

Back To Nowhere

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by

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My writing contains elements of hard-boiled detective fiction and crime writing. My stories, written in isiXhosa and English and a mixture of both, transplant these genres into a South African township setting where gang violence dominates and life is cheap. They are driven by uniquely South African characters, brutal crime scenes and fear-inspiring suspense, but none the less still full of humour. I want my work to entertain the reader while also looking realistically and critically at the problem of crime in our townships. I draw on influences of African and Latin American writers to create South African crime fiction in a realistic urban setting, with dynamic characters and sharp dialogue.

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Paul Bible

I had been there. I had seen it. I had smelled their fear. They had laughed at me but I knew, they wouldn't be laughing long. They were going down the drain, all three of them, Billy the Fat One, John the Priest, and Mousy the Enforcer, all rotting in the drain.

"I love this game," Billy the Fat One, says, counting R200, maybe more. He had never been involved in a game, but he was the one counting, keeping our score "Life is shit! But I love the smell of it,"

They all laughed at this.

"Why?" I asked. "What's to love?"

Oh! Sorry, I forgot to tell you about myself. Actually, there is...let's just say, there is nothing to tell because I am nothing, no one. Yes! You don't know me and I want to keep it that way. You will never know me ...even I don't know me. Somebody once said I was Paul. That somebody said my Mama gave me that name. Well, Bless Her Soul, she left after she gave birth to me and she was never seen again. It seems she was deeply religious, so she named me Paul. I think maybe I am Paul Simon. You don't know Paul Simon? Fine. I am Paul in the Bible! His surname was ... I can't remember. Let's just say Bible. Paul Bible. Ok, forget about that. I am just Paul. Paul No One. My life was hard until I met these animals, pigs or dogs, or...

"You stupid, Paul Simon?" asked The Priest

"How many times must I tell you I am not Paul Simon, I'm Paul... who was that man in the Bible?" I said. "I am Paul Damascus...fuck! I am Paul Bible!"

"Yeah, Paul Bible," said Mousy.

Mousy was the dumpiest fucker I ever came across. He wanted to be cool but he did the dumpiest shit. When he wanted to go to the toilet while we were drinking, he raised his hand to ask permission. What a dump shit thing to do! He always asked permission, for every wee, for every single shit.

“Boss, can I go wee-wee?” he’d say. Have you come across a grown man saying anything so that stupid?

“Shut up, shut up!” It drove me crazy.

If Mousy was stupid, the other fucker was even more than stupid, he was stupid-stupid. We call him Priest. We called him Priest, well he called himself Priest. He thought he was cool. He wore sunglasses all day, even in the house. At night he wore sunglasses. When he ate, slept or even fucked, he wore those sunglasses. That’s pretty stupid. And not just sunglasses... you know Steve Kekane? No, you don’t? Fine, how about Babsy Mlangeni? No? Are you stupid too? Never mind. How about Stevie Wonder? Now Stevie Wonder’s sunglasses were similar to the one used by this stupid ass. And all his shirts were identical. The top three buttons always unbuttoned, whether it was raining or cold he always wore his shirt that way. The money, where did we get it? Shit the money! Very hard and windy road to get it. Pain and suffering, sweat and tears, digging and pushing. Very hard, yes! Makes me want to cry but strong men don’t cry. So, the money, we’ll get there, first, the house. The house we lived in was big. I mean really big for us. It had four bedrooms, T.V room, dining room and a big sitting room. We were kings in our own castle. The house was surrounded by tall grass and big trees. The windows were broken so we covered them with old blankets. There was no furnisher. The floor had holes. Did we care? No! Because we were always stone cold drunk. One old couch and a mattress were our valuable possessions. There was no electricity but it was our house.

Now the money....

Me, I mean me Paul, and Mousy and the Priest and the Fat Fuck... no, don’t ask about the Fat Fuck. He regarded himself as the boss, yet the pig couldn’t even get up his ass. He was always at the headquarters. Yes, we were strolling in the mall. KwaDwesi Mall, big place always full of people and the kwere-kwere’s. Just across the street there is KwaDwesi Police Station. The place thronged with people. This was the day people come to collect their grants. Mousy and I took the first entrance, pretending not to know each other. The Priest took the other side of the corridor.

This was how we identify our targets. Very clever you see, very smart. As soon as one of us saw the target he would jump. Three jumps showed the target was in sight and we'd move in one direction.

Hardly five minutes after our arrival and the Priest had started jumping. I mean really jumping. He was jumping higher and higher. The people thought the stupid ass was a clown and they started to surround him, clapping and smiling. The stupid fuck kept jumping, even higher now. The crowd cheered. Some throw money. He was enjoying himself, smiling from ear to ear and showing those dirty broken teeth. Mousy and I stood open-mouthed amongst the crowd. Now the stupid ass was performing tricks. With his sunglasses on he looked like a clown from Boswell circus, shoes flapping, pants dragging. The fuck jumped, landed and breakdanced, and jumped again. Fuck! What am I doing with such stupid ass? We waved our hands to catch his attention but he thought we were cheering him on. There he was, jumping higher than ever. I closed my eyes and pushed through the crowd. Mousy was right behind me. I grabbed the Priest's arm to allow him to cool off. With my other hand I showed the crowd that he was not right in the head, mal, mentally disturbed. I tapped my forehead and made circles around my ears. The people around laughed louder and louder. Then finally, seeing the show was over, they moved back to their business. Mousy was collecting the money on the ground.

"What the fuck are you doing?" I asked.

"What?"

"Stupid ass, where is the target?"

"Oh...the what?"

"Fuck!"

"Bless, you My Son," the Priest said after collecting his breath.

"Shut up before I lose my temper."

"See that" the Priest said.

"Please."

"No see that."

We looked in the direction he was pointing. Right in front of us, just a few metres away, there was our target.

“Good boy.” I said with a big smile

“Told you,” he said, showing dirty broken teeth.

“You are very smart Priest, very smart.”

The target was walking very slowly, one hand balancing on a walking stick and the other holding a bag. She was around sixty years old, walking alone. This was easy picking. We followed her, Mousy and Priest moving to the sides, me the master, right behind. As we rounded the corner I seized my opportunity. I grabbed the bag, pushed the old lady and ran. I was fast really, really fast. I zigzagged through the crowd. They parted, giving way as if I was running in a race. I looked behind me and I saw my friends. Right in front of them a man, let’s say a Good Samaritan, was coming after me. He must have seen me push the old lady or something touched him, maybe the Hand of God, because the Good Samaritan was coming after me. He was coming fast. Long strides, eyes wide, nostrils open. Right behind, my friends were waving their hands. I turned, pushed forward. I sped out the doors and into the parking lot. I knew he couldn’t get me. He couldn’t get Paul Bible. I saw the gap. A car was coming on my left. If I manage to cross I will be gone, gone. No one would get me. I took a leap and crossed in a nick of time. I stopped and looked behind me. The Good Samaritan paused at the road then took the risk.

“No! Please, Stop! Stop!” But the Good Samaritan only saw God.

I looked at the Good Samaritan in the middle of the road like a broken doll. The car was smashed beyond repair. The windscreen shattered and the metal bent. The driver, a lady stood next to her smashed vehicle with her hands on her face. I could read silent prayers on her lips.

“Call an ambulance,” somebody shouted from the road. A crowd gathered, some were crying but my stupid-ass friends were laughing.

They brushed my shoulders.

“You’re really good man. Where did you learn to run like that?” Mousy was at it again.

“Fuck you!” I said. I turned and I started to run. This time I really ran. I ran faster and faster. I ran until the mall was out of sight, the dead man far behind me.

Paul Bible you should be lying there, yes you, dead in the road. Nothing was straight in my mind. I thought, maybe the Good Samaritan did not want to save the old lady maybe he wanted to die in my place. I kept running. I had Mousy and The Priest coming up behind me running like the devil was behind them. As I run, I saw Him on the cross. THE SON OF GOD died for my sins and he was strung on the cross with two no good men hanging beside me. There I was running with these two no good fuckers and somebody had died in my place.

We reach our headquarters in ten minutes. The Fat Fuck was still sitting in the same place we left him, stone cold drunk. I threw the bag at him and sat heavily on the couch. Mousy and Priest were out of breath but excited. They laughed and slapped each other’s hands. I was not, I knew the end was close.

Mousy started with his big dagga zol. Priest was now drinking from a beer bottle. The Fat Ass was counting the money.

“You boys are good, real good,” the fat fuck said with a big smile.

“Told you Paul Bible, you’re good,” the Priest said.

“A thousand, you’re good.”

“It’s true that I am good but I quit,” I said looking at them.

“No, take the zol and sleep. You will think better,” said the Fat Ass with a big smile.

“Where will he go?” Mousy asked

“Yes where will you go? To Heaven?” Priest said, and they all laughed.

“That’s the first smart thing you’ve ever said.” I said.

“Yeah, really?” The fuck was grinning from ear to ear.

“You’re right, I am packing my things and I am heading home.”

“Are you out of your mind? You don’t have bags and clothes, let alone a home. The fuck is sick!” They all laughed.

“You can laugh but you’re going down the drain and me, Paul Bible, I am flying out,” I said moving to the door.

“You’ll be back in an hour to take you share,” the Fat Ass said.

“No thanks. You can have it, Bye.” And I was gone. I mean real gone. In my mind I saw the Good Samaritan then I saw my body in his place, me Paul Damascus, Paul Bible, Paul No One.

Rich Girl, Poor Boy

My mama had seen it all, days of happiness, days of sorrow. She had survived the storms. Whenever there was trouble she would utter three words, “Kuzolunga mntan’am kuzolunga.” After that she would cover her face with her old blanket and pretend to sleep. I could see that she was crying but didn’t want me to see her crying. My mother had reasons for crying. Every day she woke up early to light the fire outside and boil the water. Then she prepared for work. Just before sunrise she left the house, followed the footpath then took the gravel road to the biggest property in our village.

The property was owned by the richest man in our village, uMafutha. Children called him Mafutha because he was fat, old people called him Jwarha. The man was so rich he couldn’t count all his cattle. Some people said he had more than three hundred beasts, others said more. Feasts in his house took days to end. Three cows would be slaughtered, old people would be drunk for days, everybody would be happy.

Mafutha had two wives. The first wife had two children, two boys. The youngest had only one child, a girl called Busisiwe. The only girl in the family, Busisiwe was treated like a queen. The best clothes. The best toys. A servant for everything. A shiny car to come and take her to school. Her father’s driver.

My mother was one of those people assigned to clean her room. She worked long hours. I was almost always asleep by the time she returned. She would wake me and we would sit together and feast on the scrap food taken from Mafutha’s table. That was my supper.

“My child,” my mama said one day. “Never trust rich people, they are dogs, all of them!” We were sitting at table in our one-bedroom house. The candle cast a dim light. I looked up, surprised by her words because the food on our plates was from Mafutha’s house. Mama carried on eating. She never explained what she meant. After mama left for work, I prepared myself for school. I put on my uniform, took my books and hit the gravel road. On the way I met my best friend, Lihle.

“Zuks, my brother kanti kunjani?”

He jumped up and down, joking about all the nonsense from the village. We were the same age but Lihle was the most popular boy in school. Everyone knew him, especially the girls.

“Pa, izolo, I had a jolly afternoon.”

“How so?” I asked.

“I got laid by Busie’s friend Zodwa, right by the river.”

“Ag, you’re telling lies again.”

“You know me better than that.”

“You and your stories. One day you’ll land in jail.”

“Not me, mfethu. I gave her a good one in the backside. So good Bra, that I made her scream, ‘sorry daddy,’” he laughed.

I laughed too, not knowing whether to believe him or not. “Lihle, that was in your dream man.”

“No no, there in the bushes with my pants down, and her panties... don’t tell anyone but I wore her panties on my head to show her how much I loved her.”

That drove tears of laughter down my cheeks. Now I knew he was lying.

“Zuks, when you want a girl, come to me, I’ll help you. These hands and this mouth, they have a magic touch.”

“Who are you to teach me?”

“When was your last time?”

“What last time?”

“Ag voetsek, when will you get a girl?”

We reached the school gate in time to see Busisiwe arriving. She was the only girl who had a car drop her off at school. We all used our feet or maybe caught a ride on a tractor hike. It happened every day but we all still stared at the shiny black car as Busisiwe climbed out and slammed the door.

Busisiwe gathered her friends around her and they walked to the assembly together. As they passed us Busie whispered something and they all looked at me and laughed. I looked down then away but there was no escaping it, my secret was out. My eyes turned and my cheeks felt hot. Lihle put his arm around my neck then let it drop. One of Busisiwe’s friends was walking towards us.

“Busie said I must give you this.”

I looked at the note and took a sharp breath.

“If you are serious meet me by the river.”

I couldn’t follow a single word in class that afternoon. When the last bell rang I

rushed home to change out of my school clothes. I set out after four, followed a path that would take me to a spot near the river where I could sit and watch the girls fetching water. I found the perfect place behind the bushes and crouched down. The girls came and went. I waited, not wanting to turn away, to leave without her arrival. An hour passed then another. I was getting restless. It was still hot and the sweat running down my face had started to sting my eyes. I hated myself for falling into this trap. What if that letter was a joke, written by one of her friends? Three hours passed and I felt like crying again. I watched the last of the girls collect their buckets and leave. The late afternoon light was fading. She was playing with me. I would be the laughing stock of the school the next day. It was dark now. I could barely see. I left my hiding place and walked slowly home. My mother was there already, waiting for me with the scraps of food from Busie's table.

I woke up late and dressed quickly. Lihle was waiting for me at our usual spot.

"Come on, tell me, I want details!"

"There's nothing to tell," I picked up my pace. I didn't want to think about what had happened at the river. I rushed into the classroom and sat behind my desk. I busied myself with school work. I stayed there all day, even during the break. The sounds from the playground floated through the classroom window. I was sitting staring at my book when I heard the door.

"Hi, why are you sitting alone?" It was Busie's voice. She stood in the doorway, her circle of friends behind her, watching.

"I am just preparing... something for my oral," I was stuttering. I had never spoken to her apart from the usual greetings.

"You must be disappointed?"

"No..."

"Oh! So you didn't come?"

"I was busy. My mother needed me to do some things for her."

"My friends must have seen a ghost behind the bushes," she turned and glanced back at them.

I heard them giggle and said nothing.

"What are you doing this afternoon?"

"I don't know."

"I'm going to a friend's house. Would you like to join me there?"

"Um, sure."

"I'll meet you at the shop at 4pm and we can walk there together."

Without saying goodbye she joined her friends outside.

At 4pm the shop was busy. Customers came and went. This time there was no hiding. I stood outside in the sun for three hours but she never showed up. Finally I left. I walked home in a daze. I kept looking back over my shoulder, hoping she would be there, standing at our meeting point.

It was a typical day. I had nothing to do but walk around in town. Things had been hard for me. After I'd finished school I had tried my best to look for a bursary but I was turned down. Lihle had gone to college and I was left sitting at home, looking after our one and only cow. It wasn't easy. Mama was getting thinner by the day. One night, it was almost past eight and she was not yet back from work. I was beginning to get worried when I heard a car pull up outside. I went out to look, it was Mafutha's car. My mother was sitting at the back seat. I could see from her eyes that something was wrong. Busie was sitting in the front seat with the driver next to her. My mother was coughing and I could see the pain in her eyes. Busie got out from the passenger seat. The driver was not even looking at me. I knew him very well but on this night he was not even smiling. Busie came around from the car.

There was a grin in her face. "Zuks, please help your mama out of the car, the poor thing is very sick."

Those words cut through my heart. Mama was trying with all her strength to get out of the car. At last she managed. I took her arm and escorted her to the house. Busie followed like a spoilt puppy behind us.

"God! It's dark around here, where is your mama's room?"

I pointed.

"Jesus..." she turned and went back to the car.

"Go to the car and collect my belongings please son," Mama said. Her voice was

weak. She coughed again whilst trying to make herself comfortable on her sleeping mat. I went outside and I found Busie waiting by the car. On the ground next to her there was a box.

“This belongs to your mother. My father said she could take a leave, but it would be without payment.”

I took the box and looked inside, there was bread, flour, some meat and some few apples.

“This is part of payment, but let me add this,” she held a brown envelop. “There is enough money to last you for two months, if you can buy bread every day.”

She was smiling again as she moved around to the passenger sit.

“Please, tell your mama to come and do my hair next week.”

The car started. I don’t know how long I stood there. Finally, a dog barked and my senses came back. I went inside.

“Mama, Busie gave me this envelop,” I said putting the box down. Mama took the envelop and opened it. I saw her closing her eyes.

I did not say a word. I put everything down and went to my room. I closed the door and sat on the bed staring into space.

The days were long after that. Monthes passed. My mother did not get better. I hated being in the house with her. Seeing her. I felt rage then frustration. We needed money for medicine. I walked the streets trying to think of a plan. I kicked at the sand and crossed the road. On the other side, a car pulled up and parked in front of me. A lady got out, a striking beauty I recognised immediately.

“Zuks, hi!”

“Hi, sisi.”

“You look stressed. What are you up to these days?”

“Well, there is nothing for me to do. I guess I am just not one of the lucky ones.”

She laughed at this.

“You look more beautiful than ever... what about you?”

“Nothing, I was living with my boyfriend in the city but we broke up recently. Now my father is renting me a two-roomed flat here in town.”

“Oh.”

“Would you like to see it?”

“I’m busy.”

“Doing what, kicking up sand?” she said this with laughter.

I didn’t reply.

“I’m joking. Wait here, I need to buy a newspaper and bread... Or even better, you could go buy them for me,” she handed me a banknote without even waiting for an answer.

I crossed the road to the shop and filled a bag with all the things she wanted. I saw the surprise on the owner’s face when I paid with Busie’s notes. Usually I had to count out my coins. She was still in the car, making up her face in the rear-view mirror when I returned. I gave her the change.

“Take it, you earned it. Come, let’s go.”

I was reluctant but the door was already open. She drove to an area I didn’t know. You could see it was meant for people with money. The lawns all cut to perfection, flowers everywhere. She parked outside a block of flats. I started to open the door but Busie wasn’t moving. She sat staring ahead of her out the wind-shield. I stared at her. For a moment her beauty was hidden by a mask of sadness. She said nothing for a long time, then she turned. There were tears in her eyes. I was overcome by an urge to reach out and touch her face but I held back, clenching my fists in my lap. Finally she spoke. “Do you ever get lonely Zuks?”

I didn’t know how to answer. For a second our eyes met. I stared into her face and saw a terrible sadness like a deep hole. Then she pulled away. She started to laugh. The laugh sounded false, hollow.

“Why are we still sitting here? Aren’t you going to carry my bags?”

I tried to laugh too. I took all the bags and rushed behind her. She opened a door that led to one of the most beautiful flats I had ever seen. The couches were all white, on the floor, a white rug. I had never seen such a big TV. I stood, clutching the packets of groceries, afraid to move, to touch anything.

Busie disappeared through a door and I was left waiting with the bags still in my hands. Finally I heard a door.

“Well, is this what you want?” she asked with a smile on her face.

I dropped the bags and stood like a zombie. She was naked except for her panties.

“Don’t stand there like an idiot. I am hot for you! Come on,” she turned back into her room. I watched her firm buttocks disappear through the doorway then followed. The room was dark. The air had an electric feel, as it does when a storm has moved in. She was there on the bedspread, her thighs wide open. I undressed without taking my eyes off her, tugging pants and kicking shoes. My manhood was rock hard, ready.

“Is that what you have?” she asked with a mocking smile.

Her words were like a slap and my boy went down as if electrocuted.

“Now you’re going soft. Jesus, Zuks, a thumb like that couldn’t even satisfy a virgin.” She was laughing again, the same fake hollow laugh I heard earlier. “Poor child. All these years of running after me, you had that thumb between your legs, God what will I do with that?” That made her laugh even more and she fell back on the bed. I stared at her. My face was hot. “Make yourself useful will you, don’t just stand there. Get me a drink. There is whiskey in the top cupboard. Bring it here. My Lord what a dick... my friends will go mad over this!”

I turned, grabbed my clothes off the floor and walked naked to the kitchen. This time I didn’t pause to admire her house. The tiled floor was cold. I saw the whiskey on the top of the cupboard. The bottle was half empty. I left it standing there. I balanced one hand on a chair and put my clothes back on. I didn't say goodbye.

The sharp pain dug in deeper. I thought about my mother, the servant. I thought how she must have suffered under this little bitch’s hands. I left. I walked. Around me the town blurred. I didn’t see the people who greeted me on the street. I didn’t respond. I reached my home and went straight to my mother’s room. She was on her mat as usually. The mother I knew was gone, only the shadow of what used to be my mother remained in its place. She was coughing in her sleep. My cheeks became wet. I covered my mother with her blankets and blew the candle out.

The pain was a hard knot. It had lodged itself inside me. It squeezed my heart and clouded my head. I had only one solution in my mind. I must make Busie suffer. I must make her suffer as much as she made me suffer, as much as my mother had suffered.

I stayed in my room until night. I dressed slowly and took the road to town. I walked the without feeling anything. I reached the street where Busie lived. All was quiet and I smiled for the first time in days. A strange excitement took root in my heart. It grew until it covered the pain. My mouth twitched and my eyes tightened into pinpricks as the excitement spread. I knocked and after a minute I heard her voice. "Who's there?" she asked.

"It's me my love." My heart pumped faster. My knees started to give. I knew it was now or never. I heard the key rattle in the lock. She stood at the door, bright big eyes, long black hair made beautiful by my blood. She was wearing a see-through nightdress. My manhood was rock hard.

I didn't hesitate. I knew what I was doing and I knew the consequences.

No Room for the Old

In the small dusty streets of Veeplaas, an area in Port Elizabeth, a red Citi Golf was moving very slowly. The car kept stopping then moving. It was shiny and clean, a total contrast to the area it was driving in. On the corner, an old gogo was selling apples and cigarettes. The old gogo had a faraway look, her legs were covered by an old blanket and her head was covered with a dirty scarf. Directly behind her, a picture of a smiling President Zuma hung on a plank board.

Just past where the old gogo had set up her makeshift stall, the road curved opening into a large pothole filled with green water. Two young boys had made a game of the water, jumping over it and sometimes falling in. A man with a belly protruding above his short pants exited from one of the houses that lined the road. He carried a bucket of dirty water which he threw out onto the road, sending the sharp smell of urine through the neighbourhood. As the car passed, magogo, a pregnant woman with a child on her back stepped forward and stood waiting to cross the road, next to her, a five year old was crying. The child was wearing a thin vest two sizes too big, with nothing under it. He had no shoes on his feet. The Golf passed the woman and her child without giving them a glance. It travelled towards where a dog was lying. The dog heard the car coming but only lifted its head and looked the other way. The car stopped and hooted but the dog would not move.

“Get the fucken dog out of the way,” shouted the driver to his companion.

The other man was reluctant to leave the car but at last he opened his passenger door and stepped out.

“Move you fuck, get out the way.”

The dog only lifted its head and dropped it again. It was only when the man picked up a stone and held it, as if he was about to throw it, that the animal pulled its body off the ground. It took two steps and fell, crumbling into a pile of bones and fur, so thin its ribs could be counted. The man went quickly back to the car and slammed its door. He took a white handkerchief out his pocket and started to wipe his hands.

They drove two blocks from the dog and stopped. Across from them, two men were sitting under the tree playing drafts. They paused to glance briefly at the car then went back to their game.

The driver rolled his window halfway down. “Excuse me gents, we are looking for

number 14S48,” he said. One of the men looked at him, took the BB zol he was smoking and passed it to his friend. He pointed his finger in the direction the car had come from.

“Are you sure my brother?” The man asked.

The man looked at them then at his friend. He said something in Xhosa and they both laughed and went on with their game.

“Stupid fools,” the driver said, closing his window.

Outside, the men laughed, turning their heads to watch the car drive off, leaving a cloud of dust behind it.

Inside the car, the driver had started to sweat.

“Just cool off will you,” said his companion.

“Cool off while these stupid people make a fool of me? I left my office and I should be back in an hour and you tell me to cool off, is that what you want?”

“Anger won’t solve anything, all am saying is, drive at a reasonable speed.”

“You drive, and show me a reasonable speed.”

They passed a clean lady carry two Shoprite bags.

“Stop the car.”

“What?”

“Just stop the car and leave this to me,” the man said. As the car slowed, he opened his door then got out. He crossed to the lady and spoke to her for a few minutes. She accompanied him back to the car.

“The lady lives close to the address we are searching for, she is actually a neighbour, let’s give her a ride it’s not far,” the man said while ushering the lady with her bags into the back seat. The driver did not say a word. He just shook his head and drove forward.

“From the next street, second house from your right is mine. The one you want is the third from mine further down,” the lady said in a polite voice.

“Thanks sisi, you are an angel,” said the man who had ushered the lady into the car.

“My pleasure, bhuti.”

The car came to a halt in front of her house. As soon as the lady opened the door, the smell filled the car.

“What is that asked the driver?”

The lady shook her head. She explained to the men that a donkey had died nearby. "We reported it to the municipality three days ago. There was a promise that the donkey would be collected but it's still in the same place."

She collected up her bags and exited, closing the car door behind her. She did not mention that she had noticed that some of the donkey's body parts were disappearing at night. Like others in the area, she did not want to say anything. She pointed her neighbour's house out to the men and then left.

The shack was built with zinc and planks. What should be windows were just two empty holes, probably covered with planks at night. There was no boundary wiring, only some few stones that separated it from the house next door. The men could see an eleven year old girl was standing outside. In one hand she was carrying a mug of amarhewu and in the other hand a quarter of brown bread.

"Themba, Themba where are you? izokutya maan," she called out.

A boy came around the corner. He was around eight and he was wearing short pants with two patches at the buttocks, a black t-shirt that was oily. The two children stood together, looking at the car with suspicion.

The man in the passenger seat exited. He took his handkerchief and covered his nose. The man looked at the children and think better of it, he quickly put his handkerchief back to his pocket.

"My beautiful children, how are you?" He asked, speaking through his teeth because of the smell from the dead donkey, which swarmed with flies.

"Fine, tata," said the girl.

"Good girl, is this where...?" he pretended to look in his file. "Is this where, Mrs Mfesane resides?"

The two children were at a loss for words - they did not know what resides meant.

The man saw the children were lost. "Does Mrs Mfesane lives here?" he asked with more stress. "God this smell."

"Oh, yes nguMakhulu," said the boy with a smile.

“Great young man, where is she?”

“UMakhulu?”

“Yes, boy uMakhulu where is she?” This time the man directed his question to the girl.

“Inside, Sir.”

“Sir, wow that is great, princess, May I see her?”

“Yes, Sir, please come inside.”

The young girl rushed inside, calling her grandmother as she moved. “Makhulu, Makhulu naba abantu.”

“No, please my child you don’t need to shout to be heard my dear, I am here, and who needs to see me?”

“Utata wemoto.”

The man was right behind her. There was nothing inside the house apart from an old table and two old chairs. The old lady sat in one of the chairs. From her face one could see she had seen it all. She must have been around seventy-five but she looked a little bit older, the man thought, one of those old ladies that used to work in the Madam’s kitchen. Her clothes were old and full of patches but they were clean. In what could have been a kitchen there was another table carrying a paraffin stove and some few black pots and a kettle. A cupboard that had seen any number of years was balanced on two polish tins and a stone. The door to one of the bedrooms was open and the man could see some old blankets laying on the mat and zinc washing basin.

“Morning makhulu,” the man said, easing himself onto the chair.

“Morning my child,” Makhulu said with a smile. “What is the purpose of this visit if I may ask, my child?”

“Oh, sorry Makhulu. I am Ngwanya, inspector Ngwanya and my friend in the car is Constable Louw, we are from the Crime Investigating Unit,” said the man.

“My child what do you need from this poor household with an old woman like me, we carry nothing but pains?”

“No, no Makhulu, you need not worry, we are not investigating you, hayi akunjalo.”

“Then who are you investigating, mfana wam kuba kaloku ulapha?”

The man laughed showing even white teeth. He laughed at what the old lady was saying which drove the lady to laugh as well. The little girl was standing at the half

opened door of the other room. She was not laughing. She looked straight into the man's eyes as if she suspected something.

"Kuyahlekwa mntan'am noba kuyafiwa," said Makhulu wiping the tears in her eyes.

"Kunjalo makhulu, actually we are investigating those who stole your grant, it has come to our ears that old people are being robbed of their grant and we need to get to the bottom of it," the man said, not laughing now.

"Oh, mnta'am asigqibile kwelikhaya asisatyi, they have now taken my children's grant, what will happen to them when I am dead?" Makhulu said with pain in her voice.

"That is why we need to apprehend them, for all over people are complaining, Makhulu."

"What do I need to do, my child?"

"Yabona ke ngoku, uyathetha," the man said, going through his file.

"Thixo, sibone okwemali yabazukulwana bam."

"Makhulu kuzolunga yekela konke kuthi, all you need to do now is to sign here, and the people who are taking your grant will be arrested." He handed the old lady the papers and the pen.

The old lady took the pen and signed. "I wish they could be arrested soon, my child we are suffering in this house."

"They will Makhulu," the man said.

"God Bless you my child, as you can see we live in shambles, sometimes we go without food for days, yet some people are living like kings with our money."

"Rest assured mama we are on their tail and in no time they will be behind bars, I assure you."

"Nkosi mnta'am, God Bless You."

"Sale kamandi mama, bye little princess," the man said, already out the door and heading for the car.

Almost three months later, there seemed little hope of Makhulu getting her grant. The old woman had become very sick. Her kindhearted neighbour was there by her

side. Usis'Nomsa never got tired of the old lady. She would come in the morning and again in the evening, bringing with her something to eat. Looking after Makhulu meant Nomsa had to manage two houses. She would wake early each morning and prepare both breakfast and lunch, for both her children and Makhulu Mam'Jwarha's grandchildren. Once her children had eaten, she carried what was left across the street to Makhulu Mam'Jwarha's house

"Nanamhlwanje, Jwarhakazi," she would greet Mam'Jwarha.

"Sele kunjalo sana lwam," Mam'Jwarha always called from her bedroom.

Inevitably the children wouldn't be ready for school yet, and here would be a rush of finding school books and then eating quickly before rushing to school. After the children left, Norma always sat for a moment, enjoying the solitude. Then she would stand slowly and take Mam'Jwarha her food in her bedroom.

"Mam'Jwarha, ntombi akusemhle namhlanje," she would say whilst sitting next to the old lady.

"Oh! Sana, the pain is killing me."

"I shall give you more medication dear, don't worry yourself too much."

"Mam'Jwarha, have you received nothing from Nozipho?"

"Oh!" Exclaimed Mam'Jwarha. "Nothing my child."

Mam'Jwarha became quite for some time. Her face registered a faraway pain.

Nozipho was her only daughter, the mother of her grandchildren. She left her home for Cape Town looking for a job. That was fifteen years ago. She had not written one letter since then.

"One day God will send her back home I am sure," said Nomsa seeing the old woman's pain.

"God has His own ways, wena Nomsa."

The two spoke for some time and then Nomsa would go and do her own things in her house. Then in the afternoon she would come back to see whether the old lady was still alright. She would not come empty handed as usual, there will be a pot of hot food. The old woman would enjoy the food together with her grandchildren. It always pained her to see the two grandchildren cuddled next to their grandmother waiting for the food. One day as she was coming to the house she saw one of the grandchild standing next to the house with tears on her face.

“Nomhle, hay’bo sisi yiza kumama, why are you crying?” Asked Nomsa.

“Ngumakhulu, sisi,”

“Utheni, sana lwam,” said Nomsa.

“She has been coughing all night, sisi.”

Nomsa saw that the child had lost weight and felt a knot of anger rise. Seeing the child's wide eyes, she quickly hid it behind a forced smile. “Sukhala sisi vha, things will be alright my child,” she said, giving the girl a hug. But Nomsa wasn't so sure.

Despite her help, Makhulu Mam’Jwarha’s health kept declining until she was confined to her bed. The old woman should be in the hospital but there was no money for transport. Sometimes frustration overcame Nomsa. She knew that the government provided a grant to the old people but uMakhulu did not receive hers.

What good was a government grant that existed only on paper?

After giving her a warm cup of soup, Nomsa covered the old lady with the blankets.

“Makhulu I think tomorrow I need to go to SASSA offices to find out what is really happening with your grant,” she said, sitting next to the old lady.

“Oh! Nomsa mnta’am what will that yield?”

“You will never know Makhulu, let me go and find out.”

“I had been there several times nothing had happened, apart from signing papers with the promise to check.”

“You will never know, Makhulu. Let me go and try my luck, maybe something will come up.”

“How can I thank you for your kindness my child?”

“Nothing, only be my friend, and hang on please, till we get to the bottom of this.”

At this they both laughed.

“Thank you Nomsa I will be happy, I don’t know when was the last time I received my grant.”

“You just hang on till we get your money then you can leave us rich.”

The two friends burst out laughing while holding hands.

The next morning Norma put her best clothes, a black full dress and red shoes. She took her purse and started towards the taxi rank. It was early and the dusty streets were filled with people heading to work. Norma greeted everyone she passed.

“Waze wamhle ke, Nomsa usingise phi?” The old gogo selling apples and cigarettes asked.

“Mandlovu, life is hard and it is always uphill every day.”

“You don’t have to say.”

Just then a taxi approach, a conductor’s head popping out of the window. “Town! Town, only one needed, sigcwale.”

Nomsa raised her hand for the driver to stop.

“Sale kahle Mandlovu, please don’t forget to send a plastic of apples to my house, I shall pay later.”

Just before she got inside the taxi, she lifted her head and saw the smile of President Zuma above the old gogo’s head. She had always found it a pleasant, friendly smile, but on that day it looked twisted and distrustful to Norma, an empty smile, with teeth gleaming false promises. Nomsa shivered as she got inside the taxi. The music was loud and she wondered how the driver and the conductor coped with such noise the whole day. The taxi drove fast between the lanes and it left the dusty streets of the location and was heading towards town. In no time they entered the tarred road. The atmosphere suddenly changed, the smell and dust was gone. Besides the road there was a neatly spread of green grass. They arrived at a tall building with glass revolving doors. This was SASSA offices. A security officer was standing in one of the entrances and next to him a young man was directing people to the correct counter.

“Yes sisi, how may I be of assistance?”

“I am here bhuti, in connection with the grant of...” Nomsa said, fumbling in her bag.

“Ok, sisi go to counter 4.” The man didn't wait for Nomsa to finish.

At the counter she was directed to, there were more than ten people in line waiting to be assisted. The room was full and the air conditioner was not working. Norma searched her purse for a tissue. She wiped the sweat on her forehead then joined the line. Ahead of her were most old people and a few young mothers carrying crying babies. Some of the infants looked sick. Nomsa sighed. She silently prayed for God must help her get through this.

When her turn came, Norma approached the lady's behind the counter. She was wearing a pink blouse with black skirt that was too tight for her waist and thighs.

"Yes!"

"Sisi, please ndicela uncedo," Nomsa said, handing over the Mam'Jwarha's ID.

"About what sisi?"

"This old lady has not received her grant including her grandchildren's grant. This has been going on for over a year now."

The lady did not say anything, she went through her computer then she looked at Nomsa again. "Are you sure, sisi?"

"Yes, she is my neighbour."

"Here it shows that she gave her cousin power of attorney to collect the grant on her behalf."

"No, sisi for the past five months, she has not received a cent. I had to provide for her sometimes."

"Let me check the files. There should be a copy of the form with her original signature."

Nomsa watched her enter one of the offices. Hardly five minutes later, she came back accompanied by a white person. They stood over the lady's computer. She pointed to something on the screen and the white man stood shaking his head. They left again without speaking to Nomsa, entering another office.

A few moments later, the lady returned. She showed Nomsa the form Makhulu had signed. She also had a copy of the cousin's ID.

