

**On the shop-floor:
Ten years at Ford**

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Mpumelelo Cilibe

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Abstract

My autobiographical novella covers a period of my life between 1974 and 1984, when I worked at the Ford Motor company Struandale Assembly plant in Port Elizabeth. This period predated the formation of NUMSA (the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa) and COSATU – it was a time when automobile industry workers broke away from the race-based unions to form MACWUSA (Motor Assemblers and Component Workers Union of SA). Around the same time Rev Leon Sullivan was putting pressure on US companies, including Ford, to move away from apartheid labour practices. As quite an angry young man influenced by the Black Consciousness movement, I got deeply involved in union activities mainly for my own survival, and as a personal reaction to racism in the workplace.

The story is told in a realist style, with many anecdotal detours giving the flavour of life in New Brighton in the 1980s. Important influences have been Bloke Modisane's autobiography, *Blame Me on History* and Studs Terkel's interviews of Ford plant workers and management in his book *Working*.

Contents

Chapter 1	6
Chapter 2	18
Chapter 3	28
Chapter 4	52
Chapter 5	67

Chapter 1

I arrived at Ford dressed in khaki clothes, and had just washed off my face the red ochre daubing of post-circumcision, initiation ritual. I was an ikrwala and only nineteen. I needed the job in order to raise money to return to college, and buy new clothes to replace those I'd had to discard as required by tradition. Had mother not dared me about going into circumcision with my elder brother, I wouldn't have been there. Traps are easy to get into and hard to extricate oneself out of: just check every caged animal.

Actually, this was my second job. I'd just escaped slavery at Dulux Paints down this same road. They lured me into that place with a juicy lie that a white clerk had resigned and that I'd be filling his position. Now, whites don't do much at work; so to be told you're replacing one of them and you're pitch black like me, is no small matter. On my first day they had me loitering around in the warehouse of that paint factory, weighing bits of paint mixing samples, and doing some house-keeping shit until three o'clock in the afternoon. Three o'clock I heard this goods train whistle shrilly at the back of the factory, and the guys started whistling and going wild, shouting, "E sidin'!" - To the siding! I was a bit flustered and lost. And then this series of long sliding steel doors opened up and revealed this overloaded train with about half a dozen carriages of 210 litre drums of oil and 100kg bags of some powder. Someone called me to follow the rest of the fellows to the train, and I did.

With hindsight, I always marvel at my stupidity not to quit then and there. They packed my back like a long dicked mule! I could be wrong, but I think I saw something in their eyes, some sort of strange, knowing glint. Those bastards must have been laughing all the time behind my bent back. I've never slaved like that in my life. I never bothered to go back. Not even to collect my wages for that day. I now know for sure that a man's back doesn't break that easily, it's far too supple, just like a donkey's. At home I just went straight to bed without once opening my mouth, to rest my hurting back. It was morning the next day when I woke up, in my khaki clothes, right on the same spot where I was resting when I returned from work the previous afternoon. I just played with Bobbie, our mongrel, that day.

Patrick Tarr was the personnel officer, reporting to Mr Munroe, the human resources manager at the Ford Struandale assembly plant; a big guy with a slightly bent back – a froggy looking guy who wore glasses. He looked over the large, green, cursed paper that the labour bureau had blessed me with, and freaked out:

“We can’t take you! I know this thing, it’s a clock card; it means you don’t keep jobs!”

Of course he knew a clock card; he was the one who gave them to guys like me at the labour bureau where he worked before his current job here at Ford. This was how it worked: I quit a lousy job as I’d done at Dulux, go report at the labour bureau, they stamp my dompas, issue me a most humiliating A3 size green paper with blocks to present to every potential employer I approach for work, he signs that indeed I came to him to look for a job and that he didn’t have one, and stamps it with his company stamp; only when it’s filled with sorry signatures must I take it back to the bureau as proof that I’m serious about work-seeking. Failure to follow this process would earn me a free train ticket to the state potato farms in Bethal, Eastern Transvaal, for forced labour harvesting potatoes; finish and klaar. I know; my eldest brother, Thobile, was a graduate of the system. I was horrified when the same white guy offered one to Emerson Tsotsobe, lead vocalist of the popular Black Slave band, before attending to me: “Why are you not working?” he had barked. “I’m a musician,” Emerson had responded. “Are you mad? I’ll send you to the fokken potato farms if you’re so stupid!” And Emerson, flushed pink with fright, took his green card and left.

“Baas, please, they made me offload a goods train by myself at Dulux!” I don’t know where I got the courage to say those words, but Tarr seemed surprised, and asked for my dompas before taking my documents into his office. I realized afterwards that at that moment I’d called him baas, forgetting Black Consciousness and bra Steve Biko and Barney Pityana and Moki Cekisani. These guys were always telling us never to call whites baas; but I just figured it was okay when they weren’t around, and circumstances demanded it – compromise, comrades. When the other guys weren’t around you’d be a fool not to say baas to a furious white cop jangling his chrome handcuffs between your eyes while holding a baton in the other hand, and you didn’t have your dompas with you. Okay. So Tarr dispatched me and my friends and some strangers to the Neave plant for medical examination.

A Ford station wagon, called a company bus, disgorged us outside the medical offices at the Neave plant. Two of the guys and I were fresh from the Lovedale teacher training institute in Alice. The fourth guy, Richman, had been suspended in the final year of his BA degree studies at Fort Hare.

Soon I was next to Richman, Totoma, Sdima and Dopla, all standing naked before two well-built white guys in white doctor coats – as kaalgat naked as a bunch of peeled bananas. The two orderlies circled us slowly, examining with their eyes, looking too uncomfortably closely at our penises as though they detected some strangeness. One of them suddenly came to a stop just behind Richman and pointed at an old wound on his shoulder:

“What happened here?” he barked, opening his mouth for the first time.

“I got stabbed by my father,” Richman answered straight faced.

I turned suddenly to look at him, stunned by his spectacular lie. And then I just fell on my knees with laughter. The white guy was far from amused:

“You laugh like that again you’ll be out of here very fast!” The man was scowling and flushed red with irritation.

I got back on my feet, almost hating myself for losing control like that. I mean, can you imagine Richman’s father actually stabbing him? Look, the old guy is a knobkierie type. Richman’s name for his dad is ‘the verkrampste’. Hard as I tried I couldn’t form a mental picture of the old man with a knife in his hand, chasing my friend. I suddenly remembered my own old knobkierie wound on the back of my head from old Bhele, the girls’ hostel night-watchman at Lovedale. But I’m not discussing that now.

“What happened?” insisted the medico, apparently enjoying the taste of that lie, and full of fatherly sympathy for the suddenly teary-eyed, foxy one standing next to me.

MaRichie expanded his lie to include a sister he beat up, leading to the climax of that stabbing by an irate verkrampste father who had somewhat uncharacteristically seen fit to toss aside his much favoured traditional stick in exchange for an okapi knife. It was so creative I genuinely envied him.

We passed medical testing, and then technical induction, before moving to the personnel department. One of the officers, a Coloured guy by the name of Heilbron, I think, told me he also had a teaching qualification when he learnt of mine. He conferred with his colleague and decided to assign me to the Material Handling, Unboxing section at Struandale where the Cortina sedan and pickup truck were built. He started me at fifty-nine cents per hour, three cents more than the other guys.

I reported to Deon Vermaak, the foreman, who engaged me as a line-feeder. "Silly-bee," he said, (that's how most whites pronounce my surname) "you'll be feeding Trim 1, paint-shop and the body-shop."

"Yes sir." I could feel my heart do little somersaults of joy on account of the difference between pulling the kind of trolley standing before me, and off-loading a bloody goods train. And I get to wear a blue dustcoat instead of greasy overalls like those of assembly line operators.

I don't have to pull the trolley all the way to body-shop and the paint-shop. I park it in Trim 1 and carry a couple of small boxes of grease caps to paint-shop, and plugs and floor sound-deadeners to the body-shop. Sound-deadeners are part of standard Luxury Décor Options for the most expensive model – LDO's. The assembly line is marked with station numbers. Car-body shells are hoisted over from the paint-shop to Trim 1 where they are fitted with door handles, window winders, channels, heater boxes, etc. I learn quickly; soon I get to know every nook and every part that goes into it, every station and every part number, my mind working like a camera.

I sensed the envy and resentment of some of the assembly line operators; one guy even sneered and called me a pretty boy with a soft job. I simply disregarded them and did my job. When they complained of a stock shortage I took note and informed the line store-man or went myself to check at Unboxing for the part. I could understand the envy of the operator, he was lower than me in the value chain, only the janitor was less than him; I was placed between the store-man and foreman, who was lower than the general foreman, who in turn was lower than the superintendent, who reported to the manager. All positions above mine, with the exception of foreman, were reserved for whites.

A soft job? There was nothing soft about my job. I slaved and sweated, perhaps less than the body-shop men in their safety goggles and leather aprons and filthy overalls, or the paint-shop men in grey space-suits and masks, or the helmeted guys at the Crossfeed-line area underneath car bodies, with hammers and air drills. My friend Totoma was one of the Crossfeed-line men; he sighed wearily and heavily each time I checked on him. Richman worked as an operator in the front suspension section and complained about a heavy bar he had to lift continually to place over the parts he had to drill holes into.

I pulled trolleys behind me, totteringly, still like a cursed mule, fully laden with auto parts to be fitted onto those body shells by the same assembly line operators, some of whom hated me. I had to move fast, pulling and emptying those trolleys, and rush back to fetch yet another, and then another filled to the hilt, from the Unboxing station. The trips to the assembly line became forever slower because of the heaviness of each load, with the trolley often hurting my sorry heels. I had to make way for the faster forklifts and tow-motors, past the Engine Stockade with the daily stock of two hundred car engines, past Hardware where all the bolts, rivets, screws and nuts were kept, past Receiving where all local content landed before delivery to the lines, past Clothing where overalls were kept and exchanged, past Quality where whites-only, often broke, quality control inspectors bent and pored over every suspect part.

The trip back was faster. The Unboxing guys were waiting for emptied trolleys. The foreman shouted at us line feeders "Roer!"- move our backsides. "Keep the ship moving!" Tarr, who was now a production general foreman, was wont to shout.

The atmosphere was ablaze with activity and sounds: air drills sang their own melody, forklifts, men, tow-motors forever droning, moving on the ground, hoists overhead. Bang, bang, hisses. Bang! Vigilance and caution were keys. There were dipping pits with black steel galvanizing chemicals and grey spray paints and the acrid reek of paint fumes in the paint-shop. Vigilance and caution: red skull and crossbones emblems spelt DANGER. There were Drysys ovens resembling Nazi gas chambers, swallowing car body shells. You slipped and fell at your own risk: IOD; INJURED ON DUTY. All that for fifty-six cents per hour; take it or leave it. There were more men waiting at the gates to take the job from you.

South-west of the plant was the body-shop where it all began, where mallets banged on metal panels, steel frames and chassis, where air hoses spat hisses, and air guns puked blue-orange sparks into early morning factory air. Heavy green canvas and yellowish, split, double plastic curtains cordoned off the spark-vomiting welding guns. A place of darkness corralled in mystery. The guns hung like fat alloy AK47's off a maze of tubes like a hangman's ropes from somewhere above. I didn't look too closely to examine the eerie looking place. I always rushed in to deposit the sound-deadeners into their bin and swung around to dash out of that hell faster than a swallow in summer. The guys were not recognizable because of their outta-space outfits, like sci-fi movie characters, the sort one saw in Star Wars, or Batman, or something: scary, unsmiling guys that looked so alike they were a nation. Legend had it that one tjanjarag overbearing boss got violently slapped across the face as he walked past the area one morning and failed to identify his assailant.

The body-shop men were the only ones in the entire plant who had the liberty to smoke their dagga openly without fear of reprisal from the bosses; no one dared enter their work space without safety gear, and they knew it. What boss would want to go find safety goggles and oily overalls and an odorous leather apron to don before going to challenge a crowd of red-eyed dagga-puffing labourers? And these were the most dedicated and fearless of men; like soldiers. They called that pungent odour of their narcotic, "Chicken braai smell". Drunkenness, drug-taking, theft and fighting were all high up the list of offences one could be dismissed for. They didn't even get into an offender's record – a guy got fired on the spot, and case closed. A record card was where they parked every other offence, such as late-coming, exchanging insults, or any other minor transgression. When it got full, it worked against any holder during retrenchments.

The personnel office was built on a mezzanine floor over a section of Trim 2. We often saw each offending employee being taken up by his foreman in order to have whatever his offence recorded. The only other office on the mezzanine was for Time study guys, almost all African.

Body-shop was a known high staff turn-over area, and so it helped to keep those guys happy and not unsettle the balance of things there. So, one could imagine the sort of commotion and pandemonium that ensued when this new Jan Smuts look alike white foreman took

offence and grabbed a guy by the throat, calling him a kaffir, for some reason known to both only. Welding guns seldom ceased firing; when they did the entire plant went silent and everyone wanted to know the cause. Amazingly Jan Smuts got fired on the spot. And the plant restarted and rumbled on incessantly as usual.

To me it was a first in this land of apartheid: firing a white guy and leaving a black one behind; it's normally the other way round. It's almost the first near wild-cat strike, and thank God it was averted quickly. Steel mallets resumed their percussion on ISCOR metal frames and chassis and body panels. Each bang and every spark, every hiss behind every pop rivet fashioned a car body shell out of bits and lengths of ISCOR steel. Those units were to be spray painted in colours pre-ordered by moneyed owners waiting patiently and eagerly to take possession and ride in pride. It all began here beyond yellow lines painted on the cement floor, demarcating safe and unsafe areas, smoking and non-smoking areas, green squares and red squares. Sweat, sweat, sweat, turned into cars, turning into profits for bosses and unknown shareholders smoking cigars and quaffing whisky in America. America, America the beautiful. At home I listened to Ray Charles singing that song, and then Billy Preston sang: 'My country 'tis of thee' and I so wished to see such a country.

Ford was the best paying company in town, an American firm with medical aid and pension fund. Workers qualified for false teeth within a couple of weeks, shiny Amariva safety shoes, and a company ID with a photograph same day. A job with a name: Line feeder, or janitor. Job names or descriptions were unheard of in some other local factories – only American employers did it. And there was a canteen too, offering subsidized hot meals on a display menu. A different meal was served each day from Monday to Friday. And I'm not talking mageu and magwinya, and chicken walky-talkies here, no. I mean spaghetti bolognese on Monday, grilled steak or mutton on Tuesday and Wednesday with yellow rice and two veggies, roast chicken quarter leg – or the upper part with breast and wing, my favourite, rice and roast potato on Thursday, and fried or pickled fish or grilled pork chops on Friday, all prepared by a qualified chef and cooks in starched white hoods, jackets and aprons.

Early Thursday mornings some guys quack loudly and shout, "Ingaba-ngaba!" – Sea-gull. Others laughed out loud in response, knowing it was roast chicken day. I was even prepared to work weekends if they were willing to ask me to, just for the meals. And it was always

followed up with dessert of either vanilla ice-cream, or chocolate mousse, or pudding, custard, and jelly. Restaurant stuff – even though I’ve never been inside one; restaurants were for whites only. There was no apartheid in the food, but there was apartheid in the canteen seating. All that canteen fare had to be enjoyed separately from the white employees who wanted no goddamn view of kaffirs while having their meals. Africans were partitioned off in their black section, out of sight. And of course even the toilets and the locker rooms were separated according to skin colour.

Guys were begging to come in to Ford to be exploited; so happy to be in and exploited. It was also so hard to leave once one was in; as hard as leaving a beautiful, sexy woman.

Friday was pay day. Shebeen queens scrubbed and dusted their hovels and chased the tsararas – won’t work – out of their joints in anticipation of our visits: we were real men with false teeth and company ID’s with photographs and job names – janitors, forklift drivers, material handlers. Those were big names in the townships; men with pay-slips. One easily got laid by telling a girl: I’m a janitor, baby. Payslips were mostly unheard of in factories outside our company. Some guys were known to be still paid out of their bosses’ wallets or back pockets; the very lucky few got paid in envelopes with pay details written by hand in pencil. And their bosses moered them and called them kaffirs and bobbejane, or even black bastards. Not at Ford: at least, not after that Jan Smuts-lookalike incident.

Strike? Oh no, that line could not be crossed. To go on strike was to risk going to prison. It was illegal. The bosses had committees with their workers called liaison committees, chaired by the boss himself, see? If one had something nasty to say about the company, one had to say it directly to the boss. “You, black bastard, I’ll kick you out of that fucking door right now!” a very irate boss might say if you offended him. It usually just often ended there. I got to hear that threat quite often, and often not knowing for what reason, from important looking white men who weren’t even my own bosses.

I got to be called ‘Engelse man’ – because of my sin of speaking English far better than Afrikaans. There was this line storeman, Els, on Trim 1 who wouldn’t have me work overtime with him because of the constant transgression of my English speech. Of course he had no idea how fluent I was in that home language of his: I’d just completed five years of learning Beginsels van Onderwys, Skool Organisasie, Metode vir die Onderrig van die

Amptelike Tale, Taalkunde, Aardrykskunde, and a whole lot of other shit he'd never even heard of with his own Afrikaner ears. When the kids burned down schools in '76 rejecting that shit, I'd already grown fat from imbibing it all.

"Nee, Engelse man, geen overtime vir jou nie; gat huis toe!" Fok hom; I went home. He could give that overtime to his garden-boy/ kitchen maid Afrikaans speaking bastards for all I cared. Els was new in that job, having just replaced a nicer guy called Nel, who left to study further and become a marine biologist in Cape Town. Els himself was later replaced by a black guy, Zim Duna, when he, just like Joy Lolly, couldn't cope.

The money was good anyway, even without Els's overtime. The factory was like a vicious vixen with an acid tongue; beautiful with a great body and melon titties and super-duper sex to offer, the tough type it's best to turn your back on and leave. You knew there were many other guys eyeing her, waiting for you to let her slip out of your grasp before they waded in unannounced. Ford was that kind of bitch. Good food I didn't get to eat at home I only ate there. What, with medical aid, pension fund, leave, holiday pay, and outside in the shebeens, with jazz and Soul music blaring, the groupies tossing themselves at us.

I listened to Stanley Turrentine and Shirley Scott, Jimmy Smith, David "Fathead" Newman, Gene Ammons, Miles Davis and John Coltrane, and many others. Avant-garde jazz had landed with a giant bang in New Brighton in the form of the Jazz Crusaders, Bob James, Chick Corea, Stanley Clarke. I wore clothes labelled "Made in America". The shoes too came from the States: canvas shoes, Keds, PF's, BF Goodridges, and shiny moccasins and brogues or semi-brogues, Florsheims, Nunn Bushes, my favourites- Edwin Clapps, and much more. Only moegoes didn't dress that way. Arrow shirts and Monatic Viyellas were the only shirts to wear. Underwear was either BVD or Froot-of-the-loom. Even headgear was American, Stetsons or Borsalino hats or ten gallon berets, Kangols, or one or eight piece Ayres and Smith caps.

If I didn't find that stuff in the local stores I ordered directly from Joburg stores: Kays, Kotzen, Skipper Bar, PAMO, and others. Mail order was fast, efficient and prompt; no one in the post office stole my mail. The kit was called 'mngca Jewish' because only Jewish store owners knew how to dress us; they got style, man. In Port Elizabeth I bought from Rubins, Trouser House, Romens and Schultz's. Dan Watson came late into the picture with the

Watson brothers choosing to defy apartheid and play rugby with our guys in Zwede. I met Moki Cekisani when he worked for Hot Spur Clothing; he was a fearless Black Consciousness man who boldly displayed political posters on the doors of his Volvo.

We were too dumb to see all that American Ford money flowing back to America. We were competing with clothes and winning over girls from one another: The Arrow Gents, Bostonians, and Crusaders. There were no fisticuffs or stabbings; it was all fair and peaceful.

I gave my weekly wages to my mother Sissy, every second week. She encouraged me to save for further studies and buy new clothes for changing out of my ikrwala outfit as planned. I opened a savings account with Standard Bank at Berry's Corner: got a bank book, bank cards had not been invented yet.

"Sissy, I spoke to bra Mandlomzi to come fit bedroom doors," I told her. Mandlomzi was a carpenter who lived in Connacher Street, two streets away from us. Our city council-rented house never had bedroom doors. I bought a new meranti-wood front door to get rid of the green-painted council one. Mandlomzi fitted it and the bedroom ones, and additional wall panelling, changing the way our dining-room looked. That old picture of Jesus and his disciples at a long dining table, with arches behind them exposing blue skies, had to go. It'd been there since I was a bungling toddler. I bought a new threepiece brown, buttoned leatherette lounge suit. Sissy was ecstatic with happiness.

"Dogs I raised, and never abandoned, give me fuckall," complained Dad bitterly. I paid him no attention.

My elder brother Dee looked at him in amazement and then back at me, shaking his head from side to side: "Did you hear what he's just said? So, he did actually think about deserting us, would you believe it?"

On weekends I tour the shebeens nightly, getting home around 2am Sunday and Monday mornings, pissed, and often with a girl I danced with in one of the joints. I slept in the outside tool-shed when I brought a girl with me. I hijacked the shed from my three younger brothers who hated me for it in silent protest.

Before the end of that first year at Ford, I was driving my own car, a VW Beetle. Now, look, some guys, my own father included (May his soul rest in peace), had toiled for ages for peanuts, without a glimmer of hope of ever owning even a bumper of a push-push skoro-koro, or donkey cart. And here I was a fresh faced ikrwala coming home smiling, behind the wheel of my own voongoo as we called cars in New Brighton.

Father came outside on hearing the hullabaloo, circled the white bug slowly with a serious frown on his face, and came to a final stop outside the driver's door, stooping lower, checking the dash-board through the open window, placing his left hand on the roof, tapping his fingers, before declaring a verdict: "Ngumnqund'wemoto lo!" – This is an arsehole of a car. I didn't mind. It tempted me to ask: "Iphi eyakho – where's yours?" I remembered that he had a dream since the time we were toddlers – my brother, my sister and I – when he would bring home a brochure with a bevy of shiny, well-fed horses draped with colourful sashes. This was around June each year. We, kids each had to indicate which horse we each fancied to win the Durban July race. His dream was to win what he called "...eighty pounds to start my own home café business..." It always failed to materialize.

None of us could ever hope to afford the Ford cars we built because of their expense: "Neenyosi zibenza zibutya – Even bees get to eat some of the honey they produce!" said the workers. It was a constant complaint that fell on deaf boss ears; I didn't think it ever even reached their ears. I sweated for my fifty-nine cents each hour, and bought clothes and LP's from America. The cars we built must have been heading for the rich provinces and cities of the Transvaal, Western Cape, Free State and Natal because I seldom saw them on local roads.

One morning I was returning from offloading a trolley when I found Vermaak next to his desk, talking to a process engineer, Lombard, about a part which Vermaak appeared to have no knowledge of. I reeled off the part number and Trim 1 location of that grommet as I passed them. They rushed after me, wanting me to repeat what I'd just said. I did, and offered to lead them to the part located at station 27, Trim 1. That little episode earned me promotion to the position of Unboxing checker and an extra five cents per hour. All I did then was open and check the pack-slip of every crate shipped to the plant from Dagenham, UK, tick every part my packers picked and told them which trolley to load it on. Some parts

were headed for Trim 1, others for Trim 2, or Mainline. I was now released from pulling trolleys behind me like a befucked donkey. I worked with a pen and a clip-board and earned better.

One of the trolley loaders had this sickening habit of disappearing for a while, leaving the other three sweating alone under tremendous pressure. I suggested that the matter be reported to Vermaak in the presence of the fellow so that he may defend himself.

“You see, Bobbie, you can’t accuse us of selling you out; we are reporting you because we are not happy with how you treat us; there’s a big difference,” says Veza, one of the guys. So we approached Vermaak and told on Bobbie in his presence. Selling out was a no-no those days of Black Consciousness; we were schooled never ever to sell a brother.

“Bobbie? Why? Why?” asked Vermaak, visibly angry.

“Hulle’s maal; hulle like nie vir my nie!” – They are mad; they don’t like me. Then he opened and closed his small bird-like mouth. He was lean, tall and non-aggressive.

I was shocked by the lie, but the other guys thought it was funny as they laughed and shook their heads sideways and moved away from him and the foreman. How could he say we didn’t like him when he was our friend?

That afternoon Bob invited us to help him build a ‘coffin’. He was always at his happiest when he built those miniature coffins for smuggling car jacks and batteries out of the plant. He was the quiet type, kept to himself, whistling under his breath like somebody with lots on his mind. At five in the afternoon, after work, I passed security at the gate with Bob and Veza, carrying the coffin sandwiched and cocooned within a bundle of scrap wood; I’m in front with the gate pass, the white security guy checks and stamps it. This is how I get the overtime dough Els is stingy with, thanks to Bobbie. “Siyazibhatala” – We are reimbursing ourselves – is how we justify the thefts.

Chapter 2

There was a half-crazed, forever scowling white guy who worked as the storeman on the Main line. The African workers called him Joy Lolly, I have no idea why. A real hillbilly if you ever saw one. There were daily line stoppages in his section because of parts shortages. Joy Lolly wasn't coping in his job. He was always dashing about, biting his tongue, his hands waving wildly flailing the air. The job was clearly driving him nuts.

I was hardly surprised, one morning, to hear that Joy Lolly had finally decided to throw in the towel. He wouldn't be coming back. Then I was offered his job. Now, the job of a line storeman is no baby bottom soft and smooth affair. Every car-body shell is a greedy consumer of thousands of big and small components. If even just one of these runs out of stock, then the entire production process of the manufacturing plant might come to a complete halt. A production standstill costs profits, and workers have to be sent home, meaning they lose wages. Any guy accountable for a line stoppage has no friends.

My new foreman on the Main line was a blond Charles Bronson look-alike, called Horak. The man had to deal with too much stress while supervising Joy Lolly and I could sense that he expected little change with me being on board as his new charge. He lived in Kensington, where Joy Lolly and the rest of the white guys came from. It was a poor white township of council built houses, similar to New Brighton.

KwaFord Township was a social responsibility project of Ford to house blacks, built with scrap wood from packing crates donated by the company. It was also known as Emaplangeni – Place of Planks – to the residents of New Brighton. It was all one bedroom hovels without internal plumbing, no electricity, and bucket system outside toilets. The toilets reminded me of a time when as kids, we teased the municipal shit-bucket haulers by holding our noses and muffled screams: "Mh, pooh!" and those men responded, "It's your mother's shit we're carrying!" And if you happened to be stupid enough to tease them like that when you couldn't outrun them, they simply emptied their buckets of shit over your head. I remember telling Sissy about it, and watched her laugh until tears flowed out of her eyes.

Residents of KwaFord relied on communal taps for domestic water. Paraffin stoves and coal braziers were used for cooking and candles and paraffin lamps for lighting. I lived in McNamee Village, across the street from KwaFord; an electrified area with water-borne sewerage. McNamee Village residents who defaulted on city council rent payments for their houses were transferred to cheaper- to- rent KwaFord, following a summons from council. I passed through KwaFord every morning on the way to work. This is where we disposed of Bobbie's scrap-wood 'coffin' after extracting the stolen jacks, batteries and coils. A woman who once lived as our next-door neighbour, Sis' Khanyelwa was the beneficiary of the scrap-wood.

I no longer had the VW Beetle. I took the car to a local mechanic for brake-bleeding and handbrake adjustment one Saturday morning, and left it with him. On returning later in the afternoon to fetch my car, I learned that a friend of the mechanic had taken it on a test drive, and never returned. I went and reported to the cops before going home that evening. It was like the sun had sunk permanently in my life, and I was ready to die. I lay awake in bed day and night unable to eat or sleep. On Monday afternoon, two sad cops and a township headman from the KwaZakhele rent office paid me a visit at home. They looked like men visiting to report the death of a family member. The car had been found completely wrecked in Seyisi Street in KwaZakhele. The KwaZakhele township manager, a Mr Shelver requested to see me the following morning.

It was the first time I'd seen a white man looking at me as if I was his long lost favourite son. The fifty-something man was all kind concern and care, he looked like he wanted to cry over my loss.

"What do you plan to do with the car now?" asked Mr Shelver.

"The police are handling the matter. The man who stole it has vanished, and I've instructed a lawyer as well to assist."

"Seeing that it's a complete write-off, won't you sell it to me?"

I was puzzled by the proposition. He must have seen that.

"Look, I build beach buggies; that's what I could do with the car," he explained himself.

I now see sense in that. It was a deal.

I realized I could be the owner of my own hovel in KwaZakhele as part exchange for the wreck. I found myself thinking: Isn't truly strange how life works at times? One minute I was so unhappy and sick with worry over my stolen, wrecked car; the next, some jackpot lands on my lap. Long-married men and women waited for ages to get a house in the townships; now here I was about to land one, and I wasn't even married.

It couldn't have come at a better time. I was now in a great relationship with the right kind of girl I felt I could share a future with. The sun was out dancing in the bluest sky of my life once more, and I was laughing a lot as in the past. When I was out walking my girl home after spending some time with her, some guys in the neighbourhood stopped me in the street to ask me to help them find a similar girl. I simply laughed it off. Crazy fools! My mother approved of her: what else could I want? Sissy had previously sneered at what she called my 'large variety of all kinds after kinds of strange girls'. There'd been too many short-lived trysts. Only the one with a girl called Mandisa had nearly blossomed into a full length affair.

Oh, Mandisa, Mandisa... I'd grown tired of quarrelling repeatedly with her over the same thing – her shebeen tours. I know some will call these double standards. I would go visit Mandisa at home and not find her because she was out cavorting from shebeen to shebeen with her drinking buddies. And then she would turn up late at night at my place a bit tipsy while I was sober. At first I would exhaust my fury with the most aggressive sex imaginable thinking that she would get the message and get the hell out of my life. I was like a dog hooked to a swollen bitch on heat. But I was wrong. When I finally told her, tongue hanging out from exhaustion, that it was over, she surprised me by pleading with me when she grudgingly accepted my request to desist from visiting:

“Ok, I can see that you're really serious about ending our thing; but can't we at least just continue having sex even if we are no longer together?”

What kind of crazy talk was this? I was so appalled I couldn't even respond. It sounded so ludicrous, I mean, how was that even possible: for her to come over like a cow in need of insemination, for me to mount on a regular basis? Not being in a relationship with her but to continue servicing her. Sure I liked her, she was tall and beautiful and a great joy to mount, but...

When I told one of the older guys I worked with, Mqabaqaba, he just looked at me strangely and chuckled:

“You’re such a fool to think that aggressive sex with a woman is a form of punishment!”

“What do you mean?”

“You’re lucky, man! She’s one of those women, the harder you naai her, the more you nail her to yourself, she’ll never want to leave you!”

I’d lain off booze and shebeen touring after numerous incidents of violence in the company of a former Lovedale College colleague. Kid, as my friend Makhonke was called, because he was a former champion amateur boxer, and was the one who had got me into Dulux Paints. It was him who also got me and the other guys to follow him to Ford. He got into fights quickly, and was often knocking down opponents with a lightning fast one-two combination of potent punches. I was always at his corner of the ring at Lovedale when he boxed. I was there the night he broke a Reformatory Juvenile prisoner’s jaw, and his own right wrist, in East London. He never failed with a left hook and right uppercut. I always provided prompt back-up with a fast-drawn knife, for I was too skinny and over-cautious to fight with fists. At Lovedale I was known as Mabhityi – the lean one, and I had got tired of being bullied by the bigger guys. So, I always got us out of nasty situations really quick because of my fast unexpected knife draw after every knock down, but I knew and expected our luck to run out at some stage.

Kid one-two punched a big tall guy in a grey overcoat and shorts, one Saturday night. I drew my knife and moved jet fast to separate them; I lunged at him, the man backed off slowly, crouching like a cornered animal, but he soon reached inside his coat, and pulled out what I presumed to be a nip of gin as he prepared to spring forth.

“Let go of him, Mpumi, let’s run!” I was a bit puzzled, and looked in Kid’s direction. Kid never ever told me to let go of a guy and run; it was always the other guy who ran from us. “He’s got acid, run!” We ran out of Grey’s Ntshinga Street shebeen, leaving behind that red eyed, evil giant. Christ, that was close! I thought to myself.

The following morning, Kid and I were out for a drink when we entered Mzala's shebeen in Msimka Street, right next to where we were the previous night. It was my first day in this thug riddled joint I'd always avoided because of its reputation. I'd heard of Mzala, but never seen him. I had frequented the street in the past, because Mandisa lived here. As I entered the tavern, I happened to turn my head to the right. Yes, it was Mzala the red-eyed owner of the place, whose eyes seemed to dilate on seeing me. I back stepped right into Kid as I retreated hurriedly without turning, or taking my eyes off the ugly giant who was sitting on the edge of a low divan. And suddenly I was in no mood for a drink; maybe later. I wanted to go home.

"Let's go check Saider," said Kid after regaining his breath and composure, well away from that place of knife-happy thugs.

"Who?" I asked.

"Maduna, in Connacher Street," he explained. Saider was also known as Maduna, his clan name.

That sounded better, for Connacher Street was in our neighbourhood, two streets away from our homes. Saider was both familiar and friendlier. When we arrived at his place, I pulled out my pack of Gold Dollar and lit up. Saider played the hit of the moment, a seven-single by the Three Degrees, "When will I see you again?" And he played it on and on, about three or four times, dancing to the tune after bringing cold beers. I felt hot and nauseous, and excused myself to go sit outside in the shade. It was a warm January Sunday noon. My mouth ran dry, but I had no desire for drink.

"I'm going home, Kid. Here, keep the fags; I don't want to smoke anymore," I handed him the rest of the cigarettes as I felt my heart palpitate, and the crown of my head shrink at the same time that my hands did likewise. There was an inexplicable strangeness around me, as though I was in an unknown foreign distant world.

"Let me walk you home," Kid offered, and we bade the crestfallen Saider goodbye.

At home, I headed straight for bed although I never slept in the daytime. I slept deeply like a heavily sedated patient. I start having hallucinations about three elderly women from the neighbourhood, with shawls around their shoulders. A strange drop of water dripped off the ceiling and landed on my forehead. I kept on wiping it off. Mother rushed into the bedroom

to investigate. She became distraught and demanded to know what was wrong with me. She rushed out to fetch uncle Vuyisile to get him to get me to the doctor in his car. I had become weak as a reed in the wind. She returned and frantically lifted my face to her bosom before performing mouth to mouth respiration on me. She and uncle helped load me into the back of his Ford Zodiac, and we were off to their church in Limba road where they expected to find Dr Nghona. The doctor came rushing to the car with his large black leather bag, and asked me questions about my condition, then started accusing me of doing drugs. He was wrong; I'd tried dagga and couldn't stand the senseless and pointless, uncontrollable laughing episodes. I rather enjoyed laughing naturally. He sedated me.

A week or two later I returned to work to start a new year. I was still weak. A colleague of mine who was eternally under the influence of what he called 'knowledge tobacco', took one long look at me and proclaimed:

"You're being slowly eaten up internally by impundulu" – lightning bird of witches. I didn't respond; just looked at him. "I'm taking you home with me after work; you've got to see old Maduna."

I dragged myself through that day until five, when I knocked off, and accompanied Mbuzeli to KwaZakhele, past his home. We stopped briefly at his parents' house where he introduced me to them and his younger sister, Namhla, before proceeding.

Old Maduna was one-eyed, tall, lean, fair complexioned and about seventy years of age. He smiled his acknowledgement of my friend as he responded to our greetings. "What's chasing you young men?" he asked, looking at me intently.

"Baw'uMaduna, it's about my friend here, Mpumelelo; something is wrong with him. He tells me that even the doctor his mother took him to believes it's dagga, but I know he doesn't smoke it." The old man jumped to his feet, surprisingly fast for his age, and moved towards his bedroom. I was wondering what was happening; regarding him as he disappeared into that dark room and reappeared even faster, charging at me, holding a half-jack of what looked like grease.

"You're about to run mad!" he said as he uncorked the bottle and forced it under my nose.

I inhaled the violent pungency of the bottle's contents and felt its cutting edge etch searing cold blue electric lines on the surface of my brain. He wet the cork stopper with the concoction and applied it to my scalp and both ears. The effect was swift and immediate; I sat upright and felt suddenly alive and in the present. It was as though I'd woken up from a long zombie sleep.

"You must thank your friend here, and never forget what he has done for you," Maduna spoke softly as he addressed me while applying the stuff gingerly as if taking care of a newborn. "You must return on Saturday if the sky is clear and the sun is out; if it's not, then don't bother to come, and come only on such a day. You're rotten from head to toe with etchings of witchcraft; I have to gouge them out with a razor."

He gave me a smaller bottle of the smelly ointment to use at home. I thanked him and bade him goodbye after paying him his 'satchel opening' fee.

It didn't take me long before I regained my good health. After a month or two I felt that I no longer needed Maduna's herbal concoctions. He had done well to incise my face, lips, chest, arms, ribs, feet and top of the head to remove those markings of witchcraft.

I hooked up with Kid again, but still refrained from drinking as before, and from touring shebeens. He asked me to accompany him to the Livingstone nurses home to visit a woman from East London he had fallen for. Many guys from New Brighton had turned the nurses' home into their stomping ground, but I never tried hard enough to land myself a woman there.

I thought about my Beetle. I thought about how another white man whose car I'd wanted to buy tried to rob me of my money. I'd seen the car advertised in the swop column of the Weekend Post and phoned the owner. He invited me to his Walmer home to see the car. I did, and was pleased. I went to withdraw the money and paid him. He told me to give him a week to get it road-worthy and licensed. I phoned him at the end of that week, but he told me about a starter bendix he had to replace before returning to the Traffic department. But then when I called him from a public phone the following week a woman answered and told me the man was in London.

"East London?" I asked.

“No, London, in England.”

My heart skipped a beat, and a cloud of darkness surrounded my head. I breathed painfully. I was tired when I got home and felt like a very old person. He’s in London with my money? What if he’s not coming back? I struggled to calm myself. A day or two later, when I was finally cool and composed I took a chance and went to the offices of the Department of Commerce in town to ask for advice. I expected to be turned away since such help always seemed to be meant for whites only. I was not willing to go to lawyers who would demand money before opening their mouths. The white lady at Reception seemed surprised to see me, but took me to the office of a gentleman who introduced himself as Geldenhuys. Mr Geldenhuys was friendly and pleased that I had thought of approaching him, saying he believed there were many other people in a situation similar to mine but who didn’t know about the help they could get from his office.

“Did he give you an invoice?” he asked.

“No.” He recorded the details of my case and told me to give him two weeks. Two weeks later I returned to see him and he seemed excited when I appeared. “We’re going to court. You’ve got to be there.”

I went to court on the date he gave me. The crook was there. He was charged with failure to issue an invoice, and failure to deliver goods that were paid for within thirty days, and fined on each charge. I was instructed to go fetch my money from him.

I got my cousin Vakele to accompany me, in his Ford Ranchero, to the man’s house one evening. When we got there the man had a gun in front of him on his dining table. I sure as hell was scared. But I liked the way bra Vaks just looked at him with his one eye, his hands in the pockets of his jeans and said nothing, a match stick hanging out of the corner of his mouth. It was like watching a cowboy movie. “I’ll never ever trust another black bastard again. I don’t ever even want to see another one again,” the man went on, “I’ll just shoot him.” At last, after his soliloquy and much gesticulating, he counted my money and gave it back to me, and we left.

When he started his van bra Vaks chuckled and asked, “Were you not scared, Teach?”

“Of course, I was!”

