

Good-Gooder-Goodest

This is Part One of a thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Creative Writing

of

Rhodes University

by

Fundile Majola

November 2013

This thesis is presented in two parts: English and isiXhosa, in separate manuscripts

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Abstract

My stories are set in the townships, and move with the vigorous rhythms and jagged structures of township life. Some of them are written in English and others in isiXhosa. Some of the dialogue is township slang, a mixture of languages; and pure isiXhosa. The stories follow no particular pattern and are arranged according to any form of chronology, and different voices, at times as a man/boy and in others as a girl. The characters are not related each story perfectly stands for itself. Some of the stories hark back to the days of apartheid and are seen through the eyes of a child confused by the humiliations of his elders.

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THE PROMOTION

It's quarter-past eight in the morning and I find myself at Thembu's, a local *braai* spot. I'm otherwise here because Waya woke me up, begging that we go do a quick *shisa-nyama*, knowing that he only dropped me at home less than three hours earlier, filthy-drunk and damn tired. I'm still sleepy. We get pork for fifty-rand. We'll have to do the *braaing* ourselves because the boy who normally assists with it is late, the shopkeeper tells us.

Waya tells me he had to wake up earlier just so his mother couldn't find out he had brought a girl to the house. His mother's very strict about them bringing girls in her yard. Waya picked up the girl eBhaceni. *Yerr*, that place, I hate it! Its customers are mainly thugs and there's almost always a fight, with someone being stabbed. And Waya always insists that we 'pass by'. He and Dagg are always sure to pick up girls there, if they haven't already gotten any from Patido's or Sgampi's.

But my friends are never lucky at Ngqoko's. In fact, they don't even try. The guys there are very vigilant when it comes to their girls, or even those they still have their eyes on. You talk to his girl, he shoots you. Boom ... you're dead!

I'm still struggling downing my first Hunter's Dry. I can't seem to finish it, for I have never gotten myself used to the habit of drinking so early in the morning, especially when I'd been on it the night before. Waya is on his third Amstel already. His whole body's shaking with *babalas*.

Waya tells me the girl refused having sex with him. "*Hey mtshana*, you know I'm not very good when it comes to having to beg. I played my cards out in the open right from when I approached the bitch, and she didn't seem to have an issue with it, until we got home. She probably thinks I'm interested in a relationship with her – she's mad! She doesn't do it on a first night, that's what she told me. What the fuck!

"*Hahahahaha*, sorry *my laaitie*, next time," I laughed out while comforting my friend.

My phone's vibrating in my pocket. It's Themba. He wants to know where I am and I tell him. He's coming, he tells me. Waya's on the *braai* stand. He's using his hands tossing and turning

the pieces on the griller. “Fuck!” he cries foul. His fingers are feeling the heat and the smoke’s not doing justice on his still tired eyes either.

A few more guys come in, with trays of beef, chicken and mutton. They have booze too. We share greetings and jokes about the dangers of alcohol, how we often wake up next to women we would otherwise never have thought of as eligible sex partners, had we been sober.

“Hey gents, *niziikaka maan*, why didn’t you tell me you were coming here, and why this early?” Themba complains. He’s with Simphiwe.

“It’s this motherfucker, man. I’d otherwise still be asleep. He had to take home a girl he won eBhaceni,” I tell them.

“This rubbish doesn’t know when to stop. So I just left him, pretending I was going for a pee. We were still at Gqalane’s. It was around two in the morning,” this is Simphiwe.

“*Ja maan*, Simphiwe, *jou kaka* ... this morning, something was telling me I’d been with you last night but damn, I was too drunk to even entertain it and guess what, my phone had died on me. So you left me on my own, *mnqundu?*”

“So how did you get home?” I ask Simphiwe.

“Simba, that guy from Ngqolombe, remember him... he was going home so I asked him to *sommer* drop me off at home too and he was cool with it. I was exhausted man, and remember *kaloku*, I’d been on shift the night before and I came back home and didn’t sleep, thanks to you, *msunu!*” Simphiwe fumes, playfully.

“And, guys, where was everyone else last night? Where was Vuyani, Xolani and Mavu?” asks Themba.

“They’d gone to the Sdudla Concert in Walmer. Mavu had complementary tickets. That nigger’s connected man, damn!” I say.

“Lupi went with Mlungisi, Mangwera and Gash to a function somewhere in Summerstrand. I’m not really sure about it. And Xola was with the family. The wife’s around, you know *mos*. I’m not sure about Scay.” Waya continues to enlightens us.

“I have not seen Vuyani since he went sick yesterday morning. He was on diarrhoea that one ... hahaha! I have always warned him about that Savanna of his, that thing’s no good. I suspect he’s still bedridden,” says Simphiwe.

“And Xutsa?” I ask.

Simphiwe tells us he last spoke to Xutsa two days back when he was still in Fort Beaufort with Sbu, checking out on his livestock. He’s not sure when they’re coming back.

Themba takes over the *braaing*. The three of us go over to Yako’s for a loaf and a few more beers at the tavern next door. I finish my first drink and insist on getting Coke. I will do alcohol after the meal, I say. When we come back, there’s more people, with about four gorgeous girls. And there’s music too, from the boot of one of the cars outside. *Xigubhu!*, oh how I love the song. Don’t ask me about its meaning, it just happens to be my favourite this summer. A bit revived, I make a few dance moves and some guys on the far corner start laughing at me.

“No, man, just stop it. It’s clear you can’t dance,” says one of them. We all laugh. It’s true, I know.

A few minutes later, Themba summons us back inside. The meat’s ready. We go there running playfully. We sit next to three other guys. Mouths are full and hands greasy when one of the guys invites us to a party at his house in Zwide tonight.

“Sure-sure, *baba*, obvious ... we are coming,” we excitedly accept the invitation and contact numbers are exchanged. We then formally introduce ourselves. Sgingci, Terror and Skhumba are their names. Terror is tonight’s Mr Party.

Then from the door, a *madala* of about mid-age comes straight to our new friends, grabs a piece of their mutton and eats it with eyes closed. He’s wasted. Dead-drunk. The guys look at each other for an endorsement. But no one seems to know the intruder. So Sgingci confronts him.

“*Hey wena tetsi*, you taking us for *kak, nhe?*” he shoves him.

Then one guy from another corner comes running to *madala*’s rescue. He violently pulls him closer while apologising on his behalf, citing drunkenness. Madala’s face goes straight to the cement floor. With the piece of meat still in his hand, he struggles getting up. Sgingci’s not

taking it easy. He's fuming and disgusted at being taken for granted. His friends don't seem like they care. They continue eating.

Sgingci's tells the guy rescuing *madala* that he works hard for his money for some random 'moegoe' to just come around and think he's gonna disrespect him like that. The guy tries talking him down.

"My brother, here I am, trying to talk sense to you. My uncle's drunk, please forgive him", he pleads.

"Fuck sense. Fuck your uncle and you know what... fuck you too man. I don't care. I'll fuck this uncle of yours. Do you see *poes* written all over my forehead?"

"Sgingci, Sgingci, let's go man, leave this *moegoe* alone," advises Terror. Without a word more, the guys leave the place. They get into their shiny, silver-grey *Gusheshe*. But, within a split second, Sgingci's back in the *braai* area. His right hand is hidden behind his bum. He is swearing at the *madala*. His friends are still in the car. He goes straight to the *madala* and puts a gun on his forehead. We all go down, avoiding being caught in between, still hoping for the best.

He cocks the gun. "Now, see ... I'm promoting you. From now on, you'll be an ancestor. And, you know what, don't worry, we'll respect and appease you when you are one hey? So ... consider yourself promoted!" Madala's on his feet, looking sobe. His rescuer is probably down on the cold concrete floor with us too.

"Oh please sorry, my son. It was only a mistake," Madala's pleading on his own behalf. Sgingci's biting the lower lip with the upper front teeth, still aiming the gun into the old man's forehead. Right next to me is Themba. He has not stopped chewing on the meat and bread, and he has the Amstel in the other hand.

From one big deafening shot to the forehead, Madala joins us on the floor. Sgingci gives an untrusting look at all of us and, with his back to the door, stumbles out. A door is heard banging and the car speeding off. A minute passes on before any of us makes the first move off the floor. It's Madala's rescuer. He goes straight to his uncle, rubs fingers on his neck and, turning to us all, declares: "He's gone." In shock and not sure if we're completely out of danger, we then start getting up, one-by-one. My heart's beating up unusually faster. I'm frightened.

No one says a word more and my friends start making moves out to Waya's car outside. "Skhumba, let's go, man," Themba calls out to me. Waya turns on the ignition and before driving off, he's accosted by one of the guys we left inside. "*Hola, hola... wait my bra, wait.*" He tells Waya he's still on the phone calling the police and that because he believes we were with the guys that shot Madala, we can't go.

"No fuck, man, we don't know those motherfuckers. We only just met them now, like we just met you. We don't know them!" shouts Simphiwe.

"But, please man, can you say that to the police?" he pleads. The murder aside, Waya is now drunk and none of us has a valid driver's licence. After all, we've all touched alcohol, I think.

"Where are they... it's their friends, they are together. Don't let them leave," a girl comes out blazing.

"Look here *sana*, you don't even know us: so don't come talk *kak* here. If you have nothing else to say, shut the fuck up or get back inside," threatens Waya. I wind down the window and the girl goes running back inside. I tell the guy we are waiting for no police because we don't know those murderers. I see him taking a picture of the car's registration numbers with his phone as Waya drives off. While driving down Maqanda Road, a police siren calls our attention and a blue light flashes from behind. Through the loudspeaker, we are all ordered out of the car, hands in the air.

"Shit, gents, what do I do now?" asks Waya. Because he's drunk, his initial instinct is to speed away. But we all talk him against it and he pulls on the side. With guns blazing, three while police officers come out, one on the phone. We all get out and, with guns pointed at us, all ordered to lie down on the paving on the saide of the road, with hands to our backs.

While being body-searched, two more police vans screech to a halt next to us and five more officers get out. Our car is searched too. Nothing illegal is found. An officer asks Waya who the owner of the car is and he tells him that it belongs to Volkswagen, his employer.

We are then all ordered into the back of one of the vans and driven back to Thembu's, with Waya's car being driven by one of the officers. Back there, the guys are relieved we have been apprehended. We then tell the officers that yes we were there during the shooting and that we did

talk to the culprits but that we were seeing them for the first time there. Madala's lifeless body's still lying on the floor, with a whole lot of onlookers holding on to their shocked chinswatching

And to further distance us from the crime, Simphiwe tells the police that the guys had even invited us to a party later tonight and that they'd given us a residential address of one of them; and so hands over the details, written on a piece of paper.

Together with the Madala's niece, we are driven to the police station where we are told to make statements on what happened while our personal particulars and contact numbers are being written down. We are told to go home and that we'll hear from the police.

We then wait and wait and wait and nothing's ever said of madala's shooting.

GIVE THAT MAN A BELL'S!

Woken up by the noise of the SMS into his brand new Nokia Lumia 920, Skhumba realises that he didn't even finish the movie, and it's ten already. *Moer!* He gets up, stretches his exhausted body, ejects the disk and switches off the *PC*.

He convinces himself that he deserves Wimpy's All Day Breakfast and a refreshing glass, or two, of Coke.

He gets into the bathroom, brushes his teeth and quickly splashes cold water onto his still sleepy face and prepares to leave.

While locking the door, he connects one earphone to his left ear and runs through the albums in his phone and chooses The Trio! He pulls the main door closed, walks down the corridor to the stairs, down to the gate.

He shares greetings with Stungo, the security guard, who is enjoying a smoke outside the complex. "You are not working today, my friend?" asks Stungo.

Skhumba's already disappearing past Marcel's when he gives a response: "I am. My shift starts at two this afternoon."

He drops the hired movie off at the Rondebosch Café and buys himself a R30 prepaid airtime voucher. He gets R15 more in artime... its *Mahala* Thursday! He then walks towards Wimpy.

He's singing along *Take Your Love* when he spots a tall, black brother smiling at him across the road right at Woolworths doorstep. He's convinced he's seen him before. He smiles back. They share greetings.

"*Awayooh, broda?* Long time!" asks the brother.

"No I'm good, I'm good, brother. It's just that I'm wasted right now. I had a rough time last night."

They laugh it out and jokingly remind it each other about how old alcohol is.

Turning serious, the brother then asks him for a favour and informs him that a white man in a reddish car standing next to Rustenburg Girls Primary School is waiting for a parcel from him. The *mlungu* will, in return, give Skhumba money, the brother informs him. He has no problem helping a brother, Skhumba tells him.

The brother rests the tattered Karrimor bag on his lap, opens the zipper, dips his pitch-black hand in, takes out a small, transparent plastic bag containing some white powdery stuff and, before handing it over, looks around conspiratorially to make sure no one's looking.

Skhumba takes the plastic, shoves it in the inside pocket of his stylish, grey Timberland jacket and hits the road. A few steps later, the brother pleads with him to please not escape with the money, for he needs it desperately. He is even promised a 'fair' commission. Skhumba laughs it off and promises he will never do that to a brother hustling 'hard' for his living.

As surety, the brother asks Skhumba if he can please leave him something of value, while pointing at the phone. Skhumba disconnects the earphones, hands the phone over and walks away, but not before letting him know he is not fully trusting. "You are not running away with my phone, huh?"

No, *broda*, how can I? And besides, you have a *coupla* thousands there from the stuff."

"No I'm just making sure." with that, Xutsa goes for the reddish car.

On the way, Skhumba's mind wanders limitlessly: he thinks about how other people have it hard, how this brother in particular has to get into the often dangerous business of dealing in drugs just to get something to eat. He thinks about black African immigrants, exiles of war especially, how they risk their lives and venture into foreign soils just to stay alive.

He thinks of how police often decide to take away the little that's still left of their human dignity, randomly stopping and body-searching them on the streets.

He thinks it's disgusting that they are always suspects for almost everything that goes wrong in this country.

He thinks of how police threaten them with arrest and, more often, deportation, just to get a bribe. He thinks of how hostile prison life can be for anyone in a foreign land.

He thinks of how hard it should be for them to swallow the fact that Afrika, their mother land, continues demeaning them into nothings.

With his back to the school gates, his mind wanders again, this time about why white people are so into using drugs: they have everything; the world is designed to work in their favour. Other than just wanting to act spoilt, they have no reason at all to engage in drugs, he thinks.

He looks around and spots about six cars in shades of red. He sees a maroon C Class Mercedes Benz with a middle-aged Indian man in the driver's seat and two uniformed young girls in the back. He dismisses it.

He then moves his eyes to the next car: a Jeep Cherokee with a young white lady in the front seat. It can't be it.

He moves his eyes further, spots a red Golf with a young white man. That must be it. He goes, knocks on the window and carefully takes out the plastic to show the man.

“What's that, man?” asks the guy, rather puzzled. “It's your stuff.” Skhumba answers, confidently. “My stuff ... what stuff!?”

Nagging him no further, he quickly ventures to the next car, the one after ... and the one after. All of these people are not waiting for any such stuff, they reject him. They look a little bit disgusted. They are probably waiting on their girl kids from the school.

Suspecting the brother may have taken him for a fool, Skhumba rushes back to where they had agreed to meet.

Hoho! The brother's nowhere to be found. Skhumba walks around the Main Road, in and around Pick 'n Pay, Woolies, Steers, The Pigs, into the Riverside Mall and back into the Main Road.

He's talking to himself aloud, visibly angry, with the stuff hanging recklessly in his left hand when he bumps into Sonnyboy. “Hey, Skhumba, what's wrong? And this, what is it?”

“It's this fucking *kwerekwere!* He asked me to go deliver this shit to a *mlungu* in a red a car next to the school there, and now those people know nothing about it. He's not here either, and he left with my phone,” he spits the answer, while tears roll down his face.

“Is that your new Lumia, Skhumba? So are you telling me you’re walking around carrying drugs now? I’m sorry but you are being foolish, my friend. You are playing with fire!”

“Fuck you, Sonnyboy, fuck you, sonny! How was I to know?” retaliates Skhumba. “You didn’t need to. Why did you talk to him in the first place?”

“So you’re telling me I shouldn’t be talking to guys from other African countries now? Are you being phobic or what?”

“You just called him a *kwerekwere*, isn’t that a clue enough to your phobia against him, and his kind? I thought I knew you, Skhumba, but clearly, I don’t. Perhaps I never did. You’ve grown into a fool.”

“Fuck you, Sonnyboy, fuck you again!”

“Ha-ha! Was that your best shot? And what if police find you with this now, *he*? Will you stand to be Jesus and die for your brother’s sin ... your brother from another mother?”

“Hey, Sonnyboy, stop the nonsense, man! Stop it. I have my phone to worry about here. And you know what, I will sell these fucking drugs to the highest bidder and buy that phone again!”

“I would suggest you use them yourself, rather, just to get away from the pain of having lost your valuable piece of property while ‘trying to assist’.”

“*Hey wena* Sonnyboy, fuck you *maan!*” Skhumba shouts while throwing the plastic on Sonnyboy’s face. But Sonnyboy ducks and so the plastic hits on the tarmac on the paving and the stuff scatters, rendering the surface all-white.

In a rather sarcastic fashion, Sonnyboy wets his left index finger with saliva, bends down, touches the stuff and then tastes it.

“Mhmhm!” with the other hand, Sonnyboy picks on the stuff from the paving and lets it freely on the paving while pronouncing, “See how it runs... Cerebos, the novelty of free-running salt.”

“You know what, you know what, Sonnyboy ... *voetsek wena* sonny!”

“Skhumba, Skhumba, where are you going, my friend? I can’t let you leave while you’re so frustrated. You know what, let’s go get a drink or two, just to calm down.

“*Mncim*, fuck off me!” with that, Skhumba continues towards home.

Sonnyboy rushes after him and apologetically holds his arm and pleads: “It’s all on me, *mtshana*. Let’s go drink it out, man.”

And, just when Skhumba agrees, Sonnyboy informs him they will start off at the police station to report the crime, just so Skhumba can be able to go claim the phone from the insuring company. Skhumba agrees with a smile and they take the five-minute walk to the Rondebosch Police Station. But Sonnyboy first tells Skhumba they will not mention the salt-and-white-man-in-a-reddish-car but only that he was robbed by a man who pretended to ask to make a quick call from Skhumba’s handset because his was dead; and then ran away with it. They agreed on the made-up version.

After a few cross questions from the police, the statement is fully submitted and Skhumba is issued with a case number. On the way, Skhumba makes a vow, “*Izakunya*. He better make sure I don’t see him again.” At Pigs, Sonnyboy gets them four bottles of their favourite Amstel Lager.

After the first two glasses, Skhumba confesses to Sonnyboy that he regrets having allowed himself to being fooled so easily. He also tells Sonnyboy that he was supposed to have been going to work at two but with all the drama and the stress, he just can’t.

Sonnyboy convinces him otherwise. “You still have about an hour, man, go.”

“But I’ve already downed two glasses, and you know how strict those motherfuckers are.”

“But you are not drunk; you have only just had two glasses of beer, that’s it. They have a problem with people going to work drunk. And besides, you work with alcohol, so they won’t know if the smell’s from your mouth or your clothing.”

“No, man, I can’t. And besides, I’m just not in the mood anymore. But tell me, sonny, was that really salt?” with a mischievous smile, Skhumba asks.

“Salt, yes it was. He took you for the fool you have become, *my laaitie*. He’s clever and you’re not. He deserves a whole bottle of Bell’s.”

“That son of a bitch!” yells Skhumba.

They then naughtily smile to each other while hitting their glasses in the cheers fashion, laugh it out and then, in one voice, pronounce ...

“GIVE THAT MAN A BELL’S!”

THE DEBATE

Women ululate and sing while men are stick-fighting in the midst of song and dance, true eye candy for all. Such is the height of festivities at the Zingela homestead. The community is there too. After eight full years of prayers and sacrifices, TaMxo and sis' Grace have been blessed with triplets; and the news has spread like wild fire. What a blessing!

It is still in the midst of song, dance, drinks and meat when tata calls on everyone's attention: "Silence please ... can we please get your attention people, please!" With plates and glasses in hand, people stagger to the ground, eager to listen.

"We are here today because of something I am sure you are aware of by now. To those who don't, our bride, Cikizwa, my son Mxolisi's wife, has given birth to three healthy and beautiful babies ..." The news is enough to have people whistling and ululating again.

With a telling smile, tata allows for the excitement and then, about a minute later, gestures with his hand for attention again.

"As you may all know," he continues, "this is our first set of triplets in the Khomazi homestead, in recent history. We have not even had twins. Mxolisi has truly made us proud. She has put up on the map. We are the proudest."

On the far right-hand side of the yard are young men, amongst whom are me and my cousin Xola, whispering into each other's ears. We are enjoying a bucket of *umqombothi* and a few beers on the side.

Xola got back from Bloemfontein only this morning, he tells me. He works there.

We are interrupted by the outburst of a song: *USathan' udanile uThix' uvumile uMxolisi yindoda.*

We stand up and pretend to join in, doing a few dance moves, then shuffle out the gate into Xola's car. He has good whiskey in there, but no *dash*, he boasts. We send a boy for a two-litre Soda Water for *dash*.

We are busy enjoying the smooth double barrel in the privacy of the back seats of his car when he tells me how excited he is about my big brother's biological hat-trick. "Bro Mxo's a winner in the bedroom too, cousin!" he throws a joke.

We both laugh.

"But then, cousin, have you already heard the names of the kids?" I ask him.

"No, I don't, cousin," he confesses.

"It's Beauty, Blessing and Memory ... what the heck!"

"Wow, nice. Is there something wrong with them, *khazi*?" he asks, but not before suppressing a laughter himself.

"No, cousin, come on man, why give the kids colonial names? That's so 80s, man!"

"Why not? English is *mos* everyone's language too. It's ours too. We have grown into it ... It's the language of business, cousin! We are in the 21st century, brother, don't you forget. You can't lag behind, why?"

"*Ja* it's true, cousin, we were born into the language, but you know exactly the circumstances leading to that. And not just that, but how it has come to wash away our own. White languages, cousin, especially English, are very much defeatist in nature. They cannot, and have not, in the history of co-existence, lived in harmony with others, they always have to dominate. And this is the time to redefine ourselves and do away with cultural subordination. We must give our children names they will be proud of."

"And what do you mean by redefining ourselves cousin?"

"Cousin, are you telling me you don't see how white sophistication has made us foreigners in our own land? Can you not see how the Western values we so embrace continue destroying our own?"

"Oh-oh, I'm getting you, cousin... but continue."

“In case you are not getting me, cousin, all I’m saying is, it’s time we took our languages seriously. We must be seen to be seen, by all and sundry, that we have come to acknowledge the existence of the war against the demise of our cultures, against our traditions, against *ubuntu*. We must redefine ourselves, away from the colonial past and its chains.”

“But then, cousin, doesn’t the prerogative of naming a child lie with the parent? And besides that, these are not normal English names. I think black nations are the masters of semantic memory. When we give a name to a child, we make sure it has a meaning and that meaning is often loaded with the family’s gratitude to what they were given, or to their ambitions and, more importantly, their aspirations on the future of the child.”

“And these names are exactly that. In isiXhosa, Memory would be Nkumbulo, Blessing, Ntsikelelo; and Beauty, Buhle; all of which are names we already have in isiXhosa.”

“So, cousin, would the names rather be in another language? So, to you, is it’s as long as they have the necessary elements that you’ve just mentioned?”

“You can say that cousin, but that’s not the core of my argument. Listen to me, cousin, please.”

“Continue, cousin.”

“Secondly, cousin, the unique nature of these names bears witness to a special type of contribution that Afrika is making to other linguistic communities and to language in general, because whites don’t have names like these. Whites don’t have Beauty or Blessing or Memory as names. They have them only as nouns, mere words, even if they are virtues. But we have elevated the words to names we give to our offspring. White people have the likes of Patrick, Eric, Michael, Belinda, Stuart ... and so on. You know?”

“A contribution, cousin? Why? Why must we contribute anything? Other than dispossessing us of our customs, traditions and cultures, what has English as a language done for us?”

“That aside, cousin, each nation has a unique role to play in the progress of the universe, and we are one of the nations that have honoured that duty.”

“Cousin, I think we should rather be concentrating on rebuilding and developing our languages, all black languages in this country. We still have the responsibility to do away with regionalising

black languages. This is nonsense, man! The English language is today regarded as universal because its speakers stood up for it. We need to make sure to know and appreciate other black languages, for that would also quell the tribal fires set up by the colonialists. We are buying into separate development for black languages and giving universal hegemony to white languages. We must work on intellectualising our languages, start with consciously establishing that memory through the names we give our children, in that way, we will gradually win other battles too.”

But the debate comes to an abrupt end when aunty Nomawethu comes confronting us: “Hey, boys, boys, we are busy celebrating here, singing and dancing and you are on-and-on about politics... now come here, come let’s dance.”

And so, with a whoop, we put aside these weighty intellectual matters. The whiskey’s now talking in our veins and so we get up and join the festivities.

THE MAGERMANS

The taxi is still waiting to fill up. It is parked right next to the police station in Mowbray. It is from town. Passengers have had enough of waiting.

“Driver, driver, please man... let’s go now, you will get other passengers along the way! It’s been damn fifteen minutes already. We don’t have the whole day here *kaloku!*”

The driver hoots, pretending to call back his *gatjie* from shouting for passengers outside. Two minutes later, the *gatjie* comes with a mama, “Go to the back, please lady,” he asks.

Rather reluctantly, because some passengers have threatened to get out of his taxi by now, the driver starts moving the taxi, slowly taking off and, like every taxi driver, dangerously sneaks past the heavy traffic along Main Road. A few minutes later, he stops again in front of Pick ‘n Pay in Rondebosch. A passenger gets off and the *gatjie* loiters around the shop, shouting ... “Hallo-hallo Claremo-Wynberg! Wynberg brother ... brother ... hallo!”

The *gatjie* gets back into the taxi that continues along the Main Road. He asks for fares. People start paying and he asks, “Where’s the first stop, people?”

“Newlands Stadium, please.”

Immediately thereafter, mama pats the mama seated in the chair just in front of ours. They are apparently old friends and voice surprise at reuniting after so long a time.

“*Hawu, Giqwakazi*, you are seated here all along *kanti?*” they hug, kiss and share greetings and ask each other about how their families are doing. “It is all well”, they say. It has been a few years since they last saw each other.

“Do you know my last born here,” pointing at me, mama starts introducing me to her friend.

“*Yhu, hay mfazi*, which one’s this now? enquires the friend, rather surprised.

Mama tells her she had lost hope at conceiving a boy when she had me and assures her that I’m the last-last one. Skhumba’s my name and my father’s so very proud to have an heir, adds mama.

They then continue about how they have been all along.

“Are you still with the Magermans in Constantia? *Yho*, it’s really been a long time hey? But they are good whites *mos* those *neh?*” says mama.

“What ... those? I stopped working for them about four years ago already, around the soccer World Cup.”

“*Hayi*, Mambanjwa, you are lying? What happened. After so long a service?” this is mama.

“You see, MamGiqwa, let me tell you this: however desperate we seem to be in buying love and respect from white people, it’s never going to happen. They don’t love us and they never will ... even when we are dead!”

With the debate heating up a bit and mama and a few other intrusive ears getting ready to listen; mama’s friend sits up straight and turns her head to face her in the back seat.

A passenger reminds the driver he is to get off at the SA Breweries plant in Newlands. He is wearing a Stormers jersey. They are playing the Sharks.

People are hooting from their cars and even though there are traffic officers trying hard to control the flow, traffic’s still very slow, bumper-to-bumper.

“See, MamGiqwa”, begins mama’s friend, “when I finally decided to stop working for that family, it had already been twenty-three years. All of their children are products of these hands.”

“I know, I know, Mbanjwa,” assures mama.

“I minded their house, it was always spic-and-span. I cooked for them. They always came back to a warm home while my own children slept on crumbs back in Kuyasa. I left home at dawn, MamGiqwa, and came back well after sunset and there were moments when my own children had no school shoes. My children struggled to have their school fees paid because for all the toiling, that family paid me next to nothing. I raised all of their children, you know it. And I endured all of it without complaining, not once. But the last straw came when they refused borrowing me money to go bury Ntobeko, my eldest son,” cries mama’s friend

Mama is shocked and cannot believe that Ntobeko, a humble boy, is no more.

“Hay *sisi*, *uthi kutheni na apha kum?* What happened, was he get sick?”

“No, MamGiqwa, Ntobeko was very healthy. He left for work one morning at the end of March 2010 and did not make it back. It later turned out that he had been stabbed to death while being robbed right at his doorstep. Ntobeko was married and stayed in Nkanini with his wife and daughter. The perpetrators are known and they did not deny it. But the police chose to do nothing. When Ntobeko’s father kept going to the police to remind them of a pending investigation and prosecution for the murder of our son, they kept saying they were still investigating and that they were struggling to gather enough evidence against him.”

“Hawu!“ mama is shocked.

“My son’s body was discovered only a few metres from his house. They had taken his wallet and phone in exchange for a gaping wound to the heart.”

“Oh shame *sisi*, I’m sorry *maan*. Oh but people are so cruel! Ntobeko wouldn’t hurt a fly, I knew him well. It’s the children of today and these drugs,” this is mama.

“So *ja*, when he passed on, I had literally nothing on me. His wife was unemployed and so I had no money to bury him. His father had lost his job a while back. And where Ntobeko worked, they only gave us R300, claiming he was not a permanent employee and so had no benefits due. Are you listening to me, MamGiqwa?”

“I’m listening, *sisi*, continue,” mama assures her broken friend.

“And then, naturally, I turned to my employers for help, asking them to borrow me the money and deduct it from my wages over time. And guess what, they refused.”

“*Hayi, sisi!*”

“And don’t you forget my dear friend that all along *bayawadyiwaza*, taking overseas trips and daily going shopping.”

“*Yhu, abelungu* are cruel *mos sisi!*”

“You have not heard a thing, Mamgiqwa, listen.”

“What are you telling me now, Mbanjwa?”

“I don’t even want to talk about this cruelty MamGiqwa. White people are cruel. Of the R14000 I asked for, Mr Magerman said he would give R3000 and suggested I take my son’s body to be burnt. He said it was cheaper to burn than to bury. You know what, I told him clearly that I am Christian and would want my son to wake on resurrection.”

By this time, I feel embarrassed because mama is freely letting tears down her face while her friend juggles her hands between wiping off the tears.

“How could he, how could they, MamGiqwa? I was in pain and needed their support and assistance, and they refused being there for me.”

“Oh sorry *sisi*. I didn’t know it,” mama comforts her friend.

“*Dankie, mense*, here’s Kenilworth Station,” shouts the *gatjie* and mama and I prepare to get out.

“Bye-bye, *sisi*. Keep well and be strong. You still in the same house I know in Kuyasa? I will come see you this Saturday,” without waiting for an answer, mama and get out and we walk past the train station, down past the Race Course.

Mama spends the walk talking about her friend’s pain and how her former employers will not live to see the gates of heaven. She keeps on wiping her teary eyes.

SKHUMBA BECOMES A MAN

Skhumba's both excited and anxious. It is a hot summer morning and he is to write Geography, his final matric exam paper. He is also to be made a man later on in the day. Anxious as he is, he thinks he is ready.

He has spent the last week studying and answering past papers on the subject with classmates. He is sure to do well because the guys are just great in Geography.

Just a few days ago, on a Friday to be specific, he went to the New Brighton Clinic for a vaccine against any infections. It's a government policy, because initiates have been dying. Fortunately, it has never happened here in Port Elizabeth, it mainly happens in the rural localities, not townships.

Those nurses asked him some uncomfortable questions: when last did he have sex? Does he use a condom every time? Does he have more than one sexual partner? Until then, he has never discussed his sexual activities with anyone other than his friends. The nurses are elderly women *nogal*. And they do all of this in front of other patients. He got an injection in the bum and a yellowish, soury concoction the nurse made him drink.

He has been thinking hard about the personal traits he would have to say goodbye to, along with his boyhood. Those who know have also been warning him against keeping uncircumcised friends.

He writes the exam and immediately thereafter bids farewell to classmates and friends. They are as excited as he is and do all they can to inflame the fear of physical pain in his naïve self. He then goes straight home where Mgcina and Sibonelo are already waiting for him. He has promised to give them some of the clothes he had been wearing as a boy. He can't keep them anymore. Once he becomes a man, he'll get a whole new wardrobe. Mgcina is mainly interested in his black Carvellas and the Nike All Star *tekkies*. Sibonelo has been pestering him about the red Adidas tracksuit since the beginning of the year. He gets a lot more though. Mgcina can't believe his luck.

"Thanks a lot, Skhumba my friend. Thanks, bro," says Mgcina.

It is around five in the evening when the three of them, Sibusiso, Xolisa and Skhumba are surrounded by grandfathers, fathers, brothers and friends in the backyard; clad only in blankets. They are taught about manhood and what it means to be a man and how one ought to behave once declared one. It is Oom Sy who does most of the teaching and, as usual, he is the wisest of the elders. Inside the house mothers are engaging in songs of victory and ululation while at the same time preparing the freshly slaughtered sheep, three to be specific. There'll be a whole sheep for each of them. They are each given a cooked leg to eat up before they leave the yard to be released into manhood classes in the wild.

In song, they were soon led into the idling *bakkie* with all the senior men, leaving mothers, sisters and girlfriends emotionally touched and visibly teary-eyed. In fifteen minutes, they travel through the dusty and pothole-infested streets of New Brighton into the bushes of Edadeni. On arrival, they see men still working on erecting their *phempe*, their new accommodation. It is at this time, in the midst of song, whistling, stick-fighting and all other kinds of irritating noises and engaging in other such activities that he asks himself if he really wants to be a man. Everyone has been urging him to rethink the decision to do away with the foreskin because it is not worth all the pain, and there's the possibility of not making it back. But, like many others before him, he has to be brave and tackle his fear head-on. Perhaps it would be more frightening to go against tradition.

As they are led down onto the grass and ordered to open wide their legs, the legendary surgeon uMthembu draws out something covered in an old newspaper. He unwraps it and there it is: a long, not-so-shiny sword. Mthembu then kneels in front of Sbu, his rough left hand fiddling with the man-in-the-making's genitals. Sbu is shaking with fear. In no time, Sbu has no foreskin. Looking at his spilt blood, he is immediately ordered to declare himself a man. "*Ndiyindoda!*" exclaims Sbu. Skhumba follows suit and Xolisa too, after him. They spend the following three weeks in the care of Ta-Mzi, a renowned *khankatha* from one of the villages of Fort Beaufort who takes care of their physical recuperation.

One of the main teachings they get is to master their new and exclusive language as initiates, a language no one in the townships speaks. They are informed of the cultural prestige they carry as amaXhosa – a linguistic, economic and dynamic national grouping on top of others. They are told what a useless bunch of dogs boys are. It is emphasised that a man has to be circumcised the

way they are in order to qualify as a man, nothing less will do. They are also told of how evil women are – their mothers, their sisters, their teachers, friends and girlfriends. Those cunning witches! He never knew women could be so wicked.

As the three weeks near their end, they are getting excited again. They've been doing nothing more than having their wounds taken care of, eating, shitting, laughing, talking and sleeping in the wild with new found friends, getting used to their new status and new identity – manhood. The early morning of Tuesday the 16th of December comes and, by five, they are gone. Home! Festivities abound. It is all merry with mothers, sisters and girlfriends again in tears, only happier now.

They are once more told what being a man entails and what is expected of them by both the family and the community. Dignity. Responsibility. Responsiveness. No more uncircumcised friends. There is an emphasis on the preservation of their cultures, traditions and customs. They are told they will have to lead by example. They get taught the teachings of Somagwaza, a figure they later agree is rather mysterious, if not mythical, a legendary forefather who is said to have invented circumcision as a means of passage into manhood for amaXhosa.

They spend their first day back seated on reed mats. Friends and family are happy to have them back and they drink heavily on it, enjoying traditional dishes dominated by eat meat and singing and fighting and then singing again. People are not allowed to shake their hands, they instead forward their sticks and people shake on them as if they are hands. The new men are still fragile and so vulnerable to being bewitched.

Their girlfriends claim their rightful spaces next to them on the reed mats. A fight almost erupts when Xoliswa arrives to find Thoko already seated next to Skhumba. She should be the one sitting next to Skhumba. But bro Xoza stops it before the commotion grows. Using his authority as Skhumba's older brother, he orders Xoliswa out of the yard and scolds her for coming to the function without being invited by Skhumba. On hearing of that, Oom Sy almost loses his cool and scolds Skhumba for not having learnt enough lessons about manhood at the bush.

The festivities continue and they are constantly fed food and offered drinks. For the first time in their lives, the new men are free to enjoy alcoholic drinks in front of the elders. They are now expected to be responsible.

Towards the middle of the night, still with guests singing songs and voices demanding more drinks in the other room, the new men are allowed to sleep on their mats.

Early the following morning, people continue with the singing and more meat and *mqombothi* is served. As the sun starts rising, people start flocking in again, this time with gifts, to shower the new men. All sorts of gifts flood the room: bedroom sets, TVs, music systems, watches, money and clothing and even livestock.

On the third morning, the three new men are allowed out on the streets to mingle with other new men. In line with their new identity and new-found seniority, boys and girls call them *bhuti*: dear senior brothers who will have to demand the honour; for it was through thick and thin that it was earned, a long sword, three weeks of life in the wild, physical pain, dehydration and a handful of teachings.

TIGERS DON'T CRY

It's still early in the morning and his boys are making all sorts of noises, running around the house, with the sound of breaking glass and the screams, disturbing his beautiful sleep.

“Skhumba ... hey Sandile, what's going on there? Can't you see I'm trying to sleep here? Your mother's trying to sleep! Please guys, please!”

“It's Skhumba ... haaaaahaaaa! he pushed me against the table ... yho-yho-yho!” cries Sandile.

“I didn't do it on purpose, tata. It was a mistake,” protests another voice.

He rushes to the lounge, where the boys are. Sandile is sitting down on the carpet, crying out loud while holding on to his left knee, claiming pain.

“Don't play rough, boys *maan*, please. Skhumba, you see, Sandile could have been badly injured,” he warns, while massaging the knee.

He then decides he can't go back to sleep and so goes back into the room. He takes out the glass with the water and his false teeth and walks out to the tap outside. The boys follow him out.

He shares greetings with his neighbour Mrs. Mphahlele. They briefly talk about her eldest son Humphrey's matric exams which will take place less than a month from now, with the initiation into manhood following immediately thereafter.

He brushes his teeth, cleans his mouth and goes back to the house. He calls the boys, gives them a R2 note and sends them to go get a loaf and half-dozen eggs at Jali's.

They come back about fifteen minutes later and he begins preparing the breakfast: peeling onion and tomato and starts frying sausage and the eggs. Mama gets the breakfast in bed, accompanied by a refreshing cup of coffee.

He dines with the boys in the kitchen in the midst of talk, laughter and promises of chips and sweets when he comes back from town a few hours from now. Sandile asks for balloons too.

He finishes up and immediately gets up to the boiling kettle and pours its contents into the *waskoom* with cold water and quickly washes his upper body. He then goes out to the tap,

empties and cleans the *waskoom*, asks Sandile to take it back inside, fills up a 5-litre bottle with water, opens up the bonnet of his shiny, khaki-coloured Ford Granada, pours the water and then gets inside to turn on the ignition.

“Zway, Zway, please drop us off at Xolani’s. We want to go play with him,” the boys ask. He sits down on the doorstep and cleans his white, leather *tekkies*.

“No-no, boys, it’s still very early for visits. Later.”

He then invites them to come sit next to him on the stoop. The boys rush to him. They each sit on a lap, facing each other. He then gives them a lecture on why they should from now on stop calling him by his name and start calling him *tata*. He even suggests that if that’s so difficult, they could at least put a “*bhuti*” in front of the name so he could, to them, be “*bhuti Zwayi*.” But the boys engage him robustly, naively telling him that they could not even imagine that because everyone calls him Zway and that it was, after all, his name. In resistance, the boys further argue against the idea and summarily inform him of their total rejection of it. Going forward, he dips a hand into the back pocket of his Bermuda shorts, drawing out a few brown coins and offering them as an incentive, if not a bribe, for a buy-in.

He stretches his arm and hands over to Skhumba the big two cent coin and to Sandile two one cent coins. *Yho*, he had never before seen his little boy so possessed and in so much rage before. Sandile throws the coins down onto the ground, runs *amok* around the yard, crying out loud, “*Ayithengi le mali!*” Being more mature, Skhumba is immediately asked to hand over to him the big coin and accept the two cents Sandile declares “fake”. With a smile, Skhumba does as he is asked and Sandile stops crying while being wiped the tears and getting a sarcastic apology.

“So, gents, am I now *bhuti Zway?*” Skhumba runs a bit further and shouts, “*Iwee, ndikuhathile, igama lakho nguZway, awungobhuti*. I got you, to me, you are still Zway, not *bhuti!*”

So, to Skhumba and big sister Thash, who, at this time, is visiting their granny in KwaZakhele; their father remains Zway; but to Sandile, his lovely lamb, he becomes *bhut’ Zway*. What a disciplined boy Sandile is.

He tells his wife he is going to town and won’t be long and that boys will be playing in the yard. He gets into the car and off he drives.

The boys keep playing, happy they are not in church today. It has been sometime since they have been to church. They don't know how, but they seem to have convinced their mother not to insist on them going. They have never been keen anyway, only that their mother thought it was good that they be founded on religious spirituality.

When they are to go to school, they are ordinarily given lunch money for church too. The sermons are normally boring and meaningless and the instead spend the time playing *leysi* around the lawn with other children. They fight them at times. But their sister Thash is always there for them, giving a lesson or two to those who dare touch them. They use the lunch money during the sermons, buying those crunchy *magwinya*, fries, chocolates, sweets, and every other thing they feel like eating at Willows' and Goduka's. They hope their mother has realised School is enough misery. So they spend the day playing with other children out in the streets.

After all types of games in and around their street of residence, together with friends, the boys only stop their shouting, racing, teasing, falling, laughing, crying and munching, just so they have a praising look at their father's car penetrating the driveway.

He greets the children and takes the shopper bags into the house and his boys follow him in. They scratch in the bags and, yes, they find a lot: balloons, other toys and some snacks. He kisses his wife and tells of the payment at Town Talk's and the few rounds he made in music shops looking for Caiphus Semenya's latest album, in vain.

He then boils water and washes his boys while their mother is doing laundry. He sits in the lounge and reads his Sunday newspapers. They have lunch while watching a gospel programme on TV, chatting and laughing just about everything there is, exactly the way happy families do. The whole day.

Just when they are finishing up their supper, he goes to receive a call from their Telkom line in the bedroom. He comes back a few minutes later and tells his wife it is Kototo, his closest friend, asking that they quickly meet at a friend's place for a few minutes. He seems keen; but his wife is not interested. She doesn't want him to leave. They have a long-standing deal, Sundays are a no-no for friends; they spend them as family, quality time, she calls it.

But he apologetically begs and tells her it must be something very important Kototo wants discussed and that he will not be long. So after a fight that proves futile, his wife agrees, albeit reluctantly. He promises to be quick, kissing her in both cheeks and lips and then his boys on the foreheads, and the leaves. After a long wait, the boys and their mother go to sleep.

The boys get down onto the bed and quickly manoeuvre into dreamland. Very early the following morning, the boys abruptly wake up to their mother's screams. "*Yho-yho-yho, Mzwandiile!*" Still half asleep, they try hard to regain consciousness. Then one of the two men standing next to their mother comes closer to them and scolds, "*Vukani, vukani, utata wenu ufile!* Wake up, wake up, your father is dead!" They don't know exactly what being dead means, Sandile and Skhumba show no emotion and a Humphrey's mother joins in. Neighbours start clogging the house.

Later on in the morning, the boys get to hear that their father's lifeless body was discovered by the two men who came to alert them of his fate, lying just across the fruit and vegetable market opposite where he claimed to have been meeting his friend, with a gaping hole to the heart. They also hear too, that the friend, and another of his friends; are the suspects.

Time goes by and prayer services are held every evening, with neighbours assisting by all means and ways possible. The boys also get introduced to family members they have never before seen or heard of: grannies, aunts, uncles and cousins coming to empathise.

The funeral service is held the following Saturday and the relatives and neighbours come to pay their last respects, including the friend and his alleged accomplice. The boys are allowed the last glance at their father's body through the coffin. Their mother hopelessly cries out loud, posing questions without pausing for answers. "*Why, why, why, Mzwandiileee!*" Thash joins in, and others join too. Sandile and Skhumba are not sure how to respond and so they don't cry. Tigers don't cry, they have learnt from their friends.

The mother spends the rest of her days blaming herself for not having insisted on keeping her husband home. The police did not follow it up and the two friends are never proven guilty, but the community believes they killed him. The mother does want to hear anyone asking about her husband's murder and whether it was solved or not.

SKHUMBA IS CONVICTED

So *ja*, as is common knowledge amongst friends, in his heyday, Skhumba was a dedicated and disciplined learner. So, on this particular day in his matric year, the brother feels a burning desire to go study more about life and so he asks his friend Ngqayngqay to please allow him time and space to utilise his house for a quick learning experience.