Nomsa recognised the man immediately. "This man came with another man to Mam'Jwarha's house three months ago. They were strangers and I had to give them directions to get there. What will happen now?"

The lady shook her head. "She's been conned. These scams are common. We will notify the police. Take this form back with you and get the old lady to sign it so as to transfer the power of attorney to you."

Nomsa took the form and put it carefully in her bag. She hurried back excited to tell Mam’Jwarha. She could see Mam’Jwarha’s face when she told her the good news. She pictured the grandchildren jumping up and down with joy. She got to the taxi rank in no time and joined the queue for taxis going to Veeplaas. In front of her there was a lady who looked very tired.

“Rha! Yhu! ndidikiwe, yile nto.”

“It is like this all over, my friend.”

“No! Dear you are mistaken, you should see, the rank in Greenacres, nice and cool.”

“That is because, ngomashayela aba,” Nomsa said.

“Sibe sisinyathina!”

Nomsa did not respond, she could sense the conversation was turning ugly. At last their taxi arrived and they boarded. Inside the taxi she sat next to an old man that Nomsa thought she had seen at the SASSA’s offices.

“Nawe tata uyabuya ngoku?” she asked.

“Where you also there?” the old man responded. “God, sometimes... children of today don’t care about the old.”

“Watsho tata, what happened?”

“You know my child, tomorrow I have to come back, why? Because I forgot to bring the death certificate of my wife,” he said shaking his head.

Nomsa shook her head. She felt sorry for the old man.

“Did you come right?” he asked.

“Oh! Yes, my neighbour was having trouble getting her grant, but God is on my side there is a breakthrough.”

The old man said nothing. He turned his head towards the window. Nomsa took the form out her bag and read them again. She quickly forgot about the old man. She was eager to get home. At last, the taxi turned into Veeplaas. It was early evening. Candle light shone out the passing windows. Many of the doors were closed for fear of mosquitos.

Nomsa knew something was wrong the moment she exited the taxi. The wails of Makhulu’s eleven year old girl filled the air. Nomsa took the form out her bag again

and rushed to the house. She felt her fist clench around the paper in her hand as she opened the door. The two children were crouched on the floor crying next to their grandmother's dead body. Nomsa let go of the papers and they fell to the floor. She did not notice, her eyes were too filled with tears.

The Gate is Open

The life of a radio presenter is a fascinating one. He sits behind the microphone and touches all the buttons around him. Deep in his heart he knows thousands of people are listening. It is more fascinating when you are a newsreader. The thousands increase within five minutes to millions. Everyone wants to hear the current and breaking news. It is a 45 minutes of sweat, stress, pressure, editing and reading. This was my daily life at RQK RADIO station. It was a life of working with Christians. The station was made up of members of different churches and of different races. We were broadcasting in different languages and our numbers were growing day by day. It was here where I learnt that if you are too strong, Christians will burn, persecute and hang you out to dry. If you are weak they will do the same. They will crush the juice out of your bones until you are dry and let you hang. But if you truly have faith they don't stand a chance.

I was working at this radio station's news department. That Wednesday morning, I was preparing the ten o'clock news bulletin when the phone rang. I picked it up. "Zukile, please come to my office," said the voice, then the line went dead. I knew that voice. There was no other like it, a strong voice, a voice that speaks with command, a voice with a clear no-nonsense attitude. That was the voice of the radio station's director, Mr Oswell Odwa.

Odwa was infamous at the station. It was said he never came to work without his suit and tie. As the years went by, I realised that this was true. In all my days at the station, I never saw Odwa wearing the same suit twice a week. The man must have had his own designer - you could go to every shop in the city and never find a match for any of his suits. There were only two things you were told if you were called into his office: "pull your socks up" and "the gate is open". That was the Gospel Truth. And you knew that all those who entered that office came crying.

When that phone rung, I smelled trouble but I did not guess which side it was coming from. I looked quickly at the time. I still had forty-five minutes before the next bulletin. I left everything I was doing and went down the stairs, two at a time.

Half way down, I bumped into my closest colleague. She started to say something. I stopped her, showed a sign that we all knew. The sign was simple: show the middle finger and then turn it down. For those who work in the station, this means all people wish the bastard would leave or die.

I watched my colleague disappear without a word. I breathed in deeply and straightened my jacket. Held my head high but even so, as I strode towards his door I could feel my stomach churn, my innards roil around like a jelly substance.

The office door was open. I was about to knock.

“Come in and close the door,” Odwa’s voice barked. He was behind his desk. A dark man, with spectacles propped on his nose. His dark suit was tailor-made and on his wrist I saw the unmistakable glimmer of a Rolex. The office was neat and tidy – fitting the appearance of the man.

“Sit down!” It was a command not an invitation. The command was in the voice, showing exactly who the boss is.

The man was reading a copy of the Herald newspaper. Without another word he tossed the newspaper in front of me.

“Page two right at the bottom, have you seen that?” he said, taking off his spectacles.

“No, Sir I...” I was about to explain that I was still getting through the day’s papers but his eyes commandeered me to read. I looked at the bold letters that my boss was referring to.

“It is big news Sir ‘That’ should be the front page. I will put it in my bulletin immediately.”

“You will do nothing of that sort. However I do want you to get to the bottom of ‘that’. Once you’ve done that I will decide how to proceed,” he said without a flicker of a smile.

“Yes, Sir.”

“Leave everything for now. Tomorrow I want you in this office at 10am. I want you to be ready to tell me all about ‘that’,” he said, then put on his spectacles and looked for something on his desk. “Leave the door open.”

I knew then the conversation was over. I rushed to my office not wanting to waste time. One advantage of being in the news department was that I had lots of contacts – many of whom were journalists. I went through my little book. I found the number I wanted immediately. Jimmy was the man. I dialled and spoke quickly. Jimmy agreed to see me in half an hour. I took my tape recorder, writing pad and my bag and with that I was out of the office. I signed for the company car and hit the road. I drove fast, swerving between the midday traffic and jumping traffic lights. I was rushing towards the Herald offices in order to get to the bottom of ‘that’, as my boss had said. I drove zigzagging between lanes. I knew if I was late and missed Jimmy, my chances of getting to the bottom of ‘that’ were slim.

I had met Jimmy when I started at Radio Kingfisher. He was the one who got me the break I wanted. He was one of those journalists who knew top dogs but never bothered to be on top. He could have been a senior editor or manager, but not Jimmy. He cared only for his mug, his type writer and his jacket. It was rare that you would see him without that damn mug and that flask of his - some people said he would die without it. Maybe this was true, as the flask was always full of Royal Oak, his favourite brandy. Some said he had been married to a beautiful lady and blessed with twins, two girls. A fatal accident took their lives. That was the day Jimmy lost it all. No one knew where he lived or cared. His desk was sometimes his home. The man was blessed with one thing, digging. Give Jimmy a clue to a good story and come end of the day, it will be on his desk and the following day, on the front page. How he found the story no one knew except Jimmy himself. I knew Jimmy had something. I knew it was big. And I knew my guts wouldn't lie to me.

I was in front of the Herald offices in no time. As I approached, I saw an old lady trying to get into the only parking space available. I put foot, spun my wheel and glided into the parking before her. The look she gave me was a looked that spelled: “Rot in hell, son of a ...” Never mind mama, a look wouldn't kill me, my job was at stake. All I could think about was the ‘that’ that my boss wanted.

The security guard showed me the way to the newspaper's offices. I took the lift to the second floor. When the door opened I was greeted with an open plan office space filled with journalists working at their desks. I strained my eyes but did not see the one I was looking for.

"Zuks here," a voice to my left said. There was Jimmy, all smiles as ever. He was sitting behind his desk, surrounded by papers. The man was ageless. No one would say he was older than fifty years. Although he had gained weight, he was as sharp as ever. I looked at the mug next to him and smiled. He noticed. Smiled and said, "Can't separate twins." Then he laughed, showing his white teeth. Next he bent back, reaching behind his chair and came up baring his infamous flask.

I couldn't hold myself back, I laughed with him. "True, my brother, that is true." I said.

I grabbed a chair and sat next to him as he went through his computer. He looked through some documents then clicked one open. There it was in black and white. The bold letters stared at me, "Man caught, investigation in process."

"I believe this is what you want?" he said, pointing at a story in front of him.

"No Jimmy 'that' is what I want"

"Whatever."

"How did you get this Jimmy?"

"Tip off my brother, cannot tell on my informer, but I tell you what..." He said, lowering his voice. He paused for a moment then seemed to change his mind. He took a sip from his mug. "The man does not work alone, he's in bed with a top gun... but no fear, Jimmy will get him on the front page soon." He smiled and took another sip. Knowing Jimmy as I knew him, I knew that could be within the next hour or two. He clearly was not going to tell me who his informer was.

"Jimmy where is the man now?"

"That is another secret I can't tell. That would be giving my informer away. Find him yourself brother, that is your job," he said, going through a writing pad and scribbling some words.

I knew Jimmy far too long to push him. So I was now stuck as I did not know where to start.

“Well, I guess I have to say thanks Jimmy, you have been a star,” I said collecting my stuff on his already full desk.

“Well,” he said, offering his hand to shake. “Thanks for coming S.T Mhlongo”

“Thanks, brother guess I will find my way out.”

Jimmy didn't even look at me. He was already on the phone busy with a call. I went outside and fumbled for my car keys not knowing where to start. I knew I was running out of time too fast for my liking. ‘That’ was about to catch up with me. I opened my car and sat staring at the wheel without knowing what to do. I suddenly felt exhausted.

“What now Zuks?” I asked no one in particular. I found myself thinking about my meeting with Jimmy. Something odd, very odd. Jimmy in all the years I had known him, had never called me by any name but Zuks. Jimmy never forgets names yet he had called me Mhlongo. I am not Mhlongo. I am Mdongwe. That was not a mistake that was deliberate. I stared at the windshield as if I might find an answer there. All the time ‘that’ was circling in my mind, slowly closing in, catching up with me. Ten minutes went by and I was still nowhere near the answer. Outside the sun was bright, it reflected of the glass in front of me. I blinked, then it dawned on me. “My God, Jimmy you silly old bull,” I said with a smile. The scribbled words he had written on his pad, Jimmy was laying it all in front of me to see.

I knew where this was leading and I had to drive towards it. I kicked the car and pushed it to a full level. I drove towards St. Albans Correctional Service. I jumped traffic lights and took the old Cape Road. I was driving towards Green-bushes – an area I knew was usually overrun by traffic officers along the road but I did not care. Let them give me a ticket – better that than losing my job. I drove that stretch off the road in ten minutes flat. By the time I got to the gates of prison it was almost past one. I found my way to the front door, an intimidating steel structure, manned by a surprisingly beautiful prison warder.

“Yes, but no visitors at this hour,” she said.

I showed her my business card.

“Oh, you are a reporter... great job, I also wanted to be a journalist but look where I am sitting.”

“One day, Sisi, don’t give up.”

“Well time will tell, anyway how can I help you?” she said still smiling.

I had to take my chances – it was now or never. “May I please speak to Mr Mhlongo, please?”

“Do you know how many Mhlongo’s we have here?”

That threw me for a second, but as a reporter you have to think on your toes. “I am sure you know him, Sisi his friend is Jimmy.” That was my last ace.

“Jimmy from the Herald?” She said with a flicker of knowing.

“The one and only.”

“Ah, we call him Mr Mug here, that one, my God! There is only one of Jimmy’s friend here, he is also Mr Mug.” The lady said.

“I don’t care whether you call him Mr Cup just get me the man.”

“Fine, take a seat in that room, I will call him. He is still on duty, Jesus Jimmy and Mhlongo.”

I went to the room I was directed to. It contained only a screwed chair and table - no windows, only electric lights. To me, it looked more like an interrogation room than a waiting room. Two minutes later Mhlongo appeared in a side door. The man looked like he was hit by a bull. He had puffed eyes and a drunkard face. One could tell he had not slept last night. He looked like he could have used that brandy in Jimmy’s flask now.

“Bra,” he said looking me up and down.

I knew I had to be quick with him or I would get nothing. “Jimmy sent me in connection with the prisoner, he said you will know which prisoner he is talking about.”

“Hayi maan, you see now but uyayazi imeko, why is he doing this?”

“I don’t know,” I said not looking in his face, busying myself with the recording machine.

“No, maan Jimmy uzondifaka emasimbeni, suka let me call him.”

If he made that call I didn't know what Jimmy's reaction would be and I didn't want to take a chance. "The last I spoke with him he was in a press conference with the mayor," I said, hoping that would stick.

"Lento, izeza kundiphelelelisa ne job, so promise only five minutes or I will lose my job, bra."

"Cross my heart." I knew I had him.

"Undiphetheleni ke wena." Breaking into a smile. The man was a tokoloshe with broken teeth and gaps.

I took a hundred rand note and pushed it towards him not wanting to waste time. That made him jump for the door. Ten minutes later he returned, pushing a young man of about thirty. The man was scared, oh I could see right away, he was very scared.

"Five minutes bra, not more or I will be dead."

I did not even look at Mhlongo, all I saw was the young man in front of me. "My friend..." I said pushing the mic towards him. "All I need is the story of what happened and who you work with... then maybe I might be of assistance."

The man's face and lips started to tremble but no voice came out. God what must I do with this man? If I didn't play my cards right, I would get nothing from him. I switched off my recording machine and I put it away. "My friend you are here, alone. Those who were close to you are out enjoying the day. You might be here for a long time, oh a long time indeed, whilst they bask in the sun." I let the words sink in. I kept quiet and looked at him.

"What must I do? Please help me," he said with a shaking voice.

"Give me the names, of your contacts or those working with you. You never know, that might assist you and get you reduced time," I said not caring about his plight. All I wanted was to get to the bottom of the story.

"Cannot say," his lips were quivering. "Cannot say. They will kill me."

I knew when a person was scared and this one was dead scared.

"Two minutes, guys."

I ignored the warder. An idea glimmered in my mind. I took out my writing pad and pen, pushed it towards him. He looked at the thing. After some time with shaking hands he scribbled a few words then pushed it back to me. I looked at the words written by the prisoner. I could feel my face getting hot and then the colour draining.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, yes sir, please help me.”

I looked at the warder and nod my head. The prisoner was escorted roughly out of the room. I felt nothing for his misery... ‘that’ was falling into place.

I still had three hours before I finished work. I drove back to the office like a mad man.

I parked the car and signed it back in. I went straight to my boss’s office. The door was still open and he was still sitting behind his desk. This time I entered without any attempt to knock. I closed the door and sat without being invited.

“How dare you enter my office without knocking,” he said, drawing himself up off his chair.

“Sit down!” I said. My look and voice told him I meant business.

He returned to his chair.

“You sent me on a goose chase knowing that you knew all, but you just wanted to check whether your partner had started singing.”

“Liar, liar you and him. I had nothing to do with that dagga and money.”

“What dagga, what money? In the newspaper it said “Man caught investigation in process.”

He saw his mistake, his face said it all.

“I have nothing to say to you, Mr Odwa, as you would say “THE GATE IS OPEN.” I left him sweating and went to my office.

Boss

Jack stood in front of the parole officer. His eyes darted up and down. He kept looking at the parole officer and the picture just behind the officer. He was folding and unfolding his arms, while his knees tap-danced.

Next to him stood the only man who ever cared for any of the prisoners, Pastor Lings. Pastor Lings crossed his fingers and prayed silently. He addressed the officer in charge with a voice of an Angel. He knew one slip from him and it would be the end of the young man beside him.

"If I may offer my suggestion, Sir," he said.

"You may, Pastor," the officer said, closing the file. He was fat with a no nonsense voice. He'd known the pastor for a number of years and they worked on numerous cases together. He respected the pastor's judgement but he still had a responsibility to the community.

"I have worked with this young man for a while now," said the pastor, looking at Jack and then back at the parole officer.

"I know."

"And throughout the days I've worked with him, I've seen an improved person, a person who given the opportunity might be of great importance to the community." Pastor Lings said, taking a handkerchief from his pocket and wiping his sweating hands and face.

"But," the officer said relaxing back on his chair. "He has been in and out of jail on a number of occasions. We've never seen any reformation in the past. "

Jack felt his throat tighten. He needed a glass of water but he was afraid to ask.

"Officer, this time around, I will vouch for him and I put my reputation on the line. I can assure you, you won't see him here again."

Jack did not know whether to nod or cry. The next few minutes were crucial. His whole life hung in the balance. Everything depended on the two men he stood with. The parole officer turned his attention to Jack, addressing him with a no-nonsense voice.

"It's not every day that Pastor Lings puts his name and reputation on the line."

"Yes, Sir," Jack said in a voice that he hardly recognise himself.

"There will be no Pastor Lings in the near future, only you and your time."

"Yes... Sir."

"Jack, you are given a lifetime chance, please do not waste it again. Today we are releasing you. Outside you will have many challenges and as a man you will have to overcome them," said the parole officer.

Jack fell on his knees. He prayed loud and clear. Tears ran down his cheeks. Beside him the man of God stood, brushing Jack's head while thanking the Lord.

"Dear Father God thank YOU, THANK YOU..." Jack was mumbling the same words again and again.

"My brother, from another mother, Jesus pal where have you been?" Said Die Kat, standing at once, excited to see his boss after a stint in jail. The two had been friends for a long time, since they were laaities. In those days, Jack Luka was known to his friends as "Jack Two Fingers" because everything around him had a strange habit of disappearing.

"Jy weet my ma se kind, binnekant daar wat die bobekaan nie slaap nie." It was an old joke between them. Since leaving school Jack had been in and out of prison more times than either of them could count. He knew when he got out that Billie, a.k.a. Die Kat, his best friend and now Lieutenant would be there waiting for him. The two men embraced each other, slapping each other's back and laughing.

"Lord! Oh Lord the boss is back, it's been a long time since I have seen your ugly face."

"Soos die wereld my ma se kind soos die wereld," said Jack.

"Kyk hier my broer, onthou jy nog vir oom Gert?"

"Oom Gert?"

"Ja maan, die ou man wat in die hoek gebly."

"Wie Gert?"

"Ja maan, die oom wat altyd wyn het."

“Ja, ja die ou toppie wat altyd dronk was.”

“En nou wat gaan aan?”

“Hy is dood my broer, maan ons werk by hom huis jy sien, hy is fucken dood.”

“Jy praat nou nonsense my ma se kind.”

“Die Here hoor my.”

“En wat doen julle daar?”

“Klein jobs jy weet hoe die ouens werk mos, as jy binnekant, daar is nie baie jobs jy sien.”

“Ja.”

“Nou vanaand ons gaan weer mekaar praat hulle moet weet jy is terug.”

“Is die ouens weer mekaar.”

“Altyd Boss, altyd.”

“Nou praat jy, hoe laat kom hulle mekaar?”

“Net as dit donker, mense moet mos nie weet ons gebruik die huis of hulle maak dit swaar vir ons.”

“Ja ek sien, hoor hier, ek is daar se vir die ouens hulle moet almal kom ek sal baie bly om hulle te sien.”

“Boss, my Boss, Die Here hoer my, sien ons mekaar later, nou gaan die dinge reg kom.”

“Tell my Dogs the boss is back,” said Jack with a broad smile over his face. Dogs was the word used by Jack to inspire his gangs.

“Die Honde sal blaf ek se so, my ma se kind,” said Die Kat jumping up and down like a dog hungry for a bone.

By seven o'clock Jack was sitting inside oom Gert's house. Three of his "Dogs" were sitting with him. At first they were all smiles, happy to see their Boss after a year. As the minutes passed however, the room became unusually tense. Usually when the Boss returned from jail he was full of excitement, boasting about his time behind bars and eager to catch up on the gang's news. This time around he was quiet. He responded to their questions with yes and no answers and spoke only when spoken

to. There wasn't the usual party atmosphere, and when they finally got around to business the Boss's voice was serious. Without waiting for an update from his lieutenant, he rose.

"My Honde, ons moet nou werk," he said, with his usual authority.

The members laughed and clapped their hands. They knew if the Boss was around there would be new jobs and soon money would be flowing again. The arrival of the Boss meant money, dagga and prostitutes. The rival gangs wouldn't dare enter their territory. They would know the Boss is back and keep a low profile.

The Lieutenant silenced the dogs. "The Boss is back, I told you guys no more playing – ons moet nou werk julle sien, gee die man a zol," he said.

One of the dogs leapt to his feet. He left briefly went out and returned with a handful of dagga. In no time a big zol was being passed from man to man. Smoke filled the room, hanging in thick clouds. When it reached the Boss he took it and stared at the burning zol, then without taking a hit threw it down and crushed it with his shoe. His dogs looked on in silence, shocked by the Boss's action. Finally one of them jumped up, guessing his Boss was angry at being handed a stompie. He immediately set about rolling a fresh zol.

Jack didn't wait for him to finish. "My honde, ek het gese ons moet nou werk," he said with a raised voice. "Ek se honde moet nou blaf, daar is nie plek vir katte," Jack said raising his hands.

"Hoef, hoef," replied the members on the floor.

Jack raised his hands, spreading his arms like an eagle's wings and the dogs went crazy with excitement. From the Boss's voice they could tell he meant business. This could mean only one thing: The Red Devils.

A fight had been brewing for some time. It was known throughout the area of Katanga that the leaders of the two gangs were baying for each other's blood. The core of the entire issue was the selling of drugs and one time Jack had raped the Red Devil's boss sister. Jack was set free after being apprehended due to lack of

evidence. The man then vowed on her mother's grave that he would fry Jack's heart and eat it in full view of people.

Soon the gangs were involved in an ongoing war. Jack and his Fingers gang constantly watched The Red Devils, fiercely guarding their territory. Their battles were legendary. Before Jack was imprisoned the last time, blood had flowed. Word had reached Jack that The Red Devils were coming to buy tik in the backyard of the old vandalised school. This was close to the Fingers territory, near Jack's headquarters and could lead to them not only losing face but also business.

When Jack heard the word on the street he smiled and called his right-hand man, "Billie, die Honde moet byt."

"Boss, wat moet ons doen?"

"Byt hulle dood, vat tien van my Honde, byt hulle dood, verstaan jy," said Jack moving up and down like a caged animal.

"Net soos die Boss soek."

After he received these instructions from his Boss, Billie gathered ten of his best men and waited next to the school. The guys were carrying pangas, machetes and iron bars. They lay in wait, until the top of the hour. Finally they saw a man driving a motorbike with its lights off. He carried a bag slung over one shoulder. He cut the engine as he got close, pushed the bike into some bushes behind the school and set off on foot. Finding the spot he was looking for just behind the toilets, he waited. Five minutes. Ten minutes. The man paced to and fro. He didn't notice the five Devils members, moving in slowly, eyes darting left and right, circling, closing. Finally they made their move. One member closed on the man, whilst the others waited in guard. The exchange happened without words. A bag passed between the two men.

Having made his sale, the seller headed back towards his bike. The Devils dispersed, ready to disappear back into their own territory. It was too late. Billie and his Fingers were standing two metres away from them, machetes and pangas shining brightly under the moon. Billie just stood not moving as The Devils grouped together, circling in confusion. The seller never reached his bike. He stood alone, uncertain which

group to side with. Finally Billie waved his machete in a calling gesture and the man came forward, moving slowly, as if held by a magnet. Sweat ran from him as if it was raining. Billie pointed his machete toward the seller's chest and for a moment it seemed certain the man would be hacked to pieces. Shivering he fell on all fours begging for his life.

“Goei alles op die grond en gaan, maak dat ek jou nie weer sien jou stink kak.”

The man needed no further encouragement. He dropped everything and was out of there as fast as lightning. The motorbike was heard zooming away until the sound faded into the night. One of the Fingers stepped forward and collected the bag of money and some tik left by the seller. The Devils were still rooted in the same spot. “Laat die Honde Blaf,” commanded Billie.

All the dogs came out from behind the bushes and formed a ring around their second in command. The Devils tried to make a break, scattering in all directions. Billie charged forward. A Devil fell, the first blow of the machete cutting his hand as he tried to block the blade. He fell and tried to crawl but four blows hammered him to the ground. Soon the dirt ran red with his blood. Billie didn't leave it there. “Ons gaan jou iets wys my kuikentjie,” he said kneeling down. He drew out a smaller knife. Like a trained butcher, he lifted the gang member's hand and he cut it in half, on one of the fingers there were two rings and he slide them off and pocketed them. The scream that came from the man's mouth was that of a pig led to slaughter, a high pitched sound that came from deep in his throat. Finally it became a low howling grunt that could be heard a mile away.

The people in the surrounding houses heard the sound and knew it meant there was war. As if by magic, all the lights in the houses went off at the same time. The rule was simple, “You heard nothing, and you saw nothing.”

It was better to pretend to be asleep than to witness the bloodshed. They knew that “Die een wat gepraat.” would have his house burned to the ground. The whole area was soon sunken in a heavy darkness. All that was heard were running footsteps and the cries of those that fell.

“Boss sal baie bly wees,” Billie, throwing the bloody finger he was still clasping away.
“Blaf die Honde.”

That was like a signal for the others, they charged forward with death written all over their faces. The Devils were running all over the place not knowing where to hide. Billie kept hearing a cry out of the darkness and knew one of them had been caught. Through all the commotion Jack stood like a statue in one of the houses nearby. He watched from the distance with a smile on his face. After almost ten minutes a blue light appeared in the distance. Jack knew that the police were coming and he sounded three whistles in quick succession, and a last one longer than the rest. The members heard the signal and knowing the heat was on, they disappeared among the houses. No one was arrested in the incident and Billie handed the ring to his boss Jack with pride.

Two years later Jack still wore the ring. He rolled it on his finger and glanced at Billie.
“Boss, se net wat moet ons doen, wys ons net die pad, ons sal gaan,” said one of the dogs.

“Ek is bly dat julle almal hier is en niemand was nog by die tronk, hou dit so ons het lang pad voor ons,” he said pointing his finger to all the gang members.

“Boss van my,” they screamed.

“Ons moet nou werk,” he said sweat running down his face. “Die Here se, ek moet julle die pad wys.”

The members looked at each other. This was a shock to them, this was new to them, and this was something they were not expecting. Maybe they heard the Boss wrong or the zol was taking their minds.

“God said I must speak to you to change you ways!” Jack changed from his mother tongue to a second language. This was too much for the members, for the first time they heard their Boss speaking in English.

“Wat?” asked one of the members still in shock.

“Die man is mal, tronk het...”

“God has sent me to help you!”

“Billie wat bedoel die ou, ken jy van wat praat sy?” Asked one of the members. Billie was shaking his head and looking between his legs. This was also new to him. When he saw the Boss that morning all was well and nothing seemed out of place – and now this.

“I am saying let us work for God! We have done it all! But now is the time to change, change before it is too late!” Jack said raising his voice.

“Die ou is mal, ek se jou my broer, fucken mal!”

“I am a new man, a born again Christian, God had forgiven my sins, He will also save and forgive you, now is the time change your ways before it is too late, I have done it all but now I am a Son of the Lord,” Jack said with a tone they had not heard before.

“Nee wat die ou is getwaak, die tronk het hom mal gemaak, ek het jou gese my broer, hoe kan a man so a groot zol weg gooi,” said one of the members.

“I am not mad, drunk nor had smoked dagga, it is just that I am new – everything about me is new, God has made me a better person.”

“Ek loop, ek sal nooit weer hier kom,” two of the members left still shaking their heads.

“My Honde, as from tonight you will be called, Brothers from Christ.”

There was disbelief on the faces of the gang members. Some were shaking their heads in dismay.

“Nee, pa dit werk nie so nie,” one of the gang members said whilst rolling a big dagga zol.

Billie jumped in a bid to save his boss’s face. Jack lifted his hand to stop him from saying anything.

“Wat, werk nie, Pampoen?” Jack said, looking straight into the eyes of the gang member who had spoken. “Jy is a man praat, this time around everyone is free to talk.”

Pampoen, shook his head in confusion, while lighting his zol. In his mind he had a feeling that Jack was making a joke, trying to see who will challenge him. When he lifted his head he could see how dead serious Jack was from the look on his face.

Sweat ran down his cheeks and his eyes were shining. Pampoen thought maybe Jack had taken a puff of some serious zol just before he came to the meeting.

“Die ding is die Boss, jy kom vandag uit and dis nie die eerste keer nie, en nou jy gooi die Man by ons gesig, dis mos klomp kak jy sien,” said one of the members sitting right in the corner with his bandana pulled over his face.

“Ek weet, jy sien...”

“Jy sien niks my broer, net klomp kak, dus wat jy sien.”

“Are you challenging, Papa,” the voice was the old Jack they knew before, and everyone was on their toes, knowing the tone means trouble.

“Niks, so Boss.”

“Dankie,” Jack said.

“When I was inside, one man risked his reputation and name and visited me every day, not a single day did he not come, on the last day when I got the last break of my life he was there begging for me to be realised, and I made a promise whilst inside that if, God could grant me the last opportunity to be free, I will be really free, and I am free of all the bondage of the past and I am asking you to come with me to enjoy this moment of freedom,” Jack said, sweat running, his arms spread like Jesus on the cross.

“Nee, wat! Gaan kak, jy...jy is nou Seun van Die Groot Man, gaan kak,” said Pampoen passing the zol to one of the members. The gang was beginning to warm up now seeing that Jack was not retaliating from what the other guy’s commented.

“Nou moet ons nou volg soos dom donkies, fuck you Jack, fuck you for wasting our time, gee hier my wyn jou dom gat,” said Fats grabbing his bottle from one of the guys. He also grabbed his zol, took two puffs and threw the zol in Jack’s face.

“Fuck you, rook jy is net getwaak and dors jy gaan terug kom, fucken hond,” he said and moved towards the door and out. The others sat still dumbfounded by Fat’s outburst. Two more members looked at each other and without saying a word they left the room following Fats.

“Die tronk het jou mal gemaak Jack, vat jou Groot Man, ons weet jy sal terug kom, fuck dik gat,” said the member who was sitting in the corner with bandana pulled to

his face. He lifted the bandana and went to the door. An exodus followed as six men left, laughing and shaking their heads.

“Seun Van Jeus, my hol...” one said whilst leaving the door ajar.

There was a rupture of laughter from the guys outside.

“Klomp kak...”

That brought a frenzy of laughter from those outside.

Only three were left including Billie. Jack was still rooted in the same place. Not showing any signs of anger.

“Julle kan gaan ...” Jack did not finish what he was saying. The final two jumped as if electrocuted, heading toward the door and joining the other gang members who were moving toward a nearby tavern.

Only Billie was left behind and he was looking between his legs as if there was a part missing. He was still debating whether to follow the gang members or stay with Jack. He thought of Jack’s loyalty to him when they were still at school. How Jack had stood for him when the other boys were bullying him. How Jack had carried the rap when he nearly landed in jail. How he always covered for him.

He remembered the day when he and Jack raped Blade’s sister. It was Saturday afternoon and the two friends were sitting and smoking in Jack’s room. It was a warm afternoon. The pair had made a big catch the night before when a deal for the stolen car went smooth. As always, the money was divided equally amongst the gang members. On this day the guys were eating the spoils of the night before. Jack was lying on the bed in only his shorts and smoking a big zol of tik. Billie was laughing at a fly that kept bumping against the closed window.

“Wat, is jy fucken mal?”

“Nee, kyk net Boss,” he said pointing to the window. Jack saw the fly and burst out laughing too. All this was very funny to them. A fly that could not get out of the window, a fly that kept bumping and bumping.

“Fok dit. Kom, laat ons gaan,” said Jack. Billie followed like a puppy. They moved to the Tap Tap Tavern. Outside the tavern, three girls were sitting taking. Jack saw Blade’s sister and smiled. He followed Billie inside, bought two bottles of wine and

sat with his gang members. For a long time, Jack did not say a word. He kept drinking glass after glass. An hour later he indicated that they should go. Instead of going home they headed towards an old stationary car, which was a clear view of the Tavern.

“Jy weet wat ek soek, vandag as die dag.”

“Wat jy se Boss is reg in my ore.”

The two thugs waited with the patience of vultures, smoking and laughing. It was around seven o'clock when they saw the three girls leaving the Tap, Tap Tavern. Jack immediately stood and started to follow. He picked up his pace. “Julle, dames,” he said.

The girls knew that voice. They looked at each, trying to decide whether to run but they were too drunk and it was too late.

Jack and Billie approached them. “Julle twee kan gaan, ek soek net my bokkie.”

“Wie is jou bokkie? Jack moet nie kom lieg...” the girl did not finish what she was saying. A right punch knocked her down. Her nose exploded into blood.

“Ek het gese julle twee moet gaan, ek will saam met my bokkie praat,” Jack said.

Billie was standing next to him grinning from ear to ear.

The fallen girl stood slowly, holding her nose in one hand. She glanced once quickly at Blade's sister, then, without saying a word, she staggered into the night with the other girl. The sister was left standing, mouth open, tears running down her face.

Finally overcome by fright, she fell on her knees crying.

“Asseblief, Jack tog, ek wil huise toe gaan, asseblief...”

A strong klap shut her mouth and a kick in the ribs sent her sprawling. Fury was blurring Jack's thinking. He followed with another kick in the face. Finally, punch after punch rained into the girl's body. Jack was blind to the blood, deaf to her cries. All he kept seeing was Blade's face.

“No, no Boss, dus genoeg,” Billie pushed Jack away from the girl. Jack was sweating and breathing heavily. They pulled the unconscious girl like a sack towards the old car.

Jack then delivered a last blow to the girl’s face that knocked her unconscious.

“Dit sal jou leer om by een kant drink.”

The police must have found the body in the morning because by that afternoon they had brought Jack in for questioning. He denied everything and the two girls were too scared to say anything so he was finally released because of lack of evidence.

Billie had pushed the night out of his mind. Now it came flooding back and suddenly he felt deep pain and regret. He thought about Jack’s sudden transformation. He looked at his friend and suddenly envied him. He wondered, is it really that easy?

“Jack is jy seker?” he asked.

“Thomas, Thomas my brother wanted to feel the wounds of Jesus, yes I am sure and after this there will be no pain, sorrow and hunger.”

“Dus wat ek wou weet, wie gaan ons kos gee en geld?” he asked looking straight into Jack’s eyes.

“God. He is the provider.”

Billie stared at Jack, still unconvinced but what choice did he have. Jack was Boss. He bowed his head and stared at his shoes while Jack prayed.

Rick Blade was sitting in one of the taverns in his territory with his men. He was nursing a terrible headache. Last night they had partied till the sun rose. No one in his group had slept. Some of the men yawned. Exhaustion had set in and they wanted to sleep but knew if they stood to leave the boss would regard them as weak. Blade was famous for his temper. They did not call him “Blade” for nothing.

Blade carried his blades everywhere. A pair of sharp knives that he wore at his side. He was prepared to use them at the blink of an eye, even on his own men.

No one even looked up when Rubbernose entered. He was a member of the Blades gang but right now he looked like he had seen a ghost.

“Boss, boss...”

“Wat, jou dom gat?” said Blade in his nasty voice

“Hy is hier, hy is binnekant.”

“As jy nie praat nie gee ek jou a warm klap hoor jy, fucken gat.”

“Ja boss.” Rubbernose said, eyes blinking like a doll. “Jack, boss is hier.”

“Wat!” Blade brawled like a lion. He threw his bottle against the wall. Glass splintered and all the members were on their feet.

“Ma se gat, waar? Die bloed moet gaan, my ma hoor my.”

With one voice all the members were dancing to the same tune.

“Bloed, ons soek bloed...” they chanted, as hungry for revenge as their Boss.

“Waar! Is die hond?”

“By die kerk, boss.”

Blade needed no further encouragement. Today was the day he had been waiting for, his enemy had come right into his hands. God had delivered Jack to him. The gang exited the tavern and headed into the streets, moving as group, with Blade at the centre. The two blades in Rick’s hands shone in the soft morning sun. The church was about a street away from where they were drinking and they covered that in no time.