It was about this time that many young white men were being called up to fight border wars against Angolan and Rhodesian guerrillas, and they were dying and getting maimed daily. The South African Prime Minister, B.J. Vorster, was talking about détente and pushing Ian Smith to negotiate a solution with the African leaders in Rhodesia. The Cubans and the Russians were fighting on the side of Angola’s MPLA army to repel the invading South African Defence Force. In Mozambique, Samora Machel’s FRELIMO had succeeded in driving out the Portuguese, and that success had been celebrated by many black South Africans who were being harassed and imprisoned by the Security Branch. Fifty members of Black Consciousness organizations had fled to Botswana as a result of such harassment. SWAPO was fighting against the imposition of an Ovamboland homeland in South West Africa. The mood in the country was somewhat tense, and some whites had become trigger-happy.

Newspaper headlines were mostly about dead white soldiers, and featured photographs of crying young white widows and their mourning kids. There was little happiness in the nation. Whites fleeing troubled Mozambique and Rhodesia found our country to be a safer haven for themselves.

I was now at times experiencing excruciating headaches that compelled me to constantly seek treatment from Doctor Moodliar at the Exam Centre in Korsten. I never could tell what exactly precipitated the headaches, nor did the doctor diagnose the cause. The pain only subsided when I took pain killers and went to sleep.

I had become friends with Welcome, Mike Msimango and Tobsy Madaka (who later got abducted with Siphiwo Mthimkhulu and killed by the Security Branch). I spent my weekends with them listening to jazz and arguing over politics, movies and books. Welcome had a set of beach chairs arranged in the shade of a cavernous willow in front of his mother’s yard in Ferguson Road. It was then that I heard Stanley Turrentine’s “Salt Song” album, Welcome’s favourite LP, and also fell in love with it. I remember listening to Turrentine’s tenor sax with my eyes closed, imagining myself in the studio or the front row of a live show, watching the man blow his horn animatedly.

I met Vicky in the December of the year that Jimmy Cliff made a hit of Bob Marley's "No Woman No Cry". Mike, who lived in a lane across the street from Welcome, had put up a tent on the back lawn of his parents' home. I was sort of drifting romantically after breaking up with Mandisa. Mike had just met a new girl who came visiting him one afternoon in the company of her friend. And that friend was Vicky.

I walked Vicky home leaving Mike with the other girl, Nzwaki. I learned that she was from Zwide but was now staying briefly with relatives she was visiting in Connacher Street that December. My parting with Mandisa was now signed and sealed. And Jimmy Cliff was singing "No Woman No Cry".

Vicky's Connacher Street relatives happened to be co-congregants of my mother Sissy at the Bantu Church of Christ. They soon voiced their disapproval of the relationship. They sent Vicky back home. But Sissy had already met and liked her. The two women who mattered most in my life liked each other! I am the reticent kind while she was a talker who made me laugh. She was a beautiful young woman who told me an imaginative story of her circumstances. She was born in a semi-rural area of Port Elizabeth, Salisbury Park. I had no idea of such a place before I met her, yet it was accessible, not far from Kwa-17 (17th Avenue in Walmer). They were among the first Port Elizabeth victims of forced removals to the new township of Zwide when their community was turned into a whites-only suburb followed by Fairview. I found her story to be as fascinating as a movie. Her mother had dropped out of school when she'd become pregnant and left to live with her father in Uitenhage, returning to dump her baby, Vicky, with her grandma.

There was a writer by the name of Lawrence Tutu who used to write for the African supplement of the Daily Dispatch newspaper, "Indaba". Lawrence Tutu once wrote:

"When the lips of a woman you love tenderly touch yours, an emotional spasm, a wave of satisfaction and exhilaration passes through your body and the pace of your heart increases... After the kissing session you sit down to absorb slowly the effects of your experience... A lot of good wishes and noble thoughts about the woman flood your soul... Love transforms you into a new creature..." I could not have said it better.

Chapter 3

“Cilibe, where is your shortage report? It’s close to twelve o’clock, you know.” Horak would ask.

An important part of my duties as a storeman was the compiling of a daily shortage report. Shortages had to be reported long before the parts ran out, before they led to a line stoppage. This entailed total vigilance and continuous checking and physical counting of stock and phoning suppliers for local material. Among locally produced parts in my section were carpets and underfelt, air-cleaners, radiators, jacks, door panels, tyres and wheel trim rings. It was dangerous to assume that what looked like enough to last three days was indeed the right stock. I discovered soon after replacing Joy Lolly that the line was often stocked with useless stuff that was not meant for local production. For example, I found a load of under-dashboard panels that were designed for left hand drive cars. When I showed these to Horak, explaining that we didn’t have enough stock despite the large number of the item, he struggled to see what I meant.

“Come to the line, I’ll show you.” So I took him to a car on the assembly line.

As soon as it made sense to him he rushed off to Vermaak as though he had made that discovery himself:

“Deon, this stuff is left hand drive!”

That load of panels had to be shipped back. We had to ‘rob’ cases in the yard to replace that stock.

Sometimes parts that were unusable arrived from overseas. This led to stoppages if not detected in time. I alerted the Quality Control guys who double checked to verify my claim before sending such material to the Salvage department for reworking. Gear levers and engine mountings that needed re-drilling were often the problem. Horak seemed amazed each time he came to check if I needed any help and found I didn’t need him.

“Problem?” he would ask.

“No.”

The relationship between me and Horak was one of detachment from my side and respect from his. There was no naked racism towards me from his side. He seemed quite ignorant of black people as was common with most whites, but I sensed that he was extra careful not to offend me. What little there was in the form of conversation emanating from him revealed his gross ignorance. I remember him asking me once after he told me a story he had just heard about some Zulu guys who had committed murder and then removed the eyes of their victim with the belief that photographic evidence from the eyes would incriminate them. Horak then asked:

“Are the Zulus kaffirs too?”

“What?”

“Okay, never mind. Sorry, man.”

Once he complained to me about his car having been broken into at home one night: “I have a suspect, an unemployed layabout in my neighbourhood. But if I find out that it’s not him but a kaffir, I’ll drive a sword through that kaffir’s heart and out of his back...”

I kind of sympathised with him. Apartheid was enforced racial separation that ensured that the races knew absolutely nothing about one another. We lived in the same country like people living on separate planets, imagining what the others lived like. The whites acted like they were some gods, and many in my community believed they were somehow close to gods. They could inflict all manner of injustice and cruelty on us without us blacks being able to avenge ourselves because they had the backing of the police, the army and the justice system. If a man in the community got arrested for assaulting a white man, which was very rare, the grapevine would come alive with the news: “Ubeth’umLungu!” He has beaten a white man! And that guy would be a legend in the townships.

If it was the other way round, it would be normal, and not news. Any African who went to the cops to report being beaten by a white would be regarded as mentally retarded and chased away from the charge office. I was expected to be assaulted by each and every and any white man who crossed my path. It happened so many times to me and my friends that

we considered it to be normal. My grandpa simply laughed when I once asked him whether he had ever been assaulted by a white man. His response was: “My child, the white man really got us!”

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I could see why Joy Lolly and the rest of the white guys couldn't cope and didn't last: the job was highly stressful. I was smoking twenty cigarettes a day. Even then the bosses didn't take it kindly when they found me standing and smoking in the designated smoking zones. Guys would shout: “Here comes Veitch!” or “Quick, here comes Whepton!” And then I had to kill the cigarette and vanish between the parts bins along the assembly line. Veitch was the Material Handling manager, and Whepton the plant manager. On rare occasions the cigar-chomping American managing director from Ford House in the city centre, Doug Kitterman, would dash into the plant on a surprise visit, and we would be forced to scurry out of sight and be dead quiet. It was hectic.

Main line was especially tough to run because it was where the car was completely assembled before it was started and driven off to FAI – Final Assembly Inspection. It was all loose parts until that stage. All along the Main line hoists and the metal conveyor belt floor had been moving the car from station to station to the different operators on different lines. Linked to the Main line was the Chassis line where the engine was mounted onto the chassis, and body shells hoisted from Trim 2 were dropped from above, and drilled to fasten the two together before the car slid down to be fitted with wheels. I was responsible for feeding both areas. I started each day by walking along this route, checking every bin and talking to the operators about potential shortages. My walk extended to FAI, Body-shop, Salvage and Paint-shop to check if there were no shortages, and follow up on reworked material.

Some of the guys working on the Main line were fond of gambling on horse racing. I didn't care much about racing, but I still checked the horses and their numbers and offered opinions. I happened to make a selection for another guy to bet on one Friday afternoon, and that jackpot paid 20 thousand rand. When I returned to work on Monday the guys were all excited:

“We know you’ve won the jackpot,” said some of them.

“What jackpot?”

“The numbers you selected...”

“No, I marked those numbers for Ngonyama Twala to play, I didn’t bet on them.”

I could see that they did not believe a word of what I was telling them.

When a month or two later I bought myself another car, a Chev 2500, it reinforced their suspicion that indeed I’d hit that jackpot. An idea had hit me: since it was unlikely for me to win a jackpot, how about throwing some money on those ponies but save three times the equivalent of that amount in the bank? And it worked. I’d saved so much money it became that easy to buy a car.

Actually my steady relationship with Vicky also had much to do with my decision to buy the car. She lived in Zwide Township and I had to take a bus or two taxis to visit her. I had to travel past dangerous Njoli Square each time I did. One evening, on my way back from one such visit, I witnessed an older guy being robbed just behind me. I was waiting for the bus at the bus shelter when I heard the sound of someone tripping and falling. I heard the man exclaim:

“Oh Thixo wam, imali yabantwana bam!” – Oh my God, my children’s money!

I turned to see the man sprawled on the pavement, his lunch box lying not far from his head, and three youngsters going through his pockets like a pack of vultures. A bus stopped exactly at that moment, and I stepped on board, and watched through the window as it pulled away. That was the last time I rode a bus.

I could now take Vicky to the cinemas in Korsten and not worry about missing the last bus back to the township. I could afford to see any shows at any hour. I also could now visit her at home without risking my life around Njoli Square where the Okapi-happy tsotsis roamed like landlords of the place. But I soon regretted buying the car. The Security Branch detectives were driving around in an identical car. Whenever I approached, guys scattered in different directions shouting: “Ingobiya, ingobiya!” – Cop, cop!

The townships had come alive with unrest. Thozamile Botha and a group of Zwide residents complained about the poor quality of council-built houses they'd just acquired. Thozamile, known as Bra Thoz, worked as a Time Study officer in the mezzanine office next door to Personnel. KwaFord residents protested against the quality of their own properties and also formed a residents' association. The wooden hovels of Ford were razed to the ground, and new concrete slab homes and a portion of more upmarket houses were built in their place.

Bra Thoz's boss got to hear about his civic activities and was not impressed. Botha told of a white man who had predicted that he was about to lose his job or end up in prison. Jim Morrey, the Time Study office boss, soon forced him to choose between his community duties and his job. Morrey was part of the white Rhodesian exodus into South Africa. There were many of them in the plant. Bra Thoz called it a Hobson's choice. Morrey fired him. I revered Bra Thoz, so Morrey was going to shit!

I was livid with anger. Much as I was used to South African whites treating me like shit, how could any white man from anywhere, just come into my country and have the power to also treat me like shit? And fire me as he pleased because the colour of his skin qualified him as a boss over me? Here was Bra Thoz being victimized by a white foreigner, and I had to accept it because the man was white and had the right to do it because South African whites allowed him to do it. I secretly vowed to make the white man pay for this. All the whites at Ford were going to pay. I had no idea yet how I was going to do it. I went from man to man in the plant talking about the wrongness of the deeds of the white man.

As I was brooding and plotting, I wrote poems about how the white man raped Africa and ripped my country's vagina and breasts. I sent my poems to *Staffrider* magazine, but the editor Chris van Wyk returned most of them with apologies describing them as "unremarkable". I was far from discouraged. I was a member of the local group of angry young poets who organized public poetry readings at the St Stephens Anglican church hall in Grattan Street. I wrote about Bantu kak education. I seldom went to bed before thinking about effective ways of making the white man suffer, to reduce him to a mere mortal like the rest of us he called savages, barbarians and fokken dom kaffirs. My Lord's prayer was 'Let the white man shit'.

Pamphlets calling for Botha's reinstatement were speedily produced by night and distributed among the workers.

"We want Botha back!" reverberated throughout the plant. Somebody switched the lights off and on, and the assembly line operators abandoned their stations leaving the conveyor belt to run unattended. We flowed like a huge wave out of the plant and hoisted Botha on our shoulders. The directors came from Ford House to address us just outside the main gate. The press came to cover the event.

"I am planning to blow this whole thing bigger," said Bra Thoz to me. He intended expanding his Association by merging it with the KwaFord one under former schoolteacher Besman to form the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organization (PEBCO). He invited me to be part of the steering committee for the youth wing of his organization. I was joined by his nephew, Vukile, plus Ngcobo Nguna, Monde Mditshwa and Zolisa Mlahleki. I was almost always with Bra Thoz at home when he addressed the press. Security Branch officers referred to us youth members as Botha's lieutenants. I was no lieutenant, but I was glad to be associated with a fearless man who didn't care for the white man, a man who still found the time to teach his unfortunate people at night school. I was to do likewise later when I also taught English at night at Newell high.

Soon the Thembalethu Residents Association under businessman and KwaZakhele Rugby Union founder, Dan Qeqe joined PEBCO, only to be followed by Phalo Tshume and Lizo Pityana (another of the three activist brothers) and the New Brighton Residents' Association.

"You must read, study!" was Bra Thoz's constant prompt. He never said why. He didn't say we were to do it in preparation for governing the country in future, which I think was why he prompted us in the first place.

Around the same time, I was elected chairman of Port Elizabeth Young Arts Association (Peyarta) in which I served with the late poets, Fezile Tshume and Batata Kani, the bassist Lex Futshane and brilliant photographer Mputhumi Nkewu. I continued writing vengeful angry poems with the theme of violence. We hosted the playwright Matsemela Manaka and his "EGoli" and "Imbumba" casts that included the Sebe brothers, David and Tshimano,

poet Ingoapele Madingoane and author, Muthobi Mutloatse. Muthobi worked as features editor for *The Voice* newspaper of the SA Council of Churches. It was through his encouragement that I began freelancing as a reporter for that paper. The biggest story I covered at the time was the forced removal and resistance of the people of Walmer Township.

There were two other playwrights in New Brighton that I was close to, whose work had attracted the attention of the Security cops – Khaya Mqayisa who wrote “Confused Mhlaba” and Reverend Maqina of “Give us This Day.”

I had been writing poems and short non-fiction articles since my high school days. My English teacher at Newell High predicted and repeated these words each time he read my essays: “You’ll become a writer.” I didn’t believe him, so I paid little attention. I thought my writing was angry bullshit. I had never met, or read a book by a black writer until much later when I became exposed to the Black Consciousness writings of Doctor Simon Gqubule, Chabane Manganyi, and others from the Theological seminary in Alice. I then discovered Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiongo. It was Achebe who really moved me to want to write. I enjoyed reading his dialogue especially, the way his characters were so like elderly people from my own community in every day conversation. I was impressed with his portrayal of minute details about his characters such as how Okonkwo’s heels didn’t touch the ground when he walked, because I had a younger brother who walked like that.

At Lovedale I attracted the attention of English teachers, who were also responsible for producing the college magazine. I had written an angry letter after I was assaulted by two white ticket examiners, who threw my full suitcase out of the window of a moving train into the night on my way back after holidays. All that suffering because of the sin of travelling in an empty whites-only coach when the black section was overflowing with people. Miss White and Mr Harlech-Jones expressed their sympathy but feared to publish my article as they felt it would ‘cause trouble’ for them. They said that I wrote so well.

My hatred of white men was already deeply rooted in me by then. This was not the first time I’d been assaulted by some of them. I’d been told so many times by them that I was a dom kaffir that I almost came to believe it, I found myself sometimes acting stupidly among them. I was initiated to white cruelty and their inexplicable hatred of black people as a very

young boy. The memory of that assault, that had left me black eyed, bruised, bloodied and crazed with anger, and the loss of all my prized clothes, stayed with me for years. My parents were almost paupers. I could only imagine what they had gone through to get me those clothes. It was the first time in my life that I possessed so much clothing. I feared even writing to inform them of that personal tragedy as I knew what it would do to them. I became tortured by intense hatred, fear and distrust for white men. I was only seventeen when those men violated me, and they were old enough to be my fathers.

As a younger child I had witnessed similar men, also in uniform, assaulting my father and dragging him shoeless and in pyjamas out of our house in the middle of the night. I later witnessed a scuffle between him and three cops who overpowered him and threw him headlong into the back of a police truck, and listened to his head crashing against the metal body of that vehicle. I hated all whites. I don't even want to talk about an earlier event at an accident scene in Commercial Road when, as a nine years old boy a white cop fell me with a violent clap across my face just for spectating. I spent my life running to avoid them like a dog which expects to be kicked or stoned when seeing some young boys. There had also been incidents at a stream behind the General Tyre factory when white guys materialized from nowhere when I was enjoying a swim with friends, and grabbed our clothes before stoning us. There's nothing as terrible as being stoned while swimming, when you were forced to stay under water for longer than a fish to avoid missiles. I remember finally surfacing and hurriedly leaving my clothes behind to run naked all the way home only to face Sissy, who demanded to see the clothes she had bought me, the new clothes that the long eared, green eyed, speckled faced, Satanic white guys had confiscated.

On holiday from Lovedale, I once walked down Strand Street in the company of a visiting uncle from the Transkei when I made way on the pavement for an approaching white man, but just as he was passing he hit me hard with an elbow in the solar plexus. With my hands in the front pockets of my jeans I just keeled over on the spot. I lost my speech. I opened my mouth trying to alert my uncle who was ahead of me and not aware of what had happened. Pain that excruciating is unforgettable.

At Lovedale I was caught between the impulse to skip the country to go join Umkhonto we Sizwe because of my anger, and the fear of what that action would do to my mother as a consequence. I hated disappointing my mother.

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I fitted a tan coloured vinyl top cover on the roof of my car, chrome mag wheels and balloon tyres, which differentiated me from the Security Branch car there and then. The tyres came from inside the plant. An eternally smiling soft spoken co-worker named Edgar threw a set of five of them over the fence. I felt no remorse for such thefts from Ford since Ford was also stealing from me. It was reverse exploitation. It was just like in boxing, the other guy throws a punch, I also punch back harder until I win.

Guys milled around the car marvelling at the stunning transformation. Even traffic cops and the police stopped me just to chat about the car, and ask me where I worked and what job I did. Black guys of my age who drove fancy cars were very rare at that time. It happened all the time when I went to fetch Vicky from work. She was always amazed by the attention.

My job allowed me to roam around the plant and so I could scatter seeds of unrest. The Time study guys, Bra Thoz's work mates such as Dumile Makanda and Mthuthu Benelwa, also moved freely talking to the workers, surreptitiously passing pamphlets. A strike to demand his return became that much easy to organize. The plant came to a standstill. What had started in Soweto as the June 1976 schools' protests had spread to Port Elizabeth, and now sort of coalesced with these other protests.

The spirit of freedom had arrived in the townships of my city.

Human Resources officers thanked us workers for conducting ourselves in a disciplined manner when we downed tools for the first time. We dissuaded some of our guys from attempting to vandalize cars on the assembly line.

Africa Maqolo was the one who forever lifted our spirits by leading us in song. We marched en-masse to Reverend James Haya's Anglican Church hall in KwaZakhele singing freedom songs. We elected a Ford Workers Committee with Bra Thoz as our chairman.

Ford invited us and Botha back. But since they had fired all of us, they claimed they were now re-employing us. Bra Thoz said no, Ford had to reinstate us. The man had taught us a new word: 'reinstatement'. We decided to remain outside on strike until we were reinstated. Ford called the SA Defence Force army into the company grounds to face us. We later found out that the army was responding in accordance with an agreement with Ford, according to a document we got hold of called 'The Mott Principles on Evacuation from South Africa'.

The workers tried to flee, scared to see armed soldiers. Among those army vehicles were the very Cortina pickup bakkies we built, in SA Defence Force colours.

"Sit down! They won't shoot you seated," called Botha. I doubted that at first, but somehow it made sense to me. I couldn't believe that, even cruel as they were, they would dare shoot us sitting down.

We all sat on the lawn at Ford waiting to be killed by apartheid soldiers called in by the company. A fine drizzle began to fall as we watched and waited for the soldiers to leave. Fred Ferreira the Human Relations Director came to address us. I tried to ask him a few questions, but instead of answering he invited me to his office. To this day I do not recall what I had said to earn that invitation. "Don't go, don't go! He wants to bribe you!" the guys shouted as I just stood there stupefied by the invitation. I never went.

That night a group of our comrades was rounded up and detained by the Security Branch. They were charged with intimidation and appeared at the High Court in Grahamstown. We had to engage a lawyer to represent them.

The Whites threatened to strike against Ford's decision to reinstate us, and against what they claimed was the Blacks' indiscipline in the use of now desegregated toilets, canteens and locker rooms. It was incredulous. I had no idea what they meant by their shit talk. A guy by the name of Ferreira, leader of the Yster en Staal Union was under pressure from his members to get Ford to reverse all the decisions the company had taken when dealing with our workers. They hated the idea that we would be paid for all the time we were on strike. But that attitude boomeranged when the Engine plant guys next door downed tools over racist talk by some whites over the same desegregation of facilities.

The strike dragged on for far longer than we had anticipated, three months, until we were compelled to approach the South African Council of Churches for help. Bishop Desmond Tutu responded and requested to pay us a visit. The workers were all excited by the news. The day the bishop came to Port Elizabeth I was instructed by the union to fetch him from the airport. I was to see him in person for the first time. He was very friendly, warm and down to earth that I was surprised. I'm accustomed to people of that stature who act as though they are far superior to all other living beings. But the first thing the bishop said to me after greetings, in the language I'm used to in the townships:

"Hey, la maBhulu ayabhayiza neh?" – Hey, but these Boers are confused neh?

"Why, bishop?" I was thrown off guard by the expression. What a surprise to learn that the bishop was a kasi bra!

"I've just been told that they are waiting for me near Grahamstown. They must think that I'm on my way there."

We drove to the Centenary Hall where our members waved their placards, sang and danced as if possessed ngumoya – by the spirit. They erupted and cheered when the bishop made his appearance. Some whistled joyously. I felt proud of having chauffeured the great man.

"Apartheid is more evil than communism!" said the bishop, eliciting even more whistling and cheering.

Soon after the bishop returned to Johannesburg, we received a hefty sum of money from the SA Council of Churches which we shared equally among the workers.

It was a difficult time for the leaders. I remember one guy approaching me and calling me aside:

"Mpumi, my wife has left me because of the strike."

"Why would any woman leave her husband because he is on strike at work? Do you really believe that she's left you because of the strike?"

"I don't know. But she's been so unreasonable since the strike began. She was demanding money even though she knew there was no income."

“This is the time when families show solidarity to their members as we are doing as workers, your woman is rather acting like an enemy.” There wasn’t much I could do for the man unfortunately. I stopped short of telling him to forget her and move on with his life. I believed that the monetary relief from the SACC would help in instances of this nature.

The second occasion Bishop Tutu visited the city he was a guest of his church in Gelvan Park. We went to see him about the possibility of raising an additional amount of money for the rest of our members.

“I’m afraid the Council of Churches has a deficit at this stage, so we cannot help you,” I could read the concern in his face. He was a jovial person normally, but this time I could see he was far from happy. It certainly got me worried because I somehow felt it was a permanent position that would mire his organization in trouble eternally.

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The townships of Port Elizabeth were under the control of Louis Koch and his white township managers and black headmen and Urban Bantu Council sellouts. Koch was forever in the newspapers. As the man in charge of all the townships in our part of the province he was better known to us than any other Afrikaner leader in the country. He controlled our homes, beer halls and community halls. The halls were the first structures to be torched by angry mobs frustrated by harsh apartheid rule. The state armed the headmen and recruited and armed a new brigade of men known as ‘the chaklas’ or ‘kitskonstabels’ who were as brutal and vicious as, if not more so, than the regular apartheid cops. Eighty percent of all money collected by the government from rent and ‘Shake-shake’ beer sales, including a levy on African labour employers, went into the SA Bantu Trust Fund for the maintenance of so-called homelands. All African families rented their homes from Koch’s councils. When I applied for a dompas three years earlier I had been forced by my ward headman to choose a homeland I belonged to, “I don’t have one, I was born here in Port Elizabeth,” I told him. He refused to stamp my papers until I’d chosen one. “Well, why don’t you choose it yourself? I know nothing about homelands.” He wrote ‘Ciskei’ and stamped my documents. That made me mad, and I vowed to hit back.

Mr Shelver had called me to his office and sent me in the company of a couple of his headmen to a house in Seyisi, which he said would be mine, all we had to do was kick out whoever we found there. The old occupier was not home. The headmen told me it was now my house and therefore my responsibility to inform the occupier when I found him. They had simply kicked the door and thrown out some sticks of furniture and an ancient wrought iron bed with a kayo (coir) mattress as I stood watching. A woman neighbour told me she'd lost count of the number of times that man had been kicked out of that hovel, he simply pulled his stuff back inside. The headmen had grown exasperated and tired of throwing him out until Shelver saw me as part of his solution to the problem. I certainly didn't mind.

I returned later in the evening and found the old guy standing staring wistfully at his belongings. I introduced myself as the new owner of his pigsty.

"Why did they throw these things on my seedlings?" he asked.

I had no answer. Why would one who was being thrown out of a house whose rent he didn't bother to pay be more worried about some seedlings? What a fool. I told him it was okay with me if he wanted to hang around still, and spend the night there. I was in no hurry to move in. I was no better than him because I had no furniture to move in, and I needed him to play a security role. Nothing in the man's demeanour made me feel any sympathy for him, especially when he boasted:

"They kicked me out of that house on that corner, and I moved into this one. I don't care, I'll get another house."

I got to hear of a family in Connacher Street in New Brighton that would willingly exchange that hovel with their even smaller house, and we did an exchange.

I drove to a Reverend Bokhwe in Zwide with my girlfriend, Vicky. We wanted to get married, and got my friend Totoma Nyathi and his girlfriend to sign as witnesses. A sad looking seemingly sickly man, Bokhwe told us he couldn't marry kids. She was only nineteen, I was twenty-two. She needed parental approval. We went to fetch her mother, and Bokhwe performed the ceremony. No fanfare or glittery shit.

My parents were full of concern.

“How do you know her parents? What kind of people are they?” Sissy piled on the questions, scaring me. Dad said very little, simply shaking his head. The following week I got my grandfather, Sissy’s father, and uncle Dyeyi to go ask for permission from Vicky’s maternal grandparents who had raised her, to marry and pay lobola. This was a rather fucked up order of things, but it worked.

I had witnessed the arranged marriages of two of my uncles and was determined to do my own thing in that sphere of my own life. I felt that involving grandpa in the negotiation after I’d made my choice of a girl would be enough, and ameliorate my avoidance of considering their choice of girl. I didn’t want to blame others in the event the relationship failed later.

Marriage was a time to rethink my life. That burning desire to further my studies had never died. I had now secretly made up my mind to study from home by correspondence. I studied Marketing. Shelver’s gift of a hovel fitted my plans quite snugly. I’d thought of adding extra rooms to my parents’ cramped house for space to study, but I knew I would have to move eventually to make room for my younger siblings. The meaning of determination was one thing I learnt from Gilbert Siphon Budaza, my English teacher at Newell. He taught me to work diligently towards achieving my goals. He had also studied through Unisa and obtained all his degrees there, including an MA.

There were numerous former Robben Island prisoners at Ford. Siphon Hina and Douglas Tyutyu were two of them. Hina fitted rear lamps in Trim 2, while Tyutyu was a lone spray painter at paint shop. Hina, known as comrade Mamie, invited me to meet some other comrades. Soon I was a member of ANC, walking all over the city meeting people at bus shelters, all of us pretending we were waiting for a bus. I renamed myself Reggie as I had to use a guerrilla name. We met on park benches, talking, discussing while looking straight ahead. If any contact failed to make it on time we dispersed. No one was allowed to be more than ten minutes late. I met comrades Mike, Oom Ben Fihla, Spider, Z. Manona, Prince, Nceba. Each new person introduced was a member of various cells. I in turn had to recruit two new members to form yet a new cell. I pulled in Les Bucwa and Zim Duna. ANC material was shared and distributed. Discussions were about revolutions. My hero was Mao Tse-tung because of his transformation of rural China. I read banned books about how Mao had forced peasants to remain in their rural communities and grow food for the rest of the

population, and transform their own villages. New industries in agro-processing and textiles sprang up in those communities. I had such a dream for my country and the continent. I was also impressed by Russia's five year plans. I began adopting a similar plan for my personal life. I also never tired of reading about Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh, although I was no supporter of his violent suppression of his political opponents. I admired the courage he and his comrades displayed in their guerrilla war against the French.

The network of cells was ever expanding even on the shop-floor. Guerrilla armed training was taking place in the townships. It was basic stuff like how to handle grenades and disassemble and reassemble an AK47. MK – Umkonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the banned African National Congress – were already inside the country, training cadres. Comrade Fuzile Tsewu from the Engine plant next door got arrested with a VW Kombi load of AK47s which he had not even bothered to conceal.

My wife went to join my parents to serve them as an accepted daughter in law, umakoti, doing her ukuhota duties in line with tradition. She was expecting our first child, news that excited them tremendously. The boy was born months later, albeit prematurely. Father drunkenly prayed daily for his grandson in a "cubity" (his word for incubator). He promptly named him Tom after Tom Thumb. Mother named him Phumelela – Succeed.

Father exclaimed: "The Chiliba name shall never cease!" For that was our real surname, an uncaring white official at the Bantu Affairs offices had given dad the wrongly spelt name of Cilibe in his new identity document when he applied years earlier, and chased him off when he complained. And so the entire family was stuck with that surname, so Chiliba had already ceased in a way.

I doted on my boy. I heaped all sorts of toys on him just as father did with us when we were kids. He enjoyed his ringing plastic telephone more than the others. I enjoyed laying on the carpet his battery operated racing car track and watch the cars with him. Grandpa came to visit and found me playing like that with the kid:

"The child needs a mate now," said grandpa when he was about two years of age.

I looked over at Vicky and she laughed.

“But right now I think he’s fine.” I told grandpa.

A strange incident occurred around this time. I had been fast asleep when I felt Vicky’s s elbow on my ribs. It was well past one in the morning. I opened my eyes reluctantly and found her looking at me questioningly:

“Where’s the child?”

“What?”

“The baby? Where is he?”

I jumped off the bed and went to switch on the light near the door. The boy was standing right there, behind the door facing the wall smiling as if playing with other kids.

There were moments when I was scared. Moments when I thought of the giants and cannibals I had heard about as a kid when grandma and aunt Notozi told me stories. I thought about how ineffective I would be in attempting to defend my family if such cannibals kicked the damn door to attack us. It was on such moments that I moved the baby from the middle of the bed between us, and held Vicky against me throughout the night while she in turn held onto the baby teaspoon fashion until we all felt safer and more secure. So many people had laughed at us and called us a family of kids. But we were happy, we were a happy family. When I narrate the story of the missing baby some people tell me the child was playing with a Thikoloshe that night.

It was a year later that our baby girl Biggy was born. Sissy named her Siphokazi – Gift. My son doted on her, surprising me with questions such as:

“Unayo ipipi uBiggy, tata?” – Does she also have a penis?

Sissy got along well with Vicky, going with her frequently to church. She was visibly happy to have a molokozana – daughter-in-law – and seemed to be parading her for all to see.

“A woman becomes your equal once you sleep with her. You can no longer treat her otherwise even if she’s far younger than yourself,” she surprised me with those words once, and I could find no words to respond with since I had no idea what’d prompted the lecture.

I learnt from her about the meaning of isiThembu, the traditional practice of marrying more than one wife: “Even marrying a woman who already has children of her own by another man constitutes isiThembu. There’s always the likelihood that the father of her children may return as he has the right to see his children and their mother...”

When I told some of my friends about these conversations with Sissy they were amazed that I was able to have such talks with her, they told me they could never converse like that with their own mothers. I was lucky.

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Some workers approached their trade union, the blacks only Union of Automobile Workers, to intervene in our strike, but the union had refused on the grounds that not all of us were their members: That made us decide to all join the union en-bloc. Their officials came to the plant daily, signing up new members. By the second week, when we had all been signed up, we demanded that the officials call a general meeting. We were now joined by guys from General Motors. At that meeting at the Jarman Hall in Korsten, we demanded the resignation of those old union officials. Naturally, those officials refused to hand over their union documents to us, claiming that the attempted takeover was unconstitutional. I knew nothing about trade unions, had not even bothered to join when the rest of the guys had done so, yet I was in front trying to grab the books out of the union president’s hands. He climbed on a chair, raised his arms to get them out of reach. Johnny Mke was a short man.

“It’s no-no use holding on to-to those documents just because you-you’re-re clinging to-to power,” stammered one of my irate friends, Welcome, making me laugh. I was hearing that term ‘clinging to power’ for the first time.

When it became clear that we couldn’t hijack the union that easily, we met to study a copy of their constitution brought to us by a chain-smoking Max Madlingozi and some of the guys from GM. Across the road from the plant in one of the new Ford concrete slab houses, lived Mthuthu Benelwa, a Time Study guy at whose house we met daily after work to convert that constitution into our own. There wasn’t much to change really. We simply removed with Tippex the name of the union and changed ‘ballot’ to ‘a show of hands’ wherever else those words appeared on the document. We then laboured on a name for our organization until

we were satisfied with Motor Assemblers and Component Workers Union of South Africa, MACWUSA.

It was at Mthuthu's house that we were interviewed by reporter Steven Friedman for *The Star* or *Rand Daily Mail*, I can't remember which. We were later interviewed at Bra Government Zini's KwaZakhele home by a tall and slim guy in jeans by the name of Charles Nqakula of the *Daily Dispatch*. I was impressed by the guy for I'd heard that he was a communist, and was constantly harassed and detained by the Security Branch until he fled to exile.

Thozamile Botha was by this time banned by the government from attending gatherings, and couldn't work. Bra Gov (Zini) took his place as chairman. Phalo Tshume and Lizo Pityana of the New Brighton Residents' Association were also banned. Mono Badela, the indefatigable Evening Post reporter who covered our gatherings was also banned. Despite all that, Bra Thoz would arrive at my house at dawn and tell me of all the places he had been the previous night, "Last night I was in Queenstown, I met a very old former Robben Island prisoner." He worked by night like a wizard. I accompanied him to Walmer Township where he went to recruit an old comrade, Mr Hole, to join and lead PEBCO in that township, and to do likewise with Moki Cekisani and other comrades. I was always amazed at his fearlessness and appetite for work. I was encouraged to also work that hard with determination. I had nothing to lose. He was forced to flee the country into exile following a series of detentions by the Security Branch. His house had been petrol bombed and his wife badly burnt.

Suddenly, civic organizations were springing up in every town. The Uitenhage Black Civic Organization that was led by Fikile Kobese who also introduced MACWUSA at Goodyear, was first. Kobese was also a playwright of note in Uitenhage. Members of a rival union at Goodyear conspired to have Kobese fired. He then worked for the union full time.

We received delegations from Firestone and the General Tyre companies, and then guys from Feltex. We had to turn many guys away as we were still forming and imbiza ibingekavuthwa – the pot wasn't ready yet. We co-opted some of the guys from those factories into our steering committee. Some guys came from the Goodyear Tyre company in Uitenhage. Many new applicants were not even employed in the car manufacturing and

components industry, so we had to form a separate general union to accommodate them. That is how the General Workers Union of South Africa grew alongside MACWUSA.

We roped in Thobile Mhlahlo and a few other comrades in the leadership of GWUSA although we still handled negotiations with management of members' companies. GWUSA grew like a forest fire with members coming from firms that employed and exploited women mostly. They came from textiles, bottling and hides & skin companies. Siphon Pityana, Bra Barney's youngest brother who'd been active in the Congress of South African Students, came on board as union organiser. He joined Ntonga "Stix" Singatha, a popular rugby player who'd previously played for Kwazakhele Rugby Union with the Watson brothers, with whom our union also had a close bond. Themba Duze was our first organiser after he was fired from the Ford Engine plant following a fight with a white guy who'd called him a gorilla.

Ford brought into the Struandale Cortina plant Coloured workers from their other plants with the hope that they would weaken us by refusing to join our strikes. Those guys became our first recruits when we started our recruitment drive. Our union wasn't race based. Foremen and managers began harassing our members. We forced the company to recognize our shop stewards even though we had no union recognition agreement with them yet. Workers who were members of other unions were resigning and crossing over to ours. Ford responded swiftly by demoting Bra Gov, Makanda and Dennis Neer who had ascended to foremanship.

Horak became my instant and constant shadow all over the plant.

"Your mistaken belief that you people will one day take over this country is like my belief that one day I'll win a jackpot on the horses," said Horak to me one day. He enjoyed baiting me with those types of remarks.

"It's not a dream, it's a reality towards which we are working so hard to achieve with conviction," I responded in an angry voice.

How could he have known that some of the "terrorists" every white man was talking about were employees who looked them in the face every day? Would he believe it that the quietly spoken Tyutyu in paintshop had grenades taped to the bottom of his dining table at

home? But then I learnt of some naysayers about armed struggle even within the ANC. I read about eight men in London led by one George Mbele who were expelled from the organization for disputing that a guerrilla struggle could be successfully waged against apartheid. At that very moment, a man described by the racist apartheid government as “a dangerous terrorist” living in exile, Chris Hani, was rumoured among us cadres to be holed up right in our township in Connacher Street. I remember another black guy at the plant saying to me: “Cilibe, soze niwenze nto amaBhulu!” – You can do nothing to the Boers!

The only white guy I ever saw working as an operator in the entire plant worked on the Chassis line, and had got into a fight with Jumbo Neer, Dennis’ youngest brother, who was training him on the job. He didn’t last long however. I heard a pig-like squeal one morning as that chubby white guy in overalls ran off the line in the direction of one of the exits from the plant, with Jumbo in hot pursuit, a spanner held high up in the air in his right hand. I never saw the kid again.

When I inquired after the cause of that altercation, Jumbo said:

“He called me a stupid kaffir.” Jumbo was a huge rugby forward who played for KwaZakhele Rugby Union. He kept his job following that fight.

The absconding of that young white guy must have frustrated the bosses who were now trying to respond positively to the Sullivan Principles by mixing races across all job categories. Many whites had chosen to rather travel home for lunch every day rather than share facilities with their African co-workers. Others resigned when the partitions came down in the canteen, locker rooms and toilets. Strangely, it was us the African workers who bore the brunt of irate whites who hated the changes.

There were still no blacks in management positions. Some black graduates had made appearances as management trainees, but never actually made it into management at Ford. I know some of these who actually obtained scholarships to study for MBA’s in America but on their return were never successfully absorbed into leadership within the company on their return. Some of these guys went on to be snapped up by banks and insurance companies. Among them were Ernie Bergins, Mango Shabangu, Bheki Sibiya, Ayanda Mjekula, Sidney Mshweshwe and Arthur Shipalana. I used to visit an over-worked Sidney at

home on some evenings and found him bent over documents, doing heavy calculations and chain smoking. And I had never known him to smoke before. He eventually left Ford to pursue his own business consultancy. Shipalana went on to become the first black to be appointed in a senior position as a public relations officer of Ford in Johannesburg.

A group of dedicated workers on each line collected subs by hand from our members and paid them over at our offices in return for receipts. We acquired an office at Court Chambers opposite the Law Courts in North End. I was elected as the treasurer of the union with Makanda as chairman and President, Sicelo Duze, Vice President, Neer as General Secretary, Duna as Recording Secretary and Zini as Publicity Secretary, and Mthuthu Benelwa, Les Bucwa and Max Madlingozi as additional members. We held a general meeting every Thursday at the Reverend James Haya's Holy Spirit Anglican church hall, Edolweni, before moving the meetings to the Daku hall when our numbers swelled.