As soon as the keys reach Skhumba's hands, he calls his study mate Lungisani and informs him he has the keys so they can go learn more about the reproductive life cycle of all things deemed living. With a backpack full of biology textbooks and scribbled notes, Skhumba gets down to Emaplangeni in KwaZakhele.

The studying takes something like two or so hours, until around seven in the evening. They've only been looking at some illustrations and answering past examination papers, nothing much really.

Before leaving, the niggers lock the doors, close the windows and curtains and turn on the lights, just so the house regains its homely and nightly dignity, creating with the intentional pretence that there are people inside, so that chancers and would-be house breakers get discouraged. The brothers bid each other their brotherly goodbyes and go their separate ways.

When Ngqayngqay is met again later on at the Elundini Flats, the keys exchange hands again. The friends spend the night together as usual and Ngqayngqay makes it back home only the following morning. But, unusually, he comes back seeming worried.

He asks Skhumba a lot of questions. Did he lock all the doors the night before? Did the other guy he was studying with not see the numbers to the keys? Were there any suspicious scumbags around when they left the house? Is he certain he locked all the doors? Was the fridge still intact in the kitchen when they left?

Everyone seems shocked. "What's wrong? Has your house been burgled, and the fridge? Any other big losses ... any signs of forced entry?"

"*Yho*, the window to my bedroom has been broken and the fridge is gone, guys!" A fridge!? How the hell did anyone manage moving such a big item out? They all express shock.

A few days later, Ngqayngqay informs Skhumba that his uncle is insisting on seeing a person regarding the break-in and that whoever did it will shit himself. The person they seek out is a witchdoctor. He is himself not a seer, but uses a mirror to identify the culprits. *Yho!* Skhumba has heard stories about the mirror and *hy is kak bang* of it.

Ok then, in the afternoon of the day of the visit to the person, Ngqayngqay comes back to the gentlemen angry at Skhumba. “We saw you with that fridge on your shoulders, Skhumba *mfethu!* But why are you so cruel to me *my laaitie?*”

“What!?” In one voice, *amajita* express shock and give Skhumba that judging look.

“Bhuti suggested we take witchdoctor’s advice that we kill you right there but I refused because, at the end of the day, you are still my friend, however ungrateful you are!”

This needle, my dear reader, is a tool by which a culprit, so convicted by the mirror by showing them in the act; is remotely sent to the gallows by a simple stab on the forehead when they appear.

“Bring back that fucking fridge, Skhumba, we want it as soon as possible, please. Where is it by the way, did you sell it?” Ngqayngqay wants to know. Why do you look at me like that? You dare deny, just dare! I can easily ask for a mirror print-out of you in the act, you think I’m kidding here? The mirror is no child’s play, my former friend!”

Ngqayngqay’s family then open a case with *Amadlozi* - a group of vigilante community members notorious around Port Elizabeth’s townships for their unique method of throwing culprits into the air and letting them fall back to the ground until their heads bleed confessions. These men have now also been informed of Skhumba’s supernatural conviction by the mirror. *Amadlozi* are a law unto themselves and are, as part of their gloomy track record, even reported to have fetched a magistrate while on duty in court in order to give him a taste of their interpretation of justice. You see, he hadn’t settled a debt with a local shebeen queen, Nometse.

In contrast to the principles of the national criminal justice system, with *Amadlozi*, whoever is suspected is a culprit until they prove themselves innocent. To be cleared, you need to engage in, for example, *mpimping* or providing the name of the person who you suspect and to give reasons for the suspicion.

With nothing much to say, *Amadlozi* send Skhumba demand correspondence scribbled on a dirty piece of paper torn from that big, brown potato bag, giving him three days within which to return the fridge back to its original habitat; failing which, justice would be delivered.

TaFura is himself summoned through a verbal message delivered by Rasta ‘The Physician’, another notorious ‘disciplinarian’ who has made a name for himself through conceptualising new and rather more creative ways of torturing one into a confession. Rasta is a known ‘physician’ because, in his steadfast fight against crime in our communities, he prefers and believes in being physical and practical with ‘thieves’ like Skhumba, claiming to tear directly into their consciences, and hence eliciting ‘voluntary’ confessions.

Hey boy, if you know what’s good for you, give back that fridge,

or otherwise please come see us this coming Friday at 19h00.

We will be waiting for you here at the Molefe Primary School in Connacher Street.

Yours in community justice,

Rasta – Amadlozi.

Arriving home after gym around eight, Skhumba is met by shouts from his granny, voicing her disappointment and disgust in his having involved himself with crime.

“Oh my dear Skhumba, what’s gotten to your head my son? Are you now into crime? Do you know what you are putting yourself up to with those criminals?”

“What? What are you talking about now, Gogo?”

“Here, take here. Read for yourself.” The note is handed over.

After the note, Skhumba remains shocked and cannot even say a word. Skhumba then tells Gogo of the story of the fridge, the conviction by the mirror and how he thought Ngqayngqay was joking when he threatened to report him to *Amadlozi*.

“Rasta was here, Skhumba! He delivered the letter himself. And you know how cruel that dirty bastard is. I can’t risk you being tortured, you can’t go there.”

After a quick discussion between Gogo and Skhumba’s mother later, it is decided that he must relocate as a matter of urgency. His aunt in Durban is called and alerted to the crisis and informed that Skhumba would be coming to stay with them until further notice. Skhumba does not leave the house the whole of the following day, packing up and preparing for the bus journey in the evening. He only goes out into his uncle’s *bakkie* when the time is right and journeys to Durban.

IN THE NAME OF LOVE

It is Skhumba's first year at Ben Sinuka Lower Primary. He is in Grade Four. He looks great and well-fitted in his brand-new school uniform, a shiny pair of Toughees, black socks with yellowish double lines at the upper ends, khaki shorts, a black jersey with those yellowish lines again at the wrist and in the V-shaped collar of a khaki shirt. For underwear, his mother bought him dotted white vests and a variation of colours in the stylish Spiderman *undies* with pockets in front.

Their teacher Miss Orie is fond of him. She thinks he is the cleanest among the learners, always neatly dressed. She often calls him to the front after the morning prayers in the assembly when preaching about the importance of cleanliness and school uniforms. She tells other learners he is an ideal learner. She is very strict. Even when it is cold or raining and learners come to school wearing all the different colours and sizes, she forces them to take them off.

“Your parents spend all the money on expensive clothing and alcohol. Tell them I made you take them off. I'm not afraid of them!” she frequently warns.

He did his previous grades at Enqileni Primary. They wore grey and white there. He still liked it there but his family moved house. They left KwaZakhele for New Brighton, where his father bought a proper cement house. It has four rooms. This one is not built of corrugated iron and does not have wooden poles for pillars and three-ply wooden planks for walls. It has a big yard too, a water tap and a flushable toilet used only by their family and guests.

In this new house, his father and bigger brother Major don't have to use a step-ladder to the rooftop to make alterations every time it rains. It has asbestos for roof, not zink. And, guess what, it has a nice ceiling as well ... and electric lights, and they are now using an electric stove. His mother bought it from Town-Talk. The truck came to his house and delivered it. It was still in a box, never used before. His father gave away the Primus stoves they had been using to his sister, who still lives in a shack in Chris Hani.

He doesn't sleep on the living room floor on that deflated sponge anymore. His father's boss gave them a double-bench bed that he shares with Major. He sleeps on top and Major below. His

new neighbours and schoolmates don't believe him when he tells them their bed used to sleep white children. They think he is trying to be smarter. White children!? No, it's just not possible.

Their teacher has a rather strange way of teaching and instilling memory. Once, earlier in the year, she asked the class to stand up and go lean against the wall and answer questions she would pose around the previous day's lesson.

She arranged the four rows of desks to create two separate areas. She reserved one set of double rows for those learners who proved they were smarter – the *klevas* – and the other for those she called the *domitjies*, the dumbfolk.

She went from the Religious to Health Education to English. One would be asked question from each of the subjects and if they got them all right, they could go sit down as smart learners and, if not, they would have to end up as *domitjies*.

He thought he had prepared enough for the quiz. He remembered that Jesus' followers had been 12 but, damn, he fumbled when he misspelt the number 'twelve' after the teacher asked him to go write it in words on the board. He used an 'f' instead of a 'v'. So, unfortunately, he was sent to sit down with the *domitjies* as one of them. The teacher was also disappointed because he had seemed smarter in their earlier interactions.

Then Noncedo, a very beautiful girl who stayed in the same street with him, whose father drove a silver C-Class Mercedes Benz; got them all right and was declared smart. He loves Noncedo and doesn't quite like the idea of appearing dumb in her presence. During the course of the semester, he works harder, trying to remember everything the teacher teaches. He reads his books, just so when another chance comes, gets it all right and be brought back where he belongs, to the smart circle.

Noncedo is truly smart, he knows it had not been by luck. She knows almost everything. She even told the class that Table Mountain is in Cape Town and that Sun City in the North-West province.

But he doesn't like Sandile. Sandile is full of himself. He thinks because he is with the *klevas* he is smarter, ugly as he is. One would be forgiven to mistake Sandile for the guy who designed and

built up the sun. He is so-so black and ugly. For his big face, he secretly calls him the *Nkulumbuso*. The fat Sandile even spreads lies, like that Noncedo is his girlfriend.

Then, after the Easter holidays, the teacher gives the *domitjies* another chance to answer and make it to the brighter side. He swears he will get it right. He has been reading his books and practising his maths at home.

And yes ... yes! He knows that Mandela spent twenty-seven years in prison; that FW de Klerk is a saint for having freed him and ending apartheid and that the current president, Thabo Mbeki, took over from Mandela. He is declared smart and so, together with two more boys and four girls, ordered to go sit with the *klevas*.

On his way to fetching his belongings from his old desk, he makes sure his eyes meet Sandile's and, behind Noxolo, he is sure to have caught Noncedo smiling, looking pleased. He walks back and claims his seat next to Mangaliso, the one with the thick-lensed spectacles.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

Skhumba is in his room at res, trying hard to concentrate on preparations for Dr. Kuye's Public Management Two-O-Six class test; but the inviting smell of a fried egg in the kitchen makes it hard for him to continue. He is hungry but has neither food, nor the money.

He's not friends with his flat mates so he so doesn't want to go ask. He doesn't want them to know he's desperate, especially not issues of his needs.

Those motherfuckers are two Venda boys from Giyani. They seem to have it all: desktop and laptop computers, *gumba-gumba* music players and disco-size speakers. They drink a lot and always have friends over. They use their bare hands to eat their favourite meal, *ipapa*. Money is no problem to them.

Meanwhile his family back home hustles around the neighbourhood, borrowing money every time he has to travel back to university. On lending his granny or uncle the money, local *skopari* Manqanqa normally keeps their ID documents and only gives them back when they have to go get their monthly provisions from the government at the Centenary Hall. Manqanqa's *boys* queue with them at the pay-point so they will not escape while she waits at the gates.

Since none of his family members are employed, it is difficult for them to get loans from banks. His granny, an old-age pensioner and an uncle, with a disability grant, often have to stand surety for him.

It had been in the midst of *dovoling* dice and *duzuling* ganja when an old friend and neighbour inserted the okapi right into the uncle's spinal cord about ten years earlier. He had accused him of not gambling in good faith. So uncle had since then been trapped in a wheelchair.

The rest, aunts, mother and the two elder cousins are unemployed, and may as well be unemployable.

So, in this difficult moment in his life, Skhumba knows not to call his family, and besides, he does not have a cent to call. For, if anything, his family would ask him if he has not a hundred rand to spare for them, so that they can get something to eat.

He loiters around the room, avoiding contact with his open textbook and notepads. The room is big and spacious, his friend confessed to envying him for it. For the first time in his life, he has a room to himself, with a proper bed to sleep on. Back home, he shares the living room with his brother and two cousins on a flat mattress. While every other student has on their walls pictures of hip-hop artists, TV and big screen big-timers, on his wall he has only an A-5 poster of Steve Biko and another, of Bob Marley.

A few of his friends in those fancy degree programmes have sponsorships from the country's commercial and mining companies. Some have even moved out of *res*, opting instead for *digs*, where rules are not as strict.

He got the shock of his life when classmate Sinazo told him they paid over R30-*grands* in school fees during matric. He had only paid R20. He is one of the learners from Newell High at the university. His loan puts him at the mercy of the government. As their contribution to his education, the university has ruled that his family have to pay the minimal R3000. It is his second year of being registered and he's lucky enough to have been bailed out of last year's tuition balance.

He's witnessed some of his closest friends being shown the gate after not being able to perform competently. Five of them. Tshego was excluded on academic grounds. He is sitting at home in rural Zeerust, doing nothing.

Then, Ayanda, Siphokazi, Tso and Mthura also could not register this year because they still owed last year's tuition and accommodation costs. The government did not give them the loan. They were around during registration at the beginning of the year, frequenting the SRC offices. After toy-toying daily with Azasco and Sasco, they finally decided to give up, realising the university did not want them back.

Siphokazi now leaves with her aunt in Gugs and is a cashier at Shoprite in town. Tso went back to Bloem. His homeboy Teboho complains he drinks a lot. And Ayanda is sadly said to have

committed suicide by swallowing the deadly water tank pill in May. After complaining about stomach ache, her granny had asked a neighbour to rush them to Frere Hospital, where she died within minutes of arrival.

On the other hand, at the time of his exclusion, Mthura was lucky enough to have learnt a thing or two about business. He only did his first year, but is doing well in his computer repair business.

So he has to study hard and be spared from the exclusions. He has to do it for himself, and his family. He is their only hope out of poverty. But he can't, he is hungry. So he takes out his FNB debit card and goes straight to the ATM, hoping for some miracle, braving the rain and cold weather outside.

At the machine, he inserts the card and makes a balance enquiry. A slip comes out. He has only R8.35 and he knows the ATM only releases money, in the least, from R10. What is he to do now? he wonders. He's getting desperate and, a few minutes later, he sees himself inside the bank, queuing for the tellers. When his turn comes, the teller greets him.

"Hello, *bhuti*, how can we help you today?"

"*Molo, sisi, ndizotsala.*"

"Okay. You have your ID and bank card hey? How much are you withdrawing?"

Ashamed, he looks around to see if anyone nearby is listening and whispers, "*Yes sisi*, eight thirty-five."

"Eight hundred and thirty-five?" enquires the teller.

"No. Eight rand thirty-five cents, *sisi*," he whispers.

"*No, bhuti maan*, you can't *kaloku*. You know the bank only gives in multiples of R10. So wait until you get another deposit and come withdraw," she's irritated.

"*Sisi*, you don't understand. I am leaving FNB and opening another account somewhere, so I am taking any monies I still have left."

“May I ask you why you are closing the account, *bhuti*?”

“I am done studying and leaving Cape Town.”

“Where are you going?”

“Joburg.”

“But there is an FNB in Joburg *mos*?”

Getting annoyed, “*Sisi*, I am telling you I am having nothing more to do with your bank. Please give back my money!”

“If you say so, you will get your money, *bhuti*. No need to shout and be angry.”

At this point, a few other customers look at his direction and the security guard comes closer.

“Sister, you need any assistance?”

“No I’m fine, *bhuti*,” assures the teller. He says nothing.

“Are you sure?”

“*Ja-ja*, sure.”

He is made to sign a few papers and then handed coins amounting to R8.35. He takes the money, rushes to Shoprite and comes out with half-brown and half-dozen eggs. He goes back to *res*, fries himself three eggs, a warming cup of coffee, steals four teaspoons of sugar from one of his flat mates and disappears into his room.

GOOD-GOODER-GOODEST

Teacher Miss Mankazana enters the class already shouting. She’s fuming.

“Marawu, Mpondo and Mapopo, come here. You think you know me, huh?” The learners all go down to their chairs and immediately stop all the noise. With books on their desks, some even pretend they were studying and not part of the noise makers. The teacher then sends Nompucuko to go get Nopinki from Mr Speelman at Room 9. Nopinki is that pink, metre-long electric pipe that the teachers use to hit the learners. For obvious reasons, learners hate Nopinki, while every teacher seems to love it.

“Yesterday I gave you work to do at home and, instead of being useful collectively try to work out the as a class, you make noise, jumping from desk to desk. The principal had to come call me because you are making noise and disturbing the whole school.” She then turns to the three.

“You three, you think you can shame me like that, huh? Do you do that at home too ... running on top of the tables like that?” She threatens to report Marawu’s misbehaviour to his father when she sees him at church the following day. She even tells him of how he’s dragging his family name into the mud by being the black sheep.

Nompucuko comes in carrying Nopinki and Miss Mankazana orders Marawu and his crew to stand against the chalkboard, facing the wall. She hits them hard on their bums. Five lashes each. Mpondo can’t handle it. He loiters around the class crying, with his right hand stroking the bums. “Sit down”, the teacher orders him. She goes on and on about how she passed her Standard Six with flying colours ten years back and how she sees no future with the class she’s teaching. She also tells the class that the reason black people don’t go far in life and end up later claiming they never had the chance is because of people like them. White children are not like them, she tells the class

“Take out your grammar books,” she orders. She goes to the board and writes ‘Degrees of Comparison’. She puts in three columns and then writes:

BIG BIGGEST

.....	UGLIER	UGLIEST
.....	STRONGER
.....	DUMBEST
GOOD

The class has to fill in the missing words to complete the quiz. You better get them all right and, should I find that you have copied, or allowed someone to copy from your work, *die poppe sal dans!*” She gives the class five minutes to finish the work and walks vigilantly around the desks to make sure no one finds the space and time to copy. The mood is tense. Learners don’t seem to be confident they understand the degrees of comparison. The teacher spots Pretty shaking her pen. She calls her up and demands to know why she’s not writing. “Sorry, Miss, my pen’s not writing,” answers Pretty. The teacher runs to her desk, grabs Nopinki and hits Pretty all over her tiny frame. She then orders her out of her class until she gets a pen.

“Time up,” she says and the sound of screeching chairs on the concrete floor fills the room. Learners line up towards the teacher’s table. She sits down and marks the assignments. At the back of the line a few learners are still busy with the assignment. Jackie whispers to Skhumba, trying to ascertain if he’s correct when he gives GOOD-GOODER-GOODEST. Skhumba whispers back positively. “*Ja sure, mtshana.*”

When she gets to Jackie, the teacher bursts out shouting. “Hey, look at you? You are fool of the highest grade! Where in the world have you ever heard someone say ‘Good-Gooder-Goodest’, huh?” There’s a suppressed feeling of laughter in the class. She gives him five lashes on his left palm and then orders him to go stand in front of the class and tell everyone he’s the dumbest learner ever and that he’s beyond hope. With tears falling down, Jackie exactly as per the order and goes back to his chair.

He then gives Skhumba a look and makes sure their eyes meet. Skhumba cannot bear to see his friend hurting after being humiliated. He regrets it. He wanted the title of the quiz, that’s why he lied to his friend. He wants to Jackie’s desk and ask for forgiveness but the teacher cannot see

him standing, she's still angry. So he tears a piece of paper from his exercise book and explains that he didn't know it would lead to that and asks for forgiveness. The paper makes its way to Jackie from under the desks. He reads it, gives Skhumba a look, tears the note and throws it onto the floor. Skhumba knows there's no going back. Jackie's angry with him.

After school, Matopi and Mangaliso go to Skhumba and tell him of what they think of him. He deserves a *necklace*. The *necklace* is a tyre ordinarily filled with petrol and set alight while hanging on someone's neck. People who get *necklaced* are normally those accused of being on the other side of the fight against apartheid. Matopi and Mangaliso tell Skhumba they think he's no less of a *mpimpi*. Skhumba tries reasoning with them while offering his apologies. Matopi tells Skhumba he knows he's not genuine in his apology and that he'll tell Jackie to not accept it too. "You can't sell your brother like that, Skhumba. No, I refuse," cries Matopi.

Overpowered, Skhumba leaves the boys and decides to go home. On his way he sees a group of girls running back towards the school gates, crying. They are classmates. Jackie is running behind them with stones in his hands. One of the girls hides behind a teacher's car and shouts: "Good-Gooder-Goodest!" Skhumba feels even sadder, knowing the damage he's done to his friend. He tells the girls what they are doing is wrong and that he won't prevent Jackie from hitting them. Closing in on the girls, Jackie sees Skhumba and then, with an element of sarcasm, asks, "See what you've done?"

GREETINGS TO GOD

Chauke thinks Nozi, his girlfriend, is two-timing him and so, in fury, sends me to go call her from her home in Zondi Street.

“Hey, Skhumba, go call Nozi for me from her home. She needs to be fixed to comee nice”.

I come back with her talking and laughing. On setting eyes on her, Chauke jumps on Nozi with two very hot *klaps* to both cheeks, big eyes. She stumbles and falls down on the ground. “*Yhu-yhu-yhu, wenzani, Thabo, undibethelani?* What wrong did I do, Thabo?” she cries. I run to safety a few metres away but make sure I can still see all so I could, twenty-five years later, narrate this to you. He drags her into the house and continues issuing the beatings, the kicks and the insults. Then, in the midst of it all, bhut’ Sizakele, a friend of bra Suz, my father’s elder brother; shows up. Bhut’ Sizakele has, some two weeks earlier, sold a pair of Chuck Tailors, a pair of three-quarter shorts, as well as a pair of stylish sunglasses and two short-sleeved shirts to Chauke, on credit.

Chauke is still boxing and hitting Nozi’s head against the wall when, in the midst of her cries for help, bhut’ Sizakele begins to irritate the hell out of Chauke, demanding his dues. “Look here, Chauke, I have no problem with you disciplining your girl and I’m not planning to interfere, but first please give me my money. I was here for two days last week, I was here on Monday and yesterday, and you keep promising and postponing. Do you have an idea how much time and money coming here costs me? I want my money today. I want it all now, Chauke!”

Bra Suz, on the other side, is busy hurling insults at Chauke for undermining his house and taking advantage of his wheelchair-bound existence.

Chauke initially goes on with the business of restructuring Nozi’s physique while pretending not to hear bhut’ Sizakele’s demands. He asks Nozi, while still kicking, questions he does not really expect answers to; but later screams at bhut’ Sizakele, telling him how irritated he is with his noise and that he must wait till he ‘fixes up’ “the bitch”. But the creditor doesn’t give in. “But when are you finishing up, *kaloku?* I want my money, Chauke!” he demands.

Chauke ordinarily refers to bhut' Sizakele as 'Ta-Siza' because he is more than a decade older than him. But this day is different. "*Hey Sizakele, mnqund' wakho, hhlukana nam.* Leave me alone, you bloody asshole! If this bitch escapes, you are in trouble. You will be next!" I don't know how but Chauke mistakenly loses grip of Nozi and she quickly smuggles in between bhut' Sizakele and Bra Suz, with blood spilling all over, screaming for help; she secures herself a quick asylum at baw' uMbanjwa's house, our next-door neighbour. Chauke tries running for her but it is too late.

Chauke then comes for bhut' Sizakele, "Hey wena *kaka*, you see she's gone now. Are you happy? It's your turn now, it's what you've been calling for anyways, huh?" he shouts while his left hand is throttling bhut' Sizakele against the wall and the right one fiddling in his back pocket. Bhut' Sizakele knows what Chauke is up to and so escapes into the kitchen while assuring him he's not looking for any trouble but his money. The kitchen, which also doubles as bra Suz's bedroom, has no door and so Chauke has no difficulty getting in. He draws out his shiny okapi knife and charges forward while bhut' Sizakele moves backwards, step-by-step.

Bhut' Sizakele unfortunately trips and falls on the bed on his back and Chauke, like a tiger, throws himself on him and stabs continuously at his upper torso, face and head. He has his knees on bhut' Sizakele's arms while his right hand is pressing down on his neck so he can't do anything. Stabbing, stabbing and stabbing! All this time bhut' Sizakele is crying for help while apologizing. I beg for mercy, my brother runs out crying out aloud as he runs away and bra Suz is shouting at Chauke to stop this cruelty while threatening to stand up from his wheelchair and "bullshit" him. The neighbours are already gathered outside the house and making noises.

Still on it, Chauke spots a boiling pot of our supper – *umngqusho* – grabs it and pours it all on bhut' Sizakele's fresh wounds while screaming "Say hi to God for me, tell him I'm coming too. Greetings be unto God. Greet him for me! Greet him for me, *jou moer!* Fuck you!" Finished up, Chauke stands up, gets out of the house, with the knife still in his left hand, his clothes and face bloodied – step-by-step, making the last-man-standing slow moves forward, just like in a movie. On seeing him come out, neighbours run into the safety of their homes. Chauke crosses the road, past Fudumele's shop and vanishes into his home in Bekwa Street.

Bhut' Sizakele, follows him, clearly losing strength, bleeding all over; managing to reach his cousin bhut' Mandla's gate at the entrance into Lamani Street. Neighbours follow him while holding on to their shocked chins. He trips and falls on his battered face immediately after opening the gate, and is never to wake up again. Till now.

The following day, police come and take pictures of our house and, without saying a word, leave in their trucks. This marks the harassment of our house and bra Suz by the police, for more than a year, demanding to be given leads to find Chauke. But after that, nothing comes of the case and we are not really sure if there was a case to begin with,

We are also never to see Chauke, who is believed to have escaped to the rural areas deep in the Eastern Cape.

COUNTING THEM BEFORE THEY HATCH

Just when I begin convincing myself that I'd survived the boringly long queue and the slow service at the Long Street branch of my bank, with only a thirty-minute lunch break; I witness a pain I cannot but narrate.

She had been all bubbly, happily conversing with me and another ugly guy about how slow and irritating the tellers can be at times. She also assures us how she is not complaining today because she has all the time and that, immediately after the queue, she will be doing some shopping at the Waterfront. She even introduces herself to me. Mihlali Daweti is her name, she tells me. All the way from kwaMashu, on the northern outskirts of Durban. She also thinks Skhumba, my name, is interesting and rather not common.

“Wow, I love Durban!” I lie.

“It's great, yeah!” she assures me.

In her right hand, Mihlali has a cheque she is passionately waving in the air every time she makes a point while talking to us and, with my curiosity at an unprecedented high, I peep and, I believe I see R18.800.00 written thereon. “You see, I'm taking a well-deserved, week-long holiday boat trip to Mozambique at the end of next week, so I'm taking it easy now. I'm getting myself a pair of All Star sneakers, two pairs of nice-fitting jeans and a nice pair of sunglasses after this queue.”

“You go girl! Wow, how nice. I envy you.” She laughs, blushing and, before we know it, she is next in line for service at the counter. “Teller number seven”, shouts the radio voice. She boastingly sways her well-figured waist sideways and excitedly greets the teller and even asks how she is doing. They keep a nice, short girly talk.

“Who issued the cheque, my sister?” enquires the teller. She tells her it's from one of her business associates. The teller keeps punching on her computer until she breaks the news: “I'm sorry sisi but this cheque is a fake and it can have you arrested as well. It's fraudulent; whoever issued it to you was taking you for a fool.”

“No, no, no! This can't be true, lady! Tell me you're kidding me?”

“It’s no joke, I’m telling you *sisi*, it’s a fake!” she tells Mihlali, now beginning to get visibly annoyed.

After a silence that feels like a decade, Mihlali burts out. “*Yhuu-yhu-yhu-yhu!* I’ve been raped ... *yho-yho-yho*, he raped me ... that son of a bitch ... *yhuuuuuu!!*” Everybody in the bank looks alarmed. Mihlali then roams around the bank, swearing and threatening to kill the apparent son of a female dog. Meanwhile, a security guard comes to Mihlali, whispers something to her and then escorts her to another room.

“Teller number three.” It is my turn. Within two minutes, I have R15000 in my hand and as I approach the door, the security guy who had escorted Mihlali to that room is also on his way out. I decide to ask him what the actual story seems to be with my new friend. While shaking his head in disbelief, the guy tells me the sister is apparently a sex worker who had unknowingly given a night-long service to a well-dressed, smooth-tongued crook who told her he was a businessman who owned shopping malls around the country, an engineering company securing lucrative tenders from the government and some retail franchises.

“Oh, shame ... the poor girl.” I hear myself feeling her pain.

She should not have counted them before hatching.

MY WHITE GOGO

She was coming back home to us the following day, the doctor had earlier informed her, she told me.

I'd walked back happily, knowing I would be coming back from school to find my lovely gogo at home the following afternoon. Yes, I didn't have the taxi fare home; but that wasn't an issue, I loved walking. It normally allowed me time to further engage the Creator to please preserve my gogo's truly precious life.

I had hardly stepped into the yard when uncle Nkuza called out to me, "Look here boy, go tell uncle Sgidla at the Red Location that mama has passed away."

The command cut through my chest with a deep feeling of pain that pierced my heart. Looking straight into uncle Nkuza's eyes, I knew he was talking nonsense. It couldn't be. I had just been with gogo, talking and laughing together. Gogo was even being discharged the following day, she'd said it to me herself. In so little a time, was that really possible? Uncle Nkuza must have been kidding me, or going mad. *It's a bad joke*; I thought. But I stood no chance.

Even if it was through, was that how I was supposed to find out about the passing on of my beloved grandmother? Was I not, at least, worthy of being seated down and told, with a bit of sensitivity?

"What, *malume!*?" I couldn't believe it.

"*Hey*, Skhumba, go tell uncle Sgidla that mama has left us! Do you hear me? Now. Go!"

Anyway, with no choice, I ran all the way to *tanci* Sgidla's place. I told him what I myself couldn't believe. With his lower jaw still hanging in shock, *tanci* was about to ask more questions. He ordered my cousin Nzali to prepare me a drink so that I could cool down, but I ran out. They called after me, but I would hear none of it. I ran straight back to the Livingstone Hospital, where I'd left gogo.

I ran through *edadeni*, passed Eveready Batteries and Firestone and crossed over to the busy Korsten Road. I ran like crazy, competing with the speeding taxis and other cars.

In no time I was there. I headed straight for Ward 9, B Block. I found her. My gogo was asleep, with her blankets over her head.

“Gogo!” I called out, removing the blankets. Without waiting for her to wake up or open her eyes, I told my gogo they believed she was dead back home.

She must have slept immediately after I’d left. I had kept her awake for the whole two hours, I remembered.

“Gogo, I called out again, while patting her on her chest.

“Hey, what do you think you are doing over there? Who are you? Are you mad?” shouted the pimple-faced, overweight nurse while pushing me away and covering gogo again.

A gogo on the bed next to my gogo’s waved at me. I had helped her with drinking water an hour earlier. With eyes wide open and tears freely falling down the aged cheeks, the gogo hugged me tightly, while mumbling something I couldn’t understand. But I got a feeling that she was not talking to me.

It had happened only a few minutes after I’d left, the gogo told me. “She had been waiting for you, *mzukulwana*. You are lucky enough to have seen her while she was on her way to her last home. And you are the last family member to have seen her alive, I know it. That hug and kiss she gave you right here in front of me was the blessing she’d spared for you. Only you.”

I don’t remember anything from after that point, but that I woke up on aunty Nokuzola’s bed at home, in the midst of singing, a full five hours later. *Lizalis’ idinga lakho*, sang the people. I tried making sense of what was going on: why were people singing? I stretched my strained neck to see. Almost all those present were familiar faces. They were all neighbours, friends and relatives. It turned out to be one of those nightly prayer meetings that go on until the day of the funeral. I tried recalling the earlier events of the day.

So my grandmother had indeed passed on. Those were mourners. So uncle Nkuza was not talking nonsense. My mind began swimming in sorrow, thinking of my gogo, and of what to me was to happen now that I’d lost my guardian.

Truth be told though, I thought, God does not always heed poor boys' pleas, especially when those pleas make little or no sense at all. I mean, come on ... my gogo was 88 years old. Why would anyone still want her alive? What's still there for her? For all the knowledge that God has privileged access to, my gogo may have been one of those who couldn't even afford paying their tithes to the church. When was the last time she had given? How much did she contribute towards the building of the new church structure? Did she give a gift to the Reverend's wife on her birthday? Then ... what's the fuss? Come on, dear Skhumba!

Time went on, with the prayer meetings taking place daily. I don't know where I got the strength to carry on through the two weeks leading to gogo's funeral. It was a time characterised by intense physical work. I am not very sure how I made it through.

We spent the time catering for the guests, re-arranging and removing furniture, often having to make way for them to sleep on our beds. We children were ultimately made to sleep over at aunt Nomakheswa's house in Fergusson Road, and that was until after the funeral. What a bother!

Gogo's passing-on was even announced on Umhlobo Wenene FM's Imiphanga programme and so mourners were coming from all corners of the country, which, uncle Nkuza advised, meant that we'd have to paint the whole house anew, lest the visitors gossip about how untidy we were.

Together with my friends, I weeded the backyard, cut the grass, fixed the fencing and cleaned the shrubs and hedges. We would go to and from the neighbouring houses, daily borrowing and returning their wooden benches to accommodate the growing number of mourners during the prayer meetings. We also went to the offices of the Algoa Bus Company to hire buses for transport to the cemetery, and to Vantyi & Vantyi Funerals for the tent and the accompanying chairs.

What brought me back to my senses though was a shocking event that happened two days before the day of the funeral.

Lettie, one of the daughters of the Fangs, a white family that my gogo had worked for as a domestic for close to forty years, came to our house. Gogo had always boasted that she had personally raised all of the Fangs' children. They all called her mama. Lettie was the only one

left in the country; all of her siblings and parents had emigrated to Australia during South Africa's political transition from the early to the mid-1990s. She was happily married.

Lettie gave us all hugs, laughing with uncles and aunts about how much we'd grown up so quickly. She gave some money and sweets to myself and my twin sisters - Nomgcobo and Gcotyelwa. I still remember the curious eyes of the neighbours. Why was a white lady in our yard? I could see their imaginations roaming. Xolani screamed to the top of his voice: "Lulama, *hey Major, yizani!* Come see there's a *mlungkazi* at Skhumba's." The boys came and touched Lettie's hands, feeling her mysterious, supposedly superior skin with their dirty, little fingers. Lettie hugged them and also gave them some sweets. The Colgate smiles on their faces could not have been missed.

When Lettie left, I was still at Fudumele's for Coke and Eet-Sum-Mors.

On my way back home, I could see from a distance that Lettie's car was not there anymore. She'd left.

Uncle Mgcineni was shouting out aloud. Confused as I was, I knew better than to him where Lettie was. He was fuming. "Never ... over my dead body!", he kept on vowing.

I left the drink and biscuits and uncle's change on the table in the kitchen and got out.

Outside, Xolani told me that uncle Mgcineni had chucked Lettie out of the house, swearing at her.

"You white people think you are still in power, this is our time. There is no way I can allow that to happen," he had said. Xolani thought my uncle was very brave, daring to talk like that to a white person.

Later in the day, when elders were gathered in the house, still in high temperatures, I think I heard uncle Duka swearing, "It is not our culture. It never was, and it's not starting today. My sister will not be burned. She will be buried the known, dignified way."

Aunt Sizeka then told me later that day that Lettie's visit was in order to inform the family that gogo had wanted to be cremated. She had papers to prove it, signed by lawyers and by my gogo herself.

Our relatives were disgusted at gogo for having been swayed by whites into burning her own body. How was she to join other ancestors and to look after us now? They asked.

“I hope you have all seen how spending too much time with white people has done to our dear sister, brothers and sisters?” an uncle I had never met told the mourners a day later.

When it finally dawned on most of my relatives that gogo would be cremated, they staged a protest, still refusing to let it happen. But it was unfortunately not up to them to decide, so they left, preferring instead not to be part of it.

Uncle Mkhokeli even threatened to never come back to the house, nor talk to any of those who facilitated in the dearth of our traditions.

But after a few more days of delays and heated debates, visits to the mortuary and the government offices, gogo was cremated, to the disgust of almost everybody who'd been to her funeral.

Gogo had been my guardian for the better part of my life. She had been my mother. I had spent almost two decades with her. But I had never really known her. I couldn't believe that she'd allow herself into being manipulated into this self-destruction.

Our township came to talk of my gogo as the black gogo who had succumbed to mortality the white man's way. A white gogo, they said. My gogo.

MY FIRST DAY AT WORK

So there I was, over the moon, having just sealed a lucrative employment deal as a salesperson with bra Coks, a local businessman and the resident caretaker at my former school - Ben Sinuka Junior Primary.

This was to be my first stint at a paid job, my initial active contribution to the land's GDP, albeit informally.

I had been at the shop that Friday evening for a twenty pack of Rothman's King Size cigarettes for bra Suz at Fudumele's.

A few minutes earlier, while still at the sales counter, shouting at the assistants to help me, bra Coks had greeted me with his ordinary fatherly smile, asked if I was well and then asked if I was good at counting and dealing with money. "Ewe, bra Coks!" I nodded.

"So, Skhumba, tell me my boy: if someone buys two items one costing forty cents and another thirty cents, and gives you R10 - how much does he get back in change?"

"R9.30", I exclaimed, in zero point three-three seconds. "Great, great, my son! And if anyone were to buy five items costing thirty cents each, how much would he have to give you?"

"R1.50!" again, a great sum.

"Great! Your maths is good, Skhumba. And you are fast too! How old are you and err... what standard are you doing at school?"

"I'll be turning eight in May. No, I'm not at school this year, bra Coks."

"Oh, ok." He didn't ask why, perhaps because it was none of his business or, maybe rather, he was keen to benefit from my availability.

Well, the truth is, I do not remember going back to school after my father's burial at the beginning of May just the previous year. I had only been in sub-Standard A.

So *ja*, bra Coks ordered that I be at his residence by seven the following morning. It was to be my first day at work. I went back home, gave the cigarettes that I'd gone to buy and related my good fortune to my family. They were excited.

I slept restlessly and eagerly jumped out of my makeshift bed the following morning. I was at bra Coks' fifteen minutes before time. On my arrival, I was greeted with a warm cup of soup and six peanut-buttered brown slices. Bra Coks was a caretaker, remember? So the soup, the peanut butter and the bread belonged to the school. One thing the apartheid government despised most, it seemed, was seeing black learners go hungry.

On arrival at bra Coks', I found my colleagues to be a familiar bunch, neighbourhood boys who were of more or less my age: Manyiki, Ncuza, the late Bolo, Mcebisi (the boss's son), Nqabhebhe, Xolani, Kwanele, Babalo and three more whose names I can't remember.

They were all bare footed, perhaps because shoes were never clearly stipulated as a prerequisite for the job. In fact, with my ragged pair of old North Star *tekkies*, I was the only one with shoes on.

"Boys, boys, come now, it's getting late. Let's go." ordered bra Coks. He gave each a pile of well-cut paraffin lamp wicks, about ten scented Lucky Sticks, twenty afro combs and thirty gold and silver sets of earrings. Prices were emphasised and sales targets clearly set.

We soon left for Korsten and, on arrival, we were stationed in pairs at specific spots. I was stationed at Bayview, at the bus terminus with Manyiki, who was going to be my partner. Next to where we were stationed, just outside Ramco's Wholesalers, a great performance by a *scathamiya* male octet was going on. They were doing a perfect rendition of Ladysmith Black Mambazo's hits. I was star-struck. Wow!

When Manyiki was busy making sales by shouting the prices to passers-by, 110% of my attention was dedicated to listening to the beautiful music. But my appreciation of the lovely music was abruptly interrupted by a slap that left me hearing voices inside my head. Bra Coks delivered a hot clap to my mouth, nose, eyes and a part of the forehead. "I told you to sell, *mnqundu!* Why the hell are you here for then?"

I staggered sideways and lost balance, landing on the stoop just in front of the public toilets. I was so shocked and in pain, I kept mumbling an apology. There were exclamations of disgust from those around. “*Rhaa maan*, that’s abuse! Why do that to a helpless child?”

But Bra Coks didn’t consider this comment worthy of a response. He instead turned around and took the money Manyiki had made and gave him more stock to sell. Manyiki was, at the time, laughing uncontrollably at my fate.

With bits of blood dripping from my tattered lower lip, I struggled to hold back the tears that were already pouring down my cheeks, with an extreme feeling of humiliation. Then this one *mama* came to me, Feeling sorry for me, she handed me a piece of toilet paper to wipe away both the tears and the blood. She also gave a solid red apple to munch and asked if bra Coks was my father. I shook my head.

The question was a painful reminder of how I had no one playing a father figure in my life, not even in the role of a step.

But there was neither time nor energy for self-pity, so I started shouting, eager to prove my capability:

“20 cents for a lamp wick,
30 cents for knobs,
40 cents for a Lucky Stick,
40 cents for an Afro comb!”

I kept repeating the shouts on the prices and even added a rather creative line I overheard from my partner: “*Ungahlal’ ebumnyameni ikhon’ imitya yezbane echeap ngapha, mama!* Don’t you dare curse yourself into a life of darkness when we have affordable lamp wicks this side, *mama!*”

With time, I began making some sales and, just more than two hours later, bra Coks came again and nodded approvingly when he saw what I had made: “See, you must shout. This is good. It’s only your first day and you have already sold a lot. I like you, boy.” I returned his smile, but it didn’t come from my heart. I couldn’t forget how he’d humiliated me.

At around mid-day, bra Coks summoned us all and informed us that we were to walk to Dassie for more sales. We left and, on arrival, started penetrating bus and taxi queues with our pleading shouts. In there, I made more sales than any of my experienced colleagues and so secured myself a congratulatory pat on the shoulder from the boss.

At around two in the afternoon, we got on to a bus, leaving for the head office, otherwise also known as bra Coks' residence; where we were given more stock and ordered to go door-to-door, infiltrating Port Elizabeth's townships.

By the way, that afternoon marked the first time I set my foot in Soweto, an area I had till then only heard about in people's conversations. Soweto-on-Sea, they call it to distinguish it from Joburg's. Sowetans were popular for their consistent fight against white supremacy and they were said to be a cruel bunch. It was Kwanele who suggested we go there because his mother and her boyfriend, bra Ike, had a house there.

I remember a story bra Suz once related about a white police officer who got out of the back of a *bakkie* with an AK-47 in Soweto; shooting randomly at darkies and then, perhaps either by mistake or by intention; his colleagues drove off, leaving him behind, alone with the angry victims.

The officer was stoned from behind, bra Suz went on. He fell down and after they captured him, guess what, he was forced into downing a bucket full of black *kak*. *Sies!* The 'comrades', I was told, did not kill him but released him, letting him go back home. He was later rescued by the same colleagues. It was said that he committed suicide a few days later; he just couldn't bear to live knowing he had eaten shit. A popular claim was that the poor officer confessed to having no qualms about eating shit but definitely not from a black arse.

Okay, okay, back to business now. At around six, we left Soweto and walked back to the head office to cash in. Once more, I was congratulated for doing great work.

While bra Coks was busy reconciling the day's total sales with the cash-ins, we once again kept ourselves busy... accordingly engaging the bread, the peanut butter and the soup.

Then, about thirty minutes later, the boss called us one-one-by-one into his office, doubling as a bedroom. On my turn; I was remunerated with a whopping R2 note. I'd never been that rich.

MY BIGGEST CAR SALE

It's not always easy to make that hard decision: quitting a well-paying and satisfying, first job ... for an intangible happiness *nogal*. But I - me and myself - have always possessed that amazingly rare strength to fight off the attractive and trapping evils of money, as led by greed. So *ja*, I did it, conquered the devil. I left the satisfactory comfort zone of employment and its benefits, only for a vague idea.

But it was an idea for which I had sworn to live.

I battled toe-to-toe the common knowledge that South Africa's formal educational platform was, as it still is, packaged just so one could go work for someone else, another company; and not so much so one could enrich, empower and create work for himself and others from the point go. But, with that vague idea, I was determined to do it.

Hard as it was a decision, I took it. I resigned from my comfortable salesperson job from bra Coks, and enrolled for full time study at David Vuku Lower Primary, my second attempt at Sub-Standard A, today's Grade One.

On resignation, a fat handshake package they called severance that apparently included a leave pay-out, my pension and a gratitude *sthonga* of some sort, paid in one big *mgodlo*; was all poured onto my then tiny two hands, in coins not less than forty. I can still remember a Soli Deo Gloria R1, a silver five-bob, four two-bobs and a host of other *mwangalala* dominated by not-so-interesting brown one cent coins.

I suspected I would need the money to keep the business afloat: settling debts like service providers, the salaries of my staff and the taxes due to the powers that be, the Receiver of Revenue... bro Suz; so I saved it all in a an old KOO Baked Beans tin and buried it under the bushy weed in our backyard, just behind the toilet. But I kept in my pocket something like R1, all in brown coins that I – together with my boys Sonnyboy and Ndabazakhe - partied on non-stop for the following two weeks, like all darkies do.

And, because I was eager to succeed as both a manufacturer and a dealer in the province's booming motorized car industry, I started working on the idea, daily.

Every afternoon after school, on my way home, I would actively collect waste fencing wire, bare and insulated electric cables for car chassis, old Doom and Baygon and Aromat containers and some rubber for tyres and old paint tin lids for steering wheels.

These were to be the main material for my cars and that's exactly what made the cars I made unique and sought-after. They were different.

The sales skills from bra Coks' initially came in handy, for I was indeed experienced, persuasive and charming.

But, I later realised, none of them ever had to work, for I needed no experience to persuade and charm anyone into buying, because my cars were just great and the prices even sexier.