News spread quickly through the streets. People stood outside their houses and watched the gang pass. No one dared to intervene. No one called the police.

Jack and Billie were talking to Pastor Lings in front of the church. Jack had just introduced Billie to Lings and Lings clasped his hand to welcome him. Suddenly the men froze. They heard the commotion. They heard Blade’s voice echo from across the street, calling Jack’s name and braying for his blood.

“Jack you better go inside,” said Pastor Lings with his cool voice.

“No, Pastor, if I do, they will break the church and I will never have peace,” said Jack showing no fear. Billie looked from Jack to the pastor. He wanted to run but forced his feet to stay still.

“Nou gaan jy sien hoe werk God,” said Jack.

Blade was standing in the middle of the street, his hang members right behind him. He took off his dirty T-shirt and threw it to one of them. His body was covered with tattoos.

“Blade, blood, Blade, blood...” chanted the Blade’s men.

Jack moved forward towards Blade. “Jy, jy gaan my niks maak my ma se kind,” he said loudly for all the people to hear.

“Niks om te praat, hond,” Blade said. Moving with the speed of an animal he grabbed the handle of one of his blades and flicked it in Jack’s direction. Without even a pause he followed with the other, stabbing and missing Jack’s neck by a fraction. Jack sidestepped, lost footing and fell on his back. Blade smiled showing dirty broken teeth. Jack started to pull himself off the ground. This was the opening Blade was looking for. He dived with all his might on Jack. Jack saw him coming. He lifted his right foot and it caught Blade right in the face. People could hear the crack of his nose. The scream that left Blade’s mouth was that of a pig. Blood was pouring from his face. Jack was back on his feet. He was bobbing and weaving like a boxer in the ring. They circled each other. Blade was taking no chances. He moved quickly, kicking the blade lying in the dirt away from Jack, while slicing the air with the other. His first two thrusts missed Jack. The third time he missed, Jack saw the opening. Left, right, left. All three punches landed with quick succession in Blade’s already bleeding face. The fourth punch took his breath away and he fell like a wounded animal, knife in hand. People were clapping and cheering.

“I told you, God will defeat this man,” shouted Jack.

“God is Great, God is Great,” brother Billie was chanting and all the people were following with the same voice. Jack stood breathing. He listened to the people’s voice rising up to heaven. He was filled with God and suddenly turned to Blade and extended his hand. Blade saw the opening. He lifted his knife. A sudden silence descended. One, two, three. All three slices hit Jack. One cut in the thigh, one in the ribs and the last cut his cheek. In no time his white suit was turning red. Jack

managed not to fall. He knew if he fell it was all over, Blade meant to kill him. Blade was like a bull charging. He was cutting and slicing as if possessed. Most of his thrusts missed Jack.

“Vat my ma se kind,” Billie suddenly shouted. He had retrieved the second knife from the dirt and threw it towards Jack. Jack took his eyes off Blade. Blade saw another opening. He lunged toward Jack with the blade shining from the sky. Jack knew it was now or never. He moved a little bit sideways towards Blade’s left, suddenly losing his footing on a stone blocking his path. In a flash Blade was on top of him. The blade in Blade’s hand was going up and down as if digging. Blood spurted from Jack’s wounds like water from a tap.

The congregation stood staring in horror. The venom of the knife as it moved up and down paralysed them.

Blade sliced Jack’s body with such force that no one dared to stop him. Jack stopped resisting as he lost more and more blood. Jack’s body became limp as the blood poured. Blade did not stop stabbing until Jack’s body stopped moving. At last he backed away from the dead body, eyes red with anger and his hands running with blood. He looked around challenging those who felt sorry for Jack. His hands spread like an eagle’s wings, knife dripping blood, sweat glistening.

Back to Nowhere

I took a sip and spat. The beer was rotten, as bitter as aloe. That was the story of my life. Everything turned from sweet to bitter. My first bitter taste was in the school's toilet. I smelled smoke. I was given and I took. The tobacco was sweet, sweeter than honey. The smell became my daily bread. During the short break, during the long break and after school, I breathed its smoke. I loved the taste.

One day the boys were rolling something green mixed with the tobacco. I wanted to know. The reply was brief and to the point, no questions and no answers but let us ride. Oh! I rode. I rode till my eyes were red. I felt the dizziness. My mouth was full of saliva and I spat thick black wad right on top of my black shiny shoes. I laughed. Those around me laughed as well. We all looked down at the saliva on my shoe and laughed till tears rolled down our cheeks. I looked into my friend's face and I loved what I saw. All their faces had transformed into something wonderful, something out of this world. Something hard to describe...a pig! A laughing pig, God this grass is great. I laughed louder than before. My friends did the same. We laughed and laughed.

"Danny, why?" my mother's voice.

"He'll be ok, you shouldn't worry" another voice harder than my mother's.

I tried to open my eyes but my head was heavy, my mouth dry.

"Danny are alright my child?"

I opened my eyes very slowly. I saw the room, my room. My mother was sitting next to my bed. A lady I didn't know stood behind her. I blinked. I had a memory of...yes, laughing in the boy's toilet. I remembered that we had laughed until tears rolled down our faces. I remembered the spit and the pig. I touched my face.

"Mama is there something wrong?" I asked.

"Yes, Danny your principal called and you were all sent home because you smoked, why, Danny why?" The pain was written in her voice.

"I am sorry mama, it won't happen again." I couldn't think of anything else to say.

"This is my friend she helped me bring you home."

The friend had a sour look that said, "You're hooked and you'll bring nothing but bitterness to your family."

I looked away. I didn't want to know. I had tasted the bitter end of the aloe and I was determined to drink more. My mother patted my hand. She told me to get some rest, nodded to her friend and they left the room. I waited till they were gone then stood. I grabbed some clothes, opened the window and left. I wanted to see my friends. I wanted to get some kick to stop the pain in my head. I walked quickly, passed two street until I reached the spot, right next to the corner shop, an open stretch of dirt and dust. My friends were sitting together. They sat the in the exact same way, hands on their knees, leaning back against the wall. One of them was smoking a cigarette. No one was laughing. There was nothing to laugh about. They were all dry as bones. We sat in silence. The wind and dust were making me cough. I had to do something. I stood, fighting the pain in my head.

"Give me, five minutes."

I ran back the way I came. I passed two streets. The window was still open, waiting for me. I got inside and looked around. I saw my Grasshoppers bought two days ago, bought by my mother from her nursing money, the same money that paid for our house, the money that sent me to the best schools. I saw my Levi's. I grabbed the pants and the shoes and went back the way I had come. I walked with my head down, passed two streets. The corner shop. My friends were still sitting. They saw the bag and broke into a smiles. They started to laugh. I saw their face change and I laughed too. I tossed the bag to one of the pigs.

"Make a plan."

No encouragement was need. The pig went inside the store and five minutes later he was back. He had R80 with him. The money meant happiness beyond this world. We went to a back yard room. Oh! This time there was more. Two bottles of Ship Sherry, green grass from heaven and white powder. I didn't ask what the white powder was. I live by the rules, no answers and no questions. Let us ride. Oh! I rode, I rode till my eyes were red. Magic took place within two to three puffs, we were laughing and joking. The saliva kept dripping by my mouth yet I was laughing and joking.

I slept like a king that night. No blankets, no food and no lights. The next day we were all sick. Sick like pigs. I knew if I didn't make a plan we will die in that room. We were shaking. My head felt split in half. I stood slowly, dragged myself out of that room. I went back the same way. I passed the shop. I passed two streets. I moved like a dead man toward my open window. I reached the house but the window was closed. I pressed myself against the glass. I thought when one window closes another one opens. I moved to the front door. I didn't knock. I dragged my body inside and pushed past my mother.

"I am tired, please don't say a word." It was the first time I spoke to my mama like that. Mama did not say a word her eyes followed me to my room. She stood watching me pack. "The school..."

"I quit, you can take my place if you like." I banged the door. Like a thief I grabbed my clothes new and old put them in a plastic bag. I opened the window and I threw them out.

I knew the route by heart, same road, same corner shop. I walked fast. My friends were waiting.

This became my routine for the next two years. Saliva filled my mouth. I drooled like a pig. I did not realise that I had not washed for days until a young boy laughed at me. He was walking with his mother to school.

"Mama, look at that pig in the rubbish bin."

"Don't look at him son, do as your teacher says, and think about school"

"Yes, mama, but shame..."

Shame on me. I looked at my hands and saw rags. They were thin and dirty. My pants hung off me. My shoes were old. All I had were these dirty old clothes. It was the open window had swallowed me. Saliva ran down the glass like rain. I was drowning in spit. I cried but who cared about a crying homeless man. People passed without taking notice. Some spat at me. An old lady took pity on me and she tossed R5 from her car window. My stomach was yelling for a piece of bread but my mind was telling was showing me an African beer.

I did not want to disappoint my mind. I ran to a house I knew and there were my friends, all dirty and old. I bought my beer and sat next to them. After some two sips, I was a man again.

“Danny boy, old tricks don’t die easy... where did you steal that money?”

“Old mama.”

“You lie. Your mama died two years ago”

“I mean old mama.”

“Whatever.”

The mentioning of my mama’s death cut me in half. On her death bed she saw her son selling the last item in the house, her T.V. She knew then that she wouldn’t see me again. After the funeral I sold the house built by her sweat. I sold the house with its doors and windows. I lived on the streets.

I sipped and I cried.

“Why do you cry when you are drunk?”

“The window is still open.”

“What window? We are outside man, you are mad!” He laughed and laughed.

I laughed, we laughed as I moved like a tortoise through the open window.

Follow the Blind

Captain Ngwema sits behind the counter at KwaZakhele Police Station in Port Elizabeth. The station has recently been renovated, new offices have been added and the cells housing prisoners have been expanded. Captain Ngwema is not one of those lucky enough to get a promotion, or the new office that comes with it. He is stuck at the counter. He sighs. The party last night went on until late and he has not had much sleep. He's relieved today is quiet. Usually on Monday mornings the police station is abuzz with people coming to file reports. His headache is killing him and he rubs his temples. The two constables on duty with him know to keep their distance when Ngwema is hangover - one is busy writing something and the other is playing with her phone.

Ngwema sits in silence and listens to his headache. It's a dull low ache that echoes through his brain. He squeezes his eyes closed then opens them and glances at his watch. It's like time has stopped. He is anxious to get home. He knows there is something left in the fridge. One glass will make him a man again. He glances up briefly when he hears the station door. An old lady enters. Ngwema shakes his head. She's wearing a dress two sizes too big for her tiny frame. What's worse, she's dragging cardboards behind her. He knows her kind. She's probably coming with old papers and tins that she wants to sell.

"Makhulu, zishiye phandle tu," says Constable Nosipho Nko from the corner.

The old lady does not even look at the young constable. She heads straight to Captain Ngwema's desk, the cardboards following.

"Molo, my child," sighs Captain Ngwema.

"Ja, mzukulwana wam ulahlekile."

"Oh, when was that?"

"Almost two days, and she had never left before."

"Don't worry she will be back, you know young girls these days..." Ngwema gives her a quick smile then busies himself with a stack of papers on his desk.

"Ten, you don't understand she has never left without me, me and her are like umntya nethunga."

"I see," the Captain puts down his reading and stares at the old lady. It will probably be easiest to pretend to hear her out then get rid of her. He grabs a form from the folder on the desk. "Name and address, and what the child was wearing." He fires off the questions like commands.

"No address but we sleep behind the train station in Govan Mbeki Avenue."

"Oh."

"Igama nguLuvo benxibe ibhulukhwe nebhatyi emnyama ngebala."

"I see. Okay, we will investigate and be in touch, makhulu." God the headache is killing him.

"Please find her mnta'am she is the only relative I have, her mother left with a fisherman from Katanga and..."

"Yes, mama, don't worry, bye now."

The old lady looks hard at the Captain then drops her eyes. She leaves without saying a word, slowly collects up her cardboards and walks out of the door dragging them behind her.

Ngwema returns to the papers on his desk. "Jesus, imagine me going out looking for a lost child in this hot day?" He says to no one in particular. "The child will come back. They always do."

"What was that all about?"

The voice of his new commanding officer takes Ngwema by surprise. "Nee, old gogo lost her grandchild," he says quickly.

"And?" The Superintendent is standing right in front of Ngwema's desk, looking down at him.

"I've taken a statement," says Ngwema, holding up the paper he has scribbled on as proof. "But Superintendent you must understand, we get these complaints all the time. The Gogo lives in the KwaMahlahla area. People there are always going missing. This month alone we've had at least five Missing Person Reports from that area alone."

"Five reports! Isn't that something you should be investigating?"

Ngwema sighs. The Superintendent is new to the station. Give him a few months and he'll stop wanting to play cops and robbers. "Sir, it is like this. KwaMahlahla is downtown near the taxi rank. Most of the people staying there are squatters – migrants from the rural area who have moved into the empty buildings. The place is full of tsotsis. The young girls... well you know how it is today, they all end up getting into prostitution or drugs. The boys become tsotsis in the gangs. The families think they are missing but really they just don't want to be found..."

"Drugs and prostitution? Aren't these matters for the police?"

"Yes, Sir," says Ngwema, hanging his head.

"Good, now get up from your desk and start doing police work. I want a full report on the missing girl on my desk by Friday."

"Yes sir." Ngwema stands slowly and watches the Superintendent return to his office. With a deep sigh he puts on his jacket and collects his car keys from the drawer. He glances back once then walks out of the warmth of the police station into the cold.

Every day the old blind man sits in the same spot on the main road in the city. He wakes up early from his sleeping place under the bridge, folds his only possession, a dirty grey blanket, and hides it in the bushes. He follows the road that leads to the city, crossing the bridge then turning right. Despite his disability, he walks quickly, never bumping into objects or the people around. It is only his white cane and his open eyes, staring ahead, that give him away.

Even on this very cold day, he walks through the dirty streets to the same place, the only bench that stands facing the shops on the main road. He sits in his usual spot, puts his tin neatly in front of him and looks ahead. It's still early but already the street is full. Around him everyone seems in a great hurry. They rush by, as if caught by the noise of the city, the cars and hooters, the shouts of the street vendors and the rattle of their trolleys, people speaking to each other or greeting friends. He

watches them pass him by without even a nod. Sometimes he thinks they are all blind. He smiles and shakes his head thinking about the heavy load they seem to carry. He sees a man wearing a suit that fits poorly. He walks with his cellphone to his ear, shouts something then snaps the cover shut. Almost immediately he opens it again and begins to dial. He shuts it for a second time. He frowns, then raised his hand for a taxi and disappears inside. A few seconds later, the man climbs out again, slamming the door behind him. The taxi driver hits the hooter hard and then speeds away, weaving through the traffic until he is out of sight.

The old blind man turns his attention back to the corner where a young girl wearing tight jeans is pacing slowly to and fro. He watches her approach a man and start to talk quickly. They are too far away for the old blind man to hear what they are saying but he doesn't need to. He knows the girl is negotiating a price. He knows that once they have agreed she will lead him to a room in the rundown building across the street. The old man also knows what will happen next but he does not dwell on it. Next, a young man with his hat pulled low. He is selling watches out from under his jacket. He walks with his eyes down and approaches his customers like a beggar. He moves slowly to his next customer and opens his jacket to show his goods. He walks away with his eyes moving left and right. The old blind man knows his story without being told, the watches are stolen and he is afraid the police will catch him. He see the young man approach a lady selling vegetables and repeat the action, opening his jacket, his eyes flicking left, right, as she chooses the item she wants. Obviously excited by the sale, the young man slips the money in his pants pocket and sets off more confidently, in search of new customers.

The old blind man is surprised to see a police car on the streets – the police have long given up on the area, handing it over to the tsotsi's that rule KwaMahlaha. He watches the police car drive slowly by then stop suddenly. He sees the officer climb out, swearing and sweating in his uniform despite the cold. Obviously hung over or even still drunk, thinks the old blind man, shaking his head. His glassy eyes follow the policeman down the road. He is slightly overweight and wearing a uniform that fits badly. He watches him approach the young man with the stolen watches. He sees

him pull open the young man's jacket and seize the remaining watches and a wad of cash, which he pushes into his own jacket pocket. He sees him grab the young man and pull his face close to his. The boy stammers something and lets out a cry of pain as the officer kicks him in the groin. He doubles over, gasping. The old man watches the police officer shout something and then kick the young man again. Next, instead of arresting the boy, the policeman pulls him to his feet, whispers something in his ear then turns and walks briskly to his car. The old blind man sighs, another corrupt cop. He turns his attention back to the street, to where the crowds are busy with their businesses. Occasionally one of them will drop a coin in the old blind man's tin but most seem unable to see him. He sits staring straight ahead without moving. After three hours and his tin almost half full, the old man slowly rises. He pushes himself off the bench with his hands, and stands then reaches down to pick up his tin. He is feeling hungry. Everyone must eat something, him too, even him. He counts his coins slowly. There is just enough. He crosses the road, walking quickly towards the shop where he will buy his half a loaf of bread and a bottle of coke for the day. Again, he crosses without assistance, pausing at the right time for the cars to pass. Inside the shop he walks straight to the back and opens one of the fridges. The bread is on a shelf against the wall. The man behind the till does not even look at the blind man when he pays. The old man knows why the shopkeeper is distracted. He knows about his secret girlfriend who will soon be his not so secret girlfriend once the baby she is carrying starts to show. He wants to tell the shopkeeper it will be better if he tells his wife now and then makes arrangements to pay for his girlfriend's child, but he does not bother. He knows the man won't listen. No one has any interest in advice from old men any more. He watches the shopkeeper count out his coins then thanks him and leaves.

When the old blind man returns to his bench, the young man with the stolen watches is seated in his spot. "Morning young man," he says as he sits down next to him.

The young man looks up surprised. How did the old blind man see him? He thinks the old blind man is probably umajayvana wasekasi ozigumbela ezakhe. He starts to

laugh and then stops. He looks into the old man's eyes but they are glassy, covered over so he sees only his own reflection staring back at him.

The young man looks away quickly, reaches over and grabs the food the old blind man has just bought. He eats like he hasn't eaten all day, pushing the bread into his mouth, swallows the last of the coke and screws the top back onto the bottle before throwing it into the street where the glass breaks apart.

The old blind man waits until the boy has finished then he says, "Kwenzekani big boy? Zibuye zabheda. Didn't you manage to sell any of your stolen watches today? Or maybe the police man took all your money?"

The young man feels anger rise.

"Ei, wena mdala mind you own business, life is hard, the ups and down are killing me," the young man says. He stares hard at the old blind man. How does this old fuck know he was shaken down by the police?

"You are lucky you weren't arrested."

"Arrested?" The young man laughs. "These days the police are oomajayvana too, old man. The bhoza was interested in was finding some missing young girl – probably his girlfriend."

"And what did you tell him?"

"I told him this girlfriend is a prostitute –nothing he didn't already know." The young man spits. "Sendikhathele vela bobu bubhanxa jy sien"

The old blind man just smiles. "That is the problem, in fact, your problem," he says, "You are wasting your time with trinkets instead of going after real wealth, udle iphepha mfana wam, udle iponto likazambane and live like a king."

The young man laughs, "Ponto, what do you know about ponto, what do you know about izambane wena?"

"A lot my son, more than you know."

"A poor beggar like you, inja enjengawe?"

The blind man smiles again, "Bheka la mfana ubona isilaca kodwa ubutyebi bam buzele."

"Yeah?" grins the boy, "In your dreams you had wealth, ntshele papa phi?"

"Landela uzobona, uzohlanywa indawo yonke ndiyakutshela."

The boy hesitates. The old man is probably crazy. Still, he thinks, if he does have a lot of cash it will be easy to rob him. He watches the old man cross the street. His walk is that of a seeing person, pausing for the cars and so as not to bump into anyone. The young man waits until he is almost across, then sets off after him.

They take the highway that leads out of town. It is late afternoon and the road is nearly empty. The old man leads. He walks with his stick in front of him. He stops to catch his breath and then sets off again, hurrying to catch up. He thinks the blind man is probably leading him to his home. He thinks he must live outside of the city, in one of the small settlements that line the highway. The blind man walks with an easy step and the young man thinks he probably knows the way off by heart having walked it all his life. He follows the blind man blindly. They pass the last Chinese shop, then a number of shacks. Along the way the people greet the old man and he waves his hand. At last they are past the shacks. They are on the empty road now, the way leading out of the city. Ahead the young man can see the wall of the graveyard. They walk a few more steps then the old man turns off the road, heading into the bush. He is moving fast now as if in a hurry and the young man has to run.

When he gets closer he sees that the old man is no longer carrying his stick. He tells himself that it is probably because he knows the way well enough not to need its assistance. They are near the river now and the young man shivers at the cold coming up off the water. He follows the man through the mud on the river's edge but pauses when the old man turns and begins to cross. To his surprise he does it easy, jumping from stone to stone without even wetting his pants ends. The young man stops. He is trying to judge the distance between the rocks. Across the river the old man has already set off again. The young man takes a breath then jumps, misses the rock and hits the water. The cold shoots through him. He tries to kick but the river has him. He swallows water then suddenly feels a hand. The old blind man has him by the arm. He pulls him up and out onto the bank. He lies breathing staring into the glassy eyes of his saviour.

"Let's move."

"I can't," says the young man struggling to catch his breath.

"We're nearly there." The old blind man sets off and the young man has no choice but to stand and follow. It is that or crossing the river again, he thinks.

As they progress the gap between the two men starts to widen. The young man's wet clothes are heavy, they stick against his skin and drag him down. The dark is coming and a wind has arrived. "How much further?" the young man shouts to the man in front of him, but the blind man does not turn. Probably he did not hear, he thinks. He pushes on. It is hard going. The air is cold against his wet body. The wind feels like the cuts from a knife. The young man's hands are blue with cold and he can no longer feel his feet. He wanders where the old man is taking him. He thinks maybe the old man has buried his wealth somewhere in the hills outside the city. To keep himself going, he tries to imagine of all the things he will do once he has stolen the old man's money. He thinks of the new shoes he will buy, he sees himself driving a new car, all the clothes he needs, ah the girls will fall for him with all the wealth he will receive from this madala. He sees the sun going down behind the mountain but his mind is made up and there is no turning back now.

He looks ahead of himself into the dark. Suddenly he can't hear the footsteps of the blind man ahead of him. He thinks he has lost him and his heart speeds up. Then he sees a dark shape in front of him. The blind man has stopped and is waiting just ahead. For a while they stand next to each other just breathing.

"Kuyiphi le nyhukru baba?" asks the young man.

"Soza kuyithola mfana wam" the blind man says. "Sesigalelekile zinja zam, nina balele behleli nasi isipho"

"What?" asked the young man still in shock? "What did you say?"

"Nothing, let's go."

The young man sighs, but he follows when the old man starts to walk again. He walks feeling a cold stare right around him. It is as if there are eyes watching his every move. A shiver runs down his spine. He wants to keep up with the old blind man but in the darkness he cannot. The pair walked slowly up into the mountains. At some point the young man realises he has lost the old blind man. He tries to shout but his

voice goes into the wind. He moves forward blindly, putting one foot in front of the other, not stopping. He keeps on going, not aware of anything around him, of how many hours he has travelled, how many steps he has taken until finally he can't any more. He falls down on the ground and closes his eyes. He wakes with a heavy headache. He looks around but all he can see is darkness and cold. He tries to stand but his legs are too weak. He crawls forward on his hands and knees. Suddenly sees something in front of him. By the shape he thinks maybe the carcass of a dead animal... no it's the body of a human being. At first he thinks it is the old man who has fallen from the cold. He crawls faster. Then she smells it. It is a smell he knows, the smell outside the butchery when the delivery trucks arrive. He swallows the vomit that rises in his throat. He spits then crawls forward. He bumps on something and it seems to come loose. At first he thinks it is the old man's stick. He reaches out to grab it then drops it. "No, no, please God, oh Bawo." A human leg... no, only the bones, the flesh is mostly gone. He crawls backwards and hits against something. A man's body. He can see the man's face half rotted away, the cheeks sunken in and eyes eaten. He breathes, sweat cold on his skin. He tries to stand, falls. At last he pushes himself to his feet. The sun is starting to rise, throwing its light on everything.

The young man blinks against the view that hits his eyes. All around him are bodies. They cover the ground. Some are skeletons, other have just started to rot. He thinks he recognises the faces. Oh god, the face of drug dealer use who sold him dagga, flies half covering it. A prostitute he slept with a few times – her skeleton face seems to be smiling. Kwanyeka Nanku – the young girl the police man was looking for earlier. The young man cries out, pulls himself up, and starts to run, tripping over the bones on the ground. He falls. He feels something hot and sticky run down his face. He touches his head and looks at his hand. He is bleeding. He tries to stand but falls again. The ground is cold and hard. He closes his eyes.

Captain Ngwema drives slowly down the main road. He keeps his eyes on the pavement. He is looking for the young thief he spoke to a few days earlier. Le nja is supposed to get back to him with information but now he is nowhere to be seen. Probably iqhunye imanzi somewhere, thinks Ngwema. He sighs and rolls down his window despite the cold. The Superintendent is going to blow his top, abe unyela etotini for this. His report on the missing girl was due two days ago and still he has nothing.

He pulls the car over next to an abandoned VW that pushes against the pavement. He climbs out and breathes the smells of the cooking food, the stink of piss and rubbish. He walks down the block then doubles back, his eyes staring into the dark doorways of buildings. Some girls on the side of the road laugh and whistle as he passes. They are around twenty years old, wearing short skirts and no panties, high heels in rainbow colours. One lifts her skirt and shouts. He is tempted but he has no time for whores today. He pauses briefly to ask them about the young man. When both girls shake their heads he reads them the description of the missing girl. Again the girls say that they know nothing.

“Zama ucinga” says Ngwema. The girls shake their heads again and Ngwema thinks, fuck it, not worth the effort. He starts to head back to the car, but a voice stops him.

“Something for an old blind man.” An old beggar shakes his tin at him.

“Just be thankful I’m not arresting you for begging in public tata,” says Ngwema.

“What brings a policeman to our streets?”

“None of your business old man.”

“Maybe I can help.”

Ngwema laughs, “How can a blind man help me?”

“I might be blind but I can still see.”

True, thinks Ngwema. The man is probably on the corner every day. Maybe he has heard something. He tells the old man he is looking for a young man who sells watches who he hopes will help him find the missing girl.

“They are both together,” says the blind man.

“What?” says Ngwema? What does this old man know? Maybe he buys konondindwa bedolophu soze wazi. Kungenzeka baqhunywe bamanzi mna ndilibele sesi siduphunga sexhego.

“Come, I will take you to them,” the old man starts to stand.

“I don’t have time for this. Just tell me where they are and I will go myself.”

The old man smiles. “Trust me you will never find it alone.” He starts to walk.

“Bawo andidlali mna umthetho ufuna that I must work.”

“Relax my child, I know people don’t trust blind old people, but mna, I am more than gold.”

“Lonto you could walk, yaba, you walk faster than me.”

“Oh! It is because I have been around for a long time, my child.”

Captain Ngwema says nothing but his mind is telling him something is not right. He just cannot place what it is. Ngwema hesitates then thinks, what the fuck, he has nothing to lose. This is the only lead he has and the Captain is expecting his report tomorrow. He sighs and starts to follow the old man. The walk, yes the walk, that was what he picks up on. Maybe it’s my mind playing tricks again, he brushes the thinking aside and follows the old man. “Why am I suspicious of this old man?” he questions himself. “God forgive me for the old man wants to help and the Devil plays on my mind.”

The old blind man never looks back but keeps moving. The Captain tries his best to keep pace with the old blind man, but that is in vain, the old man is fit and strong. The old blind man takes the same route. They travel till nightfall. Captain Ngwema is breathing heavily. “How much longer?”

“We are almost there my child on the other side of this hill.”

Ntakana Ntyilo-ntyilo

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Le ngqokelela yamabali iqulathe amabali angobomi babantu abasezilokishini nabo bahlala ezilalini. Nangona umfundi angahle awafumanisa ehlekisa amanye elusizi, injongo yombhali asikukuhlekisa nakunyanzelisa imfundiso koko ikuzoba ubomi bababantu, bephila kwezi ndawo neengxaki abajongene nazo. Imeko yaba bantu kumakhaya ngamakhaya yiyo ebangele ukuba umbhali abelane nomfundi ngokuqhubekayo ebomini.

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EMatipeni KuQoboqobo

Umzi waseMatipeni kuQoboqobo yayingumzi ofumileyo kwilali yaseGxulu.

Umnikazi mzi uSandile wayeneenkomo, iigusha, iibhokwe, amahashe kwakunye nenqwaba yeenkuku.

Amasimi alo mfo ayechume ngeyona ndlela, kuba umfo wayeyithanda into yokulima, ephila ngayo.

USandile wayesaziwa ngelokuba nguTipa kulo lonke elo lakuQoboqobo, kulandelwa isiduko sakhe.

Nakubeni wayenobo butyebi bungako uTipa, wayefikeleleka, uluntu lumthanda kakhulu.

Akukho nasuku awaye afike ngalo umntu kulo mzi aphume esithi akahoywanga, okanye ufike uTipa etshintshile, kungenjalo ephelwe bububele.

Linye ilizwi elaliphuma nabantu kulomzi kukwamkeleka, uncumo alufumene kuTipa, ukukhululeka kotata wekhaya, kwanobubele athe wabufumana. Ubungasokuze ungayifumani into oyifunayo kwaTipa, ukuba kunzima uTipa ebesenza amatiletile okuba, uthi uphuma ube uyifumene, nokuba incikane kanjani into oyifunayo.

Ukanti nenkosikazi yalo mfo, uNosamana, wayekwa yindlezana ngobubele.

Kubantu abaninzi yayiba ngumangaliso lo, kuba abantu ababini emtshatweni abazange bafana, kuloko babesithi elo khaya lisikelelekile.

Ngalo lonke ixesha usiya kulo mzi ubungafika kugcwele abantu kwakunye nabantwana de uzibuze ukuba ingaba, ngaba lapho bonke nha, hayi akunjalo, ntonje uninzi lwabo lufuna uncedo kambe abanye bafuna ukufundiselwa abantwana.

Kambe uninzi lwabantu lwade lwashiya amakhaya, lwaza kuhlala apho kwaTipa.

Yonke lento yayingaluhluphi olu sapho koko lwalusuka luyithathe njengendlela uThixo afuna lusebenze ngayo ebomini.

Esi sibini salizwa ngabantwana ababini kuphela amantombazana, uLiziwe kwakunye noNondyebo.

Bobabini abantwana babefunde bayityekeza imfundo benezidanga ngazibini umntu.

Bobabini aba bantwana, babe nethamsanqa lokuba bafumane umsebenzi kwisikolo esinye eBhayi. Into yokufika kwikhaya labo kugcwele abantu yayingabahlubi aba babini, kuba

bakhule kunjalo kowabo, kwaye ibisivuyisa lento esi sibini, kuba kaloku, ibithetha ukuba abazali babo ababodwanga njengokuba bekude.

Ihambile iminyaka, abancinci bakhula, abakhulu boluphala baze abolupheleyo bayokwambatha ingubo kaqaqa.

Ath'umntu yonke loo nto kukuhonjiswa kobomi.

Ngelixesha uTipa wayesele efinca iminyaka engamashumi asixhenxe esitya amazimba, ukanti inkosikazi yakhe uNosamana wayesele eqabele kumashumi amathandathu walibonayo ilanga.

Nakubeni uTipa wayeyindoda efumileyo wawungasokuze umbone ehleli, ebeyindoda ekhuthelayo obungayibona iqukeza apho kwikhaya layo. Kuyo yonke lonto nasemisebenzi yabantu ebebonakala.

Lo nto yamenza wahlonitshwa kakhulu luluntu kusithiwa ungumzekelo wendoda eyinkokheli.

Kuthe ekuhambeni kwethuba kwabhaqeka ukuba uTipa akasabonakali kakhulu phakathi kwabantu ukanti nasemzini wakhe bebonakala ngamaxesha athile. Bekusithi ngosuku oluthile, athabathe isitulo sakhe ahlale phantsi komthi, athi akugqiba abuye angene emzini wakhe angabuye abonakale.

Uluntu lwayibona le meko lwazibuza luziphendula ukuba ingaba konakele phina sele kunje. Zivakele iindaba zona zingaliyo zokuba uTipa akaphilanga kwaye ukufa kuyamdlikidla ngamandla.

Baqala abahlobo benene babonakala ingulowo wanikezela ngerati yakhe esithi iyanceda.

Kambe abaninzi babebonakalisa umbulelo malunga noko bakwenzelwayo nguTipa.

Abanye babede babethe kubo epokothweni ukuze uTipa abe nokusiwa koogqirha ukuze impilo yakhe ibe nokuncomeka.

Okukhona esisiwa koogqirha uTipa kwakukhona ukufa kuthatha unyawo.

Bazenzile abantu iinzame zokuba uTipa apha ukuze ukufa kungathabathi nyawo, ubani, ukufa kwakukhona kusithi ndilapha, kwaye andisuki lo ngowam, ndincamathele nje ndincamathele.

UNosamana, ngalo lonke elo xesha uTipa elele ngandletyananye, umile emthandazweni wokuba "UTHixo akanakusiyekela."

Baqala baxhala abantu bakuva ukuba incwina eyenziwa ngumguli ayilalisi kwaye yebuhlungu.

Imithandazo yoomama yaqokela ukungena isithi, “Bawo sindisa umkhonzi wakho ekufeni.” Wabe yena ukufa kwelinye icala esithi, “Ndiza kufika nokuba kuxesha liphina, ndilindeleni.” Enye yentwazana zikaTipa iye yaqonda ukuba mayikhe ithabathe ikhefu, ibe sekhaya, ukuze nayo iqwalasele lengulo katata wayo.

Kwalile ngobunye ubusuku abantu kwilali yaseGxulu bothuswa kukuva isikhalo esikrakra esiphuma emzini kaTipa.

Yeka ke abantu ukubaleka besiya khona beyokuqonda ukuba ingaba kwenzeke ntonina. Ekufikeni kwabo bafike intombi kaTipa izibhuqa phantsi, ingavumi kuthuthuzeleka. Babuzile ukuba ingaba konakele phina, kambe abanye babesele bezicingela ukuba uTipa ulishiyile eligada.

Bothuka babanda bakuva ukuba asingoTipa olishiyileyo eligada koko yinkosikazi yakhe uNosamana.

“Awu, injani na le nto ikukufa?” Wakhala umntu ezibuza engaphendulwa mntu.

Ngenene ebemele ukuzibuza umntu ukuba ingaba kuthenina kusweleka uNosamana kuba ebekhangeleka omelele ngalo lonke elixesha umnyeni wakhe egula, kwaze kwathi ukufa ndiza kuthatha wena kanye.

Hayi ke bethu, abantu bathuthuzela yade yathula intombi ineso singqala.

Abanye abantu abayenzanga nde into, basale befaka umthandazo ngoko nangoko bebopha olusapho, abanye basele belalisa apho.

Ngosuku olulandelayo zanwenwa iindaba okomlilo wedobo zazityhutyha iilali zakuQoboqoba kusaziswa ngokufa kwale nkosikazi yaseMatipeni.

Kambe uninzi lwabantu lwayamkela into yokusweleka kukaNosamana lusithi beluyilindele into enjalo, kuba ebexhelekile ngaphakathi engazibonakalisi, kodwa yona imeko yomyeni wakhe ibimbulala tu, kuba esi sibini sasithandana ngokwenene.

Kwilali ezilapho ooTshoxa, Gwiligwili, noCata ayikho enye into eyayincokolwa ngaphandle kwelishwa eliwele umzi waseMatipeni eGxulu.