Almost immediately after we opened our office, Firestone fired 120 workers who were organizing others to join our union, and naturally those guys came to report to us. We discussed the matter, and Makanda told the meeting that the solution was much easier than we thought: We should simply not touch Firestone tyres at Ford. I really couldn't help laughing on hearing this simple solution. The guy was a genius! Ford sourced the tyres from Goodyear, Firestone and General Tyres. Dennis Neer codenamed this ensuing strike 'MaGumede' –Big woman. I could hardly sleep with the excitement. Bra Gov Zini announced the union decision to the press.

One thing the bosses could never bring themselves to understand was why we were concerning ourselves with community issues and not confining our attention to shopfloor matters. Zini responded:

"A worker doesn't suddenly die on the shopfloor at the end of his shift, he goes back to his community. The conditions under which he lives have an effect on his performance at work." So, community involvement became a major principle of our union.

A reporter from local Afrikaans newspaper *Die Burger* requested a meeting to interview us. I was assigned the task of meeting him with Zim and Les. He was a young Afrikaner guy in his early 30's who was well informed on South African politics and quite articulate on the

subject. He soon discovered that we were more than prepared for his questions and were lucid on what we envisaged as a future South Africa. At the conclusion of the interview I accompanied him downstairs to his car when he shook my hand and surprised me with these words:

“Having just met and heard you guys, I’m now more than convinced that this country is capable of having a black man as Prime Minister.”

We then received word that SABC TV had contacted our office seeking an interview. However, the person wanting to see us was none other than Cliff Saunders, the TV presenter who was the most hated man in television journalism amongst comrades. We sat and discussed the matter before assigning Siphon and Zim to handle it. We knew and anticipated the show’s intention as we had seen before how it dealt with those deemed to be anti-establishment. On the appointed day I arrived at the office as the crew was stationing itself at the entrance. I found Siphon and Zim frantically grappling with the door, slamming it shut and clamouring:

“You’re not coming in here, go away!” Siphon told them.

“But you agreed to see us!”

“We’ve changed our minds, just go! We thought you were the normal TV News crew and not Cliff Saunders. We won’t open our doors for you to come in to destroy us!” said Zim.

I found this strange since I had known all along that it wouldn’t be ordinary TV coming, because white television cared little about covering African issues. What was it that had confused my comrades?

Les and Ntonga reported their concerns about the hygiene of one of our organisers, Bra T Duzé. “He washes just his face at the tap at the back of his house when we fetch him in the morning,” complained Les.

“I caught him red handed scratching between his legs and then sniffing his fingers when we were negotiating with management at Pelts Products,” added Ntonga, letting off his crescendo of a silly laugh as though punctuating his statement. I was appalled. Bra Gov wasn’t amused either. He fell on the phone immediately and booked an appointment with

Cheeky Watson. I left the office as he grilled the poor guy about his underpants and socks that he intended to procure for him from Dan Watson's at the union's expense. Bra Gov was that kind of man, he acted fast and cared about the welfare of others. He was the solid anchor our union needed and relied upon in order to achieve longevity. I also recall how he acted against one of our officials who started an affair with a married woman who worked in our office. She had just separated from her husband. The guy chose to stay away and neglect his duties after that confrontation.

I was present at Pelts Products on that particular day but had missed the spectacle Ntonga alluded to. I only pressed the MD of that company, when he claimed to have offered his employees 17 percent.

"You're offering them 17 percent of what, Mr Lepsky?" I asked. And of course the man couldn't say. All around, management had this tendency of speaking about percentages when addressing the question of wage increases without revealing the actual amount the worker took home, which in many cases was a pittance.

"You're still not telling us, 17 percent of what amount Mr Lepsky?" Les insisted.

"Gentlemen, I'm doing the best I can, any amount in excess of that can only spell disaster for this company..." The man was still not addressing the question. And his employees would still continue subsisting on slave wages, and he would continue living in a mansion and going overseas for holidays. GM announced a minimum wage increase that raised their starting wage to 65 cents per hour around the same period. Quite an impressive difference from the 56 cents Ford had started its employees with when I arrived.

I was enthralled when I drove for the first time around the posh suburbs of the city one weekend with my family. I never knew there existed such large homes as I saw in Humewood and Summerstrand, and for the first time I made sense of the white man's resistance to the political struggle of the oppressed. I could see why they wanted to hold on to power and keep us leashed to our pittances as suppliers of labour that continued to enrich them. I understood why they applied laws that kept us out of their residential areas except those who served them as gardeners and maids. This experience only served to grant me the resolve to fight unrelentingly against apartheid. One house in particular whose

image refused to part with my mind was built high above its boundary wall, as if the ground on which it was built had been compacted to form a hillock as a base for its foundation.

After this I cared little for the upkeep of my yard. Vicky complained:

“When do you intend cleaning the yard? Why can’t you plant flowers and shrubs? All you care about is the union.”

“Remember those mansions in Humewood and Summerstrand? That’s where we’re going to live when we are free, and we’ll have a gardener to take care of the garden and your flowers and shrubs...”

“Ha ha ha,” she laughed, as if I was talking rubbish.

She was not alone in thinking that that kind of talk was nonsense. African professionals such as doctors and teachers were fooled into building expensive properties in selected township areas that simply served as buffers between the poorer blacks and white people, because they never believed that white suburbs would be desegregated in the future. This was around the time that Afrikaner business man Anton Rupert had just created the Urban Foundation that encouraged the government to allow creation of middle class suburbs for blacks in select special areas in the townships. KwaMagxaki and KwaDwesi were built for this purpose. Bra Thoz told the people of Port Elizabeth to boycott the Urban Foundation for attempting to create a buffer between poor and middle class blacks. The foundation soon responded repudiating the allegation.

I learnt that Dumile and Dennis had placed orders for new Cortina sedans of their own. Word went around among the workers when the cars were still mere steel carcasses at bodyshop. Although these were ordinary 1600 Theresa models the workers lavished on them extras that were designed for the most expensive LDO’s. The floors were piled thick with sound deadeners. They were galvanised and dunk more than once in undercoating before they were spray painted. There was excitement and much noise and whistling around the cars right through the plant until they reached pre-delivery Final Assembly Inspection.

Den once allowed me to drive it. it was as quiet and comfortable as a Mercedes.

Chapter 4

Almost every black employee at our plant was now a member of MACWUSA, including a significant number at the Engine plant. The Engine Plant had engaged in its own plant stoppages over their own grievances until we came together as one. All new Coloured workers joined willingly. But not a single white worker bothered to join us despite their benefitting as well when wages were raised following our demand for an increase. They chose to taunt us to keep on striking for an increase. We had effectively obliterated the other union off the plant. It was now time to negotiate with Ford for recognition. I missed the first meeting with Ford: Zini, Makanda and Neer had attended but returned with disappointing news. Ford was not convinced that we deserved a recognition agreement from them yet. They wanted verification.

Not long after this, I was doing my rounds one morning around eleven when I happened to pass by the two tyre fitters, one African and the other, Jimmy, Coloured.

“Mpumi, the next car needs Firestones, so what must we do now?” they asked.

I was ill prepared for this moment. I suddenly felt thirsty. I opened my mouth and no words came out. I watched that car inching its way forward in slow-motion. Then suddenly I found words to say:

“Whatever was decided at the meeting, just do it comrades!” And then I disappeared from the scene faster than Satan.

I heard some commotion and a babble of voices behind me as I zoomed my way between stock bins away from the assembly line. Men were running along the metal conveyor belt, I could tell by the footsteps as I stopped to light a cigarette in the aisle between the Cushions and Front Suspension departments.

“Comrade, come take a look!” one of the operators called me. I feigned surprise, killed the cigarette, and followed. A swarm of dark-blue overalls was thickening around the red Cortina sedan. The assembly line had been switched off. The white foreman was red-faced and looking heavenwards as if in supplication. He kept pushing his spectacles upwards with

a finger as sweat trickled down his fat cheeks. The general foreman and the superintendent were rushing in the direction of the car whose front had ploughed into the conveyer chain. I stood right at the back, watched and listened.

Somebody whistled, “Veetyooou!”

From the direction of the body-shop and paint-shop other whistles responded.

Another worker shouted in the Front suspension aisle:

“Ufikile uMaGumede!” – MaGumede has arrived!

The usual hiss of air tools died down, forklifts came to a halt as their drivers jumped off to rush to take a look.

Pieterse, the Industrial Relations manager, rushed in. “We need to discuss this. If you’re not prepared to work, then leave the plant! Those who want to work this side, those who don’t that side.”

That was the old stupid trick of trying to divide workers, but our guys were by then too advanced to fall for it. They all shifted to the same side, refusing to part.

“EDolweni!” – To the Knee – some of the guys called out the rest to Reverend James Haya’s church hall which we nicknamed thus because it was situated at a bend on the road. We no longer had to ask for permission to use the hall, it stayed unlocked all the time as if expecting us.

Africa, our cheerleader, broke into song:

“Macwusa yethu – sayilandela, sayilandela!” – Our Macwusa – we follow, we follow!

We sang, and marched four in a line to the hall. Along the way excited onlookers cheered us on, others accompanying our throng up to the vicinity of the hall.

Members of the executive committee called the two heroes to the stage. There was some commotion at the hall entrance when some of our guys found a strange man loitering thinking he was from the Special Branch. A scuffle ensued until the fellow identified himself:

“I am Thozamile Gqwetha from SAAWU, East London,” and so he was brought to us at the table in front where we shook hands, welcomed him and introduced him to the rest of the workers. Thozi and the South African Allied Workers Union were shaking up their part of the province giving the brutal union bashing puppet Sebe and his Ciskei homeland sleepless nights. There were strikes at Johnson & Johnson, Wilson Rowntree, Defy and numerous other firms organised by his union. He came to pledge solidarity with us on behalf of his union.

The singing resumed: “Our MACWUSA we shall follow!” Cameras clicked, and the two guys made the front pages of the Evening Post and the EP Herald. The 120 fired Firestone comrades were assembled in the hall.

“We have made arrangements with the comrades who’ll be working tonight’s late shift at Firestone to join us here,” said one of the fired leaders from the tyre plant. And that night Firestone workers reported at the hall instead of going to work. A truck was sent out to every bus stop to ‘fetch’ those who were not aware but were on their way to work. Needless to say, there was no production at Firestone that night. The hall was packed wall to wall throughout the night.

“I’m a man with a thousand friends, my comrades!” Jimmy, one of the two tyre fitters who’d refused to touch the Firestones boasted when we returned to work. His front page picture and story brought in waves of new recruits into the two unions.

It didn’t take long for management at Firestone to call us in for negotiations. The man who contacted us was Bill Vos, the Human Resources director.

“You’re leading this delegation,” Dennis told me as we entered the company offices. This was so sudden and unexpected that I had little time for resistance. I calmed myself by trying not to think too much about it. It wouldn’t be my first time meeting management of a company in a delegation of this nature, but I’d be leading one for the first time. I felt honoured being the youngest in the group, to realize the high regard and confidence my comrades had in me.

In the Firestone boardroom we sat opposite Vos and the Managing Director, a Mr Watchurst, and two other white gentlemen whose names I have forgotten. We were all formally dressed.

“Gentlemen, we do not know you,” said Vos, surprising me. He had a habit of blinking his eyes incessantly.

“Well then Mr Vos, please allow me to introduce myself and my team...” I’d never been so happy in my life as when I looked in the faces of those crestfallen whites. They seemed surprised that I was the one doing most of the talking among guys much older than me. And so it went, up to the part that I informed them why we were representing their dismissed employees.

“You might think it strange that we should concern ourselves with your fired employees,” I said, “but those workers aren’t only members of our union, they also happen to be members of our community. Also, I know their number isn’t that significant to you, it’s only a mere hundred and twenty. But if you consider that each of those men is a bread winner responsible for at least five members of his family, then that number becomes significant. The consequences of your dismissal of those men present a dire situation for all of us. We are the ones who have to live with those starving families whose children will be a burden on us, their community, whose sons shall turn criminal and prey on us...” I paused when I saw Vos looking at the rest of my team expecting them to interject or support me.

“It’s fine, he is saying exactly what each of us would be telling you, anyway,” said Dennis when he noticed Vos and his side fidgeting as if seeking respite from my monologue.

“Okay, but then why should we be negotiating with you on a matter involving us and our employees? Where are your credentials? Who are you?” Since I didn’t know what he meant by ‘credentials’ I let Makanda and Max continue.

I had always thought that Firestone was an American company just like Ford, but I was wrong:

“Firestone is owned by shareholders the biggest of whom are Afrikaner Volksbellegings,” revealed Vos and left me open mouthed. I wondered what other firms were owned by the Afrikaners while we, exploited Africans, owned nothing.

“Our workers are not keen to handle your product until this matter is resolved,” continued an impassioned Makanda.

“The ball is in your court as far as this matter is concerned,” concluded Zini.

The bosses were noncommittal, with Vos insisting that they had called us in in order to “get us to know who you are.” Watchurst, the elderly balding gentleman, spoke very little, only repeating the concerns expressed by Vos.

The meeting ended on the note that we as the union representing their workers wanted to see the matter resolved speedily.

Not very long after this, Ford management wanted to see us. I was part of the delegation to Ford. Ferreira recognised me, referring to me as the ‘statistician’. And that reference gave me the suspicion that he had met with Firestone management. This time we received the good news that the company was recognising us as representing over fifty percent of their black workers.

Just as we were beginning to rejoice over Ford’s recognition of our union, workers at Coca-Cola SA Bottling Company downed tools. It fell on me, Kobese, Les and Duna to negotiate with that company. The Human Resources manager, Mr Wilson, was an amiable man I found it a pleasure to negotiate with, however that friendliness wasn’t long-lived as Kobese stepped right on it with muddy feet:

“You’ve been oppressing our people for centuries since the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in this country...” he ranted, taking us all by surprise. I would have klapped him on the ear just to shut him up if I could, especially since the man had already committed himself to write a letter expressing intent that the company would reemploy the workers.

“I wasn’t here in van Riebeeck’s time, I don’t know what you’re talking about!” the man blushed and shouted wide-eyed with fury. It was so unpleasant. My concern was how we

were ever going to calm the man down again and get him to consider reinstating the dismissed strikers.

Seeing that it was going to be impossible to get back to cordial negotiations, I thanked him for seeing us hoping to return soon to conclude our business.

“I don’t ever want to see that man again! Don’t bother to come back here with him!” he pointed at Fiks. At least there was hope that we could come back, the door wasn’t slammed shut yet. I knew that the company could not really afford to do that since the boycott of their products we had embarked on was bad for business.

We were barely out of that office on our way to the car park when I confronted Kobese: “What was that about, your Van Riebeeck History lecture? What are we supposed to tell the workers now?” I was deeply concerned because we were supposed to be heading to the incensed workers who were singing and dancing, wielding placards outside the Centenary Hall.

He simply walked right ahead and paid me no attention. He was a short man who wore platform shoes, and very stubborn.

“You must give the report yourself to those workers, Fiks,” I told him. The rest of the guys were silent, perhaps still baffled by Kobese’s crazy political speech. He was no easy man to confront like that as he was also so argumentative. Many guys fought shy of taking him head on as I did.

“And now we’re going to allow a white to pick a delegation from our side that he wants to negotiate with?” complained Fiks, his eyes bulged behind large glasses.

We didn’t respond to him.

As a way of intensifying the Coca-Cola boycott to coerce the company to reinstate our members, we had decided to embark on a mass gathering at Embizweni Square in New Brighton. But because such gathering would be illegal we styled it as a prayer meeting. We brought bibles. After much sloganeering and singing of freedom songs we watched Security Branch cars and police hippos and casspirs approaching. As they were nearing, Bra Gov opened his bible and started reading some scripture. The security vehicles slowed down as

they moved towards us until they were within hearing distance. One of the cops called out to Gov:

“Why don’t you read for them Romans, chapter 10: Respect those in authority?”

Bra Gov ignored him and continued reading. When he stopped we thumped our bibles and sang like zealots until we felt we had achieved our goal and dispersed peacefully.

When I went to visit my parents later, father warned me:

“I see you’re in the forefront. Be careful. I don’t mean that you should not be involved, just be careful not to be used by others only to be sold out. You must be careful not to wade into this thing like a chained dog being dragged and pushed to be culled in the veld...”

I listened with respect to his usual philosophical lectures. I was suddenly reminded of how he used to complain to us when I was a kid that, “Every time you flush that toilet it’s my labour you flush...”- Nigunxula amandla am! Or he would sneer and ask us: “If I’d never been born would you be around?”

I never told him, nor did I consciously connect my involvement in the struggle with his humiliation by the whites that I had witnessed as a child. But I was also aware that I no longer experienced the strong desire to indulge in liquor. I also no longer suffered the headaches that had led me to seek medical assistance from Doctor Moodliar. I was even managing to decrease the number of cigarettes I was now smoking; I was now down to less than ten a day.

I understood why my father was concerned with my political involvement. He had been there and had witnessed the crushing blows delivered by apartheid forces of the Afrikaner nationalists against black resistance. Many had been mowed down in Sharpeville, some were imprisoned on Robben Island and still others were driven to exile in foreign countries. He had survived it all. He was involved as an organiser at Algoa Sweets factory earlier in his life, and had been ivolontiya – an ANC volunteer organising the cramming of prisons with community members to make apartheid imprisonment ineffective.

When my wife came to sit next to me and tried to take part in the conversation she elicited a mean disapproving look and rebuke from Dad:

“Yintoni wandithi phuhlu ngamehlo emlonyeni, ubungenakho ukhe uzame nokuba kukunitha okanye ukhrowutshe?” Shouldn’t you be doing some knitting or crocheting instead of staring me in the mouth?

She had no idea that a makoti was supposed to have little contact or conversation with men, especially with a father in law. Not long after I found her engrossed in some crocheting of doilies and chair back covers.

The day was one of those rare Yellow-cling peaches one sometimes picked in Port Elizabeth weather, a blue expanse of sky without even a wisp of cloud above, and warmth that drives the kids inside to harass parents to take them to the beach or pop out coins for ice-cream. I’d lent my car to the union as usual. Siphohad taken it to drive to a number of appointments. But he had been gone since very early that morning and ought to have been back by then. I left father and walked home.

I was really irritated by the time Siphohad turned up very late that afternoon, all cheered up and full of apologies. He was not accustomed to keep the car that long when the union had it.

“What a busy day we had today, whew!” he said as he parked at the gate as I approached. He was a likeable jovial fellow with a permanent smile and pleading eyes. But something on the floor of the car caught my eye: it was a woman’s floral chiffon scarf, and then I noticed traces of green shrubbery and sand:

“Were you on the beach with my car, Siphohad?”

“No, Mpum... er...”

“I’m no fool I can see the sand and the St Georges Strand beach shrubs... How do you explain the chiffon?”

I could see that I had him. The smile was wiped off his face, and he looked sad. But after this episode I still continued lending the car to the union until we were able to buy a blue Cortina sedan for the union.

A fellow we didn't know that well had approached the union with the request to work for us in the office. He had recently graduated with a BA Honours degree from Fort Hare. We had expressed reservations, especially since we didn't have enough funds to afford him.

"No problem, I'm not here for the money, I need the experience and opportunity to apply what I've studied at University," he told us. We agreed to have him on board.

But it soon came to our attention that the man was fiddling with our mail despite Dennis being the only one designated to handle all correspondence. We called him into a meeting and discussed the matter with him expressing our displeasure at this kind of behaviour. We left him with the belief that he had accepted our remonstrations and that he wouldn't repeat this. I wasn't satisfied with the decision to let the guy continue working for us.

We had by now a place in Zwijve where we could meet informally and enjoy refreshments. It was the home of one of our GM comrades, comrade Tekere Gaika in Mabophe Street. It was there that we hosted comrades Sidney Mafumadi of the Transport and General Allied Workers Union, and Joe Mavi of the Municipal Workers Union that continually messed up Johannesburg city council. Sadly, Joe died in a car accident on his way home from visiting us. We hired a bus to attend the funeral at the Regina Mundi church in Soweto with some of our members.

It was there at Tekere's that comrades Dumile and Max broached the subject of Prof's conduct, as the man was named.

"We have decided to set a trap for Prof," said Dumza to me after they called me aside.

"We know how to catch him in the act to prove that he is an informer," added Max and lit a cigarette as I listened.

"I don't like it. We should fire the guy and forget about him before he causes much more trouble that we'll all regret later," I insisted. "Besides, why should we care whether he's a

sellout or not as long as he doesn't do it here among us? Where have you ever heard of a sellout getting entrapped and caught in the act?" They chose not to answer my inquisitions.

"We have agreed to go with him to meet his Lesotho contact in Queenstown. We want to meet in person the man he says has three thousand Sterling for us," said Dumza.

Prof had revealed this information on the day we confronted him about opening union mail without our permission.

It wasn't long after this conversation that Dumile and Max hired Mjuza, a GM comrade who had a reliable car, to drive them and Prof out of town to meet Prof's mystery friend. I was deeply saddened the day they left. It would be slightly more than a year before I would see them again.

The following week the local newspapers were ablaze with the headlines: UNIONISTS DETAINED.

The news sent us reeling. Amnesty International became the most vocal organization in demanding the release of our comrades. They were a thorn on the side of the apartheid authorities relentlessly until their release a year later.

Dennis moved in to work permanently in the union office. About a month later he and the staff arrived at the office one morning to find the safe blown wide open. Union documents and money were stolen. We suspected this additional blow to be an attempt by the Security Branch to demoralize and weaken us further. A seed of distrust had now been planted in the minds of our membership. We reported the matter to the police and informed the press before calling a general meeting of our members to share the bad news.

We were soon to receive yet another telling blow when Thobile Mhlahlo, an executive member of GWUSA, disappeared and skipped the country. We hobbled on like a dog on three legs.

As the repressive Afrikaner government became more brutal both at home against black resistance, and in the neighbouring African states into which they trespassed in order to bomb guerrilla hideouts, the world responded with sanctions and disinvestment from the

country. Ford responded by selling part of the company to Anglo American and became SAMCOR. Parts of its operations were moved to Pretoria.

We soon received comrades from Pretoria who desired to be part of our union. That group that was led by Donsi Khumalo, included Issy Moto, Phadi Matlala and Victor Mbau. We opened an office in Pretoria, and Donsi came to spend a while in Port Elizabeth, his work input was quite a relief in the absence of our detained members.

Donsi was a lean, tall bubbly guy who flitted between women like a bee in summer. He was so inconsiderate he had no qualms about dragging one of his conquests into the bedroom as we sat and had drinks in the lounge at Tekere's. He would simply chuckle and go ahead with his business with his women. There would be such a racket that Tekere would complain and we would be forced to leave rather than be an audience to this.

Tekere himself seemed to have a problem landing girls. I once dropped a girl at his place after losing interest in her and deciding to rather go home. The other guys were missing and I realised there was to be no fun without them. But when I reached home Vicky wasn't back yet from my parents'. I switched on television and found it boring, and when I looked at the time I realised it was still early evening. I decided to drive back to Tekere's. When I got there I found Tekere standing outside in his yard chatting to the girl I had left there earlier. Just as I was exiting the car he jumped towards me:

"What do you want? I can no longer tolerate what you guys are doing in my house; how long must I be a spectator in my own house?"

I was so taken by surprise that I had nothing to say in response. Slowly I turned back to my car and drove back home. I laughed as I drove away, suddenly finding the whole thing amusing, especially that part about being "umbukeli endlwini yam" - a spectator in my own house.

I drove to my parents to fetch my family and found father in his usual jovial mood, with a bottle of wine next to his armchair and my son on his lap. I jumped to grab the child when I found him sucking dad's thumb which had a crushed nail from an old injury.

"No!" I screamed with shock, feeling this was unhygienic.

He held on to the boy:

“Yeka lo mntwana, ndiyamhlupheza!”- Leave the child alone, I’m nailing him to the family.

I had heard of this ukhupheza, but that is never done by suckling a child on a dirty finger nail. I’d heard of some families using certain herbs to do that. Among some ethnic groups lion or leopard teeth are worn as necklaces, or strips of animal skins are worn as wrist bands for that purpose. Sometimes a baby may be fed animal bile or snake venom drops.

“Siya hamba ngoku,” – we’re leaving now. And so we went home.

I once asked my father to tell me the story of his life. He started with where he was born, in Klipplaat near Graaff-Reinet in the Karoo. He told me of the trek his parents undertook when they decided to return to the Transkei, this was when he was about twelve. He later escaped to work in the mines of Johannesburg after he was influenced by other youth. It was after a ‘Baasboy’ tried to naai him that he decided to escape yet again to Port Elizabeth...

When I next paid him a visit again he told me of the time that he married my mother:

“Your grandpa forced me to marry your mother when he found out that she was pregnant.”

I almost laughed, but managed to muffle it with a cough. One of my uncles once told me that grandpa had a rifle when they were kids. And that he seldom hesitated to use it in the veld whenever something suspicious moved among the bushes. So I had this image in my mind of a scene I once witnessed in the movies, of an elderly cowboy pointing and driving with a rifle, a younger guy to a priest to force him to marry his daughter he had impregnated. I looked away and chuckled. Grandpa was a well-built no-nonsense man who wore a hat and braces just like a cowboy. And dad was always respectably behaved in his presence: “Ewe, Da,” – Yes, Da was all he would say when grandpa spoke to him. And I could see how obedient he was.

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The people’s struggle against apartheid was intensifying. The state had also begun to intensify its repression against the forces of the oppressed. The unions had begun speaking

to one another informally about this situation. We needed to discuss the possibility of working collectively, and the only way of doing that would be by forming an umbrella body of trade unions. We were in contact with Bra Thoz Botha who had joined the South African Congress of Trade Unions in exile. We had comrade Oom Rob Tlou who constantly visited his family in Lesotho, and brought back word from the comrades in exile. Oom Rob communicated solely with Den every time he returned from Lesotho. We never wanted to know or be part of their conversations for security reasons.

The first time we met all progressive unions was in our offices at Court Chambers. We had all felt that our planned federation would be inadequate without the National Union of Mineworkers led by Cyril Ramaphosa. The only snag was that Ramaphosa had formed his own umbrella of Black Consciousness trade unions, the Council of Unions of South Africa, CUSA, with Piroshaw Camay. We had also heard that Anglo American had encouraged recruitment of their employees solely by Ramaphosa as they feared communists coming in to do so. On the basis of all that, it was perhaps not surprising that Ramaphosa refused point blank to be part of our efforts. We were strictly non-racial. He told us: "I do not subscribe to non-racialism." That meeting didn't last long.

I escorted him downstairs to his car, and never met him again. The mood was sombre. We had failed to woo the man and his powerful union. We had previously discussed going into mining and farming worker recruitment with Sid Mafumadi and the late comrade Joe Mavi. I was elected into a steering committee with them that would work towards achieving that goal.

A meeting of a similar nature was called in Cape Town. I travelled there with Bra Gov, Les and the Pretoria comrades, Donsi and Phadi. Dr Neil Aggett and Jay Naidoo were part of that gathering and quite vocal. Sadly, that would be the last I saw Aggett as he was later killed by our vicious oppressors. I attended his funeral in Johannesburg.

From Cape Town came other unionists to the Eastern Cape: David Lewis and Jan Theron who introduced the Food and Allied Workers Union. I was impressed to hear that Jan Theron was the son of an Afrikaner judge. It was encouraging to learn that some privileged whites like him were willing to make sacrifices and fight on the side of the oppressed and exploited just like Neil Aggett. We were soon invited by Professor Roux Van der Merwe of the then

University of Port Elizabeth for interaction with his students. Miss Martheanne Finnemore met with us regularly to learn first-hand about what we were doing and wrote her MA thesis on MACWUSA. She later became a professor at the same institution, and always reminded us that she got her degree because of those interviews with us. There was also Michael Evans, son of the Bishop Bruce Evans who wrote his BA Honours thesis on our activities and gave us a copy of his work as a token of appreciation. These events inspired me in no small measure to continue my quest for knowledge and academic growth. There were also Janet Cherry and Dominic Souchon from UPE who were busily engaged with other trade unions now also located at Court Chambers where our offices were situated. The struggle had changed its complexion and become truly non-racial in our part of Port Elizabeth.

*

I now frequently took my family to Bro Gov's on Saturday evenings. We had previously done so with my uncle Cwaki's family in KwaFord Township. We would buy a whole roast chicken, or sometimes Vicky fried a load of hake, and we would buy some drinks and take the kids along. Govie had a video machine and a stack of movies that we would enjoy watching. Video was relatively new, and very few people owned them because they were still exorbitant in price. Govie was also a jazz record collector whose selections I enjoyed listening to. Both our families grew to look forward to weekends together. Soon thereafter other comrades came to join us with their families, and Govie's place became a place to socialize with our families. Nobri, Bra Gov's wife, was a friendly and generous woman who enjoyed laughing and having company in their house. I felt that these social gatherings among us were important because they gave us the opportunity to be with our families as we spent much time away from them. A visiting British reporter had warned us right at the beginning of our union activism to guard against turning our wives into "trade union widows".

There was constant human traffic even in my own tiny hovel. Comrade Mamie Hina paid me regular visits. Sometimes the PEYARTA guys would flock and make such a happy racket. I was, however, almost caught in the middle when the political battles between AZAPO and the United Democratic Front began.

I once heard footsteps of people running through the yard one night and did not open the door to check. In the morning my boy went out of the house to play and returned very soon carrying a bloody knobkierie.

“Jonga, tata, uMaqina.” – Look Dad, Maqina. For some reason the boy associated the stick with the notorious band of blanketed AZAPO men, “OoNongubo”, who tended to congregate at the Reverend Mzwandile Maqina’s nearby Masangwana Street house. The kid surprised me:

“No, go throw that thing outside the gate!” I told him.

When I met some of those guys from AZAPO one of them told me: “You need not worry, Mpumi, you’re safe, we also patrol around your house.” But then when I later met some UDF guys they told me the same thing: “Mpumza, sonny relax, we always patrol around your house at night.” The penny dropped. That explained the footsteps and the bloody knobkierie my son had picked up on the stoep that morning. There were battles taking place nightly around the house as we slept.

Chapter 5

When Dumile and Max returned from detention after a year behind bars, they were slammed with banning orders. But that seemed to have little effect on them, and they didn't stop their involvement with the unions. They were quick to call me aside:

"We talked about you in prison and felt that we needed to apologize to you on our release for our failure to heed your advice," said Max to me.

"We are really sorry, you were right. We should have fired Prof and forgotten about him," said Dumile.

I accepted their apology and then listened to them tell about what really happened to them.

"The Security Branch cops were interested in our links with the ANC. We were questioned on the colours of the flag of the Movement and lots of other nonsense we had no knowledge of," said Dumile.

"Worst was when they told me that my baby girl, Noziqhamo, had died," said Max.

"Man, did we pray, consoling Max," recalled Dumile.

"I was so inconsolable," said Max, "the other comrades pleaded, 'Thula Radebe, uzakwenza omnye umntwana ukubuya kwakho' – Stop crying, Radebe, you'll make another baby when you return."

*

The executive sent me to our Pretoria office to see what was taking place. Donsi came to fetch me from the airport when I got there. I found their office crammed full of people who were interested to join the union. But what came as a surprise was when I introduced myself and one of the men there told me there was another guy with the same name whose stories he had read in *Staffrider* magazine. He couldn't believe that I was the same person.

It was my first visit ever to Pretoria. Donsi drove me around some factories. He also revealed to me that he would be travelling to Sweden, and invited me to visit the Swedish

ambassador at his home. We found the elderly gentleman enjoying a morning swim in an above ground backyard swimming pool whose design impressed me. They chatted about the weather in Sweden and the kind of clothes he needed to take to that country because of the cold weather.

On the day I was to return home, a Saturday, my hosts treated me to drinks. It was new to me: Irish coffee liqueur. I watched them scoop spoonfuls of vanilla ice cream into glasses and stirring vigorously while pouring the liqueur over it. When I took a sip it tasted more like delicious dessert than liquor. I must have had one glass too many of the stuff already by the time they warned me about it. I found myself relying heavily on the airport walls for support after Donsi dropped me there. I looked at the ceiling when I heard the intercom announce what sounded like my name being called by a strange female voice from afar:

“Mr Cilibe, you’re delaying the flight!” I walked gingerly, slowly towards the waiting runway bus. I felt embarrassed.

Bra Gov wasn’t too impressed on hearing about Donsi’s trip to Sweden. He felt if the trip was arranged because of the man’s involvement with the union then the union should have been informed beforehand instead of us finding out about it like this. Donsi was called to account. But instead he became defiant and flew to Sweden anyway. We soon learnt that he had simply gone on to add the letter M to GWUSA on the union letterhead and changed the union name to Motor & General Workers Union of South Africa, and bullied his colleagues in the Pretoria office. The union fired him by letter.

I was now planning a visit to East London. I had repeatedly suggested to the comrades at the office that we needed to follow up on Thozamile Gqwetha’s courtesy visit. My suggestion had fallen on deaf ears because we were overwhelmed by other more urgent union matters. On a particular Friday afternoon, I packed a few things and drove to Mthuthu to inform him that I was on my way to visit SAAWU. I found him in shorts, resting and having a drink, and told him. He jumped up:

“I’m coming with you!”

“But you can’t just dash off like that unprepared,” I said.

“Thembsi!” he called out to his wife, “I’m going with Common,” which was what he used to call me.

He turned at the gate, told me to wait, and rushed back to the house and re-emerged dressed in jeans and sports shoes and a striped white shirt. It was as if he was accompanying me to the shop around the corner, and that we’d be back soon.

I thought about Bra Gov once warning me about him: “Mpumi, stay away from that boy.”

We left for East London. On the way he complained often about what he felt was my “inability to speed,” despite my driving above the speed limit, and demanded to drive. I refused because I didn’t trust him. We found Bangumzi Sfingo, Sisa Njikelana and Humphrey Maxhegwana, who were members of the executive, and I slept at Sisa’s. The following day we attended a workers general meeting at a fully packed Town Hall in the city centre. All the township and village areas of that part of the Eastern Cape fell under the Ciskei homeland government where all trade unions were banned. The entire hall came to its feet when we were introduced as visitors from MACWUSA. Mthuthu addressed the mass of comrades, informing them that we were sent by our union to pledge solidarity with them in their struggle which we regarded as ours too, and that we needed to work together closely as comrades. There was much excitement and cheering, and I felt very pleased and glad I’d brought Mthuthu along. We later attended a special committee meeting, and then later in the evening we were entertained.

When I walked into the entertainment venue later, the guys introduced me to their girls individually as if warning me to stay away from them:

“Mpumi, this one is mine,” each of them said. I have no idea why they were acting that like that. There was no shortage of beauties in Mdantsane, we guys from PE knew that. Almost all the factories there employed women. They manufactured TV’s, clothing, blankets, knitwear, car radios, Bic and Parker pens, nylon stockings, shavers, you name it. And when those women were all assembled in one place, a guy just went dizzy. One such beauty from Parker gave me a present of a beautiful pen with my name carved on because, she told me: “You write so well!”

I'd really had a great time in East London. However, on the Sunday afternoon when we were driving back to PE, I experienced a clutch problem not very far from the Cecilia Makiwane hospital in Mdantsane. Mthuthu, who had mechanical knowhow, told me it was a faulty release bearing. We pushed the car into the yard of the nearest house after asking for permission to do so. We took a bus to town to go buy the part. In the bus he met a guy he'd last seen at medical school where they'd studied years earlier. I left them to exchange greetings and talk. But he soon came to join me farther back in the bus, and complained:

"I don't know why this guy seems to have become aloof towards me now..."

"May be you should take a look at yourself in the mirror to see why," I told him.

"What do you mean?"

"You look filthy from working under the car, that guy doesn't know that. He thinks you've since become a tsarara..."

"Alright, I see it now!" and he started laughing. "And now he's going to spread the news that I've let myself go."

"Yes of course."

The replacing of that part proved to be one of the toughest jobs that one could undertake on a car. Were it not for his stubbornness I would have left that car in a garage in East London and returned home. But Mthuthu patiently took the car apart and replaced the part successfully, and we drove back without any mishap.

When we reported to the rest of the guys at the union about the trip and how we were received and applauded, and they all now wanted to arrange frequent trips there.

I'd overheard a secret conversation between two worried looking older guys back in East London about a certain Douglas who had been arrested by the Security Branch in PE. It was only later that I learned that they'd been referring to our comrade Tyutyu in Paintshop. It was now becoming obvious that the Security Branch were turning their attention fiercely in our direction. But nothing the apartheid state did could tame the intense spirit of resistance

and hate for them among the working masses and the poor. What I witnessed in East London continued to fire my resolve to engage the enemy through the workers' struggle.

I still continued meeting clandestinely with my underground ANC comrades. We were now planning the first ever celebration of a May Day with a stay-away. It was generally felt that we had enough unionised workers to make the celebration effective.

We were also meeting weekly every Sunday morning at the Alabama Hotel in Korsten with members of the Eastern Province Council on Sport. Raymond Uren, Alan Zinn and his wife were always in attendance. They in turn introduced us to a Doctor Brown of Gelvan Park who informed us that Trevor Manuel and other comrades were engaging to engineer a non-racial national movement to bring together all forces of resistance in the country to act together in concert rather than each in their own separate pockets. A united democratic front needed to be forged. It was thanks to my association with EPCOS that I appreciated organizational administration and how to run meetings professionally and efficiently.

Most importantly for me, Alan Zinn and his wife introduced me to even more African writers by lending me books, as he had studied African literature at Rhodes University. I was writing less because of my union work. But we discussed among us the possibility of starting a workers' newsletter that Kobese and I were passionate about, and not very long after we, together with Les, were invited by Professor Guy Berger to join the Rhodes University Department of Journalism to attend a short course on newsletter production.

We received a PEBCO executive delegation consisting of Qaqawuli Godolozzi, Champion Gawulela and Siphon Hashe. We discussed with them the information we had received from Dr Brown. Within a month their burnt remains were discovered at a place called Post Chalmers, near Cradock. It was mysterious, strange and scary to realise that we would never ever see them again. The Security Branch were now, in their desperation, becoming callous, more sinister and brutal in the execution of their rule of terror against popular resistance.

I co-edited with Kobese our first issue of "Umsebenzi", our union newsletter that we distributed among the shopstewards. It covered topics such as drawing up agendas, meeting management, negotiations, grievance and disciplinary procedures and other shopfloor issues.

I tended to walk around with books under my clothes during working hours, studying in the toilet whenever I could sneak away from the shopfloor. I was determined to also study privately for a degree with UNISA just as Dumile and Den were now doing. I intended to leave Ford. I felt leashed like a pampered dog content with scraps thrown my way just to keep me coming back to the firm. My life would never change or improve for as long as I continued to repeat the cycle. I had to take that drastic leap into the void and get out of there. I was driven to learn in order to understand the Afrikaner mentality: What it was that made them think as they did, why they believed they were special superior beings and that the African was an animal, why this hatred of other forms of humanity? I had no idea what courses would give me the answers to these questions. I also needed to understand what was happening in African politics. Africa seems to attract so-called leaders who had little care for the development of their own people and countries in the way other nations did. The Chinese, for example, were able to pull themselves up without relying on cap-in-hand assistance from the west and elsewhere. They punished corruption and theft of state resources unflinchingly.

I traded in my car in exchange for a gold-coloured Chevair as it was continuing to give me problems following that trip to East London.

Dumile told me of a party we were all invited to attend at Sipho Pityana's mother's home in Zwide. I arrived when the party was in full swing, and couples were dancing too close to one another because the small house was as densely crammed like a pack of cigarettes. I had my arm around the waist of a girlfriend of Max's who worked in a wine factory. All the guys except Max laughed heartily when they saw us. They chanted:

"Nyis'inja!" – Make the dog shit.

It was a tit-for-tat for what he'd also done to me previously. His humiliation was visible. He chain-smoked. The scene reminded me of how Bra Gov constantly rebuked him about chain-smoking "like Satan." He and Dumile were enjoying the party as though they were under no banning order. Dumile called me outside. I followed him.

"I feel guilty about not letting you in on this: You're probably seeing Sipho for the last time today, he's about to skip the country," he said. I froze, speechless.

