Umlobi walezi:

UShaka, UDingane kaSenzangakhona, UCetshwayo,

INDLELA YABABI

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ISAHLUKO 1

UKUZALA UKUZELULA?

Uma usuka edolobheni laseMgungundlovu uhambe ngomgwaqo omkhulu wezinqola uqonde ngasentshonalanga nedolobha leli, udlula isidlidli somuzi omncane wakwaMachibise; udlule kwaMalinyane, omunye umuzi futhi owakhiwe ngabantu onamathele njengawo wakwaMachibise eduze nomgwaqo wezinqola oqonde e-Edendale. Uthi ungafika kwaMalinyane bese uphambuka emgwaqweni: uphambukele ngakwesokudla isandla. Sewuqonda eMsunduze-ke manje; umfula omkhulu ocanda phakathi idolobha laseMgungundlovu. Uthi ungawuwela lomfula ozothile, onwabuzelayo, bese ufinyelela eSiyamu. ISiyamu umuzi omncane kakhulu wamakholwa. Kakubuzwa lokho. Izindlu zawo zigqagqene kakhulu; kazifani nezase-Edendale ezakhiwe zasondelana. Lapha zigqagqene kakhulu; kodwa iningi lazo zakhiwe ngokhethe olungapendiwe futhi naphezulu. Kodwa zipholile, zakhiwe kahle imvama yazo. Isonto linye eliphakathi nomuzi ngeleBandla lama-Presbyterian, kwazise iningi labantu balapha bakholwe kulenkolo. Uma ubuka ubuncane bendawo nokugqagqana kwezindlu ungeke ucabange ukuthi isikole salapho sikhulu. Kanti-ke kunjalo. Isikole sikhulu kakhulu. Ezinye izingane zifundela phakathi endlini yesonto lelo, noma isikhona eyesikole encikene nayo leyo yesonto. Izingane ziningi, otisha abazifundisayo nabo baningi.

Lokho kufakazela ukukhuthalela kwemfundo yilabantu nokusondela eduzane kwezilokotho zenkanyiso nempucuzeko. ISiyamu liphuza umfula, Imvukazi, engenela eMsunduze eduze nomuzi omkhulu woMnumzane owaziwayo walapha. Kodwa unenhlanhla lomuzi ngoba amanzi maningi; amanye aweziphethu. Lomuzi-ke sizoxoxa ngawo kulendaba yethu. Phansi kwegquma elithe thwi phezu kwomuzi lona elibizwa ngokuthi "Inyoni ithwelenye" ngoba kukhona idwala elikhulu esengathi liyindilinga elithe congco phezu kwegquma lelo, kukhona amangcwaba aseSiyamu, okulele kuwo abanumzane namakhosikazi akha lomuzi.

Kudebuduze nawo kukhona indlu enkulu eyakhiwe ngobunono besilungu obukhulu. Yakhiwe ngesitini esiphekiwe semali. Igceke layo libanzi, libiyelwe ngocingo lwabelungu. Kudebuduze nayo kukhona isibaya sezinkomo esikhulu, esakhiwe kahle kakhulu. Laphaya ngasemuva kwendlu kodwa kudana nje nayo kukhona indlu yezinkukhu zohlobo ezimhlophe qhwa. Nayo lendlu yinhle ipholile. Izinkukhu zinamakamelo azo okuzalela enziwe ngobunono nokucophelela. Ziyakekela izikhukukazi. Zizalela ubuthaphuthaphu. Amaqhude ayakhala ayalwa ebanga zona izikhukukazi. Amachwane amhlophe afana nazo izinkukhu ayachwaza nje endaweni yawo ehlanzekile. Inja enkulu engangethole ilele phansi eduze nesicabha sangaphambili sendlu. Ufeleba wenja, iyacwazimula ukukhuluphala. Konke nje okungaphandle kwalomuzi omkhulu oyisithe yonke yalapha eSiyamu kukhomba ukunotha komniniwo uMnumzana Roma Moya.

UMnu. Roma Moya lona isibonda salapha eSiyamu. Yinsika yomuzi. Wayekade esebenza eGoli iminyaka emininingi, imali isekhona eGoli. Wayisebenza, wayisebenza waze wayiqoqela ndawonye yaba ifa elikhulu.