Umzimba uthathiwe waya kulaliswa kumzi wabangcwabi yaze yaqala imithandazo kwaye, abantu befika ngokufika. Mihla le kwakuba ngumntu nje kwelikhaya kubotshwa ibhanti olu sapho, ingakumbi uTipa owayesele ephelelwa ngamandla ngakumbi. Iqhutyiwe inkonzo

mihla le, kweli khaya, kulungiselelwa ukuba yonke into ihambe ngendlela, kwaye nentombi eseBhayi ngoku yayisele ibuyele ekhaya.

Kwalile ngolwesihlanu weveki eyandulela ukuya kubekwa kuka Nosamana, uTipa wabiza abantwana bakhe, waze wacela abantu ababe kwigumbi akulo ukuba baphume, ukuze akhe asale neentombi ezo.

“Liziwe nawe noNdyebo, ndinesicelo kuni bantwana bam”, utshilo uTipa enesingqala ezibambe ngenkophe iinyembezi ejonge phezulu.

“Ewe, tata”, zatshe kunye ezi ntombi, nazo kuqondakala ukuba nangaliphina ixesha zingacuntsula.

“Nindibona nje, ndixhelekile emphefumleni, niyazi indlela ebendimthanda ngayo unyoko.”

“Siyazi tata, ungahlupheki sikunye nawe.” Waphendula uLiziwe.

“Yabona ke bantwana bam, uThixo unesizathu kwinto nganye ayenzayo, kumelezekile ke, siyamkele.”

“Kunjalo, tata.”

“Ngomso siyakubeka unyoko kwikhaya lakhe lokugqibela.”

“Kunjalo tata.”

“Zenindenzele lento ke bantwana bam, nomelele ningakhali, niqine ningalili kuba unyoko akafanga koko ulele, ulinde thina, sithi abazakuya kuye.”

“Ewe, tata, sivile sakwenza njalo.” Baphefumla ngaxeshanye abantwana.

“Enkosi ke bantwana bam, ningakhululeka.”

Baphakamile abantwana baphuma beyokuncedisa ekwenzeni amalungiselelo okugqibela.

Enziwe amalungiselelo omngcwabo abantu bequkeza belungiselela iindwendwe ukutya.

ULiziwe ebephakathi kwabo bancedayo esenza konke okusemandleni ukuba izinto zihambe ngendlela. Kwalile ekuhambeni kwexesha wangena kwelinye lamagumbi alapho waqubula umxeba. Ucofe amanani waphulaphula. Ngelingeni uye wasabela umntu.

“Hello, ndingakunceda.” Litshilo ilizwi emnxebeni.

“Hello, bhuti ndinguLiziwe apha eQoboqobo kwilali yaseGxulu.”

“Ewe sisi, ndimamele.”

“Bhuti, ngomso sinomfihlo kamama apha eGxulu, kwaye bendifuna abantu bokundinceda.”

“Kwekhu! Sisi, yingxaki lena, kaloku kubhaliswa ngethuba apha, kwaye ngoku abantu abaninzi sele kufuneka bephumile, beye kwindawo ezithe qelele.”

“Oh! Yini bhuti, ndakugqiba ukuxakeka kangaka mnt’akatata.” Wacenga uLiziwe.

“Bangaphi abantu obafunayo apho?”

“Bendingavuya ukuba bendinokufumana amashumi amabini.”

“Sisi, andithembisi kodwa ndizakuzama.” Waphendula umntu emnxebeni.

“Nceda bhuti, ndingavuya wethu ndincede.”

“Ndizobona sisi, ukuba mandithini, kwaye iQoboqoba ithe qelele, sapha inambari yakho yomnxeba ukuze ndikutsalele, ndikuxelele ukuba sizakuthini.”

Uyinkezele uLiziwe inambari yomnxeba wathandaza ukuba malithi litshona ilanga kube sele kucaca icala.

Lihambile ilanga, nexesha lisenza into yalo, kwaye nabantu bexakekile besebenza kuba kwakukuninzi okumele kwenziwe.

Kwalile emveni kweyure ezintathu sele izibilini ziphezulu kuLiziwe, engazi nokuba kode kufowunwena, watsho umnxeba, wawuxhumela ngoko nangoko.

“Hellow.” Watsho uLiziwe izibilini ziphezulu.

“Bendicela ukuthetha nosisi Liziwe.”

“Nguye lo uthethayo, bhuti.”

“Ok, sisi ndibafumene abantu ngomso balapho ngentseni.”

“Oh! Undincedile bhuti, besele ndixakiwe ngenene ndingazi ukuba mandithini.”

“Sizama ngalo lonke ixesha ukunceda, sisi.” Latsho ilizwi emnxebeni. “Abantu bakuba lapho ke ngentsimbi yeshumi.”

“Iyakuba yimali ke bhuti?” Wabuza uLiziwe izibilini zehlile.

“Sisi, kuba kuthe qelele iyakuba yiR500, uze uncede uyinike, uMnu. Khuzwayo, nguye oyakube ekhokela elo qela.”

“Hayi bhuti, undincedile ngenene, kwaye ndixolile ke ngoku.”

“Nathi sizama ukuxolisa wonke umntu sisi, enkosi.”

Uyibeke phantsi imfonomfono uLiziwe engawuhlanganisi umlomo luvuyo kuba esazi ukuba ngoku yonke into abeyicebile sele izakulunga.

Lithe litshona ilanga yabe yonke into ime ngendlela.

Kuthe lisakuthi chapha ilanga yabe inguMbo noMxesibe phambi komzi kwaTipa. Kwaye kubonakala ukuba abantu ngenene bazokubambisana nolu sapho. Abaninzi babezokuthi ndlela-ntle kulo nkosikazi yaseMaTipeni, kwaye besazi ukuba bambalwa abafana nayo. Uqhubile umsebenzi abafundisi begalela bechaza ngoNosamana bekwahambisa nevangeli ngokunjalo.

Kwalile ngentsimbi yeshumi xa kulungiselelwa ukuyiwa enkonzweni xa kanye kusele izithethi ezibini, kwemisa iitaxi ezimbini kwaze kwehla abantu ekucaca ukuba nabo beze kwakulo mngcwabo waseMatipeni.

Owokuqala ohlileyo uvele nje wasitsho isikhalo, “Yhoo! Yhoo! Yhoo! Yhoo!” Abalandelayo ukuhla kwezo taxi nabo khangela babuye beme bavele badubula ezabo izikhalo yangu “Yhoo! Yhoo! Yhoo! Yini? Yini Bawo!”

Phakathi kwababantu kwakukho namadoda ekuqondakala ukuba nawo abindekile, kuba aye mana engqukruleka esitsholo phezulu kucaca ukuba konakele.

Abantu bamangaliswa ngabantu kuba babengabazi, kwaye besothukile kukuba abantu bathi besihla nje ezithuthini babe bedubula izikhalo.

Intoni, abantu bona babe ngajonganga nanye kule yayimangalisa, koko babethula izikhalo phezulu.

Zatsho izikhalo kwanga usweleka ngoko uNosamana, kwakusithi lakukhankanywa igama likaNosamana, kube kungona bethula isikhalo apha abantu, kucaca ukuba ngenene bamkelwe.

Baqala abanye bajuba kucaca ukuba ngoku kungaphaya kwaba intliziyo zabo zibuhlungu. Ojubileyo, beya athatyathwe kwangabo ahamba nabo bamfake eteksini ahlale nje imizuzu embalwa abuye eze kwiqela lakhe, asiqale phantsi isikhalo, “Yhoo! Yhoo! Bawo, Bawo! Yini! Yini!”

Hayi ke, neqela elo likhalayo libe ngathi lifumene amandla liqa ekuqaleni lisitsho isikhalo. Abafundisi, nezithethi baqala badideka, abazi ukuba mabathini, babhenela ekubeni inkonzo yona mayiqhubeke njengesiqhelo.

Abantu bona, ababezama ukuthuthuzela, baba ngathi bayabathuma abo bakhalayo, kuba okukhona bethuthuzelwa, kwaba kokukhona beya bekhala ngaphezulu.

Umfundisi uqondile ukuba akungangaye ngoku, makafake ufefe kuyiwe esakhiweni.

Hayi ke, esakhiweni abantu babetha kwathi nxwe, kwaye benganqandeki.

Waqhubeka kodwa wona umngcwabo logama abanye bezibhuqa phantsi.

Uhambile umzimba emveni komsebenzi esakhiweni, kwayiwa emadlakeni, yade yathotywa ibhokisi, ngalo lonke elo xesha abantu beNkosi bona basakhala.

Abantu babuyele ekhaya kwaTipa, kuthe nje ukuba abantu bangene kwindawo ahlala kuyo uTipa bahlamba izandla bathula, ngathi khange bakhe bakhale, wabe esithi umqhubi wesithuthi mabakhwele ezithuthwini kuba kukude eBhayi, kwaye kusekuninzi ekufuneka kwenziwe.

Uninzi lwabo luye lwazivuthulula lungathethi lwakhwela kwii-teksi ezo.

“Eh, sisi uxolo torho, khawuncede undibizele usis’Liziwe apha ngaphakathi”, utshilo uKhuzwayo ekrweca elinye inenekazi.

Okunene inenekazi lithe gwiqi, imizuzu engephi labuya lisithi uthi, uyeza.

Liqondile inenekazi ukuba liyatshiseka alikwazi kuzibamba malikhe libuze.

“Bhuti, uxolo torho, mandikhe ndibuze.”

“Ewe sisi.”

“Umama lo walapha niyazalana naye”, libuzile inenekazi torho libuntlonirha.

“Hayi sisi, asimazi singazange sambona nasemdudweni.”

“Oh!” Lakhuzisa inenekazi. “Bhuti ningakhala kangaka ngomntu eningamaziyo?”

“Sisi, sisemsebenzi apha kwaye siqeshiwe, thina siphuma kumzi wakwa “Cry and Sing Company”, eBhayi, ukuba uyonqena ukukhala emngcwabeni, kubizwa thina sikukhalele, kanti nokuba abantu abazimisele kucula, kubizwa thina sicule, inye nje wena into omawuyenze kukuhlawula.”

“Ngumhlola lo ndiwuvayo mawethu.”

“Kunjalo dadethu, silapha nje siqeshiwe, kwaye sisaleqa kweminye imingcwabo, eBhayi.”

“Nantso ke into yakho!” Lakhuzisa liqhwaba izandla inenekazi.

“Ndikufungisa uma ungazange umbone, inde lendlela dadethu yoyisa amadoda amakhulu.”

“Hayi akuxoki.”

“Yinyani emsulwa ke leyo ntombi yomntu.”

“Sobe undive ndithetha.”

“Thula sisi, silapha nje sileqa imingcwabo emibini eBhayi, nalapho siya kukhala”

“Hamb’indawo uzokubona”, litshilo inenekazi linikina intloko.

Uthe gqi kweso sithuba kanye uLiziwe esenobabuhle bakusasa kucaca ukuba uyintombi yaseMatipeni.

Khange abuze nto koko uthu rhuthu isipaji wabala imali wanika uKhuzwayo.

“Sisi usincedile ungadinwa nangomso”, utshilo uKhuzwayo.

“Bhuti, nincede mna.”

Emveni koko iye yegwiqi intombi yaseMatipeni yangena ngaphakathi.

Yena uKhuzwayo ungene nje esithuthini, sabethwa sasincikane ukuya kutshona eBhayi.

Nanamhlanje umngcwabo waseMatipeni eGxulu kusathethwa ngawo ngabantu ababewuzimasile.

Nantso ke Dlalani

Ukuba ungumkhenkethi ophuma kwamanye amaphondo nakumazwe aphesheya uze kweli laseBhayi abantu bayakuhambisa, bakubonise zonke iindawo zolonwabo, kodwa ndiya kuthembisa ukuba bayakuhamba nawe de bayokugaxeleka kwingingqi yaseZwide.

Akekho ongumkhenkethi onokuze athi akazange ayibone le lolikishi.

Le yilokishi yabantu abantsundu kuphela. Kwaye irhangqwe zilokishana ekugcwalise kuzo amabobosi. La mabobosi afumaneka kwindawo yaseVeeplaas, kooBF kwakunye naseSoweto on Sea.

Kukwezindawo apho ubumnandi buthande ukuthi kratya, lo kratya ke uye uwelele kummandla waseZwide.

Ndlela le ekumnandi ngayo kule lokishi yaseZwide ukuba ukhe waqala ukuya nangomso wobonakala.

Eyona nto ithandwa kakhulu luluntu nabakhenkethi kule ndawo yaseZwide zindawo zomjuxuzo ekugcwala kuzo mihla le ingakumbi ngempela veki.

Bekusithi kuqala nje impela veki kube sekugcwele kwezindawo kungabonakali nendawo yokuhlala.

Zifumaneka apho iinzwana neenzwakazi ezilityayo ilaphu lomlungu, uzibona apho iimbelukazi ezintsundu ukufaneleka kwazo uqale uqonde ukuba ngenene oluhlanga luntsundu lucikiziwe.

Izinxibo zona kukhutshiswana ngazo de uqonde ukuba akunakuyifumana nakweyiphi ivenkile loo mpahla, kuba umntu uchithe imali eninzi esithi mayenziwe ngabathungi babucala.

Kambe ezinye zezo mpahla zenziwe zancikane ngamabomu ukuze umntu ayinxibe imthi nkqi. Wothuke kumanye amaxesha uzibuze ukuba ingaba umntu lona uyinxibe njani impahla leyo kuba kubanzima ukuhamba nokuphefumla.

Yonke le nzima umntu azifaka kuyo wenzela nje ukuba aye kwezindawo zomjuxuzo.

Utywala nenyama eyojiwayo kwezindawo zidlala abantwana ekufuneka umntu ekwenzile kukuba akhuphe imali epokothweni athenge.

Nabathandanayo bayafumaneka apho kanti nabathengisa ngemizimba bakhona umntu ngamnye uyazikhethela akufunayo.

Yonke into iyafumaneka kwaye ngokukhawuleza okudibene nokungxama, i-Aids ikhona ikhiwa ngezikotile, imbumbulu ebucotsheni nayo uyifumana ngokukhawuleza ukuba ubhanxekile, amaquma neenduma uyawafuma ukuba unxila kakubi. Yonke into ngumdliva ilindele umntu kuphela.

Kuyo yonke lento abantu abapheli kwezi ndawo okukhona besonzakala kokukhona kuba mnandi kubo.

Ukuba unokuthi ujikeleleze kwezindawo ubuze ngoWakhe ukuba uphi, uyakuchazelwa ukuba ebephaya kwaSis'Knoxie, okanye khawumkhangele kwaBra Phiro kwindawo zabantwana.

Ngangendlela abesaziwa ngayo uWakhe kwezi ndawo bekunganzima ukuba angazimela ukuba benokuthi afunwe ngamapolisa ngokwenza umonakalo, kodwa uWakhe bengekho kwaphela kwicala lolwaphulo mthetho.

Umfo ucikiziwe untsundu ngebala kwaye efanelwa sisithomo sakhe waze walekelisa ngobuhomba.

Kwicala lesinxibo ebehamba yedwa imfanela impahla yomlungu ngokumangalisayo kwaye engoyiki ukuyikhupha imali yokuyithenga.

Ebeyithanda injezu ubhuti kakhulu kwaye ezibizela kungekho sidingo sayo.

Ebesithi kwindawo akuyo angaseli ehleli phantsi koko ebesima ngenyawo ayithi qhiwu igilasi ethethela phezulu kuqondakala ukuba umfo wonwabile kwaye ubomi kuye buntofontofo. Ngalo lonke ixesha encokola umfo omkhulu uba nezinto ezimbini esandleni sakhe, umabila ebanda kwakunye nomdiza amana ukuwumpafuza ajonge phezulu ekhupha umsi ngeempumlo kucaca nje ukuba umfo yonke into kuye ikwamLebese.

Kwicala labasetyhini besaziwa kakhulu ezitshintsha iintombi mihla le kwaye ezifumana kwakwezi ndawo zotywala.

Ezinye bezide zilwe ngaye kucaca ukuba zimthandile umfo omkhulu.

Ibe mnandi ke lonto kunkabi kuthi ke xa eyibalisa kuhleliwe nabahlobo bakhe kuhlekwe enconywa ngelokuba ngudlalani wokwenene.

Ukanti bekusithi kwakuliwa ngaye ngokuqinisekileyo ezo ntombi azisahambanga naye ngobo busuku sele ezakuhamba nazimbi.

Ngempela veki bumbona unkabi kwangentseni evule igumbi lakhe kwigumbi elingemva kowabo kwalapho eZwide.

Ebelicoca elo gumbi libethwe ngumoya, ze kamva acinezele impahla yakhe azakuyinxiba ngobo busuku abengezelise nezihlangu zakhe.

Emveni koko unkabi ebephuma enxibe ibhulukwe emfutshane nesikipa esipholileyo efake iimbadada ezinyaweni enjenjeya ukuya evenkileni.

Ukufika kwakhe apho evenkileni ebethenga izimuncu muncu ezithandwa kakhulu ngabasetyhini omayogathi, banana kwakunye neepinatsi ze akugqiba abuyele kwigumbi lakhe azifake kwisikhencezisi esikwalapho.

Ngokuhlwa unkabi ebezinxiba abemuncu atshixe igumbi lakhe aye kwindawo zabantwana.

Ukufika kwakhe apho ebezibethela izinto zakhe emana ukubheka-bheka ekhangela gqiyazana lithile anokuthi alibambe ngobo busuku.

Wenze njengesiqhelo ke uWakhe wabhekisa kwiindawo zabantwana, ufike wathenga izinto zakhe wabeka kwitafle yakhe waziselela kwamnandi.

Nanjengoko buhamba ubusuku kubekho gqiyazana lithile unkabi alibonileyo lihleli nabahlobo balo walithanda.

Yabe intombi yomntu intle ilephuza, inxibe into apha engaziwayo yesikipa esithe nca saveza ugqongo yaze eso sikipa yasikhapha ngebhulukwe ethe nca nesihlangu esichophileyo.

Ubuso babuplakwe ngodaka olubenza bube buhle kwaze kwafakelwa namashiya emehlweni.

linwele zazenziwe zaluhlobo olujikojiko kucaca kuba kuthathwe ixesha ukuzenza.

Inzwakazi le yayihleli kwakunye nabahlobo bayo ababini kumnandi kwitafle yabo kuba kaloku yayigcwele utywala.

“Uxolo ladies bendicela ukudanisa nalo sisi.” Kuvakale ilizwi lisitsho phezu kwabo.

“Hayi wethu bhuti, si-busy kwaye mna andikwazi noko kujayiva,” uphendule watsho uNonzwakazi kuba uWakhe wayebhekisa kuye.

“Nam nje baby andikwazi kodwa I always try”, utshilo uWakhe ehombe emuncu.

“I am sorry nyhani andikwazi”, utshilo uNonzwakazi, “uNzwaki” ngokwabahlobo bakhe.

“Okay, baby xa usitsho ungandinceda ke mhlawumbi undinike i-chance yokuthetha nawe xa unayo”, uzicelele uWakhe.

“Fine but not now”, utshilo uNonzwakazi.

“Okay baby girl”, watsho waguquka wahamba uWakhe wabuyela kwitafle yakhe.

“Yazi uWakhe uyathandeka qha uyawathanda amantombazana”, utshilo uPush enye inzwakazi ehleli noNonzwakazi.

“Nyani ngeba u-right yena qha angam fratsa umntu ngokuba soloko ethe nca ezilokhweni”, ungqinile uLovie enye inzwakazi ekwalapho.

“Girls lets drink mna ndine fratsi zam”, utshilo uNonzwakazi.

“Iyawa yintoni ngoku? Ngu-Speech kwakhona?” Ubuzile uPhush.

“Girls, I don’t want to say a thing, ndi-full ngu-Speech, really full zizinto zakhe”, watsho erhabula ngamandla kwigilasi yakhe yebhiya uNonzwakazi.

“How many times did we hear that?” Utshilo u-Lovie. “Masiseleni girl’s mna ndinxaniwe.”

“Yabona this time its for real andimfuni uSpeech undidike ngathi ndimtye ngaphakathi” utshilo uNonzwakazi kubonakala ukuba ngenene udikiwe.

“Girl, you’ve got to make a decision, almost every week ubalisa the same thing uSpeech le, uSpeech leya, ntombi bakumfuni mlahle qha enye woyibona ngoko”, utshilo uLovie.

“Kakade Nzwaki wawubone ntoni kula nto igeza ngola hlobo?” Ubuzile uPush, naye ewubeke phezulu umqhelo kucaca ukuba ufikile ebumnandini.

“Ku-late to answer that now, but ndidiniwe mna qha, and ndidiniwe ke.” Uphendule ngelitshoyo uNonzwakazi.

Emveni koko kuye kwecwaka kule tafle kwakhala ibhotile negilasi kuphela, umculo kwelawo icala wawusitsho kamnandi upholisa intliziyo wonke umntu ezonwabele.

Ngelingeni uWakhe ude walifumana ithuba lokuthetha noNonzwakazi, hayi ke, ngoko nangoko esi sibini siye savana kuba kakade besincwasene qha into ebethayo yile kaWakhe yokuthanda iilokhwe.

Emveni kweyure ezilandelayo esi sibini siye senyebilele sahamba kunye sisiya kuloWakhe.

Ngosuku olulandelayo ibe luvuyo kuWakhe kuba eye walala naye uNonzwakazi kwaye unkabi uye wanesigqibo sokuba akagqithi kule nzwakazi intle kangaka.

Libuye latshona lona ilanga lingaliyo zaphuma iintombi kwakunye nabafana besiya kwesezolo apho ubumnandi bulele khona.

Kubuye kwagcwala kwakho kwindawo yolonwabo nabantu phandle bezonwabele benxilile, abanye behleli kwizithuthi zabo benxile beludaka. Phakathi kwezithuthi ezazilapho phambi

kwalomzi uthengisa utywala kwakukho ne-City Golf emhlophe ehleli ooguluva abane uZet, Phaki, Lloyd kwakunye noSpeech.

“You know guys there is one thing I don’t like in the world kukubhanxwa you know?” Utshilo uSpeech efutha ngumsindo.

“Bra, what is your point maan?” kubuze uZet.

“No you see, phezolo ndibuza uPush ukuba uphi uNzwaki uthi akamazi umgqibele ethetha noWakhe, khange ndibuye ndimbone up untill now. What does that tell you? Inye it means ukuba lantwana imke kunye naye lamntwana, my own baby you see that”, uye wabila uSpeech ebhekisa loo mazwi kubahlobo bakhe, emva koko uye wehlasi ibhotile yebranti ababeyisela wagalela igilasi yagcwala wayibetha entloko wacimela akathetha wajonga phezulu.

“In other words Speech la ntwana ikwenza ibharu, bona bayapetshana”, utshilo uPhaki.

“Bras if kukho intwana enezothe kum yilantwana, but I am sure his time will come”, utshilo uLloyd ethethela phantsi kucaca ukuba uqhunywe umanzi.

“I’m telling you guys, very soon kuzokunuka umswane I can feel that in my bones”, utshilo uSpeech waze wabuya wasela.

“Let’s keep on watching sizakuyifumana lanja, itsho izazi ukuba iyinja”, watsho uLloyd egqithisa ibhotile.

Ngaphakathi kwindawo yomjuxuzo umculo wawusitsho kamnandi kwaye ulonwabo lalulephuza.

UWakhe emana ephakama eze na-four ye-beer ezibandayo azibeke etafileni phambi koNonzwakazi nabahlobo bakhe kuselwe.

“Wakhe, khawuze ndikubone phandle, please”, watsho uNonzwakazi emveni kwethuba.

“Fine baby, fine”, watsho uWakhe eveza uncumo lukaBlankethe.

Baphumile phandle baze bangana ngokungathi kudala bagqibelana.

“Wakhe ungavi kakubi va ndicela ukulala ekhaya namhlanje”, watsho uNonzwakazi epholile.

“Baby girl, lo nto uyitshoyo kum ilungile”, waphendula uWakhe naye efile luthando kucaca ukuba lenzwakazi iwuxhwilile umphefumlo wakhe ngokwenene.

“Wakhe ungandithembisa ukuba uzakulala wedwa ngokuhlwanje.”

“Nzwaki wam esi kum sisiqalo sento entsha ebomini bam uzakuzibonela.”

Emveni koko esisibini siye sawolana kucaca ukuba akungeni moya phakathi kwaso.

Babuyele ngaphakathi kwakho aba babini besaphethwe luthando olushushu.

Emveni kweyure uNonzwakazi uchazele uWakhe ukuba bayahamba kuba bonele.

“So girls, mandinikhaphe kaloku.”

“No baby akho need yoko sizakuzihambela”, watsho uNonzwakazi.

“Hambani nezi botile ke so that nibe nomphako apho niya khona.” Utshilo uWakhe kucaca ngenene ukuba uzimisele ukuyonwabisa le nzwakazi yakhe.

UNonzwakazi, uPhush kwakunye noLovie bazithabathile ezo botile baphuma nazo bagoduka.

Phandle ooguluva babelinde ngomonde ongathethekiyo. Nakubeni babesele bekwibotile yesibini ye – branti umqelo wawunganyuki kuyaphi. Amehlo ayethe ntsho kwisango ekuphunywa ngalo kujongwe zonke iziqu eziphuma apho.

“Naba abantwana guys”, uvakele esitsho uLloyd.

“No ndibathe, kyk jy seen”, waphendula uSpeech. “But ndifuna ukuthi make sure la bharu iyalandela, so let’s sit tight.”

Ngeli xesha oonqalintloko babenxile amehlo ebomvu kuba kaloku babedibanise nentsangu.

Inye into eyayiqondakala yayiyeyokuba bavathe uSathana kwaye bangenza nayiphina into.

“Bra khawugalele, i-stiff tot, khendirhabule yazi nobutywala abuhli, jy weet, ndibawela ukwenza uSathana yazi”, watsho uZet.

Zigalelwe iigilasi zahanjiswa phakathi kwabanqevu kuthiwe cwaka kucaca ukuba uSathana uyagquba phakathi kwabo.

Ngaphakathi uWakhe ubuye waphakama wathenga i-branti ne-beer ezimbini wabuya wahlala phantsi.

Umfo omkhulu uye wagalela ibranti wabetha entloko wajonga umabonakude olapho, suka wabona ubuso bukaNonzwakazi wancuma ...

“Wakhe, Bra Wakes, hayi ngumhlola lona zange ndakubona upoqe apha”, latsho ilizwi.

Kwasululu uWakhe wabhekabheka engazi ukuba uphina.

“Hayi maan wena khawugoduke sekutheni ulele apha ngoku”, yatsho indoda ecocayo kule ndawo ithengisa utywala.

“Ngubani ixesha?” Wabuza uWakhe.

“Ngu-nine bra Wakes, hayi maan goduka maan please, zintloni zantoni ezi uzenzayo?”

“Maan benditshayiwe phezolo ndigqibele ndibukele I-tv.”

“Ok, bra.”

“Butywala bukabani obu?”Wabuza uWakhe.

“Bobakho kuba buphambi kwakho.”

UWakhe kange abuye athethe koko usuke wathabatha ibranti wayibetha entloko, waphakama wajikisa ibeer kuba ibishushu efuna ebandayo.

Emveni koko uye waphuma ngomnyango engakhange enze nelimndaka.

Orheme kwisithuthi sabo bothuke nabo ilanga liphezu kwabo kushushu apho emotweni.

Nabo kucaca ngokumhlophe ukuba bebepoqile.

“Lloyd, Lloyd khawuvuke maan uvule le minyango, sis niyawalele!” Utshilo uSpeech esothuka ephumela ngaphandle apha emotweni.

“Jesus, look at the time, labharu inokuba kudala yemkayo”, watsho uLloyd naye ephuma.

“Maan, kutheni ndinesikhwakalala kangaka and nani nilele, umntu anganithemba njani guys?” Watsho uSpeech kubonakala ukuba uxhelekile emphefumleni kwaye nehabhalaza imphele.

Bonke oonqalintloko ngoku babesele bengaphandle emotweni kucaca ukuba ibhabhalaza ibaphethe kwaye nelanga lishushu ngamandla.

“Phaki, khawubaleke uze ne-beer ebandayo please”, ukhuphe imali uSpeech wanikezela.

Umkile uPhaki imizuzwana embalwa wabuya ephethe iibeer ezintathu.

“Guys you won’t believe this, lebhuru ipha ngaphakathi”, utshilo uPhaki.

“Uyaxoka”, watsho uSpeech ethabatha ibhotile eyivula eyimhoma.

“I’m not lying guys, nizakuyibona izakuphuma ngoku kucacile ukuba nayo ibipoqile.”
Akubanga thuba lide waphuma uWakhe ephethe utywala bakhe wechu engangxamanga wahla isitalato egoduka.
“So guys there is no need for us to wait here let us go”, watsho uSpeech.
Bangenile ooguluva kwisithuthi sabo baqhumisa uthuli begoduka.
USpeech ubabeke kumakhaya abo abahlobo bakhe emveni koko wayenza ncikane imoto ukuya kuloNonzwakazi.
Ufike wabetha i-bell kabini kathathu kwisithuthi sakhe walinda.
Emveni kwethutyana kuye kwavela umntwana emnyango ukrobe nje wabuya wangena endlwini.
Ngalo lonke eloxesha uSpeech uyagubha ngumsindo emotweni akazi makathini.
Emveni kwethutyana uye waphuma uNonzwakazi enxibe iimpahla zokulala.
“Hellow”, watsho uSpeech.
“Molo.”
“Ndicela ukhwele.”
“Andizokwazi kuba ndisalele.”
“Buphi phezolo?”
“Apha ekhaya.”
“Kwenzeka ntoni phakathi kwakho noWakhe?”
“Speech, uzokuthini apha?”
“Ndize kuwe.”
“Ndicela ungabe uphinde ke uze apha ekhaya.”
“What do you mean maan?”
“Ndithi ungabe uze apha ekhaya ndidiniwe nguwe nezinto zakho kukangaphi undibhanxa uhamba namantombazana phambi kwam ndingathethi ndithule uze ujike ngoku uzokundibuza ububhanxa bokuba bendiphi?”
“Kucacile ukuba ngoku uyathandana.”
“Ayifuni wena lonto, noba ndeza ntoni ngobomi bam.”
“Oh! Utsho ngoku?”
“Nditsho kakade ucinga ntoni?”
“Andiyithandi lento uyenzayo yeva.”
“Andithandanga oyenzileyo wena kuqala.”

“Akundifuni?”

“Andifunwanga nguwe kuqala.”

“Nonzwakazi ndicela ukhwele apha emotweni.”

“Andizokwazi.”

“Ngoba?”

“Ngoba ndisalele.”

“Ndiphinde ndibuye?”

“Uzothini kanene?”

“Uphezu kwantoni Nonzwakazi?”

“Ndiphezu kwale uphezu kwayo Speech, kwaye ndicela ungabe uphinde uze apha ekhaya.”

“Utsho?”

“Ngumhlola lo akundiva dan, ndithi ungabe uphinde uze apha ekhaya.”

Kwesi sithuba uSpeech uye wamthi ntsho emehlweni uNonzwakazi kucaca ukuba ubawela ukumxhifma anqunqele egoqweni kuloo ndawo ame kuyo. UNonzwakazi naye ukhuphe amehlo entloko kucaca ukuba akanikezeli, udiqiwe yimpatho kaSpeech.

“Ikhona enye into?” wabuza uNonzwakazi.

USpeech uye wamthi ndwanya ngamehlo kucaca ukuba ufile ngumsindo.

UNonzwakazi khange abuye athethe uye wegwiqi waya kungena kowabo wawala ucango akaphuma.

USpeech uye wahlala apho emotweni ebila ngumsindo akugqiba wayisusa ngesona santya sakhe sasikhulu engazi ukuba makathini, kodwa ngaphakathi eqonda ukuba kumele xa kunje kutake udakada.

Lihambile ilanga lona lingaliyo layakutshona kwakho lipholile kunjalo nje.

Zaqala zaphuma iintokazi nabafana kwimimngxunya yabo bonke basingisa kwindawo yobumnandi.

NoWakhe wazibetha wamhle kwakhona wayakutshona kwindawo yesezolo.

Ufike uNonzwakazi wakhe sele engaphambili ehleli nabahlobo bakhe kwaye umntwana womntu engemhle enendawo ezifuna ukucengwa.

Buzile utywala, yagcwala itafile, watsho umculo, yaduduma indlu, kwacaca kokude ukuba ngenene elo lizulu lasemhlabeni.

UNonzwakazi uziqondile ukuba ngoku uhluthi kwaye utywala abupheli phambi kwakhe nentloko sele ijikeleza.

Usebezele uWakhe ukuba makamnike isitshixo sekamire kuba yena ufuna ukuya kulala. Usinikiwe isitshixo waxelela abahlobo bakhe ukuba uyazimela uya kulala.

Akubanga xesha lide uWakhe wenyebelele naye wazimela eshiya phofu itafile isagcwele butywala.

Lovie noPush basale bezintyintya ngotywala ngathi abobe bubekho ngomso.

“Phush uphi uNonzwakazi?” Kuvakele ilizwi phezu kwabo.

“Hayi, hayi Speech andazani naNonzwakazi mna”, uphendule uPush naye ezinxilele.

“Push don’t play with me, okay uphi uNonzwakazi?”

“Speech asigcini Nzwaki, okay?” Wangenelela uLovie

“Uphi uWakhe? Uphi uNonzwakazi? Girls, I’m not playing, okay?”

“Jonga Speech mna andijongi Wakhe naNzwaki, ezabo zezabo, okay, masivane ke bhuti, ungakhe usikhwelele kancinci”, uphendule ngelitshoyo uPush.

Uye wegwiqi uSpeech ewuqonda umcimbi ukuba ulele kweliphi icala.

Ungene nje emotweni abahlobo bakhe sele bembona ukuba wonakele kwaye uyavutha ngumsindo.

“Drive”, uvele watsho.

“Siye phi papa?” Ubuzile u-Lloyd.

“Masiye kuloWakhe guys, namhlanje kuzokunuka umswane ndikuxelela inene, are you with me?”

“All the way bra, all the way, kudala ndiyifuna lantwana yatyela umntakwethu, emveni koko yasweleka icherry yi-Aids nayo ngoku ibra yam iphantsi komhlaba, masiye bras this is the day vele”, watsho uPhaki kucaca ukuba kudala enenqala.

Izityhutyhe ngokukhawuleza izitalato zaseZwide imoto de yayakufika kwesi ahlala kuso uWakhe.

Ihanjiswe kancikane ngoku kusenzelwa ukuba ingangxoli kwaye nezibane zicinyiwe.

Bade bayakumisa phambi kwaku loWakhe.

“Lloyd shiyeka apha emotweni fine”, utshilo uSpeech

“Sure papa.”

“Guys oopayipu benu ba-ready?” Wabuza uSpeech.

“Yonke into i-ready”, waphendula uPhaki.

“Ukuba iimbumbulu ziyashota nazi ezinye.”

“Bra thina silinde wena, si-ready.”

Behlile emotweni oonqevu bavula iheke bangena baze bachwechwa bajikela emva kwendlu.

Balibonile igumbi likaWakhe licinywe isibane.

“Ilapha lenja nebaby yam”, utshilo uSpeech.

Basondela emnyango bankqonkqoza.

Cwaka akwabikho mntu uthethayo babuya bankqonkqoza kwakhona.

“Ungubani?” Lavakala ilizwi ngaphakathi.

“Singobhuti bakho vula.”

Ngaphakathi kuye kwecwaka.

“Vula njandini!”

Cwaka ngaphakathi akwavakala nokhrwatshakhrwatsha.

“Vula jou nkukuma yenja!” Labuya latshe ilizwi.

Uqonde ngoko uWakhe ukuba konakele ngoku kwaye ukufa kukufutshane.

Ngeli xesha uNonzwakazi wayesele evukile wanxiba.

“Ungavuli”, utshilo uNonzwakazi esebeza.