I was still standing there with Dumile when Max appeared from the direction of the house and said to me:

“Will you please take me home, Mpumi?”

“I’ll see you,” said Dumile as he returned inside the house to resume partying.

“Ok, Max, but let me speak to Saider (Sipho) first,” and I went back inside and sought him out.

I had tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat as I hugged Sipho not knowing what to say to him. How do you say goodbye to a true comrade who is embarking on a most dangerous trip, one that could easily be his last? How could I address him in a way that wouldn’t attract suspicion? What had started off as a wonderful and happy evening was evaporating into a sad morning for me. I looked into those sad eyes and dimpled smile for the last time: “Take care my comrade, be safe...” I didn’t want him to see me cry, the darkness helped. I would not see him again until a decade later. I called Max for us to leave.

I reversed into the dark street with Max in the passenger seat next to me. The streets of Zwide at that time of night/morning can be the darkest in Port Elizabeth. Even the moon and the stars seemed to be mourning the departure of a comrade who might never walk beneath them on that street again. I felt like having a cigarette, but I had stopped smoking. Max lit one and seemed to enjoy it as usual.

Just as we were turning into Qeqe Street we heard two gunshots fired in quick succession in the darkness right in front of us. I drove on. I didn’t want to linger in such circumstances, especially in the company of a banned colleague, as that would spell instant incarceration for both of us. As I pulled away, Max exclaimed, looking at the darkness to our right:

“She’s shot!”

“Who?” At that very moment even before Max answered, a dark figure ran from the right across the road in front of the car and merged with the darkness to our left.

There were some shacks visible on that side of the road not that far from us. I looked in that direction and hazily saw a figure collapsing against the entrance to the nearest shack. I

reversed the car, turned into that street and came to a stop outside that yard. The dark apparition that had melded into darkness reappeared from where it had disappeared. He was dressed in a black tracksuit with white stripes down the sides, a man in his thirties. The woman in what resembled a pink nightgown moaned softly eyes closed. She clutched her breasts.

Max remained in the car. I stepped towards her, and her friend moved nearer warily.

“Uchaniwe?” -- Have you been hit? I removed her arm from across her breasts, and saw what appeared like a half cut peanut embedded in the middle of her chest. I must confess that I was far from sober, and the drink made me a bit sceptical. My only reference of a gunshot was what I’d seen in the movies or television. There was no blood splattered wound here. Just as I was about to sneer: “Mxim!” and walk away, a trickling of blood began to manifest itself. “Quick, help me load her into the car,” I shouted to the sad boyfriend.

We loaded her into the back seat behind Max, and the guy got in next to her, and I speeded off towards the Daku police station. It was well past one in the morning. It was dead quiet. It looked like even free range township dogs were resting well in bed beside their wives. The zithunzela too nooHili – zombies and Thikoloshes - were on sabbaticals. The witches and wizards of Zwide were still attending their conference in Gwadana. Not a soul moved.

We reached the police station and stopped at the gates. I said to the boyfriend:

“Look, bra, help her in, we can’t get farther than this. We are ‘wanted’ ourselves by the cops,” I watched him struggle along with his woman as I reversed out of that place. I went and dropped Max home before driving feverishly home to New Brighton.

*

Ford was feeling the disinvestment calls from all around. Bishop Tutu wasn’t relenting in his stance, and had become the most hated man by many white people of South Africa, even more so by those who’d moved from the newly liberated neighbouring countries into ours. More US universities were pulling their money out of companies doing business in South Africa. The rand which was previously more valuable than the American dollar was sliding farther down into the economic abyss. Tough times were here for all of us. It was

countdown to liberation. I knew Ford wouldn't last very long in the city. Even some of the suppliers of components were pulling out or scaling down. Shatterprufe who supplied windshields had announced closure of one of its divisions.

The Security Branch was working even harder. Comrade Saider Nodlawu told me: "Have you heard, they've arrested Mamie, he's in Rooi Hell prison awaiting transfer to Robben Island. I believe he's with comrade Nceba Faku."

I was like one possessed, I could not rest. How could they take Mamie? And Nceba? They were both returning to the Island for the second time. I sped down Ferguson Road towards Paterson Road where the prison is situated. The cell was small, bare and dreary. There was a third man I did not recognize with them. They were presentable, dressed in their own clothes as if going to an important meeting. Comrade Mamie was his cheerful self as if nothing had changed. They were all looking happy. I felt a deep sense of disappointment to see them behind those bars in that grey cell despite their good mood. I didn't even know what to say. It all reminded me of the night I saw Sipho Pityana for the last time.

These were the men who had nourished me with all that knowledge about our struggle for liberation, men with whom I had sat at bus shelters and on Blacks only park benches around the city, who had taught me about revolutions in other countries. They had also taught me about the importance of May Day as an international worker day, and helped me sell it to my union comrades until it was celebrated successfully for the first time in South Africa. Now, they were about to be locked away in that cold island with Nelson Mandela. I suddenly remembered the words of my teacher Mr Dennis Siwisa, also an ex Robben Islander: "Where did you ever hear an oppressed people complaining and saying: 'We're giving up now, we're fed up with fighting for our freedom'? It has never happened."

He was right. So many others before us had fought to the death. It was our turn to do likewise. We would be jailed, exiled or killed, but would never give up. It wouldn't be over until we won. Among our children there would spring up new young cadres who would rise and bear the flame forward until the same happened to them, and to generations after them.

Mr Siwisa invited me to join him as his assistant at the SACHED (South African Committee for Higher Education) trust, in North End. I would maintain a library for UNISA students, and help distribute a learners' magazine to local schools, and recruit teachers for the matriculants programme I'd also gone through. This would grant me the opportunity I so needed to focus on my BA studies for which I was now enrolled. I was studying English, History and Philosophy.

I and two other comrades had come to notice change in the financial status of one particular member of the executive committee, and smelt a rat. I thought about Dad's warning. The change in the man's fortunes came with a noticeable change in attitude and behaviour, and in the direction in which union policy was moving and being steered without discussion. There were new unwritten rules. The union was now suddenly being pushed towards collaborating with registered sell-out FOSATU (Federation of South African Trade Unions) unions. What happened to our refusal to register our union with an apartheid government against which we were fighting? Apartheid wasn't dead yet.

I could clearly see that money had changed hands, and there was no knowing where it had come from, and only one or two of us in the executive seemed to have it. I am not an envious person. But I'm no fool either. The money could have come from either the government or from our comrades in exile, but I had no way of knowing where. Zim, Les and I talked about it, but could not confront those whose fortunes had improved. A brother of one of those comrades had also become well off inexplicably. A red light was flashing.

I began looking inwardly, introspecting. I thought about all the examples in history of people who loved materials so that they were even prepared to commodify, chain and sell other humans in order to hoard wealth. Look at slavery. Look at Ford. I could barely live on what the company was paying me. The owners didn't care about that as long as they were getting richer. They didn't know me or cared to, nor were they concerned about the conditions in which I lived.

I was truly feeling like the chained dog being pushed and dragged unwillingly to the veld to be killed that Dad spoke about, while others were secretly enriching themselves. If others in the union executive were getting some money, then why wasn't I also getting it? What was I doing there? Sure, the workers were singing praises of me: "Cilibe wethu, samlandela,

samlandela!”- Cilibe of ours, we follow, we follow. Fuck that. I never wanted to be followed by any zombies. I never fought for or because of these things. I fought because of my pain, because of what the fucking white man did to me, the humiliation and assaults, and that of my father as well. There had to be other ways of fighting the white man outside of the union. I couldn't sit and watch others selling out and becoming rich in the name of the struggle. I can't stand self-enriching dooses whether they be comrades or capitalists. I had to unchain myself: I had to bang my head against the door of that cage with all my might to secure my release. The time to turn my back on others had come.

I decided to stay away from the union, and was soon joined by Les and Zim. Word soon spread that we were expelled. By whom, I have no idea. Perhaps it was self-expulsion. The front pages of the papers ran the lie without checking it with me. I chose not to respond. I had left the union I had co-founded, finish and klaar.

I did not know how to stem the incontinence of my eyes. They wet my pillow every night. I had this constant dream, no a nightmare: I was hunted, haunted, tormented, and chased until I fell. Then I played possum and pretended to be dead. Faceless men in black uniforms with black boots crunched my cheeks and temples as I lay there and screamed aloud. I am accursed by this dream all my life, even now I sometimes dare not stay the night in the bedrooms of strangers or new acquaintances.

I remain an enemy, but whose? I do not know. But I still do scream in my dreams at times embarrassingly, the torture will not go, refuses to vanish. At times I mysteriously fear other men, black or white... At such times I prefer the company of dogs, whether snarling vicious or not than that of men. I even fear myself. I fear my own hands. I do not want to own guns, or ropes... I dare not be around moving trains or busy freeways, or alone in the top floors of high rise buildings... I dream of a death-wish I can't erase, by white assaulters whose blows from their fists and boots turn into fiery bullets that hit me, scorching me between the eyes. I do not cry as I did when they hit me on the train. I hate to have screamed like a baby when they assaulted me. I can't stomach the humiliation...

Sometimes in these dreams Sissy floats into the picture. God knows I do not want her there. I do not want her to see me in this condition, with closed bloodied eyes, cut and swollen bleeding lips, a bloody skew nose, hurting ribs... She scoops me up in her arms as if lifting a

limp rag doll, cries her tears into my face and plasters my salty mouth with her own warm lips, blows her sweet breath into it to resuscitate me. But I'm dying, I'm dying or living some kind of death...

*

Ford offered employment to those who were willing to relocate to Pretoria. The company was negotiating with the registered unions about the changes taking place. MACWUSA was never invited to participate.

I visited my father and teased him about lending me some money because I was now unemployed. Just then a strange car stopped outside. My father was saying:

"Did you ever see me come knocking at your house to borrow some money?" when the visitors knocked and barged in.

It was one young white man and a black guy:

"We are from the Security Branch," announced the white.

"What do you want?" I asked.

"We're on a routine visit. Where do you work now?"

"I'm not working, why?"

"Don't you want a job?"

"No, thank you."

Then Dad, who was tipsy, interrupted and began praising the white guy, and held his beanie in both hands like an obedient servant before his master in an impromptu performance that took me by surprise and impressed the white man:

"Ah, my kroon! My baas!"

The man laughed and responded in Afrikaans, now focusing on my father and forgetting about me. His colleague just sat there gloomily, unimpressed.

I got up and left.

Idangatye ngobusuku

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

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Of

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By

Mpumelelo Cilibe

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Abstract

Growing up in New Brighton gave me so many stories that had never been written before but that were told person to person by the residents of my neighbourhood. Some of the tales in this collection are based on such stories. Others are stories that are reminiscent of childhood while growing up with an elder brother. I take the inspiration from different books that are in line with the stories that I am writing: collections of *Extreme Fiction – Fabulists and Formalists* that were edited by Robin Hemley and Michael Martone and *The Best Bizarro Fiction of the Decade* edited by Jeremy Robert Johnson and Cameron Pierce. Some stories by L.L. Ngewu and L.S. Ngcangata, and a novella by P.T. Mtuze, *Alitshoni Lingaphumi*, also bring much influence as they reveal suffering in the lives of black people who endured forced removals, and other situations that are of interest to build my stories on.

Le ngqokolela yamabali iqulathe amabali asekelwe kumabali endandiweva ebaliswa ebuntwaneni bam ndisakhula. Amanye amabali angeenkumbulo zasebuntwaneni ngethuba ndandikhula nomkhuluwa wam ongasaphiliyo. Ifuthe lokuwaqamba ndilifumene kwiincwadi zababhali abanje ngabo bafumaneka kwiingqokolela ezihlelwe nguRobin Hemley no Michael Martone kwincwadi ethi *Extreme Fiction – Fabulists and Formalists*, noJeremy Robert Johnson enoCameron Pierce kwingqokolela ethi, *The Best Bizarro Fiction of the Decade*. Amanye amabali abenefuthe ndiwafumene kwiincwadi zooP.T. Mtuze, kwinovella yakhe ethi *Alitshoni Lingaphumi*, nakwezoL.L. Ngewu noL.S. Ngcangatha apho babalisa ngobomi basekuhlaleni ngexesha abantu babedudulwa befuduswa ngetshova ukususwa kwiindawo zabo zokuhlala.

Isiqulatho

A

Inzululwazi YesiNtu

Kwakumnandi eWaainek	11
Ubugqi	17
Mazibuy' iibhokhwe zam	24
Ubumnandi baseMthatha	29

B

Imikhuba Yobukhwenkwe

Amakhohlombe	35
Ngaphaya Kwezitshixo	39
Ekhaya eBhayi	44
Amabhabhathane	49
Isipho somLungu	52

C

Ezidl'umzi

Useza kuba ngowethu	57
Umqhubi	61
UTere kaMaMvulane	66
Esibhedlela	71
Sithath' uTEBA	73

D

linkanuko

Kwaqala kwafudumala	76
Makabuyel'eGompo	85
Tyhini! Uyagula uNopina-bhokhwe?	90

E

lintlantsi

Idangatye ngobusuku	93
Ndohlala ndimkhumbula	94

A

Inzululwazi YesiNtu

Kwakumnandi eWaainek

UMqondiso wayesazi ukuba inkululeko yaziwa ngabantu baseWaainek kuphela phantse kubo bonke abemi baseRhini. Baninzi abantu ababengayazi le nto. Yena wayesazi ukuba abantu abamnyama ababephila ubomi bongcungcutheko phantsi kwamapolisa engcinezelo ezilokishini babefumana ukuphumla okungathethekiyo ngokuthi bandwendwele eWaainek apho izikali zomqombothi, iqhilika, nembhambha bezidlal'abantwana. Ipolisa lona lalingabe okwenyheke yenyoka apho. Kwakungabanjwa mntu ngenxa yokushusha, indoda ibingcamla konke ekholwa kuko, ithi yakuhlutha suka izijule engceni phantsi kwemithi de ibuye ivuke iqabukile. Ukuba ibisafuna ibisuka iphind'enkomeni, iquq'ibuyelela njalo.

Inye into ebilunyukelwe ngabantu balapho, sisiporho sodumo saseWaainek. Babephelile abantu abaqhub'iimoto ngokuzika emaweni nasemaxethukeni akuloo ngingqi belahlwa seso siporho. Unqabile umntu owabuya ephila kwezo ngozi ukuze asichazele ngendlela esisebenza ngayo okanye esikhangeleka ngayo isiporho eso.

UMqondiso uve nebali lomLungu owayengumhlali waseBhayi, eze ngentsebenzo kwesinye sezikolo ezaziwa ngodumo kweli lonke, uthe xa egoduka ngokuhlwa komnye uLwesihlanu, wagaxeleka engozini emasikizi kweso sithuba. Imoto yakhe yabhaqwa ngabahlali intlaleke isisonka kuloo miwewe nemiwonyo ingqonge iWaainek. Ngaloo Mgqibelo wokubhaqwa kwaloo ntlekele abahlali babehumzela besithi, "Simlahlile isiporho saseWaainek."

Nje ngamntu onkolelo imfutshane, uMqondiso uzibhebhethile ezo ntetho esithi ziintetho zeenkolelo ezingenasihlahla zabantu bakuthi abasesemva. Unina wayengumntu othetha ngolo hlobo ngenxa yenkolo yakhe yobunkonzo, naye ke uMqondiso wakholwa kukulinganisa yena.

Kuthe singekagqabhuki nenyongo isidumbu somLungu lowo wengozzi, suka kwiveki elandelayo kwavakala amarhe ngenye ingozzi yemoto etshone kwakuloo mwonyo. Yeka ke ukothuka kwabantu bakuva ukuba umqhubi waleyo imoto kanti ngumhlolokazi waloo mLungu ebesandul'ukweyela apho. Hayi ke ngoku, yeka naye uMqondiso ukuba nomrhano wokuba le nto yesisiporho saseWaainek inganobunyaniso.

Uhle wakhawuleza walibala ngesiporho zakuba zidambile iindaba zeengozzi ebezisanda kwehla. Uthe ngomnye uMgqibelo kuwiswe inkomo komnye waloo mizi yaseWaainek,

kumnandi ebantwini, wagaxeleka naye apho uMqondiso. Imisebenzi elolu hlobo iye idibanise izihlobo ebesekulithuba zigqibelene. Kube njalo ke nakule nqeberhu. Uhlangene apho nomhlobo wakhe wakwaLoki eyilokishi endala, uKwayimani, phofu naye esithi ujonge ukujika kwangaloo mini ukubuyela khona. Babengoontanga, bewafincile amashumi amabini anesihlanu. Le inguMqondiso ibinomzimba yakheke kakuhle, kodwa ngesithomo inganeno kancinane kule ibicekethekile ilufaf'olude inguKwayimani.

Umzi lo ubunomcimbi wawulikhaya lesihandiba salapho eWaainek, uMaqaqa, uChisana nenkosikazi yakhe uMaDlomo, ababengasileli iinto zalapha, kuziiqhilika, oozimbhambha nemiqombothi. Loo ndawo ibiyakhelwe phezu kwentlambo enomlambo omkhulu, apho ngoku selekwakhiwa khona iifama zabeLungu, ekurhanelekayo ukuba zimi kuloo mihlaba mihle yathinjwa koobaw'omkhulu ngamatyampahla ngomhla zemk'iinkomo zabo ebezifanele ukuba lilifa lethu zizukulwana zabo. Umgaqo omajiko-jiko obhekisa ngaseBhayi wawungekude apho. Yayingatyebanga inyama yaloo nkomo ibixhelwe nguChisana noMaDlomo wawungafunga ukuba yeyehagu, inqatha layo lisisipeke. Itheko elo lalingumbulelo aba babini ababewenza kubaxhasi beshishini elo labo. Imfuyo yabo ibibavumela ukuba baphoce ngolo hlobo: kuziibhokhwe, iinkomo, iigusha kwaneehagu.

Uyidle wayiva kakuhle loo nyama uMqondiso enomhlobo wakhe uKwayimani bada bakhotheka. Kweso sithuba baziphinda-phindile izipozoni zeqhilika yamatyumza bethoba loo manqatha. Yena uKwayimani uthe akuhlutha yiqhilika wee gwiqi ephuma esiyakuzijula jwii engceni phantsi kom-Oki ongaphandle kwamasango elikhaya phesheya komgaqo. Uqhube akayeka yena uMqondiso esithi akazi ukuba loo krisimesi uyakuze aphinde ayalame nini na kwakhona. Ingxaki ke ibe yile yokuba ezixuba ezivanga ezo ziphuzo. Ingxube yotywala yeyona nto ithi ibe yingozi kula aginyayo. Amanxanwa anamava ayazi mpela eyokuba ziyacima izibane kumntu ofunxa konke oku kwehagu: akhuthaza ubungcathu bokugongqoza uhlobo olunye, hayi umxube weendidi ngeendidi.

Hayi ke uqhubile uMqo elumela loo nyama iteketeke ngembhambha neqhilika kwada kwahlwa elapho ehleka kamnandi neemazi. Uthe esaxhentsa njalo nenye yezo mazi suka weva ngesibhovubhovu somfo obevath'iqaqqa, owaziwa ngelikaSigodongo, simthi xhakamfu kakubi ngesifuba sisithi: "Yi cherry yam le!"

"Uxolo bra Sgo, uxolo torho, bendidanisa nje naye..."

“Ungadanisi neyakho inkazana nje, hi? Ndakuhlaba unye mna!”

Uphuncule waphum’emanyonywana apho sel’esisankwatha ukudana oku, walungu-lunguza ekhangela umhlobo wakhe uKwayimani, efuna ukuba bagoduke. Uthe gwiqi ephumela ngaphandle kwaloo mzi sel’efuna nokubeth’amanzi, wabheka ngasemthini ongaphesheya komgaqo. Uthe sel’elungele ukulahl’amanzi apho phantsi komthi wathi mmandla ngaloo mqulu uthe natya apho engceni, wakhawuleza ukusondela kuwo ephanda. Uphawule kwangempahla ukuba ngumhlobo wakhe uKwayimani lowo ulele apho, wakhwaza emvusa:

“Kwayimani, Kwayimani! Vuka mfondini sihambe.”

Uthe khwaphululu uKwayimani evuka engasazazi nokuba uphi, khon’ingubani yena lowo umvusa kobo buthongo bakhe bentlombe. “He maan, ungubani khona wena?”

“Tyhini uphambene kakade Kwayimani? Ndim uMqondiso, yenza vuka mfondini sihambe.”

“Hayi maan, ndiyeke mna ndilale,” uphendule njalo uKwayimani esathe bada kukuyobeka kwengqondo oku.

Ukhe wama phambi kokuya kubetha amanzi qelele phayaa uMqondiso, wabe wabuya weza kumhlobo wakhe sele ecinga ngokumgxagxamisa ngoku. “He ntanga, mna ndiphantse ukubethwa phakathi phaya sesa sikrelemnqa singuSigodongo. Andifuni kuphinda ndihlangane naso, ndifuna sihambe ngoku, yiza phakama.” Umphakamisile bagxadazela bexhagene njalo, bangena endleleni. Ebesele engasazi nokuba baphina ngoku uKwayimani, kanti kwamhlobo wakhe lowo uMqondiso ebesele efathula nje kweso sithokothoko sobumnyama, engazi ukuba kuxesha phi na. Bahambe umgama ovakalayo.

Balishiye ngasemva elo khaya lesiyunguma bakhaba, behexa njalo, uMqondiso esacinga ngeso sigantsontso singuSigodongo wazithethela esithi:

“Xa ndiphinda ndibuyela kwakhona aph’eWaainek ndobe ndiyiphethe iphanga yam, ndakumhlaba anye uSigodongo ukuba nje aphinde andenzel’amasimba.”

“Andiva, kha’uphinde,” utshilo uKwayimani.

“Hayi, ndicinga ngala nja uSigodongo.”

“Mfondini, ndise ndanamanwele mna ngoku.”

“Hayi maan, sukuba ligwala apha.”

Phaya phambili kwalapho kuloo ndlela kubonakele ilangatye elikhule lasisithatha, laba labuya lakhawuleza lacima.

“Heyi, mfondini Mqo, uyibonile laa nto ndiyibonileyo?” ubuye wabuza uKwayimani.

“Yintoni na mfondini le nto uligwala kangakanana nje?”

“Andiyiqhelanga kaloku mna into yokuthwayiza ngobumnyama ebusuku.”

Kuphindile ngaphambili phaya endleleni apho bekuvele ilangatye, kwaphinda kwabonakala isithatha esisuke sajika sangumfanekiso wendoda eyambathe ibhayi elibushiti elimhlophe qhwa okwekhephu indandela phezulu okokhozi, iwelela ngaphesheya komgaqo. Kuthe hlathu amanwele kubo bobabini, basuka baziva benesifuthufuthu esingathethekiyo. “Hayi khona, ndiyajik’apha mna ngoku!” utsho ewakhuph’entloko amehlo kobo bumnyama uKwayimani.

“Ungakhululeka ntangam, mna andijiki,” uphendule njalo yena uMqo, esaqhwab’indlela ebheka phayaa, engazimiselanga ukuphindela kwindawo enoSigodongo. Kodwa ngoku, nakuba ebesaziqinisile nje, imfikele engqondweni into ethi ngenene ikho le nto kuthiwa sisiporho, uzibonela ngawakhe amehlo izinto ezingabangwa yimbhambha abeyidlile, kuloo ndlela, ekwayiva kwalapho kuye emzimbeni. Uthe akubheka wafumanisa ukuba sel’engasabonakali umhlobo wakhe uKwayimani, ejikile wada waya kusithela. Uthe xa edlula kwisicuku semingcunube kwaphakama usapho lwezikhova zikhala ngaxesha nye, “Whuu!” wee riphu umbilini, wothuka kom’umqala.

Kudlule imoto ibaselwe ukubalek’oku ivela kwicala elingemva kuye. Uyivile, wabe eyibona isima qelele phambili phaya kukhal’amavili, yabe yabuya umva ingangxamanga ikhanyise izibane zangemva, yamisa phambi kwakhe ucango lwangemva kwicala lakhe luvuliwe. Akabuzanga, watsho phakathi. Wayibasela umqhubi wayo kwakhona. Uzamile ukumqwalasela loo mqhubi suka, waphandlwa sisithatha esivele ngesiqophe kwelo cala lomqhubi, yabe ingabalekel’izinto zalomhlaba loo moto. Simfumene isifuthufuthu

namanwele kwayi loo nto. Yaqhwitha imoto ibaleka mpela ngathi soze ibe iphinde imise. Yemka, yemka ishiya imithi nezichithi namatyholo kukhala amavili emagopheni, indlandlatheka kanobom sele ingathi iqhutywa nguSathana ngenkqu ngoku. Uthe ekhwaza esithi,

“Bhuti, misa torho!” ayambheka tu loo nkewu igqunywe sisithatha esiphandlayo.

Ngelo xesha yena uKwayimani wathwabaza kobo bumnyama ephindela emva wada waya kufika kwaChisana sele kusondela ukusa. Ufike apho walondlala ibali lehambo yabo nezo zinto zimoyikisileyo kuloo ndlela de wakhetha ukujika. Iye ayamhlala kamnandi ngoku into yokungamazi ukuba uhambe wapelela phi na umhlobo wakhe, wacela abantu ukuba bamkhape kusasa kuyiwe kukhangelwa kwesa siphaluka sesithatha sendoda endanda okokhozi yambathe mhlophe. Kuphendule uSigodongo emthuka ngokuphanjaniswa yimbhambha neqhilika. Kungenelele uMaqaqa, uChisana esithi:

“Andinakuyivumela tu into yokuba ihle kanti kukho umntu obendwendwele apha kwam owonzakeleyo ngobo busuku mna bendisonwabisa abaxhasi beshishini lam. Maweze amadoda anobuntu siye kumfuna loo mfana udukileyo.”

Azikhuphile amadoda aliqaqobana angoyikiyo atsho phezulu evenini kaChisana, kwangenwa endleleni. Ihambile loo nqwelo yasesiThathwini naloo madoda, yangena kuloo ndlela ilanda ekhondweni. Kuhanjwe umgama kuthandabuzeka ukuba angaze abe uselapho ephila kuloo matyholo nemiwonyo uMqondiso. Kubekho enye yawo ecebisa ukuba kuhliwe kanye kuloo ndawo ayolathileyo uKwayimani kukhe kukhangelwe nangeenyawo. Ibe licebo eliphilileyo eli kuba omnye umfana onamehlo abukhali uphawule emazantsi kwixethuka umzi olinxiwa ekubonakala nto ngathi ngumntu othe tyu esangweni lentsimbi lokungenisa iimoto. Bahlele apho bebonke ngeenyawo benze umngcelele, bafika isango elo lizivula lizivala ngokunga lityhalwa ngumoya onamandlakazi amakhulu. Utsho kwangoko ekhwaza uKwayimani: “Nguye! O Nkosi yam, ingathi kanti ufile!”

Bakhawulezile ukusondela apho kolo tywantsi sele bebungcangcazela ngumothuko, wakhwaza uKwayimani: “Mqondiso, Mqondiso!” Uye kuye ebubaleka ukungxama oku, wafika wamthi hlasi ngemilenze ezama ukumtsala ukumothula kolo sango. Basondele nabanye bancedisana naye ukumothula apho umhlobo wakhe.

Akubonakalanga monzakalo ndawo kuloo mfo. Okusuke kwacaca kukuba ebesesebuthongweni obufana nobengcwaba. Bamdlikidlile ngempela bemfika nangeempamana waza wathi khwasululu ngoku, wabakhuphel'amehlo oku komntu lo owothukileyo ezele luloyiko. "Yintoni mfondini? Ufuna ntoni apha phezu kosango lwenxowa?" kubuze kwa untanga lowo wakhe.

"He mfondini, ndigqibele ndikhwele esona siphekepheke semoto esakha sabaleka kakubi apha emhlabeni. Nangoku ndiphupha ngathi siyafika nam elokishini."

"Hayi ntanga, ngathi kum sifumene wena namhlanje esi siporho saleWaainek."

"Mna ndibulela uThixo singakwenzakalisanga. Bendakuba yintoni ngabantu wakugqiba ukuhambela kwam..." utsho aphela esithubeni amagama uChisana.

"Masambeni sigodukeni madoda."

"Mfondini, hayi uneenkani ntang'am!" utshilo uKwayimani kumhlobo wakhe ehlukuzelisa intloko. "Andazi nokuba eso sibindi ubunaso phezolo besingabangwa yimbhambha neqhilika na," utsho sele ehleka ngoku.

Ubugqi

Iwile ibhokhwe kwaKhumalo kuloo lali yaseMandileni kwelakwaBhaca, asondela amadoda eze kusabela umcimbi. USokhaya uwuchazile umsebenzi ukuba awunanto ingako, koko ikukukhupha nje umntwana endlwini.

Nje ngakwimisebenzi yonke, ancokole amadoda ngale naleyaa. Kubekho ndoda ithile izihlelele bucala, izikhethile kwamanye, kubonakala ukuba namanye anayo indawana yokuyoyika. Ibisithi efikayo sele isondele kuloo mfo, ithi yakuthi ntle ngobuso bayo, uyibone icwezela phaya, ibuphepha. Iqhubekile ke le nto, amanye emana ukuyiba ngamehlo ukuyijonga oku.

Ukuba ubani ebengasondelayo kuloo mbhutho yamadoda, ebengeva ukuba ingevane leyo emadodeni lawo malunga naloo mnene woyikwayo, ibibangwa luloyiko lobunkintsela bayo apha ekuthakatheni. Incoko ithande ukoyama kubuhle nokuphila kweentombi zomfo lowo. Ibe kho enye inkewana engamameliyo egama linguZukile esuke yamnyevulela ubawo lowo.

Ithe leyo inguZukile, “Rha, mna andimoyiki uMafeduka nobugqwira bakhe; ubungqina ndivunywe yenye yezo ntombi zakhe nizoyikayo nina, kwaye ndiza kulala nayo phaya kowayo ngokuhlwa-nje.”

“Kwedini, lumka!” utshilo uKhumalo, ekhuph’amehlo emv’ entloko, “Uyakunya ngu Mafeduka!”

Ngalo lonke elo xesha lo mfo zingaye, uzihlalele yedwa phayaa, evale amehlo, egeqezis’intloko oku komntu lo umamele unomathotholo ophathwayo okhalel’ezindlebeni, eviwa nguye yedwa. Ebenxibe iovaroli ezuba, ibhatyi engwevu nomnqwazi omdaka ngebala kwanezihlangu ezikwanjalo. Ubengumfo oneetuma ezidleleni nentshebe ebudana emnyama tsiki. Ngeminyaka yakhe yobudala ibiwafincile amashumi amathandathu, kodwa ungenakuqiniseka koko.

Ibuzile enye inkewana enguntanga wale inguZukile, “He Zuks, kha utsho, yeyiphi *icherry* yakho kwezaa ntombi zika bawo lowa?” Ubuze uZim esalatha ngentloko kweloo cala lihleli inkintsela leyo.

“Yileya kanye iqum-qum, ikhanyayo ngebala, *iyellow-bone* enomhlantla phakathi kwamazinyo angentla, abathi nguNzwaki igama.”

“Thixo, *sonny*, ndandimfuna nam ke loo mntwana uneenwele ezinde, wakhiwe ngathi nguSerena Williams wezodumo kwintenetya yehlabathi! Hayi unentlahla nyhani ntang’am.”

Ubethe ntleke ukuncuma uZuks, ebonakala eqhayisa kule inguZim; yona ekubonakala incitheka mpela zezi ndaba.

“Ke ngoku, mtshan’am, uza kulala naye nyhani-nyhani *tonight*, pha kowabo?”

“Awu, utsho nawe nje, *vandag* ndim naye; ziyaduuma!”

“Eyi kodwa Zuks, ndiyayoyika la *Timer*; iyanconywa ngokuthakatha laa *way*.”

Zithe zakumjonga, wabonakala ehlahlana into engaziwayo nengabonwayo uMafeduka, esanikina intloko, ekhangeleka oku komntu ophula-phule loo mculo uviwa nguye yedwa engqondweni, esawavale vingci amehlo akhe.

“Unokuba umamele umculo waseGwadana laa *way*,” itsho ihleka le inguZim, imthe ntsho ngamehlo umnt’omdala. Wahleka kamnandi naye uZukile.

“Kakade ndiyathakatha, andiyifihli loo nto leyo,” utsho engabhekisi mntwini uMafeduka, esacimele; yatsho yothuka loo nkewana uZim, yabaleka ngoku yasondela kwamany’amadoda ngasexhantini.

“Niyamva lo mntu, niyamva?” Uphinda-phindile ukubuza uZim ethe ntaa amehlo luloyiko ngoku, ebhekisa kwamanye. Akubangakho nanye ephendulayo.

“Mxim! Andiyikholelwa loo nto yakhe; inokuba ufuna nje ukoyikwa ngabahlali, utheth’amasimba la *way*...”

“...Kwedini, kwedini Zukile, sukuthetha njalo ngomntu omkhulu; yintanga kayihlo leya.” Unqande wenjenjalo uKhumalo ingekaligqibi. “Ndiyabona ukuba nibuye kwela Bhayi nicinga ukuba nithweswe izidanga zobutsotsi nokuqaqadeka; kwantetho le yenu yahlukile mpela ngoku kule yalaph’ekuhlaleni. Nakweso sikolo senu ngahle niza kusimoshela nje abany’abantwana.”

Imini ebinomoya obuphephezela buyolisa, ebiqale ngobuhle nenzolo, ibonakalise ukujika, izulu lathand'ukuba mathumb'antaka. Ibonakale ithembisa imvula.

“Ngase ndizibonele ngokwam obo bugqi bale *Timer* kanjani, ndize kuyikholelwa ukuba ayenzi nje kuba ifuna ukoyikwa ngabantu belali la way,” utshilo uZim esajonge ntsho kuloo mfo amoyikayo.

“Uze uyilumkele into yokunqwenela into enokusuka ikuxake. Thina bavayo ngamandla obugqi bala ndoda asinqweneli kwazi ngaphezu kokuba sisazi ngayo. Kodwa ke wena ndiyabona ukuba uphethwe bubugagu nobukroti bobutsha. Qhuba ke mfo wam!” utshilo ebuncama uKhumalo.

Zabiwe izithebe, sasodwa esika bawo uMafeduka sikhathshwa lilizwi elithi ubonwa eyedwa apho njengangwevu engenantanga; adibana onke amanye ndawini nye, oontanga uZukile noZim bahlanganiswa njengabafana; amakhwenkwe wona adityaniswa nentamo yawo, esikelwa ke phofu nangamadoda. Zisiwe endlwini ezoomama nabafazana neentombi; kwamnandi.

Kuhlwile, kwaza ngobo busuku wabonakala uZukile ethe chuu, enxibe idyasi nesankwana oku kwexhegwana, esingisa ngakulontombi. Loo mzi ubuwakhiwe oku komzi womfama weBhulu, unamaxande noongqu-phantsi abathe qelele phaya kumzi omkhulu. Iingxande ezo bezakhiwe ngamatye asicaba afumaneka ezintabeni, kwelinye icala ubuphahlwe ziigaraji ezintathu zeveni neeteletele zodidi ezimbini. Ubani ebengenakuthandabuza ukuba ikhaya elo belifumile mpela. Ubungagqiba uthi elo likhaya labahambi abangabaphambukeli abahlawulayo ngenxa yobo bukhulu balo.

Imithi engqongileyo ekhusele umzi kwimimoya ithande ukwenza isithinzi kwakurhatyela. Iintaka zasebusuku ezinje ngezikhova neengqangqolo nazo zithande ukuxhaphaka kwakuhlwa. Zivakele ke nangobo busuku ziqhuba incoko yazo yesiqhelo, zibanga ingevane kumagwala. Zikhonkothile nezinja zenza nomkhulungwana, kodwa zabuya zathomalala ngokunga zithuliswa yinto. Ufumene ukukhuthazeka umfo omkhulu, empampatha ibhoso lakhe engxoweni esekunene yedyasi, wancuma yedwa kobo bumnyama.

“Tata kaNonzwakazi, imfuyo ibuye yonke nabalusi. Siye sancedisana ukuyibala nonoNzwakazi ngokuya ubungekho. Loo nto yandile, andazi ukuba wena wedwa

wenza njani le nto eyakho izala mihla le. Zintathu iimazi zebhokhwe ezizele amatakane ngambini namhlanje, kanti iigusha zona zimbini ezizeleyo, kubekho namathokazi amabini azeleyo,” uthethe wanga akaphefumli uNosabile, umkaMafeduka, egcobile zezo ndaba zemfuyo. Imazi leyo ibiyisheleni nesheleni nentombi yayo uNonzwakazi ngokucikizeka oku, ubungagqibayo ukuba ngumntu nodadewabo.

“Kutheni ingathi ndiva umona kule ncoko yakho nje?” Utsho ekhangele enkosikazini yakowabo enoncumo ubawo lowo, ecuthe amehlo. “Uthini ngeenkukhu namadada akho akuzalela eqandusela yonke imihla le, wakha wandiva ndikhalaza kakade mna yiloo nto?”

Igumbi lokudlela ababehleli kulo wawungafunga ugqibe uthi ukwipomakazi lomzi wabeLungu. Ifenitshala eyayilapho yayingqindilili ichaza ubuqilima bexabiso layo. Kwazitya ababedlela kuzo yayizezo zodidi zaphukayo zixatyisiweyo ngabeLungu.

“Uwowu! Phoxisa wena, kaloku asikwazi kuba zizinhlanha ezingawothiyo njengawe thina. Wonke umntu waleMandileni ukhala ngobutyebi bakwaMafeduka.”

Akukubanga kudala, bahambile abazali abo bayakulala egumbini labo, nalo elingumthebelele ukwandleka oku, likwatsho ngengaywayo yona ifenitshala yalapho.

Uthe ukuba asondele emnyango wegunjana elisesazulwini saloo manqugwala eentombi uZukile, wankqonkqoza ethethela phantsi, “Nzwaki! Nzwaki!”

Luvuliwe ucango lukhatshwa kukutswina okuchaza ukunqatyelwa kweehinjisi zalo yioli. Imincili yendoda ikhawuleze yaxubana nombilini ovele wathi rhiphu oku kokutshawuza kombane. Ufane wazihleka-hlekisa akuthana mmandla nemazi leyo ahambele kuyo. Uthe khona akuphosa amehlo akhe kwezo zijungqe zintsefu-ntsefu zokulala abesele ezinxibile uNonzwakazi wanga ushiywa ziingqondo uZukile. Waye engemhle umntwan’omntu wasuka wabungelosira ngolo rhatya. Luthe luvaleka olo cango yabe imwola la nto, sele ifutha ixel’inkunzi yerhamba. Banqandan’amathe kwanzima. Uzihlubule ezo dyasi nesankwana wazilahla phaya kude uZukile, waziphosa yena siqu phezu kwebhedi yentombi. Ukhefuzele njalo emnqini ejongene nenqontsonqa ekukudala eyilangazelela, yathi intombi makalinde

umzuzwana, isaya kuqinisekisa endlwini enkulu ukuba izinto zisabahambela kakuhle, abazi kuphazamiseka tu.

Uthe ingekaphumi kwasemnyango apho intombi, uZukile wafunyanwa bobona bakha bamyoli bona ubuthongo kweli lizwe. Yaqalisa ukuwa nemvula emyoli epholileyo ekhapha obo buthongo bakhe, yavakala isithi: “Shwaa!” Wahamba umzuzu.

Ibuyile engqondweni yakhe intombi entle enomfaneleko erhalelwa lilizwe lonke, yatyeda, yazaneka phezu koZuks. Kwenzeka ngobo busuku izinto awayezizibula naye loo makad’enetha kwezothando unguZukile. Uzive ubudoda bakhe bunga bubinjilizwa ngumqala wenyoka, wasitsho isikhalo somfelwakazi esiva ubumnandi base majuku-jukwini. Ube nencwina esizelekayo ebuhlungu oku komntu lo ufuna ukuhlangulwa engozini, watsho njalo ubusuku bonke. Wangqusha kanobom, ubuso bakhe ebungcwabe kwezo nwele zinde zimnyama thsu.