Sonnyboy was my accountant: he kept all the monies made and maintained records of all orders, sales and clients who still needed to close on their balances; just so the company could remain financially viable and legislatively compliant. At the end of each hard day's labour, the staff would excitedly go buy *iikota eziklewa* at M&M's and, occasionally, *amagwinya* at bra Coks'.

Ndabazakhe was my marketing guru. He would come back from school and inform me of two of his classmates who each needed a sedan to don at an important black-tie event and, right there and then, I would build them. We would go deliver the cars and be paid on the spot. Cash on delivery! In celebrating the sales, we would come back home to the workshop munching *oipayots* and chocolates from Mamtshawe's.

In addition to their fat, daily salaries of filled quarte breads, sweets, chocolates, pyotts and *amagwinya*, Ndaba and Sonny were also further incentivised with branded company cars – the former donning a brand new FuraFunyenye and the latter a shiny FuraMafuretse– all mahala!

Gradually over time, I gained a reputation in the neighbourhood with parents who fancied my cars for their little boys. “*Yhu, hay sanauyakude lo mntwana, ezinjeukubantleimoto?*” they would complement. And, expectantly, I would blush.

My orders came from as far afield as the Red Location, Limba Road, Emotheni, Avenue B, Ngqolombe, Naude, Zondi and Singapi streets and a bit abroad. And I was based in Gunguluza.

My client base included the famous Prince family in Gunguluza. I remember once being asked by one *sisi* to custom-make Mlungisi and Nono 4X4 each. I did exactly that and got paid, handsomely.

The workshop, our backyard, was always full of “irritating” pieces of wire and tin stuff that could turn out to be dangerous to our own little, bare feet; bra Suz would complain. Clients were coming in and out, test-driving, riding and submitting CVs for various, inexistent positions. One chap I ultimately agreed to hire, albeit strictly on commission, was Mbombozi; a fellow classmate who frequented the workshop and constantly expressed his dire interest in collecting wire and tins for us because his area had it all in abundance, he claimed.

One great benefit to my business was that it was hundred percent black-owned and based in New Brighton - a township - and so the occasional consumer boycotts aimed at destabilizing the white business establishment only served to boost my then imminent commercial monopoly and popularity amongst the disenfranchised ...my own.

I was driving a personally exclusive, executive Fura Fukufuku, a sure eye-candy. It was a very, very big 4X4. It was nothing like anyone had ever dreamt of nor seen before, custom-made only for and by the conceptualist himself... the designer, the manufacturer, the dealer, Skhumba!

This beauty – Fura Fukufuku - was the envy of all, with requests from all and sundry to sell it to them. But because I just could not face my conscience over the possibility of ever losing the *mgrugra*, I shrugged off the requests. It just could never happen. Not while I was still breathing, I swore.

But again, because *uSathana akalali engatyanga*, the possibility of kissing my car a permanent goodbye became clearer and even scarier as a persistent Roro’s mother kept pestering me to please sell it to her for her equally crazy son.

After a few more teary requests from Roro’s mother, and with my trusted accomplices – Ndaba and Sonny – feeling her pain and *sommer* begging me to sell her Fukufuku and design myself an even better car; and the more than incentivising price she put forward; I told her I would sleep on it and, because I was not very eager; I kept on sleeping-on-it, for something close to a month. But what matters, I guess, is that I finally gave in.

I asked them to give me a few more drives before ultimately delivering it. They gave me a week. Yho! No one could miss the excitement in Roro's bubbly face. The poor boy!

On the day of the actual delivery— that fateful Friday evening - you would swear a treasured close friend had been lost to death. I was crying. Even as I stretched my hand to receive the whopping, unprecedented R250 for the sale; with Roro beaming *olukaBlankethe*, I could not help but release a tear or two, not from the eyes though, but from deep down in the heart.

And because the average price for my cars was 70 cents; at R2.50, Fukufuku proved to be my biggest-ever, single sale for a car.

I do not really know where I lost it exactly but I sadly never did go further than hopes with the car manufacturing business, neither with sales, as I so wished. I suspect parting ways with my treasured car had much more to do in terms of influence.

That was my biggest-ever, single car sale.

THE SOUND OF DEATH

It is his first time. Skhumba has never taken a train before, ever. He is sitting there talking to Skorobho, anxiously waiting on his first rail ride, impressing his curious eyes with everything and anyone inside the carriage. It is seventeen minutes before departure: four-thirteen on a sunny January Sunday afternoon.

The beer is doing wonders in his head. Carling Black Label. It was his first, too. Ever. Skorobho, his cousin, had coerced him into gulping. “What kind of a man are you, *mzala*? Man up maan, *my laaitie!* Here, take.”

Skhumba’s brain wanders back to his mission in the mother city. He is here to try his luck at UWC. Aunt Nomawexuwexu is taking him and his brother Manqatha there tomorrow. Manqatha has been admitted for a BSc and Skhumba is still to submit an application, a very late application. He thinks of what will come out of it all, and hopes for the best. Journalism is his interest.

His brain is working again, thinking of his friends back in New Brighton this time, seven hundred and thirty kilometres away. He thinks about how they are spending the weekend, without him. It is his first weekend without them, in a very long time.

He thinks about the night-long, 12-hour journey that saw him and Manqatha stepping into Cape Town, for the first time in their lives. Uncle Ngwamza had insisted that it had to be the InterCape. It is reliable and comfortable, he had assured them, but the ass-massaging seats of the coach were nothing like Skhumba had ever experienced before.

It was almost his first journey out of the friendly city. The two-hour long travel on an Algoa Bus Company-rented coach that Stephen Mazungula Senior Primary’s rugby team had hired to Grahamstown half a dozen years back had its pseudo-leather seats damaged and the window panes broken.

They had gone to play rugby at Rhodes University. It had been nice. The playing fields were

vast: healthily green and softer on the skin than the Dynamos grounds they were used to.

He had played and conversed the whole day with white kids from white schools. “*Mlungu, mlungu, Vrityo-vrity’ umngqush’ uvuthiwe!*” was all he’d known of their language.

Back in the train, these four teenage boys are suspiciously loitering about the carriage, walking from one end to the other while practising their fake laughs.

Once more, Skhumba’s brain wonders back to what delivered him to a train seat, and he remembers. Skorobho had asked if he would not like to go see other interesting parts of the Cape. “*Ja* sure, why not? I’m in.” They had enjoyed beer with a few of Skorobho’s friends in Khayelitsha, including some familiar faces from back home. The train is bound for Bellville, but they are to bounce off at aunt Nombhobho’s house in Blue Downs, where they’ll be staying.

The train starts making screechy noises, preparing to depart. Skhumba sits up straight, just so that he can be fully conscious and to see every move of his first ride.

It is actually very busy inside the train. Passengers are conversing about everything there is to talk about. The faithful sing church hymns while others read their Bibles. One guy is creatively advertising his sweets.

“Thengani izwitisi imilom’ inuke kamnandi

Oosisi bayalithanda inene, bhuti

Come one ... come all, yizan kalok!”

The boys keep loitering. One is holding the door open while the train is still in slow motion: he is wearing an extremely dirty pair of All Star sneakers, *skatula* shorts, a striped Loxion

Kulca t-shirt and a bluish Nike cap. Skhumba suspects that there is something extremely mischievous about the boy.

On the other side of the carriage, just opposite Skhumba, against an open window, is a mama with designer gold jewels all across her neck, laughing and talking to a tata who doesn't look an inch like he's her husband. She has a Bona magazine that she glances at in two-minute intervals, on her lap.

Then, the boys start getting out, one by one. The one who has been holding the door is the last out. The doors close behind him. While out, he goes straight for mama's jewels. He violently pulls the chain from her neck. The chain does not give in easily and mama releases a bitter scream.

Tata instinctively rises up and grab's the evil hand that's still grappling with the loyal piece of jewelry. Other passengers follow suit. They all assist in holding on to the hand. They try pulling it inside, apparently to serve the owner with a piece of their justice. Tata draws out an okapi knife and beings to stab on the arm other passengers are still holding onto. By now, the boy is hanging from outside the train, with half his arm inside.

The train is now at full speed and the boy is crying out for mercy.

One passenger feels sorry for him, "Leave him now, leave him. You don't wanna kill him!"

"Skorobho, what's going on? Why did we have to take a train, man?." Skhumba is complaining.

Skhumba is restless, nervously standing up and sitting down again, not knowing what's going to happen next.

"Skhumba, Skhumba ... *hlala phantsi*, sit down, man," shouts Skorobho.

With the many hands pulling on the boy's arm, one big bang is heard. Boom! The passengers lose grip of the hand. "*Yifa njandini*, go to hell, bloody dog!" one passenger can be heard. Blood fills the mama's chair. It's the boy's.

The boy has hit against one of those big steel poles manning the railway.

Passengers hold on to their shocked chins. Others attempt to investigate the injuries on mama's neck. She's also bleeding. She does not stop crying. She doesn't stop crying. The chains are still holding on to her neck, reliably.

Skhumba knows that must surely have been the sound of death. The boy cannot have survived. No amount of faith could have saved him.

THE DAY

The day has been a great one, especially for us children. It is a cool winter day, very late in July. We are going back to school in a week's time. Like any other, the day has been filled with fun and all types of games in and around Gunguluza, where I live.

Gunguluza, like any other township street, is dusty with matchbox-sized, low-cost adjacent housing which is almost always in flames. Gunguluza has lately become a detour for taxis escaping the consumer boycott searches around Tshangana Street and Avenue A, which are bus and taxis routes directly adjacent.

We shout, run, race and fall. We tease, laugh, cry and munch. At one point, we stop all the noise, to have a praising look at bro Zway parking in the driveway with his gold Ford Granada – a true eye candy. Bro Zway is way cool, we all agree. We want to be like him when we grow up.

Our fun almost ends when we witness a fierce fight between Kwanele and Ndaba. The boys are arguing over whether or not we are in a leap year. Most of us don't interfere, because we don't know what that is.

But the fight goes no further than a blow and a *take-five*, in each direction, thanks to Dorothy. Dorothy intervenes and informs the two that a leap year would be in 1988, two years from then. Dorothy is older than all of us, and in Standard Five already.

We are the middle of the hide-and-seek game when I bust Xolani and Phindiwe doing stuff that only adults do, behind bro Suz's shack. I threaten to report them. But then we all cannot resist attending to a sudden cry from behind the tap. We run. It is Major. His left leg is trapped in the broken metal lid of the sewage drain and covered in blood. He accidentally slipped into it. It's horrific. The lid has cut through most of his lower leg. I run for help.

Sis' Nozipho comes to see and tries rescuing Major. Dabs is called. She is a nurse at Dora Nginza Hospital. She brings her first aid stuff before asking bro Zway to please take him to a clinic.

This brings our game to an abrupt end.

In the late afternoon, the weather changes and it starts raining.

About two hours later, we – I and my brother – are sent to go buy two plastic bags of potatoes in preparation for supper. We wait a bit until the rain subsides and, before leaving, cover our heads in OK Bazaar shopper bags and upper bodies in *lindas*. A *linda* is the black rubbish bag as known in Port Elizabeth's townships, named after a black apartheid government official, Linda Thamsanqa, who is believed to have introduced these bags because they first came into being during his reign of terror on our streets.

While in the company of a multi-racial bunch of armed assistants, Linda was occasionally seen distributing these bags, thereby making his face known and familiarising himself with the neighbourhood.

Linda would often be seen sitting on top of a caspir in front of Fudumele's shop across the street, right at the entrance into Bekwa Street, warning people to do right and avoid being found on the other side of the law: to those who knew they would still be walking the streets between 9pm and 5am at any given day due to employment obligations, he advises they ask for letters confirming this from their employers. And to those who have no *reasonable or justifiable* business on the streets during the curfew times, Linda promises "*ukuhlangana nenyoka iphung' umhluzi.*" I put my own life on the spot, I swear with everything I have, not one person I knew seemed eager to meet that snake drinking gravy, whatever that means. "*Sizam' ukulungisa. We are trying to make right*", Linda often justifies.

The curfews are part of the state of emergency, bro Suz told Yhoyhoma the other day. I myself did see President PW Botha on TV looking angry and waving his finger. But I did not understand what he said because it was in English.

Linda stayed in Avenue B, a street adjacent to Lamani, itself adjacent to Gunguluza. Linda's home is always manned by heavily armed soldiers and police officers. Once, a few months ago, I still do not know how, but the house was set alight in the middle of a very chilly night. That same night, the army raided our homes, rudely waking up families, kicking and pepper-spraying all. They took with them teenage boys, young and older men for a *lesson* or two, which lasted the whole night and most of the following day.

Some, like Kwanele's brother, Mzwakhe, were never seen again. His mother went to mortuaries, police holding cells, prisons and hospitals. And there are no records of him having been arrested in the prisons department, either.

By afternoon on the day following of the burning of the house, while passing through Avenue B on my way to one of the shops at the Red Location, I saw Linda's mother shouting at all those who cared to listen, telling them how ungrateful they were to burn their house, after *everything* his dear son has done for them.

So *ja*, with the makeshift raincoats on, I and my brother brave the freezing cold. We run through the muddy Gunguluza. While knocking *ezimbotyini* – the house that sells beans and potatoes – we whisper to ourselves, wishing they could spare us a cup of the delicious soup they are cooking, for the smell is just torturing us.

We are ordered in.

We say our greetings and ask for the two packets of potatoes while handing over Gloria – the big, silver one rand coin.

We are told to choose from the packs under the table, where the swollen and bandaged lower right leg of the owner can be seen.

The community believe the wound symbolises the *muthi* the old man is using in order for his business to flourish. A snake the man breeds, it is believed, feeds by licking on the wound. Should the wound heal, the business will go insolvent, the people believe. Moreover, because Papisi, one of his sons, is mentally unsound, the belief further holds that it is part of the guarantee of a life-long commercial success of the household.

So we take the two plastic bags and, as a gesture of respect, I stretch out my two combined hands when I receive my change. We then leave.

Half-way back home, while chasing each other playfully in the drizzle, we see from a distance a commotion around our house. There are people running out into the street, in different directions.

A few minutes before, we had left bro Suz and his friends gambling dice in his shack. As we get nearer, we see white soldiers in SADF camouflage and *amatshaka* in their blue uniforms, giving chase.

Amatshaka are blacks that act like they hate all other blacks. They speak isiZulu. Our teacher Miss Somniso had once told us that the name '*amatshaka*' is derived from Shaka, the fearless warrior and later ruler of the Zulus. They are more cruel than their white counterparts and can occasionally be seen torturing a black man or woman in the open with their whips, batons and sticks, while laughing out at the grim entertainment.

Back to the commotion, we then spot bhut' Mangwane running for dear life into Lamani Street. He is closely followed by a *tshaka* who then stands his ground, balancing both legs further apart, and starts shooting at him. Having earned himself the bullets all over his body, bhut' Mangwane falls right at the entrance into his house.

Other *matshaka* and white officers also shoot in different directions and immediately jump back onto the caspirs. In no time, they are gone.

I run closer to see for myself. Bhut' Mangwane is bleeding and neighbours start coming closer too. While an ambulance is being summoned, the family are shouting out, calling on bhut' Mangwane to wake the hell up. He does not heed the call. His eyes are closed. The ambulance arrives and first treats him on the scene, before whisking him away.

Back into Gunguluza, I learn that a lot more people have been shot. And a smell of death lingers in the air. Families are anxious.

Back home, no one is interested in the potatoes we have brought, everyone is still shocked at how cruel the government can be to "harmless poor brothers". Bro Suz, on the other side, is shouting, letting everyone know how disgusted he is at Mlamli for causing "all of this."

Mlamli is also a neighbour in his very early twenties. He lives further up Gunguluza.

As bro Suz tells it, Mlamli had left them after losing on a game of dice, on his way home, saw the *matshaka* and whites approaching, brandishing their weapons. He ran back to where he had left them, gambling.

“How could he? Could he not have been a thinker for once and run elsewhere to avoid what he had caused?” demands bro Suz.

“Now”, continues bro Suz, “what if some of these guys die in that hospital? Won’t their families blame me? And these whites, won’t they continue victimising me!?”

Neighbours keep coming to listen for themselves to what had really happened. Then, about two hours later, sis’ Nozibele, bhut’ Mangwane’s elder sister, approaches our house already screaming, blaming bro Suz for the death of her brother. “It’s your fault, your hands are full of blood, Laysuza!” Bhut Mangwane was apparently declared dead even before reaching Dora Nginza.

A few days after the shooting, Coward and Mtywiri and Zola are declared dead, too.

But we are children, so we keep on playing, in spite of the atrocities happening to our people. So, on the day of their burial a week later, we stop our games until after the procession from Lamani passes Gunguluza, into Tshangana and further.

We then start talking about how the dead will one day wake up and those who killed them would have to stand for themselves and account for their deeds in front of the Lord.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE GIRL WHO DUMPED ME BECAUSE I WAS STILL UNCIRCUMCISED

Dear Nontobeko

Oh-oh sorry, pardon me please, now I remember, your name is Nomvume, *nhe?*

I hope and wish this letter finds you well still, my dear Mvumvu.

After a fifteen-year-long break, that error is possible and so pardonable too.

Hallo mabhebeza.

You must have grown up now; it's been a long time *kaloku*. And those wide, pointed curves, and bums, do you still have them? I miss spanking them, I always looked forward to doing it, it was nice.

My friend Themba liked your boobs. He liked the fact it seemed like your tits were always pointing at him. My brother Sonnyboy thought you were better off as an ornament, just to be looked at and appreciated.

You are probably a mother by now. Say hi to the kids for me, I miss them. Had you not dumped me (the way you did), I might have been lucky enough to have been their father. Those cute little things, daddy loves them. Oh how nice it would have been for me to hold them in these hands. I promise to bring them a Stumbo and a Yogueta, one each, when I come back home to you for the holidays.

You know, I must confess, when I peeped through the window and saw you opening the gate that rainy Wednesday afternoon; I knew something had gone terribly wrong. You were impatiently fiddling with the chain. My heart started beating unusually faster.

Our relationship, we always convinced each other, had been planned and designed in heaven way before our earthly existence, remember?

You were in Standard Seven and I was doing my matric. Remember how we used to plan our lives: that I'd go to varsity the following year and do my Law and that you, three years later, would enrol for Internal Auditing? Oh how I wish it had all happened like that.

That day you seemed so nervous. I wondered whether you were coming to tell me you were pregnant.

Even though there was not an inch of a chance I could have been the father, I told myself that I would accept the responsibility. I loved the idea of being in love, especially with a girl of your physical attributes, it positioned me well ahead my peers.

You didn't even greet me the way you usually did: no kiss, no hug! You just barged in. I was totally shocked by what you said next.

“Fundile, *kanti uyajingisa* all along? What have you been taking me for, huh? Look here *ke bhuti*, whatever we had ends now!”

Up until then, the thought of you dumping me was totally inconceivable; we had committed to loving each in sickness and in health, remember?

And when, in an attempt to fight back, I confronted you with a reminder on the commitment; you put it to me that the commitment was only limited to issues related to sickness and health, and not to a foreskin. I was dumbfounded.

Arguing in favour of the break-up, you told me too that you had last dated an uncircumcised partner four years back. You must have been in Standard Three, I guessed. Damn!

Immediately after you dumped me, I went straight to my uncle bro Suz and told him about what had happened, and he agreed the foreskin had to be removed without delay. It was costing my romance dearly. So *ja*, in December that very same year, about three months after that fateful day, I went through a foreskin removal ritual that also doubled as a rite of passage into manhood. I have been a man ever since ...yippee!

When, still at the mountain, my fellow initiates Xutsa and Sbu buried their foreskins six fingers underground, I pretended to do the same while I hid mine under my blanket. I spent the following three weeks chewing on its salty taste. It was rather leathery though. We were not allowed the normal chewing gums. They are not African, remember?

At the time, I was still as naïve and couldn't understand how you could hate my foreskin to the point of not wanting anything to do with me. But now, wiser and older, I think I understand.

I still remember how I had to *peculula* it and rub my *waslap* around it every time I took a bath. And I didn't always have the time on my side. So *ja*, good riddance.

Having removed that intrusive flesh of my flesh, you must be jumping with joy *mabhebeza*, hey?

So, darling, now that you know I am no longer pulling a trailer down there any more, will you please accept me back?

Till I hear from you girl, *bhabhay*.

Skhumba

(0834020583)

UTHIXO AKAPHI NGASANDLA SODWA

It was a Tuesday and the university had just paid me my monthly affirmative action stipend - *umacanda*. Rumour had it that before I was a student there, a certain Mr. Robert Macanda was responsible for the pay-outs and so students honoured him, albeit unofficially, by calling the stipend such. Ironically though, *amacanda* is food in township slang, and the stipend was exactly for that – food.

Well, I had decided a few weeks back that I'd close my eyes and pour three thirds of it into a good pair of running shoes. The Tri-Varsity Relay was going to be in a week's time.

I took a shuttle down Lower Campus on my way to Liesbeeck Gardens, my place of residence. I left my books and ran up to the Mowbray taxi rank for that ten-minute ride to Rondebosch East. I was excited; it was that rare moment in a month where an ordinarily poor student would own money, and have total authority on how, where, when and on who to use it, without the fear of having to give any reasons to anybody.

There was good music playing in the taxi and both the driver and the *gatjie* were singing along to Tupac's hit, *Me Against The World*. The *gatjie* would occasionally peep through the window to shout "Hello Athlone-Gatesville-Mannenber, hallo-halloooo!" Like me, he also seemed excited.

While passing the Red Cross Children's Hospital, I was immediately taken back in thought, and my mind went a year earlier, when a toddler cousin of mine had lost her life while in the hands of experienced and expert paediatricians at the institution. About a minute later, I heard the *gatjie* announcing, "Dankie Hi-fi!" Hi-Fi Corp still shares the same block with Sportman's Warehouse, where I was to get my new pair of *takkies*.

I got out and was welcomed by a delicious smell of sausage braai on Hi-Fi's doorstep. I bought one and a can of Coke. Wow, finger-licking! I went in at Sportsman's and headed straight for a sales person I recognized as a fellow runner. We talked a bit about the upcoming races and

then got down to business: “So what can I do for you today, my brother?” he asked. “I’m looking for a good pair of running shoes, *grootman*”, I responded.

He then paraded me along the shelves and I quickly fell in love with an Adidas pair. I wanted it, I told him. I fitted it and it felt perfect on my feet and even improved my posture. I asked if I could still have it on while I was heading for the pay point. “No problem, my brother”, he assured me, while taking the old, dirty, stinking, sticky and ragged pair into the box meant for the new one.

I told the cashier lady I had the new pair on and inside the box was my old *takkies*. “How does it feel though?” she smiled. “Perfect!” I assured her. They cost R350.00 and I only had R300.00 cash on me, so I gave what I had to her and asked that she deduct the remaining R50 from my debit card. She told me they did not yet have a device for such sophistication. I asked if they had an ATM around so I could go withdraw the money and she told me the closest was in Mowbray. Hack, I lamented, to myself. “Go get the R50 and I will keep the pair for you here so long”, she said, while taking the box with the old pair into her custody, just underneath her full and healthily shiny, brown thighs.

Has she forgotten that the box has my old pair? I wondered, to myself. But I was immediately confronted by an irritating noise of illusory hallucination from voice within, repeating “*uThixo akaphi ngasandla sodwa*”. God does not have the privilege of coming down from heaven and give a blessing to one by hand. So it really must have been God’s hand through the cashier’s, passing a blessing in the form of a brand-new Adidas pair, for free.

Aware of what had just happened, and not wanting to disappoint the hand that had given above, I quickly left the shop and took the first taxi home. In no time, I was in my room, counting my blessings. I had a new pair I had not paid for. Wow, praises be unto Jah, the provider. Him Jireh! “Hallelujah!” I heard myself praising.

PART 2: THE GIRLS

MY FIRST EXPERIENCE

I was thirteen when I struggled through my first experience. What a torture! It still haunts me to this day. I had never before thought about it. “Be gentle, Zozo, put it in slowly”, I thought out, aloud. And, as much as it seemed scary, I had to find a way get it in. it belongs down there.

Nobody had ever talked to me about it before. Any reference to it from an adult, a friend or younger aunt seemed too taboo. The truth is, it had already been more than a year already since I had started menstruating and, on the day of my first menstruation, I recall how anxious I had been. Nervous!

I had run straight to my mother with the blood out of my already messed-up panties leaking, into my new Kelso slim-fit pair of jeans. My friend Kholeka had bought it as my birthday present a few weeks back. In defence, I ran to mama, crying out. I told her that I had never slept with a boy before, even though I had started menstruating. My elder sister sis’ Nozuko had earlier warned me she would find out if I slept with boys, and that menstruating was one such sign.

“Strue God, mama, I have never!” I swore, with tears running down my frightened cheeks. Mama didn’t look all that surprised. She had assured me she would deal with sis’ Nozuko herself and that, in the meantime, I should relax.

Mama had seated me down, urging me to calm down. She disappeared into the kitchen. I heard the primus stove making its noise. She came back a few minutes later with the *waskoom* and had told me to wash. She brought me my toddler sister Nommi’s old napkins and cut one into four equal pieces, and put it nicely into the inner base of my clean panty, the green one I wore to school.

After all the commotion, I put it on as per the instruction. Mama seated me down and gave me a lecture about how old I had grown, the dangers of sleeping with a boy, the many chances of conceiving prematurely and how she still hoped I would not disappoint her.

It was common knowledge though among younger girls that older girls menstruated into sundry old rags which they washed, reused, washed and reused.

I also learnt from mama that menstruation was a shamefully unclean secret that should not be allowed to contaminate the immaculate male ears.

She had donated a few more of the napkins and then advised me to keep them and myself particularly clean during this time of the month.

From then on, it had been the same routine to carry two or three nappies in my bag all day, that time of the month, until this fateful day.

We were in the middle of a prayer at uncle Skhenya's house when my body told me something was wrong, with no prior warning.

We were celebrating bro Mce's graduation. He earned himself a BSc Honours degree from the University of the Western Cape in Cape Town.

I immediately felt uneasy and was even tempted to quickly crawl from my holy kneeling position into the bathroom. But I knew better than to irritate tata. How could anyone run from a prayer! He would have branded me the devil's cub right there and then.

Immediately after the prayer, I excused myself to go to the bathroom, careful not to arouse anyone's suspicions.

Washing both the panty and the messed-up, ragged former napkin turned the otherwise snow-white bathroom into a muddy mess with random clots of blood. It was a heavy flow.

I was still in it when Gcogco burst in. But I thought I had locked the door!

Sies! with both hands hiding her mouth and nose, Gcogco expressed her disgust.

An overwhelming wave of embarrassment clogged me, with my heart beating unusually faster.

“What's wrong, Zozo? Oh holy shit, are you ok though?”

“Ja-ja, it's just that er...” She left before I could finish.

I knew that my periods that day should, as usual, have been a peaceful and discreet affair, but having been rushed-up and without a prior warning, it just couldn't be. I regretted it.

In no time, Gcogco came back with a replacement skirt and a small, colourful box that she handed over to me.

“Here, take one.” I didn’t know what the box was, but without hesitation, I grabbed it.

Kotex Tampons: Super, it read. I took out one and examined it. It was scary. It looked offensive too.

Did it really look like that inside? I thought. It seemed too intrusive for my vagina.

The thought of it penetrating me was the cause of my sudden feeling of fear and the accompanying sweat going down my face and neck.

Just looking at it brought unspeakable shivers to my body. I had never before seen nor heard of such a thing.

I was still busy reading the instructions when Gcogco shouted, “Come on Zozo, we have no time. People are waiting for us in the lounge, let’s go sing with them.”

“I have never used one”, I confessed.

“*Nyani*, don’t lie, *wena!*?” she laughed at me.

“But you’re better off losing your virginity to a tampon than to a man, she joked”. We both laughed.

Gcogco told me all about a tampon and, with minimum force, I attempted inserting one. It took me the whole four minutes, but not before accidentally loosening the thread, thereby spoiling it. So I had wasted one. I regretted this.

After one more try, with Gcogco’s assistance, the tampon was fully inserted.

My walk back to the lounge was an unusual one though.

THE SECRET

I'm my dad's sweet, little thing. He loves me to bits. He says I'm the world's most beautiful girl. My dad spoils the hell out of me. I am the greatest thing that's ever happened to him, he tells me. I am not his only child though, but his favourite. That much I know.

There is also Sonwabo, two years older, and the toddler twins Thabo and Thabang. Sonwabo lives in Joburg with his mother and stepdad. The twins stay with their maternal grandparents here in Site B, where I also stay with daddy's mother. The twin's mother passed on after delivering. At the time of my own mother's death, I was already ten.

My mother had been ill, mostly bed-ridden for the four months leading up to her final departure. She had been suffering from pneumonia, but she had always been hopeful she would get better.

My mother was the sweetest girl my dad had ever loved, my dad tells me. She was still young and naïve when they met. He had been her first boyfriend. She was still at school.

But, at the time of her passing-on, it had been six years since her and dad had broken up, thanks to her mother and granny. They never liked him. He was too old and experienced for a girl of her age, they told her. They had even cooked up allegations of infidelity against him.

She had warm and loving arms. Buhle, my mother's name, did more than confirm her beauty. People still say I resemble her in every way. My voice, especially, people swear, is like hers. She loved singing and was blessed with a magical voice, like me.

I and my mother were the best of friends. My mother had been proud of my beauty and my brains. I was topping my classed and was crowned Miss Molefe Primary School in Grade Four.

We would sometimes talk and talk right into the midnight. I still remember the day she took me to the Century City. She'd asked me not to go to school that day.

By ten that morning, we were already enjoying our breakfast at Wimpy, only the two of us. We then left for Ster-Kinekor, where we both agreed to watch *The Dream Girls*. After the movie, she took me to Spur, where I enjoyed my favourite, delicious chicken wings, pasted with Spur's Famous Durky sauce. *Shu!*

Mama told about how she had always wanted to be as open with me, but was waiting for the right time. She initially went on and on meaninglessly. I was panicking.

She told me about how her family had, five years back, conspired to remove her from my dad, moving our family to Kimberley, where her aunt was a teacher. She had left in December. Even though she knew she was going to miss my dad, she'd been excited about the prospects of new experiences, for she had never before stepped out of the Mother City.

It wasn't difficult for her to find a school that side, even though she had lacked the necessary documentation. Her aunt was also a teacher, remember?

So my mother had started her Standard 9 at Sol Plaatjie High School in Galeshewe township.

Then in about four months into Galeshewe, my mother had realised she was pregnant. She was five months into her pregnancy when her aunt booked her a bus back to Cape Town, in disgust.

My dad had no problems paying damages for ruining her innocence. When I was about three years old, my dad's mother asked if she could be allowed to raise me.

Then, my mother continued, after my fourth birthday, a sugar-daddy my mother had dated briefly while still in Galeshewe tracked her down. He told her that he had come to pay for the damages. My mother's aunt in Galeshewe had apparently been telling him the baby resembled him.

My mother had felt defeated and humiliated. So, all-in-all, damages to my mother were paid twice. How unique! My mother and her family had been keeping the secret for four years. In our tradition, if a man impregnates a girl, he has damaged her and so must man up fix the damages, which is often counted by the number of cows that may go up to five in number. But now, since no ordinary township dweller has cows, the cows are priced in cash. My father was charged two cows, priced at R2000 each. So he paid R4000.

I have now gotten into a habit of sneaking out of my home to visit my new dad in Galeshewe. I normally pretend to be visiting my aunt and uncle – my mother's younger siblings – who now work there. They know all about it but have, since inception, made it clear they did not want to be involved.

I am now stuck, with a deadly secret, two dads and no mother.

And so, tragically, I am no blood relation of the lovely man who has been my dad for the past fourteen years, neither of his mother, who herself spoils me like crazy.

But my mother didn't do it on purpose, I swear.

I still love my sweet dad though. His love for me keeps him alive, he tells me. I love him too, but, like my mother, I will keep the secret from him... to the grave.

A GIFT

I swung sideways without balance as the train rushed through the Cape Flats, picking up and spitting out commuters on the way.

We were about seven stations away when the train slowed down and came to a standstill somewhere between Langa and Pinelands. It was packed and stuffy. I could barely see Nosiseko. People were on their way to work.

Leaning against the metal pillar in the middle of the carriage, with my suitcase in between my legs, I was on MiXit, texting my friend Amish.

Amish: Hey *chom*, cnt bliv you lvin me *sad face*

Me: it's only gna be a month *chom maan*, please dnt b sad

Amish: m gna mic u 2 much *sana*.

Me: Mi 2 gal, but will keep in touch, I prm

Amish: Nwaes, hv a grt trip my f, lv u lots, like jelly tots

Me: Later gal, lv u 2! *teary*

Finally, the train moved again and, despite the twenty-minute delay, we arrived at Cape Town Station at 06h27, a full hour and thirty minutes earlier. Nosiseko dragged the suitcase down all the way to the queue at the TransLux counter, where she checked me in. I lagged behind with the backpack and the big *scarftin* containing my *padkos*.

We sat talking and talking in the waiting area until departure time. Nosiseko shed a few drops as the bus made out. I kept waving.

The big mama seated next to me wasted no time, she immediately fell asleep and snored *moertoe!* Luckily, I had the latest Drum magazine issue as a companion. On cover was my role model, Katlego Danke, Generations' Dineo. I read, slept, woke up and read again.

At long last, twenty one hours later, we got to Lady Frere. Tata, *makhulu* and my three cousins Coceka, Nobathembu and Sivuyile were there to welcome me. They were happy to be reunited

with me, after seven full years of slum life in KTC, a section of the greater Nyanga township. Laying her frail eyes on me, I saw that *makhulu* was crying. She was truly appeased.

I too was happy to be back. We drove home in tata's Isuzu bakkie. I sat with the cousins on the mattress in the back. We chatted and chatted and hugged and kissed.

On the way, I realised that Nonjoli, my village, place of birth; had not changed. Not a bit. It looked duller though. There were still no traffic lights, no tarred roads. Not even in town. There were now a few cement houses but most were still made of mud, falling and broken.

While offloading at home, I thought of my friends. Fezeka, in particular. I cannot even describe the shock that overwhelmed me when Coceka told me my friend had gotten married a year before and now lived in Njwanxa with her husband and new-born. But she was still young, my age, I thought.

A few days later, I found out that girls my age and older were no longer swimming at Nxarhuni. They now went to the river to fetch water and to wash clothes. The river, I later learnt, was a great hang-out place for adolescent boys and girls. A few metres away, boys would sit on rocks discussing their crushes and latest catches.

The holidays were filled with festivities and trips to the Eastern beach in East London.

Like any other girl my age, I was expected to go to the fields for wood and to the river for water. Aunty Queeny took care of laundry.

I had just filled the enamel bucket with water at the river, struggling to load it onto my head when Nobathembu alerted me to the three old men calling me, a few metres away. I ignored them. I had never seen them before. With the bucket on my head, I walked home.

But then, only a few steps away, a heavy blow struck the lower back of my head and sent me down to the ground. I became unconscious. Dizzy and confused, I attempted getting up when the men drew closer. I was crying out loud, begging for mercy. Two of them pulled me onto my still shaky feet and dragged me along the ground. I resisted, crying out while assuring them it was not me they were looking for. I had done nothing wrong, I told them. But they would hear none of it. One of them was pushing me from behind.

I saw Nobathembu running home. I urged her to do it quickly. “Go call tata”, I cried out. I could not believe it when other girls stood there smiling, watching my ordeal. How cruel of them!

Up on a hill, far away from the houses, I was put down on the kikuyu grass. One of them held my hands together across my head, the other down-pressing my legs apart while the third one drew up my dress and undid my panties. I was out of breath and could cry no more. I watched him as he undid his pants and shoes.

I begged for mercy as he held his erect, big and hairy penis in one hand and then kneeled down in between my thighs, further stretching them apart. I felt a burning sensation as he forcibly penetrated me, thereby tearing my insides. I burned with pain as he continued forcing himself into me. In and out and in and out while giving no heed to my cries. By this time, I was bleeding. He did not stop. My whole body turned numb and stiff. I was weak, hopeless and held down tightly.

Roaring and moaning like a lion, he then pressed even harder, in and out. *Aaah-aaah-aaah!* He seemed pleased. Kneeling up again, he stretched his hand to receive the snow white towel from the one holding my hands. He was bloodied himself. He wiped the blood off himself, then off me.

The two had been holding me now shoved the panties back up my legs and dropped my dress, while pulling me onto my feet. I was weak and couldn't stand on my own.

“Uxolo. I'm sorry, bhuti.” I begged. But none of them said anything.

There was not even a smell of tata. I was all on my own with these evil strangers.

The two men walked beside me, holding my arms, while their friend walked ahead, stretching his excited legs forward, with the bloodied towel hanging carelessly in his right hand. They were not taking me home. We were getting deeper into Ngcabasa, the neighbouring village, across the mealie plantations.

I had already given up on pleading when we reached houses while descending the hill. At the gate to one of the houses, I heard voices of women. As soon as they saw the man waving the towel, the mamas stood up with excitement and ululated. They were responding to the towel.

As I learnt later, the blood told them that prior to being violated; I had never been with a man. It symbolised my purity, my virginity. The man had bagged himself purity in its most natural form. One of them burst out, ululating:

Yehaaa ... yeahaaa!

Yiyo ... yiyo yintoombi

Yintombi ntoo, bafazi

Yiyiyiyiyiii!

About six mamas came to welcome us. They too were waving cloths and towels. Clean towels. One of them took the bloodied one and waved it up in the air.

I was seated down. The three men disappeared into a compound next to the house. In the midst of all the frightening confusion, a bath tub with warm water was brought before me. With another clean, white bath towel, I was made to take off my panties and cleanse myself.

I was congratulated for my purity in the face of today's teenage sex. I did not know what to say. They often referred to me as *makoti*.

The mama I later found out was a mother to the man who had violated me ordered that I be taken to the car outside – a white Yaris. She took me to the Ngcabasa Community Health Care Centre, where a nurse ordered me onto a bed, opened wide my legs and, using bluish plastic gloves and some odd tools, uncomfortably played with my vagina. A few minutes later, she talked to the mama, declaring me healthy and out of any risk. We drove back to her house.

She told me I would sleep with her and promised to take me back home first thing the following morning.

At about eight the following morning, some old man came in and, without greeting, told the mama he was ready. The three men who had abducted me came in. I jumped out of my chair. The mama assured me nothing was to happen.

The four men got into the back seat and I sat in the front with the driver. I was being taken home, they said. She drove straight to my home, but I had not told them where I stayed. A few metres

away, I was ordered out with all the men. The mama just dropped us off and left. The old man was holding my hand.

At the entrance into my house, mama was there, she jumped to me, “*Usana lwam!* Oh, my poor child, are you ok, *sisi?*” My father jumped up from his chair. He ordered mama to the kitchen. Greeting the men back, he turned to me for interrogation. He asked if I was going back with the man and I just shook my head. He then asked if I was as pure and I told him the truth.

Before releasing me into mama hands in the kitchen, tata told the men that they heard for themselves that I was refusing marriage to their family, but that because they had already taken away my innocence and purity, custom dictated, as they themselves were aware; that they pay the damages. They made arrangements for the delivery of a cow. And that’s how much my life was worth, a four-legged ox.

Mama was crying. She told me we were going back to Cape Town the following morning. It was still a week before Christmas. Two weeks into Cape Town, I developed sicknesses, often feeling dizzy and vomiting. Mama took me to the clinic and I was declared pregnant.

Mama was sure we would terminate the pregnancy but Aunty Lungiswa went on and on about how much of a heavenly gift a child was. She warned mama that aborting could expose me to the possibility of never being able to conceive again.

So, a full nine months later, on the day when my mother was supposed to have been throwing a birthday party for me, as per the norm; I gave birth to a healthy baby boy my mother named Siphso, a Gift.

I PRAY HE BURNS IN HELL!

As usual, the Cape Town Station is busy; people are bumping into each other while running into their respective platforms to all direction. It is time to go home.

I have only less than four minutes to reach platform 22. With my handbag clinging tightly on my right shoulder and on a tight a grip from my left hand and the brown A-4 envelope on my left hand, I do my best speeding past the hordes and reach the first third class carriage just in time. It is packed already, yeses!

But this is nothing new so, ja, no stress. With the help from two other hands from inside, I pull myself in. there are others pulling themselves in after me. The whistle goes off, the train starts moving and two passengers hold on tightly to the doors so they don't close, for there are still more people coming in. Inside, it is uncomfortably stuffed-up, smelly and noisy.

While others are complaining about the rising levels of violent crime in their communities and their *stout* children, others are going on about how lucky Kaizer Chiefs were over the weekend in the Carling Black Label Cup match that doubled as the Soweto Derby: for the first time since the Cup's inception, Amakhosi lifted the trophy.

Uncomfortable as it already is, passengers keep squeezing in at every station we go past, and I keep getting pressed even tighter. I can't even see the people; all I hear is voices and the competing bodily smells.

I regret not having left immediately after finishing my business in town, more than two hours before. But I had thought I should delay my journey back to the boring Khayelitsha.

Thanks God the envelope they are pushing against in my hand has only a Career Times copy. I distributed all of the eight copies of my CV, the motivating letters and the ID copies to the restaurants and retailers around town. One place I hope to hear from soon is the Fire & Ice hotel. They need more hands for their bar and restaurant and offer quite a package. Pick 'n Pay is another great option. They have medical cover and offer free transport to staff, I hear.

The day has been a long one. I will especially never forget the temptation the Congolese guy I met while having my lunch at the Company Gardens put me through when he showed me a

lump-sum he promised would be mine if I agreed to assist. Out of nowhere, he just pitched and sat next to me without even asking if I was cool with it.

He asked that I agree to staging a marriage with him in exchange for R4000 so he could get a citizenship and be free from police harassments. He was no criminal, he assured me.

I refused it and respectfully asked him to please leave me alone. I felt like telling him off with a *fuck you* when he insisted, telling me I would need the money when I have “nothing to eat in a cold shack in Khayelitsha”. But I know better. Damn, who does he think he is, the bloody refugee!

I am having it hard yes, but I am a God-fearing Christian and a law-abiding citizen with morals. When my turn comes, I know I will earn money, the correct way. You should have seen the look on his face told me that he just couldn't understand how a girl who couldn't even afford a can of Coke for her dry lunch could resist the temptation.

Passengers continue squeezing and I am hard pressed yes but hey, I am especially not appreciative of the distance between the waist of the person standing behind me and my bum. He or she is so tightly pressed, or pressing, against my bum that it creates a discomforting sense of awareness. Even worse, I can't even turn my head to look at him, or her. Everyone is complaining about being hard-pressed against and it's all in vain, so there's no point in me adding. Even if it were to be a woman, I'd still not like it.

And, all along, my waist keeps swinging helplessly sideways, out of shape as the train tosses and turns left-and-right, with people constantly almost falling on each other. But I find it quite funny and can't help thinking it is a well calculated affair that the perpetrator waist rides with my bum in every direction. It doesn't budge. For balance, I try holding on tightly to the plastic rope hanging on the ceiling but it's still in vain.

The waist feels uncomfortably warm and intrusive. I keep trying to lower my skirt down. This pushes me to the brim. I am extremely annoyed. When I get a job I swear, I would make sure I close my eyes and buy the R365 monthly ticket that sis' Nomnikelo says she pays for her comfortable, leather-seat first class ride. Sis' Nomni says they each get a newspaper and a cup of

coffee every morning and have at least two guards manning the carriage at any given time. Khayelitsha Express, they call it. Oh what peace of mind that must be!

But hey, this waist behind me, it is irritating. *No man*, I feel like crying out. It is still tightly pressed against my bum. I can't wait to get off.

After what seems like forever, the train finally gets to Nonkqubela, my home station in Site B. A sigh of relief ... oh what a journey! A big number of us get off. I rush through the platform.

"*Siiies!*" an exaggerated cry of disgust from someone behind, I hear. But I don't turn to see. I need to be home, it's been a long day.

"*Sisi, sisi ... hey lady!*" A boy walking besides me pats on my shoulder and points me to the people behind. With a disgusted face, a mid-aged woman points at my behind. "Hey lady, for your own good, you might wanna look just there and I hope it's not what I suspect it is."

Damn! This attracts everyone's eyes ... to my bum. I turn my skirt around to look. "oh *Jerre!*", again, they exclaim.

"These men have lost their sense of respect, shame. They are disgusting!" declares a girl probably my age. They deserve to be yanked by their dirty penises and pushed into running trains and just die."

Sperms, it is. Yeses! I feel humiliated. I am disgusted. I feel dirty. Now I get it. So the waist was a man and he had the nerve, and courage, to take out of his pants his perverted penis, onto my bum.

He has degraded me. With twisted faces, people offer tissues for me to wipe it off, but I don't accept them. I run for the gate where I hope my brother is waiting for me. I hate the bastard and pray he burns in hell.

Isikhumba Sikaxam

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Isishwankathelo

Amabali am asekelwe ezilokishini yaye ahambelana neemeko ezimaxongo zokuphila zasezilokishini apho yaye amanye asukela kwixesha lengcinezelo yesizwe esimnyama. Imiba echatshazelwa kula mabali iquka intlupheko, intiyo kwakunye nokuphilisana koluntu ezilokishini, phantsi kwezo meko. Amabali la ndizame ukuwenza alandele indlela yokubalisa yhenkwenkwana enguSkhumba, ethi ibone iqwalasele iimeko zokuphila zabantu bohlanga lwayo. Inqokelela esisiqendu sokuqala yona ibhalwe ze yangeniswa ngesiNgesi.