“Ngubani?” Ubuzile uWakhe ngelizwi elingcangcazelayo.

“Lilizwi likaSpeech elo kwaye uxwaye inkathazo”, uphendule uNonzwakazi.

Uye wabila umfo omkhulu wabaleka amanzi kwafika nemichamo kwakho into ethi

makasitsho isikhalo abize abantu kodwa wabuya wazicenga.

Uziphose phantsi kwebhedi kuqala wayokutsho emva wabuya wanentloni waphuma

watyhalela uNonzwakazi apho.

Wema yena exakiwe ukuba makathini iinyembezi zinqumuleza izidlele.

Uye wacinga ngomama wakhe ongekhoyo nangotata wakhe oseNgqushwa naku ngoku yena

ezakufela kweli Bhayi, uthe akufikelela kwinqanaba lokufa suka wezihlela umncamo wafuna

nokuya ngasese kwanzima endodeni.

Ngaphandle amazwi ayemile esithi, “Vula sikubulale ngoku!”

Kwakukho nelithi, “Masitshise ibobosi elo sohlukane nento yonke!”

Oonqalintloko baqondile ukuba inde lento mabagibisele izitena baqhekeze iifestile ukuze babe nokufumana ithuba lokungena ngaphakathi. Ngalo lonke elo xesha izithuko zazisitsho kwaye zihambisa umzimba.

Bazigibisele ngathi baqeshiwe izitena oonqalintloko bazitsho ezofestile zaphela vuthu. Baqala bakhaba umnyango. Kuyo yonke le meko babengathi bavuthelwe ezindlebeni nguMtyholi.

Ngaphakathi endlwini uWakhe wayemi ebambe ucango.

Koko kuxhathisa kwakhe kuye kwavakala ivumba kucaca ukuba uzingcolisele kwaye ngoku uyoyisakala.

UWakhe ucinge ngokukhwela phezu kwesibandisi wabuya wazinqanda eqonda ukuba lonto ayisayikumnceda.

Uye walala ngesisu warhubuluza ngokwejoni emfazweni wafika ecaleni kwesibandisi wasityhala sabheka phambi komnyango owawusele usecicini lokuwa. Emveni koko uye wazincama wavula ucango lwesibandisi ewisa ukutya phantsi, wangena ngaphakathi kuso wavala ucango.

Ngeli xesha ivumba lalisele libophe indlu yonke kucaca ukuba lelendoda endala.

Unkabi uzive sele ethandaza.

“Bawo ndingumoni phambi kwakho... Thixo ndenzeni emhlabeni...” yaqala yabhonga indoda ifixiza ngamandla kwaye kucaca ukuba yoyika ngokwenene.

Akakwazanga kuwugqiba unkabi umthandazo kuba iimbhokotho zazisele zingena ngamandla endlwini.

Amazwi wona ayemile ngelithi, “Sobe uphinde wenze mntu sibhanxa Wakhe, izulu uzakulingena ungacinganga namhlanje, hayi ngenye imini!”

Ngaphantsi kwebhedi uNonzwakazi waye ngakwazi nokuphefumla utywala buphele engqondweni.

Inye into awayeyicinga yeyokuba waye funa ntoni kwesi sikrom-krom sizakumbulala namhlanje.

Wafuna ukusitsho isikhalo kodwa ilizwi alaphumelisa waqonda nje ngokumhlophe ukuba ubomi kuye buphelile.

“Push, andiyithembanga lanja uSpeech, ingathi kanti iyokwenza isigezo phaya kulo Wakhe uyazi?” Utshilo uLovie esanxilile.

“Yitsh’uphinde. Uyazi my friend ukuba ukwada uSpeech neezangqeqe zakhe”, watsho uPush.

“Mtsha’nam khawusapha lefowuni yakho please.”

ULovie uye wacofa amanani waphula phula.

Ngelingeni umntu uye waphendula.

“Nceda noba ungubani, biza amapolisa.”

“Nzwaki kwenzeka ntoni apho?” ubuzile uLovie.

“Mtsha’nam please, biza amapolisa ooSpeech basivalele apha kuloWakhe ...”

“Nzwaki, Nzwaki”, cwaka ifowuni akwabikho mpendulo.

ULovie ubuye wacofa amanye amanani kwaphendulwa uchazele amapolisa ukuba umhlobo wakhe uvalelwe zizikrelemqa, watsho enikezela igama lesitalato kwakunye nenombolo yendlu.

Lloyd oshiyeke emotweni ubone isithatha esiluhlaza sisiza singxamile sisiza kwesi sitalato waqonda ukuba konakele.

Uhle ngokukhawuleza emotweni wajikela emva kwendlu wafika abahlobo bakhe besaxakekile ngoku bediliza indlu.

“Guys ku-blou”, khange abuye athethe enye into ubuye waguquka ngokukhawuleza wabuyela emotweni, ufikisene nabahlobo bakhe bakhwela ngokukhawuleza wayibetha yincinci ukusuka apho.

Athe efika amapolisa afika kungasabonakali kwamoto apho.

Ehlile esithuthini angena apho akabona nto elinye lajikele emva kwendlu, laba selibona umonakalo labiza amanye.

“Hey! Nina apho phumani sithi singamapolisa!”

Kuthe cwaka umzuzwana waze umnyango wavuleka kancikane, UNonzwakazi uthe akubona amapolisa wasitsala esofelweyo.

Amapolisa aye amthuthuzela echaza ukuba yonke into ilungile noonqalintloko babalekile. UNonzwakazi ngelingeni uye wathula, yena uWakhe wayesele exakwe kukuphuma kuba udaka lwesinqe lwalugcwalise ibhulukhwe.

Emveni kwentsuku ezimbalwa babanjwa uSpeech, uZet, uPhaki kwakunye noLloyd kodwa babuya bakhululwa kuba bayikhanyela into yokuba bayokuvingca kuloWakhe kwaye nobungqina babungabambeki. UWakhe kwelakhe icala iBhayi zange libuye libemnandi kwakho waqokelela zonke izinto zakhe wayakutshona...

.

Ntakana Ntyilo-Ntyilo

Kumazantsi eNtaba KaNdoda, kulo maxethuka endlela esingise eQonce wofumana iilali ezithe rhwelele kukutyeba nomhlaba ochume watyekeza. Ukanti ukuba uphosa amehlo kwilali ezikumantla zikwangqongwe yile ntaba wofumana iilali zaseGwili-gwili, eTshoxa, eCata naseGxulu.

Phakathi ke kwilali yaseTshoxa kukho iholo yabahlali eyagxunyekwa ngowayesakuba yinkulumbuso kwelo phandle, uGqirha L.L. Sebe. Uninzi lwabahlali kule lali lwaluyisebenzisa le holo kwizinto zabahlali kambe ezinye iimvaba zaziyisebenzisa kwezenkolo. Inkonzo kaNtu yayiqesha leholo kangangeminyaka emibini khonukuze ingenele khona. Umphathi welibandla wayengakhathali nokuba usuka kweliphina ibandla, ukuba ungenile kweli bandla sele ungowalapho. Uluntu oluninzi lwaluyithanda ke le mvaba ngenxa yalo meko. Ngecawa yayigcwala le mvaba ithi mome kungabikho nendawo yokunyathela. Intshumayelo eyayibakho apho yayingathetheki kwaye abashumayeli bengathumani manzi. Abahlali bona babephokoka apho kuba kaloku ezolwimi zazichutywa ngaphakathi. Abafuna ukuthandana babeqala babonane apho, ukanti nabo banyeke ukuchitha imizi yabantu, wawubafumana kwangaphakathi apho. Loo meko yayibangela ukuba indlu kaThixo igcwale rhoqo. Babekho ke nabo babona isitshaba seZulu kuphela. Eyona nto yayitsala umdla ebantwini ngaphezu kwazo zonke ezi zinto, yayiyingoma.

Ingoma yayimenza athi umntu nokuba uxakwe yinto, athi ndiyeke mhlaba ndigoduke. Aqale amaKrestu ayibone ibengezela iJerusalem entsha. Amakhorasi ayesithi akutsho kunge uyaqhekeka umngangatho, amaZulu akrazuka kubini.

Kwakuthi kwakuba njalo aqale ayibasele ke umhlabei kube shushu neenzwane. Wayemnye ke umhlabei kwelibandla kwaye eyikwazi lonto, yayintombi yakwa Bhulo ke leyo uPhindiwe igama. Abaninzi nababemthanda babemteketisa besithi nguPhindi-Phindi. Inene emsulwa intombi yomntu yayiwuphiwe umculo iwukhupha nangempumlo. Ebesithi akuhlabela uPhindiwe kunge kuyaduduma kugqekreza imibane eGolgotha. Ebeyibetha loo holo igcwale mome lilizwi lakhe yedwa. Bekusithi akuma ngenyawo ekhwaza umsindo ozayo, kwabo bajonge isihoyo, aqale amadoda agungqe, lithi ixhego beliphethwe ngamadolo ulibone lixhuma-xhuma lisithi, "Ndiphilile ndingumqaba-qaba." Iyilo beliqala lindumzelele ezantsi suke kungekudala ulibone lixhwiphileka likrasela phezulu. Iimfama bezisuka ziqale eyazo

into, zixhuma-xhume zigila abantu zisithi ziyabona. Iziqhwalala zona bezisuka zilahle kude ezonduku zivuthulule, zikhala ngelokuba uThixo uziphilisile. Beqala kwezo zithuba ke uPhindiwe ayibasele idyokwe yakhe ngathi lihashe lomdyarho. Ubesithi akuqonda ukuba uyibasele imbiza yakhe wayibonda, aguquke umntwana wenkosi ajonge kwicala labafana, aqale amakhwenkwe amakhulu athi, “Bawo ndaphandlwa, ndaphandlwa nank’umfazi.” Abuye aguquke umntwana ajonge kwicala labefundisi nabashumayeli, suka ubone ngabo benyenyisa ikhola namaqhina bengqukruleke bekhala ngelokuba, “Ndisemtsha madoda mayihle ehlayo, mzi wam waphela.” Oomama bona babemi ngelokuba, “Inene-inene kukho uThixo apha.”

Bekuba kwezo zithuba ke apho uPhindiwe ebeyiqala ezantsi ingoma, abuye ayenyuse kunge nezo ndonga zezakhiwo zizakuwa. Kweso sithuba kanye, ubusuka uhlasimle wonke umzi kuba uqonda ukuba kuzokonakala. Babengaxoki, kuba ingoma yayingazokube ime, kwakuzakuba ngathi ngamanzi engxangxasini. Kwakunga uyaqala ukufika emazulwini umntwana, kuba wayeyitsho loo ngoma, athi ophulaphuleyo, ayengezelise iinyembezi. Wothi eyigqiba ingoma abe esithi amakholwa, “Phindi-Phindi! Sizokudumisa apha enye, emva kwenye.”

Kukwezo zithuba kanye apho wayesuka ayibasele ngakumbi ingoma, babe abantu bengasafuni kuva nantshumayelo koko bejonge ingoma. Ngalo lonke elo xesha abantu beNkosi babebile bebaleka amanzi, belibona idini leNkosi nomsindo ozayo. Yothi iphuma inkonzo babe besithi abanye sincede mfundisi qala, kukho uThixo apha. Oomama babemi ngelokuba unesiphiwo ke lo mntwana, ukanti abefundisi besithi, “Singathini ukuba uPhindi-Phindi unokusishiya.” Kwelabo icala abafana babekrweca ooyise bekhala ngelokuba baphandliwe, nanku umfazi.

Intombi kaBhulo yayingatsho nelimdaka ibisuka ithi chu-ngcembe igoduke. Owayeyijongile isihla lomgaqo wayengafunga amunce iintupha kwelokuba sisifundiswa esigqibeleleyo. Intombi le yayithe ncothu ngesithomo, inomzimba ongenalo inqatha, intsundu ngebala kwaye yayifanelwa luncumo lwayo. Yathi ekukhuleni yakhathazwa ngamehlo yaza yanxiba izipekisi. Yayisithi ke yakube izifakile isuke ibe lelokugqibela igqwethakazi. Zaqengqeleka iiveki neenyanga isenza int’wenye intombi yakwaBhulo idumisa uThixo.

Lihambile ixesha, zahamba neenyanga, kwaqengqeleka neminyaka esenza into enye uPhindiwe edumisa iNkosi. Kwathi njengokuba iqengqeleka iminyaka kwaqala kwathubeleza uMtyholi.

“Yaz’ba uPhindiwe uyazidla?”

“Yitshu phinde tshomi, yazi ucinga ukuba nguyeyedwa okwaziyo ukucula.”

“Rha, yaba ufike le cawa imile, yena sele eyenza ngathi ime ngaye.”

“Worse, ke mhlobo wam, kuba le cawa, athi uyithwele, yaqalwa ngutatomkhulu wakho.”

“Uyayazi? Yaba lonto indenza ukuba ndivaleke, kuba naku thina bantu bayo bengenandawo.”

“Sihlobo kodwa icebo liyafuneka.”

“Ingathi mhlobo wam uphezu kwento kuba nam bendicinga njalo.”

“Ucebisa ntoni ke wena?”

“Jonga usis’Mwali akamtyi la mntwana, masiye phaya emzini wakhe, khe siphalaze lentlungu yethu.”

Okunene esi sibini, uXoliswa kunye noNontlupheko, benjenjeya ukusingisa kwaMwali. Inene emsulwa yona yayithe ndii into yokuba uPhindiwe uyenza eyakhe inkonzo. Iintombi ezininzi zazisele zingasahambi naye kuba ziphethwe ngumona. Iziqhu zazibonakala ziliqela zamantombazana kuzanywa ukuwisa uPhindiwe. Indlela awayezisindisa ngayo uPhindiwe kukusuka aphume ecaweni ehamba yedwa agoduke. Ngalo ndlela kwakungekho thuba lakumrhintyela kumayelenqe ayesenziwa.

Sithe chuu ke eso sibini ngethamsanqa sifike usis’Mwali ekho. Hayi, ke bethu kubemnandi kuncokolwa sesi sithathu kungekho uphuma egusheni.

“Yho! Wacula kamnandi uPhindiwe ecaweni.” Uvakale esitsho uNontlupheko ephosa amehlo kumhlobo wakhe.

“Ungazokuthetha ngalowo apha.” Watsho uMwali efinge iintshiya.

“Hayi sisi kwenzekani?”

“Andimthandi va, ukuba kuthethwa ngomntu endingamthandiyo ngulowa.”

“Sisi, nakuthi ulinqatha koko kunzima asazi singathemba bani.”

“Mna andikhathali noba abantu bangathini andimfuni qha.”

“Ucebisa ntoni ke sisi?” Wabuza uXoliswa.

“Andikhathali noba angadluliswa amafu mna.”

“Sakubanjwa kaloku ukuba sinokumdlulisa amafu.”

“Ngubani othe sakubonwa?” Kubuze usis’Mbali.

“Kusebusuku ke kum.”

“Linye ke masincedisane, nina jongani kum ukuze nenze oko ndiniyalela kona.”

“Sisi, singabhaqwa.”

“Ukuba niyoyika, nosele nimlandela kuba nini abeze kum.”

“Hayi, asoyiki koko kufuneka silumke ukuze singabhaqwa.”

“Akukho kubhaqwa ukuba sisebenzisa amathambo engqondo.”

“Sisi, thina sojonga kuwe.”

“Inye ke into emaniyenze kukuvala umlomo sidibane ngecawa.”

Emveni kokuyalana sohlukene esi sithathu sishiyana ngamazwi okuba makubonanwe ebhungeni.

Ngosuku lwangeCawa kuye kwabuya kwagcwala kumzi kaThixo. Waqala apho ebegqibele khona uPhindiwe wanga uvuthelwe ngumoya weZulu. Babila babaleka amanzi abantu kucaca ukuba bekudala benxaniwe. Kwalile ecula njalo uPhindiwe wakrwecwa nguXoliswa wamnika amanzi ukuba akhe arhabule kuba kudala ecula. Ngenene uwathabathile amanzi lawo watsho ngethamokazi elikhulu, kuba kaloku kwakukudala ewuvulile umlomo.

Ngexesha emana ukurhabula kulobhotele yamanzi usis’Mbali wayemana ukumkrwaqula.

Wathi akumbona eyigqiba wancuma olukaBlanketi, waqala waziva esemzini kaThixo. Kwaba kukhona eyombelela ke uPhindiwe indlu kaThixo. Yathi iphuma njengesiqhelo icawa babe abantu besafuna undikho. Yabuya yathi chuu intombi kaBhulo igoduka, ingakhange ive

nelimdaka elithethwa ezikoneni. Kwathi njengokuba ihamba nje yaphawula ukuba inentloko esisimanga. Le meko yayingavamise ukubakho, koko wayiphazamisa ngokuthi makube ubethwe ngumoya ngela lixa bekhe waphuma. Uthe efika kowabo waqonda ukuba makakhe angqengqe hleze ihle.

Ngemva enkonzweni oonondaba babebambe eyabo indibano. Uvuyo olwaluphakathi kwabo yayingathi bafumene iGolide neSilivere.

“Rha! Tshomi unesibindi uyandiva.”

“My friend, belingekho elinye ithuba, ukuba bendingamnikanga ngela xesha becula, bendoba yini? Kaloku lanto inekratshi iphuma ihambe yodwa.”

“Yitsho uphinde sihlobo, wambona usis’Mbali ukuncuma kwakhe ngexesha ewasela?”

“Sana, olunjeya uncumo lwamazinyo abolileyo zange ndalubona, hayi tana akamfuni nyhani.”

“My friend, khawutsho inoba ugalele ntoni kula manzi?”

“Mtshana, andiyazi kwaye andifuni nokuyazi hleze ivuke indongamele.”

“Ikongamele ngoku sihlobo kaloku nguwe omnike amanzi.”

“Wena, ungandoyikisi!”

“Ndiyadlala sihlobo, kanti uligwala kanje?”

“Mtshana, amapolisa yenye into xana sele kushushu.”

“Akhonto sihlobo, wena thula sikunye kwaye soze sishiyane.”

Siye saphazanyiswa kule ncoko esi sibini ngamanye amantombazana afike nawo ema ancokola ezebandla.

Lihambile ixesha engabikeli mntu uPhindiwe ngemeko yokugula kwakhe. Okukhona enyamezela kwakukhona ukugula kumondela. Waqala nalapha enkonzweni wafiniza, wasuka ngoku umntu obekade ehlabela watshitshiliza. Yonke lento yayibangwa yintloko

nomqala obuhlungu. Wacinga icebo lokuphuma kuyo lemeko. Waqala wahlabela ngamexesha afunwa nguye.

Ngexesha acinge ngalo ebesuka abethe zibembini, ntathu iingoma akugqiba ahlale phantsi. Baqala abantu babheka-bheka bengazi ukuba mabathini. Abanye babeye bamkrwece kuba besoyisakala bona, abanye besindwa ziintloni zokubona indlu kaThixo isiwa likho igorhakazi lokuyiphumeza. Besithi akukrwecewa uPhindiwe suka ayitsale impumlo ajonge kanye kumfundisi, ukumbonisa ukuba yena akazokuhlabela. Bekukodwa ukusuka angaphakami nakweso situlo. Babekho oomama bebukele, bexakiwe ukuba ingaba igorha labo lingenwe yintoni. Bagqiba ukuba mabakhe bambize khonukuze bazi ukuba yintoni isizekabani sale meko.

“Phindi mntwan’ezulu sithi masikubize.”

“Ewe, mama ndimamele”, iphendule ime ngenyawo intombi kaBhulo.

“Hlala kaloku sisi.”

“Andizokwazi mama kuba ndingxamile, akhonto imbi?”

Baqala oomama bebhathi bagungqa kwanga nezo zambatho ziyabatshisa.

“Hayi tana torho, yabona wena mizana... Mamu’Ngalo bunokuwuphalaza kakuhle lomcimbi kuba ndibuyilorho wena.”

“Ingathi uwuphethe kakuhle nje tana sele uqhuba”, utshilo umamu’Ngalo kuba ebona kusibekele.

“Yabona sisi, nantsi lento, xa uThixo ekunike italente musa ukuyisa ezihagwini.”

Aqala amakhosikazi ajonga phantsi kuba eqonda ukuba uphazamile umam’Bhele ngendlela awubeke ngayo lo mcimbi.

“Andiva mama?”

“Iiperile ntombi...” umam’Bhele uphose amehlo kwamanye amakhosikazi, suka wafika ebale iinzwane onke. Uye wabila kuba eqonda ukuba impendulo ezayo izakumlingana.

“Mam’Bhele ukuba akunanto ndingakhululeka?” ubuzile uPhindiwe kucaca ukuba sele efutheka.

“Sisi mandi...”

“Andiva?”

“Ndigqibile nomizana.” Watsho umam’Bhele, ebiza amanzi kwenye inkosikazi esuke yangathi iyadubuleka ukuya phandle.

Khange abuye aphenhule uPhindiwe uye wegwiqi waphuma phandle egoduka. Basale abafazi bezingxala kulomanzi omthombo kaDavide.

“Ts! Nandiyekela bomama?”

“Yabona Bhelekazi ubuwuphetha, kwaye singafuni kumosha tu ke thina.”

Emveni koko baye bajongana abafazi bawa yintsini.

“Rha! Hayi uqaqadekile, Yeva? Andifuni kuva nenye, kodwa inye imini esidenge abazi abantu.”

“Noko andiyiqondi lento yalo mntwana.”

“Yiphi ke Cirhakazi?” Wabuza uMam’Bhele.

“Bomama yintoni imbangi yokuba lo mntwana abe nje?”

“Nathi sifana nawe, loo mbuzo awunampendulo.”

“Iyafuna ukujongwa bafazi le meko kuba zange umntu ajike oluhlobo.”

“Unokunyanisa kodwa Cirha, nam ndinayo into ethi lo mntwana uphazamisekile kwaye kukho ukufa apha.”

“Hayini bafazi, uphethwe likratshi la mntwana kuba engafumani ntshebe.” Utshilo omnye wabafazi abakule ndibano. Kwesi sithuba kuye kwahlekwa yalibaleka naleyo bibakhubekisile.

Emveni koku kuye kwancokolwa ezemvuselelo ngamakhosikazi aze abuya achithakala.

Lihambile ixesha lona lingaliyo, lahamba laxola. Lalimana nelanga liqengqeleka de liye kutshona. Kuthe ekuhambeni kwexesha kwaphawuleka ukuba uPhindiwe akasabonakali phakathi kwabantu ukanti nasecaweni sele elizinyo lenkuku. Kuthe ke kuba ezilalini azilali mbetheni zvakala ezokuba akaguli uPhindiwe ufe ephila. Baqala bagungqa abefundisi nebandla liphela besithi, “UTHixo makenze ngetarhu kumthanjiswa wakhe.” Ooqalazive

babesithi, “Akabhitye unendawo ezifuna ukucengwa.” Abo babebuya kwikhaya lakhe babesithi, “Sele emi ngentloko kuphela wona amalungu omzimba aphelile.” Abefundisi benza isicelo sokuba oodade mabakhe baphume baye kumbona uPhindiwe, sele kuvulwa nomthandazo. Okunene oodade abane bekhathwa ligosa baye benjenjeya ukuya kwaBhulo beyokuzibonela lomhlola. Ekufikeni kwabo kweli khaya baye bahlangatyezwa nguyise wentombi leyo nonina ekubonakala ukuba bafe bephila. Hayi ke bethu baye bayondlala imeko yentombi yabo sele bemana besula namehlo kubonakala ukuba kunzima kubo. Torho abantu benkosi bamamele ngokuzola, kucaca ukuba ziNgelosi zeZulu. Igosa ke, liye lacela ukuba makhe kubekwe umthandazo omfutshane. Liqalile igorhakazi leZulu eliphakathi kwabamama larhoxozisa, hayi ke bethu bayithatha bayifunqula ingoma kucaca ngenene ukuba uzakuphuma namhlanje uMtyholi. Kuthe xa ikwivesi yesibini ingoma, yavakala incwina kweligumbi alele kulo umguli. Incwina iqale ezantsi yenza isimbonono yaze yabuya yabhonga, kuvakale ukuwa kwezinto nogoqo – goqo kubonakala ukuba kunzima. Aqala amakholwa abheka – bheka kwacaca ukuba akasayazi nokuba kukho uThixo apha. Yaqala yahexa ingoma ingulowo umntu wajonga komnye, igosa ebelingasemnyango liye legwiqi laphuma, phofu ke liyokubetha amanzi. Libuye emveni kwemizuzu emihlanu, sele ikrwitsheke mpela ingoma. Ugosa uqondile ukuba icebo kukuba ayibambe kuba umgqumo owawukho wawungathi kungavela nantonina kwelo gumbi. Okwakukubi, yayikukuba wonke umntu ngoku amehlo wayewatsolise emnyango ingathi awusaphumi loo mthandazo. Ugosa uwubethe wangowona mfutshane ebomini umthandazo wokuvala. Lisiko ke ukuba xa kuzakuhanjwa acelwe ukubonwa umguli. Inene ke luvumile usapho kwelo khaya. Yabuya yanguhintsi – hintsi ukungena ngaphakathi ingulowo esithi ngamehlo ngena wena. Uye waqina ugosa wangena, balandele oomama. Ibengumzuzu, babuya bavela sele becela ukukhululeka beshiya uThixo ngemva ukuba makabancede. Apho endleleni khangela kubekho uthetha nomnye koko ibengulowo nalowo wawazi umnyango womzi wakhe. Umam’Bhele naye bephakathi kwelo gqiza, uqondile ukuba makasele egqithela kwamfundisi kuba umzi wakhe wawungekude apho.

“Nank’umntu.” Utsho sele ngaphakathi uMamBhele.

“Tyhini nguwe Bhele? Ngena dade, ngena mntu weNkosi.” Utshilo umfundisi etsala isitulo ukuba bahlale.

“Mfundisi siphuma phaya kwaBhulo”, utshilo umam’bhele emaphikana.

“INkosi yam, inisikelele.”

“Mfundisi kubi kwela khaya.”

“Kwekhu, zambi ke ezi ndaba uza nazo, Bhele – Bhele.”

“Mfundisi lusizi oluya ndilubona phaya.”

“Qhuba Bhele-Bhele.”

“Ndikufungisa amaBhele ephelele.”

“Uthini ngoku?”

“Zange ndayibona into enjeya.”

“Uthini kum? Qhuba Bhelekazi.”

“Ndikufungisa amaBhele ephelele, sifike lamntwana elumonqo.”

“Uthini ngoku, qhuba Bhele-Bhele.”

“Sithe sakuqala ukucula, seva izwi lahagu exhelwayo itswina kweligumbi akulo.”

“Uthini na Bhele? Madoda ngumhlola, qhuba Bhele.”

“Ndikufungisa amaBhele ephelele.”

“Hambisa.”

“Uphelile la mntwana mfundisi, ubhitye ufe ephila.”

“Thixo, Mkhululi waboni.”

“Into endiphazamisayo mfundisi ngamandla, hayi tana unawo, yabona njengokuba ebhityile uthe akuva ingoma, wagibisela yonke into esekamireni phantsi evungama okwenja abuye abe yingonyama, saqala singamakholwa sathi uSathana uzokuphuma saqinisa aph’engomeni.”

“Tsi! Amagorha eZulu, ntombi zaseJerusalem.”

“Ndikufungisa amaBhele ephelele.”

“Qhuba Bhele-Bhele.”

“Mfundisi sithe sakungena kweli gumbi akulo umguli, siyibasela ingoma, suka wema ngenyawo umntwana enganxibanga eze njengoko wazalwa.”

“Hambisa Bhele-Bhele ndiphulaphule.”

“Uye waziphosa eludongeni elukhaba ngeenyawo ngathi ufuna ukugqobhoza aphumele kwelinye icala, ndikufungisa amaBhele mfundisi wam.”

“Bhelekazi cacisa.”

“Mfundisi oko ndaba ngumntu zange ndazibona iimbambo zomntu, ndithe ndakuqwalasela ezantsi komsintila ndafika kukho ugqamsholo lwento engathi ngumsila.”

“NguMtyholi Bhele-Bhele uze ngokwakhe, uze ubuqu.”

“Kunjalo mfundisi wam kwaye kufuneka uyile kwela khaya.”

Kwesi sithuba umfundisi ucinge iqhinga ngokukhawuleza lokuba makamkhulule umam’Bhele khonukuze le nyewe ingaweli ezandleni zakhe.

“Bhele ndilinde umfundisi uNgondo kwaye ke bendingekalungisi.”

“Ndiyakuva mfundisi.”

“Kwaye lo bumbona nguSathana ngokwakhe uze ubuqu ehlabathini eze kulibulala”, uhlasimle wenjenjalo umfundisi kucaca ukuba usisi thukuthuku bubushushu.

“Mfundisi wam.”

“Uthi ubone umsila?”

“Kunjalo mfundisi wam.”

“Bhele nguMtyholi uziguqule, yabona ke le meko ifuna mna, besele nditshilo ndathi kuwe kukho umfundisi endimlindileyo, yiya ke kuMthandi inceku yeNkosi, uthi ndithuma yena kwela khaya ukuba ayokukhalima.”

“Ndiyakuva mfundisi kodwa...”

“Akufuneki kodwa apha, Bhele ngamandla eZulu afunekayo, yiya ngomyalelo wam.”

Uphumile uMamBhele wenjenjeya ukuya kwaMthandi wafika wayandlala imeko njengoko ebeyalalwe. Emveni koko uye wagoduka kuba eqonda okwakhe ukugqibile. Kwelakhe icala umfundisi usale etsala ucango. Uye wabiza inkosikazi yakhe wayinika umyalelo oluqilima wokuba aze angaphazanyiswa uzakukhe athandaze, nokuba ngubani omfunayo zekuthiwe akakho. Ungene kwigumbi lakhe lokulala wavala, uye wonda phantsi kwebhedi watsala igranqa yakhe wabetha amathamo amabini avakalayo.

“Tsii!!! Madoda ndingayini ukuzingombisa ngegeza ebudaleni.”

Emva koko uye wakhwela phezu komondlalo wakhe wabetha ithatha.

Emveni kokumamela ingcombolo ayichazelwe nguMamBhele uMthandi uye waqubula intonga yakhe nebhayibhile wenjenjeya ukusingisa kwaBhulo. Inye into abenayo endleleni uMthandi ngumthandazo omfutshane. Ekugalelekeni kwakhe kwaBhulo ufike sele kuqoqoshiwe, naye ke bethu uzazisile wasele ecela ukungena kwigumbi lomguli. Uvunyelwe waze wangena, ekungeneni kwakhe uye watsala isitulo waza wahlala kufutshane nomguli. Uye ke waqhubekeka nomthandazo wakhe omfutshane ongaphumelisiyo. Ngelingeni livakele ilizwi lomguli.

“Tata ndiyafa.”

“UThixo ngowethu sonke, mnta’am kwaye usithanda ngokulinganayo.”

“Tata intloko iyandibulala kwaye ndigqitywa nangumqala.”

“Ndiyakuva ntombi yeZulu.”

“Ndibethwa ngumculo.”

“Ndimamele ceku yeZulu.”

“Uthi wakuphila suka ndibe ngathi ndikwiziko lomlilo, umqala utshise intloko iqhekeke kubini.”

“UThixo uyasiva isikhalo sakho.”

“Ndivaleke nasekutyeni.”

“Ndiyakuva mntwana weNkosi.”

“Ndicela ukuthandaziswa, uThixo andihlangule khonukuze ndibuye ndimdumise, ukuba ngumntu owenze oku, awabone amandla kaThixo ukuba akadlulwa.”

“Okukhululwe emaZulwini kukhululwe nasemhlabeni, uSathana akanamandla.”

“Enkosi tata.”

“Emasikwenze kukuthandaza sicele kuThixo akukhulule kuyo lentlungu, akubuyisele kwindawo yakho akubekele yona, phakathi kwethu ubuye usiculele.”

“Sele ndikhululwe.”

Kwesi sithuba uMthandi uye waguqa ngamadolo ebamba isandla sikaPhindiwe.

“Thixo, Bawo Mkhululi waboni...”

Simanga Sani Na Esi?

Ngaphesheya komlambo xa ujonge ngasentla elokishini, wothi wakuxwesisa amehlo uwaphose ngaphesheya wofumana uludwe lwezindlu, ezifumileyo nezibandayo. Le ke yilali yaseGxulu kuQobo-qobo. Kumzi ongezantsi komfula owawunamanqugwala amane noxande, kwakuhlala khona unyana kaSipoponi umfo waseMaNtshilibeni, uZiwelele igama. Mfo lo wayengafume kuyaphi kodwa ikati yayisoloko isebhotolweni. UZiwelele lo nenkosikazi yakhe uNomatshisi babelizwe ngomntu omnye kuphela emhlabeni ityendyana ababeliteketisa ngokuthi nguKlesbhi. Eligama lalisukela kwinkwenkwana yeBhulu uZiwelele awakhe wahlangana nayo eRhawutini, uKleinbaas. Aba ke yayingabahlobo abakhulu de uZiwelele wathiya unyana wakhe ngalo. Elonagama likaKlesbhi lenkobe yayinguZungezile Sponono. UKlesbhi ke ukhule kwelo khaya enikwa yonke into de waqabela ebukrwaleni.

Kuthe ekuphumeleleni kwakhe ibanga leshumi, waya kwikholeji yoqeqesho zititshala eMdantsane, i Dr. W. B. Rubusana Teachers College. Abafundi abaphuma kule kholeji babephuma kumaphondo ohlukeneyo kwaye beziphatha ngokungafaniyo, naye ke wazeka mzekweni. Ithamsanqa yaba kukuba wayibetha wayifinca loo minyaka mithathu kodwa wona umonakalo wawusele uthathe unyawo. Ekubuyeleni kwakhe ekhaya wafumana ubunzima ekufumaneni umsebenzi kodwa walinda ngethemba. Koku kulinda kwakhe uyise waphawula nto ithile eye ayamphatha ngendlela.

“Hee, mfazi noko andiyiqondi lento.”

“Yiphi ke tata?” Ubuzile uNomatshisi ngexa bephumle phantsi komthi phambi komzi wabo.

“Le yale ntwana.”

“Uyanditshonela ke ngoku.”

“Hayi, maan akuboni na wena?”

“Intoni, tata?”

“Si abafazi, ukuba ibilihlebo lelali elo ngekudala ulazi!”

“Kaloku nanjengomntu osele ubonile cacisa.”

“Sekhe wena weva ilizwi elincinci kweli gumbi lale ntwana?”

Kwesi sithuba uye wenqumama uNomatshisi kucaca ukuba ucinga kude.

“Yazi’ba wena uthetha into esoloko ndizibuza yona, kanti nawe uyiqwalasele?”

“Yabona ke mfazi ukuba kunjani ukungathethi?”

“Kunjalo, mna soloko ndibona encokola nalaa mfana waseMaqwathini, uNjongo.”

“Nantso ke mfazi maphi amantombazana, okuncokola?”

“Hayi, kaloku tata, abahlobo ngabahlobo kwaye bakhula kunye bebekunye nasesikolweni.”

“Ndikuva ngqo kodwa ndiphawule into ngentseni izolo, lo mfana ephuma kweli gumbi lakhe.”

“Uthini ngoku?” Wabuza umfazi ebambe umlomo.

“Ndikufungisa ubawo elele kwelokuphumla.”

“Tata, makhe simbize hleze kuthi kanti kukho nto singayiqondiyo suka thina singxame kanti akunjalo”, watsho wekhwasu umfazi wajikela kwelinye icala wakhwaza yabuya impendulo.

“Coming, Mommie.”