Kwalile ezinzulwini zobo busuku bebungangxamele siphelo weva ngesithongakazi esifana nokugqekreza kwezulu sikhathshwa sisaqhwithi, lwantleleka kubini uphahla lwendlu, waphaphama wayibona loo nkosi uZukile irhangqwe amazantsi lilifu elingwevu, ubumnyama besibhaka-bhaka ngentla kwayo bayitsho yanga ikhatshwa bubuqaqawuli basemazulwini. Uthe akuthoba amehlo ekhangela emandlalweni kuNonzwakazi suka wazibhaqa enamathele kweyona nkunzi yenja yakha yamnyama, inoboyakazi obugqume kwanto. Uphuncukene nayo sele esitsho ngesikrakrayo sona isikhalo. Inyokakazi eyintlwathi ibutshice kanye ngelo xesha ubudoda bakhe ebibumumathile, yaswabuluka nayo ishiya loo mandlalo ebexhagene kuwo nenkunzi yenja ngokunga ibonisa intlonipho kumnini-khaya ovele entungo. Ugubhe entywantywa luloyiko engasasiva nokusiva ngeendlebe zakhe kwasikhalo eso sakhe uZukile, ibe ngathi sisijwili esiphuma komnye umntu, hayi kuye yena siqu: “Iyhuuu! Yizani bantu benkosi!”

“He, he, he!” Usuke wahleka wenjenjalo uMafeduka gendyondyo ediniweyo nepholileyo abeqala kwa ukuyiva uZukile, esothuka kwa ukulibona ixhego linganxibanga mnqwazi nampahla, ngoku selikhangeleka oku komntu omtsha, lilenga-lenga esithubeni, lindanda oku kwentaka ezama ukuhlala phezu kwesebe lomthi.

“Ndixolele tata kaNzwaki...”

“Yithi Mafeduka kaloku, njengantanga yakho. Yithi ndithetha amasimba...”

“Owu baw’ uMafeduka, andisoze ndibe ndiphinde xhego lam, ndaphazama ngala mini...”

“Kakade ubekwa yini apha kwam? Ubusazi ukuba kukwam apha?” uyilandelise wenjenjalo imibuzo uMafeduka.

“Daddy, toro...”

“Yintoni ke leyo idaddy, ndifile kakade?”

Utye tyum kwesi sithuba uZuks exakiwe ukuba angaphendula athini, ixhego limbhidile mpela. Uthobe amehlo wakhangela ezandleni enga uyazihlamba ukuzihlikihla oku engasaziva tu ukuba wenza ni na. Uthe akuthoba amehlo wabona amazantsi akhe okokuqala emva kokwahlukana kwawo nomlomo wenyoka, wothuswa ngamathe enyoka abumkhunyu ajinga apho kwizitho zakhe eziphakathi kwemilenze. Uphakame kancinci ecinga ngempahla yakhe yokunxiba, kwakho into ethi makajonge exhegweni kwakhona, wafika lithe shwaka sele lingasabonakali nangomtshi. Uyitsibele kwangoko loo mpahla yakhe wangxama ukunxiba, ephatha kuwa kukubhuzela okubangwa kukungxama noloyiko. Ngeli thuba bekusele kuzolile ngathi khangwe kwanto, kuthe nkcwe nangaphandle phaya. Kukhale kuphela isikhova, saphendulwa yingqangqolo. Amasele wona awaqalisanga tu ukuvula imilomo yawo.

Ukuqaphele ukuza kokusa uZukile waqonda ukuba noko ngoku angakwazi ukuchwechwa agoduke. Wahamba wagoduka, intliziyo yakhe iwuminxile umqala wakhe.

Uyile esikolweni ngoMvulo kodwa waqaphela ukuba wonke ubani apho ucwezela kude lee kuye, kwaye bewaqhobosha ngeminwe amathatha abo akusondela kubo. Ibe nguntanga wakhe uZim omsus’ inkwethu emehlweni ngokuthi ambuze:

“He mfondini, livumba lani eli libi kangaka liphuma kuwe?”

“Utsho njani ta-Zim?”

“Theth’ ukuba mfondini akuyiva tu le way iphuma kuwe, nyhani?”

“No *sonny*, bendingayiqondi, but ndiyabona la *way* ingathi wonke umntu uyandislayiza kanjani...”

“Inuka *blind sonny*, nyhani andikuxokiseli. Ngcono uvaye uye edladleni uyosplasha la *way*...”

“Zukile, kha usondele apha mfo wam,” umbizile utitshala omkhulu.

“Heke *meneer*?”

“Andazi mfo wam ukuba sisaqhunge sani esi sikukhaphayo namhlanje apha esikolweni. Kodwa ke ndiyakukhulula uye ngase khaya, uze ubuye xa simkile kuwe.”

“*Alright* mfundisi.” Ukhululeke ngoko nangoko selefile zintloni naye ngoku uZukile, wagoduka.

Mazibuy'iibhokhwe zam

“Eyona nto indijuyayo ngumsindo yile yokuba ezi ntwana zisuke zindiwe ngentsinikazi yomya qho xa zindibona apha ekuhlaleni. Ibe yodwa ke le yokuba zisuke zikhonye, zindigxwale zisithi: “Sizi *owners*; amandla! Ngawethu! Iibhokhwe! Zezethu!” Uthethe kabuhlungu wenjenjalo ubawo uZizi, ixhego elifuye umhlambi weebhokhwe kule lokishi yaseJoza, eRhini. Intlungu ube eyiphalazela inkintsela yexhwele elaziwayo lase *Seven Fountains*, uKhwel’ebhedini; into engazanga yasifaka isihlangu enyaweni layo, itsho ngeengxondorha zemiwewe yamasa kwezo nyawo zinkulu.

“Mazibuy'iibhokhwe zam, Khwel’ebhedini; ndincede! Amapolisa wona ndiwancamile malunga nalo mcimbi.” Ube buntywizisa akutsho, nto leyo eyamzalisa ngumsindo nentiyo uKhwel’ebhedini akubona ezo gilasi emehlweni omhlobo wakhe omkhulu.

“Uyazazi ezi ntwana?” Ubuzile uKhwela eqondele phantsi, etsala-tsala intshetyana yakhe efana neyebhokhwe ngesinye isandla.

“Ewe, ezimbini zezaphaya ebummelwaneni kwaThatha, ezinye ngootshomi bazo; zona ke ezo andizazi.” Uphendule sele ebuxola kunangaphambili uZizi, ekhuthazwa nakukubona ebukhathazeka nomhlobo wakhe lowo.

“Khangel’apha ke Zizi, le mbhodlela uzakuthi ukufika kwakho ebuhlantini beebhokhwe zakho uyihlukuhle, uyivule, uyiphose esazulwini somhlambi lowo weebhokhwe ebusuku; uhambe uye kulala wakugqiba. Ngalo lonke elo xesha usenza loo nto uyathetha; naxa ubheka pha, sele ugqibile akuyekanga ukuthetha de ungene endlwini, uthi: “Mazibuy'iibhokhwe zam!” Loo nto ayithethi ukuba zakube zibuye iibhokhwe ezo sezidliwe ngala masela amakhwenkwe, koko kuzakwenzeka into ezakubanga ukuba ziyeke ukuba sisisulu iibhokhwe zakho. Okunye, sizakubuya isidima nesithunzi sakho kubantu basekuhlaleni, yonke into yakho ihlonitshwe, nawe uhlonitshwe. Indoda kufuneka ibe nesithunzi!”

“Kwowu, Khwela, andazi ukuba ndingakubulela njani. Inene akukho nto yakha yandihlupha nje ngale yokumoshwa ngaba bantwana, bajike bahlekise ngaloo nto ibuhlungu bandenze yona.”

“Eyokundibulela ilula Zizi, ndifuna inkomo yam ngolu ncedo ndikunika lona. Inkomo yam uyayazi ukuba yimalini.”

“Hayi, hayi, Khwela, andali; kukuthetha nje, inkomo yakho ndiza kuyihlawula, mhlobo wam.”

Ngalo lonke elo xesha la madoda mabini ebevalelene kwelo gumbi likaKhwelebhedini lineengxowa zamakhambi neengcambu, neemfele eziqwayitiweyo zezilo neentaka, amasela wona ebesonwabile, evungula. Izoli yomya ibijikeleza ixelisa uArch wase Ziyoni. Elo gqange lelahle lalivutha okwesihogo kwakutsalwa umsi wezoli yinkewu nganye.

Ivakele isithi le inguSikhenya: “Yazi, *magents* le nyama yebhokhwe *yalaTimer* ityebe gqitha laa way, *sishota ngedrink* yokuthoba la manqatha.”

“Izibe ke mtshanam, ndiyaqala khe ndidle inyama yebhokhwe ethambe netyebe le way ngathi yeyetakane legusha,” kuphendule uKhwesta esoyame ngentsika yetyotyombe lakhe apho bebetshaya besidlela khona inyama leyo, amehlo ebuyoba ngumya.

“Umhluzi namanqatha yimpilo kuthi batshayi besigada ngoba ayasioyilisha isifuba la way,” utshilo uDekaider ebuya negaqa lesihlunu esinenqathakazi eliteke-teke kwisikotile esiphambi kwebhedi ebebehleli phezu kwayo, siphuphumala yinyama enomhluzi. Ubuye walumela ngesipoponi somhluzi oshushu.

“Kha udlulise umhluzi lowo Dekaider, mna andikhathalele naloo *Drink’o’pop*. Inyama nomhluzi zindanele,” kutsho uPayto, ecima-cimeza amehlo amancinci, ebomvu krwe ngumsi womya.

Kuhlwile ngelingeni, wabonakala uZizi engena ebuhlanti beebhokhwe zakhe ngobo busuku nje ngamyalelo ka Khwel’ebhedini. Uyivulile loo mbhodlelana abeyinikwe lixhwele, yatsho ngesaqhunge sevumba elimtsho wadidizela sisathuthwane sabumini. Zimngqongile iibhokhwe kodwa zibubaleka, zenza isangqa athe waphosa phakathi apho kuso loo mthi. Zigxwalile ezinye zikhala, Mhee! Wakhwaza naye kanye ngelo xesha esithi:

“Mazibuy’iibhokhwe zam!” Ibe ngathi siyamkhuthaza eso sankxwe senziwa ziiibhokhwe ezo, waqhuba wenjenjalo ukukhwaza, sel’ebunikela umva ubuhlanti

ebheka ngasendlwini, esiya kulala. Akayiphathanga nasemfazini loo ndaba kaKhwel'ebhedini, watya tyum, ejonge kuphela iziphumo, ekholwa kukubona emntwaneni.

Abafana betheko lenyama yebhokhwe baqala ngokuhlekana, behluthi izisu ziyimipatsiya, ubuso nemilomo inyinyitheka, beqhunywe begxadazela ngumya. Intsini le ibangwe yinto abathe ukuyibiza 'kukuva izinto'. Kuqale uKhwesta oye wayidubula apha entungo, esithi isisu sikaSikhenya siyathetha. Bakhe bathi zole bonke baphula-phula, suka ngoku kwakhala esikaDekaider. Bayihleke intsini balila iinyembezi. Kuye kweenqumama kwezo zooDekaider noSikhenya, suka kwavakala u "Mhee" ocacileyo evela kwicala likaKhwesta, bavela bamwa ngentsini bonke uKhwesta. Besahleka uKhwesta njalo, loo Mhee watsho kule inguPayto. Zibe bubuya iingqondo ngoku kubo bonke, wagqotsa ukubaleka ephuma apho uKhwesta eshiya abahlobo bakhe bodwa ngemva, esiya kubikela unina endlwini enkulu ngeso simanga sebhokhwe ekhala kubo bonke eziswini. UNozengezi, unina kaKhwesta uye wayithatha mayana le nto esithi abafana abo baqhutywa yinto abayinkawuzileyo, akukho kwanto. Wasuka watsho loo Mhee kanye ngelo xesha ngokuvakalayo evela apho kunyana wakhe ngenkqu.

Udubuleke wabalekela phandle uNozengezi eshiya unyana yedwa endlwini, wakhwaza abamelwane,

"Yizani bantu benkosi, phumani nizokuva esi simanga!"

Ngenene baphumile emizini abantu bonda ngaye, wabalathisa kwakhe. Ubuyele apho endlwini yakhe sele elandelwa lelo hlokondiba labahlali abafuna ukuzivela eso simanga sebhokhwe ekhala esuswini somntu. Bathe besangena bonke apho kwaNozengezi suka bagilwa ngootshomi bakanyana wakhe bephuma ebobosini begilana, bekhatshwa sisikhalo somhlambi weebhokhwe. Bamangaliswa abantu, bambi baphuma bebaleka kwelo khaya besithi lithakathiwe.

Uvele kweso sithuba uZizi naye eze kusabela eso simanga kukhalwa ngaso ngabamelwane. Uthe akuva loo Mhee ekhala eziswini zabo bafana, suka wayothula apha naye ngoku intsini. Abantu basuka badideka bakuva ixhego lihleka ngolo hlobo sele livuza iinyembezi emehlweni. Wakhwaza uZizi wathi,

“Bantu bakuthi, ndihlekiswa kukuba kanti ngenene ezam iibhokhwe ziyakhala esiswini sendoda! Ndanditshilo baza kunya!”

Kufike ngelo xesha kanye uNokholeji, ongumama wenye yezo nkewu, leyo kuthiwa nguSikhenya, sele engamalangatye ngumsindo ebhekisa kuZizi, “Gqwirandini lendoda, ndiyamfun’umntwan’am! Yini Thixo lo mntu ungcole kangaka endijikel’umntwan’am amenz’ibhokhwe?” Kucacile ukuba umama lo akevanga kakuhle esiba unyana lowo ujikiwe.

Usuke weqhuzu-qhuzu ukuhleka uZizi: “Hayi, sisi, unyana wakho usenguye, uselilo isela leebhokhwe, nto nje iibhokhwe ezo zenza isikhalo sazo sesiqhelo ngaphakathi esiswini sakhe.”

“Ndiyahamba ndiyakubambisa emapoliseni!”

“Hamba torho mha, uze nawo apha amapolisa lawo!” Ume ngelo uZizi.

Bamqandile abanye abafazi uNokholeji besithi makayeke ukuba sisihiba, uZizi lowo ufanelwe kukucengwa ukuze alikhuphe elo fufunyana lebhokhwe kwabo bafana bangamasela anentlonti.

Isimbonono sebhokhwe eziswini zamasela asiyekanga. Amasela lawo, endawonye onke, aye ewakhuphe entloko amehlo abomvu, kunguMhee! Abantu babethe chasi, bambi ikukhona begaleleka ukuza kuzivela nokuzibonela eso simanga. Bafika nooNondaba *beDaily Sun* yamabholo, babhala, bafota.

Bafikile nabanye ababini oonina bamasela, baza bonke bamngqonga uZizi, bebonakala bebumcenga emehlweni. Ibe nguNozengezi obenesibindi sokubuza: “Ngoku ke bhuti, sizakuyithini le nto?”

“Hayi bafazi, ngathi kum ilula le nto; iibhokhwe zingayeka ukukhala apho inyama yazo ilele khona ngokuhlawula ixhwele. Ndiyaqonda ukuba uKhwel’ebhedini angekhe adlule kwiinkomo ezimbini. Kha nizizame.”

Balishiyile ixhego oomama bagqugula bodwa bucala okwethutyana, baphinda babuyela kulo. Ibe nguNozengezi kwakhona obuye wathetha nalo ethunywa ngabanye: “Bhuti torho,

sincede. Sakuzikhupha iinkomo ezo zifunwa lixhwele kunokuba abantwana bethu baphelele eNdimangeni. Silinde, siyabuya, sele silazi nexabiso lenkomo kaKhwela.”

Namhla xa udlula kwaZizi ezibhokhweni apho eJoza, kukho umbhalo omhle omkhulu obomvu othi: LUMKA, EZAM ZIYATHETHA ESISWINI SENDODA!

Ubumnandi baseMthatha

Inene babungena kulibaleka ububele awayebunikwa uDezoks ngamanene aseMthatha ngaloo Mqgibelo. Injika-langa yonke wahanjiswa iindawo ezifana *noomaCircle Triangle* waboniswa nezakhiwo zodumo ezifana neBotha Sigcawu. Wagqiba kuye ngaphakathi ukuba loo manene woze naye awatende ngaphezu koko mhla ahambela kuye eBhayi. Wayecinga ngokuwakhuphela kwiindawo zolonwabo ezifana *noomaBoardwalk, ooBaywest, komaCentral, Summerstrand, ooLunga eNhose eZwide, nakooGqalane, nooPatido eJabavu, eNew Brighton*.

Ngokuhlwa ammemela kwisiyunguma sotshiso-nyama netheko lokumamkela apho eNgangelizwe. Uzive engenamlomo bubungcungcu azibhaqe ebekwe kubo, esitsho naye ukuba akazanga wakha wayibona loo nto afakwe kuyo. Kwa siselo aqalwe ngaso ngamarhumsha wayesizibula. Wabona kukhutshwa umkhenkce-bubisi efrijini wakhiwa ngamacephe ugalelwa ezigilasini zokusela, walekeliswa ngesiphuzo abasibize otshomi bakhe ngokuba yi *Irish Coffee Cream*. Hayi ke, yaqhuqhwa kanobom ke loo nto, yasuka yayintubululu egwebhuzayo, etsala iliso iginyisa amathe. Uthe khona akuyifaka emlonyeni yafika elwimini yadala into entsha ebunqumbululu obatsho wahlasimla.

“Sii, madoda, hayi ngenene niyakwazi ukonwabisana majita aseMthatha!

AwaseBhayi andiqondi ukuba akha ayiva le nto nindidlisa yona namhlanje!” Utsho ngokunyaniseka okukhatshwa ngumothuko.

Utsho kamnandi umculo kaDavid Sanborn, zaphokoka neembelukazi ukufika ngokufika. Uye wathand’ukuba bukhawuleza ukuyifinca leyo yokuqala igilasi, wonda ngeyesibini. Umfana ogama linguSango ubonile ukuba ingathi iza kubhatyaza le yaseBhayi, wasondela kuyo, wayoyama: “Bra, sukuya ngamandla kule way kuba usiva ubumnandi bayo; asiyo *pudding* le, iyakuthatha nyhani uhambe ngepipi estratweni. Yigcine kuwe igilasi yakho, uthathe ixesha lakho, umane unyela ulwimi lwakho ngayo; ungayithi laqa, kwaye ungayigongqozi,” utsho ebuhleka umLungwana lowo. Wavela wayithanda naye loo poni uDezoks ezibona ezibhaqele umhlobo wenene.

Wawungayekanga umculo omyoli, nevumba lenyama etshiswayo lalibanga amathumbu axokozele liphango. Isoleji yayixele amarhamba azisongileyo ubuninzi bayo. Ubusuku

behlobo babuyoko-yoko zizibane zezulu, zinga zikhuphisana nezo mazi zazikhutshiwe, zimbi zizikhuphile, ngobuhle bazo. Uye wakrwecwa ngomnye umfo othe ncothu, onomfaneleko wesifundiswa uDezoks, naye wasabela. Umfo lowo ubemi neyona yakhe yalubhelu intyatyambo, ifana nezo zazichazwe ngumfi uWordsworth kumhobe wakhe. “Jonga, bhuda yam, hoya nank’umntu, ubusuku busebude; yonwabani.”

Uye wahleka usisi lowo esithi: “He-he, bawo, nank’umntu ephisa ngam ndithe phuhlu amehlo!” Ayiphendulanga loo ndedeba, ingakhange izazise nokuzazisa, yasuka yaphelel’emehlweni, yayakusithela.

“No, babes, akaphisi ngawe tu. Undincedile lo mfo kuba kudala ndikujongile qha ndingazi ukuba ndingakuqala ngaphi na. Mna ndinguZongezile abambiza ngoDezoks. Ndiphuma eBhayi la way. Wena ke ungubani?”

“Mna ndinguThabisa, bhuti, aph’eNgangelizwe.”

“Ke, kha undiqinisekise ukuba ndinomhlobo wenene apha kuwe; akukho bhobhoyi uza kundihloh’ibhozo okanye imbumbulu ngokundibhaqa nawe,” utsho ezihleka-hlekisa uDezoks, naye encunyelwe kamnandi.

“Tyhini! Hayi kaloku andinxibanga msesane wamntu emnweni njengokuba ubona nawe. Akukho nto inokuleqisa ngebhozo okanye ngompu wethu suka,” utsho naye ebuhleka uThabisa lowo.

“Hayi ke *sweet-girl*, nam ndiyavuyisa; butsho baphela ubulolo bam, kudala *ndisimaka* ukuncokola nawe.” Iqhube yenjejala incoko yabo babini, kucaca ukuba abachasene mpela, badanisa nokudanisa kunye, behlangene ngezidlele kwakukhala umculo ofunisa oko.

USango, obekade enyamalele eyekuncedisa ekutshiseni inyama, ugangwe nguloo mbono wokunamathelana kweso sibini oku kwamawele ahlange ngeentloko. Wothuke wema okomzuzwana, kodwa wabuya warhoxa wabuyela kwaseziko.

Kuxokozele kwamnandi kwayiloo nto yintsholo yolonwabo lwabantu abatsha nomculo; abathandanayo besoyamene, bambi bafumana abatsha, abanye babe bahlangana nababegqibelene kudala nabo, kubuyelwana, bambi baxabana belindana, balahlana

besahlukana. Baqhubeka ubomi. Zijikelezile izitya zenyama namaqebengwana neziselo kumnandi, ingoma isitsho njalo.

Buhambile ubusuku, nabantu bacutheka ngambini-ngambini. UDezoks noThabisa babasesinye sezozibini zilahlekayo besiya kuchitha intsalela yobo busuku kwindawo uDezoks awayesele eyilungiselelwe kwasemini ngabahlobo bakhe. Bahamba ke bayakuvalelana. Ndlela le ababethene nca ngayo wawungafunga ukuba soze babe baphinde bohluwe nto. Kwabanjalo nakwelo qonga lothando. Kwasebenza imilebe kosulwana amathe, iminwe inga ingakroboza iimbambo. “Ubukade uphi ixesha eli lonke?” Usebezele endlebeni yaloo mfo uThabisa, engaziva, ewavale vingci amehlo akhe efuthela phezulu.

“Masilale!” Uphendule esebeza naye uDezoks emhluba konke abekunxibile.

Umwolele phezu kwakhe engqengqa ngomqolo amabele entombi ewakhongozele ngezandla okweziciko.

Izithobe yonke phezu kwakhe loo ntombi ngomzimba ongezantsi, watsho ngencwina ebukukhuza yakuzihlaba ngaye, nayo yatsho ngeyayo incwina ibugcuma bubuncwane bobushushu bomzimba. Bakhalelene bekhalisana ngolo hlobo babe bawolana ngemilomo bedlala ngamalwimi, yabe ingayekanga ukungqusha ngokwayo ngaphezulu imazi, isehla isenyuka inga iphalisa ihashe emdyarhweni weJuly eNatala. Ibe lithutyana siqhuba eso sililo sabo sesiyunguma sababini ikhwel’izehlela intombi, wada wawela phezu kweso sifuba simanzi kukubila uThabisa, imizimba yabo ithe saa. Baqhube njalo bemana bevusana ebuthongweni ngeengqiniba bephind’enkomeni kwada kwasa.

Ngentseni kungekaxukuxi nomqhagi, kuvakale unkqo-nkqo-nkqo ecangweni lelo gumbi bebelele kulo. Ukuphuphile oko kunkqonkqoza ngathi kutsho egumbini lakhe emva ekhaya eBhayi uDezoks, enga uva igama lakhe likhwazwa libizwa ngunina. Ukhwaze esebuthongweni: “Mama!” Weva ngengqiniba yentokazi leyo ebelele nayo imngomba ezimbanjeni. Uthe khwasululu exhuma, weva ukuba kunkqonkqozwa apho kuye emnyango. Uphakame wonda ngocango, wavula.

“Tyhini! Sango, yintoni mfondini ngentseni kangaka?”

“Hayi mfondini, ndithe mandikhangele ukuba ulele kakuhle na,” utshilo omnye amehlo ewakhuph’entloko.

“Ewe ndilele *right, broer*. Kutheni ngathi usexhaleni nje?”

“Hayi xa ulele kakuhle ke akukho nto, ndakubona *later*, xa sele uvukile.” Esitsho nje iliso lakhe lijonge ntsho egumbini emva komhlobo wakhe, ngathi usakrokra noko.

UDezoks ubuyele ebhedini wahlala apho enyeleni lomondlalo ecingisisa ngesi senzo somhlobo wakhe lowo usuka apho, akayifumanisa konke-konke ukuba ishoba ni na. Emva kwethutyana ehlikihla isilevu sakhe eqondele phantsi, ubuyele emazini wayiphutha-phutha, baphind’emva kwendlu.

Kwalile emva kwesidlo sakusasa, malunga nentsimbi yeshumi, wehla esiya kukhangela uSango kowabo, sele eyikhulule intokazi yakhe, wayikhapha eyiloo nto ijongwe nangutha-tha-tha apho ebummelwaneni ngathi kolanyw’umshologu. Imini ibintle, ilanga lithe qheke, kupholile. Uzibone efanelene naloo ntombi esithi nababukeli abo makube babuka loo mfaneleko.

Umfumene uSango xa aphumayo kowabo esangweni, wabe sele esithi ukuthana ntlana kwabo: “Bendisaya phaya kuwe, mfondini.”

“Nam, *sonny*, ndiqondile ukuba ndiza kuqala apha kuwe khe ndive ngale nto ikuxhalise kangaka de uze kundivusa ngentseni ndingekaxukuxi. Kha utsho, ibiyintoni kakade?”

Ube bucingisisa okwethutyana uSango oku komntu ongaziyo ukuba angawuqala ngaphi umcimbi: “Hayi ntanga, uze ungafi; undincede ungambuzi uthi uve ngam uThabisa ngale nto ndiza kuxelela yona.”

“Yintoni leyo, mfondini? Uyandoyikisa, yazi?” Ube bundweba enoloyiko naye uDezoks ngoku.

“No, *sonny*, lo mntwana uThabisa waqhingana nenye iponi yafa.”

“Yho-yho-yho! Thixo, yintoni le uyithethayo ngoku mfondini?”

“*That’s why* ndikuvukele ngentseni nje, ndizokutsheka.”

“Ke ngoku, ukuba bendifile nam Ibiza kundinceda ntoni into yokufika kwakho ngentseni?” Utsho ecaphuka uDezoks.

“Mfondini, khange ndilale tu phezolo, okoko ndicinga ngawe nale nto uzifake kuyo.”

“Into endizifake kuyo?”

“Le yokubamba le *cherry* uyokulala nayo kukho nesi simoko sayo ongasaziyo. Kodwa ke *mos usafe* nje ngoku, awenzekanga *fokol*, and umshaye ubusuku bonke.”

“He *maan*, ndiphantse ukufa; khona kha utsho, ihamba njani *maan* le *way* yalo mntwana?”

“*No maan*, le *cherry* yayidyola nomjita waseMaputo owayeze apha *ngespan*. Kucaca ukuba uthe xa egoduka ebuyela kwelakubo wamthiyisela emvala ngomthi nemela egotywayo lo mntwana ukuze angashaywa ngamany’amajita, *but* yena nanko edyola neny’iawuti; nqaku-nqaku, bangideka boyi-*two*.”

“And then?”

“Kaloku wakhala wancama loo mjita, no *my-sister* watsho kwatsha nelizwi elo; baphuma abantu babatsala-tsala, beqhingene oku kwezinja, beze-*bruts* njalo, bezama ukubaqhawula. Loo *owu* yaphum’igazi ngeempumlo neendlebe, yafela apho phezu kwakhe, waba uyaphuncuka naye ngaloo *way umaid* lo wakho.”

B

Ebuntwaneni

Amakhohlombe

Ngexeshana elalingephi phambi kokuba ndiqalise ngqa ukuhamba isikolo, ndikhumbula kufika ekhaya igquba lamaBhulu angalo zinkulu zinoboya, ebomvu oku kwabantu abahambe gqitha elangeni. Kwaqala kwakhonkotha uBobbyinja yasekhaya ngaloo ntsasa esenza isithukuthezi esingenasiphelo ejonge esangweni lokungena abahambi. Bankqonkqoza ngobukrwada obungathethekiyo, umama watsiba ukuya kubavulela esanxibe izambatho zokulala. Kungene apho izixhapothi zeengxilimbela zamadoda amhlophe amahlanu okanye emathandathu, enxibe iimpahla zasemkhosini exhobile. Oyinkokheli yabo owayephethe intongana yokwalatha, wathetha nomama owasuka wathi cebu emela bucala ukuze badlulele ngaphakathi endlwini. Baqalisa ugqogqo benqika oozikhabhathi, iiwodrophu, bekhangelana nangaphezulu kwazo, bekhangelana nditsho nangaphantsi kweebhedi. Baphuma apho ekhaya nezembe lokucanda iinkuni kwanebhoso lethu lokusika inyama elikhulu elibukhali ngenene. Yeyona nto yandihluphayo ke leyo, ndisazi ukuba luncedo kwezo zixhobo zokusebenza apho ekhaya.

“Bazithathela ntoni bezisaphi ke mama, sizakusebenza njani zingekho?” Ndibuziswe ngumothuko.

“Boyikisela ukuhlaselwa ngabantu bakaPoqo *neCongress*. Bathi bagqogqa yonke imizi elapha eLokishini,” uphendule umama ekhangeleka engonwabanga.

Andikwazanga ukuphinda ndibuze nangona umdla ndandisenawo, nemibuzo isaxananazile engqodweni malunga naloo Poqo *neCongress* zazisoyikwa ngaloo maBhulu. Ngeloo xesha kwakusele kunqabe nootata ababezizihlobo zikatata ababedla ngokuxoxa bange bayaxabana bephakamisa amanqindi abhontsi bakhombe ngemva besithi, “Mayibuye!” abanye bephendula besithi, “I Afrika!” Ngoku abantu abadala babesele bethethela phantsi behlonipha, besebeza nga “Lant’inkulu.”

Ngosuku olulandelayo umama usivuse ngentseni, “Mncedisi! Mpumelelo, vukani, vukani!” ndothuswe lelo lizwi libukhali lizele uloyiko ndikobunzulu ubuthongo, ndee khwaphululu ukuvuka. Phaya ngaphandle kwakuvakala izandi zeeteletele ezibaleka ngokungxama.

“Shh, yiva iitrektara esitratweni,” nditshilo.

“Asizotrektara eziya sidenge, *ziiSeracen!*” Itshilo leyo yasoloko isazi ingumkhuluwa, ndamangala ukuba yazi njani. Sikhawulezile nomkhuluwa lowo ukuhlamba ukulungiselela ukuya esikolweni. Siye sachitha loo manzi amdaka ebhafu lezinki edreyinini phambi kokuba sinxibe impahla yekhaki eneebhulukhwe ezimfutshane. Izihlangu zona besingekabinazo. Sidle isonka esimdaka salumela ngeti emnyama saza emva koko sangena endleleni sikhathshwa ngumama. Ndizibonile neezotrektara bezisenza loo mgqumo zidlula kuthi zitsho ngamavili entsimbi abutyathanga nombombo omde ongumpu ojikekayo ujonge macala onke.

Sothuke kumganyana othe qelele ukusuka ekhaya sakuphawula ukuba uBobby,inja yakowethu uyasilandela.

“Sibi! Hamba goduka!” utsho ecaphuka umama ukumgxotha, thina sancedisisa ngokumqwebisela ngamatye, sambukela egqotsile ukujika ebaleka. UBobby wayesoyika umama kuphela ekhaya, engenamsebebenzi nabanye abantu. Kwaye ingumama kuphela owayembiza ngokuba nguSibi.

Sifike kumgaqo omkhulu oyiNtshekisa uvalwe lityathanga lamajoni amaBhulu axhobe efe amacala ngemipu emide. Ndaba noloyiko ukunqumla apho ndicinga ngokudutyulwa, kodwa loo majoni amhlophe akasisanga so tu kwaphela, sawuwela umgaqo. Kwa ipolisa lomgaqo elimnyama elalisaziwa ngegama likaSibhidla, lisoyikwa kakhulu ngabaqhubi zimoto alibonakalanga ngaloo mini. Abantwana abadalana apha kum abangena mbeko babeye bamcaphukise ngokumkhwaza ubawo lowo bacule besithi, “Na’idada livul’iimpundu, uSibhidla uyalivuthela!” Ebezitsho ke izithuko ezibi ngoomama babobantwana equmbile. Abo bantwana ke bona babesuka bamwe ngesiqhazolo sentsini bebaleka bebheka phaa.

Sifikile esikolweni apho safikela kwigxudululu labanye abantwana abakwakhathshwa ngoonina, abanye bekhala besoyika. Umama wathetha notitshala omkhulu owayesaziwa ngokuba nguMnumzana uQeqe, owasithumela komnye utitshalakazi onguTsengiwe.

“Lo yena andiqondi ukuba sele ekulungele ukuqalisa isikolo,” watsho utitshalakazi lowo ejonge kum ebhekisa kumama. “Kha uqabelise ingalo yakho yasekhohlo ubambe indlebe yasekunene,” utshilo kum, ndenjenjalo. Isandla sam sekhohlo sayicupha nje indlebe leyo, andaphumelela. UMncedisi yena ukwenze ngokulula oko,

wamkelwa kwangoko. Wandicengela kwakuko umama de kwathiwa kuye: “Mshiye sakubona ukuba masithini na ngaye,” waba uyamkhulula njalo umama utitshalakazi.

Akuba emkile umama, utitshalakazi uTsengiwe uthe kwabo bafana nam bangena gumbi lakufundela apho esikolweni, kuba isikolo sasimagumbi asixhenxe kuphela, “Nina nonke sinifudusela ecaweni kwaDonki, eMendi Road. Kwelo gumbi lesikolo sasilindiselwe kulo ndaqaphela izindlu zeentaka ezazakhelwe kumaplanga axhase uphahla lwelo gumbi ngentla kweentloko zethu. Ndachitha ixesha elide ndibuka ezo ntaka, ndiqala kwa ukuzibonela kufuphi ngolo hlobo iintaka, ndaphulaphula loo ntyilo-ntyilo wazo kwada kwafika elo xesha lokuba siphume apho singuloo mngcelele usingise kwaDonki.

Sasishiya ngemva eso sikolo *saseLabour* bambi babesibiza ngegama *lakwaFord*, sihamba ngabane ngabane. Sishiye ngemva loo mizi yamaplanga besakhiwe embindini yayo isikolo eso. Saphuma apho kwisitalato *saseMabija*, sadlua kwesaseMarwanqa, saqabela iNtshekisa, saza sayigqiba yonke *iAggrey*, sagwejela eMbizweni phambi kokuba singene eMendi apho ibimi khona loo cawa yakwaDonki. Sifike apho sele lisondele ixesha lokuphuma kwesikolo, ndaye ndidinwe ndililaphu. Saye sisondele kumashumi amathandathu abantwana. Mnye kuphela omnye umntwana endandimazi endambona apho, uMthuthuzeli ka Gubayo emaCirheni, owayengummelwane. Ndandiqala loo mini ukuhamba umgama ovakala kangako ngeenyawo.

Ndabuya ndambalisela umama ngehambo yaloo mini, wakhangeleka othukile, wathi kum:

“Akubuyeli apho! Andinakho tu ukukuvumela uyekufunda apho. Uyakuthini ezimotweni? Ndikuyeke unqumle imigaqo eliqela ngolo hlobo wedwa?” wathetha ezibuza njalo engenamphenduli umama, engcwaba elo kamvanyana laloo mfundwanyana yam lisaqala. Ngalo lonke elo xesha wayexoxa nesiqu sakhe, wayesonge iingalo zakhe phezu kwamabele, ejonge kude enkalweni ngokunga andikho apho phambi kwakhe. Ndasigqibelisa isikolo ngolo hlobo.

UMncedisi ubuye yena ethe nqeke loo mazinyo makhulu ngathi ngawomvundla eyimivuyo wonke: “Jonga mama, mna ndibhalile esikolweni,” utsho ebonisa ngoo *a e i o u* bakhe abagoso kwelo phekepheke lakhe lesileyiti. Ayindivisanga kamnandi tu into yokuba ezakuqhuba nokufunda lo gama mna ndizakusala ndinguMahlalela ongafundiyo.

Utatomkhulu wam ozala umama yena ayimhluphanga kwaphela le meko ibingandonwabisanga. Bamvisa kamnandi ubukho bam ekhaya ngenxa yemisetyenzana andenzise yona efana nokupha iinkukhu amanzi nokutya, nokukhupha amaqanda ehokweni. Kwabamnandi mpela kum ukuhamba naye ngenqwelo yakhe yeedonki. Into eyathi yandonwabisa ngamandla yaba kukundwendwela kwethu kwiilokishi zabeBala nezamaBhulu, ngakumbi ngemiVulo. Abo bantu babesela utywala obuninzi bembodlela ngeempelaveki, aze utatomkhulu abahambe ezekuthenga kubo loo makhohlombe otywala ngemiVulo leyo. Ndaqaphela iqela lemizi eneefestile ezaphukileyo kuleyo yabantu beBala, kurhaneleka ukuba kwakusiliwa ngeempelaveki ezo, kophulwe ezo festile.

Apho sifike khona ebeqalisa utamkhulu ngokukhwaza athi: *“Empty bottles!”* Yeka ke ukukhawuleza ukuphuma oku kweembovane kwabafazi beBala nababeLungu bexhakazela naloo makhohlombe otywala azalise iingalo, bethengisela utatomkhulu. Ubeye amise inqwelo akhuphe ingxowa yemali abahlawule, mna ndihlohle ezingxoweni ndiwahlula-hlula ngokwemibala yawo amakhohlombe lawo. Wayesithi akudinwa kukukhwaza ajonge kum athi: *“Khwaza nawe jou sleg!”* Nam ke ndalinganisa ndikhwaza,

“Empty bottles!” Kwaba mnandi kum mhla ndaqala ukuthetha isiLungu ngolo hlobo, ingakumbi xa ndibona abo mama beBala nababeLungu bephuma emizini yabo naloo makhohlombe abo ngenxa yaloo mikhwazo yam. Loo nto yenza ukuba ndilibale ngokumonelana nomkhuluwa ngenxa yesikolo naloo magama akhe akekeleyo kweso sileyiti sakhe sicandekileyo.

Lo msebenzi sasingawenzi *eNew Brighton* nakwezinye iilokishi zabantu abamnyama kuba babengabuthengiselwa bona utywala bembodlela ngokomthetho wamaBhulu, bebanjwa ngamapolisa xa bebhaqwe nabo. Loo nto yenza ukuba linqabe okwegolide ikhohlombe lotywala ezilokishini zabamnyama.

Andiphelanga mandla ngenxa yokwahlukana kwam nesikolo ke noko. Ndaya ndazixakekisa ngokufundisa udadewethu ondalekelayo ukubhala amaqanda, nto leyo eyabanga ukuba oomakazi noomalume bam bandithiye igama lokuba ndinguTitshala.

Ngaphaya kwezitshixo

Bam – bam – bam! “Vula, vula!” Kwakhala amanqindi nezihlangu emnyango nasezifestileni ezinzulwini zobusuku. Amapolisa amaBhulu ayebaleka phambili, emva kwawo izizinja zawo ezingabantu abamnyama. Amtyhalela phaya kude utata angena onke endlwini emhlaba iimpama nezihlangu esanxibe iimpahla zokulala ezinemigca eluhlaza, enganxibanga zihlangu. Amrhuqela ngaphandle kanye ngelo xesha, ndaziva ndisoyika ndikhathazekile. Ndeva iingcango zentsimbi zomgqomo welori zivaleka mbakra ngaphandle apho, yagquma injini yayo, yaza yatsala isuka ngamendukazi akhalisa amavili.

