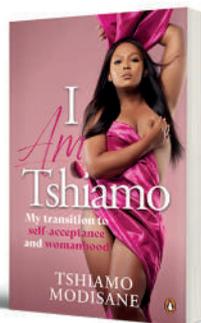
“For years, fear is what kept me from fully acknowledging who I was.”

choice was to look within myself for the answer to dealing with this adversity. Don't get me wrong, it wasn't an easy feat. My first instinct was to fight against the current, but, as they say, 'What you resist, persists.'

For years, fear is what kept me from fully acknowledging who I was. What if I got rejected? Nevertheless, when I finally had the courage to stand firmly in my truth, it started me on a journey of healing, rebirth and reinvention.

It started with me asking myself some powerful questions, like *Who am I?* and *How do I want to show up to myself and others?* At the same time, my journey led me through the hurts of my past, and pointed me to the possibilities of what were previously unimaginable realities. It was only then that I had the freedom to lay the foundation for a limitless future; one which I can curate according to who I am, and who I want to be. But, with this comes the humility of knowing that not everything is within my control. Time marches on, and things can change in the blink of an eye.

So, as you reach the end of the countdown, your glass of bubbles in hand, your voice reaching a festive fever pitch, remember that life only exists in *three* ways – past, present and future – the year consists of *two* main halves and there is and will only be *ONE* of you ... so why not make it count?”



I Am Tshiamo is on shelves now.