Ubuyele esitulweni umfazi wahlala ecaleni komyeni wakhe. Kube ngumzuzu belindile suka kwegqi into entetyezayo ukuhamba, yabe inxibe ibhulukwe emhlophe ethe nca izobe lo mzimba ungezantsi, yayifake nehemphe embala ubuthubi icwayiza ngeenyawo ezikhazimlayo kubonakala ukuba aziwazi umhlaba, kuzwane ngalunye kwakufakwe icici kuqondakala ukuba lelemali. Kwesi sithuba wothuke waqikileka ngomqolo uZiwelele akubona inkulu yakhe isithi gqi intetyeza. Uphakamile wavuthulula wabuya wahlala phantsi. Uphakamise amehlo wajonga esisimanga siphambi kwakhe.

“Mfazi, nceda undiphathele la mphantsi webhedi mhlambi zingabuya iingqondo kum.”

Uthe khwasu kwakho umfazi wangena kwelinye inqugwala wabuya ephethe ibhekile. Unyana ebesame bhunxe phambi koyise ebambebele esinqeni engathethi, utata ejonge phantsi enikina intloko.

“Bamba tata.”

Uyithe hlasi loo bhokile uZiwelele igcwele iphuphuma wabetha entloko umthamo ovakalayo, uthe xa azakuyibeka phantsi suka nenkosikazi yonda ngayo, hlasi guntyu, guntyu yehla ibhekile yabekwa phantsi.

“Kwedini, hlala phantsi!” Utshilo uZiwelele kucaca ukuba ubufudumala.

“Where, papa?” Ubuzile unyana ngelizwi likamamlambo

“Ngunywee pari waphi ke ngoku lo uthethe ngaye, Thixo yenye ke le kwelikhaya!”

“No daddy where do I sit please, darlie?”

Uqhwebane izandla uNomatshisi xa kulapho, logama uZiwelele evule umlomo exakwe nakukuphefumla.

“Dad, mom, let me put you at ease, I am living my life and I like it, sorry if you don’t approve darlie, that’s just it, but I love you both.”

“Hak, heke, uthini kwedini?” Wabhuda utata.

“Oh, if there is nothing to discuss, I would rather leave I am waiting for Jey to take me out tonight.”

“Yintoni ke leyo?” Wabuza uNomatshisi.

“UJey, mamie, nguNjongo.”

“UNjongo?”

“Yes, daddy he is my man.”

Ubuye wayakuthi qikili uZiwelele wabuya waziphakamela, uthe xa aphakamisa amehlo wabona isinqe esintetyezayo sijikela emvakwendlu wabuya wayokuthi finini ngomqolo. Umfazi uthe ngexesha emana ukuwa uZiwelele suka wehlasi ibhekile wangena kakhulu kuyo. Ubuyele esitulweni uZiwelele iqebe lomfazi lijonge phezu.

“Wenzani, wenzani?”

“Tyhini, wabuza kum ngento zakowenu, nini abanjeya kowenu!”

“Ndibuza wenzani etywaleni bam?”

“Hay, torho tata ngumothuko, lwatsho nonxano lwathatha indawo.”

“Nomatshisi yintoni le uze nayo kweli khaya, emzini kabawo?”

“Tata, nceda ungadyobhi ibhotolo yakowenu kum.”

“Abanjeya, rha! Ubhanxekile yaba akuziva, ugeziswa yilento usela nam, rha! Phakama ham’bhobiza ubhuti phaya, bobabini beze apha ngoku yithi kukho umamlambo okhoyo, uchaze ukuba ndinayo negranqa.”

Ubambe isidima umfazi waphuma ngeheke kodwa kucaca ukuba amadolo wona ayanikezela.

UKlesbhi utyibhize ngeso sinqe sikanomeva waya kungena kwigumbi lakhe lokulala. Hayi, ke bhuti lalingumbono webhokisi ke lona. Uyise wagqibela lingapeyintwanga kodwa ngoku lalipeyintwe ngombala obuthubi, laza apha eluphahleni lafakwa inkabankaba yesipili egqibe uphahla lonke. Wayesithi umntu ukuba ulele kulo azibuke ubuhle kweso sipili. Phezu kwebhedi kwakukho oonopopi abathathu abakhulu, owebhere omhlophe kwakunye nemibini yehlosi. Entanyeni kwaba nopopi kwakujinga amatsheyina esilivere abhalwe, “I Love U Klesbhi Wam.” Indawo yokufaka impahla yayimhlophe wee, kwaza emgangathweni kwafakwa ufele lwegusha nalo olumhlophe, lento ke yabangela ukuba igumbi libe lele nkosazana yasesihlangwini. UKlesbhi ufike waziphosa phezu komondlalo wakhe kucaca ukuba ukhubekile emphefumleni. Uye wehlasi umkhala emthunzini wakhe wacofa. Ukhale kabini kathathu lavakala ilizwi.

“My sugar, my baby girl how are you?”

“I’m hurt dear, please come and be with me, I need you please, please.” Unkwinize njalo uKlesbhi exelisa ikati.

“I will be there my luv, I will be with you forever.”

“Please dear”, utshilo uKlesibhi kubonakala ukuba naxesha liphi angasitsho esika Rarheli. Emveni koko uye wavuthela apha kwimfono-mfono yakhe umoya wothando wayicima.

Kwesi sithuba ugqibe ukuba makasele ipilisi yokulala waze wazigquma.

UNomatshisi uhexeze wayakufika emzini womkhuluwa kaZiwelele, ufike ngethamsanqa ekho omabini amadoda. Uye wangena wevu phantsi, phofu eziphosa.

“Sisi, walapha uphi umtakwethu?” Ubuzile uMagaqana kuba nguye inkulu kumadodana amathathu, uMagaqana, uZiwelele noMaxelegwana.

“Ndithunywa nguye, bhuti.”

“Akhonto molokozana?” Wabuza uMaxelegwana.

“Kwedini, yintoni ngoku uqale nini ukuhlaba imibuzo wena?”

“Bhuti kaloku...”

“Hayi, akho bhuti apha phendula sele ubuza nje ungakanani kum?”

“Bhuti...”

“Akufuneki bhuti apha akundalekeli nokundalekela, uthetha xa ulinikwe ngubani igunya.”

“Bhuti, noko mkhuluwa uyakhubekisa...”

“Unayo indlu, unaye umfazi, umdala kodwa akunanto.”

“Bhuti uyandithuka, hayi mkhuluwa uyandithuka...”

“Umbuzo waba sisithuko kuwe, thula kwedini nangoku uyaphendula, uphendula ntoni?”

Ibe ngulo phantsi phezulu kwesi sibini, kuhliswana ngemibuzo yena uNomatshisi sele eyinto entanyazisa intloko ephosa amehlo kulo ibuye iwaphose kulowa. Kuncede ngokusuka kungene uNomagqwetha umfazi kaMagaqana ukulamla loo meko.

“Tata, sele umyeka ke bethu umamele le ithethwa ngusisi.”

“Ewe, ndiyeke bhuti, kuba ndodinwa kusoloko undiyuca, nam ndoziphosa ngelinye ilanga.”

“Rha! MaXelegwana, yithi gwigqi ndikucande kwedini, rha ndakucanda uyamazi uMaqagana nasezilokhweni mna ndiyaziwa, Yhu! Yhu! Utsho kuMbosholo kadlalani onjengam rha! Phu Maxelegwana kwedini ndakucanda, ndakubetha ungazazi negama lakho kwedini.”

Uye wagungqa uMaqagana kucaca ukuba uthunukiwe, kodwa kwakunzima ukuphakama kuba unkabi wayedlulile kwiminyaka engamashumi asixhenxe.

Uthe khwasu kweso sithuba uMaxelegwana wayakuma phantsi komthi othe qelele nexande eli bekuthethelwa kulo.

“Tata, ingenaphi ke le kadlalani? Kodwa ke sele unceda usisi hlezele kuthi kanti uyaleqwa.”

“Unyanisile ke mfazi, sisi uthini umntakwethu yeka wena lentwana isileyo.”

“Bhuti, akhonto, ngaphandle kokuba becela ukuba uvele phaya kuye endlwini”, watsho esithi...”

“Sisi yithi kumntakwethu ndibuxakeka kuba mna nale ntwana, ufika silungiselela ukuya phakwa... kwabani nkosikazi kanene?”

“Hayi andazi khangе nithethe nto kum.”

“Bhuti, uthe maze ndithi unetakane analo nakulukrwitsha kunye.”

“Yabona ke le ntwana, masele ndiwuyeka lo msebenzi bendizakuya kuwo ndileqise lo, kaloku wena molokozana lentwana sashiyelana ibele, ayikwazi ke xa ixakekile kungenjalo indifuna suka ndiyiyekele.”

“Tata, bendingavuya ukuba ndinokuhamba nam kuba kukho into ebendingwenela ukuyithetha nosisi.”

“Ndakhe ndahamba nomfazi kwinto zam?”

“Sele umyeka bhuti ngenene ikho into ebesizimisele ukukhe siyichube.”

“Hayi ke molokozana, ndosele ndirhoxa xa usitsho, biza ke nale ntwana, kuba andikwazi kuyishiya yintonga yam esekhosi leya.”

Baphume ke sele kumnandi kwelo gumbi aba besingise kwaZiwelele.

UJongi uye ngokukhawuleza kulo Klesbhi kuba wayeqonda ukuba ukho umonakalo. Wayenxibe ibhulukhwe ebomvu ethe nca, ihempe emnyama kwakunye nezihlangu ekwakuthiwa ngo “Liewe Heksie” ezazitsho ngempumlo etsolo. linwele zazingathi zimuncwe lithole zithe nca apha entloko zibengezela okwezo zamagqwirha amathathu kwincwadi uMacbeth.

“My love, what is wrong?” Utsho emwola uKlesbhi, naye ke waliphelazana wazinikela.

“My dad, I hate him, my dad...yes, yes I hate him”, wankwiniza njalo uKlesbhi.

“What happened dear?” Watsho uJongi, osele ezitshintshe igama engu J.Jey.

“Jey, ufuna ukwazi ukuba ithini into yam.”

“What a crap, what is the meaning of that?” Batsho behlala ebhedini aba babini kucaca ukuba ilizwe lincinci kubo yaye kubuhlungu.

“Oh! How I wish we could just leave.”

“My dad asked me the same question the other day, what a joke”, utshilo uJongi kucaca ukuba naye unezakhe ezimongameleyo.

“They want to separate us dear, why, why?” Utsho esithi nca kwisifuba sikaJongi uKlesbhi kubonakala ukuba akabuboni obunye ubomi.

“I will not allow that, I would rather die.”

“No, please don’t talk like that Jey, what will happen to me, oh, I will die myself.”

Kweso sithuba kuye kwavakala umntu enkqonkqoza emnyango.

“Oh, please do leave us alone.”

Okukhona bengaphenduli kwabe kukhona kuqinisa ukungongozwa kwecango. Uye wazincama uKlesbhi waphakama waya kuvula ucango sele enyibhilili zinyembezi nodaka lobuso burhiphizekile.

“Yhoo! Madoda yintoni ngoku le? Simanga sani ke esi? Yhoo! Yhoo...” Utshilo uMaxelegwana emi phambi komnyango.

“Do you hear that, my luv, do you hear that, now I must stand and be abused?”

“Kwedini, ngunyehop waphi ke lo uthetha ngaye, khona u nyoluv ngubani? Uyabizwa nguyihlo, yabona uBhuti sasithe likho isiko aliphosileyo sele unje!”

Kwesi sithuba kuthe gqi u Jongi wema emva kwentokazi yakhe.

“Thixo! Thixo, madoda yenye ke le kulo mzi kabhuti, wena kwedini ka...”

“What is wrong with you people?”

Akaligqibanga, wegwiqi uMaxelegegwana ebaleka lomilenze yakhe igoso sele ingathi livili. Ufike kwigumbi abahleli kulo abakhuluwa bakhe waziphosa.

“Bhuti galela, nceda, khandiphinde undithi chatha kulanto, mhlawumbi ingqondo zingabuya...”

“MaXelegwana kwedini uyagula, sikuthume, ubuye sele uphambene ingqondo.”

“Bhuti andiguli kodwa into endiyibonileyo indenza ndifune ukusela ngakumbi, nceda galela mkhuluwa.”

“Galela ntokabawo sizova kakuhle lentwana ithini.” Utshilo uZiwelele.

“Andiseli nabantwana ke, yeyokugqibela kuwe le...”

“Hayi, hayi bhuti ndiyala, mna ndisele isichenene uthi yonke ibhotile yayenu, hayi...”

“Yabona ke Ziwelele? Lento soloko ndikuxelela yona, yabona lentwana inyuka nengalo ngoku.”

“Kwedini, ngubhuti lo uyaphendula ngoku kuye, wakugqiba ukuba mncinci, khona usela nathi kwezi ntsuku? Galelela mna mkhuluwa ungabi sayigalelela le ntwana yaliwa, yimbeko.”

“Yabona wena Ziwelele ndikuthanda ngenyani nokuba kunjani inyani unayo kwedini ufuze mna, le bhotile yeyethu sobabini yakuthi xa isehafini ndiyivale ndigoduke nayo ukuze kusasa ndibe nento yokucinga izinto zakowethu.” Utshilo uMagaqana encumile ethungela uZiwelele.

“Noko Tata isephezulu, mpheni naye ubhuti ze kamva sive le ayibonileyo.” Utshilo uNomagqwetha ngelizwi elipholileyo.

“Jonga mfazi, andixoxi namfazi izinto zakowethu yeva, lentwana sele ingeva nje nguwe kanye, soloko ungenelela.”

“I-hintyana ke Tata nje ukuze naye akwazi ukuba semcimbini yini, yise wabantwana bam.”

Kwesi sithuba kuye kwabonakala esihla kwigwele abekulo uMagaqana, wathatha ikopi wayithi gabhu wadlulisa kumtakwabo ongakhange athethe osuke wayibetha entloko yonke wahlasimla.

“Njengokuba uyigqiba unethemba lani?”

Akubangakho mpendulo kuba uMaxelegwana wayejonge ezantsi ehlasimla kucaca ukuba umnqala kudala ugquba.

“Kwedini besikuthumile.”

“Phi?”

“Kwedini usibhanxa sikuthume ukuba ubize le ntwana ubuya ubaleka ngoku ubuza kwamna ukuba sikuthume phi?”

“Indoda ithume enye indoda, bhuti undithatha njani?”

“Nantso ke, nantso ke, yima, yima ndizakulungisa kudala ndithetha nawe kwedini ndiyabona wena uavumbuka umlibele yima kancinci.” Uphakamile uMaqagana kodwa wabuya wevu phantsi kuba iblanti yayinyukile kuye.

“Ziwelele bamba lentwana uyizise apha ndiyayazi mna into etyiwa ligqirha.”

“Tata ndicinga ngekhe ndiye ngokwam, kuKlesbhi ndimbize.”

“Yitsho usiya, kuba kuzochitheka igazi apha.”

Uphumile uNomagqwetha kangangemizuzu emihlanu wabuya ehamba noKlesbhi kwakunye noJongi. UKlesbhi wayeseyilo nyhididi ebusweni kubonakala ukuba khange abuye ame oko ekhala. Wothuke wacimela uMaqagana esakubona lombono wekati nekatazana emibalabala.

“Nantso ke, mna bendizokuthini ukucacisa lento...”

“Thula...” Utshilo uMaqagana ephinda ephosa elinye ithamo entloko.

“Bhuti, nantso ke into ebendikubizela yona, ngulo mamlambo kunye nokati lo umbetshembetshe kulo mzi kabawo.” Watsho uZiwelele enikina intloko.

“Daddy, why do you bring these people to me, what is it that I have done?” Wabuza uKlesbhi ethe nca kuJongi esifubeni.

“Le ntwana ayisakwazi nokuthetha isiXhosa kwezi ntsuku, ngubani khona lo uzifake kuye kwedini?” Wabuza uZiwelele.

“This is my future husband, ngumyeni wam, sizotshata”, waphendula uKlesbhi.

Hayi ke madoda yaqala ingxuba kaxaka, uye waya kuthi bhulukuqu uMagaqana, phofu ekhatshwa butywala abuselileyo, waxhuma uZiwelele wema ngenyawo eqhwaba izandla okwebhinqa yena uMaxelegwana ufumane ithuba wethaphu ibhotile wabetha ithamo elikhulu lomzuzu besothukile wabuya wayivala ibhotile wayinyengeza.

“Kwedini yini le, ihlazo elinje emzini kabawo, yini kwedini ufuze bani, ngubani osekhhe wambona kwelikhaya esenza lento?” Wabuza uZiwelele sele naye ecuntsula kwinto yabantwana kodwa kuqondakala ukuba eqhutywa yiblanti.

“Tata I am gay, I love J.Jey please, yamkela.”

“I also love your daughter, andizenzi ndiyayithanda intombi yakho tata.” Watsho uJongi. Emveni kwala mazwi uye wamwola uKlesbhi bangana.

Kuviwe ngesithonga gungqu kanti kuwa kwakho uMagaqana ebuyela kwakho eluthulwini. Kwesi sithuba uZiwelele uye wehlasi ibhotile waya kuyo emqaleni engakhange agalele. Uye we vhu phantsi wabheka-bheka ekhangela inkulu yakowabo wafika itatsalaza phantsi. Uye wolula isandla ukuze iphakame. Iye nayo yaphakamela ebhotileni yatsho ithamo elivakalayo.

“Bhuti thetha, ndikubizele lento.”

“Ndithethe ntoni mfokabawo?”

“Bendicinga mna ukuba masibakhulule abantwana khonukuze nabo bonwabe, sibomeleze kuthando lwabo.” Utshilo uNomagqwetha ethethela phantsi.

“Unxilile, ungena izinto zelixhaya ngoku, Nomagqwetha?” Wabuza uMagaqana.

“Tata ingxaki kukuba, xa sinobagxotha sibagxothela phi? Ingabethu nje, kwaye sibathumela phi? Kubani? Ikhaya leli, ngabethu.”

“Lilonke sisi uthi ngunyana wam lo uneblukhwe ethe nca nenwele zethole?” Wabuza uZiwelele ebufudumala.

“Unalo icebo ke bhuti?”

Kwesi sithuba kuye kwecwaka endlwini kucaca ukuba kushushu kwaye kunuka nomphanda apho. Amadoda omabini aye ajonga phantsi kungade kubekho iphakamisa amehlo.

“Kambe xa nibagxotha bhuti, nithi mabaye phi, lonto ithi nam nakundigxotha kweli khaya?” Kubuze uMaxelegwana eyengezelisa amehlo.

“Andiva Maxelegwana, uthini ngoku?” Wabuza uMaqagana kubonakala ukuba wothukile.

“Nithi ndingade nditshate nje yintoni? Nam ndinje!”

“Praise the Lord, my handsome uncle.” Watsho waziphosa uKlesbhi kumalume wakhe uMaxelegwana bawolana belilelana.

Ibe ke ngugeqe-geqe, bhum, mbhakra kusiwa abantu macala omabini.

Thando Nyana Wam

Kumadoda ayehlala kwingingqi yaseZwide eBhayi babembalwa abantu ababengamazi uThando. UThando wayeyenye yaloo madoda ethi ukuba ijongiwe, kusalwe kuhletywa ngayo, kungenjalo athi esateketisa usana, suka lufixize. Kwiminyaka emininzi eyadlulayo wayesaziwa njengomdlali obalaseleyo kwezombhoxo. Iqela awayelidlalela iSpring Rose, lalisaziwa kakhulu kwaye igama lakhe lalingqisha entla, limelana namadoda amakhulu afana noPeter Mkhatha kwakunye noCheeky Watson. Ubumbhalasane bakhe kweli qela kwabangela ukuba achongwe kwiqela elimele ingingqi, i-KWARU. Oku kwamenza ukuba adume ngakumbi kuba mihla le, babedlala kumaphondo ahlukeneyo, baze babuye nodumo.

Kolo dumo lwakhe waba nenzwakazi ethe ncoo kuye emphefumlweni, akalibazisa ke wazimanya ngeqhina lomtshato kunye nayo. Akubanga kudala bekunye baye balizwa ngabantwana abathathu uBusisiwe, Fafa kwakunye noLerato. Ubomi ke ngeli xesha babuyibhotolo bekwimpepho ephezulu. Kwathi esemdlalweni ngenye imini uThando wenzakala edolweni nto leyo eyabangela ukuba kubenzima kakhulu kuye ukudlala kwakho. Uye wancama wayiyeka ibhola waze wafumana isingxungxo kwinkampani eyenza amatayere. Kwaba ngathi ke wambathwe ngumdintsi, kuba uthe kunyaka wokuqala elapho lwaqala uqhanqalazo baze bagxothwa bonke.

Nangona uThando engekayifinci iminyaka engamashumi amathathu ubungafunga umunce iintupha ukuba uqabele kwiminyaka engamashumi amahlanu. Lo mzimba ubusoloko ulushica ulolongwa wasuka wagogeka okowenkothovu, iintlontlo zakhawuleza ukuzikhuthula iinwele zakhe wabuya wagogeka ngakumbi. Iinxwaleko zamembatha ngokumembatha wanga angacela umhlaba umginye. Eyona nto yayimngqiba kakhulu kukungaphangeli nokusoloko ekhongozela emfazini. Yaqala ke ngoku nentombi yomntu yabonisa ubuyona, savela isimilo esingesiso.

“Thixo wam ndidiniwe, ndondle-ndondle nexhego”, ebevakala ngamanye amaxesha egrwexula njalo umfazi ekwigumbi lokuphekela. Emva koko kokhala icephe nesitya kwigumbi lokuphekela suka kucinywe isibane kuyokulalwa engakhange akhothiswe naphantsi. Ngalo lonke elo xesha wayesuka abukele umabonakude uThando suka azibhaqe sele elele kweso situlo. Ibuye yenza enye ngoku inkosikazi yasuka yaphuma kwakweli gumbi balala kulo yaya kuzifaka kwigumbi labantwana. Oku kumtsho uThando waminxeka emphefumlweni wasuka wasisithunzela nje esingavuli mlomo koko silale kweso situlo siphambi komabonakude.

Nakubeni wayezithulela uThando umfazi wayengayekanga ukumombelela ngezithuko.

“Kazi lo wowufuna nini umsebenzi? Amanye amadoda ebila nje.”

Asikuko nokuba uThando wayengawufuni umsebenzi. Mihla le wayevuka kweso situlo amengentseni phambi komnyango womzi wakhe. Abantu babedlula phambi komzi wakhe, kambe abanye sele besebeza. Nakubeni engabeva wayeyazi into abayithethayo imkruna ngakumbi, kodwa icebo lalingekho. Ngentsimbi yesixhenxe nkqo iyakuthithu indoda ethengisa iphepha ekoneni. Yothi gqi sele incumile kuba isazi ukuba umhlobo wayo ulindile. Esi sibini sasikhula kunye kwingingqi yase Veeplaas, saze sangenela amabanga apho kwisikolo esinye. Bohlukana ke ngokuba bekhula kodwa ubomi babunzingi-nzingi macala.

“Sekunjalo Mazaleni”, indoda yephepha yomkhahlela njalo uThando.

“Nakuwe Jolinkomo.”

“Akhonto mntwan’nkosi.”

“Sesezolo Mazaleni.”

“Nakum mhlobo wam.”

“Ezi zinto wena Mazaleni zenzeka zibuye zidlule.”

“Yitsho uphinde mfo wakuthi, wakuva into wena uncede undazise.”

“Ndindlebe zonke wena”, emveni koko yokhupha iphepha langentseni indoda imnike. Le ndoda yayingasajonge nentlawulo kuba isazi ukuba uThando imeko yakhe imaxongo. Emveni koku uThando woncuma athathe iphepha angene ngaphakathi. Olo ncumo yoba lolo kugqibela kuba eyakubuya ancume kwakho xa ethatha iphepha ngentseni kusuku olulandelayo. Ekungeneni kwakhe uThando wokhawulelwa sisaqhwithi ngaphakathi.

“Rha! Ndazenza, vha?” Yodwaxabula njalo inkosikazi ikwelinye igumbi.

“Ngantoni mama?”

“Thula!!! Thula andithethini nawe”, wohlahlamba njalo uNobantu, kunge uqala phantsi ukuvutha.

“Thixo wam, andazi undizondani? Yini endayenze kuwe, Yhu! Ndafa esinje isihogo!”

“Nobantu, sukukwekwa, ukuba uthetha nam yitsho uyeke abantwana”, wotsho ngeliphantsi

uThando.

“Bendithe ndithetha nawe, Rha! Uvuthelwa kum, wakugqiba ukuxakwa kukufuna umsebenzi, mna ndipixa imini yonke wena uthe nqeke, imali yesikolo iphuma kula magxa, nokutya kwalendlu kuphuma kum, ngoku unesibindi sondiphendula, hamb’ofuna umsebenzi bhuti.”

La mazwi ayemtsho uThando anga angangcwatywa ehleli. Wayesuka awutshixe umlomo kunge akakho. Hayi ke, inkosikazi yomombhelela, ixhentsa suke uve ngombha! Wecango kanti usapho lumkile. Ezintento zamenza wabuyela emva nasempilweni uThando wasuka wathi beyindoda ezivayo wajika wanguDengana. Ngaphakathi wayesisibingi-bingi sento elijacu. Inye into eyayimomeleza kulo meko ngamazwi kanina osele wagoduka.

Thando mntwan’am ithi incwadi elungileyo, “OSUKUBA ECELA NGEGAMA LAM WOFUMANA.”

La mazwi ayesoloko enkenteza njalo ezindlebeni zikaThando, wayezixelela ukuba kolunga ngelinye ilanga. Nakubeni waye fumana iphepha rhoqo uThando inye indawo awaye ayifunde yindawo yokufuna imisebenzi. Kwathi ngelinye ilanga esaphengulula njalo uThando, wathana gaga namagama amakhulu, Debt Collectors Needed. Uye waguqa ngamadolo watsho ngomthandazo omfutshane.

“Bawo, khandinike elo thuba Nkosi yam...Amen.”

Emveni kwamazwi uye wazilungisa wakhawuleza ukuya kwindawo yokukhwela ii-teksi eziya edolophini. Ngalo lonke elixa ehamba uThando amazwi omzali wakhe ayenkenteza ezindlebeni zakhe.

“OSUKUBA ECELA NGEGAMA LAM WOFUMANA.”

Uthe akufika kwindawo yee-taxi walinda. Ngaphesheya kwindawo awayemi kuyo kwakumi isikolo samabanga aphantsi. Uthe akujonga wabona ukuba abantwana abangena kwesi sikolo babengajongwa mntu kwaye indawo le yaye igcwele izithuthi ezihla zinyuka. Nezo zazizobathula zazifika zibashiye nje zingabanekeli ukuba bangenilena abantwana. Lento uThando wayijonga nje akayifaka ngqondweni kuba wayexinwe zezakhe. Akubanga kudala efikile yagaleleka i-teksi yamthatha yaya kumlahla phambi kwamagumbi ekufunwa kuwo abasebenzi. Engenile apho wahlangatyezwa linenekazi eliye lathi makathi chuu phakathi

kwamanye amadoda amathathu, ekuqondakala ukuba nawo azofuna umsebenzi. Bangene ngabanye ngabanye kwigumbi lomphathi de lafika nethuba likaThando. Ungenile ke naye wafika phambi kwendoda etya ulwimi aluqondayo. Umphathi uvele wasikwa yinceba engekavuli nomlomo uThando. Ubone usizana lwexhego ekuqondakala ukuba sele lwenzakele ziinkxwaleko.

“My friend this is a very hard job.”

“Will do my best, mlungu wam, please.”

“Do you have experience on this type of job?”

“I am prepared to learn, Sir.”

Wasikwa yinceba ngakumbi umlungu ngala mazwi kuba eqonda ukuba ukho umonakalo nokuba kuphina.

“My friend we pay on commission and you have to travel long distances but I will be fair to you I will give you an area close to where you live, all you need to do is to deliver these documents to each person, once they sign you will get your payment, that is there least I can do.”

La mazwi amtsho uThando kwanga angathi vuleka mhlaba ndingene. Abuya amazwi kanina.

“OSUKUBA ECELA NGEGAMA LAM WOFUMANA.”

UThando umbulele umphathi wakhe omtsha, wayalelwa ukuba abuyele kwinenekazi abe dibene nalo kuqala, ukuze anikezele iziqinisekiso zakhe. Emveni koko uye wafumana iincwadi azakuzihambisa, waqalisa, uhambo lo mhambi. Uhambise ezo ncwadi kwizindlu ezahlukeneyo kwingingqi yaseSoweto on Sea nase Veeplaas kodwa wabuya nembande yesikhova. Uye kungena emzini wakhe ngentsimbi yesibhozo edinwe eyimfe. Ufike sele kucinywe nezibane engabekelwanga noko kutya. Uye waziphosa kwisitulo esisebenza njengomondlalo wakhe.

Phambi kokuba abiwe bubuthongo uye waziba ngomthandazo omfutshane.

“Bawo ndithwale nakwesi sihlandlo...Amen.”

Ngentseni ibe sese siqhelo wekhwasu sele bemkile abantu engaxelelwanga nokuba kuyahanjwa. Kube njalo ke iintsuku eziliqela engade abhaqe mntu uluthathayo uxwebu

kambe kwamanye amakhaya ebenyhukutywa kakubi. Kusuku lwesine ebhadula uThando uye wafumana idilesi ekufuphi nomzi wakhe. Ngexesha efumana ledilesi kwakusele kuburhatyela kwaye ebehambe imini yonke kwingqatsini yelanga. Usondele emzini lowo wankqonkqoza. Ngelingeni kuye kwazakuvula inkwenkwana.

“Molo bhuti, ukhona utata?”

“Ewe.”

Uqonde kwangempendulo emntaneni ukuba kushushu kweli khaya.

“Bendicela ukuthetha notata wakho.”

Khange itsho nelimdaka inkwenkwe isuke, yegwiqi yangena ngaphakathi.

“Lo mntu ufuna wena tata, andimazi mna.”

Uve lo mazwi ephandle uThando.

Emveni komzuzu kuthe gqi indoda enxibe ibhulukhwe emfutshane, ngentla ihamba ngogaga. Yayisisiqingqana sendoda enomkhaba ojingayo.

“Ewe, yhini nguwe Mazaleni?”

“Ndim Nokhala”, watsho uThando ebambe amazinyo kuba ivumba lo tywala elaliphuma kule ndoda yayingathi buphekwe kuyo.

“Oh! Yini ebusuku mfondini sele sizakulala.”

“Ndiambisa le ncwadi yetyala, Nokhala.”

“Uyaphazama! Kum andinatyala vha, Mandlovu khawuze kufunwa wena apha.”

“Hayi mfo kabawo wena”, utshilo uThando.

Oko ke, yaba kukubasela umlilo ngamafutha, iqale ngoko ukumnukuneza uThando indoda imchazela ngokondliwa ngumfazi. Itsho izichaza ukuba yona linene into engenamatyala. Uthe gqi kwesi sithuba umfazi kucaca ukuba ufile zintloni. Uye wazama ukuthomalalisa indoda yakhe eyaye ivutha amadangatye. Iye nayo ye gqwiqi ishiya uThando apho emnyango esisankwankwa. Kunye okwakufunwa nguThando kukuba indoda leyo ityikitye uxwebu olo. Ingcango zamaZulu zavuleka ngalo mzuzu kuba yasuka yaluthi rhuthu uxwebu inkosikazi yatyikitya. Nakubeni uThando wayifumana into awayeyifuna waphuma apho umphefumlo

wakhe wophuke ngakumbi. Utsale idyokhwe uThando inyanga yonke apha the kubhaqa abuye axhimfwe, kodwa lona ithemba lalibonakala enkalweni. Ukuphela kwenyanga uThando uye wamkela umvuzo wakhe nakubeni ungengakanani uye waziva ekwelesithathu iZulu. Uye wangqalela kwivenkile yenyama wabopha, wabuya wangena kweyezimuncu-mncu zabantwana nalapho wabopha. Uye waxhabasha ukusingisa emzini wakhe wafika bekho abantwana nomfazi. Baye bajongana xa engena esindwa, kwavakala kwangoko ubushushu bekhaya akwabuzwa mahasa. Uye wohlulela umfazi wakhe kwimalana eshiyekileyo. Ngobo busuku uThando walala okosana.

Ubuye wagoqoza ezama uThando nakwinyanga elandelayo. Kwalile phakathi enyangeni xa elungiselela ukuphangela uThando, yaqala yachaphaza imvula. Uqondile ukuba lo mvula ayisayi kumnqanda ukuba angaphangeli. Uthe xa efika phambi kwesikolo elindele i-teksi waphawula ukuba iyagalela ngamandla imvula. Kulo meko iimoto zazihamba ngezantya ezikhulu logama abantwana bethontelana ukungena esikolweni. Kuthe esajongile njalo wabona ujikeleza oza ngesantya esiphezulu ngezantsi. Embindini wendlela kwakuwela intwazana izakungena kwiheke yesikolo. Ujikeleza khangela uthobe santya koko uvele waqabela. Lo mntwana ubethwe seso sithuthi waya kujuba kude nezo ncwadi zaphasalaka. Akakhange ame ujikeleza koko umqhubi uvele wasivuthela isithuthi. Amava nokuhlakanipha kwengqondo kumdlali kuvele kwabuya ngoko kuThando, uye watsiba ukuya emntwaneni logama iliso lijonge inombolo yesithuthi. Yonke lonto uyenze ngesiqingatha somzuzu. Ufike umntwana ethe natya phantsi waza wakhulula ibhatyi yakhe wamembathisa. Akazanga ukuba kwenzekeni kuba kwaye kwagcwala ootitshala nabahlali apho. Ngethuba elingephi kuye kwafika amapolisa nenqwelo yezigulana yamthatha umntwana. UThando unikezele inombolo yesithuthi emapoliseni, yaza inqununu yambulela ngegalelo lakhe. Emveni koku uThando uye waqalisa ngomsebenzi wakhe. Nangona esebenza uThando, isehlo salo mini samhlala engqondweni kuba wayesoloko elubona olosana kwingcinga zakhe. Waba nombuzo osoloko umzingile ukuba angenzani ukuze asindise abo bantwana. Wazile ukuba inqununu nomasipala bakuza nesisombululo emva kwexesha elide yaye iingozi ezinjalo sokuze ziphele. Kuthe ekurholeni kwakhe uThando wathenga izinto zomzi wakhe wabuya wangena kwivenkile ethengisa isinxibo esisetyenziswa ngamagosa endlela. Ufike wathenga isinxibo semibala esetyenziswa ngamagosa ekuwezeni abantwana emigaqweni. Waze wabuya wathenga nesinxibo sezandla ezimhlophe. Akonelanga koko ubuye wathenga nophawu

lomgaqo olubhalwe “STOP, GO.” Esi sinxibo sasinemibala eluhlaza namthubi kwaye sisaziwa ngokuba sisemthethweni.