Abstract

My stories are set in the townships, and move with the vigorous rhythms and jagged structures of township life. Some of them are written in English and others in isiXhosa. Some of the dialogue is township slang, a mixture of languages; and pure isiXhosa. The stories follow no particular pattern and are arranged according to any form of chronology, since the characters are not related each story perfectly stands for itself. Some of the stories hark back to the days of apartheid and are seen through the eyes of a child confused by the humiliations of his elders.

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ISIDLO SOKUGQIBELA

Yintsasa yoMvulo, mna nomntakwethu asiyanga esikolweni kuba izulu lilibi. Sidlala ngezinto zethu zokudlala kwigumbi lethu lokulala. Emva kokuba ese umama emsebenzini ngesithuthi, utata ubuye waphindela ezingubeni. USkhixi ukhalela isithuthi sam sokudlala, uyangxola. Sithi sakulilisana asingxolise esithi siyangxola uzama ukulala. Umninawa uyaphikelela ekhalela isithuthi sam, ndiyamnika, athule.

Kuthi ke emva kwemizuzu engephi simbone utata ephuma egumbini lakhe esiza kuthi afike athi usiqumbele ngoba thina siyamngxolela xa efuna ukulala. USkhixi utyholo mna esithi ndidlala kakubi. Utata uphethe iglasi enamazinyo akhe emboleko. Uyaphuma aye kuwahlamba empompeni. Siyamlandela. Ufika apho kukho ummelwane umama kaNtobeko. Bayabulisana kuncokolwe ngolwaluko lukaNtobeko oluzakuba kwisithuba seenyanga ezimbini ezizayo. Utata uthi akugqiba ukuhlamba amazinyo akhe, awafake emlonyeni abuyele endlwini, siyamlandela kwakho.

Kwesi sithuba sele ithe qabu imvula, kulokho ekwazi nje ukusithuma ibhokisi yamaqanda amathandathu, isonka, iitumato kunye nobisi, ze athi maze sizithengele nathi izinto zokumungunya. Siyakhawuleza sibuye ke, kwenziwe ukutya, kuphakwe, ndithunywe ukuba ndiye kunika uBra Suz okwakhe epozini lakhe. Ndifika esalele, ndimvuse, athi mandikubeke etafileni. Ndibuyela ekhitshini ndonwabele ukutya nomntakwethu notata, kuncokolwe, kuhlekwe.

Uye ahlambe izitya utata emva koko, ngelixa thina sichola-chola amaphepha nezinye izinto ezimdaka ngaphandle. Uthi akugqiba utata akhuphe imoto yakhe ngapha kwamasango ukuze ayihlambe. Simncedisa emavilini. Sithi sakugqiba athi masikhwele axelele uBra Suz ukuba uyabuya usaya kulanda umama emsebenzini, kuba ebethe uzakusebenza de kube yintsimbi yeshumi elinambini. Siqala egaraji apho afika ongeze amafutha esithuthi esi, ze sisingise ngasedolophini. Sifika edolophini singene kwa-OK apho athenga khona izinto zokutya, asithengele nathi amashwamshwam ze sibuyele esithuthini kuyiwe emsebenzini kamama.

Sifika sele esilindile umama, angene esithuthini aphuze utata, eze kuSkhixi, ze agqibelise ngam. Umama ukhalaza ngentloko ebuhlungu arhanela ukuba ingumvuka wokungenwa kwakhe ngumkhuhlane. Uye athi uza kufika endlwini alale, ze notata athi akayi ndawo tu namhlanje, uzakuhlala endlwini. Sithi sifika endlwini umama asicele ukuba siye kudlala ngaphandle kwela gumbi kuphekelwa kulo ukuze singamngxoleli. Utata yena ufika aye

epozini kuBra Suz, bahlale bancokole. Kuthi ke kwisithuba esifana neeyure ezimbini sidlala angene utata apha ekhitshini afike achube imifuno, aqhole inyama, abase isitovu apheke. Sesiman' ukuncokola naye ke ngoku, simncedisa kwiintwana-ntwanana. Kuyahlekwa kumnandi.

Uthi utata akugqiba ukupheka asimisele amanzi asihlambe nomntakwethu, ze ahlambe naye. Siyahlala emva koko kubukelwe *uSokhetye Inkawu Yelitye* kumabonakude. Utata yena uzifundela iphepha-ndaba. Kuthi emva kweyure umninawa abiwe bubuthongo, ze utata amfunqule aye kumbeka emandlalweni ecaleni komama esekobentlombe. Utata ufaka isandla kwibhulukhwe ebeyinxibe ngezolo akhuphe imali eziinkozo athi mandimkhape siye kuthenga isiselo evenkileni. Undibeke emagxeni ke sihamba nje, sincokola kumnandi. Sifika kuloPinkboy utata ancokole notata kaPinkboy ngelixa mna ndibukele uPinkboy edlala ngenqwelo-ntaka yakhe, eyiphethe ngesandla, eyihambisa phezulu. Ndicela andidlalise, kodwa ale esithi akafuni. Utata uyasunikwa isiselo ze avalelise sihambe sibuyele ekhaya.

Kuthi emva koko athi mandiye kuxelela uBra Suz ukuba eze endlwini ngoba uzakuphaka ngoku. uBra Suz uye athi uziva enentloko ebuhlungu yena angazikhathazi utata kodwa, angamphakela nje, uzakutya akufumana isiqabu. Ndibuyela endlwini sele evukile umama, exukuxa. Utata uyaphaka acele umama ukuba avuse umninawa aze kutya. Umama yena uye acele ayekwe umntwana ngoba udiniwe, abe ke ngoko umninawa noBra Suz abatyi nathi. Kodwa ke sithi sisatya njalo kuvakale isithonga sokuwa kukamninawa, abe sele esitsho nesikhalo. Umama uyabaleka aye kumthatha amthuthuzele, amthathe embeke phezu kwakhe ngelixa asetafileni, amtyise. Sithi xa kanye sigqiba ukutya, utata elungiselela ukusigalelela isiselo, kukhale umnxeba egumbini, aye kuwuphendula.

Ubuya achazele umama ukuba ibisisihlobo sakhe ubhut' Kototo, uthi usendlwini yesinye isihlobo sabo kwiSitalato iSangotsha esikufutshane nesi sethu; yaye ucela ukumbona ngokukhawuleza yaye akayi kumlibazisa. Umama uyakhalaza akhumbuze utata ukuba kaloku bebethembisene ukuba akayi ndawo namhlanje, sekutheni ngoku ehamba nje. Utata uye azame ukucacisa ukuba makube mhlawumbi ngumba obalulekileyo nongxamiseke kakhulu lo afuna ukumbonela wona umhlobo wakhe, yaye naye ke uyathembisa, akayi kuhlala. Uyala umama. "Nisenakho kaloku, Mzwandile, ukubonana nangomso, kuselithuba tyhini?" Utata uphinda azame ukucenga ebonisa umama ukuba kusenokwenzeka ukuba umhlobo wakhe udinga uncedo olukhawulezileyo, watsho esithi ukumqinisekisa ukuba akayi kuhlala apho, uzakusishiya isithuthi. Uye athule umama, kubonakala mhlophe ukuba akaxolanga

nakancinci. Kodwa ke utata uye aphinde amcenge esithi makamkhulule, ze umama ke, noxa engekaxoli, athi makahambe. Utata uye aphuze umama ebunzi aphinde abulele ngokumkhulula, aphinde futhi athembise ukuba akasayi kuba mde kumhlobo wakhe. “Ndiyabuya ngoku, bafana bam.” Uthembisa atsho nakuthi. “*Sure*, tata.” Iphendula itsho le ingumninawa.

Uyaphuma ke utata, avale umnyango, sisale thina nomama sibukele umabonakude. Kuthi emva kwesithuba esifikelela kwiiyure ezimbini, engekabuyi utata; umama athi masiye kulala ngoba siya esikolweni ngentsasa elandelayo. Singena emandlalweni singekathandi ke ngoba asikozeli, futhi ke nomboniso wethu esiwuthandayo kumabonakude awukaqali. Kodwa ke siyazi, umama akathethi kabini, ngoko ke, senza ngokwemiyalelo. Andazi ukuba ngubani ophela elala kuqala kodwa ndiyarhana ndim ngoba bendidiniwe.

Kuthi ngentseni elandelayo sivuswe sisikhalo esikrakrayo sikamama, ezibethekisa naseludongeni, ekhwaza igama likatata. Sithi sisesebuthongweni njalo, sifumanise ukuba kukho nabanye abantu apha endlini, abaquka oobhuti ababini esingabaziyo kunye nomama notata kaNtobeko, abamelwane bethu. Omnye waba bhuti singabaziyo uye eze apha kuthi emandlalweni, athi:

“Vukani, vukani, makwedini, utata wenu ufile.”

Asikayazi ncam ke thina indaba yokuba uthetha ukuthini xa athi umntu ufile, ngoko ke siye singazi nomntakwethu ukuba sithini ukuphendula kule nto ithethwa ngulo bhuti. Ngaphandle kokubhideka zizililo zikamama, asikabi nazimvakalelo zizizo. Umama ukhala akayeki, abamelwane baya besanda ngoku endlwini, beze kuthuthuzela umama. Siyababona basijonga ngokusisizela, kodwa ke asazi nathi ukuba sithini. Iyaqhuba ke imini kuman’ ukungena abamelwane beze kumama, bafike basange nathi, basixelele ukuba singakhathazeki ngoba utata wethu uye ezulwini, siyakuhlangu naye thina khona apho. Ikwa ngabamelwane abasenzela ipapa ukuze site, umama akekho mandleni.

Kwisithuba seentsuku ezilandelayo, kuqhuba imithandazo rhoqo ngorhatya, kuculwe kufundwe neBhayibhile. Umama ngoku uthanda ukunxiba iqhiya, yaye usoloko ekhala. Kuya kugcwala apha ekhaya, izizalwane ziza kuhlala, nathi ngoku siphele singenandawo yokuhlala. Andiyithandisisi le meko. Umama akasasihoyi kakuhle, yaye usoloko engathi ukhathazekile. Utata yena kuthiwa ufile, yaye akutshiwo ukuba uza kubuya nini ekufeni, siyamkhumbula thina. Kwisithuba seveki, ngomnye uMgqibelo, umakazi uNonzolo usixelela

ukuba kuyafihlwa yaye mna nomntakwethu sithengelwe iisuti ezintsha. Ndiva kuculwa la ngoma sidla ngokuyicula esikolweni ndingxole ndichazele umninawa, “Skhixi, nantsi le ngoma le sidla ngokuyicula esikolweni!” Umama uyandikhalimela athi mandingangxoli.

Kwiintsukwana ezimbalwa emva koku, uBra Suz uthe vram yaye ubonakala ekhathazekile, ekwanomsindo ngaxesha-nye, uyathukisa ngelixa alilayo. Uthetha nomama: “Uyabona, Nomvuzo, ukuba ndingambamba ngezi zam la Kototo, uyakuzisola. Njani abulale utata uMzwandile esazi ukuba uzakushiya iintwana zakhe? Uthi mazithini ezi ntwana ngoku?” umama akaphenduli, uthule, kodwa ubonakala ekude ngeengcinga.

Siba ke ngolo hlobo isidlo esasisiphekelwe ngutata ngala Mvulo, sisidlo sethu sokugqibela naye.

UBIZIWE

Kuthi ke ngenye imini, kwisithuba seeveki ezimbini emva kokuba efihliwe utata, avuke umama asibambe nomntakwethu njengesiqhelo, ze naye ahlambe elungiselela ukuya emsebenzini. Usishiya sisatya ipapa ke thina, kuba noko thina sifunda kwalapha kufutshane, siwela nje indlela sibe sesingaphakathi kwamasango esikolo.

Apha ekhayeni azikahambi zonke ke izizalwane ebezise kusikhunga ekushiyweni kwethu ngutata, yaye ezi zizalwane ziquka umakazi wootata kunye nodade botata uNomayeye; esimteketisa ngokumbiza 'dabs'. Udabs ke yena uze nontondo wakhe oseyimveku uNoraysi kunye nela geza lentwana linguSandile. Kumnandi ke ngoba siyatefiswa ngoku, sibukwa ngumntu wonke, yaye nomama akasakwazi kusingxolisa nakusibetha, uyanqandwa kuthiwe ayikho le nto ayenza ebantwaneni. Siyayithanda le meko nomntakwethu. Akumnandanga kaloku ukusoloko unqandwa xa ungumntwana, yaye abazali abayiqondi eyokuba sukuba sizonwabela ezi zinto basinqanda kuzo; futhi ke kuthi kuba ngathi abafuni sonwabe.

Simkile ke nathi saya esikolweni njengesiqhelo, sabuya sakhulula impahla yesikolo, satya saya kudlala nabanye abantwana esitalatweni. Kuthe ke emva kwemini udabs wasibiza ukuba singene ngaphakathi endlwini ukuze sigcine uSandile noNoraysi ngoba yena nomakazi wakhe kukho indawo abasaya kuyo ngokukhawuleza. UBra Suz yena ke ebesahambe ezakhe iindawo, ze wathi akubuya samxelela ukuba oodabs bathe bazakubuya kungekudala basasukela into engxamisekileyo. Uthe akukhala uNoraysi ndamcingela ngoko nangoko ukuba ulambile ze ndenza njengoko ebeyalele udabs, ndamfudumezela ibhotile yobisi lwakhe emanzini ashushu ze ndamseza. Uthe akungathuli ndaxakwa ke ngoku, ze uBra Suz wacingela ukuba makube udinga ukutshintshwa inapkeni.

Ndiye egumbini ndafumana elinye ekhabhathini ze ndafika ndamkhulula uNoraysi, kwathi kanti eneneni uzenzele; ndamtshintsha. Ndithathe elo linqongo ndalifaka ebhakethini ukuze lihlanjwe ngudabs akubuya, ze ndaphinda ndamfaka ibhotile yakhe yobisi esafudumeleyo, kwathi kanti ibiyileyo ingxaki. Akaphindanga asihluphe, sihleli nje sonke kwamnandi sidlalisana njalo.

Kuthe kanye xa kuqala ukurhatyela, bafika oodabs, baxola ndakubaxelela ukuba akakhange asinike ngxaki umntwana ngaphandle kokuba ebekhe wafuna ukutshintshwa. Oodabs babize uBra Suz bavalelana bodwa egumbini ngelixa thina sibukele umabonakude. Bahleli apho isithuba eside de noNoraysi wakhala efuna umama wakhe. Uvulile udabs wamthatha

uNoraysi waphinda wawuvala ngoko nangoko umnyango. Kuthe ke emva kwethuba elide bephaya, wavakala uvuleka umnyango, baphuma bonke. UBra Suz uye wacela ndimqhuba ngesitulo ndimkhuphe aye kuphumla, wabe efixiza ke kodwa. Ndimbuzile ukuba kukho nto ingamphethanga kakuhle na okanye kukho ndawo ibuhlungu emzimbeni wakhe, wathi yintloko nje kodwa ke izakuphila, ndingakhathazeki ngoba sele ezifumene iipilisi, uzakuphumla egumbini lakhe ngoku ukuze avuke engcono.

Udabs uye wabiza mna nomntakwethu bahlala nathi ze basixelela ukuba umama akazi kubuya namhlanje kukho into encinci eyenzekileyo, kodwa ke singakhathazeki kuza kulunga. Sileli ngalo mhla engekho umama, okokuqala ebomini bethu. Ngentsasa elandelayo sivuswe ngumnxeba obungxola ukhala egumbini. Ndiye udabs ewuphakamisa wabulisa ze kwisithutyana somzuzwana ndeva ngesijwili sakhe. Utsho esikrakra kangangokuba kuthe kungemzuzu kwabe sekungena umama kaNtobeko eze kusabela. Uthe engena nje umama kaNtobeko wabe ekhwaza igama likamama udabs, “Nomvuzo ...Nomvuzo!”

Umama kaNtobeko uzame ukumthomalalisa udabs, wamhlalisa phantsi, ngelixa umakazi wakhe yena enika mna umyalezo wokuba ndivuke ndinxibe ndiye kubiza utata kaSibusiso kwalapha ebumelwaneni. Ndifike kanye xa aphumayo esithi uyaphangela utata kaSibusiso, ndabulisa ndamxelela ukuba uyabizwa ekhaya, ubuzile ukuba kukho sehlo na, andayazi ke mna; waphuma nam saya ekhaya. Sifike apho sele kukho nabanye abamelwane.

Sifike apho ndaxelelwa mna nomntakwethu ukuba siye kuhlambela ngaphandle kwela gumbi kuphekelwa kulo kuba amanzi sele esilungele. Okunene ke siyile, sahlamba sithule kungekho uthetha nomnye. Sigqibe apho saya kunxiba endlwini, apho bekusekho abamelwane kusenziwa nomthandazo okhokelwa ngutata kaSibusiso. Silungisile ke sathi siphuma wathi uBra Suz akukho sizathu sakuya esikolweni masikhulule sinxibe impahla yethu. Kodwa ke abanye abantu bona balile, besithi kuyakulunga siye.

Siwelile ke sangena esikolweni, sisabhidekile. Ndothuke zazehlela emva kwemini akuthi utitshalakazi wethu emva komthandazwana abanye abantwana ze baze neesheleni ngomso ukuze kukhungwe isibini esindim nomntakwethu kuba siswelekelwe ngumama. Ndiye ndakhumbula ukuba ngokuya besixelelwa ukuba uswelekile utata, kuye kwathiwa asiphindi simbone, ndazibuza ukuba ingaba nomama asisayi kuphinda size simbone na. Utitshalakazi undikhuphele ngaphandle wandisa e-ofisini apho afike wandimbambazela wandenzela indubela esithi kuzakulunga umama uye ezulwini yaye uye kuphumla ngonaphakade notata.

Ndibuyele eklasini umntakwethu engekabi namvakalelo kuba eneneni ebengazi ukuba makathini, engekayazi ingxaki esikuyo. Sithe sakubuya esikolweni emva kwemini wasibiza waphuma nathi uBra Suz, wasixelela ukuba umama wethu akabuyanga ngezolo emsebenzini ngoba uye waphathwa lihlaba ze abelungu bakhe bambalekisola esibhedlele. Esibhedlele ke caba ufike sele efe isiqaqqa, kodwa ke kwakho amathemba okuba uyakuvuka kwakhona. Ngokuya oodabs bebeleqisa izolo, bebetsalelwe emsebenzini kamama besaziswa ukuba ubalekiselwa esibhedlele. UBra Suz ke usixelele ukuba oodabs bafike umama esaphila kodwa engekaqabuki, bamshiya esenjalo, ze bafumana ke umnxeba ekuseni obaxelele ukuba uye wohluleka wabe uyanduluka emhlabeni.

Usithembisile ke uBra Suz ukuba akayi kuza asilahle nokuba sekutheni na ngoba ukuba ngabantwana bomntakwabo kuthetha ukuba singabantwana bakhe naye, nto leyo ithi uzinika uxanduva lokusikhulisa asihoye. Ndichiphi-chiphizile ke, ze wathi nomntakwethu ngokubhideka, wazama ukukopa kum, zehla nakuye. Ndiphawule ukuba noBra Suz ke akakwazanga kuzibamba, sema phandle apho sibambene sithuthuzelana silila sonke. Ufike udabs wamngxolisa uBra Suz esithi kuyini na ukukhala ebukelwe ngabantwana, uthi mabathini na bona. Uzamile ukuziqinisa uBra Suz esosula ezo nyembezi zingayekiyo ukumpompoza, ngelixa acela uxolo kudabs.

Udabs ukhuphe isheleni wayinika mna ze enye wayinika umntakwethu wathi masiye kuzithengela amashwamshwam. Siyile ke kuloLulama safika samkelwa ngutatomkhulu wakhe othe akusibona wasibiza ukuze sisondele kuye wasanga. Utsho umthandazo omfutshane ze wasixelele ukuba sizakuba ngamadoda yaye ke kufuneka somelelele ukuze sibe ngamadoda amakhulu. Sikhuphe iimali ezo sathenga amashwamshwam, wasinika wasongezelela neelekelele wala esithi masiyigcine kuthi imali yethu, uyasipha ezo zimungumenye.

Xa siphuma uthe ze sazi ukuba umama akashishiyanga nto nje ubiziwe, kodwa ke yena notata bayakusikhusela apho bakhoyo ngoku, futhi baye kusilungiselele nendawo esifaneleyo. “Ubiziwe bantabam, ningamsoli,” uqwele ngelitshoyo. Siphume sabuyela ekhaya apho sifike udabs wathi kuzakufuneka siye kuhlala eLimba kwamakhulu ithutyana, kusekho izinto bona bantu badala abasazilungisayo. Udabs uqokelele iintwanana zempahla yethu wazifaka kunompotwana ze wacela ubhut’ Yhoyhoma ukuba asise kwamakhulu. Sikhwele uduladula saya kufika apho xa kuhlwayo, safika umakhulu esilinde ngezibele ezikhulu, ebhake namaqebengwane akhe amnandi.

Sihleli ke apho kumnandi nomakhulu nomalume wethu ubhut' Ndoda, umakhulu esibhakela amaqebengwane nesonka sombhako esimnandi. Yena ubhut' Ndoda ebesigcina ngamabali akhe amnandi.

Usixelele ke umakhulu sizakukhe singayi eikolweni ithutyana njengokuba abantu abadala phaya ekhaya kusekho izinto abasazama ukuzilungisa. Naye ke umakhulu uthe umama kunye notata babizwe phezulu yaye bebenganakwala, kodwa ke thina simele ukuba sivuye ngoba baye kusilungiselela indawo apho bakhoyo ukuze sifike sihlani sonke silusapho kamnandi nangoxolo. Uthe emva koko wathi masiguqe sithandaze. Siphakame apho saya kulala.

UKUDUKA KWEMALI YAMATHUMBU

Kuthi ke ngenye imini sibuya esikolweni nomntakwethu sicelewe nguBra Suz ukuba sigxabhagxabhise ukutya oku ukuze sileqise kwaMakoti siye kufuna inyama. Sithi sisakhe amacephe mabini-mathathu kuloo mngqusho umnandi nangqumbululu kunene wangezolo, sicengwe ukuba masingabi sagqibezela sakubuya ngako ukutya ngoba ikhawuleza iphele inyama elalini ebomvu kwaMakoti apho. Sihamba singaxolanga ke ngoba besingekakhi macephe abheke ndawo kula mngqusho.

Inyama le thina siye kuyithenga yeyangaphakathi, amathumbu ke futhi. Ingxowa enye yala mathumbu ibiza amashumi asixhenxe eesenti kwaMakoti yaye aphakwa ngathi umntu uyagxothwa. Akho ke nakwaMawila amathumbu, futhi ke ebiza ngaphantsi ngamashumi amabini onke eesenti kunala akwaMakoti, nto nje abantu abawathandi lawo bathi ayavinjwa, mancinci ke ukutsho.

Siphuma endlwini ke siphethe iimali zemizi emibini, eyasekhaya nekamama kaPilityi, lo unxuse emva phaya ekhaya. Sithi ke naxa siphuma asikhumbuze uBra Suz ukuba singahambi sidlala ngoba akhawuleza aphele amathumbu kwaMakoti. “Ke, *gents*, nikhawuleze *maan please* nhe?” sivumile ke nathi sabonakala siqala kwangoko ukwelula imilenze sibaleka. Nathi kaloku siyayifuna le nyama.

Sithi ke ekuhambeni sincokole ngendlela esikhutshwe ngayo kakubi ekutyeni kwethu sisakulambele nendlela esisalambe ngayo kunangoku. Siye sincokole ke nangokuthi ukuba besinayo imadlana besiyakudlula apho kwaMawila sithenge iikota zesonka ezifakwe ibhotolo nepoloni. Uthi akuthetha ngolo hlobo umntakwethu uSkhixi ndirhale nangakumbi ke ngoku. Sithi xa sidlula kwaMawila sibone ukuba mbalwa kwabantu abalinde inyama, ndibe nacebo elindivelelayo, endiye ndikholelwe ukuba lingasebenzela mna nomntakwethu kunye nabantu abadala abo basithumileyo.

Kuye kuvele iqhinga lokuba singema kunye naba bantu bambalwa balinde inyama kwaMawila, sithenge khona amathumbu ngamashumi amahlanu eesenti ingxowa, ze sifumane ezi kota zesonka sizirhalelayo. Ndithi ndakubajonga abantu ndibone ukuba singangabeshumi thina ukuba sinokungena nathi silinde. Ndiye ndiliveze ke eli qhinga kumninawa, ndimbekele ayibone icace gca nembuyekezo ngakuye. Uthi emva kwemizuzwana engathi uyacinga, ndimve ebuza ukuba ndiqinisekile kuqala ukuba siyakuyifumana na inyama apho, ndithi mna xa singabeshumi emgceni, ngokuqinisekileyo.

“Hayi ke ukuba kunjalo singahamba nelo cebo lakho, mkhuluwa,” uvuma atsho umntakwethu.

Ndingena ngaphakathi ndiye kuthenga ikota ibe nye enebhotolo nepoloni leyo, ze ngetshintshi ndifumane iilekese ezimbini; ngelixa yena umntakwethu ndithe makabe esima emgceni ukuze singaphulukani nokuba kwindawo yeshumi. Ndibuyela kumntakwethu siqhekezelane sitye isonka, ze sithobe ngeelekese. Kuthi kwisithuba semizuzwana emva kokuba sisigqibile isonka, ndimjonge ngamehlo athethayo umntakwethu, ndincumile. “Yintoni, ucinga ntoni mntakwethu, wancuma nje?”

“Mninawa, ingathi ijikele emqolo le kota *maan*. Phofu ke ibingenakungajikeli mqolo sohlulelene ngenye kuphela nje thina. Kaloku sesiqhele ukufumana ikota umntu ngamnye thina, ibiyimfeketho ke le.” Uye ahleke emva koku umninawa ze andibuze ukuba ndigqiba ekubeni masithini ke, nditsho ke nam ukuba sele icacile, iyaphinda ikota ekleva, njengoko siyiteketisa ke. Ndibuyela ngaphakathi, ndibuye kwangoko, ndiphinde ndabe isonka, sidle nomntakwethu, ze siphinde sifumane iilekese. Ngalo lonke ke eli xesha ayikafiki inyama kwaMawila apha, kusalindiwe.

Kuthi ke emva kwesithuba ezingaziiyure ezimbini sifikile kuloo mgca sigaleleke isigadla senyama kwaMawila, ze ngoko nangoko sibone kufika abantu beze kungena emgceni. Uninzi lwaba bantu ke lufika lungene phakathi kwabanye abantu ngaphambi kwethu. Sithi sakubuza ukuba kutheni kusenziwa njalo nje, kuthiwe hayi bebefike bema apho kwakuqala singekafiki thina, ze bashiya beyalezile ebantwini ukuba bayabuya. Ndithi ke ngoku ndakujonga ndifike mna nomntakwethu singabamashumi amathathu emgceni, ndoyike ngoko nangoko. Kodwa ke usisi omi emva kwethu uye athi hayi noko inokuba naye uyakufumana ngoba inyama yalapha idla ngokubanela abantu abangamashumi amahlanu emgceni. Kuye kundithobe amaxhala ke oko, ndikholelwe ukuba siyakuyifumana inyama. Uyahamba umgca ke, bathengiselwe abantu, baphume bephethe imimbumbutho yeepasile ngantathu ngane umntu. Kuye kukhalazwe ke ngabanye abantu abasemgceni kuthiwe ngumkhuba ombi lo wokuba ivenkile le ivume ukuthengisela abantu abanikelweyo ngoba kaloku umntu nomntu bekumele ukuba uyazimela emgceni. Abazihoyi ezi zikhalazo aba sisi bathengiselayo, bayasebenza qha. Uyahamba umgca, athengiselwe umama ophambi kwethu, ze kuthi xa isithi kuphume umpoposho othi mabahambe abantu iphelile inyama yaye akukho nenjani.

Yho! Yintoni esizakuyithini ke ngoku le nomntakwethu siyityile nje ke ngoku imali? Eyona nto ibuhlungu nangakumbi ke ngoku kukuba sele kurhatyela, futhi ke siyazi kakuhle ukuba

akulindwa kwaMakoti, umntu uma emgcezi athengiselwe inyama ahambe, akube kulindwa sigadla. Ethembeni lecebo, siyajonga-jongana, kodwa kucace ukuba kome nakum lo wembala, igqubusha elikhulu. Sithabatha amanyathelo okuqala sisingise ngasendlwini, kungekho uthetha nomnye, siwazi kakuhle nomsindo esiyakufikela kuwo apho.

Ndiye ndiqaphele ukuba umntakwethu uyalila. Ziyazehlela iinyembezi. Ngokudikwa, ndiye ndimbuze ukuba yintoni ngoku le ayikhalelayo endaweni yokuba andincedise size necebo elizakusisindisa ekungonjweni nguBra Suz.

“Ayikho le nto uyenzileyo ... uzakusibethisa ngoku!” uphendula atsho. Uyandicaphukisa. Akatshongo ngokuya besisitya iikota kumnandi ehlahlana into engapheliyo. Kukundingcatsha ngoku oku eza nako, ingakumbi xa elilahlela kum lonke ityala. Ndiye ndizibambe sendifuna ukumkhalimela ndimkhumbuze nokuba nezeminyaka na, azingeze zafeza nto, ndibuye ndizingande ndithi mandizame indlela yokumthomalalisa ukuze alamkele icebo endizakuza nalo. Ndiye ndimchazele ukuba into eyakusisindisa ngoku kukuza necebo eliphilileyo, ngoko ke makeme kancinci ngeenyembezi ngoba ndizithembile ndizakuphinda ndimonyule kule ntlekele azibhaqa ekuyo ngenxa yamaqhinga am.

“Lithini ke icebo, yiza nalo ngoku kaloku, Skhumba,” nguye lowo. Ndithi ndisamchazela ukuba siyakuthi ekhaya sileqise kwaMakoti kwangoko ukuphuma kwethu endlwini ze kwathi kuba besibaleka sagilana zawa zombini *iithubhobho* ebesiziphathisiwe, kwasala *iifivebhobho* zodwa; suke ndibone phaya ezantsi uBra Suz eqhutywa ngumhlobo wakhe ubhut’ Yhoyhoma. Lutsho kwangoko ukungongoza uvalo, kodwa ndizame ukuzibamba.

Ndiye ndigxabhagxabhise ke ndithi kumninawa azangaphumi kweli qhinga ndize nalo ukuze sibe sithetha into enye, zeke ngoko sisinde ekubethweni.

Kuthi emzuzwini sive ngobhuti Yhoyhoma esithi “Nazi, Bra Suz ezi ntwana, nivela phi, makwedini? Kunini sinibhuqa?” Ndiye ndithi ndisapitiliza ndizama ukuchaza ukuba sivela kwaMakoti, angenelele uBra Suz esithi masihambeni sizakuhlangana kakuhle ukufika kwethu endlwini. Sijika nabo sisoyika sinjalo ke. Sithi singena nje endlwini abe esonda ngam uBra Suz, atsho ngempama endibuza ukuba kwenzekeni besithunywe inyama nje. Ndiyachaza ke nam, ndimi kwa kwela bali lam, ukuba sifike kwaMakoti sele zingasekho iithubhobho ngenxa yokuba mhlawumbi sigilene kokwa kubaleka, zawa. Ngoku ke asakhawuleza sibuye ngoba

siqale sabuya sazikhangelala, asazifumana. Soyika ke nokubuya kwangoko kuba sicingela ukuba sizakubethwa.

Ngoko nangoko, uBra Suz ujike isitulo sakhe wangena kuSkhixi ngothotho lwemivumba emzimbeni nasentloko. Ibe licebo eliphilileyo eli ngoba uyayazi le incinci iyakoyika ukubethwa yaye ke ngoko ikhawuleze iyithethe ngokukhawuleza inyaniso kwakuba ngathi ingabethwa, okanye xa ithe yabethwa, njengangoku. Ube ngathi ubotshwe emnweni umntakwethu *ukumpimpa* oku kwakhe, wayibeka ngobunjalo bayo yonke. uBra Suz uphinde wajika wangena kum engandiyeki. Ndiphume apho ngokungenelela kukamama kaNtobeko wasebumelwaneni, naye ke phofu esithi usikwe yinimba akuva isikhalo sam esikrakra.

Undingxolisile kodwa naye umama kaNtobeko esithi akayikhuthazi tu into endiyenzileyo, ingakumbi xa exelelwa nguBra Suz ukuba thina simke endlwini apho ukuya kuthenga inyama izisu zibomvu ngumngqusho.

Emva koko ke kuye kwathiwa mandiye kuzixela kumama kaPilityi ukuba ndiyityile imali yakhe. Ndiye apho ndisagxigxiza, ndisopha kukutswetywa ezindlebeni, imilenze yona ibhonte zizivubeko. Ndifike kumama kaPilityi ndema ndisalila, wasuka waxhuma esihlalweni sakhe waza kundanga ebuza ukuba ndenzakaliswe ngubani na. Ndithe ndakungaphenduli waya ngqo kuBra Suz ethukisa esithi makungabonwa singasematata namama, yena usekho njengomthetheleli wethu, akayithandisisi konke-konke eyokuba siphathwe kakubi olo hlobo. Uthe uBra Suz akuphendula esithi undohlwayele ukutya imali yenyama, waphendula kwakhona umama kaPilityi esithi besiyakuthini ukungayityi sivinjwe ukutya sizibuyela esikolweni nje. Akazange waxakwa olwa hlobo uBra Suz.

USUKU LWAM LOKUQALA EMSEBENZINI

Andisavuyi nje yini, intliziyo idada emafutheni! Kaloku ndigqiba kuqinisekiswa nguBra Coks ukuba eneneni ndisifumene isithuba sengqesho sokuba ngumthengisi kwishishini lakhe. UBra Coks lo ke ngusomashishini ophume izandla kule lokishi yam iyiNew Brighton, eBhayi apha; ekwanguye futhi ke nomlindi eBen Sinuka Lower Primary, esisikolo endandisakuba ngumfundi kuso kwisithuba seminyaka emibini edlulileyo.

Eli ke iza kuba lithuba lokuqala njengomsebenzi ofumana umvuzo, okokoko ndathi ndawubeka umcondo wam kulo umagad' amdaka. Ndichulumancile.

Kodwa ke bendingazelanga olu dliwano-ndlebe ndifikele kulo nobawo uCoks apha evenkileni kwaFudumele, koko bendithunywe nguBra Suz ibhokisi yecuba.

Kaloku kwisithuba semizuzu engamibini-mithathu edlulileyo, bendikhwaza kwaba sisi bathengiselayo apha, ndicela ukuhoywa. Ndithe ndisakhwaza ndinjalo, ndeva ilizwi likaBra Coks eligudileyo nelimnandi lindibulisa.

“Tyhini bhota, Skhumba, mfo wam. Kusaphileka phofu?”

“Ewe-ewe, Bra Coks, siphilile, akukho nto, enkosi. Niyaphila nani phofu, Bra Coks?”

“Hay akukho nto mfo wam, sivukile nathi. Khawutsho, Skhumba kakade, uyakwazi ukubala?”

“Ewe, Bra Coks, ndiyakwazi,” ndivumile.

“Khawutsho ke, ukuba umntu unokuza kuwe ephethe iponti, efuna izinto ezimbini ezibiziza iisheleni ezintlanu inye, ingayimalini itshintshi yakhe?”

“Yirandi, Bra Coks.”

“Tyhini, ukrelekrele, Skhumba *mos* ukuba kuphelel' apho? Xa ke enokuza ephethe ishumi leerandi ethenga into exabisa iponti, exabisa irandi kunye nexabisa amashumi amathandathu eesheleni, kungafuneka afumane malini etshintshini?”

“Kungafuneka afumane iirandi ezintandathu namashumi amane eesheleni”, ndiphinde ndaphendula kwisithuba semizuzwana nje engafikanga kwisithathu.

“Yho, hayi ndikuncamile nyana kaMzwandile, ukrelekrele.” andincume ke ngelo xesha, ndivathe olukakrebe uncumo, intloko ndiyijongise ezantsi kukuvuya, ungafunga uthi ndivutyiselwe kwitsheyimba yeslamsi, yona ndirhanela ukuba igcwele zizinongo eziphuma kwiziqholo zokutya azifaka rhoqo kwizidlo zawo amaslamsi.

Uye andincome ngezibalo ezisemanqwanqweni kwanangokukhawuleza ukuza nempendulo, atsho ebuza ubudala bam kunye nebanga endikulo esikolweni.

“Ndiza kuba neminyaka esibhozo ngenyanga kaCanzibe, Bra Coks. Andikabikho sikolweni okwangoku.”

“Oh, ndiyakuva, nyana.” Akabonalisi kukhwankqiswa kukungabikho sikolweni kwam. Eneneni ke, mfundi, andizikhumbuli ndibuyela edesikeni emva kokufihlwa kukabawo ondizalayo kwisithuba seminyaka emibini edlulileyo, ngexa ndandisaqala isikolo, ndisenza u-A bhaxa.

Ngoko ke uBra Coks uye athi ucela ze ndibe kwakhe ngentsimbi yesixhenxe ngentseni yangomso, uMgqibelo. Undishiya ndikolo chulumanco ke uBra Coks, apho kwabawo uFudumele. Kwisithuba semizuzu emithathu emva koku, ndiye ndiyifumane ibhokisi yecuba, ndibuyele ekhaya ndigcobile.

Ndithi ndingena nje andingxolele uBra Suz endingxolisa, ebuza ukuba ndihlelени ebendiyale ukuba ze ndikhawuleze nje. Ndiye ndingxengxeze ngelixa ndichaza iindaba ezimnandi. Uye avuye ke noBra Suz kukufumana kwam isingxungxo, esithi ndizakuncedakala ndiyeke ukuhiliza le mizi ndingayazi into endiyifunayo.

Ndingene kumandlalo wam ngobo busuku kwangathi akusahlwi ndizokuya kuthengisa edolophini noBra Coks. Ndivuke ngentsasa elandelayo ndabetha nje ngenkwenkwe endim ukungawaxabisi amanzi, ndosula ubuso nentloko ndahlamba namazinyo, ze ndangena endleleni.

Ndifikele kwaBra Coks apho koogxa bam abangamakhwenkwana aziintanga zam kwanamadadlana, makhwenkwana lawo ndiwaziyo ekuhlaleni: uBholo, umninawe wakhe uManyiki, uXolani, uThemba, uNdabazakhe nomkhuluwa wakhe uSkhonkwane, uNqabhebhe, uPhindile, uNcuzayi, unyana kaBra Coks uNquveve kunye noKwanele.

Ndinxibe eza teki zeNorth Star zide zalilaphu ukukrazuka oku, ibe ndim ndodwa emakhawenkweni onxibe nto ezinyaweni. Phofu ke izihlangu yayingeyonto ibalulekileyo

ayifunayo umqeshi kubasebenzi bakhe. Amakhwenkwe ke ngeli xesha azinika kwisonka esiqatywe ibhotolo yamandongomane, iyileyo iphethe intaba yayo. Khumbula kaloku, mfundi, uBra Coks lo bendithe ngumlindi kwisikolo samabanga aphantsi, ngoko ke isonka esi nebhotoo zigcinwa nguye, zezabafundi apho.

“Bafana bam, bafana bam ... masiyeni, lixhatshwe yinja.” NguBra Coks lowo, otsho enika inkwenkwe nganye imichwe yethamsanqa eqhunywiso ukuze iqhole ikhaya ze igxotho nemishologu, ebizwa iilucky stix ngesilungu; imitya yezibane esikwe kuhle, iikama, amacici kunye neeprika. Uye awagxininise ke amaxabiso uBra Coks ze asikhuthaze ukuba singadlali, sisebenze.

Sikhwela ibhasi sonke, iye kusibeka kwindawo ephithizelayo ebizwa iBayview eKorsten, apho afika asahlula-hlule sisebenze ngambini. Mna ndibekwa ngakumnyango wevenkile uRamco, kude kufuphi nesikhululo seebhasi. Kwalapho kukho iqela loobhuti abasibhozo abacula umculo wesicathamiya. Yho, bacula kamnandi yaye kugcwele ngabathandi bomculo. Ngelixa ugxa wam uManyiki ekhwazela phezulu ethengisa, mna ndiye ndithabatheke, ndisondele ndonwabele iingoma endizazela kwiqela iLadysmith Black Mambazo.

Kuthi kusemnandi kunjalo, ndilibele ngebendikuzele eKorsten, ndive ngenkuntsela yempama efumana onke amalungu obuso bam inditsho ndigxadazele ndiye kuwa ngaphambi komnyango wezindlu zangasese zabasetyhini. NguBra Coks, uyafufutheka ngumsindo, engayekanga nokuthukisa. Ngomothuko, omnye umama obephuma kwindlu yangasese uyothuka angxole:

“Yhu ... umntwana! Yinkohlakalo oyithatha phi le tatandini?”

Akamnanzi uBra Coks. Usuka aye kuManyiki, amnike ezinye izinto zokuthengisa kuba noko sele egabadele yena ekuthengiseni. Ngalo lonke eli xesha, uManyiki yena akakwazi nokuzibamba yintsini, ude ahle nala mikhwinya yakhe ingqindilili iluhlaza kukonwaba, uhleka mna.

Ngenxa yemfesane, kubonakala futhi ukuba uva buhlungu, omnye umama uye andinike itshefu lakhe ndesule igazi eliphuma ngaphakathi emlonyeni kunye nasemilebeni yam ekrazukileyo. Uye andinike ne-apile ukuba nditye, ze andithuthuzele. Ndizibona ndenziwe intlekisa yaye nentliziyo ilihlwili, kodwa ke andinawo amandla nexesha endinokulichitha ekuzisizeleni, kuloko ndilinganisa uManyiki kwangoko, ndikhwazele phezulu nam:

“Ziisheleni ezimbini umtya wesibane...

Ziisheleni ezine ilucky stix...

Ziisheleni ezintathu ikama...

Ziisheleni ezine amacici!”

Ndiyayiphinda-phinda le mikhwazo ze ndikope nendikuva kugxa wam, ndivakale nam ndisithi:

“Ungalal’ ebumnyameni, mama, yiyo le imitya yezibane ziisheleni zimbini kuphela!”

Kuthi ekuhambeni kwexesha ndibone abantu besiza kuthenga nalapha kum, ngambini ngantathu, bambi behleka le ndlela ndikhwaza ngayo besithi iyahlekisa. Kuthi kwisithuba seeyure ezimbini abuye uBra Coks aze kusijonga ukuba siquba njani. Uthi akufika izinto zokuthengisa zisiya ekupheleni, ancume andimbambazele emagxeni endincoma esithi ebesazi ukuba ndiyakwazi ukuthengisa, bendisenziwa yimfeketho nje ngokuya. Ndiye ndingaluvezi lonke uncumo lwam kuba ndisakhumbula ukuba kwisithuba seeyure ezimbini ebekhe wandihlaza. Uye andinike ikota yesonka ehlohlwe intlanzi eqhotsiweyo kunye nebhotilana enesiselo esixutywe namanzi, andishiye. Ndiye nditye ke ngelixa ndikhwazayo.

Kuthi xa kuba semini-maqanda, ajikele kwakhona uBra Coks, ngeli thuba ke uhamba namanye amakhwenkwe, uthi makuhanjweni eKorsten kuyiwe eDassie, apho siyakuqhubekeka khona sithengise. Sihamba ngeenyawo ke, siqhubekeke sikhwaza, kuthengwe kwabanye, kungathengwa kwabanye.

Ukufika kwethu eDassie siye singene kwimityangampo yabantu abalinde iiteksi nooduladula abagodukayo, singxole sithengisa. Kuthi emva kwesithuba seeyure ezimbini aphinde asihlanganise uBra Coks esithi kuyagodukwa. Uncuma kakhulu akufumanisa ukuba ndithengise ngaphezu kwabo gxa bam banamava bemthengisela, ancume, aphinde ancome. Siye singene kuduladula ogodukayo ke sisingise kwakhe, apho sifika siphinde sizinike kula bhotolo nesonka sabafundi. Kuthi kungekudala aphinde uB ra Coks asibize asinike ezinye izinto zokuthengisa ukuze singena-ngene iilokishi zeBhayi.

Olu ke lukwalusuku lwam lokuqala ukuthi cakathi le micondwana yam eSoweto, eyilokishi enkulu yoogobityholo nedume kakhulu kweli Bhayi ngamabali ahlasimlisa umzimba. ESoweto apho ke siya kuba silukuhlwa nguKwanele, kuba enethemba lokubona umama wakhe kunye nobhuti Isaac ahlalisana naye apho.