Uthe lapho esebona ukuthi qha senginayo isibili imali lena wafikelwa inhliziyo yokuthanda ukubuyela ekhaya, ayodla imali yakhe ehlezi phansi azilungiselele usuku lokumuka kwakhe emhlabeni. Wakwenza lokho. Wafika lapha eSiyamu wakha umuzi wakhe lona ekade siwubuka ngaphandle. Wakhuthaza abantu balapha ukuba bakhe imizi emihle, bafundise izingane zabo; bakhuthalele izinto zempucuko. Bakwenza lokho abantu bebonela kuye. Ngalenkathi uMoya wayenemi-nyaka engamashumi ayisihlanu. Enesiqu esikhulu. Ufeleba wendoda onemihlathi eqinileyo, yenkani yodwa. Amehlo lawa ezinhlansi okusengathi kawabheki, ayajamela. Bonke abantu bemhlonipha uMoya, bekhuluma kahle ngaye. Iningi labo libheke kuye umholi ozohola abantu baseNatal nakwaZulu abathuthukise babe yisizwe esikholwayo, esinomhlandla. Zonke izi-nhlangano zizidlisa satshanyana kuMoya zimcela abe umongameli noma uSihlalo wazo. Wayenjalo uMnu. Roma Moya. Isifundiswa sempela.

UMoya wayehlezi nenkosikazi yakhe ekamelweni elikhulu. Nangaphakathi lendlu yayifakazela isimo sayo sangaphandle. Inempahla enhle yemali. Engosini laphaya kukhona upiyane olwenziwe eJalimani. Lwemali. Konke nje endlini kuthi, "Ngiyimali mina!"

UMoya wabefunda iphepha lesiNgisi, ngoba awabantu engawathandisisi; ethi isifundiswa singefunde lutho emaphepheni ahlelwa ngabantu abangazi lutho. Dukuduku, abheke isikhathi esabe silenga odongeni. Anele ukubona ukuthi sishaya liphi ihola alintshinge phansi iphepha lelo anxaphe.

Owakwakhe amebe ngeso lapho ezwa enxapha.

"Kodwa uDelsie lona ulibelephi?" Kubuza inkosikazi sekuyikhanyele ukuthi ukubheka isikhathi noku-

nxapha kukaMoya kubangwa yini. "Ngimtshelile ngathi akobuya masinyane."

UMoya anxaphe futhi.

"UDelsie lowo ngundlebekazizwa," kusho yena, ejamela umkakhe. "Kade ngangikutshela ngithi indlela okhulisa ngayo lomntwana kayimakhi neze. Uyamona nje."

Umkakhe abeke phansi inayiti lokhu wayehlezi ethunga; abheke indoda yakhe ngamehlo akhe amakhulu.

"Hawu, Moya, uthini uma usho njalo? Ngimona kanjani umntanami uDelsie uma ngimfundisa indlela yobuntu?"

Asukume uMoya, aqale ukuzulazula phakathi nekamelo. Usehwaqabala lapha ebusweni; umhlathi wakhe waqina wathi ngqi.

"Indlela yobuntu omfundisa yona iyinqaba-ke; ngoba ngiyengithi lapho ngimsola phambi kwakho usuke wena uvune yena. Ucabanga ukuthi yindlela enhle leyo ngaleminyaka yokukhulisa intombazana? Umfake umoya wokudela izwi lami, alalele elakho? Kubesengathi nguwe kuphela omthandayo! mina ngiyamzonda?"

Athule uMoya esome umlomo.

Aphendule umkakhe, ngelipholile izwi.

"Qha, Moya, kangisho njalo. Into nje ngiye ngikukhuze lapho sewumthethisa umntwana noma esesibonile isiphonsiso sakhe. Kodwa . . ."

Azinqume ulimi lapho ebona amehlo kaMoya evutha umlilo.

"Yebo-ke ngiyezwa, MaDutshwa," kuphendula uMoya ngokunengwa; "Nginalo lona ulaka; kodwa noma kunjalo kakufanele ukuba uqale ukuphikisana phakathi kwami nawe phambi kwakhe uDelsie. Umntwana okhula ebangwa abazali ngomsindo wokuxabana angeke akhule abe umuntu kahle esimilweni. Masiyeke ukuxabana phambi kwakhe."

UMoya abeke isandla sakhe ehlombe lomkakhe; bese ekhuluma ngomoya ophansi.

"Uma nginezi phonsiso ungangisola nje sisobabili, hayi phambi kwengane yethu."

Umkakhe aphakamise ubuso bakhe obuhle ambheke ngobuso obumamathekayo. Kodwa angaphenduli.