Ngosuku olulandelayo uThando uye wavuka ngentseni kakhulu elungiselela ukuphangela. Uye waxhabasha into zakhe waya phambi komgaqo wesikolo, wafika wanxiba ezo mpahla bezithenge ngezolo. Wajika ngoku wakhangeleka okwegosa lo mgaqo. Uye wema apho emana evulela abantwana bawele umgaqo ngaphandle kweziphazamiso zezithuthi. Ngolo suku yaba ngumtyangampo omhle nobukekayo abantwana bengena esikololweni bemana belindwa ukuba bawele umgaqo zizithuthi. Kuthe bakuba bewele bonke abantwana, sebengena nakumagumbi okufundela waqala wakhulula uThando wangena kowakhe umsebenzi. Kusuku olulandelayo uqhubile uThando njengezolo yade yaphela inyanga. Ngoku wayesele engumbono oqhelekileyo apho phambi kwesikolo emana ephekuza ekhweba izithuthi nabantwana. Okwakumangalisa kulo msebenzi umtsha kaThando yayikukuba wayengajonge ntlawulo kwaye waye wenza kabini ngelanga lo msebenzi. Kwakusithi nokuba uphi, kulo msebenzi wakhe wokuhambisa amaxwebu, ukuba zileqa icala emva kweyokuqala umbone egxalathelana ukuya esikolweni kuba esazi ukuba isikolo siphuma ngentsimbi yesibini. Babesithi bephuma ootitshala kwakunye nabantwana ibe ngathi khangela aye kwenye indawo uThando koko behleli phantsi kwalo mithi yesikolo. Emva koku phuma kwesikolo ubeye abuyele kwasenkomeni. Kwalile kwinyanga yesithathu esenza into enye uThando, uthe xa efika apho esikolweni wabona kuphuma abantwana abathandathu bekhokelwa yititshala, bobathandathu kuquka netitshala babenxibe isinxibo esifana twatse nesakhe. Utitshala ufike wambamba isandla uThando kangango mzuzu engathethi. Emva koko abantwana abathathu bawelele ngapha komgaqo logama abanye notitshala bemi nganeno. Baye baqalisa ukuweza abantwana. UThando uye wancuma wakhulula impahla yakhe wabuyela kumsebenzi wakhe. Ngentsimbi yesibini ufike abantwana sele bengaphambili. Kusuku olulandelayo uye wenza njengesiqhelo wasingisa esikolweni abantwana babe sebekho. Uye wancuma umfo omkhulu kuba eqonda ukuba okwakhe ukufezile.

Ngalo lonke elixesha nemeko ekhaya yayisele iguquka kuba umfo wayesiza nento etafileni. Inkosikazi nabantwana babesazi ukuba ukuphela kwenyanga utata uzakuza nezinto ezimnandi.

Kudlule iinyanga eziliqela uThando engasayi esikolweni, koko exakekile ngumsebenzi

wokuhambisa amaxwebu. Kwalile phambi kokuvalwa kwezikolo kwiholide kaDesember, uThando wafikelwa yincwadi emmemela kumbhuyo kwisikolo abewelisa umgaqo abantwana kuso. UThando uhambise lo ncwadi kwinkosikazi yakhe esuke yancuma yamwola ikhumbula iimini zamandulo. Kwalile ngosuku lwesimemo kwemisa umgrugra wemoto phambi komzi kaThando uzokumlanda, uThando ukhwele nenkosikazi nabantwana bakhe kwesi sithuthi encumile abantu bemi phandle. Yenjenjeya ukuya kwisikolo eso. Kuthe nje ukuba ibe kufuphi waphawula ukuba abantu macala onke endlela baphahle umgaqo beyiyizela. Phambi kwesikolo yayingootitshala nabafundi bexhome umbalo omkhulu othi,

“IGORHA LOKWENENE ELISINDISE UBOMI BABANTWANA BETHU.”

Uthe akuwafunda lamazwi uThando wajonga inkosikazi yakhe, suka yona zawa iinyembezi zimanzisa izidlele. Uye wamwola umkakhe uThando wamanga. Nabantwana babentywizisa ngoku. UThando usuke wajonga phezulu ecinga amazwi kanina.

“OSUKUBA ECELA EGAMENI LAM WOFUMANA.”

Tshila!!! Bhula kaZaBhebhetha

Kuwo onke amagqirha awayesaziwa kwelo lakuQobo-qobo alikho elalidume ngaphezu koBhula kaZaBhebhetha. Umakhwekhwetha wenkwenkwe enkulu engangxengwanga, ingaxakwa nto kwaphela. Kwezo lali zazingqonge uQobo-qobo, kwaNomenti, kwaMntan'am ndenzeni, kwaNtozophukayo, mnye kuphela umntu obuyakuxelelwa ngaye xa usengxakini nguBhula kaZabhebhetha. Inkwenkwe enkulu yayizinze kwisiphambuka selali yakuTshoxa, ngaphesheya kwilali yase Gwili-Gwili. Indlela eyayisiya apho yayingaginyisi mathe kwaphela, kodwa izithuthi zazilukrozo ukujolisa apho. Ibisithi indoda, umfazi okanye intokazi yakubambheka ngobhongwana, iphakame isithi ukho uBhula kaZabhebhetha phesh`apha kungani ndihlale kusitsha. Ngentseni woyibona ixhabasha iwela lo miwewe nemifula isingise kuBhula. Ibisithi xa iwela lo miwewe ikhale ngelokuba, "Bhula abanye ubenzele ke mna ndingotheni?" Emva koko yothi iphela iveki uyive iphethe olukaBlankethi izingca ngelithi, "Benditshilo ukho okaZabhebhetha uzondiweza."

Kukho ngaminazana ithile ingasokuze ilibaleke kuluntu olulapho kwezo lali zingqonge uQobo-qobo, suku olo ekusathethwa ngalo nanamhlanje. Inkosikazi yaseMaBheleni kwilali yaseTshoxa yenzelwa umangaliso ngulo Bhula. UNoAmen wayehleli obentshontsho ubomi, engcungcuthekiswa yintokazi yomyeni wakhe, uNontle. Le ntokazi yayimshiya imbhulela amasaka uNoAmen ingamboni nokuba usiciko sayiphi imbiza. Okunene kona uNontle wayelilandele igama lakhe. Intombi yomntu yayicikizwe iphume izandla. Intombi le yayithe ncothu ngesithomo, ikhanya ngebala, kumacala omabini ezidlele yayithiwe jize ngezinxonxo, kuyo yonke lonto yalekwa ngemilenze emihle ekhanyayo. Ilaphu lomlungu yayilitya ngathi iyaphangela kanti zange yambona umLungu. Eso sinxibo ke sasimenza abe yinzwakazi epheleleyo. Wonke onxiba ibhulukwe othandana nale ntombi wayesithi utsalwe bubhle nelizwi elisoloko liphantsi. Oku kuphola nobuhle bale ntokazi bekubangela ukuba ithi indoda nokuba izixelele ukuba kwezaphandle apha izinto ayizingene, suka ithi yakuthi ntle obo buhle iziphose. Nayo ke intombi ibe ingalibazisi ibiwamkela onke loo madoda. Kuyo yonke lento ke usisi lo, wayengazelanga waye phule uluthi. Babesibhozo abantwana bakhe bengashiyani kuyaphi. Ayelapho amaJwarha, ooTipha, ooRadebe, ndibalani, nooCirha babefumaneka kwabo bantwana. Bonke ke aba bantwana babesithi tata kokhoyo umfo, akumka babone omnye babuye bathi tata nakuye.

Umyeni kaNoAmeni, uBhele, naye ke waphandlwa yilentokazi waziphosa. Kuba ke ingoyiki ngo ewe wayo yamamkela. Yabonakala ikhula ingca indlela esingisa emzini wakhe uBhele logama ikhuthuka eya kwaNontle. Abantwana bamamkela ngezishushu utata wabo omtsha, kwakuba kodwa ngoLwezihlanu kuba babemkhawulela ngekriva. Ngalo lonke elo xesha usizana olungu NoAmen lwalulala iinyembezi zinqumleze umbombo. Intliziyo yayilihlwili kukubindeka, koko engazi ukuba makathini. Amakhosikazi aseTshoxa aye eyazi imeko kaNoAmen kwaye iwahlupha lento. Intlungu yayikukuba wakuthi akugqiba ukukhukuza uBhele, uNontle, abuyele kwamanye amadoda. Ngaminazana ithile amchwechwela uNoAmen la makhosikazi. Hayi ke bethu kwancokolwa ezobumelwane kwamnandi. Ngelingeni yagqabhuka enye.

“Wethu asingeni nto zomzi wakho, kodwa umntu uyavuka xa kusunakala.”

“Ngantoni ke ntombazana?” Wabuza uNoAmen.

“Hayi wethu, sitshatile nathi siyabona”, latsho elinye iqhajazana.

“Zihlobo kusebusuku kum, yenzani ndibone.”

“Ntombi, siziswa yilento kaNontle, kwaye thina sifuna umvuthulule aphele tu.”

“Oh!”

“Vuka sisi.”

“Bethuna mna nguThixo owobona ukuba eyam imeko ithini.”

“Nantso ke bafazi, yathi indoda iphela isondla inkazana wabe uthembele kuThixo, naye uyancediswa mfazi.”

“Kungoba ngendisithini ke mna?”

“Uyathetha ke ngoku yabona phezulu apha ukho uBhula kaZabhebhetha.”

“Hayi bafazi, mna xa engadifuni uBhele kulungile, eyamayeza andiyingene tu.”

“Sisi, yithi sikuncede, siza kukhapha ke tana.”

Ibe ngulononjani ke kucengwa uNoAmen ukuba akhe avele kuBhula, de ngelingeni wavuma. Ngosuku olulandelayo amakhosikazi ayibethe yancikane indlela eya kwaBhula eGwili-gwili. Kulondlela kwakungekho uthetha nomnye kaloku intetho yakwantu yayisagquba engqondweni, akuthethwa eyezeni. Intsimbi yesibhozo ibethe sele bephambi komzi kaBhula. Umzi wawubonakala ukuba ngokamakhwekwetha nyani. Yayizintlanti zemfuyo, izithuthi zikaBhula kwakunye nabakhwetha bakhe. Ngelo xesha kwakusele kugcwele ngabantu abasuka kwindawo ezahlukeneyo, abanye babesuka komaQonce, Rhini, Kapa naseBhayi. Ekugalelekeni kwawo lamakhosikazi yayingekavuki intw’nkulu, kodwa kuthe nje emva

kwentsimbi yesithoba wabonakala usihla ngokuhla umthamo ongena kweli gumbi asebenzela kulo uBhula. Lide lafika nelabo ithuba abafazi. Bangena. Abakubone apho yabatsho bothukela ngaphakathi. Kwezabo iingcinga babesithi bayakungena kwigumbi eligcwele iingcambu zamayeza neemfele zezilwanyana. Kwakungenjalo ke kweli gumbi, koko kwakukho ibhanka ende kwakunye nesitulo esenziwe okweso sesithwalandwe. Esi situlo saye sithiwe wambu ngofele lwesilwanyana sasendle abangasaziyo. Igumbi laliphole libetha umoya. Kweso situlo kwakuhleli uBhula ngokwakhe. Wayengemdala kuyaphi koko ewafincile amashumi amahlanu eminyaka. Umfo wayemnyama kodwa kubonakala ukuba ukhe wamcula undophule ndiyatsha, kuba nesinxibo yayingesiso esegqirha. UBhula ufune ukuqonda ukuba bathuthwa yini Na? Hayi ke, uNoAmen wayichuba imbilini yakhe, ngalo lonke elo xesha uBhula umthe ntsho emehlweni.

“Makhosikazi, godukani ngomso ndipha emzini wakho ngentsimbi yesixhenxe.”

Utshilo uBhula etsefuza. Uthe xa efuna ukuhlawula uNoAmeni wanqunyaniswa ngelirhabaxa ilizwi.

“Ndithe goduka ngomso ndisemzini wakho, olandelayo”, watsho uBhula sele ekhwaza ophandle.

Kweso sithuba aye ekhwasu amakhosikazi, aphuma engatshongo nelimdaka. Aye anyathelela phezulu oku ngathi uBhula usemva kwawo. Kuthe xa sethe qelele umgama ovisayo zaqala zehla izibilini kuwo.

“Bafazi, khanitsho, lo mfo uthi wobasemzini wam kusasa, uwazelaphi?”

“Sisi nguBhula kaZabhebhetha lowa thula, uzobona.”

Kweso sithuba atye indlela amakhosikazi engavuli nelimndaka, ekufikeni kwawo kwilali yawo ibe ngulowo wasinga kwelakhe isango, ngesivumelwano sokuba kuya kudityanwa ngentseni kwaNoAmen.

Ngentseni aba ngathi belele kwaNoAmen amakhosikazi kuba afikisana. Ingulowo efuna ukuzibonela ukuba uBhula uza kusebenza njani. Kwathi esaphunga njalo nkqo ngeyesixhenxe intsimbi yavuleka iheke. UBhula ungene kwelo gumbi ahleli kulo amakhosikazi akabulisa, koko uye wayalela uNoAmen ukuba makeze ne-emele ayigcwalise ngamanzi. Uye wavula itasi abeyiphethe wakhupha umgutyana okuyo, wagalela kule emele. Uyalele uNoAmen ukuba eme phezu kwale emele abize uBhele kuyo kahlanu. Ubuye wagalela omnye umgutyana kwisandla sasekunene kuNoAmen, wathi makame emnyango abize umnyeni

wakhe kahlanu akugqiba avuthele lomgubo. UNoAmen uzenzile ezi zinto wabuya wahlala phantsi. UBhula ubuye wakhupha amatye amahlanu kule tasi yakhe wawaphosa kule emele, wandumzela kabini kathathu ehlasimla kucaca ukuba umhlola uyaqonda ukuba uwuchanile. Emveni koko uye wabopha itasi yakhe ukubonisa ukuba owakhe umsebenzi uwugqibile. “Akungena uze uyokuchitha la manzi ngapha kweheke, ubuye ungabheki, yoba ngamakhulu amathathu intlawulo”, utshilo uBhula kubonakala ukuba ungxamile kwaye usajonge phambili.

UNoAmeni uwe esipajini emadolo nzima, wayikhupha imali leyo ekrokra. UBhula khange amnanze koko uye wamkela imali, waphosa etasini waphuma. Uthe engekafiki ehekeni wegqi uBhele. UBhele uye wefuthu ngumsindo asakubona indoda iphuma emzini wakhe ngentseni, koko ubuye wazibamba, uye wanqwala intloko kuBhula ongakhange amnanze. UBhele uye wagxanya ukusingisa emnyango kucaca ngoku ukuba uvathe iqaqa.

“NoAmen, NoAmen ngubani lo uphuma emzini wam ngentseni?” Umbhonzeleke emnyango esitsho. Uthe xa engaphakathi wentla ngamakhosikazi, suka zamwa iintloni.

“Makhosikazi, tyhini nalapha kwangentseni akhonto?” Ubuze ngele nkonzo uBhele.

“Hayi wethu Bhele yile migalelo yethu, qha sithi masivuke.”

“Mandinganiphazamisi ke noko”, emva koko wonde ngekamire yakhe. Aye ayana ngamehlo amakhosikazi, yena uNoAmeni wayethwele olukaBlankethe. Aphakamile amakhosikazi acela indlela kubonakala ukuba eyawo indima ayigqibile.

E-Cata uthe akungabuyi uBhele iintsuku ezivakalayo baqala baxhala abantwana. Ibe ngulowa wafuna uqonda ukuba utata ubuya nini? Besuka aphenyule ngokupholileyo uNontle kubantwana bakhe. Kucaca ukuba ixhala kuye alikho kwaye uyazi ukuba kungekudala kuzolunga.

“Ningaxhali nina bantwana bam uyeza utata.”

Ngokwenene emsulwa akudlulanga nyanga zingephi kwabe sekubonakala omnye utata.

Nabantwana abalibazisanga bawe kwesezolo bevuyela utata omntsha onelekese.

Isenzo sikaBhula samenza waduma ngaphezu kokuba wayedumile. Zabuya zanwenwa iindaba ezingenkintsela yexhwele. Kwingingqi yaseDwesi, eBhayi, uninzi lwabahlali yayingotitshala nonesi. Omnye waba bahlali yayinguZola Dyuni. Umfo lo wayehlola

kwesinye sezikolo kwalapho. Uthe emi phambi komzi wakhe kwadlula umhlobo wakhe.

Njengesiqhelo ke esi sibini siye sema sancokola, ezezolo.

“Xola ntanga mandide ndithethe”, utshilo uZola emveni kwencoko ende.

“Awu ntanga, akhonto imbi? Wathetha ngolo hlobo?”

“Ewe ntanga, kugoso okwaphukayo kweli khaya.”

“Ungandoyikisi mfondini.”

“Hayi ntanga ndicela uncedo.”

“Sikhula kunye mfondini.”

“Yilonto ke ntanga ndibhenela kuwe, apha kwelikhaya asilali sele iyinyanga silala siguqe ngamadolo.”

“Sugeza mfondini.”

“Ndifunga uma, emangcwabeni.”

“Madoda yenye ke le, yintoni ingxaki?”

“Mfondini kukho into egungquza ubusuku bonke apha eluphahleni, kwale ntanga xa zileqa eyokuqala ebusuku isuke ibe ngathi iyaqinisa, de kube ngathi izakuwela apha kulendawo silele kuyo.”

“Thixo ntanga yintoni le uyitshoyo?”

“Yinene emsulwa ntanga kweye mna ndixakwe nakuthini, kunga kungasoloko kusemini.”

“Tsi, madoda ubomi bunzima.”

“Ngumzamo ntanga kwaye ngumzamo obuhlungu.”

“Madoda kulikhuni emhlabeni, yaba nathi sakhe sanento enjalo.”

“Uthini ngoku?”

“Ndikuxelela ukungakuxokisi ntanga.”

“Cebisa mfondini.”

“Hayi ntanga saphakama sajongisa kuQobo-qobo, ukho uBhula, ndikuxelela ukungakuxokisi wenza into uyibone la mfo, thina sabuya salala ngobo busuku.”

“Uthini kum ngoku?”

“Ntanga, vuka ngomso nenkosikazi yakho kusasa ukhangele ukuba akubuya uthetha enye into na?”

“Ntanga ndiyabulela.”

“Hamba ntanga kuphilwa ngamntu.”

Esi sibini sohlukene emva kwale ntetho. UZola uye wangena emzini wakhe wayichubela

inkosikazi yakhe ngakuvileyo. Hayi ke, ngobo busuku yabangathi into eseluphahleni ihletyelwe. Yavunguza kucaca ukuba iqumbile mpela. Kwakukodwa ukusuka ibe ngathi iyaxhentsa ibuye itswine oku kosana olukrwitshwayo. Kude kwasa gede esi sibini sime ngenyawo amehlo siwakhuphe entloko. Ngentseni, zange baxukuxe nokuxukuxa bayibetha imoto yancikane ukusinga eGwili-gwili. Apha endleleni yayingathi isithuthi sibaselwe kuba uZola wayehleli emafutheni ngathi uleqwa sipokro. Ngethamsanqa ekugalelekeni kwabo kwaBhula kwakungekho mntu baze babalekiswa bafakwa. Bafike umakhwenkwetha kudala ebalindile. Bathe nje ukuba bahlale phantsi wahlasimla uBhula, etshila ebabonisa ukuba kudala besengxakini.

“Camagu!”

“Camagu! Tata.”

“Ndithi kuni camagu andiniva!”

“Camagu! Tata”, lanyuka ilizwi kwesi sibini.

“Nisuka kude bethuna.”

“Ewe, tata eBhayi.”

“Camagu!”

“Camagu!”

“Athi amanyange nesuswa yimpundulu!”

“Phosa!”

“Ayinilalisi, kwaye sele izakuzala!”

“Phosa! Tata.”

Emveni kwala mazwi liye le cwaka igqirha lajonga phantsi.

“Bantwana bam, ndiza kuyigxotha ke ibuyele emntwini wayo, ifike ikhabe yena, nina nova ngesithonga kuba kaloku umntu wayo akakude kuni.”

“Buyisela tata! Sidiniwe.”

“Nigqibile! Bendifuna otshoyo.”

Emva koko uye wegwiqi uBhula wangena kwelinye igumbi. Uthathe imizuzu emihlanu ekulo wabuya ephethe iibhotile ezintathu ezincikane. Zontathu zazinemibala eyahlukeneyo kwaye zinamafutha.

“Yabona ke nyana, wakufika ekhaya wophumla into engange yure.”

“Camagu!”

“Emva koko wothambisa umzimba wonke ngale bhotile imhlophe, ze kamva uvule apha

eluphahleni ungene ubeke ezi zimbini uhle, kusasa wondixelela.”

“Camagu!”

“Amakhulu amahlanu, ke yintlawulo nakugqiba nigoduke.”

UZola nowakwakhe bayikhuphile intlawulo bengenasikhalazo. Kamva bayenza ncikane ebuyela eBhayi indlela. Bagaleleke emva kwemini bedinwe beyimfe. Umfazi uye waquekeza elungisa ezekhaya logama uZola ehleli ezolile emana ukujonga phezulu. Kuthe njengokuba ehleli emana ukujonga phezulu uZola, wee rhiphu umbilini. Suka lwaqala lwangongoza uvalo weva shushu. Uthe engaqondanga weva sele ekhuzela ngaphandle.

“Zola yintoni?” Wabuza umfazi.

“NguSathana mfazi, kwaye sizokumlwa ngamandla.”

“Kunjalo masiqale wethu sisebenze ngoku kusakhanya.”

Loo mazwi amtsho wabila wabaleka amanzi uZola waqala watyhwytyhwa ecinga amazwi kaBhula okuba le mpundulu sele izakuzala. Uzibone ekrwitshwa yimpundulu kolo phahla lomzi wakhe, waqala wazidela ukuba besiyaphi eGoli.

“U right dear.”

“Akhonto mfazi”, utsho engcangcazelisa ilizwi uZola.

Umfazi uye wamnika ibotile emhlophe enamafutha ukuze azithambise. Kwabanzima endodeni amadolo engqubana kucaca ukuba ukufa sele kusemnyango. Wangcangcazela ethambisa lo mafutha uZola engazi nokuba kubhekiswa kweliphi icala. Ngelingeni uye wazithambisa umzimba wonke wagqiba. Emva koko uye wabeka isitulo phantsi kwentunjana yokungena eluphahleni. Waba ngathi uthunyelwa esihogweni uZola kuba wasuka wagevezela ngakumbi. Kuye kwakunzima ukukhwela kweso situlo ukuze afikelele eluphahleni. Iqondile inkosikazi ukuba kubi kwaye nangaliphi ixesha ingavela iqikileke indoda.

“Ndikuncede, dear?” Yabuza inkosikazi.

“Ngantoni? Suka maan akuboni uyandiphazamisa.” Waphendula uZola sele ekhuphe amehlo kodwa kucaca ukuba intliziyo ayitsho.

Uyivulile intunjana leyo sele ngoku ephethwe naludaka lwesinqe, nemichamo ikwalapho.

Uye wafaka intloko ewavale mbha amehlo eqonda ukuba impundulu leyo izakumkrwitsha engayijonganga. Kuthe emveni komzuzu ewavalile amehlo, wawavula kancinci akabona nto kwaza ngelingeni wawavula onke. Akabonanga nto tu kwelo phahla, waqonda ukuba makakhwele ngokukhawuleza hleze kuthi kanti isayokufuna ukutya impundulu leyo.

“Zola, kwenzekani?” Wabuza ezantsi umfazi.

“Akhonto nkosikazi.”

Uye emva koko wazibeka iibhotile apho eluphahleni sele efuna ukukhawuleza aphume. Kuthe xa eza kwehla apha eluphahleni waphula ukuba kukho isikroba esikhulu esibonisa ngaphandle kwaye kukho neplastiki eyenza ingxolo. Uye wenza iinzame zokuba sivaleke eso sikroba waqinisa nalo plastiki ibiphihlika. Uhlile eluphahleni wafika inkosikazi yakhe isemi kulandawo ibimi kuyo.

“Usebenzile sithandwa sam.”

“Kuzolunga nkosikazi ungaxhali wena, ndiwuphethe umcimbi.”

“Utsho dear wam?”

“Ungahlupheki my love, namhlanje kuzovutha”, watsho uZola esiya kuhlamba loo mafutha.

“Kunga uThixo angamncedisa uBhula emke uSathana emzini wam.”

“Kunga kunganjalo nkosikazi, khesifumane ubuthongo.”

“Yitsho uphinde”, yatsho inkosikazi sele ikwigumbi lokuphekela ilungisa isidlo sasebusuku.

Ngobo busuku esi sibini saye salala okwentsana, ngentseni inkosikazi ivuke inoncumo kubonakala ukuba ngenene balele ngoxolo. Umyeni besazigqumile kuqondakala ukuba obunjalo ubuthongo wabugqibela eselityendyana.

“Tsi!!! Bafazi, yinkintsela uBhula ke bethu, uyigxothe yemka tu le mpundulu kweli khaya”, itshilo inkosikazi isenoncumo.

“Inkintsela! Inkintsela phi? Impundulu! Impundulu ebiphi?” itshilo indoda ityhila iingubo.

“Hayi Zola, kutheni wathetha njalo?”

“Mnxim, imal’am engaka! Impundulu, impundulu!”

“Zola, uyandixaka ke ngoku.”

“Umelwe kukuxakwa kuba siyokulahla imali.”

“Zola, suthetha ngolo hlobo wakugqiba ukuncedwa.”

“Sisi, khandiyeke ndilale mna, qha ndikhalela imali yam eninzi emke namanzi”, utsho etsala ingubo ebetha ithatha uZola, kubonakala ukuba inye into ekuye engqondweni yimali yakhe. Inkosikazi ime kwelo gumbi labo lokulala ixakiwe suka yabuyela kwakho ezingubeni.

Ukuphumla sele kufikile

Isikhululo samapolisa, KwaZakhele eBhayi sasisaziwa ngokuxakeka ntsuku zonke. Abantu abaya kumangala apho babefika bame iiyure ezinde, kambe kumanye amaxesha umntu ebesukaashiye, “Mnxim.” Emke engasifakanga neso simangalo. Esi sakhwo sasigxunyekwe kufutshane namatyotyombe amaninzi, ukanti ngaphesheya kude kufuphi nesikhululo eso kwakuhluma izindlu zeRDP. Uninzi lwezi zindlu zazingagqitywanga ukwakhiwa, kwaye ke, onqevu babezisebenzisa. Ngalo olu suku, uCaptain T. T. Ngwema, wayehleli ebambelele entloko. Asikuba wayecinga, koko intloko yayiqhekeka kubini. Ngezolo lo kaNgwema uye kulala ekuzeni kokusa, ngalo lonke elo xesha wayezintyintya, ezibuza imvelaphi. Ngentseni yokuba aphanzele umzimba wawududa ngathi bekubethwa idonki efileyo. Lo kaNgwema wayehleli ejonge phambili, abo wayekunye nabo ngolusuku babesele bemazi ukuba akanako nokuchukunyiswa xa ekwimeko enjalo. Isibini samapolisa esasikunye naye sasingenzinto koko siziphithizelisa, kambe siphathe kucofa-cofa oomakhala emoyeni. Ngethamsanqa usuku olu lalubonakalisa ukuzinza kuthontelwano lwabantu kwisi sikhululo eso. Kwalile kusathe cwaka kwisikhululo eso, kwangena ixhegokazi ekubonakala ukuba intlupheko sele ilisongile. Eli xhegokazi lalinxibe ilokhwe enkulu ekubonakala ukuba yacholwa yavuthululwa yaze yanxitywa. Ezinyaweni lalinxibe izihlangu ezingafaniyo esinye isesebhinqa kanti kwelinye icala isesendoda. Umakhulu lo wayerhuqa ingxowa ebonisa ukuba igcwele ikharibhodi kwakunye neplastiki.

“Makhulu, ungayishiya phandle ingxowa leyo”, litshilo elinye ipolisa.

Ixhegokazi khange liyinanze lento liye ngqo kuCaptain Ngwema, owayesifa yibhabhalaza.

“Molo, mnt’am”, litshilo ixhegokazi.

“Ewe makhulu, ndingakunceda?” Utshilo uNgwema ngelizwi elindongondongo.

“Ingxaki, polisa ndifuna uncedo, umzukulwana wam ulahlekile.”

“Ndiyakuva makhulu, masithi uzobuya wena, suba naxhala”, watsho uNgwema ezama ukuzenza umntu oxakekileyo kodwa ngaphakathi wayebila enqwenela ukuba elo xhegokazi lisuke phambi kwakhe.

“Ingxaki polisa, lo mntu mncinci kwaye zange sohlukana oko washiywa ngunina esimka nela qheya laseKatanga liloba...”

“Ndiyakuva mama, kanene ngumzukulwana lo, ngubani igama?” UNgwema uqonde ukuba makaqhawulise kuba elo xhegokazi alizimisele kuyeka, uye wathatha amaxhwebu aphambi kwakhe engajonganga nokuba ngalawo abhala abantu abalahlekileyo kusini na, uye wazixakekisa ebhala.

“NguLuvo.”

“Iminyaka.”

“Lishumi, kuphela.”

“Wena ke makhulu nihlala phi?”

“Ezantsi kwesititshi, pha phantsi kwebhurorho, ngaseSwartkops.”

“Kulamatyotyombe angase Boxongo?”

“Ngamanye amaxesha siyalala naphaya.”

UNgwema uqondile akhonto izolunga apha, kuba akukho apho azalifumana khona elo xhegokazi, kwaye uzochitha ixesha ngomntana obaleke namadoda.

“Ungahlupheki ke makhulu umntwana ndizokumkhangela, ungazihluphi hleze abuye wena bonke benza lo nto.”

“Ndiyakuva”, litshilo ixhegokazi.

“Ungakhululeka ke makhulu.”

IXhegokazi liye lamthi ntsho emehlweni uNgwema, laguquka linikina intloko. UNgwema usale ephosa lo maphepha kude. Uye wabuya wabambelela entloko ecinga isimehlana sakhe asishiye phantsi kwesitulo ngephezolo, ukuba nje unokufumana ikopi umzimba ungaswabuluka.

“And, toe?” Livakele ilizwi likaSuperintendent Ntlapho phezu kwakhe.

“Superintendent, akhonto?”

“Ela xhegokazi libekwa yintoni apha?”

“Hayi, wena Superintendent la makhulu ulahlekelwe ngumzukulwana, uyabazi mos, balahleka ze bazibuyele, kanti ngalo lonke elo xesha basemadodeni.”

“Oh!!”

“Yaba, neli xhegokazi lihlala phantsi kwala bhulorho, libuye lilale kula matyotyombe aseBoxongo, on top, yazi lo mntwana I am sure, uthengisa ngomzimba ekwasebenzisa ii drugs.”

Uye wasondela apha ebusweni kuNgwema uSuperintendent wathetha exhathisa etshixizisa amazinyo.

“Ngwema, apha silwa ulwaphulo mthetho, iprostitution and needrugs, now this poor woman, uchaza ngomntwana wakhe olahlekileyo, uhleli uthe finini akukhathali, bona icebo ke ndoda. In two days’ time I want that report on my desk, sharp!”

“Sir, le ndawo alahleke kuyo...”

“Two days Ngwema only, two days”, emveni kwala mazwi, iye yaguquka le ndoda ingenalusini tu, yabheka kwigumbi esebenzela kulo.

UNgwema uqondile ukuba, umsebenzi wakhe usesichengeni, ubheka-bheke wajonga abo bebekunye naye wafika beqwalasele kumaxwebu abo, waqonda ukuba akukho tyholo. Uqubule izitshixo zemoto waphuma phandle.

Mihla le ubawo uMnkwankume wayehlala phambi kwevenkile yamaKwarakwara esecaleni kwendlela. Lo ke yayingumgaqo omkhulu odibanise iNjoli Square neDaku Road. Lo mgaqo ke wawuba mgumtyangampo omde oqabela u M17 uyakuthi xhaxhe eMotherwell. Phambi kwale venkile wayehlala kuyo uMnkwankume kwakusisiphithi-phithi sabantu abazokuthenga ukutya kwivenkile yakwaSPAR. Mihla le kwakuba ngumbho nomxesibe phambi kwale venkile. UMnkwankume wayezihlalela netoti yakhe yokungqiba phambi kwakhe. Ecaleni kwesitulo sakhe yayiba yintonga yakhe emhlophe. Ngangendlela abantu ababemaxhapheshu ngawo wayeye ababone njengokuba ngabo abazimfama. Wayebabona bethwele imithwalo enzima ebaxakileyo. Ethe ntsho njalo wajonga umfo onxibe isutu emnyama nehemphe emhlophe, wayethetha kwimfono-mfono yakhe. Kwakubonakala ukuba kuninzi okumkhubekisayo kuba wayebhenguzelisa izandla njengokuba ethetha. Uye wayicima imfono-mfono wamisa ujikeleza wakhwela. Kube yimizuzwa ekulojikeleza waphuma embhakraza ucango. Umqhubi kajikeleza uye wanyathela umcephe kuqondakala

ukuba ucaphukile. Ngezantsi intwazana ekuqondakala ukuba ayikafiki nakwiminyaka engamashumi amabini, yayimi nomfana weQheya. UMnkwankume wayeqonda ukuba baxoxisana ngexabiso. Wayesazi ukuba xa bevisisana ngexabiso lo mfana wolandela lontwazana batshone kumanye alo matyotyombe akufuphi apho. Uthe esajonge leyo uMnkwankume waqwalasela ityendyana elinxibe idyasi enkulu, umnqwazi liwutsale wagquma ubuso. Lo mfana wayehamba ebheka-bheka kucaca ukuba kukho into ayigushe phantsi kwalo dyasi. Kwabe kuqondakala ukuba kulo ntshukumo usoyika namapolisa. Ukhawulele enye inzwakazi wafika wayibonisa okuphantsi kwalo dyasi koko, lasuka lanikina intloko inenekazi. Ubuye akatyhafa umfana lowo wachwechwela elinye inenekazi elithengisa ama-apile. Ufike watyhila kwalo bhatyi, lajonga inenekazi kamva la chonga enye i-wotshi elapho lakhupha imali esifubeni lanika umfana oye wahlikihla izandla waqwalasela omnye anokumthengisela. UMnkwankume uye wancuma kuba waphawula ukuba ngabo abangaboniyo ukuba basinga kwaNtsonganyawana. Koko kuncuma kwakhe uye waphazanyiswa kukubona isithuthi samapolisa sisiza singangxamanga. Yamothuso ke lento, kuba waye sele engawaboni amapolisa apho. Sithe chuu isithuthi eso esijongile saze sema phambi kwabafazi abathengisa iziqhamo nemifuno. Kuye kwehla kuso ipolisa ekubonakala ukuba alisazikhathalele. La lilincinci ngenkangeleko kodwa umzimba wawuchaza ukuba sele wayekwa ukunanelwa. Okunye okwakubonakala libala elimbatshileyo elibonisa ukuba ibhotile akudlalwa ngayo koko iyasetyenziswa. Nangona kwakungeshushu kuyaphi ipolisa elo lalibile libaleka amanzi. Ipolisa londe ngomfana othengisa iiwotshi lamthi xhakamfu entanyeni lamsondeza kulo, umfana uzame ukutatsalaza weva ngempama phakathi kwamehlo.

“Sukumbetha! Sukumbetha kaloku”, badanduluke ngazwinye abathengisi.

“Nitsho?” Watsho emrhuqela evenini umfana.

Ugxwale kweso sithuba umfana kuqondakala ukuba, akafuni kuya kuvalelwa. Ipolisa livele lahlohla isandla salo kwibhatyi yomfana labuya kunye neewotshi kunye nemali. Lijonge efanele yona layifaka epokothweni, laze kamva lathatha naloombali. Emveni koku liye lasebeza endlebeni yomfana laze lamgibisela isicathulo ngemva. Udwangazele waya kuwa umfana laza ipolisa le chuu ukuya kwisithuthi salo.

UMnkwankume uyibukele lento ethule kucaca ukuba ayingeni kamandi kuye kodwa kungekho nto anokuyenza. Zidlule iiyure ezintathu ehleli apho uMnkwankume, epholile abantu bedlula kuye kambe abanye babedlula bagibisele iisentana kulototi yakhe ukanti abanye babedlula bengamsi so. Kwalile sekumalanga waqonda ukuba noko sele ebulamba wathabatha itoti yakhe wakhuphela iisenti zakhe, waqubula induku yakhe emhlophe wawelela kwivenkile engaphesheya. Wayehamba ke okomntu obonayo engakhubeki, engagileki nasebantwini. Yayi yiyinduku kuphela ebonisa ukuba isibane asikho. Ungenile evenkileni, wonda ngesikhenkcezisi wakhupha isiselo esibandayo emveni koko uye kwindoda engumqeshwa apho wafuna isonka. Indoda yamnika ingakhange izibale ezosenti. Uncumile uMnkwankume kuba wayesazi ukuba indoda sele intshingintshingi nje, izenze ngokwayo. Yiyi ekrexezileyo kwaye ngoku intokazi imithi.