Abantu baseSoweto badume ngokuba phambili kumzabalazo wokukhululwa kwesizwe esimnyama kumakhamandela ongcikivo nengcinezelo karhulumente wabantu abamhlophe. Elinye lala mabali lihambisa lithi kukho ijoni lomlungu elehla emva kwisigadla kule lokishi ze lathulula irhuluwa kuye wonke elimbonayo. Yaba yiloo nyhikityha ke, abantu bezezo zigede. Kodwa ke, liqhuba litsho ibali, ijoni eli laye, ngempazamo, lashiya apho ngugxa walo owayeqhuba, engabonanga ukuba alibuyangelanga kwisigadla. Kuthiwa ke lathi lizama ukuboyikisa abantu lisenza ngathi umbayimbayi walo useneembumbululu, kwathi kanti abantu balibhaqile ukuba liphelelwe, bonda ngalo ke ngoko, bekhwaza besithi makuyiwe.

Kuthiwa lafunyanwa ngembokotho enqentsu ze laya kuthi tywa emlotheni, ze balingena abahlali. Kuthiwa ke kodwa alizange lonzakaliswe, nto nje abahlali bavumelana ekubeni linyanzeliswe litye ligqibe ibhakethi lelindle labo. Kuthiwa okunene bayenza ke loo nto, belibetha xa lingafuni, ze balikhulula ukuba ligoduke lakugqiba. Kuthiwa ke laphinda lalandwa kwasesa sigadla kunye nezinye, sele kuthululwa irhuluwa nje, kunye nala rhasi ityabula umzimba namehlo. Abaziyo ke bathi elo joni lafika kwalo lazixhoma, labe ke ngoko liyabhubha. Maninzi ke amanye amabali aseSoweto, kodwa ke andiyi kuwagqiba apha.

Siyingenile ke iSoweto, sithengisa, saya kudlula nakumama kwaKwanele, osiphe iisentana ukuba sifumane izimuncu-muncu endleleni yethu. Kuthe xa kuqala ukurhatyela, sabuyela kwaBra Coks, apho sifike sanikezela imali nezinye izinto zokuthengisa eziseleyo.

Ungene nazo e-ofisini yakhe uBra Coks, ofisi leyo ikwa ligumbi lakhe lokulala, wabala wahlanganisa; ze emva kwesithuba semizuzu engamashumi amathathu, wasibiza ngamnye-ngamnye ukuze size kwamkela imirholo.

Ndithe ndakungena kwelam ithuba, ndafika ubawo uCoks evathe olukaBlankethe uncumo, wandamkela endinika isihlalo. Uthathe ebhedini, apho kugcwele yimali eziinkozo nengamaphepha, iponti wayidlulisela kum, esancume njalo.

“Nangamso, mfana wam. Ungalibali ke, ndisakufuna nangomso,” utshilo.

Ndiphume apho ndingalikholelwa elingako lona ithamsanqa, ndasingisa ekhaya. Lube ke ngolo hlobo lufikelela esiphelweni usuku lwam lokuqala emsebenzini.

USUKU LOKUBUYELA KWAM ESIKOLWENI

“Skhumba, vukani kaloku, sekusile tyhini!”

Elo lilizwi likadade bobawo uNomayeye, usivusela ukuba siphakame silungiselele ukuba sendleleni eya kwiholo lelokishi, apho siyakulanda khona ukutya okuziikofu, iisuphu, amagwele, ityiwa, iziqhamo nemifuno kwanenyama yentlanzi ekhonkxiweyo, kunye namaxamba aquka eleswekile, elomgubo wombona, elokubhaka, elerayisi kunye nelomngqusho.

Le nyhweba ke ifunyanwa ngamakhaya amnyama ahlelelekileyo. Ikhaya ngalinye kufuneka likhuphe umntu omnye onesazisi aye kulilandela ezi zidlo. Kodwa ke kuyile mihla nje abantu abasanyanisekanga, yaye phantse wonke umntu omdala unayo incwadana yakhe yesazisi, nto leyo ke eyenza kuphume abantu de babe sisixhenxe kwikhaya elinye, bafike apho babhalise iidilesi ezahlukeneyo nezingezizo ukuze bonke baphume bexhakazela. Isiphumo salo mkhuba ke iba kukungafumani kwazo zonke iintsapho, ze zithi ezo zifumene kakhulu ngenxa yalo mkhonyovu, zizithengisele ezo zingafumenanga. Ukungcola okungako.

Mna ke ndiyakuncedisa ngokuthwala amaxamba lawo, ze umntakwethu uSkhixi yena asale nekhaya encedisana noBra Suz ekujongeni iintsana. Kaloku ngale intsasa sivuka kunye noManqonqo, oyintombi yendodakazi kadade bobawo lo wam. UManqonqo uze kufuna isikolo apha eBhayi, ukuze aqale iBanga Lokuqala. Ebesoloko efunda kokwabo eNjwaxa, eyenye ke yeelali eziPhonoshono kweNciba. Mna naye siziintanga.

Sithe sisagxabhagxabhisa sikhuma isonka sethu, wavakala udabs esixhesha esithi limkile ixesha masigqibezele ukutya. Okunene siphumile ke, emva kokuba kushiye imiyalelo kumntakwethu. UManqonqo unxibe impahla yesikolo esitsha aya kuso, intsha rhaca, ukuqala eluzwaneni kuye kuma ngeqhina entanyeni. Mna ndinxibe la blukhwana yam igqabhuke ngaphantsi nehemphe yam emabalabala, andinxibanga zihlangu. Sithe xa sizakuyigqiba iGunguluza esisitalato sethu, wakhumbula udabs ukuba ulibele iimpepha zokukhululwa kukaManqonqo sisikolo abekuso eNjwaxa, wacela ke ngoko ukuba ndileqise ndiye kuwalanda. Yho, akothukanga ngako umninawa akundibona ndigaleleka endlwini ndingabhungisanga. Uphantse wophula naloo kopi ebezibele iswekile wenzela indubela kuyo. Ndimqinisekisile kodwa ke ukuba andiyi kumxela, ndathi makandiphe nam, ndagongqoza ndathatha iimpepha ndangena endleleni.

Ndibafumene oodabs xa kanye bengena kwibala lebhola ekhatywayo elikwisitalato iKota, sele behamba nomama kaNtobeko, umakhelwane wethu. Ndibulisile kumama kaNtobeko, wavuma, baqhubekeka ngencoko yabadala, ze sathi xa siphakathi kwamangcwaba angasesikolweni iDavid Vuku, wohlukana nathi umama kaNtobeko, esithi uyakuhlangana nathi kwakhona eholweni. Siqhubile ke sisiya kwisango lesikolo, apho sibone sisengaphandle ukuba kugcwele ngumlisela nomthinjana, konwatywe kudlalwa zonke iindidi zemidlalo ekhoyo. Kuyahlekwa, kuyalilwa. Bambi bayajubalaza abafuni kungena esikolweni kodwa bayanzelwa ngabazali babo, kubi kuyiloo nto. Yimpithizelo nje. Ndiyanqwena nam ukuba kuthi kanti bendingomnye wabo bonwabileyo, okanye kuthi kanti bekuze kubhaliswa mna.

Ndimbhaqa ezibuka encumile uManqonqo, ingathi uzakukuthanda ukuba lapha.

Uyafaniselana nabantwana besi sikolo ngempahla. Sithi singena nje esangweni sibe sigangwa ngobubele ngutitshalakazi oye azichaze kudabs njengoMiss Mngxuma. UMiss Mngxuma ke uye athi akufumanisa ukuba ziphelele iimpepha zokubhaliswa asithumele kwi-ofisi yenqununu apho athi siyakuncedakala khona kakuhle. Uye angasithembisi kodwa ukuba isekho indawo. Okunene ke siyile kwi-ofisi leyo, safika kukho umama osele ekhulile, onempandlakazi emshiye engenanwele kukhakhayi nasenqentsu, enxibe izibuko. Sifike esaxakekile ke ekhumsha emnxebeni. Ndimjonge ndamoyika. Sinkqonkqozile, ze, engayekanga ukuthetha emnxebeni, wasalathisa indawo yokuchopha. Sihleli apho isithuba semizuzu efikelela kwisihlanu phambi kokuba ibuye ithethe nathi inqununu. Ithobe intloko, yenyusa amehlo ukuze isibone ngaphaya kwezibuko ezo, yabulisa.

“Molweni, ninjani namhlanje?”

“Molo, *Prinsipali*. Siyavuka wethu akukho nto nakuthi. Nivuka njani kodwa nina, mama?” uphendule watsho udabs.

“Hayi akukho nto sisi, sivukile, nto nje, njengoko nibona nani, simaxhaphetshu.

Ndingumama uBekwa ke mna sisi, inqununu yesi sikolo, ndinganinceda ngantoni?”

“Oh, siyabulela, *Prinsipali*. Eneneni kunjalo, nixakekile, ndiyabona. Lo, *Prinsipali*, nguManqonqo Soldati, oyintombi yasemzini wam, ize kukhangela isikolo kweli cala. Ebefunda ezilalini. Ndithe ke kuba ndisazi indlela esifundisa kakuhle ngayo esi sikolo, ndamzisa apha.”

“Uziphetha iimpepha?”

“Ewe, *Prinsipali*, nazi,” watsho udabs esolula isandla enikezela kwinqununu iimpepha ezo.

Iye yachitha umzuzu iqwalasele ezi mpepha, ze yathabatha incwadi yayo enkulu yakhuphela kuyo iinkcukacha ezikwezi mpepha. Ithe emva koko yalula isandla inqununu, isithi ayiboni kuya kuba yingxaki ukwamkela intombi le njengomfundi kwisikolo sayo kuba kuzicacele kwakwiimpepha ezi ukuba ingumntu ozimiseleyo esikolweni, yaye ke nempahla yesikolo epheleleyo sele enayo uManqonqo.

Inqununu yalathise udabs igumbi aza kufundela kulo uManqonqo ze yamchazela nokuba umntu oyakube emhlohla kulo nyaka ngutitshalakazi uNtoninzi. Imkhuthazile ukuba udabs amshiye kwanamhlanje uManqonqo ukuze aze kuqhelana nabanye abafundi, aziswe nakutitshalakazi wakhe. Emva kokubulela kukadabs, engawuvali bubuntu bukamama uBekwa, savalelisa sasingisa kwigumbi lokufunda likaManqonqo. Sithe singekathathi namanyathelo amathathu, yaphinda yasibiza inqununu ukuba sisondele. Iqwalasele kum ze yabuza kudabs ukuba mna ndiyafunda na, walandula udabs.

Iphindile inqununu yabhekisa kwakudabs, imbuza ukuba ndingafundi ndakugqiba ukuba mncinci kangaka, ze yalekelisa ngothi andingethandi na mna kufunda njengabanye abantwana. Kwesi sihlandlo udabs uye wema nematha, eshwantshwatha into engavakaliyo ze wabhekisa kum, ebuza:

“Skhumba, uyafuna ukufunda?”

“Ewe, dabawo, ndiyafuna,” ndiphendule ndatsho, ndingazi nokuba akazi kundikhalimela na. kaloku asiyanga esikolweni nomntakwenu kule minyaka mithathu idlulileyo kuba udabs noBra Suz bekhala ngokungabikho kwemali. Okokoko wathi wasishiya engabhungisanga ubawo osizalayo esingise kwelemimoya, asizange siphinde singene kumasango esikolo nomntakwethu. Ngoku ke, ndimphendula nje udabs andazi nokuba akazi kundiphoxa na athi ndiyazi ukuba akukho mali. Ndiphendule ke kodwa.

“Unayo impahla yesikolo ke?” ibhekise kwakum inqununu.

“Hayi, mama, andinayo.”

Inqununu iye yabhekisa kudabs, yathi ukuba akakwazi kundithengela mpahla yesikolo, aze aqinisekise ukuba impahla endinayo iyahlanjwa ukuze ndize esikolweni ngosuku olulandelayo. Uthe engekaphenduli udabs, ndangenelela ndisithi ukhona nomntakwethu ekhaya yaye ndiqinisekile naye angakuthakazelela ukubuyela esikolweni. Inqununu

isibuyisele e-ofisini yayo ingasancumanga, yathatha la newadi yayo yabhala amagama am. Ayikhuzanga ngako ukuva ukuba ndineshumi lonke leminyaka ubudala kodwa andiyi sikolweni. Imkhalimele udabs isithi udlala ngekamva labantwana, ngoba akukho sipho sidlule imfundo emntwaneni, yona ingenakwehluthwa, yona iyakuliqaqambisa ngokuqinisekileyo ikamva lakhe.

Ndiyinike negama lomntakwethu ukuze abhaliswe naye, ndatsho ndisithi ndiqinisekile naye uyakusithakazelela isikolo. Ikhali mile inqununu ndakuyinika uBillyboy njengegama lomntakwethu, isithi mandingafekethi ifuna igama lakhe lokwenene. Sijongene nodabs, kwathi kwakungatsitsi nto, wamthiya kwalapho esithi nguSkhixi. Mna nomntakwethu sizakuba seklasini enye, kwigumbi lesibini, phantsi kotitshalakazi uMpini.

Sihambe apho saya kushiya uManqonqo eklasini yakhe ze sadlulela eholweni eCentenary. bendingasachulumance nje mna, ndingulowo uyakufana neentanga zam elokishini, nam ndivuke ndihlambe mihla le, ndisiya esikolweni. Sifike abantu beyimityangampo emide, bedwelele ukutya, bambi sele begqibile, besindwa ngamaxamba nezitya ezikhulu zeplastiki ezinezinye izidlo. Sime apho isithuba esifikelela kwiiyure ezine ze, ekugqibeleni, nathi safikelela ngaphambili, sanikwa ezethu iipasile, saxwaya sayindlela.

Sihambisene nabanye abantu ke endleleni, kuncokolwa ngabantu abadala. Ngalo lonke eli xesha mna ndonwabe ngaphakathi, ndingxamile, ingathi andisafiki ekhaya ndize kuphakela umntakwethu iindaba ezikhe zamnandi kuthi kwisithuba sexesha elide. Sithe sisathi siyavela esitalatweni, ndambona umntakwethu emi esangweni noBra Suz, ndamkhwaza ndizele yimincili. Ubalekile weza, ndathi akufika ndaziphokoza iindaba ebezingasayi kulalwa mbethe kakade. Ndibeke phantsi amaxamba lawo sangana sivuya, sabe ke ngoko sizakubuyela esikolweni okokuqala emva kweminyaka emithathu.

IMALI YOKUTYA KOMNTWANA

Kuthi ke ngolunye usuku Lwesibini evekini, ndizidlalela ekhaya nomntakwethu ndive ndikhwazwa ngudabs. Endlini uhleli nesihlobokazi sakhe usis' Nomeysi. Uye andithume ukuba ndiye kumyeni wakhe kokwabo ndifike ndithi ufuna imali yokutya komntwana. Uyabonakala ukuba akatyhilekanga ebusweni.

“Jonga, Skhumba, yiya kuMbhobho uthi ndithi ndifuna imali yokutya komntwana!”

Okunene ke ndiyaphuma ndileqise apho kwiSitalato iNozewu. Kaloku udabs lo ungumdezana osancancisayo, intwazanana yabo entle nethandeka kakhulu uNoraysi ikwisithuba seenyanga ezine ezelwe. Belapha ekhaya nje udabs nosana lwakhe kukuba uye wagqiba ekubeni agoduke akoyiswa zezomendo, kodwa ke isizathu asibekayo yena ukuthi kukungabi nakunyamzela ukugezelwa ngamadodakazi nangunina-zala.

Ndibaleke okomntwana ke ndaya kufika kulobhuti Mbhobho, ndamfumana enkcenkceshela ingca, ndabulisa, ndathi ndingekayiphenduli nale andibuza yona yokuba ndiyaphila na, wabe endibuza ukuba undithumeni na udabs. Ndimxelele ke ukuba udabs uthi mandize kulanda imali yokutya komntwana. Ubonakele edikwe kwangoko wathi ingaba udabs uthi uyithatha phi na imali emazi nje ukuba akakarholi.

“Hayi *maan*, Skhumba kwedini ufeketha ngam udabawo wakho, uthi ndiyithatha phi imali esazi nje ukuba andikarholi? Mxelele ke ukuba ndithi andinayo, futhi andizukuyitsitsa ndawo de ndibe ndiyahlawulwa ngoLwesihlanu. Mna kuqala andazi ukuba ndizakulala ndidleni ngokuhlwa nje.” Ndivumile ke ndaphinda ndabuyela ekhaya kudabs neendaba ezingentlanga kuyaphi.

Ndifike ndayilungisa kodwa intetho, andayitsho yonke enye imfitshi-mfitshi ayithethileyo ebangwa ngumsindo, ndathi kudabs uthi utata kaNoraysi ucela acenge sekukufutshane ngoLwesihlanu, yena akanayo nemdaka ngoku, uyakuba nakho ukumnika ukuphela kweveki leyo. Yhu, umothuko endibe nawo yindlela ayithathe ngayo le mpendulo udabs. Usuke waqhushumba watswina esithi mandibuyele kumyeni wakhe ndithi angamgezeli ngoba yena uyakumsombulula ngokwakhe ukuba akabhadlanga. Uye wasebenzisa namagama arhabaxa, esithi:

“Jong’ apha, Skhumba, yithi kuMbhubho ndithi andinike la mali ukuba akafuni ndiye ngokwam phaya.”

Ndiphinde ndaleqisa ke nakulo umyalezo. Ndifike esankcenkceshela utata kaNoraysi, ndathi ndingena nje esangweni wabe esithi:

“Kowu, iyawa yintoni ngoku, kwedini Skhumba, uthini udabawo wakho?”

Ndimchazele ke ukuba unomsindo yaye uthi uzakuza ngokwakhe apho makamnike imali yokutya komntwana ngoba abananto nabo, uthi bazakuyithatha phi. Kwesi sihlandlo uthe mandithi uzakuya ngokwakhe aye kumchazela kungekudala, ngoko ke makamlinde. Ndibuyele endlwini ndibaleka ndathi ndingekangeni nasemnyango wabe endingxolela udabs ebuza ukuba uthini utata kaNoraysi. Ndigqibe ukuyithetha sele esisifu ngoku, sele engena nakum ngoku, endichazela ngendlela endinyabe nendisisiphukuphuku ngayo, elila. Kuthe kwakuba nje usisi Nomeysi obesoloko ethule ngalo lonke eli xesha, wangenelela esithi hayi noko makandixolele udabs. Yho, udabs ujonge kusi’ Nomeysi wamgxotha ngoko nangoko esithi makagoduke ngoba akafuni mntu ungenelelayo yena xa ezama ukulungisa izinto zomzi wakhe.

“Jong’ apha wena, Skhumba, yithi kuMbhubho andithathanga lo bhontsi ndawufaka apha kum ngaphantsi ndazikhwela ukuze kuvele lo mntwana uyandiva?”

Kwesi sithuba usisi’ Nomeysi uye wakhuzwa engawukholelwa lo myalezo awuva unikwa umntwana, amehlo ethe gqa kukothuka, isandla sisemlonyeni. Uphindile udabs wathukisa ebhekisa kusi’ Nomeysi esithi:

“*Fokof wena!*” akakhuphanga nelimdaka usisi wabantu, wathatha inxili yakhe watsiba umgubasi wangena endleleni esingise kokwabo.

“Hey-hey ... undimamale wena sibhanxa,” utshilo udabs ebuyela kum ... “undivile ukuba ndithini?” ndishwantshwathe u-ewe nam, ndisonqena ukuba udabs andingene emzimbeni, ngoba bese kucaca ngoku ukuba akakudanga apho.

“Yithini ndithi kula mnqundu uMbhubho bekumnandi ngokuya ebendigwencela esenza umntwana kodwa ngoku akafuni kuthabatha xanduva ... hamba, sibhanxa!”

Ndithe xa ndigqiba kutsiba umgubasi waphinda udabs wandikhwaza esithi ndizakuthini na kutata kaNoraysi, ndithe ndisashwantshwatha into endingayivayo nam, wavakala ephinda

egxininisa ekubeni sisiphukuphuku kwam, watsho egxininisa ukuba ze ndithi yena akazikhwelanga ngomnwe ukuze kuphume la mntwana, ze emva koko esafutha ngumsindo, wabuza ukuba ndimvile na, ndavuma nam.

Ndiphume ndabaleka apho ndibuyela kutata kaNoraysi, othe akafuna kwakuyiva le nto ndiza nayo wathi mandingabuyeli kudabs ndisuke ndiye kudlala nabanye abantwana qha mna ngoba udlala ngam. Ndivumile kodwa ndazi ukuba andisoze ndiyizame nakancinci leyo ukuba ndiyakwazi okundilungeleyo, ingakumbi xa udabs ekulowa umoya, angandosela ngezandla nje zodwa. Yiyo ke le nto ndigqibe ekubeni ndibuyele kuye ndithi uthi utata kaNoraysi kulungile ke uzakuyizisa ngokwakhe imali kungaphelanga thuba lide. Uphindile udabs wathukisa esithi maze ndimxelele utata kaNoraysi ukuba angabhanxi ngaye ngoba sele ivela phi ngoku imali ebesandula ukuthi akanayo nje. Kangangendlela anomnsindo ngayo udabs ude agibisele edongeni nemagi abexubela kuyo ubisi lomntwana, ekhala esithi yena akasiso isibhanxa yaye ke uyakumenza kakubi utata kaNoraysi. Ngalo loke ke eli xesha uNoraysi ukhala isithukuthezi sento engapheliyo, uyajubalaza. Ndithi ndisamamele udabs ethukisa, eshiya angalaziyo kuphela, ndive kwangaye endibuza ukuba ndimeleni na ndingahambi.

Ndiphumile kwakhona, kodwa ke ndazinqanda ngeli ithuba ndisithi noko ngudamtiriri lo, nam ndiyakube ndifeketha ngomzimba nengqondo yam ukuba ndikwenzile oko. Kaloku besendisoyika nengqumbo katata kaNoraysi, khumbula kaloku mfundi, ukuba ebethe mandihambe ndiye kudlala nabanye abantwana ngoba kufekethwa ngam ngudabs. Ndiphume ke ndaya kuncathama isithuba semizuzu efikelela kwishumi ngasemangcwabeni kude kufuphi ngakulotata kaNoraysi, ukuze ndibuyele kudabs njengosuka apho. Ndiphinde ndabuyela endlwini, ndathi kanye xa ndisondelayo ndeva ilizwi likadabs, engxola ethukisa esithi yena akasosibhanxa.

Ndithe xa ndisondelayo ndeva ukuba ubhekisa kutata kaNoraysi emnyanzela ukuba uyayifuna imali yokutya komntwana, ndimvile ke naye utata wabantu ezithethelela esithi akukho apho azakuyifumana khona ngaphambi kokuba arhole emsebenzini. Ndibuyele umva ndaqonda ukuba mandingangeni hleze kuphinde kungenwe kum ngobuphukuphuku, ndasuka ndaya ezitshomini ndaya kudlala nam. Ndithe ndingekabi kude ndeva udabs ekhwaza igama lam, kanti undibhaqile ngoku ndijikayo, wandibuza ukuba kanti ebengandithumanga na, ndathi xa ndizama ukuphendula wasuka wandinika imali esithi mandiyokuthenga itoti yobisi

lomntwana neebhotilana zokutya kwakhe evenkileni. Kuye kwathi ke kanti uyitsitsile utata kaNoraysi imali, ngaloo ndlela yaziwa nguye nodabs.

INTO KAMAMKUMBENI INOBOYA, CABA

Kuthiwa ziyachetywa kule mihla siphila kuyo, zingabi naboya, andazi njani, futhi ke ndingenakwa mdla wokuyibona ingenabo; ngoba kaloku, njengoko ecula atsho amaSgumfete, imel' ukuba iyahlekisa xa injalo.

Kwesi sihlandlo, mfundi, sifumana abamelwane basekhaya usis' Nomahlabi nesiinqanda-mathe sakhe ubhuti Vuyo. Abamelwane aba bahlalisana kwindlu yesithathu ukusuka kule yasekhaya yaye balulutsha oluzityela izinto zalo amaxesha amaninzi. Kukhe kuliwe kuthukwane kugxothwane nasendlwini ke ngamanye amaxesha, kuphinde kuxolelwane kulandwane, kubuyelwe ekhaya zakubuya iingqondo. Kodwa ke ixesha elide isibini esi siphilisana kamnandi yaye ndicinga ukuba indlu yabo yiyo yodwa ekhokelwa ngabantu abasebatsha, uninzi kaloku lukhokelwa ngamaxhego namaxhegokazi. Abamelwane bethu aba ke bazihlalela bobabini kuphela, abanabo abantwana.

Caba ke kuthi ezinzulwini zobunye ubusuku kwalapha kule nyanga yeNkanga sisazirhonela isibini esi, usisi aphazanyiswe kokunye ukurhona okumenzela isithukuthezi. Wazi kakuhle ukuba umntu wakhe ubhut' Vuyo akangomntu urhonayo, ide ibe nguye okhe adlikidlwe esebuthongweni kusithiwa uyarhona. Uphaphama nje kube kanye afumane isithandwa sakhe sileli zole kwelinye icala lomandlalo, kube kusekho kodwa okunye ukurhona okungaqhelekanga, okuvakala ngathi kukugquma kwengonyama.

Uthi eve ke futhi usisi ukuba le ngxolo isukela ngakwigumbi labo lokuphumla, agqibe ekubeni achwechwe aye kukroba. Ukhanyisa umnxeba wakhe kancinci ukuze angakhawulezi aqapheleke okanye abhaqwe, ajonge ndawo zonke egumbini kodwa angafumani nto. Uye athi kanye xa acinga ukuba makube mhlawumbi akukhange kubekho kwanto, mhlawumbi nguye ebesesebuthongweni ngoko, xa kanye azakubuyela ezingubeni; aphinde awuve umgqumo athi akholwe kwangoko ukuba awunguwo konke-konke owomntu yaye usuka ngaphandle. Uchwechwile kwakhona waya efestileni, wafika wavula kancinci umdiyadiya. Uthe akukroba ngasesituphini somnyango wabo, wothuka woma akubona kuhleli ingwanzilili yesilo esifukufuku buboya. Uzitswikile apha ethangeni ngenjongo yokufumanisa ukuba akaphuphi na, ze wathi akuva intlungu waphinda wahlikhla amehlo akhe ukuze aqiniseke ukuba ubona kakuhle. Afike amehlo kweso situphu aphinda abona kwala

ngwanzilili yesilo. Uthe akuqwalaselisisa wafumanisa ukuba kukho ukuyelelana kwaso emntwini, noxa eqinisekile nje ukuba asimntu sona. Sibe sisikhulu kakhulu kunomntu, sibulingana nendlovu ngobukhulu. Ebepphantse waqinisekisa ke ukuba yiyo indlovu kodwa waphinda wazilungisa kwangokwakhe esithi ayinaboya indlovu koko inesikhumba esirhabaxa.

Besingenzi nto ke esi silo estuphini apho, siziphumlele nje, futhi ke sikhangeleka ngathi sizicingela iinto zaso; sifake intloko phakathi kwemilenze, ngokunga sikhathazekile.

Kuba ke esoyika, futhi engafuni kuviwa ukuba uhleli, usis' Hlubi uye kukrweca isgqamama sakhe: "Vuyo, Vuyo, vuka nas' isgebenga sihleli emnyango, mfondini. Ungangxoli." Yho, ngoko nangoko, waphaphama uVuyo, wajonga ixesha, wafika lisithi ilishumi linesithathu imizuzu emva kwentsimbi yesibini. Ulandele usis' Nomahlubi bechwechwa njalo, baya kufika efestileni, bakroba. Okunene ke naye ufike sisahleli apho isilo. Uthe esabambe ongezantsi, sabonakala sishukuma isilo, sazikrwempa idywantsi lasekunene, satsho isandi saphinda sagragrama... gro-gro-gro-gro!

Kuthe kusenjalo, savakala sisenza omnye umgqumo obe ngathi kukubhodla, nako kuphuma umoya ungena endlwini yabo ngaphantsi komnyango ungumphunga omhlophe ofana nqwa nelifu, babaleka ngoko nangoko bayakuzivalela egumbini lokulala, besoyika. Kuvakale apho egumbini kunuka into engathi lilindle, wabonakala ungena nala mphunga bawubaleke kwelinye igumbi, ngoko nangoko barhawuzelelwa yimizimba neembuso. Ngalo lonke eli xesha ke kuyangcangcazelwa sisibini, akukho waziyo ukuba iyakuphelela phi na imeko abazibhaqa bekuyo.

Benze umthandazo omncinci, becela uSomandla abonyule kule ngxuba kaxaka, besithi ukuba ngumntu lo uthumele esi silo ukuze bona bafumaneke zizinto zakhe ezimdaka, maze abaphindezelele ngokusibuyisela kuye sonke isingcolo asicingayo nasenzayo kubo.

Bamkhumbuzile ke uQamata ukuba bona bamthembe ngako konke abanakho ebomini, yiyo kenale nto besiza kuye kwakuba nje. Kuthe emva koko bahlala phezu komandlalo kwakhona, ethembeni lommangaliso oyakuvela phezulu. Bahleli apho besahlebeza benjalo, ze kwisithuba seyure emva kokuba bebaleke la mphunga, usisi wathuma ubhuti ukuba aye kukroba ukuba akukabikho zinguqu na.

Ubhuti ufike efestileni xa kanye simi ngeenyawo sizolula isilo. Umothuko ongako akubona ukuba siphantse silingane nendlu ngokwayo ubude. Sizulazuleiyadi, ze saphuma ngesango sawela umgaqo sisingisa kwiSitalato iBekwa, sihamba ngamacala oku kotsotsi. Usisi ucinge ukuba makube mhlawumbi siya ngasemangcwabeni. Ubhuti ubize usisi ngoko nangoko esithi makeze nekhamera ngoba siyemka, ufuna ukusifota. Uzile nayo usisi ikhamera, bazama ukusifota kaninzi-ninzi isilo noxa sibafulathele nje. Bakhawuleze bangena egumbini ngenjongo yokuya kujonga imifanekiso, bafika kubonakala ivenkile yaseBhongweni ebesidlula kuyo isilo, singekho sona. Baqonde kwangoko ukuba ukho umkhonyovu apho.

Babuyele ezingubeni besoyika njalo, kodwa ke bafumana ukubiwa bubuthongo balala. Ekuvukeni kwabo ekuseni, ubhuti wothuswe sisikhalo sikasisi, wavuka ngoko nangoko. Uleqise kwigumbi lokuhlambela apho afike ezibhenca-bhenca ubuso obubhutyu-bhutyu ngamaqhakuva amakhulu. Kuthe kanti naye ubhuti unawo. Bagqibe ekubeni lishwangusha elize nala mphunga ubusuka kwesa silo. Bavumelene ukuba bazakuya kubona isanuse abasithembileyo, uMakheswa, kodwa ke bebeve kusithiwa uye kulanda amayeza eSwazini.

Kuthe ke kuba isibini esi besimenywe emgidini kwalapha ekuhlaleni, sahlamba salungiselela ukuya khona kwangoko. Baphumile ke kwayiwa emgidini apho. Bathe bengena apho bagangwa nguMamkhumbeni, omnye umakhulu wakwalapha ebumelwaneni omnyama kakhulu ngebala; nothe ebona nje wabe eabuza impilo nokuba kulelwe njani na. Uthe akuyitsala uMamkhumbene impilo, ebuza ukuba akukabikho zintsha noko, wadibanisa ngoko nangoko usisi, ze wawakala esithi:

“Hay-hay yima, yintoni ngoku wena Mamkhumbeni? Sekutheni ndadibana nawe sewundileqa ngetoti enomchamo nje? Wakhe wandibulisa okanye wandibuza impilo ngaphambili, kutheni unditsibela ngokuba ndileli njani nje, he? Jonga, andifun’ ukuphinda ndisibone esa silo sakho sinoboya pha kwam uyandiva?”

Uthe esafing’ iintshiyi uMamkhumbeni kubonakala ukuba uxakiwe futhi wothukile, sabe sibekwa isithebe senyama yoomama, baphazanyiswa nayingoma, wabe ke ngoko akakwazi kuzithethelela uMamkhumbeni. Umshiye kwangoko usisi uMamkhumbeni waya kuzimanya nabanye oomama, wasala apho uMamkhumbeni esakhwankqisekile.

AKUKHO NZWANA INGENASIPHAKO

Apha ke bafundi bam siboniswa uSkhixi, inzwana yasemaKhomazini esaze ngobuso ezweni, iphantsi kwelifu elimnyama thsu, emva kokushiywa kwesinomhlwa sisihlobo sayo esisenyongweni uKrwempeza. USkhixi ke lo bafundi ngulo mfanyana nimazi njengalowo ndamshiyela ibele.

Umntakwethu lo uchithe ixesha elide ke ehlobene noKrwempeza lo, befunda kunye, bedlala kunye ibhola ekhatywayo, baqala ukubona-bona iintombi kunye; bathandana neentombi ezizizihlobo, nto leyo ibuqinise nangakumbi ubuhlobo. UKrwempeza lo ebesele engathi ngomnye wabaninawe bam apha ekhaya ngoba bekungekho nto angayenzelwayo, kungekho gumbi angalingeniyo, nqwa nomntakwethu ke kuloKrwempeza, bekukwanjalo.

UKrwempeza usutywa kukufa esedolophini, endleleni evela kuzithengela urhacaza wesihlangu iCarvella, ngokuthi atshayiswe yilori esihambisa isonka ebesiphephetheka ukubaleka oku.Uvakele ke umphanga ekuhlaleni, savakala isandi sokuwa kwaloo mfanyana ebengafanelwe nakancinci lingcwaba, kangangendlela ebelinene ngayo. Ihexile ilokishi ke sesi sehlo, ngoba uKrwempeza ebeseziwa sisimelwane sonke njengomntwana onembeko, othumekayo nonenkathalo. Enye into ebimthandisa kakhulu kukuthanda kwakhe isikolo nebhola ekhatywayo, engazimanyi noninzi lweentanga zakhe, ebesezingenwe yimikhuba yokusela kakubi utywala lusebenzise gwenxa nezinye iziyobisi.

Kangangendlela abebethandana ngayo umntakwethu noKrwempeza lo ubungeva abantu xa ndihlangana nabo esitalatweni bendibuza ukuba unjani na umntakwethu ukukhubeka, besithi bayavelana naye, ngoba bayayazi indlela eyakumthwaxa ngayo emoyeni le lahleko. Ndibaqinisekisile ke ukuba noko uchacha kuhle endlwini yaye nathi senza unakho-nakho ukumthuthuzela, futhi nathi silahlekelwe lilungu losapho.

Iqalile ke imithandazo, ngokokulindeleka, wabonakala umntakwethu eququzela kuloKrwempeza, ethi elapha abe ephaya. Ngamanye amaxesha ibiye ibe nguye nowamkela *isosala* yeminikelo, emele ikhaya ngombulelo, ze anikezele nezaziso zemihla ngemihla. Bekuthi ke xa uqukunjelwa umthandazo wangorhatya, lisitsho elingasozelilibaleke iculo elithi “Oku kutya sikutyayo...,” abonakale echwechwa umntakwethu kwigumbi ekulungiselelwa kulo abo baze kukhunga. Ebetsiba nje ngaphandle umninawe abe aphinde

avele sele ephethe ingqoko yamaqebengwane neziselo kwesinye isandla. Bathathe ke abantu badle, sele kuncokolelwa phezulu ke ngoku, kubukwana lulutsha, kubaliswa nangendlela ayakukhumbuleka nayakuhlala esezintliziyweni ngayo uKrwempeza.

Ndithe ke kuba ndimazi ukusuka nokuhlala umntakwethu, ndaqaphela ukuba idyasi yakhe ikhukhumele ngendlela engaqhelekanga apha ngasemacaleni esinqe. Ndimncome ukutyeba ke ndatsho ndisithi bendisoloko ndimoyikisela kule meko yokushiywa nguKrwempeza, ndibe ndimcingela ukuba hleze ehle emzimbeni, kuba ndisazi ukuba uyakhawuleza ukukhathazeka, futhi loo nto amaxesha amaninzi ibonakala kuye emzimbeni. Uncomile ke naye esithi uyazama, futhi ebengazilindelanga ukuba uyakuba esalinganwa yimpahla yakhe kangangendlela emkhubekise ngayo le lahleko emphefumleni. Bakhona ke nabanye abantu abebencedisa ukuhambisa izidlo. Ndiqaphele ukuba umntakwethu uye acele kubo bonke esithi akakafumani ngoba okokoko encedisa ekunikeneni abanye abantu.

Uye waman' ukutsiba nakwindlwana yangasese ke umninawe kuba etshiswa ngumchamo, abuye noko engathi uya encipha apha ebhatyini. Ndiye kwangoko xa ndithi mandiqwalaselisise ndafumanisa ukuba apha ezimpokothweni kukho imbuqe yamaqhekezana amaqebengwane abewahambisa, wabe naye ke eman' ukubuya apho exhaphe nangakumbi apha ezindeveni. Uqhubile ke nokuman' ecela kwaba mama bahambisa iziselo, kuthethwa nje ngabantu, kuncediswana nangezitulo netafile ekufuneka ibuyele ngaphakathi yena unkabi uyahlafuna akayeki.

Ndimve ngelinye ithuba ecela iqebengwane nerostile kuba esithi ufuna ukugqibezela isiselo sakhe ngazo. Ndiphinde ndamva ecela kwakhona, kodwa ke kwesi sithuba ecela isiselo, esithi ufuna ukugqibezela iqebengwane nerostile abesandula ukuzifumana komnye umama. Ndiqwalasele ukuba hayi noko ngoku umntakwethu uthuthela ngaphakathi mpela, yaye akayeki. Uqhubile ke nalo mkhwa wokucela enye ukuze agqibezele enye, andabhobhisa mna, kodwa ke uthe akubhaqwa ngomnye usisi obedikwe mpela, ndambona edana umntakwethu. Usisi lowo uye wahlebeza into endlebeni kuye, ze ndambona etshintsha ebusweni, enikezela naloo glasi uKhomaz' ongangxengwanga.

Zihambile ke iintsuku, zaya zisondela iintsuku kuMgqibelo ongaliyo, obulusuku ebelucwangciselwe ukuya kubekwa kwikhaya layo lokugqibela inzwana yaseNtakwendeni. Uqhubile nomfihlo, kakuhle futhi; umkhulu kunjanjoku, indlu imi ngeembambo

kukuphuphumala. Zikhuphisene iikwayala, eyeqela lebhola, eyokuhlala, eyasenkonzweni, neyesikolo; iintombi nabafana beqhafuqhafu beyiloo nto ubuhle. Nabefundisi bagadlele ke, beshiya abangalaziyo ukutyibela elo nene lingumzekelo wendlela yokuziphatha kolutsha ingafanelwe ngcwaba. Litshilo ke nelizwi ukuba abantu maze bayeke ukumlilela uKrwempeza, balilele bona, ngoba yena ulufezile olwakhe ugqatso yaye kungoku nje uthe ngcu ngasekunene koYise onamandla onke, uMdali weZulu nomhlaba, ebotshwa amanxeba nezivubeko zomhlaba. Kubhekiswe nakumntakwethu, enikwa amazwi okomelela ngokulahlekelwa ngumlingane.

Kuyiwe emafihlweni iselelo linye lokuwongwa kwenzwana ngokuziphatha kakuhle, kwabuyelwa ekhayeni layo, apho abazili bebelindwe bubukhazi-khazi bezidlo ezimibala-bala neziselo ezihwahlwazayo, sele kubukwana kwakhona luluntu iyiloo nto. Nalapha uye wazigqamisa ke umntakwethu, ebonakala ekhuthela, esisinqininqini esingazibandeziyo emsebenzini. Ephatha kuncedisa ekuzisweni kwezidlo aphinde abekho nasezimalini ezingumkhonto esangweni. Ndiye ndaman' ukumbona ke umntakwethu ephethe isitya esinokutyana okuncinci, mhlawumbi kukho iqathana nje lenyama, ndamcingela ndithi kowu bethu umntwana kamama, akanalo nethuba lokutya kangangendlela axakeke ngayo ehoyana neendwalutho ezize kukhunga; ndimazi ngokuyithanda ke into esiwa phantsi kwempumlo. Ndiye ndamvela usizi kodwa ndabehle ndathi luyakuthi luqina usuku abe noko sele ezinzile, ekwazi nokuphumla afumane isixhaso. Ndiye kwangaye sele esiza nompoposho umntakwethu ekhumbuza abantu ukuba kaloku ayilotheko elo, kuziliwe yaye kufuneka bayamkele inyaniso yokuba iphelile inyama, bakutye ukutya nokuba komile.

Ndothuswe kule apho lilizwi lomnye umama ethukisa esithi yini le, nanku umfana eze kugqiba ukudla komngcwabo amandwendwe engekafumani. Ndithe xa ndithi ndiyajonga, ndafumanisa ukuba kanti ubhekisa kumntakwethu. Ndiye kwangalo mama esithi yakhe yaviwa phi into yokuba umntu afake inyama engako ezimpokothweni zebhatyi ze angabi nazintlani ukuxelela abantu ukuba ayilotheko elo, kodwa uyigcinele yena yonke le nyama. Kuye kwee wayi-wayi ke ngoku, basondela abantu befuna ukuzivela bazibonele nalo kubhekiswa kuye. Umama utshilo ke ukuba kudala embukele iveki le yonke egqiba ukutya ekufaka nasezimpokothweni. Undigqibe ngokuthi fanel' ukuba umntakwethu uyavuya kukubhubha kukaKrwempeza ngoba naku kaloku yena uzakuba ngunyana kaSambhuntsuntsu kukutyeba, atsho futhi ngonyaka woshiywa kosapho lwakaSimayile

ngunyana wabo oyintanda, yena wonwaba watyeba wayihagu. Ugqibelise ngelithi: “Iintloni ziyamakha umntu ke bhuti. Sibhujelwe thina apha, sisentlungwini, wena usisenga nje! Yhu kunini mntwan’ omntu ndikubukele ugqiba ukutya kwalapha?” Umama wabantu.

Ndibehle ndaqonda nam ukuba eneneni makube unyanisile lo mama, ngoba bezingafani ngemibala eza zitya bendisoloko ndizibona ziphethwe nguSkhixi. Ngalo lonke eli xesha umntakwethu yena ubambelele kongezantsi uzenza ingelosi emsulwa, ngendlela ekhanyelayo, uphethe intaba yokutya endingaziyo ukuba yeyesingaphi. Uvakele ethethela phantsi, ebudana unkabi esithi:

“Hayi kodwa mna okokoko ndisebenza, ndiyaqala ukukhe ndise into phantsi kwempumlo ngale, andimazi lo mama endisukela engandazi nokundazi nje. Yhu hayi makube mna ndishwatyulelwe ke ebomini ukuba kuphelele apho.”

Kwesi sithuba kuphume utata kaKrwempeza wasondela kuSkhixi wathi, “Sikhwelele mfo wam, ndiyakucela, kungenjalo uzakonzala.”

Noxa bekubonakala nje ukuba uyakhanuka ukuphosa ambalwa ezithethelela umninawe, uye wazithenga, wazithanda waphuma waqhweb’ itha edlula kuloo nginginya imjonge ngokumbeka ityala.

Uthe akuba ngaphaya kwamasango eli khaya, wakhwaza eshwabula, “Niqhayisa ngokufa ingathi nini nodwa abanokufelwa, sonke ke singabantu. Umakhulu kamzala wam uSongezo usweleke izolo, ndinijongile nonke, andifuni kunibona phaya. Kusekhaya yaye ndim ozakube *eshay’* isgingci ezimbizeni!”

Uphinde wajika wajongisa umbombo ekhayeni, esachiphi-chiphiza yintlungu yokuhlambalazwa esidlangalaleni, wanyantsula njalo ke wagoduka ehluthi. Ndiphume apho nam ndamlandela ke, ndidlula kwabo bantu bamehlo athi “nesa sisu sakhe singakaya senziwa kukuba ebuthelwe ukutya ngula mntakwabo ngempokotho yebhatyi.” Ndaphuma ndagoduka ndingakhuphanga nelimdaka.

Nditsh’ ukuthi ke, mfundi, eneneni liyinyaniso elithi akukho nzwana ingenasiphako, ngoba naku negqibelo likabawo lisifaka kwezinjalo zona iintloni.

USANDILE NONINALUME

Sihleli kamnandi ekhaya sibuka utatomncinci uZigweqe, ongulume ke kule nkewana kadabs inguSandile. Utatomncinci kaloku sele waba ngummi waseGoli ukususela singekazalwa nokuzalwa thina. USandile uvana kakhulu noninalume ke, basoloko bebukana njalo. Kuba noko engumntu ongelotshipa utatomncinci, bayazana noSandile lo, ominyaka sele ifikelela kwisihlanu ngoku ubudala.

Udabs ke akazibeki maxhala nantoni yile nto katatomncinci yokusoloko ehamba noSandile, equqa naye ezindaweni zakhe mihla le, uyazi kakuhle indlela abavana ngayo, yaye ke engafuni nokuphelisa ubumnandi bomntwana wakhe. Ngoko ke engumntu obavulayo nje.