Kwabanzima ukubuyela ebuthongweni kwakhona emveni kokuba emkile loo mapolisa. Into eyandihlala kakubi ngokungalibalekiyo ngamehlo katata awayewakhuphe onke entloko, ezele uloyiko nomothuko. Utata wayengelilo igwala, kodwa ubumhlophe bamehlo akhe loo mini ayechaza enye into endandiqala ukuyibona kuwo. Bamrhuqa oku kwenja enebhula elisela lamaqanda eyakubulawa ethafeni.

Umama wantantazela exakiwe ukuba angenza ntoni na. Ndavuka ndaphakama ndayakuma ecaleni kwakhe, nam ndixakiwe. Kwakuvuleke yonke indawo apho endlwini – iminyango neefestile. Umama wema apho emnyango kwigumbi lethu lokulala esithi: “Bamthathile utata wenu, kwa noThobile umnta’kwenu!” Watsho ewakhuphe entloko amehlo, ebambebele esidleleni.

“Ndibabonile, ndibone yonk’into!”

“Ubungalelanga na, Mpumelelo?” ubuzile umama.

“Ndivuswe kukungongoza kwabo iingcango neefestile. Utata bamthathe enganxibanga nezihlangu ezo, ehamba ngeepijama.”

Kwakusa ndifike esikolweni zithe ndii iindaba zokubanjwa kootata babanye babobantwana baseklasini. Sibaliselene ngendlela ababanjwe ngayo abazali bethu. Eyona nkwenkwe yayinkulu kunathi sonke apho eklasini, uBudge Tshijolo, wasibalisela ukuba naye bazamile ukumbamba kodwa wakhala unina enqanda ebaxelele ukuba unyana wakhe lowo usengumntwana wesikolo. Seva kwangaye ukuba bonke abo babebanjiwe

babengamavolontiya ombutho *weCongress* namalungu ombutho kaPoqo, esithi bonke bazakuthunyelwa esiqithini *saseRobben Island* ngamapolisa.

Wangena, efika kanye ngelo xesha utitshalakazi wethu uNkosazana Mpathi wathi,

“Ndincedeni bantwana, tshayelani nicoce igumbi eli neefestile, ndiyahamba ndiya entlanganisweni yootitshala nomhloli. Ndifuna ukulifumana eli gumbi libeth’umoya ukubuya kwam. Wena Tshijolo ndikushiya njengamntu wokugcina ucwangco, undibhalele abenza ingxolo.”

Asilibazisanga, thina makhwenkwe sancedise ngokubhekelisa izihlalo ukuze amantombazana akwazi ukutshayela ngaphandle kokuphazamiseka. Ithe enye intwana esileyo, ihleba enye intombazana ebusifomborha, embana, ingumnyewu ongenazihlobo: “UNogari lowa unooHili!” Sabesiliqela lamakhwenkwe athi ahleka kwelo qela.

Ngokulindelekileyo, uNogari akayithandanga loo nto yokuhlekwa kwakhe. Yaba lilishwa lam ukuba akhethe ukonda ngam kuye wonke umntu owaye elapho, wafika wazikhelela ngamanqindi kum esifubeni apha. Ndazama ukumphotha iingalo, ndiphepha ezo zithonga zakhe, sajjisana saya kuwa phantsi, saqengqana kuloo mgangatho wesamente ekrwada. Ibe seso sankxwe besigxwala abanye abantwana bekhuza loo mlo wethu nooHili. Andizi kuphosisa, yandifikela ngenene yandihlala loo ngcingane yokuba hleze ithi kanti ngenene loo ntombazana inamahlakani angooThikoloshe, ndathanda ukuba nokutyhafa luloyiko. Kwakhawuleza kwa uBudge ukusahlula nokuphelisa loo mlo, endisindisa kwaboHili baka Nogari. Into engakhange ilibaleke kum livumba laloo ntombazana, wena wakha warhiwula isaqhunge seentsiba zenkukhu ezifunyenwe ngamanzi abilileyo. Ngethamsanqa akubanga kudala ngaphambi kokuba siphume isikolo.

Ndaya ndakhawuleza ndahamba phambili ukugoduka, ndibaleka ukuhlekwa ngabanye abantwana ngendaba yaloo mlo. Into eyavela yandothusa yaba yeyokufika utata ekho ekhaya ebuyile etrongweni emva kokuthathwa kwakhe ngamaBhulu. Ubuso bakhe babuxhappe iindevu eziqathalala, efana nomntu wasemzini endingamaziyo. Wafana nesimumu, enqatyelwe ziindaba. Ndandinethemba lokuba uzakusibalisela ngonopopi wamaBhulu wodumo owaye ebabazwa ngokunkula ngamanqindi amabanjwa ezobupolitika

afikayo etrongweni, kodwa akatsho nento ukuvula umlomo. Wayesanxibe ezo mpahla zakhe zokulala wayebanjwe ezinxibile, amehlo akhe ebomvu, ekhangeleka ediniwe.

Uvakele umama ekhala emjongile esithi:

“Yhu – yhu – yhu! Hayi kha ukhulule loo mpahla uhlambe, zange ndayibona into enje!” Ukhawuleze umama wampompa iprayima stofu ezakumisa amanzi okuhlamba, emana ephosa iliso kwelo cala abehleli kulo utata.

Ngosuku olulandelayo uThobile naye ugalelekile ebuya etrongweni. Yena akafananga notata ngoba wayeqavile, echwayitile, ehleka, amehlo akhe ekhazimla. Kodwa ihle yakhawuleza yaguquka inkangeleko yakhe oku kokutshawuza kombane, wabuqumba, wavukwa yintlamba, sele ethukisela ekhala ngamaBhulu amdaka, akhohlakeleyo. Ilizwi lakhe lalibungcangcazela ngumsindo, enga ufuna ukulila. Kodwa, ethubeni ube wabuxola, wadamba umsindo wakhe, wancokola nje ngesiqhelo, eqhula. “Ndibuyile, futhi ndiyavuya ndibuyile,” utshilo ekugqibeleni.

Ndasondela kancinci kuye ndifuna ukuzibonela kakuhle amaqhuma neenduma zokungonjwa kwakhe ngulaa nopopi wamaBhulu, kodwa andabona namkrwelwana uluphawu lokuqhokrwa kwakhe.

“Ndicingela uMpara noKholiwe, basavalelwe bona nangoku. Mhlawumbi nabo bazakuthunyelwa esiqithini *eRobben Island*. AbeLungu bam basehotele ndiqinisekile ukuba ndithethelelwe ngabo ngokuchaza ukuba bendisoloko ndiphangele ngalo lonke ixesha leentlanganiso abatyholwa ngazo abanye.

Utata uphindile waseshweni ngokuthi abanjwe ngamapolisa ndimthe ntshoo ngala wam amehlo ngomnye uLwesihlanu. Ndandiphuma esikroxweni sakwaTono nomalume wam uCwaki apho sasithunywe khona iswekile. Sabona ngomgqomo wamapolisa ngobo busuku umisa kanye xa ubusazakudlula kwinene elalithe ncothu ngesithomo, linxibe idyasi ende embala wegqabi elitshe lilanga, nomnqwazi wohlobo lweStetson. Ubawo lowo wayedlula phantsi kwesibane somgaqo esahamba ngokuzimisela ukumisa kwamapolisa lawo. Ehla buphuthuphuthu kuloo mgqomo onda ngaye, “Xhakamfu!” Ajijisana naye, yanguphantsi – phezulu ezama ukumrhuqela ngemva kuloo masango avuliweyo entsimbi. Walwa kanobom nawo engafuni kunikezela tu, kodwa kuba wona ayemathathu kwabonakala ukuba

ayamongamela ngamandla, ekhwaza esithi: “Khwela, khwela!” Uthe akujika ubuso ejongisa ngasesibaneni wathi uCwaki,

“Ngubhuti lowa ubanjwayo!” Ndiye ndajongisisa nam, ndangqina ukuba ngenene ngutata lowo ulwisana namapolisa.

Amgibisela kakubi ngemva ngaphakathi emgqomeni, ndeva isithonga sokuntlitheka kwakhe ngentloko, kwatsho kwasika ngaphakathi entliziyweni kum. Ngalo lonke elo xesha umLungu oqhuba umgqomo akazikhathazanga, eyekele kuloo mapolisa akhe amnyama ukuba aziqhubele loo msebenzi wawo ungcolileyo. Ndomelwa ngamathe ndikhathazekile emphefumlweni nguloo mbono, amehlo am etshiswa ziinyembezi endandizibambe ngeenkophe. Ukubukela utata efunqulwa oku kosana, elahlelwa ngaphakathi kuloo lori okwepasile yeposi emva kokukhonkxwa ngeentsimbi zeengalo, kwandilalisa nzima ubomi bam bonke. Wayitsala usajini womLungu eqhumisa amavili ukusuka apho esiya kuvalela utata etrongweni.

Sibalekile noCwaki sayakungena sigilana simaphikana ekhaya sikhwaza, “Ubhuti ubanjiwe!”

“Owu, kwakhona?” Wothuke ngolo hlobo umama akuva ezo ndaba. Ukhawuleze wahlala phantsi, wazigquma ubuso ngefaskothi yakhe. Uhleli ngolo hlobo ithutyana elingephi, wakhawuleza wema ngeenyawo, amehlo akhe ebomvu, ekhangeleka ebudinwa. “Akungencedi nokuya kumhlawulela ukuze akhululwe, bayakumkhupha ngoMvulo ngoku. Khona ndiza kuyifumana phi loo mali-ntlawulo iziiponti ezintlanu?” Ungene egumbini labo lokulala, ndamva ezithethela esithi, “Ziiponti ezimbini kuphela eziyimali yerente ezisaseleyo kuloo mvuzo weveki katata wakho. Mandiye ekhaya, mhlawumbi utata anganayo le mali,” uphume ngomnyango esenza isingqala esinzulu, nam ndamlandela ukuya kuqabela elucingweni, endleleni eya kwatatomkhulu.

NgoMvulo ndabuya esikolweni ndamfumana sele ekhona ebuyile etrongweni utata, encokola nomama. Kodwa noko ebedlamkile kwesi sihlandlo, engafani namhla wabuya ukuqala kwakhe ukubanjwa ngamaBhulu. Ndaziphosa kuye ndiyimincili ndonke, ndathi:

“Ndikubonile ngokuya ububanjwa ngamapolisa!” Ndathi ukuba nditsho ndambona ebuxhuma ngathi uhlatywa ngunotaka ezimbanjeni.

“O...” Waphendula njalo waphelelisa, wajonga kude oku komntu lo oneentloni, wakhawuleza waphakama waya kuphuma ngomnyango.

Ekhaya eBhayi

Ngexesha leziphithiphithi ezakhokelela ekubanjweni kwabantu ngamaBhulu ngenxa yokuzayamanisa kwabo nomzabalazo kaPoqo *neCongress* nogwayimbo emisebenzini olweza neuniyoni kaMasabalala eyayisakwaziwa ngegama leIndustrial and *Commercial Union*, utata wapheliswa ngumsebenzi kwifektri yeelekese *yakwaAlgoa Sweets* eBhayi apho wayengomnye wabameli babasebenzi. Emva kokuquqa eluvalelweni ubuye wangumntu ophelelwe zizihlobo kuba abona bantu babesondele kuye babesele bevalelwe esiqithini *saseRobben Island* ngelo xesha.

Akubanga thuba lide ehleli ekhaya phambi kokuba afumane umsebenzi evenkileni yokutya yamaJuda *yakwaldeal Bazaar*. Wathi kungekudala elapho umLungu wakhe wamthumela kwelinye ishishini lesizalwane elikwanjalo *eBerchins Stores*, eWestern Road, apho wayezakuthutha ehambisa ukutya emizini yabeLungu eyayikufuphi kwalapho. UmLungu walapho wayesaziwa ngegama likaBergman. Ndaphawula ukuba ngoku ungenwe ngumkhwa wokufika ebusukwana kunakuqala ebonakala ukuba urhabule mpela. Ndamfumana engumntu ngoku osoloko eyimvuzemvuze ezele uncumo, engenwe kukuthanda ukuziculela iingonyana ezingena ntsingiselo, ethethela phezulu. Waya wangenwa ngoku kukudla inyama kuphela xa ikho, okunye ukudla okungeyo nyama akuphe thina bantwana.

Kwakungelo xesha kanye apho umama walekelisa udadewethu oza emva kwam kwangomnye umntwana oyintombazana, wamthiya igama lokuba nguNomonde. Ngelishwa, kwaba kanye ngelo xesha umama ebesengumdlezana apho wathi waxabana nomkhuluwa uThobile waza wambetha ngephini lokuzamisa imbiza, wabaleka wemka uThobile. Wathi akuba ebuyele ekhaya emva kwethutyana kwacaca ukuba akasazimisele mpela ukuphinda abe luncedo apho. Kanti ke ngaphambi kokuba yehle le ntlekele yayinguye owayengumxovi wesonka nomsili wamarhewu kolo sapho lwethu, emphumza kakhulu umama ngalo misetyenzana. Loo nto yayingathethi ukuba wayevulwe yedwa ngomsebenzi ngoba nam nomntakwethu, uMncedisi, sasisebenza sikorobha umgangatho weplanga wendlu, sihlamba iifestile sisebenza nasesityeni phandle. Zafika zona iindaba zokuba uThobile lowo uqalisile ukulwa ngebhoso nabanye oontanga bakhe phaya esithubeni, kwaye wayesoyikwa ngamanye amakhwenkwe ekuhlaleni.

Utata waqonda ukuba uThobile makafune umsebenzi aphangelele ukoluka. Hayi ke, akukhange kube kudala ngaphambi kokuba awufumane umsebenzi ehotele yaseMarine eSummerstrand, yamnceda kakhulu loo nto. Ukhawuleze wabonakala elinene elizithandayo ezithengela iimpahla zokunxiba kwanomnqwazi. Wabonakala etshintshile mpela ngenkangeleko, etyebile ekhanya nangebala esempilweni entle. Kuvele neefoto zakhe namantombazana wakhe, bewafote kwaGovan, umfoti, eDassie. Kuthe kuba ilishwa likaSathana likholwa ngumntu ozizamayo, kwafika isigidimi esibika ukuba nako-nako uThobile ephuke umlenze emsebenzini, kodwa egadwe ngamapolisa esibhedlele. Yasenza sathi xhungu sonke silusapho loo nto, ingakumbi le ndawo yamapolisa.

Wayilandela utata le nto waza wabuya nazo kumama esithi: “Tyhini Nofikile, yazi ukuba le ntwana uThobile yathi sele itshayisile emsebenzini yabuyela ekhitshini lehotele ngokuthi irhubuluze ngesisu esilingini, yayakuba inkukhu epheleleyo evuthiweyo. Ilishwa layo ibe kukugrabhuka kwaloo silingi yehotele, bhodlo! Yaya kuwela phezu kwabeLungu le ntwana naloo nkukhu. Ewe, yinyaniso eyokuba ubanjiwe, ujongwe lipolisa phaya eLivingstone apho aqanyangelwe khona edityaniswe nebhedo ngeentsimbi zamapolisa.”

Wathi akuphila emlenzeni uThobile amqhubela eziseleni amapolisa akugwetywa ngumantyi iinyanga ezintathu ngaphakathi. Wazithothoza ezonyanga wazigqiba wabuya. Akuba ebuyile wakhunjuzwa ngutata ukuba wayethunyelwe emsebenzini ukuba aye kuphangelela ukuqweba imali yokwaluka, hayi ukuyakubela abeLungu iinkukhu zabo eziqhotsiweyo. Wabonisa ukudana okukhulu, waza wathi akufumana ezo malana zazimsalele emsebenzini woluswa ngazo. Waba nethamsanqa lokuba kubekho untanga wakhe, uBhaba, ongummelwane owalukayo kanye ngelo xesha, baza bangena kunye. Kwaba kungona ayibalisayo uThobile into yasetrongweni ngelo xesha angumkhwetha, esithi:

“Ndaba nethamsanqa lokuthengwa ngumLungu owayengumfama, ndazibhantintela apho efama ezo nyanga, ndigadwe ngumfazi waloo mLungu owayelunge kunene. Ndathi ngenye imini sele ndinenyanga ndisebenza apho umLungukazi wandibona ndiphakama ndisakha umkhanya ndijonge kude lee kwelo cala laselokishini, wandibuza ukuba ndibona ntoni na. Ndamphendula ndimolathisa kwicala lelokishi apho kwakubonakala qelele phaya iqhina elikwindlela engena elokishini, kunyuka

khona apho ibhasi. Ndathi kuye, “Ndihlala kufuphi nalapho ibhasi leya ihamba khona’, ndabona kwangoko ukuba unosizi ndim.”

Yaba ndim noMncedisi amanqalathi abathuthela ukutya esuthwini. Ngosuku lokuqala ngqa ukusa kwethu ibhekile apho asizange sibuthi rhwe ubuthongo ngenxa yeenkunzi zezigcawu ezikhulu ezibomvu ezinoboya ezibizwa ngokuba ngooRomani. Kwakucaca ukuba ibhoma elo lalakhelwe phezu kwenesi yazo. Hayi ke mntakabawo, yeka ukubasa kwethu apho siqhumisa into engapheliyo simi ngeenyawo. Ndaqala ndazisola ukuba ndandisiya phi apho. Apha ebomini akukho nto idlula izinto ezirhubuluzayo ngokoyikeka kum. Ungazicingela ke ukuba yayindimise njani loo meko yobo busuku kwelo phempe labo bakhwetha babini. Okukhona sibasa yaba kukhona zithululeka ezo zigcawu ngathi zibizwa kanye nguloo msi. Kwasa ndihleli apho.

Kona ukusa iibhekile ezo ebakhwetheni ndandingakuchasanga, kodwa ndazixelela ukuba nakanye ukuba ndibe ndiphinde ndilale apho. Akukho nto imnandi esikhwetheni nje ngale yokongula ibhekile yomkhwetha. Iyakhuthaza kakhulu loo nto. Ngendakuyeka zibekwa ukuya kwelo bhoma ukuba wawungekho loo mthetho wokongula. Into eyayixaka apha ekonguleni yile yokuba inyama ingongulwayo yona. Loo nto yayindixelela ukuba umkhwetha angabulawa lula ngenyama, asinde amanqalathi.

Ngaphandle kokonwabela ukongula zazikho ezinye izinto ezazibanga ukuba ndingakuchasi ukukhankatha. Umntakwethu kwacaca ukuba kuninzi awayekwazi endandikuzibula. Nguye owandifundisa ukomba ingcambu efana nqwa netapile okanye ibhatata ezele mome ngamanzi amnandi. Loo ngcambu wayeyibiza ngokuba ngubharu. Ibonakala phezu komhlaba ngegqabi eliluhlaza elibumsonto. Enye into engalibalekiyo awandifundisa yona yeyokuba iimbovane ezinkulu ezimnyama ezinengcwangu ukuluma oku xa unyathele endleleni yazo, zinobumuncu obuhlasimlisayo xa uziluma iimpundwana ezi. Sasichitha ixesha ngolo hlobo endleleni egodukayo mihla le ukubuya esikhwetheni.

Phakathi kwiveki yesibini yokoluka kwabo, abakhwetha bojiswa. Hayi ke andithethi ngendlela ekwakumnandi ngayo kum ngoko. Zonke ezo ntsuku zaloo veki inyama yayisitsho njalo ukuze ide igqitywe ingekonakali. NooRomani ndandingasenaxesha labo ngoku. Kwakutya oko kwabakhwetha kwakuxhome umgangatho kunoko kweveki yokuqala kwakungena tyuwa.

Utata wayengaxhaphakanga apho esikhwetheni. Yena wabonakala ngelo xesha lokojisa nasekuphumeni kwabakhwetha. Wabamkhulu loo mgidi wabo bakhwetha babini bamakhaya ameleneyo, kuxhelwe macala. Umkhwetha ngamnye wangcamla umkhono wakhe, loo nto yenza ukuba sisikelwe macala nje ngamanqalathi, mna nomkhuluwa. Ukuze uqonde ukuba wawumkhulu loo mcimbi, kwada kwalwa namaxhego amabini apho oobawo uKhushe noHlathi. “Andinakubethwa nguKhushe!” lakhala elo linguHlathi liphum’iinyembezi kodwa lisayiphethe ngesandla inyama yalo. Andingeze ndikuxelele nokuba yayintoni isizeka bani somlo lowo. Kodwa ngokuqinisekileyo umsebenzi lowo wona wawuvumile.

Mandikhe ndizobe loo mini ngokukunika umfanekiso weziganekwana ezakhokelela kuloo msitho: Into yaqala kwangobusuku obandulelayo. Sacula ubusuku bonke sibase igqange lomlilo wamatayara emoto. Sasisazi ukuba kwasemva ekhaya kwakuyiloo ngoma yabantu abatsha ababetshayelela belinde ukufika kwabakhwetha ngentseni yangomso. Bona ke babehleli kamnandi besidla iziphakathi zezobhokhwe zaziwisiwe, besela neendywala ezazisilelwe loo mcimbi. Abantu abadala bona bakhawuleza bagoduka emva kokufumana kuloo nyama neziselo zokuthoba, beshiya ulutsha lodwa. Ubusuku babuyintombazana, amazulu ecwengile, iinkwenkwezi zithe saa qhekre okweedayimane eziphoswe ngaphandle kwenkathalo phezu kwetafile zintlithwa yintlantsi yelanga. Babekho nabanye abakhwetha kwamanye amaphempe ayengekude apho kuthi besenza eyabo intsholo eyayingahlukanga kuleyo yethu.

Ngentseni yosuku olulandelayo bavuka abakhwetha emva kokuthi ngqwaa kancinane bazilahlela phaya kude ezo ngubo zabo, bagqotsa ukuya kuziphosa esizibeni somfula waseGreystad besiya kuhlamba ifutha. Sashiyeka thina siwuvuselela ngamatayara umlilo ukuze babuye oondoqa bothe ukuzama ukuzomisa. Seva ngamakhwelo ukuba babesondele oobawo nabanye ooNcentsa beze kuthambisa abakhwetha ibhotolo, babakhulule. Bathi ukusondela kwabo seva bedumisa abakhwetha: “Makwedini! Makwedini! Imbabal’iyay’iphamb’inja!”

“Ngqeziyaa!” baphendula abakhwetha bengqokola.

“Inyama yinyo, inkanda lihleza!”

“Ngqeziyaa!”

“Makwedini! Makwedini!”

“Ngqeziyaa!”

Bathe ukufika kwabo apho ebhomeni lathi ikhankatha ebelikade libonga, “Wisani makwedini sibone!” Basondele ootata bazoneza ngokuzibonela ukuba ngenene abakhwetha abo babephilile bekufanele ukugoduswa. Yaba ngutatomkhulu onikwa iwonga lokuba ngumthambisi wabakhwetha nje ngamntu owayeziphethe kakuhle engazanga wenza manyala nazinto ezizintloni phakathi kwabantu. Wabaqaba elowo ngesitena sebhotolo yoqobo ngaphambi kokubathwesa iingubo ezimhlophe zeNgcawe. Bathe nje ukugqunywa kwabo imizimba ukuya kuqabela entloko latshiswa ibhoma nayo yonke into eyayilapho, lakhokela inqalathi, uMncedisi ukuphuma. Bakhwaza abantu abadala:

“Ningabheki! Jongani phambili!” Baqalisa bona umdlalo weentonga nabo bebheka phaya belandela ngemva. Abo babengenazintonga baphahla amakrwala nabo besingise ngasekhaya.

Oomama ababelinde ekhaya baqokelelana ndawini nye babetha iingqongqo beyiyizela besithi:

“Halala! Ifikile imini ebikade ixelwa! Ukuzala kukuzolula!” Wavakala omnye umama ebhekisa kumama ekhwaza:

“Vuya Nofikile nawe namhlanje, ngoku ulizibazana!”

Amabhabhathane

Ngenye intsasa yehlobo ndimfumene umkhuluwa wam nomhlobo wakhe uZwayi bemaxhaphetshu, bexakekile bezingela esitiyeni sasekhaya. Ndibone kwangenkangeleko emehlweni abo ukuba ngenene bazimisele, kwaye bengenaxesha lam. Ndiye ndema okwexeshana ndibukele, ndimangalisiwe.

Ndiqaphele ukuba esisibini sizingela amabhabhathane. Ndibone uhlobo abathi bawalandele, bewachwechwela ngokuthe cwaka amabhabhathane la bevule iziqwengana zamabhayana ezandleni zabo, baze bathi xa lihlala phantsi okanye ngaphezu kwenyatyambo ibhabhathane elo batsho ukuziphosa phezu kwalo. Amabhabhathane la ahlakaniphile, kwaye anamendu adlula awomntu. Ibisithi indoda yakuziphosa suke ibhabhathane liphume bucala, isale intlaleka yodwa inkewu leyo kabuhlungu.

Ngelingeni ndibukele ndiye ndabuza apha kuZwayi, andabhekisa kule yakowethu:

“Khaw’utsho, Zwayi, amabhabhathane la niwazonda ntoni?”

Ubuye wema uZwayi, wandiphendula engandijonganga kuba iliso lakhe beligxeleshe ibhabhathane elikhulu elimibala iluhlaza, mhlophe namthubi:

“Sizakuzihlikihla ngawo apha ngaphambili amazantsi esisu la ukuze nathi sikhule uboya nje ngabantu abadala.”

Hii!

“Kanti abantu abadala aba banoboya ngaphambili kumazantsi esisu esi?” Ndibuze ndinomothuko omkhulu ongazenzisiyo.

“Ewe, kuthiwa zizenza,” uphendule engandijonganga urheme elungisa ibhayana lakhe, elungiselela ukutsibela elinye ibhabhathane.

Ndikhe ndema nam ndiyihlafuna le mpendulo yalo mfo ndingayikholelwa. Kodwa ndiqondile ukuba nam ndiyazifuna, kuba ndifuna ukufana nomntu omdala. Ndikhawuleze ndabashiya abazingeli abo ndisiya kuzikhangelela elam irhonya lokuphosa phezu kwamabhabhathane lawo ukuze ndiqalise nam ukuzingela.

Ndibuyile ndawafumana la mabini sele ebambisile; iibhulukhwana zawo zekhaki ezimfutshane zisemadolweni, engahlikhleli-nto zalomhlaba. Ndikhawuleze ngoko-nangoko ndaqalisa elam iphulo lokuzingela. Hayi ke mnta-ka-bawo, yeka ukuzinkula kwam ndiziphosa ngapha-nangapha, engceni, phezu kwamatyholo, nangaphezu kweenyatyambo, nditsho mna nezo zinameva. Uyazi ukuba xa umntu efuna into ngenene nangenyano, uyazinikela de abanye abantu bambone nje ngoshiywa ziingqondo. Kwakunjalo ke mnta'sekhaya nakum lo. Lalilinye: ndiyazifuna, qha ke! Ngobo busuku ndalala ubuthongo obufana nqwa nobesidumbu; ndilibele nokudla naloo sophoro yam.

Ngosuku olulandelayo ndithe ukuvuka kwam nde ntle ngombono oncumisa kunene. Ndibhaye ngaphakathi apha endlwini kwirhadeyini le yefestile uhlobo apha lwebhabhathane elikholwa kukudlalela esibaneni ngokuhlwa'apha, abathi ngesikhumsha yimoth ukulibiza. Nqaku! Ithe ilaba-laba, ndatshela kuyo kanobomi, ndayifaka epokothweni yebhulukhwe, ndakhawuleza ukuphuma endlwini apho, ndaya kutshona kwigunjana langasese elingaphandle kwendlu. Ndiyiphose emaqatheni ibhulukhwana yam enesinqe selastiki, ndahlikhla kanobom, ndithi mna, lavuthuluka mpela ibhabhathane elo. Ndiphume apho nditsho ngento enkulu yoncumokazi.

Ndiphindele ngaphakathi endlwini ndizimisele ukuwagqogqa ndiwagqibe onke amagumbi endlu leyo ndizingela la asendlwini amabhabhathane ndiwafumene esisisulu. Le ingumkhuluwa ivele xa ndihlasela elesithathu okanye elesine, ndinemincilikazi engenakulinganiswa; wayigxobha yonke loo nto eyiphosa emanzini amdaka.

“Hayi, sidengadini, asilobhabhathane elo! Ayisebenzi loo nto!”

“Libhabhathane neli, tyhini! Liyasebenza!” Ndiphikise, ndinkaniza ndenjenjalo.

“Asililo, ungabuza nakuZwayi...”

Khange aligqibe, ndiphume apho ngomkhulu wona umsindo, ndicaphuka, ndonda ngegunjana langasese eliphandle, ndafika ndahlis'ibhulukhwe, ndahlikhla kanobom ngawona mandlakazi angathethekiyo oku koMtyholi. Ndawavuthulula azintswazi loo mabhabhathane. Tyhini le! Xa enokuthi alusebenzi lona olu uhlobo. Adalwe nguye kakade amabhabhathane la kaThixo?

Ndibuye ndabafumana bekunye noZwayi kamnandi, ndabancwina: “Kakade, yitshoni, buphi ubungqina benu bokuba abantu abadala banoboya ngaphambili; kutheni ndingazange ndabubona nje, nabo ndingazanga ndababona bezihlikihla ngamabhabhathane nje?” Iya, ndabona nje ngokukhupha kwazo amehlo entloko ukuba ndizifumene, zikhonxekile.

Zisuke zayana nje ngamehlo, zaxakwa kukundiphendula. NgoMgqibelo waloo veki kwafika kumzi omelene nasekhaya ubhuti Mankoloyi osisizalwane salapho esinxilayo. Kwatsha; yangen’intak’endlwini! Lo mfo ebembi, emnyama oku koMankalanyana wamalahle, eyi loo nto ixhapse iindevu ezikwamnyama njalo, enamehlo abomvu. Ndimbhaqe ngaloo njikalanga kamnandi loo bhuti elele ehluthi isisu sithe mpu butywala ekuthiwa sisikhephe, enxile eyipapa; erhona ubuthongo bengcwaba. Ndibaleke ndagqotsa ukuya kulanda uZwayi nale yakuthi.

“Nal’ithuba, masibone apha kuMankoloyi lo; kamnandi unazo neendevu!” Nditshilo kuzo ndiyimincili ndonke.

Ziye zema ezi zimbini zandijonga zisoyika. Kodwa side saya, safika uMankoloyi selevuza izincwe kukunxila nobuthongo; ndaqonda ukuba sizakubona kwanto, hayi uboya nje bodwa. Ngoku sendifuna nokubona kwa umpipi womnt’omkhulu; nditshilo kuzo. Kodwa ke inqashi ibe yibhukukhwe kaMankoloyi ye *jeans*. Le bhulukhwe yakhe yayiluhlobo olwalusakubizwa ngokuba yi *dungaree* ngezoo mini; inamaqhosha entsimbi omelele kunene. Ziwazamile ke loo maqhosha ezi zindala kunam, zatsho zancama; nam ndikhe ndathathisa ndilinga, suka ndabona ukuba ngathi angasika nalaph’eminweni le.

Kuthe ndisaxakekile njalo ndizamana nale tyheliphu yalo mfo suka wevumbululu uMankoloyi lo, embi enjalo, elelo zimu linentshebe evuza amathe. Ndothuka ndayakuwa ngomqolo. Ndithe ukuphaphama kwam apho, suka ndaxel’igeza; sele bengasabonakali nangomtshi abakhuluwa bam abo. Ndithetha ukuba mna andizanga ndazithi tshe tu ezo ntsiba zamaphambili zabantu abadala de ndamdala nam...

Isipho somLungu

UMzala wavuka ngenj'ixukuxa ngomnye uLwesihlanu njengoko wayesele ezilungiselele ukwenjenjalo kwangephezolo. Waqala ngokuvulela unomathotholo wakhe ophathwayo osecaleni kwebhedi yakhe, wakhala umculo usithi: “Vukani vukani sekusile bo, vukani vukani sekusile bo. Na’iqhude lisithi kili-ki-ki-ki; nal’iqhude lisithi kili-ki-ki-ki. Vukani vukani...” Uqhube njalo unomathotholo ngaloo mculo etshayezelela umsasazi esiza neendaba zokuqala zaloo ntsasa. Uphakame apho emmandlalweni wonda geprayima stovu wayipompa ngokunga uxabene nayo, wamisa amanzi okuhlamba nokuphunga.

Wathi ukugqiba kwakhe ukuhlamba nokuphunga wanxiba, waza wakhupha ipasi lakhe epokothweni engaphakathi yedyasi yakhe walinqika. Ukhe wema umzuzu eliphethe njalo elikhangele, wakha wacinga: “Ndiliphathe, ndilishiye – hayi mandilishiye.” Eso sigqibo sakhe sokulishiya ngemva waye esithathiswa kukuqonda ukuba kwakusekulithuba wagqibela ukuhlawula irhafu yalo. Uzive sele ecinga esithi: “Ndaliphatha, andaliphatha kuyafana nje, izakundibambisa loo nto.” Amapolisa kaSotewu ebegqugqisa ngooLwezihlanu aba. Ebebamba abashushu besele kuba bomkele imivuzo yabo yempelaveki, nabangenamapasi kanti nabanawo kodwa bengawarhafelanga.

Uphume kuloo mzi wakhe oseMaplangeni uMzala wakhawuleza ukunqumla isiporo sikaLoliwe, waqabela idada elinganeno komfula waseDassie esingise kuloo mzi waseDeri apho wayesebenza khona. Wothule umnqwazi wazosula ukubila kuba ebekhawuleza ukuhamba oku, ezama ukufika emsebenzini engekabhadwa polisa kuloo ndlela. Wathi akuqabela umzila omkhulu onyakazelayo weCommercial noko zehla izibilini, wafumana ukuphola emphefumlweni nasengqondweni.

“Sii, madoda,” utshilo kwamanye emsebenzini xa bekhulula ezasekhaya ukuze banxibe ezomsebenzi, “inzima mpela le ndaba yepasi, indoda ihamba ibhekabheka okwekati yemboleko ikhangela uSotewu.”

Uyisebenze loo mini yada yayakufika esiphelweni, wamkela nomvuzo wakhe weveki, sele elibele ngamapasi namapolisa, wacinga ngoku ngamatyala akhe azakuwahlawula.

Ngexesha lokutshayisa emsebenzini malunga nentsimbi yesihlanu uphume wasingisa ngasekhaya enamanye amadoda. Indlela ahambe ngayo ibe kwayileya ebeze ngayo kusasa.

Ngelo xesha besele kunyakazela ngabantu abaphuma bengena ezilarheni nasezivenkileni zooSorhali, bambi benikela kumaLawu ukuze abathengele utywala ezinkantini kuba abaNtsundu bengena mvume yakungena apho ngokomthetho. Ingxaki yokokuthengelwa yayiba yeyokuba amapolisa embamba umntu omnyama nangokubuphatha oku. Indoda kunyanzeleka ukuba ibufake phantsi kombhinqo okanye ibubeleke emqolo ngaphantsi kwebhatyi. Uthe akuthi gqi ngakumzi obhaka isonka wakwaBrito wabona isiqhu sabantu sichithakala ngokungxama okukhulu, kodwa bakhona abasamileyo benze umngcelele. Inggondo ithe makasondele ukuze azibonele ukuba umngcelele lowo ngowani na, wasondela kuwo.

Wothuke uvalo lwamminxa umqala uMzala akuphawula ukuba onke loo manene enze loo mngcelele akhonkxwe omnye komnye ngeentsimbi zamapolisa. Amanye apho ebekhwaza abadlulayo ababaziyo besithi:

“Uze uxele phaya edladleni ukuba ndiphakiwe!”

Uthe akuphosa iliso apho entloko yelo tyathanga wabona ngomdak’omnyama wexhwangusha lepolisa ebelisoyikwa kakhulu liBhayi elo lonke elibizwa ngokuba nguJoburg. Ubheke kanye ngelo xesha uJoburg, amehlo abo ahlangana oku kwalawo erhamba ehlangene nawebuzi.

Wakha weva kuncokolwa uMzala ngamanye amarhumsha esithi anomrhano wokuba uJoburg lowo ngahle unomthi wokubamba abantu abagcine ndawonye de kufike umgqomo wokuwasa etrongweni. Uthe xa eqalisa ukujika efikelwe yingqondo ethi makasabe apho, kwabe kumisa loo mgqomo wamapolisa uqhutywa yisajini yeBhulu ize kulanda loo mkhosi ukhonkxwe nguJoburg.

UMzala uzibhaqe emi bhungxe phakathi koJoburg nomngcelele wakhe nomLungu nomgqomo wakhe, oku komntu oseliweni elinengonyama ngemva ejongwe lulwandle emazantsi kwelinye icala. Ubabhaqe bethetha ngamehlo usajini noJoburg waqonda ukuba zingaye. Akalibazisanga, utsibe oku kwembabala wasik’umoya ewela loo mgaqo uphithizela zizithuthi esingela ngaseludadeni olunekwari yomzi wesamente wakwaPPC, ezibelekile iinyawo.

Uve nje ngezingqi emva kwakhe waqonda ukuba omnye waabo bakwaSidlodlo akakude emva kwakhe. Ucande wacanda wada wafika kuloo mfula wahlula *iDassie neNew Brighton*, waqala wabheka. Ubone nje ukuba liBhulu elo lileqisayo waphinda wathathisa ukusika umoya. Ungene apho eludadeni sele eyimfe ukudinwa oku, namathumbu la sele exuxuzela, wacinga msinya icebo angazanga ukuba livele phi na. Ukhawuleze wonda ngetyholo elikhulu eliphambili phaya, waya wafika wahlisa ibhulukhwe wachopha, wazithuma.

Udilize imfumba yelindle, akugqiba wothula loo mnqwazi wakhe umnyama *weDorian* wathwalisa elo lindle lakhe, waguqa ewubambe macala umnqwazi oku komntu obambise nto. Zivakele zona izingqi zeBhulu zada zazakudlula kule ndawo aguqe kuyo. Uthe umLungu sele edlule elelo nqugwala ukubila oku, wanakana ukuba udlula apho afanele ukukhangelisisa khona, wema. Ujike kwa ngoko akuthi ntle ngaloo ndoda ebeyiswantsulisa wabuya wonda ngayo wathi:

“Ja, ek het jou gekry, kom!”- Ndikufumene, yiza!

“Wag tog baas, ek het ‘n kinerie vir jou gevang,” – Yima torwana mLungu ndibambise isikhwenene- wamthomalalisa njalo uMzala.

Onke awalapho eNew Brighton ayesazi ukuba akukho ntaka bayixabise njengesikhwenene abeLungu aba. Uthe usajini akuva ukuba uMzala lowo ubambise sona, wee xhungu, wazala yimincili. Uye wabhekabheka usajini ebomvu krwe enjalo, ukubila kusezingxangxasi ukwehla ngezidlele, ekhangela into abanokusifaka kuyo isikhwenene eso.

“Baas, vat ‘n bietjie hierso so lank, ek gat ‘n kassie kry om die voeltjie te bere,” – Kha ubambe apha torho mLungu ndiye kukhangela ibhokisi yokusifaka - utsho ekhangeleka enenkathalo uMzala.

Usondele kwangoko usajini wawubamba ngobunono loo mnqwazi ukuze angasiphunculi isikhwenene esinexabiso. Ukhawulezile ukumka apho uMzala waya kuqabela eMasangwana, wagoduka esiya eMaplangeni ewuncamile umnqwazi wakhe ebewuthanda. Usale eguqe apho usajini elinde ngethemba elikhulu.