Uphumile apho uMnkwankume wabuyela kwisihlalo sakhe koko ngoku ufike sele kukho mntu wumbi. Akamsusanga koko uye wahlala phantsi ebeka ukutya kwakhe ecaleni lakhe.

“Siyabulisa nyana.”

Umfana uye wothuka waqwalasela kuye uMnkwankume. Ingaba elixhego lindibone njani? Uye wanalo mibuzo umfana. Kanene kukho oomajayivana bamaxhego abazenza iimfama kuba befuna ukusizelwa. Uye weqhuzu-qhuzu ehleka, elijongile ixhego elo, kodwa waphawula ukuba amehlo zinkwenkwezi, akukho nechaphaza elimnyama lokubona. Kwesi sithuba uye wajonga kude umfana exakiwe koku, emveni koko wexhiphu ukutya kwexhego watya. Alimnqandanga ixhego koko liye lamyeka ukuba agqibe.

“Kwenzekani mfana wam, zibuye zakubhedela, akukwazanga kuthengisa namhlanje okanye umakhul’bhasi uzixuthile ii-wotshi zakho nemali?”

Uye wefixi ngumsindo lo mfana kodwa wabuya wazibamba ecinga iimpama zepolisa angakhange akwazi ukulwa kulo.

“Weet jy, madala please mind your own business, if usafuna ukuphefumla”, utshilo umfana. Nakubeni kunjalo umnqa wawukho wokuba ezizinto elo topie lizazi kanjani.

“Bulela ungavalelwanga mfana wam.”

“Mna, ndibanjwe ngubani?” Ubuzile umfana. “Jy weet la ngamla ikhangela umntwana wayo olahlekileyo, ek kan jou se usemadodeni qha yena uyakhweleza, so akanakundivalelela ububhanxa, uyazithola.”

“Oh! Kuhle xa kunjalo, ukrele-krele.”

“Khumbula, uthetha nengwenya kaloku.”

UMnkwankume uye wancuma wanikina intloko.

“Ingxaki yenu, phofu eyakho, kukuba uleqana nepeni uyeke iponto elihleli likulindile, ubutyebi mntana, apho ungadla izambana ungqengqile.”

“Madala sudlala apha wazini wena ngobutyebi, isilaca esinjengawe.”

“Nantso ingxaki, ujonge isilaca kanti umelene nesinhanha”

La mazwi amtsho umfana wabheka-bheka waxakwa.

“Xa kunjalo uhleli ngani apha, khona iphi lomali?”

“Utsho endodeni ke nyana, bendilinde lonto, landela.”

Uye wekhwasu uMnkwankume, waqubula induku yakhe, weqabela umgaqo. Umfana uye wamjonga wafumanisa ukuba akagilibantu koko uhamba okomntu obonayo, kwaye uMnkwankume uyayazi apho aya khona. Ifikile ingcinga yokuba ajike koko wabuya wayilahla kwelokulibala ngelithi ubutyebi bumi phambi kwakhe. Ulandele emkhondweni wexhego. Liye le chuu emkhondweni wendlela ligudle indlela eya eDaku Power Station. Liye lacondoba kuhle lijonge u M17, kwala xa ziphela izindlu kuzoqala amatyotyombe le phinye-phinye phakathi kwawo. Uqondile uSponono ukuba makabe ngathi uyanyathela ayeke ukuba ngathi uphezu kwamaqanda. Kunye okwakusengqondweni yakhe, yimali azakuyifumana. Wayezibona eqhuba umnyobo wemoto ekhwele neyona nzwakazi yakhe yantle, wazijonga wafumanisa ukuba loo madlavu awanxibileyo uyawagqibelisa ukuwafaka kuba imali yothi tata kuye. Kuthe ekwezo ngcinga wazibona sele ekwithafa lesiphelo samatyotyombe. Umgama ongekude ke kweli thafa wawuzaliswe ngamanzi etyuwa yase Swartkops. Waqonda ukuba akasokuze akwazi ukuwela kulo manzi kuba akaboni nabhulorho angacangcatha kuyo. Kuthe esaxakwe yileyo wabona ngexhego licangcatha phezu kwamatywe avele kancinci apha emanzini. Hayi ke, zaqala zamxaka mpela izinto. Kuba ingqondo yayisele

ibona imali, zange alibazise waya kulamatye; unyathele amabini amathathu wayakuwa bhulukuqu, watoxo-toxo wayilonto, asele emphandla nasemehlweni amanzi amtsho abomvu ngoko nangoko. Uzamile uphakama suka wabuya wokuwa. Uthe xa efuna ukunikezela ajike suka weva isandla simtsalela ngaphandle.

“Sesifikile nyana, ungadinwa”, litshilo ixhego lakugqiba laguquka latya indlela. Ngeli thuba ilanga lalisele lisithi liyagoduka nezithuthi phaya ku M17 zazikhanyise izibane zimane ukuthi wii ziyokutshona. Phambi kwabo yaye ilizenge zenge lethafa elibanzi eligcwele amahlahla. Waqala wazidela ukusa umfana emana ukuthi besiyaphi, wayebugodola naloo mpahla sele imbandisa ngakumbi. UMnkwankume khange ame nakanye waye ejongise phambili kucaca phofu ngoku ukuba naloo nduku sele eyibekele kude. Bangene kwihlathi elimnyama laseRedhouse sele kukhanya neenkwenkwezi. Ngasekunene kwakubonakala izindlu zakudala zamaBhulu ukanti ngasekhohlo yayingamangcwaba asusela kwiminyaka ye 1700. Kuthe esothuswe yileyo umfana wabona sele engasamboni uMnkwankume phambi kwakhe. Lwaqala lwamdlikidla uvalo ngoku sele eziqonda ingxaki akuyo.

“Tata, uphi?” Ubuze ngelizwi elingcangcazelayo.

“Ngentla mnta’am sikulindilile.”

Unyathele kabini kathathu wakhubeka, ekuweni kwakhe uphawule ukuba ukho lomntu ulele phambi kwakhe, warhuqela ngakuye kuba ecinga ukuba lixhego elo. Uthe xa ekufuphi weva ivumba lento efileyo, ngoko nangoko elo vumba lamenza wafuna ukugabha kuba lamvala waminxeka mbha. Uthe xa eqwalasela lo uleleyo wabona ukuba sisidumbu somntu ofileyo kwaye ubuso bonke babubaleka iimpethu amathumbu engaphandle. Ushixize ebuya umva wabambeleva kwintonga ephambi kwakhe, uye wazama ukuyiphakamisa kuba efuna ukuzikhusela suka waphawula ukuba nguxhongo womntu lowo. Uwujule kude elandelisa ngokutswina okwehagu. Kweso sithuba iye yethaa inyanga. Ubone ngokumhlophe ukuba ujikelezwe zizidumbu namathambo abantu abafuleyo. Uyibonile intwazana efunwa nguCaptain Ngwema ikhamisile umqala usikwe kubini, imilenze inqunqwe kuhle yabekwa ecaleni layo. Koko kukhala ubone nenye intwazana ethengisa ngomzimba abedla ngokuthenga kuyo, nayo inqunyulwe umqala, hayi ke aphela emqaleni ngoku akwaphuma neso sikhalo.

“Banjalo ke nyana wam abadedele ecaleni”, livakele ilizwi lexhego. Emveni koko ibe nguxhimfi-xhimfi wezembe sele kungasavakali nesikhalo, iyincwina kuphela. Incwina iye yaphela kwavakala umkhulungwane wenja phakathi kwezindlu zamaBhulu; akubangaphi, satsho isikhova isithukuthezi. Umzimba womfana wawusele ungasabonakali bububomvu begazi.

“Bawo balingcolisile ihlabathi, ndibanikela kuwe Nkosi kuba abafuneki kweli hlabathi”, utshilo uMnkwankume esula izembe.

Kweso sithuba kuveleinja engangedonki ikhwelwe yindoda enxibe ezimnyama izivatho. Yayimfutshane okosana, kodwa iziqa zazibonakala ukuba lixhego ekudala labakho. Liye ngqo kuMnkwankume owayeme bhunxe ngathi ubethelelwe, wayehambaze oko wazalwa ebile ebaleka amanzi. Umzimba wakhe wawubengezela okwehashe lomdyarho. Ithe yakusondela indoda emfutshane waguqa ngamadolo uMnkwankume ecaleni kwesidumbu eso. Indoda iye yamthambisa ngamafutha anegazi apha ebunzi yakugqiba yajonga enjeni,inja iye yaya kumathumbu omfana yaxhafuza kucaca ukuba ilambile. Ithe yakugqiba ukutya yabuyela kumnini wayo. Indoda khange ibuye ithethe iye yolatha ehlathini,inja yandolosa yangena ehlathini phakathi. Ibuye yajonga uMnkwankume.

“USEBENZILE, UMOVUZO WAKHO UKUFUPHI, KWAKHO!” Itsho ngelizwi eligqumayo le ndoda emveni koko yabuyela phakathi ehlathini.

“Enkosi Tata”, utshilo uMnkwankume encumile.

UCaptain Ngwema uthe chuu esihla isitalato saseDaku eyiqhuba ngesona santya sakhe sasezantsi imoto. Ngalo lonke elo xesha wayebheka-bheka ekhangela umfana. Wafutha ngumsindo akungamboni kuba wayeqonda ukuba uzimele, kungenjalo uqhunywe umanzi apho akhoyo. Kuyo yonke lonto yena wayenoxininzelelo olukhulu kuba kwakufuneka enikezele ingxelo yophando kompetheyo. Wayeqonda ngokuphandle ukuba, ukuba linokutshona elalo mini engenanto esandleni uzodilikelwa ngumgodi. Uhle wayakujika apho ziphela khona iitaxi kunye noojikeleza. Uthe xa ebuya esathe chuu njalo wabona amantombazana ngapheshaya komgaqo. Ayenxibe eziminxayo iimpahla, eziminxe engakwazi nokuphefumla, enye yawo iye yaveza ulwimi yamkhombisa kumhlaba ongezantsi. Umnqweno uye wavuka ngoko nangoko kodwa wabuya wazibamba ngelithi usenkomeni.

Uqondile ukuba hleze afumane umkhomba-ndlela kula mantombazana, uye wehla kwisithuthi, waya kuwo.

“Girls, khange nimbone uSponono?” utshilo esula ukubila, kuba yayiligama lomfana lowo amfunayo.

“Oh! Sele uthenga koSponono ngoku la wethu amathanga akamahlanga kuwe.”

“Hey! Subhanxa wena, vha, ndisemsebenzini...”

“Xa usemsebenzini ubudla ngokuthenga nje, yintoni entsha, hayi sudlala please and I have i discount for umntu karhulumente, I know luv kunzima.”

Uqondile uCaptain Ngwema ukuba akukhonto azakuyifumana apha, makabuyele kwisithuthi sakhe.

“Bekungekho nesentana na ukusiza onjengam?” Litshilo ilizwi kude kufuphi nala mantombazana. Uye wamangaliswa koko uCaptain Ngwema kuba eqonda ukuba akunakuba kubhekiswa kuye.

“Ndibhekisa kuwe mntu wenkosi, ngalo yomthetho”, libuye latsho ilizwi.

Kwisitulo esingekude kula mantombazana kwakuhleli kuso uMnkwankume, induku yakhe emhlophe isecaleni kwakhe, itoti yesenti eyibambe ngesandla.

“Nxa, iimfama soloko zingqiba ungazi ukuba zifunani kodwa ziyaya mkela inkam-nkam”, undumzele watsho uCaptain Ngwema elinde iimoto zidlule ukuze awele umgaqo.

“Owomthetho ubekwa yintoni apha, kuba sele befana nezinyo lenkuku?”

“Bawo, mind your business, please”, uguquke ngelitshoyo uNgwema.

“You will never know, maybe elikhehle lingakunceda.”

UNgwema uye wasondela kuMnkwankume ehleka, wafaka isandla epokothweni wakhupha isentana waphosa kuloo toti.

“Sudlala khehle.”

“Ndingangaboni kodwa ndiyeva, kanti ndingangaboni ndibona.”

UNgwema uqondile ukuba ngahle kubekho ubunyani koku. Kuba elo xhego lihlala mihla le kule ndawo lingaboni kodwa liyeva, kwaye hleze kanti limvile ngela xesha bethetha namantombazana.

“Bakunye aba ubafunayo.”

Limothuse ngalo mazwi uCaptain Ngwema ixhego.

“Uthini?” Ubuze ngomdla ngoku uNgwema.

“Asitolikwa.”

“Bawo uthini? Khumbula ndingumntu womthetho.”

“Oh!”

“Ukuba unento oyaziyo ze ungathethi ndinelungelo lokuvalela, uyayazi lo nto.”

“Liyinene elo, kodwa phambi komantyi imfama oyiphe imali yazini?”

Uqondile uNgwema ukuba akadibenanga namuncwane apha koko makathobe umxakatho. Kwaye hleze kuthi kanti elixhego linento eninzi eliyaziyo elinokumnceda ngayo.

“Bawo ndifuna uSponono.”

“Kunye nentombazana encinane.”

“Bawo andinalo ixesha lokudlala, khona...”

“Ndikuxelele bakunye.”

“Eh...”

“Mandikuse kubo mfana wama uzobabona.”

“Bawo ixesha lodlala...”

“Kholwa mfana wam xa uwedwa sokuze ubabone yeka ixhego likukhokele.”

“Mnto’mdala ixesha liphelile esi sibini kufuneka ndisifumene.”

“Thoba umxakatho nyana, abantu abakholwa kwabangaboniyo, kwaye unyanisile ixesha liphelile.”

Uphakamile uMnkwankume, wathatha intonga yakhe wechu ngendlela. UCaptain Ngwema uye walandela emveni kwakhe.

“Bawo uhamba, kakuhle”

“Ndiyinkabi yamalanga mfana wam, lamaqhwa kudala ewela kum, nesihlalo sele sindilindile.”

UCaptain Ngwema uye wahlasimnyelwa ngumzimba. Iingqondo zazibetha-betha, ikho ethi ukho undonakele kodwa wayisusa ngelithi uSathana makangadlali ngaye kuba ixhego lalifuna ukumnceda. Uye wacela kuSombawo ukuba asuse ingcingane engendawo kuba umsebenzi wakhe wawuxhomekeke kweli xhego ngoku.

UMnkwankume wayengabheki ephinyeza phakathi kwezindlu zeRDP kwakunye namatyotyombe. Esisantya wayehamba ngaso samtsho wabila xhopho uCaptain Ngwema kwanga angathi makakhe aphumle, koko ixhego lalingathi livuthelwe ngemva.

“Sisekude, bawo?” Ukhwaze watsho uNgwema.

“Sesizakufika mfana wam, ukuphumla sele kufikile kula maqhwa.”

Emveni koko...

Wandenza ke John

Idolophu yaseBhayi ingqongwe zizixeko ezahlukeneyo, kodwa ukuba unokubuza indawo ekuthiwa kukwaDwesi, naseMagxaki, nemveku ekhule izolo ingakolathisa ngapheshaya komfula owawukho. Apho kulo ngingqi ungabona amapomakazi ezindlu, ucinge ukuba sele ufikile edolophini, kanti usekude ke bethu, koko ugaleleke kwingingqi yabamnyama. Apha ke ungafumana ootitshala, benamapomekazi ezindlu, bengebodwa ke phofu ekho amapolisa, abongikazi kwakunye noogqirha, nabo bekwanezindlu ezikumanqanaba aphezulu.

UNokhanyo wayengomnye wamakhosikazi ahlala kule ndawo, ehlala nomyeni wakhe uJohn kwakunye nabantwana babo ababini uZintle kwakunye noThina.

UJohn wayengumhlohli kwesinye sezikolo esikwalapho eDwesi.

UNokhanyo yena wayengumama wekhaya osoloko ekukeza emzini wakhe.

Umzi wale nkosikazi wawushushu ngalo lonke ixesha kulawula uxolo, nothando phakathi kwakhe nomyeni wakhe nabantwana babo.

Abantwana babesekumabanga aphantsi bobabini, ukanti inkosikazi yayise ncikane ingaphantsi kwamashumi amathathu eminyaka, logama indoda iqabele kumashumi amane.

UNokhanyo inye into awayeyiphilela lusapho lwakhe kwakunye nenkonzo.

Buyakumbona ngecawa ekukeza ngentseni elungungiselela abantwana bakhe zekamva enjenjeya ukuya enkonzweni.

Ebeshiya ekhaya elungise yonke into. Ukuba umyeni wakhe akazokuya ecaweni, ebemlungiselela ukuze kuthi kubetha intsimbi yeshumi, abe sele yena engaphakathi kwigumbi lenkonzo.

Emveni kwenkonzo ebeye ancokole nje kancikane nabanye oomama bebandla, aze acele indlela agoduke.

Bekunqabile ukufane umbone uNokhanyo esitalatweni, kwaye bengahambi ebutha kwimizi yabantu.

Kuyo yonke loo nto bekungathethi ukuba unekratshi kuba wayencokola nabantu xa athe wadibana nabo.

Inye into eyayi ngamonwabisi kubomi bakhe uNokhanyo, ngumyeni wakhe uJohn.

UJohn beye athi kumanye amaxesha afikelele kwidiliya emfaxangiweyo.

Nangona ibingeyonto yemihla ngemihla le kuba uJohn, ubeya acele ukuya emadodeni ngezinye iimini aze abuye ezibethile.

Le nto ibimhlupha uNokhanyo kodwa bezixolisa ngelithi kuzokubuya kulunge.

UNokhanyo wayezithuzela ngelithi izobuya iphele le meko kuba uyayithandazela kwaye uThixo soze angawuva umthandazo wakhe.

Iqhubekekile iluxolo imeko kweli khaya nakubeni isikrokro sona sasikho sokuba,

“Nkosi yenza ukuba umyeni wam ayeke obu tywala.”

Ngaminazana ithile, uNokhanyo uthe xa ehlamba wabona isigxala apha kuye emzimbeni esithande ukuba nentloko ebomvu.

Yamothusa le nto uNokhanyo kodwa akathetha.

Zihambile iintsuku, zaya zisanda izizgxala emzimbeni.

“Baby, inoba yintoni le?” Watsho uNokhanyo kumyeni wakhe ngenye imini.

“Baby girl, maan ndiyayibona kodwa andiyazi”, uphendule watsho uJohn.

“Bendicinga ukukhe ndiye kwagqirha kuba ziyandihlupha ezi zigxala”, watsho ngomzimba opholileyo uNokhanyo

“Ungaya mfazi wam akho ngxaki”, utshilo uJohn.

Ngosuku olulandelayo uNokhanyo uvukile wazilungisa waya kwagqirha.

Ubhalisile walinda ngokwesiqhwelo.

Lide lafika elakhe ithuba lokuba angene kugqirha. Uyichazile into ayibonileyo emzimbeni wakhe.

Ugqirha ucele ukumxilonga, waza uNokhanyo wavuma.

Ekugqibeni kwakhe ugqirha babuye bahlala phantsi.

“Sisi, andiboni ngxaki nawe uphilile.”

“Owu! Enkosi gqirha.”

“Ndiza kunika la mayeza, ukuba uwasebenzise ukuba azipheli ezi zigxala, uze uncede ubuye uze kwakum.”

“Kulungile gqirha ndakwenza njalo, enkosi.”

“Kuhle ke sisi, uhambe kakuhle.”

Ubuyele ekhaya uNokhanyo waququzela wenza izinto zomzi wakhe njengesiqhelo engangxamanga, de wafika umyeni wakhe.

UNokhanyo, uye wayilungiselela indoda yakhe ekufikeni kwayo, waze ke wayichazela ukuba ukhe wadibana nogqirha koko akabonanga nto, kodwa uthe aze abuye xa ebona kukho into angayiqondiyo.

Indoda ivumile, yaze yaqhubekeka nezinto zekhaya.

Ziqengqlekile iintsuku yade yadlula iveki yokuqala neyesibini, kungekho nto ihluphayo kweli khaya.

Kwiveki yesithathu, uNokhanyo uphawule ukuba, endaweni yokuba izigxala ziphele koko ngoku zithande ukwanda.

UNokhanyo uqondile ukuba makabuyele kwakugqirha, ayokuchaza le ngxaki.

Okunene uyile wabhalisa walinda.

Lifikile ithuba lokuba naye adibane nogqirha waza wangena.

“Oh! Molo nkosikazi uthini namhlanje?”

“Gqirha andithethi, koko ndihlutshwa kwangala maqhakuva, ahamba nezi zigxala zingapheliyo.”

“Ndiyeva nkosikazi, phofu seke watsala igazi ngaphambili.”

“Ewe gqirha, seke ndatsala.”

“Ndiyabona laphuma lisithini?”

“Iziphumo zathi licocekile gqirha.”

“Ndiyabona ke sisi, kodwa akuqondi ukuba ngesikhe sitsale kwakho sikhangele ukuba abangwa yintoni na la maqakuva nezi zigxala zingapheliyo?”

Lo mazwi amtsho wabanda uNokhanyo kuba khange awalindele

“Hayi sisi, ungandivi kakubi koko kufuneka sijonge nkalo zonke wena, ndingatsho ke phofu ukuba uyagula.”

“Eh, eh gqirha, ucinga ukuba ngahle kuthi kanti ndinentsholongwane kagawulayo.”

“Hayi sisi, kaloku siyahlola, ukuba ingaba umonakalo uthi gqi kweliphina icala.”

“Ndiyakuva.”

Ukhe wecwaka uNokhanyo akathetha wasuka weva shushu.

“Hayi sisi, ungakhe uye kucinga ekhaya wena udibane notata wekhaya.”

“Hayi gqirha, akhonto wena, ungatsala, kuba nam ziyandihlupha ezi zigxala ngaske ziphele.”

“Yiyo loo nto, ke kufuneka sijonge nkalo zonke.”

Uye wanikezela uNokhanyo watyityika uxwebhu lotsalo gazi kuhlolwe intshologwane kagawulayo.

Ekufikeni kwakhe ekhaya ufike umyeni wakhe sele ebuyile emsebenzini wamchazela ukuba uhambe njani kwagqirha.

Umyeni uvumile ukuba akhonto xa athe watsala igazi kwabuya kwancokolwa zimbi.

Ziqengqelekile iiveki ezimbini zadlula, kuthe xa kungenwa kule yesithathu kwatsho umxeba kwelikhaya.

Kaloku ambalwa amakhaya angenawo

“Hello”, utshilo uNolukhanyo

“Molo sisi, bendicela ukuthetha nosis’Nolukhanyo.”

“Nguye othethayo.”

“Sisi nguDr Mpothulo lona, bendicela ukuba nize apha kum e-surgery ngomso, ukuba nakubanalo ithuba.”

“Akhonto imbi phofu, gqirha?” Wabuza uNokhanyo izibilini ziphezulu.

“Hayi, akhonto imbi noko.”

“Ngomso emva kwemini kunganjani, kuba kusasa umyeni wam usesemsebenzin.i”

“Lingalihle elo xesha nakum, enkosi.”

“Enkosi, gqirha.”

Uyibeke phantsi uNokhanyo imfono-mfono wabuya waququzelela izinto zomzi wakhe.

Ekufikeni komyeni wakhe uye wamchazela ukuba bayafuneka kwagqirha ngomso.

Myeni uvumile akabuza ukuba yintoni isizathu, wathi bodibana kwagqirha ke ngomso.

Ngengomso uNokhanyo uye walungisa izinto zomyeni wakhe, waphangela, waza kamva walungiselela abantwana bakhe.

Lihambile ixesha de lafika elokuba makaye kwagqirha.

Okunene uye walungisa waza waxhabasha waya ngakhona.

Kuthe kungekudala wafika umyeni wakhe bahlala balinda.

Lifikile elabo ithuba lokuba badibane nogqirha.

Ugqirha ubachazele ukuba akho nto imbi koko bazakufumana iziphumo zotsalo gazi, kwaye kubalulekile ukuba xa baza kunikwa iziphumo badibane nonontlalontle.

Bavumile waze ke wathi mabakhe balinde kancinci kweli gumbi bebelinde kulo kuqala.

Baphumile baza balinda kungekudala kuye kwathi gqi omnye umongikazi wabacela ukuba bamlandele.

Balandele, waza wabakhokelela kwelinye igumbi bakhe balinde apho.

Eli gumbi lalipholile, licocekile, kwaye kungabonakali ukuba kukhe kuhlale abantu abaninzi kulo.

Ngalo lonke elixesha esi sibini sithe cwaka okungathi kukho nto imbi ekhe yehla.

Kuthe kungekudala kwethu omnye umongikazi kwelinye igumbi kwalapho.

“Tyhini! Hellow Bra K”, utshilo lo mongikazi.

“Hi”, utshilo uJohn ejonge phantsi.

“Heh! Wethu wahamba wedwa namhlanje, iphi inkosikazi yakho?”

“Nantsi, inkosikazi yam”, yabuya impendulo

Umongikazi uqondile ukuba ukho undonakele apha makasele ethula kuba akayazi nabeyibuza kakade.

Uye wekriphu umbilini kuNokhanyo akuva la mazwi, okokuqala kuthiwe umyeni wakhe nguBra K. ngoku kuthiwa iphi inkosikazi yakhe.

“John, unguBra K. ngoku?”

“Hayi.”

“Khona le nkosikazi kuthethwa ngayo ngubani?”

“Maan! Ndizakuyazelaphi mna, sukundibuza yonke into, please.”

“Sekutheni usilwa nje ngoku?”

“Andilwi koko ndiyaphendula”, utshilo uJohn ejonge phantsi kucaca ukuba akafuni kuphendulana tu nenkosikazi yakhe.

Inkosikazi ikhe yathula ayathetha imangalisiwe koku kutshintsha kwomyeni wayo.

“John, sekhe weza apha?” ibuzile inkosikazi

“Thixo! Nokhanyo yintoni le undibuza yona, ndize apha ndizokuthini? Khawuyeke ukundibuza maan, please!”

“Andilwi, John.”

“Nam andilwi!”

Emveni koko esi sibini siye secwaka asathetha kucaca ukuba iingcinga zikude, uJohn uye wahlala ejonge ecaleni kucaca ukuba ukude ngeengcinga logama inkosikazi izibuza ukuba konakele phina.

Kuye kwabuya kwethu elinye inenekazi elubuqina lababizela kwigumbi lalo.

Ekungeneni kwabo bafike kwigumbi elipholileyo baze bahlala.

Inenekazi lizazise njengonontlalontle osebenza apho, laze kamva labaqinisa libabophela ukuba bathi xa kukho into enzima abanokuyiva, bangothuki koko, bomelele.

Baphumile kwelo gumbi bakuba bomeleziwe baya kwelo linogqirha bafika ebalindile.

“Sisi, iziphumo zifikile.”

“Ewe, gqirha.”

“Nali ke iphepha eliqulathe ezo ziphumo.”

“Ewe gqirha, sifundele.”

“Sisi, ezi ziphumo zithi zikufumanisa unayo intsholongwane kagawulayo, HIV positive.”

“Andiva kakuhle uthini gqirha?” Wabuza uNokhanyo ilizwi libungcangcazela.

“Hayi sisi, iziphumo zithi unayo intsholongwane kagawulayo.”

UNokhanyo wabangathi ugalelwe amanzi abandayo waphinda kwangoko wangathi uthiwe yiba ngashushu.

Uye wabila ngoko nangoko aphela amathe emlonyeni wasuka wanxanwa kwangasekuntsuku engawaseli amanzi.

Ngelingeni lide laphumelisa ilizwi.

“Andiva kakuhle uthini gqirha?” ubuye wabuza uNokhanyo.

Ugqirha uqondile ukuba akukuhle kuba uNokhanyo wayesele ejike nebala, ukubila kubaleka okwamanzi emfuleni.

Uye wakhawuleza wacofa iqhoshha eliphambi kwakhe, wacela ukuba kukhawuleze kuze umongikazi apho.

UNokhanyo uye wajonga umyeni wakhe obeqondele phantsi ngalo lonke elixesha kuthethwayo.

“John, John undenzani abantwana bam?”

Uye wajuba emveni koko uNokhanyo yanguphantsi phezulu kuzanywa ukuncedwana nobomi bakhe.

Wothuke ezinzulwini zobusuku uNokhanyo engazi ukuba uphina, kwaye engazi nokuba uze njani kwindawo akuyo.

Ngelingeni zide zabuya iingqondo waphawula ukuba usemzini wakhe.

Uthe akuphosa amehlo ezantsi kwabedi waphawula ukuba ukho umntu ohleli apho kanti ngumyeni wakhe.

“Ndize njani apha?” Ubuzile ngezwi elingenamandla.

“Sikuzisile Khanyo wam.”

“Oh”, utshilo uNokhanyo emveni koko zawa iinyembezi.

“Ndicela uxolo mfazi wam, ndixolele.”

“John, John...” akakwazanga ukuwagqiba amazwi akhe uNokhanyo, wabuya watsala ingubo wazigquma, kwavakala nje ukungqukruleka kwakhe.

UJohn naye akakwazanga ukuzibamba koko uzibone izidlele sele zimanzi, waqala wamfixiza.

UJohn uhleli apho ezantsi kwebedi kwade kwasa yona inkosikazi izigqumile sele kuvakala nje ukungqukruleka.

Kuthe ekuzeni kokusa waphakama waqala walungiselela abantwana nenkosikazi into yokutya.

“Baby, nantsi ibreakfast yakho.” Utshilo uJohn.

“Enkosi, beka apho”, yaphendula inkosikazi isazigqumile.

UJohn ukubekile ukutya wabuya waqukeza esenza umsebenzi wendlu ngalo lonke eloxesha inkosikazi isazigqumile.

Uqhubile uJohn esebenza wade waqonda ukuba inkosikazi igqibile ukutya, xa engena kweligumbi ukutya khangela kuphathwe inkosikazi isazigqumile.

“Khanyo, khawutye sithandwa sam”, utshilo uJohn.

“Enkosi, ndihluthi.”

“Owu! Yini Khanyo wam.”

“Ndihluthi John, nyhani.”

“Khanyo, khawuveze ubuso ndikubone nkosikazi yakowethu.”

“John, intloko yam ibuhlungu ndicela undiyeke.”

“Please, mfazi wam.”

Uphakamise intloko kancinci uNokhanyo wajonga uJohn, ngomothuko uJohn uye waziva sele esitsho “Ngo-yhoo!” omkhulu, waguquka uNokhanyo wajonga esipilini, into ayibone apho imenze wasitsho esikrakra isikhalo, wasidubula phezulu.

Ubhuzenzele akazi nokuba makathini uJohn, exakwe nasesi sikhalo sibuhlungu senziwa yinkosikazi yakhe.

“Baby, khawuthule kaloku bazakuthini abantu.”

“Suthetha ngabantu! Suthetha ngabantu! Uthini ngam? Uthini ngam? Abantwana bam!

Abantwana bam! Yhini, John! Yini, John!”

Emveni kwala mazwi uye wasidubula kwakho isikhalo uNokhanyo.

Kuthe esaxakwe yileyo uJohn weva ukuba kukho umntu onkqonkqozayo emnyango uyile wavula.

“Hayi torho mmelwane, sithi, siva esi sikhalo sikrakra.”

“Ngenani meza.”

Kungene amakhosikazi amahlanu ahlala phantsi.

“Hayi akhonto”, utshilo uJohn emaya mayaza engazi ukuba makacacise athini.

“Siyothuka kaloku kuba asizange sava sikhalo apha”, itshilo inkosikazi.

“Kunjalo mama.”

“Iphi inkosikazi?”

“Nantsa ekamireni ungangena.”

Iphakamile inkosikazi yangena ishiya amanye ethe cwaka.

Ngalo lonke ixesha isikhalo sikaNokhanya asimanga.

“Khanyo, mntw’nam thula kaloku sisi yima kwenzeke ntoni?”

“NguJohn! NguJohn mama! Undisulele ngeAids.”

Inkosikazi yaxakwa nokuba mayithini, yasuka yaphelelwa ngamandla yahlala phezu kwebedi.

“Thula ke sisi, sukhala, zityhile ungazigqumi, sithethe silapha singomama”

Uzityhilile uNokhanyo suka inkosikazi yothuka yakhupha, “UThixo umkhulu.”

“Thixo! Bafazi, yhini umntwana wabantu, khanize bafazi.”

Bangenile nabanye abafazi bebuduzela bafika babona ubuso bakaNokhanyo bujalile

bugcwele izigxala sele kubonakala namathumba kubuso bonke.

Ngoko nangoko amakhosikazi awe ngedolo athandaza.

UJohn kwelakhe icala wayengazi ukuba makatshone kowuphi umngxunya.

Bathuthuzele oomama bezama ukubonisa ukuba uThixo ukhona.

Zinwenwile iindaba zemeko kaNokhanyo nomyeni wakhe zayigqiba iDwesi kwakunye neMagxaki.

Kumabandla alapho wabasemithandazweni uNokhanyo, kwiinkonzo zoomama zangooLwesine wabekwa ukuba uThixa ambone.

Kubafazi abathanda ulwimi yayinto ethethwayo into eyenziwe nguJohn.

Ezindyaleni kwakumiswa ngoJohn engumzekelo wamadoda angasebenzisi condom xa enamakrexekazi.

Zajikeleza zona indaba ingulowo nalowo umhlali esithi amadoda ayazenza izinto ezibuhlungu.

Kwelakhe icala uJohn waqala ukuyibona impazamo yakhe, wangcungcutheka ngakumbi akubona inkosikazi yakhe ityiwa kukufa eyijongile.

Kwaqala kwamfikela ukuba ebesisiyatha ukushiya inkosikazi entle ngolo hlobo aleqe phandle.

Akubanga kudala zvakala iindaba zokuba uNokhanyo umkelwe ziingqondo ngoku.

Kwakukodwa ukuba aphumeze phandle asitsho isikhalo kumaxa wambi wayefunyanwa ngumyeni wakhe efuna ukuzixhoma.

Abantu baqala bathi ngenene uJohn uwubulele umzi wakhe.

Ngaminazana ithile uJohn ushiye inkosikazi yakhe kwakunye nodade wayo ukuba akhe amjonge, uye wechu ngcembe waya kwamfundisi.

Ungene wahlala, waze wakhe wathi cwaka umzuzu akhathetha, nomfundisi kwalakhe icala uye akathetha kuba eyazi imeko.

“Mfundisi, ndiziswa kukuxakwa”, ude wavakala esitsho.

“Ewe, nyana”, watsho umntu wenkosi

“Mfundisi, ndonile ndayidlakaza indlu yam.”

“Ewe, nyana.”

“Umfazi wam, ndimsulele ngentsholongwane kagawulayo endiyifumele ekurhaqazeni kwam.”

Akakwazanga kuzibamba uJohn uye wagixa.

Umfundisi uye wathula akathetha emnika ithuba lokuba akhe agqibe.

“Nyana wam, uThixo uyayibona ingxaki yakho nokuzisola kwakho kwaye akaxakwanto masithandaze...”

Emveni komthandazo umfundisi uye wabopha uJohn ngamazwi emqinisa ukuba makomelele.

Amazwi kamfundisi aye amenza ukuba aqine uJohn waze wacela indlela.

Umfundisi uye wacela ukumpheleka koko uJohn uye wala, esithi ufuna ukukhe abethwe ngumoya.

Kusuku olulandelayo uJohn ubhaqwe ngabantwana ezixhomile.

Ngenene ebethwa ngumoya wanaphakade.

Ithe inkosikazi yakuchazelwa ngokuzixhoma kukaJohn yasuka yajonga phezulu zawa iinyembezi.

Ivakele isithi “Wandenza ke, John.”