Kuthi ke ngalo mva kwemini, emva kokuba bebuye ezindaweni zabo, utatomncinci noSandile bafike endlwini babukwe ibe yiloo nto benzelwe into esiwa phantsi kwempumlo ngudabs. Emva koko ke kudlalwa imidlalo yamakhasi, konwatywe ngabantu, abe uSandile yena ethe ngcu emathangeni kuninalume, kubonakala mhlophe ukuba umnandelwe. USandile ke sele eyintwana apha esele ifuna ukwenza yonke into noninalume xa ekho, nokutya oku.

Bendikhe ndayiva ngenye intsasa kusityiwa isidlo sasekuseni isitya noninalume esityeni esinye, isithi kunina, “Mama, awuzoty apha wena, kutya amakhwenkwe odwa.” Ihlekiwe ke le mfeketho ngoba kuye kwacaca ukuba unkabi akakayiqondi indaba yokuba uninalume ngumntu omdala yaye akaseyonkwenkwe njengaye. Mhlawumbi ke phofu ebengazi nomahluko phakathi kwendoda nenkwenkwe, ukuchama simile nokunganxibi zilokhwe kuye kuthetha ukuba abantu ngamakhwenkwe, njengaye lo.

Kuthe ke xa aphumayo emdlalweni uninalume, etyiwe, waya kwindlwana esiya kubetha amanzi. Umlandele ngoko nangoko uSandile, njengesiqhelo ke phofu. Akuhlalwanga ke apho, kwabuywa kwaza kuhlalwa nabanye abantu kwabukelwa umdlalo. Kodwa ke ekubuyeni, ndiqaphele ukuba uSandile okokoko esenza into enye, ekhuza. Ubeman’ ukuphinda-phinda isikhuzo esithi “Yhu-yhu-yhu!” besimhleka ke thina singabanye ngoba siyazi ukuba wenziwa nje yimfeketho yokuba engumntwana. Uthe yena akudikwa udabs yile mfeketho wavakala engxola esithi yintoni na le idikayo ikhuzwa nguSandile kangaka, watsho esithi aphume ukuba waliwa yimbeko ngokungxolela abantu abadala.

Kodwa uSandile usothuse ngempendulo yakhe ethe, “Yhu, mama, ayinkulu ipipi kamalume, inoboya!” kunge ndingawucela umhlaba uvuleke ukuze ndibe nokuzifihla ngongako umothuko ogutyungelwe ziintloni ezingummangaliso. Uguqukile udabs wabhekisa kumntakwabo esithi, “Fezile, he wena Fezile, ziintoni ezi zinkulu uzibonisa abantwana? Uyawubona ke ngoku umonakalo ondenzela wona kwingqeqesho yam?” othukile naye utatomncinci wam, uzame epitiliza esitsho ukuba ebengamqondanga uSandile ukuba kuthe kanti ebemkrobile ngelixa achamayo, uthe ucinge ukuba uzifihlile.

Akakholwanga yena umama esithi bekuqalele phi kakade ukuba ade caba uzakuya kuchama nomntwana omncinci. Umnukuneze ngokungabi nangqeqesho watsho esithi mkhulu umdla wakhe wokufuna ukwazi ukuba ingaba ubaqeqesha aphele ndawoni na abakhe, ukuba uyabaqeqesha phofu. Umngene nangobutshivela abufunde kwela Rhawuti, watsho esithi akasamazi ngoku okokoko wathi waya kula dolophu, wonakele. Akayekanga utatomncinci yena ukucacisa ukuba eneneni ebengakhange amcingele tu umtshana wakhe ukuba kanti esiya kuchama naye nje ebeseqhingeni lokumkroba ukuze abe nokuza kubuthi paha esidlangalaleni ubungakanani belungu lakhe langasese

Kuthe kusenjalo, esafufutheka umama, suka sanga singacela umhlaba uvuleke singene ke ngoku xa esangeza ngokunga akayiboni le ngxwabangxwaba umfanyana, esithi: “Yho, mama, ayinayo futhi la ndawo ingaphambili.” Kwesi sithuba sive ngotatomncinci esithi “Tyhini, mtshana, yintoni ngoku?” wabe sele ephendula enyelisa nodabs, esithi “mnyana-mnyana ntoni, uze kundonakalisela abantwana ndizama ukuzikhulisela ndiziqeqeshele mna kweli Bhayi, hamba, Fezile ubuyele eRhawutini lakho, apho wenza khona ezi zinto nabantwana ungaphikiswa, ungaboniswa, ungangxoliswa mntu. Hamba mntakamama, yini le!”

Kwangelo xesha udabs uthathe uSandile wamngena kanobom ngeenzipho apha kanye emiphakathweni. Akabhonganga umntwana yeha, ecela amaxolo ethembisa nokungaphindi ajonge izinto ezinkulu, ngelizxa unina engamhoyanga, emosela ngozipho qha. Luphele ke olo suku sele eqoqoshe konke ke okwakhe wabuyela kwiRhawuti lakhe lebhongo utatomncinci wam endimthandayo, sabe sisala sodwa kwakhona kwezo holide.

INGQEQESHO IQALA EKHAYA

Kuthe emva kwesithuba seenyanga udabs ehlala nathi apha ekhaya kweza nentombi yakhe egama linguNomqhafazo, umzala endandivana kakhulu naye. Ndikhumbula kakuhle usuku awaqala ngalo ukuhlala apho ekhayeni, weza elila esithi akukho kutya endlwini yaye uyise uthi akanamali. Udabs ke wathi makasele elala ngolo rhatya, wafumana isidlo sangokuhlwa nathi, sadlala sibukana kumnandi, kanti ke oko kukuqala ukuhlala nathi umphelo kwakhe.

Sihleli ke nodadethu kungekho ziguruguru nazingxabano ngoba ebesithanda nomntakwethu, esoloko esithethelela nasesitalatweni xa kukho amakhwenkwe asintlontayo, kuba kaloku noko yena ebesele noko emdadlana kuthi ngeminyaka efikelela kwisihlanu sonke.

Ebesiphekela, asihambe ngamanye amaxesha, xa udabs emvumela. Kaloku ebengavumi udabs amaxesha amaninzi kuba esithi asiyi kufunda ukuzenzela ukuba uNomqhafazo uthe gqolo ukusenzela izinto ezifana nokusihlambela impahla. Enye yeemfundiso awayezibethelela kuthi ke udabs kukuba ekhayeni akukho msebenzi wantombi, akukho msebenzi wankwenkwe. Yiyo le nto besizibona sicoca indlu, sihlambe izitya ekho uQhafi ngamanye amaxesha, gama elo sasisele simteketisa ngalo xa simbiza.

Elona bali ndiza kulo ke mfundi wam lelolunye urhatya olwaluphole kamnandi, apho udabs wasithuma khona ibhotile *yeparafini* kuloPinkboy. Eneneni ke mfundi ngumsebenzi wethu makhwenkwe lo wokubaleka sisiya ezivenkileni sileqa oononi nooni abafana neparafini le, nto nje uNomqhafazo uye wanyanzelisa esithi uza kuyifuna ngokwakhe ngolu usuku kuba thina sizakuhamba sidlala futhi ke yena ukungxamele ukupheka. Wamvumela ke udabs ukuba aleqe.

Kukufutshane kakhulu ke kuloPinkboy ukusuka ekhaya kodwa ndithi mna laqengqelesa ixesha, kwada kwasondela neyure yonke, de udabs wathi mandiyi kumkhangela uNomqhafazo. Ndiqale kuloPinkboy apho, andamfumana kusithiwa akakhange afike khona, ndadlulela kuloNonceba, nalapho ndifike ikho iparafini kodwa kusithiwa akakhange abonwe yena. Ndidlulele kwiiivenkile eziselalini ebomvu ke, ndaqala kwaWillows, ndadlulela kwaXhego ze ndagqibelisa ngoSkyman, ndingamfumani kuzo zonke.

Ndibuyile ndaya kudabs sele ndinkwanya mna kuqala kuba ndicinga ukuba mhlawumbi wabuya kudala uNomqhafazo, futhi ke nam ndizakungxoliselwa ukuhlala. Ndifike endlwini engekafiki uNomqhafazo, sele ekhathazekile ke ngoku udabs kuba kaloku kuleli xesha kudume ngalo imoto eba abantwana babulawe kuthengiswe amalungu emizimba yabo. Udabs

uye wacela ukuba ndiye kubiza ubhuti Mzwakhe kokwabo eLamani ndimxelele okwenzekileyo ukuze andincedise sikhangele uNomqhafazo. Ndiyile kubhuti Mzwakhe, andamfumana, kusithiwa uphangele, ndabuyela endlini. Ndibuyele ekhaya, apho ndingene ngaxesha-nye nomninawa, yena evela kuthenga la bhotile yeparafini ibithunywe uNomqhafazo, eyiphethe.

Sothukile sakuva ilizwi likaNomqhafazo ukungena kwethu, ethetha nodabs egumbini lokuphekela. Ukungena kwethu sifike sele ekho uNomqhafazo, ikho neparafini ebhotileni.

Uyamngcambazisa udabs:

“Ngoku ke uye phi wakungayifumani kuloPinkboy, mntwanam?”

“Ndidlulele kuloNonceba ndaya ke nakwezi venkile ziselalini ebomvu. Bekusithiwa inqabile kwasemva iparafini. Ndiphele ndiyifumana kwaSali ezantsi e-Avenue A. nyan sisi, ndinyanisile.” Uzithethelele watsho usisiza.

“Ngoku ke, Nomqhafazo, mntwanam ingena phi le yokugqibela? Kutheni undiqinisekisa usithi “nyani” nje? Ingaba ucinga ukuba andikukholelwa?” uyathula uNomqhafazo angaphenduli. Kodwa ke uyamqinisekisa udabs ukuba eneneni uyamkholelwa ukuba uthetha inyani, wathi angahlala phantsi uzakupheka ngokwakhe.

Uye waya kuhlala phantsi uNomqhafazo esofeni ebukele umabonakude. Sihleli ke apho sonwabele umboniso uSgudi Snaysi, sihleka iyiloo nto. Usondele udabs weza kuthi. Wenze ngathi uyahlala, seva ngesandi sebhanti kuNomqhafazo emqolo, wasitsho esofelweyo, wathi xa kanye atsibayo ezama ukuqhwesha, wamthi nka ukumbamba oku udabs, embuza ukuba kutheni engcolile nje. Uzamile ukucela uxolo uNomqhafazo esithi sobe aphinde, wabe yena ebuza ukuba soze aphinde enzeni. Uthe uNomqhafazo uyaxolisa akasobe aphinde afune ukuya kuyithenga ngokwakhe iparafini angathumi thina. Esambambile, udabs ubuzile ukuba bekutheni efune ukuyithenga ngokwakhe nje namhlanje, ebuza ukuba wakha waya kuyithenga ngokwakhe ngaphambili. Akabanga nampendulo uNomqhafazo, waqhayisa ngeenyembezi qha esithi uyaxolisa.

Umngenile kwakhona udabs uNomqhafazo ngebhanti emzimbeni wonke, engayekanga ukuba kukungcola awayekuve ngabani na oko. Usana olunguNoraysi torhwana luyalila, aluyithandisizi le nto yenzekayo ekhay’ apha. Mna kwelinye icala ndiyangxolelwa ngudabs kuthiwa mandimfunqule ayeke ukukhala. Yho, umhambile udabs uNomqhafazo, emtsweba

nokumtsweba. Uthe kanye phambi kokuba amyeke, wamhlalisa phantsi wambuza ukuba uwafundiswe ngubani na amakhwenkwe. Indothusile ke le, ze noNomqhafazo we gqa amehlo esithi hayi yena akazani namakhwenkwe.

“Nomqhafazo mntwanam ndimdala kakhulu, andisosibhanxa futhi. Awuzenzi nakakuhle nezi zinto uzenzayo zimdaka phandl’ apha namakhwenkwe. Ulimenemene elisisibhanxa.” Watsho ephinda emngena ngekhonkco lebhanti emzimbeni wonke. Uthe kanye xa ebona ukumpompoza kwegazi entloko, nathi nomntakwethu ngoku sele silila, wamyeka. Kodwa akayekanga ukumngcambazisa. Uthe apho kanye wandibiza esithi mandisondele ndijonge uNomqhafazo ukuba unantoni na enqentsu. Ndifike udadethu enengca nokhula enqentsu nakwijezi emqolo, ndothuka. Ubuzile ukuba ndibona ntoni, ndamxelela, wabuza kuNomqhafazo ukuba ifunani ingca kuye entloko nasemqolo, wathi ebewile. Kuthe kwakubuzwa ukuba ebewe phi, wapitiliza esithi ebebaleka wakhubeka wawa ngakulobhuti Mzwakhe, waphendula nodabs esithi akukho ngca kule ndawo ayibalayo, ngumlotha nje kuphela, yaqalisa yalila kwakhona icela uxolo intombendala.

Esafutha njalo, udabs uye wathi kuNomqhafazo makagalele amanzi ahlambe igazi elo. Okunene uhlambile uQhafi, esenyembezana ke phofu. Ngeli xesha ahlambayo udabs uyathukisa uyafunga futhi ukuba akazukuva ukutya kwemali yakhe akugqiba ukungcola kangaka.

“Uzakutya ibona, gqwirhakazindini!” uthukisa atsho udabs. Ndiye ndathunywa into yokubopha amanxeba lawo, ze wathi akugqiba ukuhlamba uNomqhafazo, kwathiwa makazibophe. Ukugqiba kwakhe uye wambiza kwakhona udabs esithi ukuba akafuni ukuba amphambanele okanye amonzakalise nangakumbi, makamxelele inyaniso yokuba ngubani lo ebesenza amanyala naye, watsho egrogrisa nokuba uzakumxela nakutata wakhe amphinde ukuba akazi nanyani.

“Nomqhafazo, akasoze axoke umama kaPinkboy nomama kaNonceba bathi awukhange uye phaya. Ingaba bakuzondani ke mhlawumbi ukuba ubuyile?” wathula uNomqhafazo. Utsho esithi ke udabs uyamyala angambhanxi, aqale phantsi achaze konke okwenzekileyo , nendawo okwenzeke kuyo. Uqale ngokuphinda osule iinyembezi uNomqhafazo, esahlininika, ze udabs akafuna kuyingena leyo, wabonakala ephinda efutha ngumsindo ephakama esiya ebhantini lakhe. Uye ngoko nangoko uNomqhafazo wacela uxolo esithi uzakuthetha

iinyaniso zodwa. Udabs umyalile ke ukuba uphinde wabona ukuba kukho apho angamxeleli nyani khona, uyakusuka angaphulaphuli nanye into ayithethayo, amphinde ngebhanti.

UNomqhafazo uthembise ngokungaxoki ze waqala esithi ngokuya ebephuma ebesoyika uMthuzimele wakwabawo uChithibhunga obekudala ezama ukumnyanzela ukuba ahambe naye xa ebuya esikolweni, kodwa esala yena kuba engafuni, kodwa emoyika. Uthe akungafuni uzakumngomba, woyika naye, yiyo ke le nto aphele esenza icebo lokuba aphume aye kuye ngoba uye weza kubetha ikhwelo apha ngasekhaya phambi kokuba yena Nomqhafazo aphume esenza ngathi uya kufuna iparafini. Uphinde wamyalile ke udabs esithi akafuni kumkhokela, makazithethele, kwenzekani emva koko.

Uqhubile uNomqhafazo esithi uye wahamba noMthuzimele omse ngasemangcwabeni wafika phaya wamkhulula umthawuzo ze wamnyanzela ukuba alale ngomqolo engceni apho, wamenza amanyala yena engafuni, ekhala. Ubuzile udabs ukuba inxesha elingakanani isenzeka le nto, wathi uNomqhafazo ibiqala, wabuza ukuba kukaninzi kangaphi emnyanzela emgrogrisa uMthuzimele, wathi yinyanga yesibini le. Ufungile udabs ukuba uzakuxelela uBra Suz kunye notata kaNomqhafazo kuye kuxelwa loo mfana kokwabo ukuze angabhungci naye ekohlwayweni. Udabs ubuyele ezimbizeni, ndeva izitya zikhala, waphaka ndisiva ukuba usesemsindweni.

Uphakele mna nomntakwethu ze wathi kuNomqhafazo akazufumana kutya yena ngoba kaloku umxokisele wayokuzenza isisulu samakhwenkwe amdakana emangcwabeni, waqhubeka emnukuneza ngobumdaka. Uyaphakama udabs aye kuzivalela kwigumbi lakhe lokulala ze simve ekhupha elokugqibela esithi “ingqeqesho iqala ekhaya, sisi.”

IKHOBA

Dyulukudu-dyulukudu ... qhwinkilili ... kulandela izikhalo, “Yho-yho-yho!”

Ngubhut’ Vusumzi lo ubhongayo, uyaphephetheka ukuphuma epozini ahlalisana kuyo nosis’ Sizeka, isinqanda-mathe sakhe seminyaka, uman’ ukukhubeka nasematyeni aphephe neenyhunyhu ezibangwa kukugqabhuka kwemibhobho yelindle kwisitalato sabo iBekwa. Ubhut’ Vusumzi undigila ndiye kuwa pha kwamtyholi. Lithi nelo khoba bendiliphethe liwe lophuke. Usis’ Sizeka usemva kwakhe, uyaleqisa, umgibisela ngekhoba lebhiya nangamatye ngelixa athukisayo. Ndiphakama ngoko nangoko ze ndizame ukumela bucala ukuze ndingachatshazelwa. Ukwagxadazela ke ubhut’ Vusumzi ngoba kaloku noxa ingekaqini kuyaphi nje le mini yangeCawe, sele ezityele iinto zakhe, uthe vram.

“Uzakunya ... uzakunya Vusumzi, msun’ wakho. Rhaa ucing’ ‘b’ ungumntu wena, he? Udyolela mna?”

Ndiyaleqisa ndibalandele, kaloku ndithunywe nguBra Suz ndize kubhut’ Vusumzi amfakele ukuze athenge ibhiya ibenye yokuqabula. Kuthi xa kanye emqweqwedisela eGunguluza, sele ezakumfumana, suka kuvele isiphekepheke sesithuthi sigqayiwe, simphose ngozipho usis’ Sizeka. Uba ke ngolo hlobo uyabhungca ubhut’ Vusumzi, emkisela mpela. Uye aphumle phaya ekuqaleni kweGunguluza, ngakwaGqirha Ngema, esakhefuzela.

Abantu basabambe engezantsi ke kuba kaloku bebesele besithi simgqibile isithuthi usis’ Sizeka, kodwa ke, ngezikasibi, usindile. Akabonakalisi kothuka yena usisiza, usuka eme, aphinde kwakhona, ethukisa:

“Yiz’ apha wena Vusumzi, yiz’ apha, msun’ wakho!”

“Hayi maan *fokof* wena Sizeka, hlukana nam! Yintoni ngoku ndadibana nawe sewuzenza umam’ am nje, he? Uzakuziqhekezisa ngam wena, uyandiqhela nhe?”

Kwesi sihlandlo usis’ Sizeka uye atsho ngamandla, emtyibela ngazo zonke azaziyo ubhut’ Vusumzi, sele engena nakumama wakhe ngoku.

“Hayi andikuqheli ke bonanje, bhuti, qha ngaske uyazi ‘ba ndiyakuqhotsa. Rhaa ... khona, ude uthi ndizenza umam’ akho, *siesmaan*, ungade uqhayise ngela menemenekazi lingunyoko? Nangoku *mos* watyiwa nguye utatakho, uthi uphi kanti ... mkhangele *ewodrophini* mntakwethu!” uphoxisa atsho.

Ngalo lonke ke eli xesha usis' Sizeka usawaphethe ngazo zozibini amatye akhe, ulinde nje abe ngathi *uyalahla* ubhut' Vusumzi ukuze amosele. Kodwa ke uvundlile ubhuti, ngoba uyazi kakuhle indlela esikhohlakele ngayo isithandwa sakhe. Kukho umganyana phakathi kwabo, ubhut' Vusumzi umi ngaphaya kwesithuthi sikagqirha, usis' Sizeka yena umi ngapha kwendlela kude kufuphi nevenkile eBhongweni. Uyafuna ukumgibisela nto nje woyikisela ukusuka achane ngempazamo isithuthi sikagqirha.

Sekuthe wayi-wayi ke ngoku esitalatweni yaye nabahlali sele bemnandelwe, bakrobe ngeefestile, bambi bemi emasangweni emizi yabo, kubekho nabo ke bebezidlulela ngendlela ze bema, befuna ukubona ukuba yozala nkomo-ni na imbambano. Usis' Sizeka uhlohle ilokhwe ngaphantsi komthawuzo, kuloo madywantsi athe saa kamnandi, kubonakala ukuba usemdleni wawo lo mlo.

“Jonga ke sisi, uyakuzisola ukuba ufaka umama wam kwiingxabano zethu. Loo nto awunambulelo, Sizeka, unesibindi sokuthetha ngolu hlobo ngomama lo ukuphipha mihla le? Eyona nto ndandingakufuni ke mna qha uthandwa nguye, ubumel' ukuba uyambulela.”

“Rhaa, intoni ... uthi kutheni, Vusumzi? Ungandixeleli ngelo lokonya lingunyoko mna, eli lincumela bonke aba nondatshaza bangena kula ndlu.”

“Hey jonga wena Sizeka, bendithe hlukana nomama, uzakuzikhabisa ngam ndiyakuxelela,” umngxolisa atsho ubhut' Vusumzi.

Ndiqhele oomama mna sana hayi amalokonya,” uphinda ongeze atsho usis' Sizeka

“Hay' yima-yima sisi, phambi kokuba uqhubekeke uhlambalazana nomama esidlangalaleni ndicela uqale ukhulule izihlangu zemali yam ezo. Khulula ngoku futhi.” umenyisa atsho ubhut' Vusumzi.

“Rhaaa unganya! Unganya ujike ububuthe ubutye, bhuti, nditsho nangoku! Soze, wakugqiba ukundireya iminyaka emingaka? Awuzova zihlangu apha. Buyisa nawe iimpundu zam ezi kudala uzikhwela uzikhukhuza.”

“Sapha, khulula!” uphinda agxininise ubhut' Vusumzi.

“Loo nto, ude uthethe ngokuzithemba Vusumzi, ndakumenya kaloku mna: ingathi uyalibala ukuba ndakufumana ungakwazi nokuzeka, uzifundiswe ndim iimpundu kaloku wena, bhuti.

Wawusisishumane esingenathemba, ndakuqoqosha, ndakubonisa ukuba kuyahlanjwa, ngoku kwawena unyela kum!”

“Hey, Sizeka, Sizeka, hlukana nokungxola ngegama lam wena ‘va?’”

Kuthi kusathe chasi kunjalo, zisachophelene izithandani, suka kuvele ngase-Avenue A ubhut’ Mphumzi osisihlobo sikabhut’ Vusumzi, othuke akubona ukuba kanti kubukelwe izihlobo zakhe zihlambalazana esidlangalaleni, anqande ngoko nangoko, esithi abanakho ukwenzana olu hlobo.

“Nguloo usecaleni kwakho, bhut’ Mphumzi, uyandidyolela, ndakugqiba ukumphipha. Rhaa, ade agqemfeze khona ingathi ngumntu la *nondatshaza* amfumeneyo ... ngunotargane *mos* lowa, into engenayo nemali yokugoduka xa ibitakile! Soze undibeke *eskalini* esinye nesa sfebe mna sana ... uzundijonge kakuhle!” uzikhusele watsho uSizeka, kuvakala futhi ukuba noxa engazivezi nje, usabindekile. Bayanyuba abahlali.

Akabonakalisi kumnanza uMavusana uMphumzi, nto nje uqhubekeka ebhekisa kwintokazi yakhe: “Hey jong’ apha wena ... jong’ apha Sizeka, yeyam le ipipi, izakungena apho kufuna mna ‘va, hayi apho kufuna wena ... ndazalwa nayo. *And* jonga ke sisi, ndingaphindi ndikubone pha kula ndlu ‘va, ndigqibile mna ngawe.”

“Hayi rhaa Vusumzi, uthi yindlu khona ela tyotyombe, andithanga nqa mna, ndiqhele izindlu hayi amabobosi... *and* jonga ke, bhuti, for your *information*, ndithi mandikwazise ukuba ndisafunwa mna ekhaya, andilahlwanga.”

“Ubuhlala kwela tyotyombe iminyaka le ke ulinukuneza nje ngoku. Ungalibali ke sisi, bendithe ukhulule izihlangu zemali yam. *And* jonga ke sisi, ungalibali bendifune izihlangu zemali yam, *please!*” uqhuba atsho ubhut’ Vusumzi.

“Yiza, yizozithatha, nazi. Yiza bhuti, thatha nants’ imali yakho.” kutsho usis’ Sizeka, otsho ezikhulula izihlangu ezo, kucaca futhi nokuba ukwiqhinga lokumfumana engacingelanga ubhut’ Vusumzi ukuze amosele ngeza mbokotho. Kodwa ke kuba evundlile unkabi, uye athume ubhut’ Mphumzi azilande.

Uthi xa esacinga ukwala ubhut’ Mphumzi, ebonakala ukuba uyathandabuza; amqinisekise usis’ Sizeka ukuba makeze azifumane, aye ke naye, kodwa engayekanga ukuzicenga izihlobo zakhe ukuba ziyeke ukuvuyisa iintshaba. Uthe akufika ezihlangwini ubhut’ Mphumzi, wagoba wazithatha ze wathi xa aphakamayo, wanikelwa umyalezo oya kubhut’ Vusumzi:

“Jonga, TaMphura, ndicela uthi kwesa sirhama siyitshomi yakho ndithe ngumnqund’ wakhe kunye nokamam’ akhe ‘va?’”

Akaphendulanga ubhut’ Mphumzi, kubonakala mhlophe ukuba akaxolanga, wahamba ke ebuyela kwisihlobo sakhe. Uthe xa ekude-kufuphi nobhut’ Vusumzi, wavakala kwakhona usis’ Sizeka ekhwaza, “Jonga, TaMphura, ndonqen’ ingathi ndiyakuvimba *maan* bhuti, *so jonga ke ... nawe va? Ngumnqund’ wakho nowakanyoko nawe.*”

Yhu, ngoko nangoko, ujike waleqisa ubhut’ Mphumzi ebuyela kusus’ Sizeka ngomsindokazi, othe naye waqhwesha esiya kuzivalela ngapha kwamasango omzi kabawo uMji, ebalek’ umsind’ ozayo.

Kuthe ke kuba ebonakala oyame ngamasango lawo ubaw’ uMji, akabi nasibindi sakungena ubhut’ Mphumzi, kodwa kubonakala ukuba usenesingqala yaye ukulambeke ukumfundisa isifundo usis’ Sizeka.

“Yiza ... yiza, betha nje wena, ukhangele ‘ba awuzolala ubaliwe uvuke uchetyiwe na. Ndakubamb’ unye mna sana ... akukho ndoda ingaphakamis’ isandla kum ndingalali nayo mna. Rhaa!”

Ngalo lonke eli xesha ubaw’ uMji umjonge ngabomvu usis’ Sizeka, ozibone kufuneka ecacisile, ze wavakala esithi,

“Uxolo tata ka-Ayanda wethu, ngulo mnqundu lo ungena into engamfuniyo, ebefunani yena ezenza impelesi kwinto yabantu ababini?” nalapho akakhuphanga nelinye ubawo uMji, esaxakanisekile.

Mna ndijikile ndabuyela ekhaya kuBra Suz kuba ndibona ukuba andisayi kuze ndiyifumane le mali bendiyithunyiwe. Ndithe ndifika apho uBra Suz wandingxolisa ebuza ukuba ndihleli phi, efuna ibhiya yakhe. Ndithe ndizama ukucacisa ngendlela elife ngayo ikhoba nomlo ondilibazisileyo kabhut’ Vusumzi, akafuna kuva, wonda ngam, ndaqhwesha ke mna ndaya ezitshomini, ndishiya imali yakhe apho.

USENZILE KODWA UMAMA KAPILITYI

Kunanamhla nje mna nomntakwethu sisisigculelo sentlekisa kubantwana beklasi yethu, ngenxa kamama kaPilityi. Wonke umntu sele ebalisa ngathi nesibhivilvana esisuka ekhaya sisiya kutitshalakazi wethu.

Kaloku umama kaPilityi ngulo mama unxuse apha ekhaya nesiqanda-mathe sakhe – uBra Cat. UPilityi ke yena uhlala kulonina kwiSitalato iSingaphi, kodwa ke uxhaphakile kunina. Andiqiniseki kuphele ukuba uBra Cat lo nguyise, ngoba uthi mama kunina ze athi bhuti kuBra Cat.

Isibini esi ke singabantu abazityela iinto zabo ke, ubeve ngokuthukana bankulane esidlangalaleni xa sebetshovwe yiloo Vin-Coco naloo mqombothi bawuthanda kunene. Umama lo waziwa njengoNanini ngabahlali, kodwa ke andiqondi ukuba uyalazi yena eli gama; ngoba kaloku liyafihlwa kuye. Kaloku ungamva rhoqo xa ezityele iinto zakhe, elelo kholwa lifanelwe liZulu, lingqina ubukho boMfeli, licula lisithi:

“Naaniniii, naanini na

Naaninii, naanini na

uYes’ ukhona,

naanini na

Uyaqhubeka ke alitsho eli culo de ngamanye amaxesha kuse gede, ingakumbi xa uBra Cat engekho, ephangele ebusuku; okanye ‘de abiwe bubuthongo. Ngezinye iintsuku ude abe unqandwa nguBra Suz okanye ngabamelwane abafuna ukulala. Kanti ke ngamanye amaxesha ukhe anqandwe nanguBra Cat. Uyakucekisa ke kodwa ukunqandwa nguBra Cat, usuka athukise, umve ehoboloza esithi: “Jong’ apha wena, Kati, yindlu yam le. Ndim ohlawula irente apha ‘va? Uyakuthi *fokof* ngoku ubuyele kokwenu uyohlala nonyoko koba *burabishi* bala lali yakho ibomvu. Ndizakungaculi ngoku kuba ndisoyika wena, lo mhedeni lo? Utsho qho xa ndicula iingoma zecawe qha futhi, ndikuqwalasele. Jonga ke mntakwethu, ndikhuliselwe ecaweni mna, andifani nawe!”

Iyho! Ngobunye ubusuku uBra Cat wona ngokuphendula athi naloo nkonzakho akhuliselwe kuyo mos uyikhumbula xa enxilile qha. Wayemfuna esikhumbeni, emxelela iindaba zakhe esithi

uzakuphelela esihogweni, akasoze alibone izulu. Kwafuneka aqhweshe uBra Cat, wabe ke ngolo hlobo uyabhungca.

Akuba eqhweshile uBra Cat, umama kaPilityi waya kuBra Suz wamnyanzelisa ukuba agxothe uBra Cat phaya ngoba umphethe kakubi, watsho emkhumbuza futhi ke ukuba nguyeye na mama kaPilityi owaya kuye efuna indawo yokuhlala, wongeza ngelithi ikwanguye yedwa nohlawula irente.

“Jonga, Suziyeza, andizukugezelwa yindoda endiyiphiphayo mna. Ndicela ke *please* umgxothe kuse engasavuki apha!”

Waxakeka ke uBra Suz engazi ukuba athini ngoba wayemthanda uBra Cat, yaye wayesele elithemba lakhe xa yena engenanto yokutshaya okanye enxaniwe.

“Hay maan kaloku sis’ Pat, andizukwazi ukumgxotha uBra Cat ngoba nemvume yokuhlala apha akazange ayifumane kum, ndasuka ndambona sele ehlala nawe, andabi nangxaki. Nangoku ke iyakuba nguwe omgxothayo, xa ungasamfuni.”

Kodwa ke, mfundi, okubalulekileyo kukuba kwasa okungaliyo sele evuka apha ekhaya uBra Cat, kuteketiswana njengesiqhelo ke futhi zizithandani. Njengoko besenditshilo ngentla apha, ezi ngxabano yayingezozehlo zinqabileyo phakathi kwesi sibini. Kodwa ke amaxesha amaninzi uBra Cat akathandi ukuphikisana okanye axabane nowakwakhe, kuba ke ndiyabona, ecenge undolala-phi. Ngoko ke usuka azithulele.

Kumnandi ke kodwa ukuhlala nabo ngoba umama lo uphangelela amaNdiya eMalabar, yaye ubuya nezidlo ezimnandi nezikhakhazelayo ngezinye iintsuku, iintsalela zabaqeshi bakhe.

Kodwa ke, izolo oku, sithe mna nomntakwethu xa kanye sesinxibile silungele ukuya esikolweni, wasibiza umama kaPilityi ecela ukuba siye kumthengela umqombothi. Uthe masingayi apha kufutshane kwaMadlamini kuba esithi awusekho ngqumbululu umqombothi wakhona futhi ke awusanxilisi, uyalambisa qha. Uthe masiye kwamaMkhwemte elalini emhlophe. Ndithe ndizama ukumxelela ukuba lizakusishiya ixesha lesikolo, wathi mandingakhathazeki uzakusiphathisa umyalezo oya kutitshalakazi wethu. UBra Suz naye uvuke waya kwamkela inkamnkam yakhe namhlanje ngoku asinaye ke nomthetheleli onokuthi makasiyeke umama kaPilityi. Okunene ke siyile elalini emhlophe, safika asawufumana kuba kusithiwa kusesekuseni, awukalungi. Sibuyile samxelela umama kaPilityi, wathi masidlulele kwaMadlamini. Sithe kanye xa siphuma ekhaya sisiya

kwaMadlamini labe ixesha sele liyintsimbi yesibhozo, isikolo ke sona sibe singena ngecala emva kweyesixhenxe; oko ke kukuthi, mfundi wam, sibe sele sisemva ngesiqingatha sonke seyure.

Sibuye nawo kwaMadlamini, wabulela, ze wasilibazisa nangakumbi ngokusibhalela ncwadana ezakuchazela ootitshalakazi esikolweni ukuba bangasohlwayi besithunye nguye. Wasibuza igama likatitshalakazi wethu, ze wasinika incwadana leyo, saleqisa.

Kuba ke sinayo indawana engamthembanga kuyaphi apha kumzi watsha, sithe sisesendleleni sagqiba ekubeni siyivule siyifunde ingekafiki esikolweni. Indlela esothuke ngayo sakubona okubhalwe apho, sidane sanyaba nomntakwethu. Incwadana ke ibifundeka ngolu hlobo:

Molo Miss Mngxunya

Ndiphilile mna ngempilo, ndiyathemba uphilile nawe.

Hay wethu akho nto qha sendisonqena abantwana bafike emva kwexesha esikolweni kungekho nelizwi elisuka emzalini. Ndivuke ndinxanwe kakhulu namhlanje, kangangokuba andiyanga nasemsebenzini, ayandikhoboza kaloku la makula, yaye nala mali andinika yona ayibonakali, ngamantongomane. Ngoko ke, Miss, bendibathume esa skali singqumbululu sakwaMamKhwemte kwaFour elalini emhlophe.

Abasifumenanga ke kodwa kuba kaloku waba livila ngoku la mfazi kuba engenelwa yimali kakhulu, uhluthi ngoku ziimali zethu, uyapetsula. Baphele besifumana kwalapha kwaMadlamini eKwaza ke kodwa. Ungababethi wethu benziwe late ndim.

Ndim ngenene

Umama kaPilityi

Siye saphikisana ke nomninawa, ndisithi mna masingayisi, yena esithi asinalo elinye icebo, kuzakufuneka siyise. Mna ke bendisithi ndingayibhala incwadana leyo kodwa ke ndibeke isizathu esibambekayo, ndizenze yena okanye uBra Suz. Walile umninawa esithi iyaziwa indlela esibhala ngayo sobabini ngutitshalakazi, loo nto iyakusele isibizela ukuzibethisa nokuthatyathwa njengabantwana abanamaqhinga, abaxokayo. Nam ke ndiyile, noxa ndingaxolanga kuyaphi nje, ndavuma, ethembeni lokuba mhlawumbi soze isenze ntlekisa.

Sifike esikolweni phambi kwentsimbi yethoba, sisemva ezifundweni phantse ngeeyure ezimbini zonke. Sityhalene ukungena eklasini kuba sisoyika, ingulo efuna kungene omnye

kuqala. Sithe singena nje kwaqala kwakhuza abafundi, besithi “Yhu!” Sangqala etafileni katitshalakazi osijameleyo, saxolisa ngokuvovisa imizimba, sashwantshwatha nento engavakaliyo, sadlulisa incwadana leyo. Simi apho ecaleni kwakhe ngelixa ayifundayo, silinde imvume yokuya kuhlala phantsi. Kuthe ekuyifundeni, samva eman’ ukumumatha intsini, engafuni simbhaqe.

Kuthe ke emva kwemizuzu engephi, wancuma, wazama ukuhlekelala ngaphathi kodwa woyisakala. Uye wandithuma ukuba ndiye kubiza utitshalakazi uSomniso ngelixa le yasekhaya yona iyokubiziswa utitshalakazi uMafongosi, nabo ke abafike bayijonga banyuba. Ibe yiloo nto ke, kuman’ ukungena iititshalakazi, zifundiswe incwadana le, zigigitheke. Sibuzwe nje ukuba ngubani na lo ebeyibhala, sachaza, sabuzwa ukuba siyifundile na thina, sakhanyela, kwathiwa masihlale phantsi ngelixa owethu utitshalakazi enikina intloko, babe nabanye besondla amehlo abo ngathi, besiqwalasele, kubonakala futhi ukuba bazixina ngemibuzo engaphendulekiyo, bengayekanga nokunyubula.

Sithi sisiya edesikeni zethu, baqava ke nabafundi, befuna ukwazi ukuba kubhalweni na encwadini, sangabangayaziyo thina, kuba singafuni kuba yintlekisa kubantu abatwezeke olwa hlobo. Kodwa ke kuthe kanti asibhungisanga ngoba utitshalakazi wethu uye wayifundela iklasi yonke, ndingasazi ke isizathu, yahleka yonwaba iklasi iman’ ukolathisa ngathi naxa sesiphumile esikolweni.

IHOLIDE ZAM KWAMAKHULU

Ingathi andikakulungeli ukubuyela esikolweni, kaloku ndibuye izolo apha ekhaya ndivela ekhefina lokuvalwa kwezikolo ngenyanga yeSilimela. Umntakwethu uSkhixi yena ebengayanga. Akafunanga kuba kaloku uyakuthanda ukuchitha ixesha noBra Suz. Ndibuye izolo. Bekumnandi yho! Ndikonwabele ukuhlala nobhut' Ndoda endibalisela izinto ezizinzi: ukususela kwiinjongo zakhe zokubhaca aye kuzimanya noMkhonto Wesizwe eLusaka, imisebenzi yakhe emihle abangafuni kuyibona bamncome ngayo abantu abamnyama kwakunye namantombi akhe. Ebengxoliswa rhoqo ke kodwa ngumakhulu ngokungafuni kwenza nto. Bendilala emandlalweni wakhe naye epozini lakhe. Besihlala ke kude kube sezinzulwini zobusuku endibalisela amabali amnandi nakhwankqisayo. Nguye nangoku lo undigodusileyo izolo, khange sikhwele, undikhaphile sahamba ngeenyawo, wathi mandimnike la mali yokukhwela uzakufuna ukutshaya emva kwemini.

Enye yezinto ezimenza asoloko exabana nomakhulu ke ubhut' Ndoda ngala mantombi akhe maninzi. Uza nentsha phantse rhoqo ngobusuku. Khawufan' ucinge ke, mfundi, ndilala naye naloo ntombi sukuba eze nayo. Ndathi ndifika nje ngomhla wokuqala weeholide zam kwamakhulu, kwafika omnye usisi, wabe yena ebehleli nomnye. Yho, wambetha emkhaba lo uzizeleyo esithi makajike abuyele apho avela khona ngoba ebengambizanga. Wambethekisa nasedongeni, emthuka. Kodwa ke, eyona nto yandothusayo kukuba la sisi waphinda wabuya kwisithuba seentsukwana ezimbalwa ebebethiwe, waza kulala kubhut' Ndoda kwangathi khange kwenzeke nto, ndasala mna ndisamatshekile. Amthanda iindidi amantombi phandle phaya, ndibonile.

Bendisithi ke ndisazibukelele umabonakude endlwini nomakhulu, aphume kancinci ubhut' Ndoda, ndilive iqhaga lesango, noxa ebezama yena ukuba lingavakali, aye kulanda intombi yakhe abuye nayo. Ebephinda abuyele endlwini ke azenze ohleliyo isithuba semizuzu engephi ze akhale ngokudinwa nangokozela, aphume. Ebeye andikrwece ke ukuba ndiphume nam ndiye kulala kuba eze nentombi yaye engafuni kulityaziwa ekwenzeni izinto zakhe kuba kusafuneka evulele mna emnyango. Ungalibali ke, mfundi, silala emandlalweni omnye: ibe ndim naye naloo ntombi. Besilala iintloko zibe kwicala elinye ke xa kungekho ntombi, kuthi xa ikho kuthiwe mandilale ezantsi ezinyaweni.

Ebeye andinyanzele ke ukuba ndilale xa afuna ukwenza amanyala, nam ke ngamanye amaxesha ndandiye ndizenze oleleyo kuba ndingafuni kungxoliswa nguye. Kodwa ke

bendiye ndive intombi ihlebeza, ikhalaza isithi “Hayi, ndoda, akakalali lo mntwana wakokwenu, usahleli, andizokwazi.” Ndimve emnyanzela ngamanye amaxesha, ephosisa esithi ndilele. Kodwa intombi ibiye ingafuni, ineentloni zokwenza izinto zabantu abadala phambi komntwana. Ebeye andingxolise ke kwiimeko ezinje esithi mandiyeke ukubukelana nomabonakude kude kube sebusuku ngoba yena udikiwe kukuman’ elindana nam, okanye uzakundigxotha egumbini lakhe, nam ke ndingxengxeze.

Ebecatshukiswa zizinto ezininzi endicinga ukuba zincinci ke ubhut’ Ndoda emantombini akhe ezifana mhlawumbi nokungena ezingubeni ngempahla. Uyive ikhalaza intombi isithi izakukhulula xa sele ingaphakathi ezingubeni. Ngamanye amaxesha ebeye agrogrise ngokuyigxotha, mhlawumbi xa ingafuni kwenza into athi mayiyenze. Ndamva ngobunye ubusuku ethukisa esithi, “Hey, Nozipho, khulula le mpahla, ngumandlalo kabani lo ufuna ube neentakumba, he?” Waphendula ke noNozipho esithi makangamngxameli, watsho eguquka emfulathela, ndamva nje ubhut’ Ndoda ukuba uyafufutheka.

Bekuye kufuneke ndizenze oleleyo ke amaxesha amaninzi, kuba ndisazi ukuba ufuna ukwenza izinto zakhe ndilele mna. Kodwa ke ebesele enalo ngoku neqhinga lokuqinisekisa ukuba eneneni ndilele ngokuthi acofa-cofe ipolotyisi yam. Ukuqina kwayo bekuthetha ukuba ndisahleli ze ukuthamba kuthethe ukuba ndilele. Inkolelo yakhe ibisithi ayinakuqina ndisebuthongweni, andazi ke nokuba yinyaniso na leyo. Bendimva ke ezisa isandla sakhe ndoyike, ingakumbi xa iqinile, ndive ngaye sele ethukisa endibuza ukuba ndilala nini na. Ngamanye amaxesha bendingaphenduli ngoku ndihleli, ndizenze oleleyo ngokurhona, kodwa ke ndiphinde ndive ngaye esithi mandingacingi ukuba ndilele, uyandazi andilelanga. Ngamanye amaxesha ke bendivuswa nguye ezama ukuva yena ukuba ndilele na, ndibe ndikobentlombe, kodwa ke ndisele ndisothuka ndivuke akundiphatha-phatha.

Ngamanye amaxesha ke bendikhe ndive umzimba waloo sisi akunye naye uthe nca kowam, uthambe kamnandi futhi ushushu ngendlela endenza ndinqwenele ukuba bendingubhut’ Ndoda. Emva kokuba ndizenze oleleyo, bendiye ndibave besenza imikhwino, ubhut’ Ndoda esihla esonyuka phezu kwakhe, mna ngelo xesha ndibe nditsala amarhanana ndizenza oleleyo. Ibiba nguloo durubhentsu ke, kukhwinwe, kuncwinwe, kubhongwe; ze ngamanye amaxesha ndigqibele kusemnandi kunjalo, ndive sele kusitsho izithuko kukhala neempama: “Hey, Nomgcobo, kutheni undiqhela nje mntandini, undimincelani, he? Ngubani lo ufun’ ukumgulisa?”

Ibe zezo zikhalo ke, “Yhu-yhu-yhu hay, Ndoda, undibethelani, khange ndikumince mna, xolo ke!” ebetha nje usoyika nokuba eve umakhulu endlwini enkulu, umve esebeza esithi: “Ke ngoku, yintoni ethi ngxola ... ungxolela ntoni, he? Uyaphambana, Nomgcobo?”

Ngezinye iintsuku bendiye ndive sele ubhuti engxola esithi: “Hey, Nomgqibelo sana, kutheni undingcolela nje? Awunambulelo nhe? Ndikuthengele ipayi kodwa uyakwazi ukundingcolela, ulala njani nam unxibe amacici *nenekleysi*? Ukuthunywe ngubani oku kungcola ... ngumam’ akho? He? Uthe uzundigulise?” litsho ke inqindi ebusweni, axhimfwe umntwan’ omntu. Bendiye ndiphakame ke ndime ngeenyawo ndisoyika ukuchatshazelwa nokungonjwa mna kuqala ngubhut’ Ndoda, ngoba bendimoyika xa esemisindweni.