Lihambile ixesha wada waqonda usajini ukuba noJoburg unokuba sele emangele ukuba kuqhubeka ni na nje ngokuba sele ilithuba elivakalayo emkile apho. Uqondile nokuba

akanakube aphinde alinde thuba limbi de abuye loo mfo womnqwazi naloo bhokisi aye kuyifuna, wazixelela ukuba makasithathe isikhwenene eso asivalele apho emnqwazini. Uwuphakamise kancinci calanye, warhubuluzisa isandla ngaphantsi apho, we nqaku! Uthe akuva ukuba lilindle lomntu elo alifumbathileyo kwathi angagabha. Uphakame apho sele ebomvu oku kwengwenye esinekile, wavuthulula isandla, wasisula engceni, wawukhaba loo mnqwazi ngomsindokazi wabhabha, sele ekhala ngo: *“Donner se kaffir!”*

Ngelo xesha yena uMzala ebesele esendlwini yakhe apho eMaplangeni eziqhotsela isibindi esinetswele abezithengele sona ezitafileni zoomama abathengisa inyama yangaphakathi, ikati yakhe imjikeleza ibawa, isenza eso sithukuthezi singapheliyo sika, *“Miaawu!”*

C

Ekuhlaleni

Useza kuba ngowethu

Ngexesha besisakhula nontanga wam owaye ekwa ngumzala wam, uKhawuta, sathunywa ngenye imini ngumama esilarheni esikwingingqi ehlala abeLungu apha esixekweni. Ndawo leyo yayisaziwa ngegama elithi *kuseDassie*, kumzila ophithizela mpela ziimoto kwa nabantu, obizwa *ngeCommercial Road*. Kulapho sele kufumaneka khona umtyangampo wodederu lweevenkile ezaziwayo nezithandwayo ngabantu, ezifana *nooSpringbok* kwa *nooBrito*, *Macdonalds*, *KFC*, njalo-njalo. Sasingekude apho isilara sakwaBotha eso sasithunywe kuso. Umzi lowo wawudume ngokuwathengisela kakuhle amathambo enkomo okwenza isophu.

Ikhaya lethu lona lalisakuba kule ndawo ibizwa ngokuba kuseChibini lamagqwira, kude-kufuphi nemizi *yaseFordville* kwalapha *eNew Brighton*. Ichibi elo seladityelwa nguMasipala ngokuthi alenze itiphu yedolophu yokulahlela yonke inkukuma yeli Bhayi liphela. Bantu bathile balithimba ithafa elo bengazi kwantsusa yalo, bazixumekela amatyotyombe apho baza bayithiya indawo leyo ngegama leqhawe lomzabalazo wenkululeko u Chris Hani. Kanti ke xa uphosa iliso ngaphesheya kwakuyo loo ndawo wofumana indulana eyayisakubizwa ngokuba yinduli ka Masabalala, umfo wokuqala ukuzama ukudibanisa aqokelele abasebenzi baseBhayi ebafaka phantsi kwephiko leyuniyoni yabasebenzi ekwakusakuthiwa yi-*ICU*. Kuloo nduli sele kwama umzi-mveliso weemoto zakwa*Ford* sithetha nje. Ingcombolo ngembali yendawo le siyive ngexhego esidibene nalo endleleni apho.

Ixhego elo silifumene ligobile lizama-zamana neembadada esele zingamagqesha ukuvuthuluka oku. Uthe kuthi ubawo lowo xa sidlulayo kuye:

“Makwedini, ncedani nindikhangalise icingwana elibhityileyo lokubopha ezi mbadada, amehlo am ayoyisakala ukufuna, selefile.”

Ngenene sikhawuleze sancedisela ukufuna elo cingwana lokuthunga loo madlavu eembadada. Ngethamsanqa ibe nguKhawuta okhawuleze walibhaqa, waza walidlulisela exhegweni. Wahlala phantsi kwangoko uMadala, wabopha. Akavumanga konke-konke ukuba simshiye. Ndiphawule ukuba icingo lithande ukuba liqela kunethwathwa kuloo manyathelo akhe.

“Uyabona, ukufumana nje kwam ipeyshoni yam, into yokuqala endiza kuyithenga sisihlangu,” utshilo ubawo akusibhaqa sigxeleshe ezinyaweni zakhe. “Ze nifunde

bantwana bam, ngokuba inguqu esezayo izakufuna imfundo; nifunde, ningadlali kuba noRhulumente lo useza kuba ngowethu.”

Andikhange ndiyinanze le ntetho kuba ndingayilandelanga kakuhle; okokuqala, kwaRhulumente lo athethe ngaye ubawo ndibe ngumntu othile. Umntu esingamaziyo nokumazi angaba ngowethu njani? Enye into endingakwazanga kuyilandela ibe yile yepeyshoni ezakwenza ukuba atsho ahlukane naloo mavuku-vuku eembadada eziqanyangelwe ngeengcingo. Le nguqu izakufuna imfundo, khona ke yona iyintoni? Kodwa andikwazanga kulibuza ixhego, ndayigcina ngaphakathi apha kum yonke loo nto. Ndibuke ikwari ekufutshane nezofektri zase *General Tyre* ne *Eveready*, apho bekuphithizela iiteletele ezithutha umhlaba othande ukuba mhlophe oku kwefutha labakhwetha, zithuthela kumzi okwakufuphi wakwa *PPC*, oxova loo mhlaba namatye ukwenza isamente yokwakha. Ndiye ndaqaphela nokuba ubawo ubehamba ahambe abe abheke, ezigxelesha izithende zabantwana abo anyathela ngabo, ngokungathi ufuna ukuqinisekisa ukuba iingcingo zisabambile. Ebesele enyathela mpela ngoku, kunzima ukukhuphisana naye kuloo ndlela, iimbadada sele ingathi zimile iimpiko.

“Siseza kuhamba sihambe sivote, silingane nomLungu. He, he!”

Ndaphawula ukunqongophala kwamazinyo emlonyeni wakhe, nokuba bomvu kwezo ntsini zixelise ivatala evuthwe yaqhekeka. Siqabele imizila emibini yoololiwe ekhweza emva kwaloo mizi-mveliso bendiyikhankanyile. Ndeva lidanduluka ixhego:

“Bantwana bam, anazi nto nina; usifumene kak’hle umLungu thina!” Ndikhawuleze ndamqwalasela emehlweni umKhulu, ndafika iinyembezi ebezibangwe kukuhleka intsini zingekomi. “Ndazalelwa kwezo fama zaseRhafu ngexesha lemfazwe kaKaizer; abazali bam babehlala bendikhumbuza njalo.” Abonakale amehlo akhe ekhangele kude, phaya phambili, apho besisaya khona, enosizi enkangelekweni yawo. “Ubawo ondizalayo wayengumchebi weegusha owayesehla esenyuka egqiba zonk’ezofama zeloRhafu, ehlawulwa itiki ngokucheba igusha nganye. Niyayazi phofu ukuba yimani itiki?” Ukhawuleze waziphendula singekavuli milomo: “Itiki ziisenti ezintathu!” Uphinde wahleka, amehlo elil’iinyembezi.

“Ndikhumbula ngobuny’ubusika obabubanda bujik’amathe abe yiqabaka emlonyeni... Kuyabanda eKaroo ebusika! Kwifama esasisanda kufika kuyo, abantu ababegeshwe apho babelaliswa kwizindlu zamarhonya liBhulu. Utata wam, owaye engumntu onobuchule bokusebenza ngezandla, wazakhela ityotyombe ngamacangci eemoto ezindala, ezilahliweyo ahamba-hambe ewachola emathafeni. Kwaku ziingcango, maphahla amagxoko-gxoko eemoto enze elo bobosi lilikhaya lethu, kodwa lifudumele ukodlula loo marhonya sasilaliswa kuwo liBhulu. Ezinzulwini zobusuku sisalele, seva isankxwe sokukhonkotha kwezinja ngaphandle kwebobosi. Lathi wambu idyasi ixhego, laphuma phandle liyakuvela. Wagangwa liBhulu sele lihlahlamba ngomsindokazi omkhulu.

“Weg, gaan weg uit my plaas!” –Phum’uphele efameni yam.

“Wangxengxeza kabuhlungu ubawo kuloo mLungu, ethembisa ngokulichitha ibobosi elo, ecela amaxolo, ethembisa ukuba akakuba aphinde. UmLungu wayebomvu, amehlo eluhlaza oku kolwandle, amabhovu nawo ebomvu, enabele macala oku kweempondo zebhayisekile, enxibe loo mpahla yekhaki imikhono nabhulukhwe zimfutshane kuloo ngqele. USathana, ngenene, akayiv’ingqele. Amabhovu ayephephezela ngumfutho womsindo; ebungcangcazela, bugqushalaza nguloo msindo wakhe.

“Umama waye sisantanta nolo sana lwakhe lungudade wethu, eluqamangele ngebhondile yamabhayi ashushu. Mna ndandithe hatya emagxeni apha umrhajana, ndiqhaqhazelisa amazinyo, ndiphethwe nayimichamo. Wabuya kwayena uMa wabona ukuba makalubeleke emqolo usana olo ukuze akwazi ukuqokelela ndawonye izitya neembiza zakhe. Yena utata ndandiqala ngqaa ukumbona exakanisekile ngumothuko noloyiko; amehlo ewakhuph’entloko oku komntu lo walamileyo.”

limbadada ezibotshwe ngeengcingo zazisik’umoya ukukhawuleza oku, sekucaca ukuba sele elibele nangobungxwelerha bazo umninizo. Kusele kukhefuzela mna lo noKhawuta, sizama ukufikisana nexhego elo, sesibubaleka. Sihambe sadlula nasewotshini yenkonzo yamaBhulu yaseDatshi, sabe sele sikufuphi nesilarha eso sakwaBotha; saza samalathisa simbonisa ubawo lowo apho besithunywe khona. Kodwa ubengathi akasiva tu.

“Sahamba silala ngobo busuku, kwathi kwakusa sangen’endleleni ngaphandle kwembeko ngenxa yomLungu. Hayi ke bazukulwana, mna ndisadlula; salani kakuhle. Ningalibali ke ukuba nithembisile ukuba niya kufunda. Nikhumbule ukuba uRhulumente lo useza kuba ngowethu.”

Sabulisa ekwahlukaneni nexhego elo, sabe sele singena esilarheni sakwaBotha apho...

Umqhubi

Kukhe kwanzima endodeni, ndacinga intetho yamaZulu ethi indod'igug'izwile. Andingekhe ndiyilibale loo ntetho. Kodwa ke apha ebudodeni kushiywana ngamandla okugqushalaza. Ndizamile ke nam. Ndithe apha ekuncokoleni namanye amarhumsha kwakho elithi:

“Mfondini, unazo nje iincwadi zokuqhuba kutheni le nto ungakhe uzame naphaya kubangcwabi, bahlala bebadinga abaqhubi, ingakumbi apha ngeempelaveki.”

Ndikhe ndayetyisa le ndaba iza nalo mfo, ndathi ngoku ndisoyika kwanto edibene nokufa nezidumbu, ndazibuza ukuba lizakubela phi elinye icebo eliphucuke ukodlula elo lize naloo mfo. Umfo kaYakobi lowo wandinika negama lomfana osebenzela omnye wemizi yabangcwabi kule dolophu yethu, esithi mandidibane naye. Ndibe mathidala ukuqhagamishelana naloo mfana de ndaphinda ndabuya ndabonana noYakobi.

Uye wandibuza: “He Mawawa, yintoni kaloku undiphoxa nje?”

“Ngantoni kanene mntakwethu?” nditshilo mna ukuphendula.

“Laa mfana wakubangcwabi ndathetha naye ngawe; uthi akuzange wamthinta tu malunga nesithuba sokuqhuba.”

“Yeka ke mntakwethu ndivukele khona ngomso.” Andifunanga kuxoxa ngalo mcimbi.

Sii, ndalala nzima ngobo busuku, ndimbola-mboleka ndicinga wonk'unobenani lo ngezo zidumbu. Kodwa ke ngenene ngengomso ndizicengile ndavuka ndaya kuloo mzikazi mkhulu wabangcwabi abaziwayo bakwa Maduna & Maduna, ndamfumana umfana lowo bendithunyelwe kuye. USaider lowo ufune ukubona iincwadi zam zokuqhuba, ndazikhupha wazibhenca wonela. Ubize elinye igqala lendoda waliyalela ukuba lijikeleze nam lisenza uvavanyo lokuqonda ukuba ngenene ndinguye umqhubi. Ndingene emva kwevili, loo mfo ehleli apha ecaleni kwam, sajikeleza zambalwa izitrato zalo ngingqi; kwatsho kwayena umf'omkhulu lowo ukuba yena wonezisekile, singabuya. Ufike wamazisa uSaider lowo ngeziphumo ezimxolisileyo.

“Uyakubuya ngoMgqibelo ke, mkhuluwa, ngentseni. Uze unxibe mnyama konke, nehemphe emhlophe,” utshilo u Saider, ndambulela phambi kokuba ndimshiye.

Ngenene ndibuyile ngoMgqibelo njalo, ngaloo ntseni ibandayo yenyanga ka Juni, ndafika beliqela bethe dwe, bengxangile abaqhubi bexel'iinkonjane ekuthwaseni kwehlobo. Bonke babenxibe ngokufanayo nam. Ndiye ndakhutshwa ukuba ndikhaphe ndiye kubonisa omnye umqhubi obenedilesi angayichaniyo kwisiphaluka esihlala abeBala eGelvandale. Ulayishiwe umzimba wendoda yeBala emotweni. Ndothuke ndom'amathe xa umfo osebenza ngezidumbu ezo evula le tyesi sizakuhamba nayo esithi umfi lowo ufanelwe kukunxityiswa iiglavu zesandla ezimhlophe; watsho esinxibisa isidumbu eso. Ndibuye umva ndema kude ndinamasikizi nguloo mbono. Umfi wayefakwe isuti engwevu ngebala. Asilibazisanga emva koko, sangena edleleni nomfi lowo. Ndimkhombisile indlela emasiyilandele, hayi ke ngenene naye wayithatha umqhubi.

Sifikile apho eGelvan siyibonile inombolo yomzi ebesiwufuna, kodwa sababuthandabuza ngoba akukhange kubekho kwanto ethi kubhujiwe kwelo khaya, sadlula. Imbangi yokuba sidlule kwelo khaya kukuba kwakumi apho amatyendyana amabini abetha ngogaga ecaleni komzi kufuphi nomnyango. Ndithe kumqhubi masibuye umva sibuzise kuloo manene mabini. Avumile ukuba hayi asilahlekanga, umfi nguyise, sifikile apho besifuna khona. Ndiphawule ngaloo mini ukuba amaSukwini la noko awawunanze nganto nje ngathi maXhosa umngcwabo lo.

Sithande ukusokola ukuwungenisa loo mzimba kuloo ndlu ngenxa yamanqwanqwa enyukayo ukuya emnyango; saduntsu-duntsuza sincediswa ngabo bafana begilana, bengayekanga ukuthana bhutyu ngezilumezayo zona izithuko. Uyazazi ke wena izibongo zabo ezithande ukuba sisiqhelo: *Ooma se ntoni-ntoni*. Side ke sawungenisa ngempumelelo ngaphakathi endlwini umzimba. Sifike apho ngoku saxakwa yindawo apho emasiwunyengeze khona ngoba nomabona-kude ebedanyaza engayekanga ukudlala ooBold bakhe. Nale isothusile, kodwa sakhetha ukuval'apha phezulu.

Umama walapho uphumile egumbini lakhe lokupheka weza ngaphambili, waqhwitha umdiza, wakha watsala yamibini-mithathu imisi, ezinxibele ibhulukhwe eluhlaza ejinga phezu kweziquluba ezi, iinwele zibotshwe ngeenjiko ezipinki ezibizwa ngokuba *zirollers*. Simcelille ukuba awuqwalasele ukungqina ukuba ngenene ngowabo umfi lowo. Ngenene wenjenjalo. Waqala wahlala phantsi wantywizisa akube esixelele ukuba siwubeke phambi

komabona-kude lowo umkhombe womyeni wakhe. Ndiphawule ukuba imazi leyo ingasondela kumashumi amahlanu ngeminyaka.

Sicele indlela kuba indlela yethu ibisende nomsebenzi ngemva usangxangile. Samshiya njalo ke umfelwakazi eyedwa; oonyana ababebetha ngogaga sele bengasabonakali ndawo, kucaca ukuba babelinde loo mzimba ngela xesha lokufika kwethu nawo. Isithabathe ithutyana into yokuba sihlomle ngalo mba ngenxa yomothuko waloo nkqubo yomzi lowo. Sakha sathula sithe zole phambi kokuba siphefumlelane nomqhubi. Kuqala, siphawule eyokungamkelwa komzimba, saphawula ukungabikho komthandazo, ukungabonakali kwabamelwane, ukungabonakali-ndawo kwenkonzo, ukudlalwa komabona-kude, ukungazili komama noonyana balapho. Semnka apho sikhwankqiswe mpela.

Loo mini ibixakeke kakhulu apho kuloo mzi wokungcwaba, izikhenkcisi ziphuphumala ngamashumi amathandathu anesihlanu emizimba. Ukubuyela kwam apho eofisini ndiphoselwe ngomzimba neencwadi eziwukhaphayo, usingise eMaqanda kwalapho kwaZakhele. Ndifike kuloo mzi kucaca ngenene ukuba kubhujiwe, kwaye kubonakala ukuba kulindwe uzimba kaSingaye. Imeko yekhaya elo yavela yakhabana naleyo bendiphuma kuyo kwabeBala.

Ndithe nje ukuba ndimise imoto, baphuma oobawo beloo khaya ngomthandazo, besiza kuzilandela umzimba ukuze bawungenise endlwini. Ndibavulele isciko sentloko yebhokisi ukuze bafanise, yabe intloko yomfi lowo inganeno apha, mna ndithe krwaqu oku kwentshebe nje yodwa, bona ke bajongisisa benqwala ukuba ngenene nguyeyo owabo.

Kukhale umnxeba weofisi yabangcwabi kanye kweso sithuba kulo wam uphathwayo; yathi loo ntombi kum emnxebeni apho:

“Baw’uMawawa, undawoni ngoku nomzimba lowo?”

Ndiphendule ngelithi: “Sendifikile, ndiyothula, nabantu bawo sele bewufanisile.”

“Ungakhatazeki toro, bawo; sicela ukuba ubuye nawo ngokuba kukho ingxaki,” itshilo intombi yabe sel’iwubeka phantsi owayo umnxeba, yasala nam imamalekile.

“Bo bawo, toro ndicela nikhe nime!” Wema esithubeni umthandazo, noobawo bema ngxi ngathi babanjwe ngomlingo phambi kwesango laloo mzi. “Ndicela niwubuyisele

emotweni umzimba, bathi abangcwabi kukho ingxaki, mandibuye nawo.” Ndithetha nje, ndisaluvulile ucango lwangemva emotweni yomngcwabi, ndilixhase ngesandl’ esinye.

“Owu, bangathini ukusenza loo nto aba bangcwabi sakugqiba ukubabhatala kakuhle kangaka?” Ubuzile umkhokeli-mngcwabo okwasisizalwane. “Yiza, ngena ngaphakathi bhuti, uchazele inkosikazi kamfi yonke loo nto yaloo mhlola uwuthethayo.”

Ibuyiselwe emotweni ityesi leyo ithwele umfi.

Ndingene apho ekhusini ndamfumana umhlokokazi ehleli engqongwe ngabanye oomama ekhukweni, nde sebe-sebe ukuwandlala umcimbi wakwakhe kuye.

Ubizise umphathi-mfihlo lowo obekhalaza, mna ndabuyela emotweni ndisiya kulinda khona. Ubuyile umphathi esithi bagqibile ukuba kuhambe yena ukuya kusabela kubangcwabi, hayi umhlokokazi njengokuba ibiyalele intombi yakubangcwabi abo. Uye waziphatha zonke iincwadi-nkcukacha ezimalunga nomfi nentlawulo, esilwa nam mpela apha endleleni, nam ndingxengxeza ngovelwano olungazenzisiyo kuye.

“Le nto ithi masiqhawule kwantsebenziswano nalo mzi wenu xa kunjel!” Ulwe watsho.

Usoomashishini uMaduna womzi lowo mna bendimazi njengamntu ongena velwano konke-konke nabantu abamali ingaphelelanga yokungcwaba kangangokuba mna ayindothusanga kangakho neyokuhluthwa kweso sidumbu, kodwa ke andatsho kubawo lowo. Nathi baqhubi balapho besiba nayo eyethu imikhwino yokuphatheka kakubi bobo bunyolu-nyolu bakhe ngasemalini.

Sifikile, wangena ubawo lowo apho eziofisini zethu wabonisana nabo, mna ndilinde ngaphandle ngalo lonke elo xesha. Indibizile intombi yeofisi, isithi bawulungisile umcimbi, ndingawuphindisela umzimba emzini wesifihlo.

Siphindele kwelo khaya nomzimba, apho sifike abantu sele bebuchithakala beme iziqhu kubonakala ukuba kugwadlwa le nyewe ngolwimi. Ndiva omnye udade obewakhuph’entloko amehlo endithe ntshoo esithi:

“Inokuba asinguye umfi, yimpundulu!”

Indothusile ke noko loo ntetho yaloo sisi, yandenza khe ndimncwine nam ubawo lowo kuba ngenene bendingazi ukuba bekuqhubeka ntoni na malunga nokubizelwa kwethu kubangcwabi abo.

“Ithe kanti besibizelwa ntoni eofisini?”

“Hayi, bathe imali yentente asikhange siyihlawule, kanti thina besiyinqonqozile eyokuba asiyidingi nganto intente leyo njengokuba sizakungcwabela eholweni ekufuphi nekhaya eli lomfi.”

Ndiphindile ndalungiselele ukothulwa komzimba lowo, waqhuba umngcwabo. Ndimkile apho okwethutyana ndinika imbeko yokuba baqhube ukuze ndibe ndibuye ukuza kuwulanda umzimba ukuwuthuthela emadlakeni...

UTere kaMaMvulane

“Tere ndiyifake phantsi komqamelo wakho ke laa nto,” ibe lelo culo mihla le ekuseni xa ephangela uMaMvulane eyaleza kunyana wakhe imali amshiyela yona yecuba. Loo nkwenkwe ebeseyiqhelise lo mkhuba mbi kangangokuba ibisele iyifuna ngetshova na xa sele engasenamali, ubone ukuba ngathi sel’irhalela nokumdlala nangamazinyo unina. Ibide imfake nasezintlonini ngamanye amaxesha sele ehleli nabantu basemzini.

Usihambe unothanda neso sikolo loo Tere kaMaMvulane kuba kaloku unina ebemshiya ngemva esalele, emke yena ukuya kwamLungu nemiqhagi ingekaphaphami. Uyise wayo uGxarha, umyeni kaMaMvulane, watsho wancama ukuzama ukumkwebula umfazi kweso similo. Ukusuka apho uTere, ogama lokwenene linguThembekile, ubonakalise ukumdlala nokumcekisa uyise kuba ebona ukuba yena akatshayi ngaloo nqawa kanina.

Unina ube ngamthengela zifowuni unyana lowo, kwaziitablethi, oozikhompuyutha, esithi uTere uyazidinga ezo zixhobo emsebenzini wakhe wekholeji, suka ahambe unyana aye kuzithengisa adle loo mali, abuye sele ebalisa ngokuphangwa kwakhe ahluthwe kwa nto: Asale ke unina esahlawula loo matyala ezo venkile.

“Thembekile, ndifuna undimamelisise: ukuba nje ndikhe ndazakuvuselwa ukuxelelwa ngokundululwa kwesidumbu sakho esitratweni ngo 2 ekuseni, okanye ukulala kwakho esibhedlele ngokonzakalisana nootshomi bakho ngobusuku, okanye ukuvalelwa kwakho etrongweni, uze uncede ungandijongi apho mfo wam,” ubesiphindaphinda eso silumkiso kunyana wakhe uGxarha.

Ibivela indumzele loo nkewu de igqibelise ngo “Mxim!” ukuziphendulela kuyise. Ube suka ange akayivanga uyise kodwa ebindekile emphefumleni, kuba kaloku yamtyityimbisela umnwe igrogrisa ngokuya kummangalela ukugqibelisa kwakhe ukuyohlwaya ngemvubu. Uthe uGxarha akuphawula ukuba lo mntwana akasayi sikolweni koko esidla nje imali kanina oneenkani ngokuzenza osafundayo, wayilandela loo nto. Uzinike ithuba waya kwelo ziko lemfundo ephakamileyo laseQhayiya ukuya kuphanda ngenkqubo kanyana lowo, wasuka wadana. Inkosazana awuchaze kuyo umba wondwendwelo lwakhe apho imchazele ijonge icofa ikhompuyutha, yaze yathi:

“Ewe, iyabonakala tata into ethi uThembekile lo wayebhalisile apha kuthi ekuqaleni konyaka, kodwa akaphindanga walubeka olwakhe unyawo apha.”

“Kwatsha! Bendihleli ndiyirhanela ke le nto,” utshilo uGxarha ebuthuthura ebusweni ngumothuko. “Ndizakuyichaza njani ke le nto kunina?”

“Ndiza kukushicelelela ingxelo le ichazwa yikhompuyutha ugoduke nayo bawo ukuze ubabonise ekhaya,” imphendule ngelitsheyo intombi.

“Ndiyabulela mntwana wam, enkosi sisi,” utsho esamkela loo maphepha-ngxelo wangena endleleni uGxarha. Uhambe ekhuza yedwa ekhala ngo, “Sii! Hayi asizelanga bantwana kweli xesha lethu. Le ntwana sisandula kuyinika amawaka amabini onke isithi loo mali ifunwa shushu ekholejini apho kuba kuzakuyiwa ethetshiyari; khona iyintoni loo thetshiyari leyo?”

Akabanga namphenduli, wada waya kufika endlwini. Imhleli ingcinga yokuba kwa loo nto yaloo mali yaloo thetshiyari yaba nguMaMvulane omngqinelayo unyana wakhe esithi ubeva rhoqo abanye abantwana eziteksini bekhala ngokuya kuloo thetshiyari. Woyisakala ke naye apho uGxarha wasikhupha eso sityhwenywe semali.

Wafika endlwini walinda ukubuya komfazi, waza wambonisa loo maphepha ukufika kwakhe. Wasuka waba yiloo nto idumbise umlomo uMaMvulane esongwe iingalo zinqumleze emabeleni efutha ejonge enkalweni, esithi umntwana wakhe uyaxokwa yiloo khompuyutha yekhohleji.

“Hayi ke mna ndikholiwe yinto endiyichazelweyo, ndeza nabo nobungqina bayo, obu ndikunike bona. Mna ndahlukene nokumpompoza imali yam yendodla ukuze wena uyinike esinje ukukhohlakala isigebenga somntwana. Le ntwana mayihambe iye kuphangela,” utshilo uGxarha.

Ide yangenwa ngumkhuba omtsha ngoku le ntwana, umkhwa wokutyhuthula ikhaya eli layo ithathe impahla, nditsho nezo zokunxiba neembiza, iye kuzithengisa xa abazali bengekho. Uthe omnye ummelwane kuGxarha xa ebeyincokola le ngxaki yabo:

“Mmelwane, aba bantwana bonakaliswa zezi ziyobisi bazitshayayo, ingakumbi le *Tik*; bonke benza into enye kula makhaya ngamakhaya.”

“Into ebuhlungu kukubona ukuba umntwana woda ayekungena engcwabeni esenza into enye engazimisele kohlukana naloo mkhuba. Yinto eyakude ithini le? Kubuhlungu ukuhlaliswa ngolu hlobo ngumntwana ochitha yonke into eyintsebenzo yethu bazali bakhe yeminyaka, abe yena engena ngeniso tu. Ubone ukuba nakuphumla ngokusuka afe fi kulityalwe ngaye okanye kufe nina bazali bakhe,” utshilo uGxarha.

“Gxarha, akukho nto ibulala abantwana nje ngeengqeqesho ezahlukeneyo zabazali. Kufuneka nibambisane ningabazali nithethe ngezwi elinye nomntwana...”

“Hayi ke mmelwane, akunjalo apha kwam. Le yam intwana iphethwe oku kosana ngunina. Ndatsho ndancama. Akukho nto yandothusa nje ngale yokunikwa kwa mali le yecuba ngunina, umhlola wento. Uyiphathela ibhaka yakhe emsebenzini, athi mayizivalele egunjini layo lokulala ingaphazanyiswa xa isidla ezo *zilaps zeorskieti* yasemaBhulwini aza nazo. Iphume kwelo gumbi iyiloo nto ichininika nombombo lo ukuhlutha kwayo sele ibhodla. Ndise ndiyihleke ke yonke loo nto kuba kaloku mna andizanga ndakhuliswa ngaloo ndlela ngabam abazali. Loo nto ngoku ingenwe kukutya nokwam oku ukudla okubekiweyo kugqunyiwe, ikuxhafuze ishiye kwamathambo nelo cephe apho ekutyeni. Ngoku ndiye ndicele unina ukuba isitya sam aphake asibeke ecaleni kwebhedi yam xa ndingekho, into entsha ke leyo.”

Akukhange kube kudala, kwabonwa ingena apho kowayo ngenjikalanga yomnye uLwesihlanu loo ntwana igileka ixhapse igazi, iswantsuliswa ziingxilimbela zabafo abathathu bevuth’amadangatye yimisindo, beyifun’apha. Waphuma uMaMvulane eligqabi wema phambi kwabo esithi:

“Ndiza kunibamba nithi shu ngowam umntwana! Ndilifuna apha igazi lomntwana wam!”

“Hayi, akukho mntu uzakubiza mapolisa apha! Masiphulaphule kubantu aba bathi boniwe ngulo mntwana.” Kwathi kanti uyichulile uGxarha ngokwenjenjalo, kuba kaloku ukuya emapoliseni bekuza kubangela ukuba abahlali abo boniweyo bawutshise ngomlilo umzi lowo kaGxarha.

“Ndifuna ifowuni yam ebiwe yile ntwana nootshomi bayo, kuthiwa ithathwe yiyo!”
utshilo omnye ome ngaphambili kubo.

“Yimani sikhe sive kuyo. Thembekile! Yiza, yiza apha!” Ukhwaze ngomsindo uGxarha ebhekisa ejonge emnyangweni otshixiweyo welo gumbi lilala unyana lowo woyikayo ngoku.

“Tata,” uphendule bungqokola ngelecawa, ephuma erhuqa iinyawo kweloo gumbi unyana.

“Chaza, kuqhubeke ntoni malunga nale fowuni yalomfana?”

“Ithengwe nguRasta *ngefive clip*, tata,” itshilo.

“Kwaza kwathini ungamsi kuRasta lo mfana, apho waziyo ukuba ikho ifowuni yakhe? Ubalekela kwam uze kuthini ndingena fowuni yakhe apha nje?”

“Basuke bangxama ngokundibetha, ndabona ukuba mandibaleke ndigoduke...”

“Ndiza kuyibhatala...” utsibe watsho uMaMvulane.

“Uthule wena! Akuzikubhatala fowuni yobusela apha. Makahambe unyana lo wakho oyintanda ase aba bafana kuloo Rasta...”

“Nam ndihamba naye...” uphikelele uMaMvulane.

“Andikhathali nokuba wenzeni na. Ungahamba naye kaloku.”

Baphumile apho belelo gxudululu, uMaMvulane sele egila izicithi, ehambel’apha.

“Mama, ungxama ngokuthi uza kuyibhatala nje, uyayazi ukuba le fowuni ixabisa *6thousand* yeerandi?” ubuzile umnini-fowuni.

“Iyhuu! Nkosi yam, eyemali engako?” wakhuzisa uMaMvulane.

Bafike uRasta ehleli ngaphandle kwebobosi lakhe ubuso bakhe burhangqwe lilifu lomsa womya, ephulaphule umculo kaPeter Tosh, ebuyotywa sisisi eso. Wothuke sekunini kumiwe phambi kwakhe lelo gquba.

“Yikhuphe Rasta, sesivile ukuba ikuwe ifowuni. Umama lo uthe uza kuyibhatala imali yakho ekule ntwana yakhe,” itshilo leyo yefowuni.

Akaphendulanga uRasta, usuke wee khwaphululu ukuphakama esiya kungena endlwini, elanda loo fowuni. Ubuye ewuthe qhiwu loo mgrugra wefowuni yexabiso wabuza, “Yiyo le?”

“Yiyo kanye Rastaman, ndiyabulela mfondini; dibana nomama lo malunga *nefive clip* yakho leyo,” utsho eyicofacofa amaqhosha eyikhangelisisa umnini fowuni ebheka pha, ebashiya njalo.

“Ndincede torho ke ma ngemali yam ngoku...”

“Ndijonge Rasta sana lwam ukuphela kwenyanga, ndomana ndikucutha...”

“Hayi khona *ol’ lady*, ndiyifuna ngoku yonke imali yam!”

“Kha undincede torho Rasta, ndimele kaloku ndithethe noGxarha,” uthethe sele ebuyela endlwini emyenini uMaMvulane. Ubuye wabhekisa kunyana ecaphuka: “Uyazibona ke izinto ondifaka kuzo?” Akaligqibanga uMaMvulane, yamphendula ihesha inkewu leyo:

“Hayi suka nawe *maan ol’ lady*, undenzela *istress* phezu kwayo yonke le nto yokubethwa kwam ngaba bantu!”

“Uyamazi ukuba utata wakho wakuhlamba kudala, akukho nento yakho asazimisele kuyihoya kunamhlanje ngenxa yesimilo sakho angasithandiyo...”

“Andiyikhathalele loo nto leyo mna, naye andimkhathalele!”

Esibhedlele

Ukubaluleka kwesibhedlele yinto ethi ilibaleke de kufike loo mini isisidenge ethi yenze ukuba sibufumane ubuxhaka-xhaka boomashini baso kwanobugqi babasebenzi balapho izizinto eziluncedo kuthi nezithi ziphele zisindisa ubomi babantu abaninzi.

Umothuko endiwufumene kule veke awusayi kuze ulibaleke ebomini bam. Ndiye ndabiziswa ngummelwane wam ewakhuph'entloko amehlo, esithi: "Khawuleza, khawuleza, Meza! Sincede usibalekisele umntwana wam esibhedlele, uyagwebhuza ngomlomo, asazi ukuba udle ntoni na!" Andilibazisanga ke nam, ndakhawuleza ndaleqisa.

Ndithe ndakumkhangela umntwana lowo, ndafumanisa ukuba sele eyoba, eyi loo nto ityokololo ibhedlula amehlo. Ngomothuko omkhulu ndiye ndayivuthulula ndiyivuthele imoto ukuyibalekisa oku ndisingise esibhedlele eMotherwell. Esi sisibhedlelana sasekuhlaleni esingenakulinganiswa nezo zikhulu kule dolophu yaseBhayi; nditsho iLivingstone kwa neDora Nginza. Kodwa sisincinane njalo sibanalo uncedo olukhawulezileyo kubahlali, ze kuthi xa kunzima mpela kumguli adluliselwe kwezinye ezo sele ndizikhankanyile.

Sifike apho esibhedlele sambalekisele kubongikazi umntwana lowo, samphosa phezu komondlalwana onamavili ukuze ongiwe. Umongikazi omkhulu omagx'abomvu ukhawuleze wamvavanya umntwana ngesandla esifubeni, wamcofa nesihlahla esi; naye sel'ewakhuph'entloko amehlo. Umongikazi umbizele ecaleni unina womntwana, ebumruqa ngengalo, wayakungena naye kwigunjana elibu-ofisi. Thina bakhaphi sive ngesona sakha sasibi ngobukrakra obu isijwili siphuma kuloo ofisi, engakhalanga umfazi womntu amehlo ezingxangxasi.

"Thixo wam, yintoni ukundithathela umntwana wam, owokuqala nowokugqibela, ikukuphela kwakhe!?" Usiphinda-phindile eso sililo ngaloo mazwi unina womntwana, watsho kwasika kumazantsi esisu sam, zaphokoka nasemehlweni ethu iinyembezi sakuva ukuba usishiyile umntwana.

Kubenzima kakhulu kum ukuphuma ndishiye isibhedlela eso, nomntwana ebendimthwele ezandleni ndincedisene nonina ngaye, ndimshiya sele elele ubuthongo

obungenasiphelo. Ndimke apho ndimadolw'anzima kukuxheleka emphefumlweni, sele ndingasakwazi nokumjonga unina womntwana. Sona isibhedlele andisikhalazelanga, koko ndiphume apho ndizikhalazela mna siqu, ndisithi ukuba bendifike naye kwangethuba ngencedakele umntwana lowo, samsindisa isibhedlele.

Uthe omnye ubawo wasekuhlaleni kum, ukuba umntwana besiqale ngokumseza ubisi, sazama nokumgabhisa ngokumnyanzela usiba lwenkukhu emqaleni, mhlawumbi loo nto ibisiswini somntwana ngeyingakhange de imbulale yakuphumela ngaphandle kwamathumbu. Sona isibhedlele ngesifumane kulula ukumsindisa umntwana ukuba thina besiqale ngokuzama uncedo lokuqala. Le ntetho yelo xhego indinike amava nolwazi olungasayi kulibaleka kum. Isibhedlele esi naso siyafuna ukuncediswa ngabantu basekuhlaleni abaqeqeshiweyo kuncedo lokuqala.

Sithath' uTEBA

Phantse wonke ubani uthi efika kwiminyaka yakhe yokwaluphala abe sele entlaleke mpela kwiinzingo neenzima zobomi. Kube njalo ke nakuloo nkab'abakuthi uMaqhawe, umfo wasemaNtandeni phaya kulaa mhlaba waseGwili-gwili. Intetho yesiZulu abeyithanda ethi indod'igug'izwile kuvakala ukuba umnt'akwethu lo wayichola kwelaseGoli apho wayeye ngempangelo.

Uthi ke uMadiba lo, wathi akoyiswa sisikolo, wabe ebona nabanye oontanga bakhe bethabatha uTEBA, becan'd'amathafa besingisa eRawutini, bambi eFreyistata, abanye eNatala, wazishiya apho edlelweni iinkomo zakowabo, waland'ekhondweni loontanga bakhe. Iofisi yakwa TEBA eQonce yamthi jize ngesipoponi sejemu, isonka esikhulu esimdaka nembhodlela yomongi-mali, yamphosa phakathi ebhasini yakwaloliwe esingise apho kwaMzilikazi. Ihambile ke ibhasi njengazo zonke iinqwelo zamahili-hili, ityhutyh'amathafa ubusuku bonke yada yaya kumlahla eFreyistata apho kwelaseWelkom.

Uhambisa athi ke umkhuluwa lo, uthe kwakusa wabona okokuqala ezimbhalini loo mathafa aseFreyistata, suka wangenwa ngombi wona umbilini, waqala wacing'emva, ecinga abazali bakhe neenkomo zakowabo awasuka wazishiy'edlelweni okweenkedama zisisisulu. Zaqala zathi chapha-chapha iinyembezi zichankcatha izidlele ezi ukusingisa ngasemlonyeni naloo tyuwa yazo.

Bafike baxilongwa apho emayini, baza baboniswa namagumbi abo okulala ehostele, nalapho baye baphakelwa badla, bazibetha zabomvu iziswana ezi. Akhange kube kudala phambi kokuba ahlele emathunjini omhlaba ngekhethshi esiya kombha igolide le ebethe uzela yona eGoli. Uthi xa ebalisa uDlomo, umqala wakhe wawungenwe ngoku ngumkhwa omtsha wokusuka wome uhleli nje, kukunxanwa angaziyo ukuba kuzalwa yini na, endiqondayo ke phofu mna ukuba mhlawumbi wawuzalwa lixhala nomoyiko. Kodwa kwayena uyatsho ukuba akukho ndawo ibilisa umzimba womntu nje ngomgodi. Ukunxiba impahla ngaphantsi komhlaba yinkcitha-xesha yokwenene; ubuchule kukusebenza ze oku kosana luphum'esizalweni. Ubhuti lo ubesithi xa ebalisa ngaloo duntsu-duntsu wezomini umve esithi: "Kwedini, nokuba ungaze uqhawukelwe ngenye imini, ungaze uphambanele ngasemgodi! Phaya indoda inya imile!"