UDora Dutshwa, umka Moya, wabeliXhosa. Umuntu omuhle ngakho konke. Umzimba wakhe umncane, sengathi ngowentombi egcweleyo; kepha ubunjwe kahle. Isidumbu sangenhla sisincane simile kwesangezansi esabe sithe gqi. Izitho lezi zimi kahle kungebona osondonzima. Iminyaka yakhe ingamashumi amane neminyaka emihlanu. Into eyayikuthatha kuqala ebuhleni bakhe amehlo akhe amakhulu, athambileyo. Okuthi emakhulu abuke sengathi akhathele. Noma uMaDutshwa wayeseneminyaka emininga kakhulu endele kuMoya kwabe kungapheli kuye ukuthi ngingumXhosa.

UMoya wambona lena eGoli bashada khona, emzini waseOrlando lapho abazali benkosikazi babakhe khona. Ubuyela eSiyamu nje useganiwe. UMoya lomfazi wamthatha ngoba emthanda kazazihlupha ngokuthi ungumhlobo muni nokuthi yikholwa yini. Emthandela ubuhle nje bakhe eqonde ukuba kuthi lapho evakashelwa izihlobo zibabaze lobobuhle. Kwathi nalapho abayiziNzule nezinqotho zabo bemyala ukuba angathathi emaXhoseni wathi ubuzwe bomuntu abulutho; into enkulu uthando. Qha, bahlala kahle kakhulu noma babede bephambana nje njengabantu bonke abaganene. Ukungezwani okukhulu phakathi kwabo kwaqala mhla bethola intombazana izibulo labo,

nokuphela kwomntwana wabo. Yakhula lentombi yafuza abazali bayo ngobuhle. Yakhula okwekhaba lommbila. Kuthe lapho seyizokuya esikoleni esikhulu lokhu yabisiqedile esikoleni saseSiyamu baxabana kakhulu ngayo. UNkosikazi Moya ethi umntanakhe makaye kofunda eKoloni. "Ngoba eKoloni," eqaphuza, "uzothola imfundo ephambili kulelizwe. Imenze akwazi ukubhekana nempilo yamanje."

"Suka lapha!" kusho uMoya. "Ngifuna uDelsie afunde umsebenzi wezandla ngokupheleleyo. Yiwona oyoba isinkwa sakhe esekhulile. Kangisho ukuthi uDelsie ufanele ukuba afundele ubutisha noma iziqu. Lemfundo anayo yanele ngoba useyiqedile incwadi yesishiyangalombili. Kuhle-ke afunde umsebenzi wezandla.

Anxife umkakhe.

"Awufundelephi lowomsebenzi wezandla wakho?" Ebuza ngokweyisa.

"Mina ngithi kaye eNhlonhlweni noma eNanda. Lezizikole ngezamantombazana futhi zilapha eduze. Kangithandi afundele ubutisha kude lena eKoloni."

"Kangikuzwa nje ukuthi uthini. Yini oyesabayo ekufundeleni ukufundisa? Baningi abazali abangamakholwa abathumela izingane zabo zamantombazana ukuyofundela ukufundisa. Mina ngibona ukuthi unengwa yiKoloni nje wena ngoba uyiNzule."

Angaphenduli masinyane uMoya; ngoba esafithizelwe ulaka. Kodwa azibambe; abale amazwi awakhulumayo.

"Uyabona, mkami, ukufundisa kuhle, kangilwi nakho. Into nje ngithi kakumfanele umntanami uDelsie. Kuphela nje. Kunezilingo angeke azimele uDelsie.

"Kakukho lapho zingekho khona izilingo. Nalapho emsebenzini wezandla lezo ziningi. UDelsie usifanele

ngempela isikhundla sokufundisa; sengathi wadalelwa sona nje."

"Mina ngimbona engasidalelwanga nje nempela," kuphendula uMoya. "Ngibona sengathi ukufundisa lokhu kufuna umuntu okholwayo, onesimilo ukuze abe nesibonelo esihle ezinganeni azifundisayo. Kangikuboni lokhu kuDelsie. Sewamona isibili wena, ngokumvumela azenzele intando yakhe. Kawumkhuthazi nokuba akholwe, aye ezinkonzweni. Kawumeluleki lapho ehamba ebuya ebusuku. Ukufanele ngaphi-ke ukufundisa, abe yisibonelo esihle kanjani?"

Athule umkakhe. Athule kodwa engezwisisi. Kodwa kwagcina ngelakhe, uDelsie wafundela ukufundisa izingane.