Kukhe kwakubi nyani ngenye inzulu yobusuku kule veki iphelileyo, esisifu ubhut’ Ndoda, efumanise ukuba la sisi wayeleli naye kanti unezinyo legolide, wafunza ngaye. Engasakhali usis’ Nonzukiso “Yhu-yhu ..yho-yho, xolo, ungandihlabi, Ndoda, sobe ndiphinde, ndizalikhupha ke. Yhu imel’ engaka!?” ndixhume ngoko nangoko akukhala.

Kuvakele ngoko nangoko kunkqonkqozwa emnyango, umakhulu engxola: “Ndoda, he wena Ndoda, yintoni kodwa le nto uyenza ebantwaneni babantu? Vula lo mnyango! Umhlabelani umntwan’ abantu? Vulani lo mnyango, Skhumba!” Ndithe noko ndingaboni kakuhle nje kuba sisesebumnyameni, ndazama ndaya ngasemnyango, ndizive ndikhatywa kabuhlungu ezimbanjeni ndasitsho nesam isijwili, wandibuza ukuba ndithunywe ngubani na ukuba ndivule, andimboni na ukuba uhamba ze, ndacela uxolo.

Uye waya ngokwakhe ke ngoku emnyango, wavula enganxibanga enjalo, waqenyula incanca yakhe wayibamba ngesandla eyijongise kumakhulu obesangomba umnyango, wangxola ebuza esithi:

“He mama, yimela le, yimela le mama? Wakhe wayibona imela enoboya wena?”

Babalekile abanye abamelwane, bothuswe ngulo mbono ombi kangaka esidlangalaleni, yaba ke nelo lithuba lokuqhvesha kukasis’ Nonzukiso, esophisa enjalo. Ngalo lonke eli xesha, umakhulu yena uphethe umnqayi wakhe uzama ukuzikhelela kubhut’ Ndoda ongefumanekiyo kuba emde yaye enamandla kunomakhulu, esuka awubambe umnqayi awulahlele kude.

Kuthe kwisithutyana semizuzu elishumi, esathukisa umakhulu, esithi makaphume aphele ubhut’ Ndoda emzini wakhe ngoba uzakumzisela iintshaba, sabona kusima imoto yamapolisa

esangweni, kwaphuma amapolisa amabini – umntu ongusisi nongubhuti, bebambebele ezinqeni apho kuhleli imipu yabo. Axelele ubhut' Ndoda ukuba makanxibe, ze amthatha ahamba naye. Kodwa ke uye wabuya kwangemva kwemini yosuku olulandelayo. Ndimke phaya ke kule veki iphelileyo umakhulu esamqumbele, kodwa ke thina besesixolelene, sincokola kumnandi. Ndizakuphinda ndiye xa kufike ezinye iiholide.

ISIPHELO

“Jonga, Skhumba, yiya kula kakakazi uNozipho uthi ndithi mayize apha ngoku uyeva?” Nam ke andilibazisi ndisukuma ngoko nangoko. Ndithi ndisanda kuphuma esangweni aphinde akhwaze uThabo endiyalela ukuba ndikhawuleze, ndibe kenam sele ndigqotsa ukubaleka oku. Ukhangeleka enomsindo uThabo.

UNozipho endithunywe ukuba ndiye kumbiza ke sisingandamathe sikaThabo. Ndiya kokwabo kwiSitalato iZondi esingekude kwaphela. Ndiqhelile ukuthunywa ukuba ndiye kumbiza. Kuthandwana kakhulu ke apha ngokwesiqhelo. Kodwa ke andazi ukuba kutheni ebizwa ngeli gama limthukayo nje namhlanje. Ndifika egqibezela ukuhlamba ndibulise kamnandi njengesiqhelo, ndibe sendisitsho ke ukuba uThabo ucela ukumbona ngokukhawuleza. Uye athi mandimlinde umzuzwana njengoba esagqibezela. Ndihlala phantsi ndimlinde isithuba semizuzu efikelela kwengamashumi amabini, athi masiye ke emva koko. Endleleni kumnandi sinqunqutha iilekese azithathe kwezi zithengiswayo kokwabo. Siyaqhulana, sihleke.

Sithi singena nje ekhaya abe uThabo emxhumela ngempama uNozipho. UNozipho uyagxadazela aye kuwa phantsi ze asitsho esikrakra. Ndibhekelela kude ukuze ndingachatshazelwa, kodwa ndibe kufutshane kancinci ukuze ndikwazi ukubona. “Undibethelani, Thabo, ndikwenzeni?” ukhala atsho uNozipho. Uthi ngoku sele ephantsi uNozipho, ambhabhele ngonyawo uThabo emkhaba, aphinde abuyele emlotheni ngentloko uNozipho. Uyathukisa uThabo abuze ukuba kutheni emqhela kakubi nje uNozipho. UNozipho uyala akafuni kungena ngoba uyabona ukuba uzakubethwa nguThabo, uyatshitshiliza. UThabo uyamrhuqa ngelixa aman’ ukulahlela ngeempama ebusweni aphinde amkhabe nasemzimbeni.

UThabo ungena noNozipho endlwini aqhubekeke emnkula, embuza ukuba kutheni emqhelisa kakubi ngeentwana zale lokishi ngokuhamba elala nje. UNozipho uthi akazani naloo nto yena. Uyafunga ngeli lixa elila ukuba akazange yena wakhe walala nomnye umfana okokoko wathi wathandana noThabo, kodwa ke uThabo yena akafuni nokuyiva leyo; kucaca ukuba ukholelwa le ayihletyelweyo. Umbethekisa kabuhlungu eludongeni ngelixa aman’ ukumfaka nenqindi ezimbanjeni nasebusweni. UNozipho sele esophisa ngoku yaye uyakhwaza ucela ukunqandelwa, kodwa ke abantu basezilokishini ngokuphangaleleyo abayingeni imicimbi yabantu abathandanayo, nokuba omnye

angaze abe sesichengeni sokwenzakaliswa kangakanani na; ngoba bakholelwa ekubeni mayiyekwe indoda izilungiselele iingxaki zendlu yayo. Eyona nto bayenza kakuhle ke kukuma babukele ngelixa beman' ukukhuza wakutsho umvumba, kungekho namnye ocinga nokubiza abakwantsasana. Okwesibini ke ndingatsho ndithi bayamoyika umguvela otshaya intsangu onguThabo noneetshomi eziziindlobongela.

UNozipho uphelelwa ngamandla awe phantsi, kodwa uThabo uyamtsala amenyuse ukwenzela eme ngeenyawo ze aphinde ambethe ukuze aphinde awe. Kuthi kusenjalo kungene ubhut' Sizakele sele engxola esithi ufuna imali yakhe. Ubhut' Sizakele usisihlobo sikabawokazi uBra Suz esithengisa impahla enxitywayo. Bendikhe ndamva ke ubhut' Sizakele ethetha noBra Suz kwiveki ephelileyo esithi uThabo umqhela kakubi umsokolisa ngemali yakhe akuba ebemnike impahla ngetyala wathembisa ukuyihlawula kwinyanga engaphambili. Nakaloku nje kaloku, mfundi, uThabo unxibe eza zihlangu, ihempe nebhlukhwe emfutshane ebeyinikwe ngubhut' Sizakele ngetyala.

"Thabo, Thabo, ndifuna imali yam ngoku, mfondini. Sapha." Ngubhut' Sizakele ke lowo. UThabo uphendula ngelingacengiyo naye esithi ubhut' Sizakele makohlukane naye ukuba akafuni kuzibhaqa esonzakala ngoba uyambona ukuba uxakekile uzama ukulungisa imicimbi yendlu yakhe. Ubhut' Sizakele uyaphikelela esithi akayigatyi eyokulungiswa komzi futhi ke engathi makangalibethi 'ihule' lakhe, nto nje makaqale ngokunika yena imali yakhe kuba noko sele kulithuba ngoku embaleka. Uye aqhube athi yena kuye kufuneke akhwele ukuza kweli cala, nto leyo imtyela imali kakhulu.

"Bendilapha kabini kule veki iphelileyo, kokwesithathu namhlanje. Kudala ndikuquqela nakwezinye iiveki, into oyenzayo kukundibaleka, undizulisele; ndiyabona awufuni kundinika imali yam. Andihambi ke apha namhlanje ungandihlawulanga."

"Hey jonga mnqund' wakho wena, Sizakele, izikhe iphuncuke le njakazi uyakungena endaweni yayo uyandiva?" utsho esabambe uNozipho ngobhongwane emcinezelele eludongeni. UNozipho uphelelwa ngamandla, akasakwazi nokukhala ngoku ngoba uThabo umvale umphefumlo, uyamkrwitsha. "Ndinike imali yam uqhubekeke ke nokubetha *its'heri* yakho, Thabo," utsho ubhut' Sizakele. Kuthi kusenjalo amyeke uThabo uNozipho aye kuwela phantsi ngenjongo yokuhoyana nobhut' Sizakele. Nangoku ke akamcengi, uye amxelele ukuba yena akazuzenza mali xa ingekho, ngoko ke uyakumhlawula mhla yakho, ngaloo ndlela ivele ngayo angayaziyo naye, futhi ke ukuba ikho enye into angayenza ngapha koko ngaloo mpendulo makayenze ngoku umlindile.

Ngokwesiqhelo ke uThabo ungumntu ombiza 'bhuti' umlom' ugcwale ubhut' Sizakele ngoba mdala kakhulu kuye, kodwa ingathi olu usuku lwahlukile. "Thabo kwedini, uyafuna ukundinika imali yam okanye awufuni? Ndixelele kaloku ndazi kaloku," utshutshisa atsho ubhut' Sizakele. Kuthi kusenjalo,

uThabo aqabuke uNozipho sele ephumile emnyango eqhwesha. Uye aleqise ngoko nangoko. Kodwa ke uye akhubeke kwimoto yam yamacingo ephoswe nguNozipho kuye akubona ukuba uyamsukela; awe. Uphakama aleqise kodwa abe uNozipho sele embonzeleke wazitshixela kuloNtobeko. UThabo ulukhaba kabini kathathu ucango ethukisa esithi makaphume uNozipho ukuba akafuni kwenzakala, anyanzele nomama kaNtobeko ukuba avule ukuba akafuni aphumele kuye. Uthi akubona ukuba umile umnyango yaye womelele, ahambe, kodwa esathukisa, esongela; kucaca ukuba akaxolanga. Uba ke ngoko akamfumani uNozipho.

Ubuyela ekhaya onde ngobhut' Sizakele omi ngasemnyango. Uya kuye sele efaka isandla empokothweni esemva kwibhulukhwe yakhe.

“Bendingatshongo ukuba ndizakungena kuwe ukuba ibalekile la kakakazi, he? Ubufuna loo nto *mos nhe*? Ubhut' Sizakele ubuya umva ngokuphephayo,. UThabo uyamphuthaphutha. Ubhut' Sizakele uthi akulibona ibhoso le-okapi lisesandleni sikaThabo azithethele ecacisa ukuba ebengazanga ngadushe nakumphazamisa elungisa izinto zakhe, koko ebefuna nje imali nje yena; ngelixa abuya umva. UThabo uya phambili uzama ukumleqa, akafuni kuyimamela le ngcaciso, futhi usathukisa. Ngalo lonke eli xesha ubhut' Sizakele ubuya umva.

Kuthi ke engaboni apha aya khona akhubeke ngesithende sesihlangu kumgubasi womnyango wegumbi lokulala likaBra Suz, elikwaligumbi lokuphekela; awe emgangathweni ngomqolo. Uphakama ngoko nangoko aphinde azame ukubuya umva esacacisa. Ngeli thuba ke uye angakwazi kudlulela, anqandwe yibhedi. Kulapho uThabo amtsibela okwehlosi khona ke, amlahlele phezu kwebhedi leyo ngomqolo. Isandla sikaThabo sasekhohlo simcinezele entanyeni ubhut' Sizakele, ngelixa amadolo akhe ecinezele iingalo ukuba zingenzi nto. Uyaphinda-phinda ukumhlaba esifubeni nasemqaleni, engayekanga ukuthukisa. Ubhut' Sizakele uyakhala ucela uxolo. Akamnanzi uThabo, uqhubekeka nokumhlaba njalo.

Uye athathe nembiza yomngqusho ebilayo ayigalele kuloo manxeba asagxigxiza ligazi kabhut' Sizakele ekhwaza esithi “Uzundibulisele kuThixo, umxelele ukuba nam ndiyeza!” uyilahla pha kude loo mbiza ishushu akugqiba, ze aphakame phezu kobhut' Sizakele aphume egumbini. Kungelo xesha kanye kufika uBra Suz ke, engxola ebuza ukuba kutheni uThabo esenza ukungcola okunje endlwini yakhe nje. Akaphenduli uThabo, uqhubekeka nohambo lwakhe, aphumele ngaphandle kwendlu. Ihlokondiba labamelwane ebelimi apho lithi akuvela lithi saa, kubaleke wonke umntu aye kutshona ngekhyaya lakhe; kuba kungekho ufuna ukuzibona ebhubhela ilize. UThabo usaphethe imela kwisandla sakhe yaye izandla nempahla zigcwele ligazi.

Uthi akuwela umgaqo esingisa ngakokwabo uThabo, ndimbone ubhut' Sizakele naye ephuma endlwini egxadazela ngokunga uqhuba amatakane, kucaca mhlophe ukuba uphelelwa ngamandla. Uphuma kumasango asekhaya aye kungena kwalapho ebumelwaneni, kwabhut' Mandla ongumzala wakhe. Ababukeleyo bayamlandela ngelixa besabambe engezantsi ngumothuko, bambi bengakwazi nokuzibamba, bekhuzela ngaphandle. Ubhut' Sizakele uthi kanye xa azakufika esangweni kwabhut' Mandla, awe phantsi. Inkosikazi kabhut' Mandla isondela esangweni ze itsho ngesikrakra yakubona loo ntlungu. Uye atsalele amapolisa nenqwelo yezigulana kwangoko

Iyafika inqwelo yezigulana emva kweyure, kukhutshwe izixhobo zokuhlangula. Omnye wala magosa uye abeke umnwe wakhe entanyeni kubhut' Sizakele ze abhekise kugxa wakhe esithi sele elandulele igada. Kuba ke oko kukufikelela esiphelweni kobomi bukabhut' Sizakele. Kabuhlungu nangokungenalusini njalo.

ISIBHILIVANA SAM

Nanko ke uphopho ondim ngomnye umhla kula nyaka enza ngawo iBanga Lesibini ezibhaqa ekweshushu yona isuphu ngenxa yokuba mkhulu kunezihlangu azinxibayo. Uthi akugqiba ukusifundisa ngokubhalwa kwencwadi utitshalakazi uSomniso, ndigqibe ekubeni makhe ndizame ukubona ukuba eneneni ndiyakwazi na ukuyibhala incwadi.

Kaloku apha eklasini kukho intwazana yakwaMzema entle nendiyithanda ngako konke endinakho. Le ntwazana ndivana kakhulu nayo, kodwa ke kuba noko ndingemntu unarhuluwa nasibindi kwimicimbi enento yokwenza nentliziyo, ndiyigcina kum loo nto de sibe sifundiswa ukubhala incwadi eklasini apha.

Ngoko ke ndigqiba ekubeni ndizityande igila ngokumbhalela uThandi, inzwakazi engafanelwe kukhathazeka nakungalifumani isoka elilunge njengam lo. Ithi iklasi xa kanye ithi “Amen” emva komthandazo wabantwana, ndiphose amehlo am edesikeni ahlala kuyo uThandi nenye intwazana. Usazama ukuqoqosha iincwadi zakhe naye elungiselela ukugoduka. Uthi akuvaelisa aphume utitshalakazi eklasini, ndibone ukuba elo lithuba lam lokunika le mbelukazi incwadi eyichazela ngokuvakalelwa kwam yiyo kwanendlela endiyibona ilunge ngayo. Ngalo lonke eli thuba abanye abafundi benza ingxolo njengesiqhelo, bayaleqana bekhwazana, bambi becula. Akukho undikhathaleleyo, ndiyayithanda le meko.

Ndiyambona uThandi ephuma, ehamba kancinci, elinde uNoncedo isihlobokazi sakhe. Ndiya kuye ngelo xesha kanye ndifike ndimnyengezele kwinxili yakhe yeencwadi, kodwa ndiqiniseke ukuba uyandibona. Uye othuke abuze ngoko nangoko ukuba ndenzani, ndibe mna ndineentloni, ndimhlebezele nje ukuba ndicela ayifunde yedwa xa enethuba ze andiphendule. Ndithi xa kanye ndimbona ukuba ubhidekile, ndiqobe ilihlo ndizama ukumbonisa ukuba asinto imbi nenzima leyo, makaphole. Uye ayikhuphe ngoko nangoko, abonakale eyivula eyifunda. Ndibhekela ngoko nangoko ke ndimshiye. Ndithi xa ndimbonela kude, ndifumanise ukuba bangungelene nezihlobokazi zakhe kugotywe ikho le nto kujongwe kuyo, ndibethwe luvalo kwa oko, ndicinga ukuba uyenza njani uThandi into yokundenza intlekisa ngokufunda incwadi endiyibhalele yena nezinye iintombi, ingakumbi xa zizakuhleka isiqhazolo njalo.

Ndigoduka ingqondo ibetha-bethana ke, ndingazi nokuba ndivuye na okanye ndikhathazeke, ngoba enye ingqondo ithi ezo zihlobokazi zakhe zingandenzela lula, zimcebise ukuba andivume kuba kaloku kakade noko ndiyinkwenkwana ezilungeleyo nenenkathalo. Eyesibini ithi la mantombazanyana azakudlala ngayo la ncwadana abonise nabanye, kuhlekiswe ngentlungu yam. Ndilala ndisayicingisa le nto ekhaya, kuthi nangengomso ndivuke neenkumbulo ezimnandi zephupha lam ebendingcamba kulo nembelukazi esisinganda-mathe sam uThandi edolophini siman' ukukhupha loo malwimi simuncisana ngocwambu lomkhenkce olusemagini zeplastiki, ngeli lixa sibambene izandla, sincokola kamnandi.

Ndivuka umoya uphezulu, ndikholelwa ekubeni iyakuba lusuku oluhle kum olo kuba ndizithembise ngokuvunywa yiloo ntombi ilizwe ngomkhitha, ndibe ke ndifunzwa naliphupha elo. Ndifika esikolweni kwangethuba, ndingaqaqi ndimbone, ze ndizicingele ukuba makube akakafiki. Kangangendlela endihombe ngayo ke namhlanje andifuni nokudlala ibhola namanye amakhwenkwe ngaphambi kokungena kwesikolo kuba ndisoyikisela ukuba ndingcole, andibone ndinyhuku-nyhuku ndinjalo uThandi, angathandi, ndibe ke ngoko ndizehlisele amanqaku ebendinokuwafumana simahla.

Iyabetha intsimbi yokungena kwesikolo, kuyiwe emigceni kuthandazwe, kuthi nalapho emthandazweni mna ndibe ndisithi kuQamata ndicela andigcine mna noThandi, ngoba kaloku sendizixelele ukuba intombi yeyam. Siyangena eklasini, ndidane ndakungamboni. Kuthi ke kuba engekafiki utitshalakazi, senze ngokwesiqhelo siyiklasi, sicengceleze iZibhalo kunye nezibalo. Uyangena utitshalakazi emva kwemizuzwana ze asinike ilungelo lokuhlala phantsi athi masikhuphe iincwadi zethu zesiNgesi.

Inggqondo iyabetha-bethana kum ngalo lonke eli xesha, ndizibuza ukuba kwenzekeni kumntwana wabantu, ingaba bethu imkhubekise wade wabe akakwazanga kuza kujamelana nam apha esikolweni incwadana endimbhalele yona? Ingaba ibhaqiwe ngabazali ze wohlwaywa kusithiwa undwebele izinto zabantu abadala? Makube kutheni bethu, ndizibuze ndingafumani mpendulo ndinjalo. Sithe kanye xa sigqiba ukwenza isicengcelezo sesiNgesi uBetty Botha, wangena uThandi enyoshoza waya kutitshalakazi ecela uxolo ngokufika sele iqalile iklasi. Wavunyelwa ukuba aye kuhlala phantsi engangxoliswanga nokungxoliswa. Ndizingqine kwangoko nam ndisithi eneneni into endiyibonileyo kule nzwakazi ingafanelwe naluswazi lukatitshalakazi inkulu yaye intle, ibonwa nangabaphantsi, abo bayikhuselayo.

Uthe uThandi xa kanye ahlala phantsi wavakala utitshalakazi esithi utsho wakhumbula nto. “Heke, Mzema, sapha siphi esa sibhilivana sikaSkhumba, sisapha.” Ongako umothuko! Kanti uThandi uyinike utitshalakazi incwadi ebendiyibhalele yena. Utitshalakazi usithathile ze wasifundela iklasi, wahambisa ngolu hlobo:

“Thandi endimthandayo

Ndithi mandibhale le ncwadi ndivakalise ukuthabatheka kwam bubuhle nokucikizeka kwakho ntombi yasemathileni. Kudala ndikuthanda sisi, kodwa ke ndibe ndikoyika, noxa ndithwaxwa kanobom zizimbo zobufana; futhi ke, okokugqibela, bendingazi ukuba kuphinyiswa njani; yiyo ke nale nto ndigqibe ekubeni ndibhale phantsi iimvakalelo zam ngawe.

Ndicela ke dadethu ukuba akuyi kuxhamleka kakhulu undiphendule kwangolu hlobo, oko ke, mbelukazi, kukuthi impendulo yam ndingathanda uyibhale phantsi nayo.

Ndovuyiswa kukundivuma kwakho.

Ozithobileyo

Ndim ngenene

uSkhumba wakho”

Uthe egqiba apho utitshalakazi ndabe ndifile ziintloni, iklasi yona iman’ ukukhuza kumgca wonke ofundwayo, bambi bendijamele ngamehlo athi ‘awungcole. Ndinga ukuba yiyo ke nale nto yabasela utitshalakazi ukuba andibethe imivumba emihlanu yonke esandleni, ekhala ngokundweba kwam izinto ezinkulu kwanokufaka umntwana omncinci nolunge njengoThandi kwimikhuba yam.

Emva kolu suku wonke umfundi eklasini ebendenza intlekisa, iintombi zindibona ukungcola ngelixa amakhwenkwe wona endigxeka ukuba ligwala, ndithi endaweni yokuthetha nentombi ndibe mna ndiyibhalela izibhilivana ezibethisayo. Akaphindanga afune ukuthetha nam ke uThandi, naye kwangeso sizathu sithi ndingcolile yaye ndithetha izinto zabantu abadala. Ndibe ke ngoko ndiyaphulukana nenqatha ebendisele ndizithembise lona, lokuba yikumkani etempileni eyinzwakazi yakwaMzema; ndahlala ndilelo kheswa lingenabani.

IBALI LIKABHUT' MATYUMZA

Ndazibamba izolo ndizama ukungahleki ubhut' Matyumza eze kubalisela uBra Suz ukuba yena uyekile ngoku ukuzilolonga ngokuya kubaleka aye kujika elwandle afike azilolonge nangakumbi apho. Kaloku bendisoyika ukuviwa ndihleka ze ndikhalinyelwe njengomntwana ongenambeko omamele iindaba zabantu abadala. Ubhuti Matyumza ke ngomnye woobhuti abakukhuthaleleyo ukugcina imizimba yabo isempilweni. Ubaleka aye elwandle rhoqo ekuseni ngaphambi kokuba aphanzele ze aphinde abuye atshintshe angene kwimpahla yokuzilolonga abuyele elwandle ezilolonga.

Uthi ke ubhut' Matyumza ebesothuke kunangoku, emva kokuleqwa ngumamlambo elwandle. Uthi uyile njengesiqhelo, kodwa ke, ngokungaqhelekanga, wafika kungekho omnye umntu ozilolongayo apho. Kodwa ke uthi ukhawuleze wathi loo nto inokuba ibibangelwa kukuba kusibekele yaye ibikhe yana imvula emini. Usoloko esithi kaloku abantu bayakoyika ukuzilolonga emvuleni ngokungathi bayanyibilika.

Uthi hayi ke ufikile akabona nto itheni ngaphandle kokunqongophala kwabanye abantu abazilolongayo, wazilolonga ngokwesiqhelo, ebaleka esantini esolula nemilenze kula matye makhulu. Uthi uthe kanye xa enza umjikelo wokugqibela esantini, weva ngala mboko udla ngokusetyenziswa ngabahlanguli baselwandle uvakala ngathi uzakuthetha. Uthi kuqale kwavakala ngokunga uyavavanywa, wothuka woma akuva ilizwi lisithi “*wan-thu-wan-thu ...testing.*” Uthi uthe esamamele leyo, othukile kuba engeva mntu, weva kwangelo lizwi likhwaza igama lakhe kwakula mboko, lisithi:

“Matyumza, Matyumza, kutheni le nto ungasiyeki nathi khe sizonwabele nje elwandleni lethu? Wakhe wambona wena umamlambo okanye intlanzi izula-zula okanye izilolonga eNew Brighton? Sakhe thina sathi nizihlelele, nisazikhoth'amanxeba *sanibhotolasha*, he? Kutheni le nto ningakhe nisiyeke sizilalele ngoxolo nange nzolo nje thina? Sasinenzeni, Matyumza, khawutsho?”

Yho, uthi ubhut' Matyumza lithe lingekagqibi elo lizwi abe amadolo sele egevezela engakwazi nokuma kakuhle ngenxa yoloyiko. Uthi uzamile kodwa ukuma ubhuti wabantu, sele uvalo lungathi luzakuphuma ngomlomo, ebile ethe xhopho. Uthi ebengazi nokuba makaphendule athini, ebhekisa kubani. Uthi ke uthe esami apho ematshekile, laphinda lona ilizwi:

“Matyumza, he wena Matyumza, ndithetha nawe, phendula mfondini? Kutheni wasisimumu nje ngoku? Okanye uyaqala ukuba umamlambo ethetha? Ubufuna sithini thina, sithule singathethi nisona kangaka?” uthi kukwesi sihlandlo ke apho agqibe ekubeni abaleke, wababeleka kwangoko abasicatyana, engabheki nangemva. Uthi ke uthe esabaleka wakhutyekiswa kukuphinda kuvakale ela lizwi, lisithi ufane wabaleka uyazilibazisa ngoba lizakumfumana limnqumle iinyawo ezi alilisela ngazo engeva kuthethiswa nje. Uthi uwe etheni wagruzuka iingalo nemilenze. Uthi ke uthe xa aphakamayo wabona isiqu esikhulu esibe ngathi ngumntu ongunyisi omhle kodwa ekubonakalayo ukuba unomsindo, sibetha ngomsila phantsi sileqisa emva kwakhe. Uthi ke izingqi zeso siqu bezivakala zisithi plece-plece etheni apho, eleqwa. Uthi noxa ebengasenawo nje amandla, uye waphakama waphinda wagqotsa esiya kungena kwingingqi yoogobityholo ekufutshane apho ebizwa iSilvertown, emva kokuba engazi ukuba usinde njani kuthotho lwezithuthi ebezigityiselwe apho, wafika waziphosa kumnyango wenye indlu wayokuwela emandlalweni, apho kwakuleli khona imveku awaxelelwa ukuba ineveki izelwe ngumama wayo emva kokuba ewele ecaleni kwayo.

Yho, ebefunga ubhut’ Matyumza esithi akaphindi alibeke elwandle, yaye akukhathaliseki nokuba ukuthanda kangakanani na ukuba nomzimba osempilweni. Nam liyandoyikisa eli bali ngoba noxa belihlekisa nje kum ngoku alibalisayo, ithemba ibilelokuba aliyonyani kuba ndisafuna ukuphinda ndiye kuzilolonga elwandle. Kaloku nathi sizilolonga phaya neqela lebhola yombhoxo lesikolo sam.

ISIPILI SIKAMAKHESWA

Kwalapha ezantsi kwesi sitalato sekhaya lam, kukho ikhaya esihlobene nalo, elikhokelwa ngubawo osoloko encumile nobathandayo abantwana, kwakunye nenkosikazi yakhe ekwayimvuzemvuze zizibele, umama uMakheswa. Umama uMakheswa lo ke ungumntu, isanuse ke ngamanye amagama. Usisanuse esivumisayo ze sinedwe nasisipili abababhaqa kuso abantu abo bababele impahla. Yile nkalo ke le ndizakukubalisela ngayo, mfundi.

Ikhaya eli lilizwe ngabantwana abane: umafungwashe, oodade wabo ababini kunye nontondo, igeza lentwana egama linguBandile. Usapho olu lulunge nenzala yalo, kube ngakumbi ke umafungwashe uNtomboxolo, unomnyamazana onomkhitha. Le nto ke ithi asinaso tu isithukuthezi ngokwabalingane bokudlala.

Sithi sibuya nje esikolweni nomntakwethu sileqe kwelo khaya lakwaHoho. Sinedakala kakhulu ke futhi nakwicala lento esiwa phantsi kwempumlo, ngoba sithi sifika nje sibe sinikwa iingqoko zethu sinabe sidle. Andimntu ke mna unokutyholwa ngokuzithenga ekuseni icephe emlonyeni, noko ndiwukhuthalele lowo umhlaba. Ndisithanda kunene isisu sam. Unokucinga ke mfundi indlela endikukhathalele ngayo ukundwendwela eli khaya, ingakumbi ngoku sisatsala nzinyana nje ekhayeni. Asisabuzwa ke nasekhaya kuBra Suz nodabs ngoba nabo bayancedakala ekulilelweni sithi ngezisu ezihobolozayo.

Kuzezi ntsuku nje ixesha esilichitha kweli khaya lininzi kakhulu kunelo silichitha kwelethu ikhaya, sibuya ngobusuku emva kweefilimu esizithandayo, siphelile kukudinwa. Beside ngezinye iintsuku, ingakumbi ngeempelaveki naxa kuzakuba ziholide zikawonke-wonke, silale. Enye into ke esenza sonwabele ukuba kweli khaya kunasekhaya kukuba umntu uphakelwa esityeni sakhe, esitya ngecephe lakhe, njengoba ekhaya sisabelana ngengqoko necephe nje.

Uyancedakala ke nomama uMakheswa ngoba mna nomntakwethu noko singamakhwenkwana anamandla, ibe ke eyakhe inkwenkwana iselusana. Ububa nzima ke noko umsebenzi wakhe ezintombini zakhe. Kaloku bekuye kufuneke kuyiwe kulahlwa amanzi amdaka abezigabhisa ngawo umntu oze kunyangwa, kothulwe iingubo zokwegquma umntu ekufuneka efuthiwe ze kucocwe nezitshele ezisele emgangathweni wegumbi emva kokuba bekucinywa okanye kuchathwa umntu. Siyenza ngemizimba engenamikhinqqi le misebenzi nomntakwethu, ngoba siyazi kakuhle imbuyekezo.

Uthenjiwe ke umama uMakheswa luluntu, kude kuze nabantu abasuka kwiindawo ngeendawo ezikude lee kuneBhayi. Bayavukela ke abantu apha ngoba kaloku kukwakho namarhe okuba isipili esi sinochuku, sisebenza ngamaxesha athile kuphela, yaye asihlangani neemo zezulu ezithile ezifana nezaqhwithi neemvula. Abanye torhwana wawubabona ukuba basagcwele iintongo, berhonorhono ngokunga zizinja ezifunyenwe zizithukuthuku; bambi bethu beseneedumbe ziibhabhalaza, kodwa bezixelele ukuba ababuyi ngamva, bayafuna ukwazi amasela empahla yabo, yaye bafuna ibuyiswe. Omnye wemibuzo ephambili ke kulowo ulahlekelweyo kukuba ukho na umntu amrhanelayo, ingathi futhi ke lelo gama alikhwaza kakhulu esipilini.

Ngapha kokuza kukhangela amasela empahla yabo ke abantu bakwaza kufuna unyango kumama uMakheswa: bazicoce ngamayeza esintu. Igumbi esihlala kulo isipili simelene, okanye ke lidibene ngeendonga nelo kuphekelwa kulo. Siyabeva ke abantu xa bengene ngaphakathi kwigumbi lesipili bengxola bethukisa besithi umntu obe impahla yakhe makavele. Uye eme ngaphandle ke uMakheswa akhuthaze ethundeza lowo okanye abo sukube bengaphakathi kwigumbi lesipili ukuba bangapheli mandla, bakhwaze nangakumbi, bathukise futhi.

Siyaziva ke izi-*aranyana* zabantu xa zingene kwelo gumbi livingcwe ngamaphepha-ndaba kunye nempahla endala ukuze kube mnyama kungaveli nolungakanani na ukhanyo, zikhwaza zisithi “Vela, vela *maan*, suzimela!” Kuyathukiswa nokuthukiswa ke, kusetyenziswe izithuko endingasoze ndikwazi ukuzisebenzisa kwesi sikhundla. Nomama ke ngaphandle uyabanunusa, ebathundeza ukuba bangxole bangayeki. Ubungamva esithi “Khwazani, khwazani, sanukumyeka, uzawude avele!”

Umntu ude abe ngathi uyakhala, umve esithi: “Vela-vela, ngotyo yakho! Ndiyayifuna iwotshi yam, uzakuza nayo, golo lakho!” Akapheli mandla ke nomama, otsho engomba umnyango ngaphandle, “Sumyeka, suphela mandla, qhuba ... thukisa!” Kuthi ke kusenjalo uve kuthukiswa kusithiwa umtyholwa okanye isela elo malingezi ngomva. “Kutheni ngoku wandinikela iimpundu nje, yiza ngobuso sikubone, rhaa!”

Umntu ke uphuma kwelo gumbi enesiyezi, ngamanye amaxesha engasaboni nakakuhle ngoba kaloku kukho eli yeza alisezwa ngaphambi kokuba angene kwigumbi lesipili, elenza isiyezi. Ndikhe ndimve ke umama ebuza kulowo uzakungena ngaphakathi ukuba akakeva nto na.

Caba ke akuvumelekanga ukuba ungene kwela gumbi ungekaziva unesiyezi. Uyalilinda lide 'likusebenze' kuqala.

Umve ke umama encoma lowo uqhube kakuhle egumbini lesipili esithi: "Yho, hayi nibethile, mntakwethu. Nimbhaqile nje ke ze niye kuye nimxelele ukuba makayikhuphe."

Kangangendlela enefuthe ngayo imisebenzi kamama uMakheswa, abantu bayabuya bephethe izipho zeemali ezinkulu, ifenitshala, impahla, nditsho mna nkqu norhacaza wesithuthi ebesikhe saziswa ngomnye utata waseNgqushwa obefumene intombi yakhe ebiduke nezwe. Kuthiwa uyilande eRhawutini sele ihlalisana no nosala wenkwenkwe yala lali yakhe.

Kuthi ke ngolunye urhatya, sisalinde ukuvuthwa kwesidlo sangokuhlwa, ndihleli nomntakwethu kweli gumbi lokuphekela, sigqibe ekubeni sidlale umdlalo ngesipili. Mna ke ndibe ngulo ulisela, lo ukhwazwayo kuthiwa makaziveze, ze umntakwethu yena wangulo ukhwazayo, engathukisi yeha, ephum' izithuba. Ndiyaqhuba njalo ke, ndiman' ukwenza loo mavel' etshona, ndisiza ngeempundu ngamanye amaxesha, ndizimela umnini-zihlangu endizibileyo, naye engapheli mandla ezifuna apha izihlangu zakhe.

Kuthi ke ethubeni aphanthe umcinga umntakwethu esenza ngathi uzakundihlaba ngawo phaya esipilini, yhu ndisitsho esikrakra, ndisithi makandixolele ndizakavela. Kaloku kukho nento ethi phaya esipilini uyakwazi ukumhlaba umntu ebunzi ngenaliti oyinikwa ngumnini-sipili ukuze umbulale lowo ukonileyo, aswelekele kuloo ndawo akuyo ngelixa wena umhlaba ngenaliti. Ndiye andavela ke, sivakala nje isililo sam, kuba ndingafuni kuhlatywa ndibhubhe. Ndithembise nasekubeni ndizakuzizisa izihlangu yaye ndingxengxeza ngako konke endinako ebomini. Kuthi ke kusenje, ndothuke ndome ndakubona umama uMakheswa emi kufutshane nathi. Kanti lonke ixesha eli sithukisa nje sidlala ngeshishini lakhe, yena usibukele.

Yho, bendiqala ukumbona enomsindo ngolwa hlobo umama kaBandile. Usikhombise nje ngomnwe isango, efufutheka. "Noba andiphindanga ndanibona kule ndlu, niqaqadeke gqitha!" Sibe ngazama ukungxengxeza sisithi asenzanga ngabom, akaphendula umama wabantu. Sithe sakungathi asiphakami kuba sisazama ukucenga ngokoyikisela ukuba sizakufika sithini na ekhaya, seva ebiza uBobbyinja yakhe, sixhume ngoko nangoko satsibela isango sibaleka umsind' ozayo.

Sinyoshoze sagoduka ke singazi nokuba sizakufika sithi wha-bani ekhaya sibuya singatyanga yaye singabukelanga namboniso nje. Sifike kukho udabs yedwa, sangena sahlala asathetha nto, ngokunga akwenzekanga nto.

IMINI ENDINGASOKUZE NDIYILIBALE

Kuthi ke ngenye intsasa yoLwesine ngala nyaka ndenza ngawo iBanga Leshumi, ikhosi yethu ikhutshelwe kwidyunivesithi yaseVista, eMissionvale, kwakweli Bhayi. Apha ke siziselwe ukuza kucaciselwa ngeentlobo zezidanga nokuba umfundi ngamnye kufuneka eliphumelele njani iBanga lakhe Leshumi, kwakunye nezifundo ezidingekayo zasesikolweni.

EVista apho ke sifika kukho nezinye izikolo, zize kufunxa olu lwazi nazo. Ezi zizikolo zabebala namaNdiya kunye nezethu midaka. Kuyabuliswana, kuncokoliswane ze kubukwane ke ngabafundi, kuhlekiswane kube mnandi kube yiloo nto. Siye sifunde lukhulu ke kolu tyelelo, yaye uninzi lwethu luthatha izigqibo ezithi luza kufunda kule dyunivesithi ngoba ikwayeyona ingabizi kakhulu kunezinye ngokwasezimalini.

Kuthi kuba ke noko sele ndiyile ntwana ingqokolayo, kuba sele ndibona-bona nalapha ezintombini; ndiphandlwe yenye intombi efunda eThubelihle. Ndiye ndizityande igila ke, ndizise entombini, ndiwutsho nomnqweno wam wokunga singakha ubuhlobo nentombi le. Ifile ziintloni nakukuthabatheka, intombi ayivakalisi kugatya kakhulu, kodwa igxininisa nje ekubeni ubutshomi bubutshomi ke abudluleli kwezinye iinkalo. Ndiye ndivume ke nam, ndihleli eqhingeni lokuba hleze, ekuhambeni kwethuba, indivume. Sinikana iidilesi ke, ndithembise ukuba ndiyakwenza unakho-nakho ndiye kumbona ngoMgqibelo. Okunene ke ndiyile kwiSitalato iVuku, ndalifumana ikhaya lakhe, ndafika nayo ikho imbelukazi engafanelwe kubhubha.

Undazisile ke kuninakhulu ukuba ndisisihlobo sakhe esitsha ahlangele naso kutyelelo lwaseVista. Nomakhulu ke ubonakalise izibele ezirhawuzelelisa amakhwapha kum, waleqisa umntwana ukuba ndithengelwe isiselo namaqebengwane, ngelixa azama ukundazi ngcono, endibuza imvelaphi kwakunye nokuba ndifuna ukufundela ukuba yini na ndakufika edyunivesithi. Iqhubile ke incoko, afika amaqebengwane samungunya nogogo nentombi nomfanyana obethunywe evenkileni, uSciko.

Kuthe kusenjalo, sisahleka nomakhulu, caba intombi isagqibezela imisetyenzana yayo ekhaya apha, kwangena enye intwana endingathi mhlawumbi ingayintanga apha kum, ikhangeleka iyoba, ayabulisa yangqala ngqo apho sihlala khona isonka. Ifike singekho yakhalimela umakhulu isithi kutheni kungekho sonka ilambile nje yona, ikhala ngokungacingelwa. Nomakhulu ke uphendule esithi iqaqadekile ngoba ayifuni kusebenza ivuka ihambe iye kweza tshomi zayo ziyimigulukudu kutshaywe iziyobisi, ze kuthi yakukhameka ilazi ikhaya.

Uthe umakhulu kuzakufuneka isisebenzele ngoku isonka ngoba imisebenzi yayo njengomfana ekhay' apha yenziwa ngabanye.

Kuphindwe kwathunywa la mfanyana wesiselo ke ukuba aye kuthenga isonka, yaye yona le indala iziqhotsela amaqanda. Kulelo lixa kanye apho ndiqwalasele ukuba kwingxowa engasemva yebhulukhwe yayo ekrazukileyo kukho ibhoso le-okapi. Akundonwabisanga oku. Ibuyile inkwenkwana nesonka yasibeka etafileni ze le indala yangena kuso ngoko nangoko, ingaphangi yeha. Ukuba ebengakhalimanga umakhulu ngeyisitye sonke eso sonka sipheleleyo. Emva koko iye yasondela apha kum ibonakala qumbileyo, yathatha ibhotile yeCoke leyo yayimhomha, iman' ukukhohlela. Ngalo lonke ke eli xesha indijamele, ayikhuphi nelimdaka. Oku kundenze andaziva mnandi ngokuba lapha, noxa ke incinci nje le ntwana ngomzimba apha kum, ngoba bendingazi ukuba icingani ngam.

“Yhu hayi kodwa, Mzolisi mntwanam, awunayo tu imbeko yona, yakwala kwaphela. Ungathi ke ngoku uyenzelani into yokugongqoza isiselo ngebhotile ungagaleli eglasini? Uyayazi phofu ukuba sisiselo solu ndwendwe ungalazi nokulazi eso?” ayiphendulanga le ntwana, yasuka nje, isaphethe loo bhotile ngesinye isandla, yakhupha isabhongokazi esichaza ukuba izintyintye ngokwaneleyo. Kuthe kanye xa igqibezela ukutya, yavakala ibuza:

“Makhulu, uze kubani lo mntu apha?”

“Hayi-hayi, Mzolisi, ayikufuni leyo ke, ithumbu ligcwele ngoku, uhluthi, qhwaba itha uyeke umntu wabantu. Khona uzakumthini ukuba uze kubani, iyakufuna?”

“Makhulu, uze kubani lo mntu aph' ekhaya?” uphindile umtshana, sele evakala gxininisayo ke kwesi sithuba.

“Mzolisi, Mzolisi, ndithini kuwe, awundiva?”

“Makhulu, amakhwenkwe kaNomawethu uyawavumela ngoku angene aph' ekhaya?”

“Hee... nithi linani na eli geza likaNozizwe, Mzolisi, ndithi phum' uphele apha uye kweza zikromkrom ziziitshomi zakho uyekane nezingakufuniyo. Uyandiva?” utshilo umakhulu, sele efutha ngumsindo, kodwa ke engenakwenza nto ngoba kaloku yena usebenzisa umsimelelo ukuphakama kuba noko sele imkile iminyaka.

“Makhulu, ndizamhlab' anye mna lo mntu ukugqiba kwam ukutya 'ba uselaph' ekhaya!” kwee xhuku kum ngoko nangoko, noxa ndingekazi nje ukuba ndithini, ndisalinde ethembeni

lokuba ukungenelela kukagogo kuyakunceda ndisinde kulo mgulukudu. Uzamile ukuthukisa ugogo esithi kumhla wathutha konke okwakhe uMzolisi apho aye kuzimela. UMzolisi akamnanzanga umakhulu, uzigqibezelele ukutya kwakhe, ejonge endexe. Uzamile kodwa ukundiqinisekisa umakhulu yena ukuba akukho nto izakwenzeka ndingaxhali. Kwesi sithuba kuvele intombi le ndize ngayo ekhay' apha, yabe sele ixhunyelwa ngombuzo ngumntakwayo:

“Hey wena, Nomawethu, udelisa le ndlu ngezi ntwana zakho nhe, uyayifuna impama?”
UNomawethu usuke wehla ezenyukela ngamehlo kumntakwabo, ngendlela embonisa indelelo nokungamnanzi, ze ekugqibeleni wakhupha u “mnxim” otsaliweyo. Ndithe ndisahleli apho, ndingekazi ukuba ndithini, ndambona umfana esosula umlomo, ndatsho ndazixelela ukuba ugqibile ngoku ukutya yaye ke uzakwenza la nto ebethembise ngayo. Andibhungisanga, ndaziphosa ngoko nangoko phandle, ndawa apho kuloo mlotha undigruzuleyo, andabi naxesha lakuphulula, ndaphakama ngoko nangoko ndazibeleka iinyawo zam ndingaboni nokuba ndiyasukelwa kusini na. Ndilitsibile isango, kungekho xesha lakuvulana neqhaga, nalapho ndawa phantsi ndaphinda ndathabathisa ndenyuka isitalato ndingatsho ukubheka. Ndithe kanye xa ndisenyuka, ndingena iSitalato iNorongo, ndazibona ndikhawulelwa lihlokondiba labantu endithe ndakuvela kubo, kwavakalwa amazwi esithi “Nanko, mbambeni!”