Ubalisa athi uMthembu, uye wasebenza kwinto abathi yitafile emathunjini apho omhlaba esomba, ebeth'ifosholo elele ngecala; ukubila komzimba wakhe kunkcenkceza, kugcwalise loo maquza ezihlangu ezide zomsebenzi, *iigumboots*, ngabula-makhumsha. Babefaka amakolom eepali zokuxhasa umgodi apho idanameyiti ibiqhushumbise khona, besenzela ukuba ungabaweli umgodi. Ithe isandul'ukusuka apho ingolovane beyigcwalise qhu ngamatye omgodi, yasuka yangathi ihlabe ikhwelo lokudiliza umgodi. Kwavakala ukudidizela komhlaba okukhulu okufana nokududuma kwezulu; yatsho loo nto basala bejongana, besiyana ngamehlo bexakiwe.

Bathe besamuya-muyaza bengazi ukuba mababheke kweliphi icala, suka kweduncu-muncu into enkulu yelityekazi elingangeliwa lincothuka ngentla kweentloko zabo kwiphahla lomgodi; basindiswa kukutsibela kude bephepha. Lathi nje ukuwa kwalo latsho ngelifukazi lothuli olumnyama, kwazizijwili nje zamadod'amadala. Avakala amaninzi enqula amawawo, amanye ekhala ngoQamata omkhulu.

Uqhuba athi uMthembu: "Ntanga, kwakukubi loo mini sivalelekile singazi ukuba singaze siphume njani ngaphaya kwelo liwa. Ndikhwaze amanyange akowetu ndanqula, indoda nganye yakhwaza awakowayo. Ndizithuthe ndabiza abaThembu, ndakhwaz'ooDlomo, ooSophitsho, ooYem-Yem, ooNgub'engcuka, ooMthikrakra, ooZondwa-ziintshaba, ooVelabambhentsele. Kumhla ndabona amadoda amadala ezinyela okweentsana zabadlezana, ezi zona zinxiba amalweyile. Kwakusisaqhunge nje selo vumba linganyamezelekiyo lobulongo bomntu omdala."

D

linkanuko

Kwaqala kwafudumala

Yathi yakuphela ithenda yomfo obemqeshile, emthembile uGatyeni wasuka wayiloo nto ihleli nje ijikelezana nomzi, wabe yena umkakhe ezama amatorho emakhitshini. Loo meko yabo ihambe yahamba yamakhela amagxa umfo lo. Ube yiloo nto evela ngoku ibe lugcwabevu ngumsindo ngexesha lokufika komfazi ebuya emsebenzini, uve sel'imbuza ijonge exesheni: "Kutheni ufika ngeli xesha ngoku, ulibele phi kangaka?"

"Hayi kaloku tata kaZandi, iibhasi ezi azilawulwa sithi bakhweli," ubeziphendulela ngelitshoyo umfazi. Indoda ngelo xesha ithe nkwa iintshiya ukumjonga oku ngaloo mehlo ayo mancianane kobo buso bumnyama busicaba, abengathi ujongwe yinkunzi yemfene.

"Andiyithandi ke le nto; futhi akuqali ukuyenza..."

"Uyabona ke, ngathi kum ngel'uphakama uyekufuna umsebenzi mna ndihlale aph'endlwini, ndijonge kuwe!" Akuphendula njalo umfazi ibivela isikeke umlomo indoda.

Ufike neendaba ezimnandi ngenye imini uNozinzile umka Gatyeni ebuya emsebenzini: "Enye inkosikazi endikhwela nayo ibhasi ithi umyeni wayo udinga umntu wokubaqhubela iteksi yabo eyiQuantum. Ndimxelele ukuba unazo iincwadi zokuqhuba, ndathi ndakuva apha kuwe."

"Mxelele Nozinzile ukuba ndingabaqhubela," utsho sele ebuncuma ngoku, wayeka nokujonga elo xesha ebesaqalisa ukulikhangela ukungena komfazi, kwaswabuluka nezontshiya ebezifingile.

"Hayi ke, ndiyavuya xa uvumayo, nantsi ifowuni yomyeni, mna andimazi andizanga ndambona, nenkosikazi le ndazana nje ngokuncokola nayo, nje ngokuba senditshilo." Umnikile ibhalwe ephetshaneni loo nombolo.

Ibe ziintsukwana zambini-ntathu, wabonakala efika engena apho ekuhlaleni uGatyeni ehamba ngeyona yakha yantsha iQuantum, intsonts'amanzi ngemva. Ube yiloo nto iyimvuze-mvuze enoncumo ehleli nje ngoku, wasoloko ekhalisa umculo emotweni, abantwana bakhe beyihamba mihla le ngegugu ngokungathi yeyakowabo. Babuzene

abamelwane ukuba azi iya nini na erenkeni iyokwenzel'umniniyo imali yokuhlawula ityala lebhanka.

Ithe ingekapheli naloo nyanga kwaba sekuphithizela abantu bephuma bengena apho kwaGatyeni. Yavakala, zingalali mbethe nje, eyokuba umfo lo ngoku ubolekisa ngemali ezalayo. Nobuso babantwana bakhe abamnyama thsu baqalisa ukusoloko bunyinyitheka amafutha. Isibindi esiqhotsiweyo netswele sabethwa ngeentonga ukuxhaphaka ngoku. Lwaqala nolo faf'olude lukwamnyama lungumkakhe obekade enqinile lwaphum'izidlele, lwajinga iingalo neempundu, sele lubizwa kamnandi ngoku yindoda: "NakaZandi!" Zaphela neezomfazwe zikaNapoliyoni ngoku phakathi kwabo.

Zathi ndii iindaba ekuhlaleni ezithi ayomali kwaGatyeni iingeengxowa, akujiki ungayifumenanga xa usiya kuboleka. Basale besabuzana abamelwane ukuba kanti iteksi le yekaGatyeni na, ayinamniniyo ungomnye na. Akubangakho mpendulo.

UNozinzile uthe kolo thando lwabo luvuke phantsi gqatsiyane luphenjelelwa yimali yeteksi wenza shushu ngaphezulu endodeni, wacenga kamnandi ezithobile edlala ngesilevu sayo eyiphuza-phuza ebunzi, nayo sel'imane ivakala ngo "He-he-he!" ongqokolayo. Wafuna kuyo wayifumana imali yokuthenga ibhokhwe yokwenza loo msebenzi, wayifaka ebhankeni. Wayesoloko esitsho apho endodeni ngexesha bebesalwa ukuba ufuna imali yokuzenzela umsebenzi wokuvuma intwaso. Uthethe kamnandi bavisisana wada wabolekwa nenkundla yooGatyeni ukuze awuqhubele apho kwakhe umcimbi lowo. Hayi ke, neebhotile zebranti kwalula nje kuGatyeni ukuba azilande ukuze amadoda azibonele ukuba yena nomkakhe abagodoli. Uyilandile ke nemithombo yokusila yakho nayo apho. Kwabamnandi kuloo mzi, abantwana bemunca oopota, izitoki, ootshoki neebompi.

Ifikile loo mini inkulu yomfazi, kwafika namanye amagqirhakazi akhapha umama ozakusingatha umsebenzi, yaqhuba intlombe impelaveki yonke. Ugaxele naye uGatyeni ezakhe iintsimbi eqabe mhlophe, wasina ecula ngelizwi elimnandi elothuse abamelwane ngokubamyoli oku. Abe bunqaba amagqirha angamadoda kuloo msebenzi sekurhaneleka ukuba umfazi uwalumkisile ngamagxa omfo wakhe, aza aweza. Yawa ibhokhwe, yaphokok'ibranti, yahamba nebhekile kwamnandi. Waqhuba wada wadlula umsebenzi.

Akubanga kudala, kwathi ngokuhlwa ngenye imini abamelwane beva ngeentetho ezibushushu zabantu abaxambulisanayo phandle phaya. Bathe bakujonga abakrobe ngeefestile babona isixhapothi somfo sibambene noGatyeni ngezifuba, ekhwaza umhambi lowo esithi, “Ndifun’imali yam Gatyeni! Ndinike Gatyeni imali yam, okanye...” Uthe ukumyeka kwakhe loo mfo uGatyeni lowo wamtshovela phaya kude, wokuwela ethangweni folokoty. Kubonwe ngokukhwela kwakhe kwelo qegu besel’ingathi lelakwaGatyeni ukuba ubawo lowo ngumninilo ocaphuge mpela. Wasuka apho ngomsindokazi okhalis’amavili eqegu lakhe; sabe isimmelwane siyayigqibelisa loo mini loo Quantum.

Zivakele ezokuba umnini Quantum lowo ebekade egula elele esibhedlela lonke elo xesha ebetabhata ngeteksi yakhe uGatyeni lowo.

Labuya ngamandla ke ngoku nebhungane kwaGatyeni lenza isizungu, yangu “Bhuuu!” Umfo waphindela ekukhedameni ecaleni kwendlu egcakamele ilanga lobusika, apha the kungena endlwini angqengqe.

Ethubeni kubonakale kufika omnye umfo okwaqhuba iteksi kwakhona apho, wemisa wathetha noGatyeni. Mzuzwini uvakele ekhwaza naye esithi:

“Ndifun’imali yam Gatyeni, kudala ndilindile! Khangela imoto yam isenjeyaa okoko wayitshayisayo wayityoboza isibane ngala Quantum yakho. Ndidiniwe kukuhamba ngemoto enje ngathi ndilixelegu.”

“Kwowu, ndingasenayo kwamoto yokurenkisha nje...”

Akaligqibanga uGatyeni, yathi la nto: “Heyi, khangela apha, sukundixelela ngokungabi namoto kwakho mna, uyeva? Andiyikhathalele kakubi mna loo nto leyo, ndifun’imali yam qha ke!” Yatsho itshikila ukuya emotweni yayo naleyo nkalanzinzi, yakhalis’amavili ukumka apho.

Ubuyele apho kuloo bhanka ebehleli kuyo elangeni uGatyeni wadibanisa iingqiniba namadolo, izandla nentloko, ubuso bajongana nomhlaba ophakathi kweenyawo zakhe. Wahlala ngolo hlobo ithutha ibeka ingqondo, sele engazi nokuba ixesha limkile. Weva

ngokuvuleka kosango ukugaleleka komfazi evela kwamLungu. Ukhawuleze wajonga ixesha zifingene iintshiya zibuyele kuNdalashe.

Umfazi ukhawuleze wambeth' emlonyeni kanye xa imilebe yakhe ibisavuleka izakukhuph'isigezo: "Tata kaZandi, kule mpelaveki izayo bayafika abantu bam bokundenzisa omnye umsebenzi olandela lowa wam wentwaso bendikhova kuwenza."

Uye wamthi ntshoo loo mfazi ngaloo mehlo akhe aziintloko zoonotaka asondele embonjeni, watya tyum exakiwe ukuba makaphendule athini na, esaxakaniswe yiloo meko yokuphinda kwakhe abe ngumpha ochutywe wajulwa kude lee. Umfazi ubonile ukuba makamshiye apho xa kungekho mpendulo, angene endlwini ukuya kulungisa iimbiza zesidlo sangokuhlwa.

Ethubeni uphakame kancinci apho walandela, wangen'edlwini. Ufike wabhekisa emfazini eme ngeenyawo, "Nozinzile, mna bendibona ukuba ukhe ume ngalo msebenzi sikhe siwubekele elinye ixesha xa kunje..."

Engakagqibi njalo ithe imazi imqhawula, "Hayi ke noko, andizukwazi tu ukuwumisa lo msebenzi. Hayi andinakho tu emva kwentsokolo engako yelikhaya, ndithi sele ndilifumene ithuba ndimise into enkulu kangaka ebomini bam..."

"Uyabona ke, use uthethe wophele kugqibele wena; ndisifaka xa kulapho kanye ke isihlangu apha kuwe."

"Tata kaZandi torho, ndiyacela kha undiyeke, le nto ayilwisi. Bendibukele usenza unothanda ngemali ngelaa xesha uburenkisha, uzalisa nangemali, andanqanda. Ngoku xa mna ndiqalisa ukulungisa ezam izinto uyandinqanda..."

"Hee *maan*, ndithi kuwe kha ume, izinto zisandihambela kakubi; ndinike loo mali ndibhatale ababantu bandijikelezayo bendigrogrisa befuna kakubi iimali zabo..."

"Unotshe, andikwazi tu..."

Uthe engekalgqibi umfazi, uGatyeni watsiba ukuya kungena egumbini labo lokulala, kwavakala u "Gruuu!" wokurhuqwa kwetranka ehlala izixhobo zakhe zokusebenza, efuna umkhonto wakhe.

Umfazi wazile ukuba kuza kwaziwana, wathi rhuthu umakhal'ekhuwini wakhe watsalela kwa 10111, wagqagqanisa ukuchaza imbangi yokubamema abakwaNtsasana abo, ecela nokwenzelwa incwadi sithinteli enokuthi inikwe umyeni lowo. Uthe ephuma kwelo gumbi uGatyeni ewuthe qhiwu loo mkhonto wakhe unomhlwa, yabe imisa iveni yamapolisa sele ikhanyise idanyazisa isibane esiluhlaza phezulu efokothweni. Amise amapolisa kanye ngelo xesha ebasantsulisa umfazi, akhawuleza ukukhupha imipu esithi, "Mnumzana, wulahle phantsi umkhonto lowo ulale ngesisu phantsi!"

Hayi ke bethu akalibazisanga uGatyeni, uwujulele ezinyaweni zawo ezigqunywe zezo zipili zimnyama zofele umkhonto lowo kaTshaka, wacambalala izandla ezithwele entloko. Baqale ngawo abakwaSidlodlo bawusongela ngeplastiki bawuphosa ngaphambli evenini apho. Bamqhoboshe ngeentsimbi zabo ngaphambi kokuba bamphakamise bamthantamisele ngasendlwini. Bakhawuleze bathi wayi-wayi ukusondela abamelwane abathanda izinto zabantu, bambi sele beze kungena kwasendlwini bethe ntaa amehlo. "Kha nitsho, kwenzeka ntoni ekhay'apha?" ubuzile uSajini wamapolisa.

Hayi ke wayiqala phantsi uNozinzile sele engathi ubotshwe emnweni ethe phuhlu loo mehlo makhulu egwalakazi. "Ufuna ukundibulala!"

"Ayikho loo nto leyo; ndifun'imali yam, makandinike imali yam!"

"Eyiphi imali yakho? Eyiphi..."

"Ho, kha nime bo," litshilo ipolisa. "Mfondini, wena siyakuvalela ngoku ngenxa yokugrogrisa umfazi ngesikhali esinobungozi. Kuqala, nantsi incwadi yakho ekuthintelayo ukuze ungaphindi ulibeke inyawo lakho ekhay'apha ngokuza kugrogrisa umfazi..."

"Makahambe utata sisigebenga. Umana eleqana nomama ngomkhonto. Mthatheni!" kutsho le ntwana yabo iphakathi ineshumi elinesine leminyaka, isothusa loo mapolisa naye wonke umntu obelapho. Kwanyana lowo yinto apha ende emnyama ephinda-phinda ibanga lesihlanu, esel'ikhova kuleqwa ngamapolisa ithwele isikhwama sentsangu ithengisa ithunywa ngomnye umfo.

Ube ngathi uGatyeni, “Lo mfazi lo ndiyamrhanela ukuba uphinde waneny’indoda nje kwangaphambili, ngoku ungenwe kukubaleka ayekuyiphendulela phandle la fowuni yakhe qho xa ikhalayo...”

“Mfondini, masambe ngoku siye kuvalela,” amgxagxamisa amapolisa emka naye waya kulala eziseleni.

Ngengomso emva kwemini, amkhulula amapolisa athi makagoduke angabuyi aphinde aswantsulise umfazi. Uye ngqo endlwini yakhe kuba esazi ukuba umfazi usaphangele, kodwa abantwana bona sele bebuyile esikolweni. Limbukile igqibelo lakhe eliyintombazanana eyinceke yakhe nefana kakhulu naye, kwamnandi ke nakuye. Kodwa ngexesha alithekeleleyo lokubuya komfazi kwamLungu, wakhawuleza watshayisa apho waya kuxhwara phantsi kwemithi engekude apho. Uziphose kuloo ngca akuva amehlo esindwa bubuthongo, zaya zacima.

Ufikile ngeligeni umfazi ebuya emsebenzini wangena kwakhe eziculela iingonyana zakhe ezichaza ukuchwayita kwakhe, into leyo ebesele eyibalisa kubahlobokazi bakhe esithi utsho waphumla ngoku. Ube ngathi uGatyeni uvuswa yiloo ngoma yolonwabo ukuthi khwasululu ukuvuka kwakhe phantsi kwaloo mthi, wajonga ngaphesheya kwehlathi kwakhe. Ubone isiqingqana sesigaqana somfo onomzimba kodwa ephantse walingana naye ngesithomo, ekwamnyama tsiki. Ziye zama iindlebe zakhe zaxel’ezomvundla, wajonga. Umfo lowo ungenile kwakhe, kwathi cwaka. Uye wama isithutyana uGatyeni akhe umkhanya esajonge apho, wathuth’ebeka ethunywa nguSathana malunga nokuba inokuba kuqhubeka ntoni na ngaloo mzuzu phakathi komkakhe naloo mlesi ungene apho.

Ethubeni uphumile umfazi ekhapha loo mfo ebehambele apho.

Ume ngeenyawo uGatyeni embukele umkakhe ekhapha loo ndoda, bada baya kungena kwindledlana esematyholweni. Uchwechwile ngomgaqo okwelicala ebekulo walandela. Ufike kanye xa beqalayo ukumunxuzana befunxana iinyheke, watsiba esithi,

“Iya Nozinzile, kudala ndiyithetha le nto yokuba unendoda, kanti yile ntohololo le ulalana nayo?”

Uye kuloo mfana wamthi xhakamfu ngesifuba, wamtsho ngamanqindi ebusweni nasemlonyeni kwatsaz'igazi kwangoko. Umfo lowo kucaca ukuba ebesothukile exakwe kukuziphindezela, ebukeye lomzuzu loo manqindi ebemxhifwa. Zithe zakubuya izibane, hayi ke walwa naye okwengonyama ephindisa. Imazi ibaleke ngoko yangen'endleleni. Uthe akufumana umtyhi umfo omtsha wabaleka naye.

Indoda ilande ekhondweni lomkayo yahamba ingena kwimizi ekufuphi yabamelwane imfuna. Akavakala ndawo umfazi. Ibonile ukuba mayihambe iye kulala kwisibawokazi sayo kwalapho eLokishini, hleze umfazi abuye nabomthetho.

Ngengomso lifowunile ikrexe lithetha nemazi: "He wethu, wapelela phi kaloku phezolo?"

"Hayi Tshangisa wethu, ndibaleke ndaya kulala kwaMaThahleni," itshilo impendulo.

"Kanti ububaleka ntoni, ubungatshongo kum ukuba nahlukene nale ndoda? Ukuba ibixhobile yaza yandosela ubuzakuyithini loo nto?" Ibe luthotho yaxananaza njalo loo mibuzo.

"Andikhange ndiyicinge yonke loo nto ngenxa yomothuko."

"Uyabona ke, nam ndisothukile. Ndiza kucela ukuba ndikhe ndirhoxe, sikhe sithobe isantya de niyilungise loo ndaba yenu lo mzuzu; mna andifuni kufela emanyaleni edolophini ndishiye umfazi wam emakhaya engumhlokokazi, nabantwana bam bengena yise," itsho iluvala olo cingo ayalinda mpendulo loo nkabi.

Ime nematha imazi, yakuude ngeengcinga. UTshangisa lowo ebeluncedo kakhulu kuye emsikelela nangeeR200 abemana ukumthi jwaxa ngazo xa kukubi kunqabe neemali zesikolo nezokukhwela ukuya nokubuya emsebenzini. Ucinge ngoko kubuya kweenzima.

Ubuyile emva kweentsuku ezimbini-ntathu wabonakala engena apho kwakhe uGatyeni ingekabuyi emsebenzini imazi, kodwa abantwana bekhona. Uncokole nentombi kwamnandi, yampha nento etyiwayo uyise. Akubanga kudala wagaleleka umfazi. Ubulise nje, "Molweni,"

wadlula waya kungena egunjini lokulala akuba evule ngesitshixo. Uhleli ithuba elivakalayo ezivalele kwelo gumbi. UGatyeni uthe makakhe ambize, “Nozinzile, ndihambele kuwe!”

“Wahambela kum, ngabuni?”

“Ndifun’inkundla yam, nam ndineengxaki.”

“Inkundla yakho? Akukho nkundla yakho apha!”

“Yinkundla yakwaGatyeni le ubuyibolekele ukwenza umsebenzi, nayivula ngembodlela yebranti...”

“He *maan*, tata kaZandi, yindlu yam le, ulibele ukuba weza kuhlala nam iselibobosi eli phambi kokuba ndakhelwe iRDP? Kutheni le nto ulibala msinya kangaka nje?”

“Awu! Hlenje usenza zonke ezi zinto uzenzayo kanti ulanda loo nto?”

“Ewe, yindlu yam kaloku le nabantwana bam.”

“Ungumfazi wam into oyiyo...”

“Akuzange ugqibe noko kulobola. *And too*, anditshatanga siLungu nawe, akunamaphepha atshoyo...”

“Tyhini bawo wam, asingomntu lo! Akugqiba ukundilobolisa kuye esandleni, ndamnika waya kuyivalela ebhankeni imali yam engako!”

“Kanti ndingumntu!”

“Mna ndiyabuya ngoMgqibelo lo uthanda ungathandi. Ndiza kuthetha kulaa nkundla ngebhotile yam yebranti!” Uphakame engathi uyavuthelwa waphuma ngomnyango.

“Ndifung’abalel’ukufa, izinyanya zakwaGatyeni, uzakubona into lo mfazi engandazi nje!” Uthethe sele ehamba yedwa, ethwabaza ebumnyameni.

Ngenene ubuyile ngaloo Mgqibelo ebewuxelile ephethe imbodlela yakhe yegrangqa ephelekwe ngabafana abathathu, waza walanda nexhego lalinye elingummelwane wakhe. Ubefake iintsimbi zakhe ezimhlophe zobugqira, eqabe mhlophe ebusweni, ekwvathe ezikwanjalo. Uye wama enkundleni ephambi kwaloo ndlu wajong’exhantini wazithutha. Ugqibele ngokungxengxeza, ekhalazela ukuba sisibhadu-bhadu sedolophu esilahlwa

nangumfazi. “Yibani netarhu kum booGatyeni! Ndincedeni nindityhilele iindlela zam; kubi kum. Litshone emini ilanga kum. Zivezeni zinyanya zakwaGatyeni nindithethelele!”

Emva koko iye yajikeleza imbhodlela, aphos’emiqaleni amadoda. Aphakame nganye-nganye ebulela ekwamnqwenelela impumelelo kuloo migudu nemizamo yakhe. Hayi ke kwachithakalwa emva koko. Umfazi umele phayaa ngasemnyango wendlu yakhe ebukele ngalo lonke elo xesha.

Ibe lithuba elivakalayo engasabonakali apho uGatyeni. Umfazi ubonwe ehanjelwa yenemoto ngoku indoda; yona ingumZimbabwe. Kwesi sithuba ubonakale eziphethe oku kwentombi yabafana enukiselwa ngumendo, sele engasathwali nezo qhiya, naloo mibhinqo eyilahle phaa kude.

Makabuyel'eGompo

“Nkqo – nkqo –nkqo!” kunkqonkqozwe oku kwesipolisa kwaGqwashu ngenye intsasa esangqengqile.

“Ungubani?” ubuze evakala ngathi uvuka ebuthongweni ngaphakathi apho uGqwashu.

“He *maan*, vula mfondini, kutheni ingathi akukavuki nje emin'apha?” utsho omnye esame ngaphandle, kodwa weva ngelizwi uGqwashu...

“Tyhini Zondwa, nguwe?” utsho emvulela emngenisisa.

“Ewe ndim, uphi uMaXesibe?”

“Uphangele.”

“O, uphangele? Khawuleza nxiba mfondini sihambe.”

“Yintoni na Zondwa, mfondini?”

“Khawuleza, khawuleza, yenza sihambe.”

Utsibele ibhulukhwe yakhe ebithiwe tyuu esitulweni uGqwashu, wakhawuleza ukunxiba phambi kokuba asule ubuso, axukuxe. Bakhwele emotweni kaZondwa, bangen'edleleni, umbombo wemoto ukhombwe ngasedolophini kule ndawo ibizwa ngokukuba kuse*Dassie* phaya eBhayi.

Uthule tyum uZondwa, ukufingeka kweentshiya zakhe kubonakalisa ukuxakaniseka okungathethekiyo engqondweni nasephefumleni. Umhlobo wakhe uthe akumkhangela wavela wafikelwa lixhala angalaziyo ukuba lishoba ni na.

“He Zondwa, undithutha undisaphi na mfondini?” ubuzile uGqwashu.

“Sesifikile, le ndawo ilapha kanye ekuqaleni apha e*Dassie*, kule mizi yabeLungu sel'ihlala abantu abamnyama ngoku.”

Ngenene bafikile kwimizi ekufuphi nechibi laseNorth End, wayimisa ye vu imoto ngaphandle kwamasango omnye waloo mizi, waya ngqo kwelinye lamagunjana angemva apho,

uGqwashu emthe nca ezithendeni apha. Umoya waseBhayi wawubuvuthuza kodwa hayi ngamandla, imini ingacacanga ngenxa yamafu ayethembisa imvula. Yiloo nto kanye naye uGqwashu waye esalele ngethuba ebefika uZondwa.

Uthe sele esondele kolo cango uZondwa wabe wabuya umva amanyathelo amabini-mathathu. Uhlehlile naye uGqwashu ephepha. Usuke waya ngamandla ngoku uZondwa, walukhaba lwesaa ukuvuleka ucango. Watsho etsiba ukungena apho. Umbono abawalamileyo apho ubothuse ngohlobo olugungxul'umphefumlo lo. Bangene kanye xa loo maqhekeza amnyama thsu esehla, umniniwo elima ngekhuba lakowabo phakathi kwemilenze yemazi elubhelu ebikhaba-khaba emoyeni oku komntu lo ukhwele ibhayisekile emavili ajongise esibhakabhakeni. Eso sibini sisemandlalweni asiyekanga noko, kucaca ukuba asiseva kwangeendlebe ngenxa yencasa yesondo elibiwayo. Imazi leyo ibikhwina lo wekati esebumnyameni bobusuku, ingasaziva tu, ikwelinye ilizwe. Umqolo waloo mfo ubuyinyhididi ukubila oku kucaca ukuba sekul'ithuba iphangele apho.

“Zibonele ke Gqwashu, nanko ke ephangele uMaxesibe wakho!” Ukhawuleze wasondela kwelo nqwanqwa letheko wakhwaza, “Heyi, mfundisi! Akuyeki nangoku sesiphezu kwakho, hi? Benditheni kuwe ngecawa enkonzweni?”

Utsibe umfo lowo wonda ngomqamelo, wawuthi hlasi wawugibisela phakathi kwemilenze yakhe ewubambe ngazo zozibini, amehlo ezingqanga ukujing'entloko, sel'ekhamisile ngoku, ebetha ngaloo ngubo yesele, elinqugwala ukubila. Imazi yona ixhume yanyebeleza yanyantsuza yatsibela isitulo esikufuphi, apho impahla yayo ibithiwe tyuu khona phezu kwaleyo yekrexe layo, yakhawuleza okombane ukunxiba lo gama amadoda esarholelene amehlo, sele ikhala ngo, “Yhoo!” Ibaleke yagqotsa ukuphuma ngaloo mnyango, ayababheka nokubabheka ababukeli ababesele bekho ngaphandle apho, yalibala ngemva nesosikhindi sayo.

“MaXesibe, MaXesibe!” Ufane wakhwaza wenjenjalo uGqwashu elandela imazi yakwakhe ebhekisa ngasemnyango, wabuya wema bhunxe ejongene naloo mnyango, wazithwal'entloko izandla. “Tyhini, bawo! O, Nkosi yam! Awu madoda, yinto endizakuyithini na le?” Uthe ukuguquka kwakhe we ntle ngaloo bhlumasi yomkakhe, waya kuyo wayichola wayifonya ngesokunene yalinqindi, waza wayifaka epokothweni yebhatyi.

“Uphangele! Ndikubuzile...” utsho ebhekisa kuye emjongile uZondwa, wabuya wabhekisa ekrexeni, “Wena m...ndu, ukhwel’abafazi babany’abantu...”

“O, ndixoleleni, ndingayintoni emfazini wam?”

“Usatheth’ububhanxa ngomfazi wakho? Uthini ngalo umfazi umlalayo sikubambe uphezu kwakhe? Uthini ngendoda le yakhe uyityelayo, hi?”

“Ndixoleleni, soze ndibe ndiphinde...”

“Soze ube uphinde kakade, uyahamba ubuyel’eGompo! *And too* uyahamba, uyaphuma kwasebufundisini menemenendini. Bangaphi; ngobani abany’abafazi obalalayo kwela bandla, hi? Chaza!”

“Hayi torho, ndiyaqala, bendisaqala...”

“O, ubusaza kuqhuba? Uyafokofa ke ngoku. Singaze sibe siphinde sikubone ngawethu amehlo apha kweli Bhayi. Thatha konk’okwakho ngoku, akukhonto izakuxoxwa ngale nto uyenzileyo; hamba ngoku ingekafiki ebandleni, uyandiva? Menemenendini lenja!”

Ngalo lonke elixesha uGqwashu uchophe oku komntwana othunywe ityuwa, ebambelele entloko ngazo zozibini encwina ejonge phantsi. Indoda leyo yomkakhe yayisabambe umqamelo ofihle amaphambili la, igubha ukungcangcazela oku, ifile ziintloni.

“Masambe Gqwashu,” utsho uZondwa esalibaze kakubi ngamehlo abomvu elo sela labafazi, esiya ngasemnyango.

Urhuqeke ngemva uGqwashu naye esiya ngasemnyango amehlo ethe gwantyi iinyembezi, engaziva, ingqondo ilee.

Uthe uZondwa kuye, “Khangel’apha ke Gqwashu, ndizakuhlanganisa amadoda athile aphaya enkonzweni; yikekele kum le nto. Yona le nja mayibuyel’eGompo ingekabagqibi bonk’abafazi aba bethu. Makahambe bo! Kwankqu le nto angazanga wayifuna into yokuhlala kwasemishini wayesazi ukuba uceba ukwenza le ntloni yokulalana nabafazi aba bethu. Ndatsho isafika ukuba ayibizwanga, asingomfundisi lo tsotsi lo. Yinja, nja le

inqunquth'amathambo. Makabuyel'eGompo; hayi makahambe bo." Baphumile bakhwel'emotweni bemka. Iqaqobana lababukeli lalisaxhwarhe phandle lisaphos'iliso.

UGqwashu ufike kukhal'ibhungane kwakhe. Kwakucaca ukuba uMaXesibe wagqotsela apho ukuphuncuka kwakhe emanyaleni akhe waya kwakhe, waqokelela kwanto. UGqwashu wonde ngegumbi lakhe lokulala, wase wangenwa kukuxhaxha oku komntu ongenwe yingqele le ingathethekiyo. Utsalele isitulo phambi kwetafile yesipili, wahlala ejonge esipilini apho kodwa engaboni nto, nkqu yena siqu engaziboni kuloo gilasi.

Emzuzwini uve isandi esibutswina bukrwitsheka, wamamelisisa, wothuka akuqaphela ukuba siphuma kuye emqaleni, wakhawuleza waphakama. Isingqala sakhe sijike ngoku safana nesomntu orhoxozayo ephuma umphefumlo, esabela kookhoko bakhe. Uye waguqa ngaphambi kwebhedi wafaka isandla wathi rhuthu imbodlela yegrangqa apha ebizwa ngokuba yi*Klipdrift* wayiphosa phezu kwebhedi ngaphambi kokuba ayekulanda igilasi ekhitshini. Ubuye nayo kwanejokwana yamanzi abanda okomkhence, waxuba, waphos'emqaleni ithamokazi, wakhawuleza walandelisa elinye elimtsho weva ukugqatseka okukhawulezileyo emazantsi esisu, wacimela ethe ntlubu amazinyo oku komntu lo uhlekayo.

Uthe esacimele njalo uGqwashu kwakukhona ewubona loo mbono wagangwa nguwo xeshikweni ebefika umkakhe engaphantsi kwekrexe ekhabakhaba imilenze phezulu emoyeni encwina bugcuma. "O, undenza ntoni MaXesibe?" Ubengathi uthetha naye embona ngamehlo lawo akhe phambi kwakhe. "MaXesibe, MaXesibe!" Waphinda elinye ithamo, lona lingasangxengwanga.

Abamelwane bave kusophuka igilasi yefestile. Bathe xa bekroba baphoswa ngunomathotholo ophathwayo ephuma oku kwembumbulu ngaloo festile, "vurrr! Qhwinki!" Besamangele njalo bothuswe kukuvela kukaGqwashu ebetha ngale yesele, naye ecothoza ukuphuma ngesango lakwakhe. Bakhala abafazi bokuhlala baval'amehlo ngezandla, abanabantwana bavala awabantwana bephepha elo sikizi.

"Yho – yho – yho! Nqandani! Aphi na amadoda alapha bantu beNkosi?" kukhale omnye wabo esothukile.

Kweso sithuba ube bunkcunkca ukukhawuleza oku komntu oqalisa umdyarho wemarathoni uGqwashu. Ubaleke esehla ngaloo mgaqo mkhulu Kunene waseNtshekisa, esingise ngaseCentenry Hall...

Sabanjalo ke isiphelo sikaGqwashu, usankcunkca kuloo lokishi nanamhlanje lo gama uMaXesibe engaziwa ukuba waya kutshona phi. OoQalazive bathi wagcagca naloo mfundisi wakwaGompo...

Tyhini uyagula uNopina-bhokhwe?

Mna ndingumfana osaze ngobuso elizweni, ndineminyaka elishumi elinesithoba ndazalwa. Ndingumfundi okunyaka wokuqala wezifundo zebakala leBA phaya kulaa dyunivesithi yaseRhodes, eRhini. Kwixesha lekhefu leholide zePasika ndikhe ndahambela ekhaya, ndaza ndavuya kakhulu ukubona abanye abahlobo bam endandisaya kufunda nabo kwisikolo samabanga aphakamileyo.

Omnye wabafundi endandisakuba naye esikolweni yintombazana egama linguNopina-bhokhwe. Usisi lo ebengomnye wamaqabane endandilungiselela iimviwo zematriki kunye nawo, sifunda ngokuzimisela okukhulu. Ngelo xesha sasifundela kwigumbi lam elingemva ekhaya; abazali bam bendinikile imvume yokufundela apho nabo bahlobo bam, yaza loo nto yabanga ukuba bamazi kwaye bamthanda uNopina-bhokhwe lo.

Ngale mpela-veki yePasika idlulileyo ufikile uPina lo eze kundindwendwela; savuya okwenene sobabini ukuphinda sibonane sukela mhla sohlukana ekuqaleni konyaka. Siye sawelana, sawolana sixhawulana sancamisana ngolwango lobungcwele, intombi sele ibunyembezana. Ndikhawuleze ndonda ngendlu enkulu, ndathi tsaku-tsaku ukubaleka ndisiya evenkileni, ndabuya ngokukhawuleza nembhodlela yesiselo esibandayo namaqebengwana; hayi ke sadla, sasela kamnandi, zavela neendaba.

Ethubeni ndiye ndamkhupha, ndamkhapha kuba bendinganqweneli ukuba ahlwelwe apho ekhaya. Ndibonile ukuba ubuthingaza, kodwa ndanyanzelisa ndibumtyhala; hayi ke wade wahamba, nzima, emva kwethutyana, ebutshela endincamisa ngohlobo endingaluqhelanga. Andizi kuxoka torwana, ndisale ndicinga ngaye akuba emkile, ndaza ndamphupha nokumphupha ngobo busuku. Ndiphuphe ndithandana naye oku komyeni nomtshakazi wakhe ngobusuku bokuqala bemini yabo yomtshato.

Uphinde wabuya emva kweentsuku ezimbini umhlobokazi wam, ndamcela ukuba ahlale apho egumbini lam langemva andilinde de ndibuye evenkileni apho bendisiya kumthengela khona isiselo esibandayo.

Ndibuye apho evenkileni, ndafika sele ndigangwa ngumama esithi, “Tyhini uyagula uNopina-bhokhwe lo?”

“Utsho ngokuba kutheni na mama?” ndibuzile, ndiqaphele ukuba uMa uwakhuphe entloko amehlo akhe oku komntu lo wothukileyo.

“Khangela apha Siqwayi, uze undincede nisebenzise ihokowa kuloo nto niza kuyiqhuba noNopina-bhokhwe lowo, angamithi apha loo mntwana!”

“Owu, mama, kanti undithatha oku kwantoni na?” Akaphendulanga umama, usuke wajonga kude oku komntu okhathazekileyo.

Ndibone isimanga sombono onditsho ndayibona loo ngulo abekhala ngayo umama. Ndifike uNopina-bhokhwe ebetha ngale yesele ingubo, ezaneke phezu komandlalo wam, elindile. Ndikhe ndema ndimbukele yanga ndiyalama, engandiboni yena, ndeva ubushushukazi emzimbeni obundenze nde minxi ingqondo le, ndaxakwa nakukuphefumla; waye emilile, engemhle umntwan’abantu, enomkhitha. Ndinge ndingaziphosa apho ebhedini, kodwa zakhawuleza zabuya iingqondo, yazinga intetho kamama ethi, “Tyhini uyagula uNopina-bhokhwe lo?”

E

lintlantsi

Idangatye ngobusuku

Amangcwaba la asindawo ebekuye kudlalwe kuyo, ebesoyikwa ehlonelwe ngabantu. Ngenye imini umhlobo wam uBoy uthe sakuba sihluthi izisu zithe mpu yigrangqa, wathi kum masikhe sijikele ngemva kwendlu yakhe siye kumangcwaba akufutshane nalapho kwakhe, kukho into afuna ndiyibone. Ndithe ndakumngcambazisa ngemibuzo waphendula ngelithi kukho usomashishini wakudala owangcwatyelwa apho odlaka lihlala-hlale livuth'idangatye ngobusuku. Ndithe kuba nam ndityile, ndinesibindi sebranti ndathi masiye kuba ndingayikholelwa le ntsomi yalomfo. Ngenene sikhawuleze salifumana ingcwaba elo lomnumzana, sikhanyise ngetotshi. Uthe nje ukuba ayicime itotshi uBhiza, suka kweqhwithe into enkulu yelangatye engcwabeni elo; yeka ke mhlob'am ukubaleka kwam, kwaphela naloo mqhelwana *weKlipdrift*.

Ndohlala ndimkhumbula

Ndiyakholwa kakhulu ngumntu othozamileyo, ofikelekayo, ongonqenekiyo, othethela phantsi enentlonipho. Ndithanda umntu onjalo, onesithozela nesidima kodwa engaziphakamisanga kwabanye abantu. Ndinethamsanqa kuba bonke abahlobo bam ngabantu abanjalo; akungetsho ukuba ngabantu abafunde bayityekeza, bambi beneemali zabo futhi. Ndithanda umntu ovakalelwayo yintlungu yomnye umntu ongathathi-ntweni, odandathekileyo emphefumlweni edinga ukomelezwa nokukhuthazwa ngabanye, hayi ukwenziwa intlekisa ngenxa yeengxaki azibhaqa egaxeleke kuzo. Ndithanda umntu oliyolisa, owenza kuhlekwe konwatywe apho akhoyo, phofu engahlekisi ngeemeko ezibuhlungu zabanye abantu. Wayenjalo umkhuluwa wam ongasekhoyo endihlala ndimkhumbula yonke imihla.