Lendaba iqala nje usesekhaya njengoba izikole zisavaliwe ngenyanga kaJuly. Useqedile ukufundela ukufundisa. Usebheke isikole nje azoya kofundisa kuso eNatal. Namhlanje abazali bakhe sebexoxa ngaye futhi.

UMoya wayede evusa umkakhe ethi njengoba uDelsie usekhulile nje uke ahlale nje naye amyale ngokuzigcina ubuntombi bakhe na? Amyale nangokuziphatha kahle? Emvusa futhi ukuba ayeke ukude evumela uDelsie azenzele akuthandayo; kodwa ethi kamcindezele ekuhlonipheni nasekuthobeleni imithetho yobuntu. Ukhula nje uDelsie unina kakwenzi lokho. Umvumela kukho konke akwenzayo futhi umkhuba omubi kanina wokuba athi lapho uyise emsola asuke amvune uDelsie waze wenza ukuba noDelsie angamthandisisi uyise.

Kuthe kusenjalo angene egijima uDelsie!

ISAHLUKO 2

UDELSIE ZENZELE MOYA

Angene egijima endlini uDelsie Zenzele Moya.

Intombazana enhle, empofu ebusweni sengathi ilawu. Ikhanda lilincane lihlezi entanyeni ende ngokwaneleyo. Ngalenkathi wayesentangeni yeminyaka eyishumi neminyaka eyisishiyagalolunye ubudala. Engemude futhi engemfushane. Ephakathi nje. Isigqigqi sentombi enomzimba ogcweleyo ofana nokanina. Nakuye futhi uDelsie njengakunina into eyayifike idonse amehlo, amehlo akhe. Awakhe ayedlulisile kwakanina. Emakhulu ethe bha. Kuhleke wona kuqala amehlo ubuso busathule. Amehlo amangalisayo akhe kwakungamehlo akhomba phakathi enhliziyweni yakhe. Amehlo akhulumayo, amehlo abizayo lapho esethandile; akhuze, asole. ancenge lapho kusafanele.

Abantu abanamehlo anjalo bavamile ukuba abantu abanezimilo ezijulileyo. Okuthi lapho benezimilo ezinhle babe abantu abathembekile nabaqotho. Kodwa uma engenaso isimilo esihle aphelele ebubini abemubi ngokwempela.

"Fundisa umntwana esemncane indlela okufanele ahambe ngayo; kuyothi lapho esekhulile angaphambuki kuyo," kwasho uSolomon kaDavid.

Lomyalo wawuqondene nabantu abafana noDelsie lona:

Uthe lapho ephonseka endlini uDelsie, wabona uyise nonina behlezi eduze kweziko; beliphahlile. Amehlo akhe ahlangane nakayise esevutha ulaka. Athe ehlangana nje wayesukuma uMoya emhlangabeza.

"Uvelaphi?" Emdumela ngengalo.

"Mama!" Kukhala uDelsie, ebiza unina. "Ngafa, mama!"

"Ngiyabuza ngithi uvelaphi? Uyezwa nje?"

Amehlo kaDelsie asegcwele izinyembezi engenziwe lutho nolunci.

"Bengiphelekezele uMabel."

Asukume unina lapho ebona ingane yakhe seyikhala; kwasika esiswini. UMoya amkhaphezele phansi esihlalweni.

"O, bewuhamba naleyontombazana engakutshela ngathi ungahambi nayo?"

"Bengiyiphelekezele nje, Baba."

"Bewuyiphelekezele kade iyephi? Kangishongo ukuthi ungahambi noMabel ngoba niyonana naye? Uyangizwa nje lapho ngikhuluma nawe?"

"Ngiyakuzwa, Baba."

"Pho, ubelandeni lapha uMabel?"

Cwaka!

Ayaluze esihlalweni manje uNkosikazi. Abe uyathe uyazibamba kwale. Avulele ngomlomo wakhe.

"Moya ngineqiniso lokuthi uyazisola uDelsie ngesenzo sakhe. Kakunjalo, mntanami?"

"Thula wena!" kuphendula uMoya.

Aphenduke futhi ayibuze indodakazi yakhe.

"Ngisabheke impendulo kuwe."

"Ubehambele nje uMabel, Baba."

Amehlo akhe ahlangane nakanina; anyakazise umlomo unina athi: wothi "uyadabuka."

Beseshilo uDelsie.

"Ngixolele, Baba; ngiyadabuka."

Axole-ke uMoya lapho ezwa lokho; besethi:

"Mntanami, ngidabuka kabi lapho ngikubona sengathi kawuqondile nempela ukungihlonipha ngibe

mina ngiqonde ukuba ukhule unobuntu uhlonipha. Hlala phansi lapho sesiyakhuleka. Besesilinde wena nje kuphela."