Andibanga nathuba lakubuza nto, ndaphinda kwangoko ndabuyela apho bendivela, ndisiya ngakula mgewu bendiqhwesha kuye, kusakhwaza ngabantu. Ndiphephe abantu abazama ukundibamba apho, ndisehla ngesitalato, ingayekanga intswahla ukufunza kum. Ndithe ndisabaleka njalo, ndagilwa ngomzimba ngubhuti obephuma kwisango lomnye umzi ndaya kuthi tywa phantsi, andibanga namandla akuvuka ngoko nangoko apho, kuba ndisadiniwe. Kube ke oko kukubanjwa kwam kwangula bhuti ebendigila, ngokundicinezela ngonyawo kakhulu emqolo njengoko lisiza ihlokondiba ebelindileqa. Ngalo lonke ke eli xesha ndiyakhala, ndiyatarhuzisa ndisithi andinakuze ndiphinde, ndicela ubhuti ukuba andikhulule. Bathe befika nje abantu abebendileqa zavakala izagweba entloko, ndakhatywa nditsalwa ngapha nangapha, kukho nabacebisa ukuba ndibulawe ngetayala kuba bona bedikiwe yimigewu ebaphethe kakubi ezindaweni zabo zokuhlala. Livakele ke elinye ilizwi lindibuza ukuba kutheni ndingcolile nje, ndimkhuthuzelani utatomkhulu wabantu imali yakhe yenkamnkam. Ndithe ndisazama ukuziphendulela, langena iquza ezimbanjeni, lilandelwa ziimpama namanqindi.

Kuthe kusenjalo, kwamisa imoto ekwehliswe kuyo ixhego eselitotoba kukukhokhoba, bakhuzwa abantu kwakhona besithi andinazintloni ukukhuthuza umntu omdala kangaka imali yakhe yokugqibela. Lindijongisisile ixhego lazama ukubamisa abantu lisithi hayi khona, ayindimanga lo, libabone kakuhle abafana abalikhuthuzileyo, kodwa ke kuphinde kwavakala elinye ilizwi lilandula lisithi lidala ixhego eli, ngoko ke selimlibele umntu olikhuthuzileyo, watsho eqinisekisa ukuba ndim, enyanzelisa ukuba ndiye kukhomba apho ahlala khona lo ben disenza lo mkhuba mbi kangaka naye.

Ngalo lonke ke eli xesha ndiyagxigxiza kukopha, sendiphelelwe nangamathemba okusinda nokuba liviwe icala lam. Kuye kwathunywa omnye umfana ke ukuba aye kuthatha itayala lemoto ukuze ndintunyekwe, ndizamile ukuphinda nditsho ukuba andenzanga nto, ndingumntwana wesikolo yaye ndiyabacaphukela nam ootsotsi, kodwa wathi omnye umama batsho rhoqo ootsotsi xa bekwimeko efana nale, ngoko ke abasayi kundixolela. Kukulwe iingoma zomzabalazo, sele ndiphelelwe nangamandla ndirhuqelwa kwithafa elingaphaya kweSitalato iNobatana. Kuthe kusenjalo, kwe thu isigadla samapolisa, babaleka bonke abantu, ndasala ndodwa ndiselelo tywantsi. Abantu babalekele kwimizi ekufutshane apho, ndambona nalo ebeseza netayala elilahla phaya eqhwesha naye. Amapolisa atsalele inqwelo yezigulana efike ndisathoxoza apho emva kweyure yonke, bandithatha abongi bandifaka kuloo nqwelo bandibalekisele esibhedlele ngelixa begxabha-gxabhisa ngoncedo lokuqala.

Kulokho ke ndazibona sele ndichitha iinyanga ezine zonke ndileli ngandletyana-nye kwisibhedlele iLivingstone. Andisayi kuze ndiyilibale ke loo mini yayimele ukuba yemnandi kum ngenxa yokufumana igqiyazana elihle njengokoThumeka.

INDIPHATHELE INDUMASI IWOTSHI YAM

Ndithe ke ngenye intlazane yoMgqibelo ezole nakobezinja, ndivela kukha amanzi empompeni, ndeva ubawokazi nomntakwethu bevuya bendikhwaza. Ndibeke phantsi loo emele kwangoko ndasondela ndisiza kuva ukuba zingantoni na iindaba. Bathethe ngexesha elinye bobani, bengasakwazi nokuzimbamba, “Igama lakho likhankanywe kunomathotholo, uphumelele!”

Ndixhumaxhume ngoko nangoko noxa ndingazi nje ukuba ndivuyela ukuphumelelani, bekwanele kaloku kum ukwazi ukuba igama lam likhankanywe kunomathotholo. Kodwa ke noxa kunjalo, bengevanga ukuba ndimophulele bhaso lini, isibini esi sasisithi hamb’ uhambe ndlala, sondela ntlutha, kudala kakade sikulindle. Iintliziyo nemiphefumlo ilangazelela impucuko kumgangatho wobomi. Amehlo abhalwe izityhwenywe nezambuku zemali.

Kaloku ndingumntu okuthandayo ukuzizamela kumathuba ngokuthi ndingenele kukhuphiswano kwiRadio Xhosa le kunye nakwiimagazini. Le nkqubo kuthiwa ndikhankanywe kuyo ke yiCoca-Cola Full Blast Music Show ethandwa kakhulu ngabaphulaphuli ngenxa yomculo wayo owondla umphefumlo kwanendumasi yayo yokusoloko inikezela ngeziphokubaphulaphuli. Inkqubo le iqhutywa yindumasi yomsasazi uVido.

Kuthi ke kwangalo mhla ndithunywe nguBra Suz kwesinye isitalato kwalapha kule lokishi yethu iyiNew Brighton. Indlela endikhwazwe ngayo ngabandaziyo kwezo zitalato, ndichazelwa ukuba bekuviwe igama lam likhankanywa kunomathotholo, nam ke kufuneke ndiman’ ukuncuma. Nabangandaziyo bandazile ngale veki. Ndithi mna kude kwaphela nenyanga ndinguloo mntu ukhahlelwa ngapha nangapha, nto leyo endenze ndaziva ndinguMadiba ngokwakhe, nguye yedwa kaloku onale ndumasi okwangoku.

Nako ke kwiveki elandela le sisiya kwezo ofisi zeRadio Xhosa; indim, ubawokazi kunye nomalume wakhe oyinqununu kwesinye isikolo esikwalapha ekuhlaleni. Ulume kabawokazi ke ungumntu oxhomayo nonamatshamba, akakhumshi yeha! Asipheli isivakalisi engakhumshanga athi: *“Don’t bit about the bush, why bit about the bush?”*, *“There’s more to it than meets the eye”*, okanye umve engqinelana nomtshana wakhe kwincoko esithi, *“Yes, yes, I commend you there, mtshana, great!”* olu ke lusuku lokuya esikolweni kodwa kuye kuthiwe mandingayi ngoba ubawokazi wenze idinga noninalume ukuze siye kulanda ibhaso

lam kwisikhululo sikanomathotholo. Nam ke ndiyavuya ngokuba ndizakubona abasasazi ngamehlo.

Sifike ke pho samkelwa ngomnye usisi othe masilinde kancinci ngelixa umsasazi esihambele kuye esesembokweni. Sithe sisemi apho njalo sabona abanye abasasazi endiqhele ukubabona kwikhalenda yesikhululo, ndaman' ukuncuma ndodwa. Ufikile ke uVido, wasixhawula sonke, waxolisa ngokusilindisa ze, ngoko nangoko ubawokazi wangena emxholweni. Uqale wazazisa yena noninalume, ze wagqibelisa ngam. "Eh, Vido, nguSkhumba lo, unyana kadadethu omncinci, besive ubiza igama lakhe kunomathotholo kule veki iphelileyo kula *show* yakho yangoMgqibelo, qha ke asazi ukuba uphumelele ntoni. Khawusincede mntakwethu *maan, please, Vido.*"

UVido uphinde wacela igama nefani, wazinikwa ze wacela ukusishiya kancinci. Kuthe emva kwemizuzu engephi wabuya ephethe iphetshana aqwalasele kulo wafumanisa ukuba ndiphumelele iwotshi. Udano olungako kubantu abadala! "Iwotshi qha, Vido? Akho mali? Hay niyasiqhatha kodwa ngoku!" Uncumile umsasazi, waxolisa kodwa ecacisa ukuba yiyo yodwa ngenyaniso. Sinyoshoze senjenjalo ukubuyela esithuthini, ze nolume kabawokazi akasidanisa, waqala apho, "*No, no, no! There's more to this than meets the eye. No ways, it can't be this only. We must get to the bottom of it and leave no stone unturned.*"

Kodwa ke mna ndibe ndichulumancile kuba intle iwotshi endiyinikwe apho: ibomvu, amasiba enziwe aziibhotile zeCoke. Ndifike elokishini ndakhulula loo dyasi bendiyinxibile izakwenza abantu bangayiboni iwotshi yam entle. Ndinconywe ngumntu wonke oyibonileyo. Bebedanile ke nabanye sakufika ekhayeni, besithi bebecingele ukuba ndizakufumana itsheki endinika isambuku semali. Bathe ndide ndingayi nasesikolweni kanti andiyeli iwotshi.

Indinike ukuqwalaseleka ke nasekuhlaleni iwotshi yam ngoba indlela eyenziwe ngayo yengaqhelekanga. Iphinde yaqala phantsi ke indumasi kum ndakubuyela esikolweni, kubukwa le wotshi; ndinconywa ndinconyiwe. Kodwa ke indumasi le ibe ntlantlo-mbini: abanye bayincoma kuba beyithanda kum kanti ke abanye bayithandele bona.

Ndiyigcine ixesha elide ke le wotshi, indibizela amehlo ngalo lonke ixesha. Kuthe ke ngenye intsasa ndileqa esikolweni. Andisakhumbuli ukuba bendilityaziswe yini okanye ngubani na kangako kodwa ke ndibe ndisemva ngeyure yonke. Ndithe xa kanye ndidlula kwithafa elingakwisikolo iDavid Vuku kwiSitalato iNaude, kanye ngasemangcwabeni, ndazibona sele

ndihamba nabafana ababini abadadlana apha kum, nabo bencoma iwotshi yam. Bahambe kumacala am omabini ke abafana, bendiphahlile.

Kuthe kusenjalo omnye wacela ndimthengisele, ze xa ndisala ndisithi andiyithengisi, wathi “Hayi ke kulungile, masiyeni kuyithengisani sonke kuBra Sting endingamaziyo mna eNgqolombe ukuze sohlulelaneni ngemali”. Nalapho ndalile ndisithi andiyithengisi, ze lo wesibini wathi mandingabi neengqondo zekati ngoba bazakunditshayisa xa ithengiwe, wathi kutheni ndibenza amaxelegu nje ndicinga ukuba bazakutshaya bodwa. Nalapho ndibachazele abafana ukuba anditshayi, ngoko ke akuyi kulunga ukuba le wotshi ithengiselwe icuba. Kuthe kanti ndimnyathele *ekonsini* omnye ngoba ndibone ngaye sele efufutheka ebhekisa kwisihlobo sakhe esithi “*Ekse*, Nyero, sekutheni ngoku le kaka isixelela ukuba ayitshayi yona, ibuzwe ngubani? Ubuzwe ngubani kwedini, he? Uyasazi usiqhela kakubi nje?”

Enye indikhabe kabuhlungu ezimpundwini ngelixa ifaka nenqindi ezimbanjeni, sele kucaca ukuba inomsindo ngoku, yathi, “Jonga mtshanam, ndiyacinga ngoku, asizoba sakutshayisa, sapha le wotshi siyokuzithengisela. Rha ucinga ukuba sicengile kakade ukutshaya neempatha ezifana nawe? Xa usijongile wena ingathi sitshayisana neempatha? Sapha le kaka yewotshi *ufokofe* ukuba awufuni kwenzakala, uqhweb’ itha wakugqiba,” itsho le sele ifaka isandla ngokungxama kwimpokotho esemva yebhulukhwe yayo, ayaphuma nanto.

Ngalo lonke ke eli xesha, mna ndizama ukuqhwebesha, ndiyabhekela ndibuya umva. Kodwa ke zindivalele. Ndizama nokuzixelela ukuba isikolo singene kudala ndisemva ngoko ke ndicela zindikhulule. Azindihoyanga. Ndiva nje ngale ibindikhaba iphinda ibhekisa kwisihlobo sayo, isithi: “*Ek se, atyhus*, iphi la nkenkce, ikuwe? Isiqhel’ amasimba *mos* ngoku le kaka, icinga ukuba socengana nayo kakade?”

Yho, ndithe ndakuva kukhankanywa inkcenkce endisele ndisazi ukuba ibhekisa kwibhoso, ndatsho ngesabhongokazi sesikhalo esikrakra, ethembeni lokuba ezi ziyakuba novelwano zindiyeke, okanye ke zoyike ukuba ndiviwe ngabahlali abanokuthi bakukubona ukungcola ezikwenzayo bazonzakalise ngokuzibetha. Bangazitshisa nokuzitshisa kaloku. Azibanga nazintlani zingako ke, ngoba zibhekabheke nje, enye yaxhumela isandla sam esinewotshi, izama ukuyehlutha. Ndiqinisile apha ekulileni, sele isisijwili ngoku. Ukuba uyalikhumbula ibali lesimbonono sikaRakeli ekhalela iintsana zakhe phantsi kwesitshetshe esasingenalusini sesingcoli sekumkani yamaJuda uHerode. Yiba nombono wenkwenkwe endim ke wena.

Kaloku ndibe ndingenawo umbono okanye ingcinga yokuphulukana ngokungenasidima kangako newotshi yam yeminyaka. Le wotshi ibisele ilibala endidla ngalo kum, iyiyo nendlela yokungena ezintombini, ngoba abe eyithanda kakhulu. Yothuke yoma ke imiguludu sisikhalo sam, ngoba kuye kwangoko kwabonakala kukroba omnye umama efestileni kwenye indlu, kwabe kuphuma nomnye utata kwenye, ngqee ukubaleka abafana, ndabe ke ngolo hlobo ndiyayigcina kwakhona iwotshi yam yegugu.

Kodwa ke akukhange kube lithuba elide ngoba iphele isohluthwa liqela lemigulukudu ekhohlakeleyo ngenye imini siphume nesikolo siyokubaleka kumabala eWestbourn Oval kunyaka olandela lowo. Ndithe ndisancokola neetshomi zam, gqi-qhaphu abafana abafikileyo kwishumi elinesihlanu, becula ingoma engaqhelekanga ethi “Sicel’ iimpokotho, iimpokotho, iimpokotho!” oku kucelwa kweempokotho ke kukuthi sifuna yonke into yexabiso onayo, ingakumbi imali.

Ndithe kanye xa ndisalungiselela ukuya kungena ebaleni kuba ndizakumela isikolo sam, zandibamba eza nto zandiphosa phantsi, ndakhatywa, ndaqhwatywa, ndankulwa ngandlela zonke. Ndivuke apho sele zingekho, ndisiva nje ingxolo yabo bandivelayo, iwotshi nemadlana ebendinayo zimkile. Ndibe ke ngoko ndiyaphulukana newotshi yam, emva kweminyaka emithathu siphethene ngembeko.

UMTHATHI UYAWUZALA UMLOTHA

“Thandiwe, Thandiwe, vula!”

NguSkhixi umntakwethu lo, ewumbokra umnyango ukunkqonkqoza oku. Akanxilanga uphelile. Uphakama aye kuvula uThandiwe, aphindele ezingubeni ngoko nangoko, engakhuphanga nelimdaka.

USkhixi ushwantshwatha into engavakaliyo ebumnyameni, kuvakala ukuba ikho le nto ayikhalazelayo, abe sele ekhanyisa.

“Yhu hayi Skhixi *maan* ayikho le nto uyenzayo. Ukhanyisanjani ndilele... siyandiphandla mna esi sibane? Ayikho futhi nale nto uyenzayo yokundibizela kokwenu ube uzazi wena ukuba uzakugcwala esitalatweni. Ndidikiwe mna yiloo nto!”

“*I wonder* ububizwe ngubani sewukhalaza nje, ingathi ibikwanguwe nje nothe usendleleni ezayo ndingakubizanga. Uman’ uman’ uzolal’ aph’ ekhaya ujike u...u...u...” utsho enqika isitya sakhe, amamfuze iqatha lenyama amehlo ewavalile.

“Hayi-hayi yima, bhuti, uthini? Uthi kutheni, Skhixi? Ubothetha ndikuve kaloku, bhuti, ungawashwantshwathi.”

“Mncim!” itsho la nto, izilahlela emandlalweni ngempahla nezihlangu, ze ilandelise ngesabhongokazi esibophayo. UThandiwe ulahlela kude isandla sikaSkhixi esibekwe phezu kobhazabhaza wethanga lakhe. Emva kwemizuwana uThandiwe uyaphakama aye kuvala umnyango awushiye uvulekile uSkhixi, atshixe, ze aye ngqo kwibhulukhwe kaSkhixi aphuthaphuthe ekhangela, ethembeni lokugagana neesentana. Ubuya nelize, ashwabulele ngaphakathi. Ucima isibane abuyele ezingubeni, esafutha ngumsindo. Ngeli xesha ke indoda yona sele ikobentlombe, ingarhoni igragama.

Kuthi ngentseni avuke ahlambe uThandiwe, azenzele into esiwa phantsi kwempumlo ngelixa aziminca ngomculo ogqumzayo wemaskandi kwinkqubo yeZawa kuMhlobo Wenene ...
Lavuth’ ibhayi!

“*Heymaan* Thandiwe ayikho le nt’ uyenzayo, njani uwuvulele kangaka umculo ndisalele? Sucingela wena wedwa *maan* sana, ngekh’ uyithande ke xa inokwenziwa kuwe!” ungxola atsho uSkhixi ze abuyisele emqamelweni intloko emsinda kanobom. Akamnanzi uThandiwe.

Kwisithuba semizuzu embalwa emva koku, uThandiwe uye adlikidle uSkhixi emvusa, esithi uyagoduka yena yaye ke kufuneka emkhaphile.

Ukubonakalisa ukuba akayithandi le meko uSkhixi, uyamjamela uThandiwe, azame ukuphakamisa umzimba ongavumiyo. Uphakama aye ngqo kwisikhenkcisi avule agongqoze ibhotile yeCoke elapho. Uyangcangcazela. Iyamthwaxa ibhabhalaza. Ubuyela emandlalweni ahlale, axhase intloko ngezandla, iingqiniba zisemadolweni. Uye aphinde amshukumise uThandiwe, ze athathe unyaka onesiqhuma uSkhixi ezama ukunxiba. Uyamngxamisisa uThandiwe, emkhumbuzwa ukuba ebemxelele ukuba kufuneka egcine abantwana namhlanje. USkhixi uyaphakama, baphume, abuyise umnyango, bahambe. Ummelwane wakuloSkhixi ubawo uTshawe nenkosikazi yakhe bazipholele ngaphantsi komthunzi womthi wepesika emzini wabo. Uthi ubawo akubona uSkhixi anikine intloko, amngxolise:

“Yini kwedini, kunini ndikubukele ukhupha enye ngenye kula mankazana akho aliwaka kule ndlu? Kutheni udelisa indlu kayihlo ngamankazana nje, he?”

“Oh, utye wena, mna ndingatyi?” uziphendulela ngentswela-mbeko engumbuzo unkabi, esesigezweni. Uthi xa kanye aphakama nomnqayi wakhe ubawo uTshawe, inqande inkosikazi yakhe, imthomalalisa. Ngeli xesha ke uThandiwe yena ufile ziintloni, uhamba phambili. Bayahamba ke kungekho uthetha nomnye, uSkhixi esakokose ingulo yakhe. Kuthi xa beqalisa iSitalato iTshangana, ajike uSkhixi, aziqhubekekele uThandiwe.

Uthi efika nje kokwabo uThandiwe abe sele eyalezwa ngumakazi osele elungele ukuphuma ukuba abantwana sele besityile isidudu kodwa ke kuzakufuneka abaphinde ngesonka namaqanda emva kwethutyana, yena uzakwenza isidlo sasemva kwemini akubuya esifihlweni. Uye othuke ke umakazi akubuzwa nguThandiwe ukuba uyishiye ndawoni na imali.

“Imali yantoni na, sisi?”

“Imali yesonka namaqanda kaloki, makazi, tyhini?”

Hayi nkazana ungandixeleli ukuba awunamali mna?”

“Izakuvela phi na, makido?”

“Tyhini! Utaka mihla le, ntombazana? Uzakuthini ukundibuza loo nto ulala endodeni ubusuku nezolo?”

“Hayi bo akandiniki mali mna uSkhixi, makazi.”

Umakazi uye amjamele uThandiwe, ambambe ngesandla amhlalise phantsi, azame ukumbonisa.

“Kaloku Thandi sisi, siyazazi ezi zinto thina, sibadala singaka nje: indoda ayaneli nje kukuwehlisa umthawuzo, iyayazi ukuba kufuneka uhlanjiwe, yaye ke nesepha yokuwuhlamba ithengwa ngemali. Ngapha koko ke mtwanam, imali yomqamelo yinto ekhoyo. Iyakunika khona la ndoda imali yentloko? Kaloku sisi akukho ndoda ifuna intombi yayo ihleleleke phakathi kwezinye iintombi. Unokusuka ungabi nandoda ke *mos* xa caba uzakuthi gqi ngentloko engathi ulala ehlathini njengale wakugqiba ukuba yintombi,” utsho esalatha amaqiqisholo eenwele zikaThandiwe. Uyaphakama umakazi emva koku, akhuphe imali eliphepha ayidlulisele kuThandiwe, anikine intloko aphume ngomnyango.

Ayimphathi kakuhle le nto uThandiwe, nto leyo imenza athi akugqiba ukwenzela iintsana ukutya abhabhe ukubuyela kuloSkhixi. Ufika uSkhixi ehleli nesihlobo sakhe sokuqina uMxolisi beziminca ngeengudu ezimbini zeBlack Label; acelele umntu wakhe ngaphandle, engabulisanga nokubulusa.

Uphuma alandele uSkhixi. “Skhixi, ayizukulunga *maan* bhuti into yethu, ndiyabona ngoku. Mayiphele ngoku ke, hayi kabi. Ungandifuni ntsusa nasizathu futhi, andinazo.”

“Awu, Thandi, yintoni ngoku, *mabhebeza*, xa bekutheni?”

“Skhixi, mntakwethu, ndicela singasokolisani, ndithe kuwe andinantsusa nasizathu. Ndicela nje oku kwemifanekiso yam, uyicime le isemnxebeni, ndizakwenza njalo nam.”

“Awu, njalo nje?” nguSkhixi lo, esamatshekile.

Uyagxanya aye kuphuma ngesango uThandiwe. Uyalandela uSkhixi, ethembeni lokucenga.

“Ungakhathazeki ngokundikhapha, bhuti, ndizakuzihambela,” uphoxisa atsho unontombi, aqhube nohambo lwakhe. Usalandela uSkhixi.

“Skhixi, Skhixi, hlukana nam! Into oyaziyo kukugomfela ubile phezu kwam, kodwa awazi ukuba iimpundu ezi ziyabila yaye zihlanjwa ngesepha ethengwe ngemali. Okwakho kukundikhwela qha! Inqetsu lam lide lakhuthuka kukungqengqa ngomqolo kwesa sikhitshane sebhedhi yakho, awukhe ube naso nesazela sokundipha imali yentloko, kodwa wena

uzithengela impahla nezihlangu zodidi rhoqo ngenyanga, ungazungayi qho ke futhi etywaleni nasepakeni, uthenge usele unxile. Awundibali mna!?”

USkhixi uyarhwaqela ziintloni, abuye ajongise umbombo ngakokwabo akufumanisa ukuba abantu esitalatweni sele bethe nta iindlebe bemamele oku kuhlambalazeka kwakhe, kuba ethethela phezulu uThandiwe. Ufika epozini yakhe abalisele uMxolisi othi naye wothuswe bobu bukrwada bungafani noThandiwe.

“Yhu, hay *khazi*, soze ndimyeke la mntwana. Undipha kamnandi *and* yho, uyambona mfondini indlela *apake* ngayo? Ukhukhumele, sbali. Ukhona futhi lo umfake umoy’ omdaka, kungenzeka futhi lela gqwirhakazi lingumakazi wakhe. Uyaxoka kodwa, ndizakumcenga ade athambe.”

Kuthi xa kulapho kanye, uSkhixi afumanise ukuba uMxolisi ubugqibile utywala, aphambane. “Hayi jonga, *khazi*, yintoni ngoku? Kutheni ucingela wena wedwa nje? Uyigqiba njani ibhiya usazi ukuba nam ndiyanya yibhabhalaza? Izakuvela phi ngoku imali yenye? Hayi jonga khululeka mfethu, ndidrend mna ngawe. Phuma, mfo wethu, ndingekabi namsindo.” Uthi uMxolisi sele ecinga ukucacisa, aphinde azinqande, aphume ngoko nangoko.

UThandiwe yena ufika kokwabo azilahlele ebhedini, alile. Ubiwe bubuthongo ecinga indlela amchithele ixesha ngalo uSkhixi, engamthathi njengomntu amthandayo, kodwa njengomntu omhlambela impahla nekufuneka asoloko elala naye. Wothuka emva kwemini sele evuswa ngumakazi ombuza ukuba uleleleni na emini apha. Uye achaze ke ukuba umhlalile uSkhixi ngoba uyibonile la nto ebeyithetha, yaye ke kakade uSkhixi uxabise ubumnandi neetshomi kunaye.

Umakazi uyasithanda isigqibo somtshana wakhe, ze amncokolele ngenene elalinguyise kaSkhixi, sele evathe olukaBlankethe.

“Uyazi, Thandi mntwanam, wayelinene uyise wala mfana ke. Wayeyazi ukuba iyintoni na le nto iyimali yomqamelo, yaye ke sisi, wayebheja hayi njee indaba yemfeketho. Mna ndithetha ngemali enjengemali. Uyabona, Thandi, ndandithi ukuba ndivuke kuMoses xa inkosikazi yakhe ileli kwamlungu, ndibuye nemali ebonakalayo, ndithenge ooni nooni kutyiwe aph’ ekhaya. Uyayazi umama loo nto. Naye wayemthanda uMoses, esithi linene. Andazi ufuze bani yena la Skhixi wakho. Akamfuzanga nakancinci inene elalinguyise. Phofu ke amaXhosa angaxokiyo athi umthathi uyawuzala umlotha.”

Bayancumelana, ze aphakame uThandi aye kwenzela uninakazi into ephungwayo, esavathe olukakrebe.



MABAHAMBE

Zithe zakuqengqeleka iinyanga efikile kwesi sixeko seengcwele engazi mntu ngaphandle kwabo aphantela nabo uSkhumba, wazibona elilolo. Kaloku bezisele zifikelela kwisiqingatha sonyaka ngoku iinyanga ekweli Rhini, engekabi nazihlobo. Kukwesi sisithuba ke apho aqale ukuhlangana nelinye igeza lomfo wasemaZizini awayekhe wafunda naye eKapa, uZimele. Uzimele noSkhumba ke bachithe ixesha baqhelana kakhulu besengabafundi eKapa.

Kodwa ke uZimele yena ebesele eneminyaka efikelela kwisine elapha, ngoko ke sele ebazi abantu, neendawo abazihambayo. USkhumba ufumanise ukuba waziwa kakhulu uZimele eRhini apha, ingakumbi ziintombi, yaye nabanye abahlobo bakhe bangabantu abanika umdla yaye bekwazilungele. Uqale apho ke unkabi ukwazi imizi yembadu, sele esiya phantse yonke impelaveki ngoku, aqale ngoLwesihlanu aye kuphumla kuphela ezinzulwini zobusuku beCawe, adinwe lelo nqugwala. Besele esaziwa ngoku nakwaMandisa, kwaMfanandini nakwaMakhaya, de anikwe nangetyala ngamanye amaxesha. Nezasedolophini iindawo zentselo besele zisezintupheni kuye, ezazi ukusuka nokuhlala, ezazi neentsuku zamaxabiso aphantsi. Besele eqalisa nokuphangela kakubi ngoku, eman' ukungenisa amaphepha kagqirha ngeMivulo, nezinga lakhe lentsebenzo sele lisehla, kuba ezinikele esitalatweni.

Kodwa ke eyona nto abe nomdla kuyo kakhulu nazithembise ukuba uyakuthi ukuyifumana kwakhe athothise apha ebhekileni, ze aqalise nokuziphatha njengendoda azazi eyiyo kwakhona; libhinqa. Kodwa ke, kuba emazi umfo wasemaZizini indlela aba neddyudyu ngayo kwakufuneka ezibike entombini umhlobo wakhe, uye wamehlisa amaxhala esithi maze angazikhathazi, yena mntu weentombi uyakumfaka kweyohlobo yona, yaye akuyi kufuneka enze nanto ingako ngaphandle nje ngokuyiphatha kakuhle akuyifumana.

Kuthe ke ngolunye urhatya loLwesihlanu kule veki iphelileyo kwayiwa kuselwa komnye umzi wentselo obizwa iChamps kumbindi wesixeko, kuba ke ibisele noko isisiqhelo. Kaloku amaxabiso ayehla rhoqo phakathi kwentsimbi yesine neyesithandathu ngoLwezihlanu. Umntu uthenga isiselo sibe sinye, abhaselwe esinye. Babe lapho ke nesihlobo sakhe kunye namanye amanene amahlanu asele ezizihlobo zakhe ezisenyongweni nawo, kuncokolwa nje. Uthe esadlala umdlalo webhodi *ipool* noMark, ongumlungu ongumnini-ndawo le, waqaphela ukuba kukho igqiyazana elihleli lodwa kwisitulo esichophileyo *sebhari*. Lungongoze kwangoko uvalo kumf^o omkhulu. Kodwa ke olu ayibanga luvalo oluqhelekileyo oluthi makabuye umva. Lunge luyamthuma rhoqo elijonga inenekazi elo. Uqalise nokungabi

namdla ngoku apha emdlalweni, wazibona ecinga ngeli nenekazi okokoko, eman' ukulithi krwaqu. Uye ke unkabi wacinga nokuthi kungathi kanti lize kulinda umntu, onokuba ngumlingane walo, ngoko ke wabona kunyanzelekile ukuba aye kuzazisa kulo, ukuze ke kuthi ukuba abakwazanga kuthetha nto inesidima ngenxa yokufika komntu olindiweyo, abe noko sele enazo iinkcukacha ezifana nenombolo zomnxeba okanye idilesi yekhaya lakhe, ukuze azilahlele.

Athe engxola amadoda evuyisana noMark ngokuphumelela kwakhe umdlalo, egxwagxwa uSkhumba ngokuba lirhawu elityiwa ngumlungu, wabe umfo engasakhathalele kuthenjwa, ingqondo isekuzijuleni enenekazini ebeselibe ingqondo nentliziyo yakhe. Uyakukhumbula ke, mfundi, ukuba uSkhumba lo akangomfo ubukhali kakhulu ezintombini. Ungumntu wedyudyu. Kodwa ke ngolu rhatya, unkabi uzibhaqa enesibindi. Mhlawumbi kusenokuba oko kubangwa ziibhotilana zebhiya ezifikelela kwisihlanu asele eziqabelisile ngaphaya komginyo uphopho. Enye into unkabi ayicinga njengesizathu sokuzithemba kwakhe ngobu busuku sisiqholo somzimba asifakileyo nabesandula ukusithenga esinevumba elimnandi kakhulu. Ebesifake ekuseni ngokuya ebesiya empangelweni yaye okokoko enconywa imini le yonke.

USkhumba uqwalasele ukuba inenekazi eli lisela iwayini ebomvu, waqonda ukuba makube liyintombi esemanqwanqweni, ngoko ke kuyakulunga angabhatyazi. Uzixelele ukuba uyakuhlala ecaleni kwalo apho kwisitulo esichophileyo *sebhari*, azame ukuzincokolisa. ; aphoxwe ke ukuba uyaphoxwa. Uye etafileni apho abahlobo bakhe bahleli khona, bethethela phezulu beshukuxa imicimbi yopolitiko nolonyulo-jikelele oluzakuba kulo nyaka uzayo; wafika wathatha ibhotilana yebhiya wajika kwangoko waya kuhlala ecaleni kwegqiyazana elo.

Ufike apho wahlala, wajonga ngakusisi, wabeka unyawo lwakhe lwasekhohlo phantsi emgangathweni, ze olunye waluzinzisa kwintsinjana esezantsi esitulweni. Uqale wabulisa, lungayekanga ukungongoza kodwa lona uvalo. Ubehle waqwalasela unkabi ukuba unokuba akangethandi ukuphazanyiswa usisi, ngoba uziphethele umnxeba wakhe ujonge phantsi. Kuthe akungavumi, yamfikela unkabi eyokuba angaphoxwa apho, kodwa ke kuba ebezimisele ukwazana negqiyazana elicikizwe ngolwa hlobo ngomkhitha, uye akaphela mandla, waphinda:

“Andizange ndakubona apha ngaphambili,” ndimtsho ngento ephole njalo.

Enyanisweni ke, mfundi, esona sizathu siyibeka apha imbelukazi le kukuba yona ingumntu oshishina ngokuthengisa ngomzimba yaye ke omnye wabantu aqhele ukuyixuma kwishishini elo ebecele ukuba bahlanganele khona apha, ze walirhoxisa idinga elo, ngemizuzu yokugqibela; ngoko ke usisi wagqiba ekubeni asele efumana ibe nye okanye zibe mbini.

“Unyanisile. Andizange ndeza apha ngaphambili, ndiyaqala namhlanje,” uphendule watsho, esajonge phantsi.

Uthe akuphendulwa unkabi, enyuka amathemba, wazilungisa ezama ukuhlala kakuhle esitulweni, wasondela kancinci kusisi, amacala amathanga abo angathi ayakhuhlana kancinci.

“Mna ke ndiza rhoqo ngooLwezihlanu ukuphuma kwam emsebenzini. Ingekokuthanda ke phofu. *Amajita* asoloko enditsalela apha,” utsho ekhomba ngobhontsi *kumajita* akhe emva kwabo.

“Ok,” uphendule engabonakalisi mdla unontombi.

“Ndisebenzela umaspala mna kwalapha eHigh Street. Andazi ke nokuba uyazazi na eza ofisi, zikwiholo yesixeko,” uqale njalo ukuzazisa unkabi.

“Andikayazi le ndawo,” uthathe umzuzu wonke ngaphambi kokuba akhuphe le impendulo usisi. Eneneni ebengafuni kuphazanyiswa ezihlelele umntwan’ abantu, umbhaqile uSkhumba.

Kwesi sihlandlo, uSkhumba uphinde walungisa ukuhlala esitulweni, eliva ifuthe lomlenze wenzwakazi kowakhe, engenakulikhalazela ke futhi.

“Ndikwicandelo elijongene nogutyulo lwamanzi nelindle kweli Rhini.”

“Ndiyakuva,” liyavuma igqiyazana.

“Wenzani ke wena, mntasekhaya? Uphangela phi?”

Intombi le ibe sele ibona ukuba bekutheni na ukuze akhethe le ndawo ubhuti lo ebizakuhlangana naye apha. Ifumanise ukuba indawo le igcwele abantu abafana naye, abantu abanxibe iihempe eziwakuzelayo nezimibala-bala kunye namagqengegqenge eenkuntsela zemisesane namatsheyna egolide ajinga eminweni nasemiqaleni. Amanye made kangangokuba ehla adlule kumbhono. Ibimfanele, icinge yatsho intombi. Kodwa ke iqaphele ukuba umfo lo uhleli ecaleni kwayo ngoku akafanelwa nakancinci yile ndawo.

Ubekhangeleka cocekileyo kaloku umfo lo, futhi ke unomfaneleko yaye nomzimba wakhe

mhle. Imbona erhaleleka. Intombi iye ingakwazi nokungalihoyi ilinambithe ivumba elimnandi lesiqholo sikaSkhumba, kodwa ayathetha nto.

Uthi xa kanye alinde ukuba izakuzazisa intombi uSkhumba, itsho nokuba yenza msebenzi mni, imkhuphe kwezo ngqondo. Iyijika nangakumbi intloko yayo ukuze ijonge apho kwafela khona ithole, imunce umnwe wayo wokukhomba ze iwuhamba-hambise ikrwela umphezulu weglasi yayo yewayini yexabiso. Le nto ke yenza isandi esitswina kamnandi kuyo. Lo ke ngumkhwa awuthandyo yena neetshomi zakhe unontombi, ingakumbi xa besemdleni wokugeza. Ithi emva kwemizuzu emibini yonke, iphendule.

“Ndingumabhalana,” iyaxoka ngelixa ishuku-shukumisa intloko yayo ze iqwalasele ibhotile yetequilla ehleli kwishelfu yebhari le, izikhothela amazinyo ayo ngolwimi.

“Kwakhle oko, nkosazana. Usebenza phi ke?”

“Ndisebenzela inkampani yabucala,” iyamxokisela.

“Oh, ndiyabona, kuhle ke dadethu. NdinguSkhumba ke mna igama sisi, emaKhomazini akwaMkhonyovu.”

Imthi krwaqu ngekona yeliso intombi, imbone esalula isandla. Ayikhawulezi imjonge, kodwa ke ekugqibeleni, iye ijike imjonge okokuqala. Ihlikihla amehlo ukuze ndiyiqwalasele.

Ongako umothuko, rhaa, mhle lo bhuti, yaye nomzimba wakhe ukhawuleza uyinike iingcinga ezimdaka. Kodwa ke iye iziqinise yenze ngathi akukho kwa nto.

“Ufunani ecaleni kwam?” Intombi ibuza uSkhumba.

“Oh, uxolo dadethu, bendithi nje”

“Siya phi ke isandla esi sona?”

“Bendithi mandibulise, sisi wam. Hayi kabi.”

“Undithath’ *amachance*? Undithathe wandibeka nhe? Undijonge wazigqibela?”

“Hayi bo, sisi, ingaba kuyingxaki na ukukuncokolisa? Ingaba kukho mntu umlindileyo ke mhlawumbi ndikushiye?”

“Uyihoye ngantoni ke leyo? Naku ulapha *mos* ngoku andithi? Ngokuqinisekileyo ke, bhuti, andinamdla wakho, ngoko ke, ndicela uhambe. Ndishiye ngoku.”

Ngomothukokazi, umlomo kaSkhumba uvuleka ube yiloo nkebenkebe ingathi ingacholwa phantsi kodwa ke angenzi zintshukumo zakuphakama.

“Ingaba yindlela obenza ngayo le abantu?”

“Andiva? Ingaba wena uthetha nawo onke amabhinqa ahamba apha? Kutheni ucinga ukuba ndinomdla wakho nje? Uxolo ke, bhuti.”

“Andikukholelwa uyazi, sisi?”

“Ufunani apha, sisi?”

“Ndicinga ukuba mhlawumbi ndidikwe kukuva nokumamela izihlobo zam zincokola ngokuba zizakulala nawaphi na amagqiyazana ngobu busuku, yiyo ke le nto ndigqibe ekubeni ndize kuncokola nomntu endingamaziyo ... umntu onguwe, ethembeni lencoko eyakhayo.”

Akazanga ke ngoku usisi ukuba ayithini le kuziwa nayo ngoku. Inginga emfikelayo ithi makathi makakhombe ambonise aba athi bafuna isilalo ukuze abe nokuzenzela imadlana, kodwa abone ukuba akunakusebenza oko. Mhlawumbi angasebenza kwangaye lo, kodwa ke akaqondi. Kodwa ke ubhuti lo ukhangeleka engengomntu uludidi olunokuthenga isilalo nentombi. Iyamkhuthaza nendaba yokuba esahleli apho umfo, noxa ke yena ehlelele ukumphoxa nje iyandikhuthaza.

Ngoko ke, usisi uye agqibe ekubeni atshintshe indlela ancokola ngayo naye.

“*Well*, ndiyaxolisa ke, bhuti. Uyakundivumela ukuba ndithi ndicela siqalele kwakhona?”

Uye azilungise usisi, ahlale kakuhle esitulweni ze ehlise kancinci *isketi* sakhe esenyuke sawaveza onke amathanga akhe. Usebenzisa iminwe yakhe ukwesula amacala emilebe yomlomo wakhe.

“Bhota,” utsho esalula isandla. USkhumba ufinga iintshiyi kodwa ke olule isandla esamkela esikasisi emva kwemizuzwana nje engephi. Uyasitsala eso isandla ze ityibilike kancinci

kwisitulo sayo intombi. Ixhathisa ngolunye unyawo phantsi ze oko kucuthe umgama ophakathi kwabo. Intombi iphakathi kokuma ngeenyawo nokuhlala.

Amadolo ayo angene phakathi kwamathanga kaSkhumba axananazileyo. USkhumba uyayiqinisa ukuyibamba yaye isandla sayo siqalisa ukubila ngoku.

“Wenzani?” iyambuza intombi.

“Ndimel’ ukuba ndiwubuza kuwe loo mbuzo.”

“Uthetha ukuthini? Ndicela ukhulule isandla sam torhwana, bhuti,” itsho intombi isalatha ngentloko ezandleni zabo ezisaqhineneyo. Uyancuma, ze asikhulule ngokukhawuleza.

“Ingaba *ubipolar*,” uphoxisa atsho uSkhumba, sele efumana ukuzithemba nangakumbi ngoku.

“Ingaba eneneni usesi sirhama uzenza sona ... esi nam ndicinga ukuba usiso?” iphoxise yatsho nentombi.

“Yhu ... bendithi uyingelosi uyazi? Kanti ukrwada olu hlobo, sisi? Akufani nawe oko. Kulungile ke kodwa, ndiyahamba,” utsho ephakama

Usisi uziva echazeka ngulo mfana, uyayithanda le ndaba yokungabonakalisi kumhoya nakumoyika kwakhe, wenza kanye le nto ayifunayo qha, uthetha le nto ayicingayo.

Uye agongqoze ngemithamo emithathu ekhawulezileyo oko kuseleyo kwibhotilana yakhe yebhiya ze kuwe ibhokisana yecuba.

“Lilonke ke, sisi, bekumnandi,” utsho esima ngeenyawo, eyinike uncumo olunga luyabhanxa intombi.

“Yima,” kutsho intombi

“Ewe ... ikho enye?”

“Khawuhlale phantsi.”

“Ngoba?”

“Ndiyakucela.”

“Kulungile ke.”

Akukho uthethayo.

“Ngoku ke ...?” utsho eyingqale ngqo emehlweni intombi uSkhumba, elindile.

“Khawume kancinci. Oh, Yesu! Khawume ndicinge.”

USkhumba usonga iingalo zakhe, ancume, esemi ngeenyawo.

“Awuzange wakhe waphoxwa yindoda ngaphambili nhe?” ubuza, esanqekekile uSkhumba.

Usisi uya esiba shushu. Ulwimi luyatyhudisa, lutyhalela phambili amazinyo akhe angaphambili. usisi ulungisa ukuhlala, asonge imilenze, eyiminca.

“Hay *maan* yintoni wena, khawume ndicinge,” iyanyanzelisa intombi.

USkhumba uye acele enye ibhiya ebharini.

“Ndithengele iwayini emhlophe, ndiyakucela,” yintombi leyo. USkhumba ucela iwayini emhlophe, athi xa kanye akhupha imali esipajini, aqwalasele ukuba kukho umfo aye agqibe ukuba ungowelinye lamazwe asemantla kweli lizwekazi lethu. Umfo lo ufika abhantse ngendlela edlalayo kwintombi le, ithi yakubheka incume, bawolane ngoko nangoko, bancamisane. Ngalo lonke eli thuba ubukele uSkhumba. Intombi iye ijonge kuSkhumba yakugqiba, ibulele ithi nanku umntu wayo ufikile, bayakuphinda babonane baqhube incoko yabo ngoLwesihlanu olulandelayo.

Ukhubekile uSkhumba, akazi ukuba makathini na, kodwa azicenge abuyele ezitshomini zakhe engasekho mnandi. Uthi efika apho izihlobo zakhe zimamkele ngezishushu zifuna ukwazi ukuba uhambe njani na kwela gqiyazana lihle kangakaya. Uye ale ukuthetha ngalo, atsho esithi uyagoduka yena. Uhambe efufutheka enjalo ngumsindo uSkhumba, wafika kwakhe waziphosa emandlalweni ngoko nangoko, ecinga ukuphulakana nenqatha sele esithi ulibambile ngolwa hlobo. Uleli apho ecinga kakubi kakhulu ngamadoda asemantla angawathandiyo ngoba kudala wayitsho into yokuba aze kubathathela iintombi nemisebenzi yabo eMzantsi Afrika.

“Mabahambe,” uvakele esitsho, ethetha yedwa.