



Press Release

ROXANNE'S ABUSE NIGHTMARE ON BACKSTAGE

Beautiful **Roxanne Campbell** (Carmel Fisher) from Backstage is unable to have normal relationships with men. She mostly chooses to date older men, and then her relationships often turn out to be abusive. Finally, Ipeleng (Grace Mahlaba), the principal of Vulindlela College, decides to take Roxanne under her wing in a bid to change this entrenched pattern.

Ipeleng finds the key to Roxanne's past when she reads an essay that Roxanne has written about her young self in drama class. She discovers that, as a child, Roxanne was abused by her uncle, Desmond. Ipeleng undertakes the gruelling process of trying to help Roxanne heal the psychological scars left from this tragic experience in her life, and even convinces Roxanne to take her uncle to court.

When asked what it's like to play a role of this kind, Carmel Fisher says, "When I'm on set, I've got to feel what I'm scripted to feel. There's a lot of crying, depression and reminiscing... I've got to put myself in this little girl's shoes.

"There's a lot of preparation that goes into a role like this. I find a quiet spot and create a story in my head... I picture the uncle abusing me. I see me, but the little girl's name is Roxanne. I "remember" made-up memories. Roxanne is still trying to find herself - she grew up in an orphanage and had no role models to look up to. Then she had her first connection with a male, and it was her uncle who abused her, and so she became promiscuous.

"There are two major ways of dealing with abuse... you either think it's the acceptable way of getting love and become promiscuous, or you withdraw from people and focus your energy on other things. But you can't connect with males on a romantic/sexual level. It's often one extreme or the other."

Does Carmel believe that child abuse is the kind of issue one should highlight in a daily youth drama like Backstage? "Yes," she replies. "It's good to talk about it, it's good for people who have been abused to know it's not their fault, as they often believe this of themselves. Bringing it out into the open is vital, because it is a taboo subject. Usually, it's locked away so deep inside of an abused person that they block out the whole incident completely.

"According to them they're dealing with it - but they're actually not, and digging it deeper into the grave doesn't mean it's been dealt with. It's best to bring it out and cry about it. That way - once the trauma has been dealt with... that's when they can begin to accept themselves.

"Only when this happens will Roxanne be able to take back her power as a woman and make conscious decisions to make her future relationships work." She pauses for a moment before adding thoughtfully, "I don't think you ever really get over it, but you can learn how to deal with it."

Carmel planned carefully for this role. She says, "I wanted to reach out and really touch people, so I spoke to the directors and asked for some tips on how better to play the storyline as there's no way I'd ever want to make light of such a tragic situation. It's a very draining role to play. I've had to dig deep into myself to feel the true depth of pain, sadness and loneliness of it all. But it's been a privilege to try and reach any viewers who may be in need of help."

Watch Carmel Fisher's sensitive portrayal of Roxanne on Backstage every weekday @ 6.30 - only on e.

For Support: Call the POWA Helpline (011) 642-4345.

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For photos of Roxanne, please contact:

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