Wasethatha iNcwadi eNgcwele evula esahlukweni sesithupha kwabaseFesu. Wasifunda sonke; base beyakhuleka.

Bathi bangaqeda uMoya wathi kumkakhe usaya emhlanganweni kaKhongolosi eMgungundlovu. Wathi njengoba naye umkakhe ezohamba aye emhlanganweni wamakhosikazi esililo esontweni azangamshiyi uDelsie yedwa ekhaya. Ahambe naye. Afake ijazi lakhe elikhulu ahambe. Lithe livaleka nje isango emva kwakhe wayegxumela opiyaneni uDelsie wansondo, elushaya amaphimbophimbo. Asondele kuye unina, asondele enganeni yakhe sengathi usondela kumuntu amesabayo.

"Delsie, mntanami, kawuzukuhamba nami siye esililweni?"

"Hawu, Mama," kuncenga uDelsie, evula amehlo akhe amakhulu. "Hawu, Mama; ngikhathele kangaka! Kade ngiseMgungundlovu lonke usuku noMabel. Ngizodliwa yini lapha ekhaya, Mama?"

Asho ephonsa izandla zakhe entanyeni kanina emqabula.

Iphele indaba kunina; athambe afane nemfe.

"Kulungile-ke, mntanami. Uhlale lapha ekhaya. Siyokhulekela nina laphaya eSontweni."

"Kangizukudliwa yilutho Mama wami." Asho ebuyela opiyaneni elushaya sengathi ulwa nalo.

Pho, lokhu uMaDutshwa wayefana nebumba ezandleni zentombi yakhe, kube kuphela njalo. Bese uyavuma ukuba isale yodwana ekhaya ebusuku. Yena nina ahambe aye emhlanganweni womkhuleko. Ushiya ingane yakhe ekhaya lapho eya kokhuleka!

Kodwa isho inhliziyo ithi: "UMoya uqinisile, uDelsie lona uswele aphathwe ngesandla esiqinile." Asho eqonde esililweni leso.

Uthe ephuma nje unina endlini nanguya uDelsie egqigqizela elungisa isihlalo lesi eside sabelungu okulalwa kuso ebusuku. Abeke kuso izicamelo ezimbili. Bese eziphathaphatha ekhanda ezilungisa izinwele ezibuka esibukweni. Agcobe ubuso kancane ngamafutha anuka kamnandi. Uthe nje eqeda lokho wezwa:

Ngqo! Ngqo! Ngqo! emnyango.

Nenhliziyo yakhe isho njalo.

"Ngena!" amehlo akhe esekhanya uthando.

Sivuleke kancane isicabha, bese kungena ibhungu, levathe kahle lingene linyonyobe.

"Uwedwa?"

"Yebo, ngingedwa, John," kuphendula uDelsie emdonsela phansi esihlalweni leso akade esilungisa.

Ahlale kuso uJohn, asondele eduze kukaDelsie, amsondeze kuye.

"Kunjani, mntakwethu?" Emphuluphulula izihlathi.

"Ngiyaphila, John. Wena unjani?"

"Ngibulawa uthando lwakho."

"Nami ngikukhumbula kakhulu, John kodwa . . ."

"Kodwa yini?"

"Sengiyazisola ukuthi ngikubizeleni namhlanje? Kade ngikubheke kabi kodwa . . ."

"Ngafa 'okodwa' bakho," sekusho uJohn enengwa. "Unani nje, Delsie?"

Amhleke nje uDelsie.

"Kakuvumi nje, John ngikhulume ngezothando namhlanje; noma bengizimisele kabi ukukuthokozisa."

"Uyangicasula-ke uma uzode ukhuluma imbude nje," kusho uJohn.

Asondele kuye futhi uDelsie. Azinameke kuye; amehlo akhe amakhulu abakaze.

"Uyabona, John, bengingazi ukuthi umama uzokhuluma amazwi anjeya. Amazwi akhe angihlabile."

"Amazwi mani wona lawo?"

"Uthe umama uya emkhulekweni uyongikhulekela ukuba ngilunge."

"Mus'ukungitshena ngevangeli manje. Bewungibizele ivangeli lapha?" Useyathukuthela isibili manje uJohn. Usesuka kancane eduzane kukaDelsie. Umlomo esewuphukule sewumude. Kepha ibunzi likaDelsie lihwaqabele.

"Ngiyezwa. John; into nje sekusuke kwaba yinqaba nje kimi. Akuvumi ukuba ngiwakhohlwe lawomazwi. Ngixolele, mntakwethu, namhlanje. Ngizokwenzela elinye ithuba ngelinye ilanga."

Ancenge umfana; ancenge intombazana ukuba ikhohlwe isisindo samazwi kanina ilalele yena ofuna ukuyiwisa. Kodwa ide ithi nje intombazana:

"Ngiyesaba, mntakwethu; ngiyesaba."

"Wesabani? Ubheda nje?"

Asukume eme ngezinyawo uDelsie kubesengathi kukhona akwesabayo lapha endlini. Umfana amjamele ekhohliwe nje ukuthi ngabe kwenze njani.

"Ngiyesaba, John, mntakwethu. Sengathi kasisodwa lapha endlini."

"Uyahlanya wena!" kusho uJohn esondela eduze kwakhe sengathi uzomshaya. "Udlala ngami wena! Uthi angize lapha kanti uzodlala ngami nje? Yilo lolu uthanjwana lwakho othi ungithanda ngalo. Sala kahle, ntombazana. Kangisona isiphukuphuku sakho mina."

Asho eqonda emnyango.

Wo, imdumele intombazana! Ithi mbe kuye.

"Musa ukuhamba uthukuthele, John," isho izinyembezi zigcwale emehlweni ayo. "Woza, mntakwethu. Hlala phansi. Ngizokwenza noma yini oyithandayo. Hlala phansi."

Ihlale phansi; ithi lapho imbona esamile isukume nayo. Isondele kuye. Imgone. Imphathaphathe.

"Ngixolele phela, mntakwethu. Hlala phansi-ke. Hlala phela." Bese ibeka ikhanda layo esifubeni sakhe ikhala. Kuthule kuthi du endlini. Sengathi kakukho muntu. Naphandle kwase kuhlwile nemfuyo seyilele yonke; nezinja zisalele. Kudana nje nomuzi kwabe kukhala isikhova sithi "Wuwu-wu! Wu-wu-wu!" Sithi singathula kubesengathi sekungokunye. UJohn ayizwe inhliziyo kaDelsie iduduzela esifubeni sakhe. Kuthe kusenjalo, kukhale iqhude phandle. Likhale limethuse uJohn kubesengathi uzwa umuntu engqongqoza emnyango. Ethuke maqede abambe uDelsie ngengalo amdonsele esihlalweni leso ambeke kuso kahle. Athi angambeka nje ahambe aqonde emnyango. Aphume isicabha asivale ngenkulu inkani.

Asale yedwa zwi uDelsie.

Nathi sizoke simshiye lapho kesilunguze ukuthi unina namanye amakhosikazi benzani lapho emhlanganweni omkhulu wesililo. Indlu yesonto yayigcwele ithe swi amakhosikazi omkhuleko amabandla ngamabandla. Yilelobandla levathe izevatho zalo ezahlukile kwezamanye. Kukhona nathwele amaduku amhlophe emakhanda, evathe amabhantshi amhlophe. Amanye evathe amabhantshi abomvu; igazi likaJesu. AmaWeseli, amaHabe, amaMelika, amaLuthela, amaBhabhadisi, namanye amabandla ayephelele lapho, emelwe yilabomame. Bekhona nabesilisa abaying-

cosana: nabo bezobeka indlebe. ISiyamu ebuhlungu kayizange ibe nengqungquthela engangaleyo.

Uthe lapho uNkosikazi Sihlobo, umka mfundisi omhlophe, esewuvulile umhlangano uNkosikazi Mema, uSihlalo wabesifazana baseSiyamu wabingelela izithunywa egameni lomuzi waseSiyamu.

"Makhosikazi esililo," esho ngezwi elihlabayo, "silapha nje siphuma ezigodini ngezigodi zalapha eNatal nakwaZulu, sizokhulekela izono zethu; izono zabantabethu nezono zezwe lakithi laseAfrika.

"Silapha nje simele amabandlabandla, Nkosi; kodwa ngegama lendodana yakho uJesu Krestu sesibanye ngomoya. Umoya obubulela izono zezwe lakithi." Athule aphonse amehlo yonke indlu. Amehlo ahlabayo avutha umlilo wokholo nethemba.

"Kepha okusibulalayo ukungaqiniseki okholweni lwethu. Baba. Silapha nje sishiye amadoda ethu emakhaya nezingane zethu. Bezihlalele nje. Izingane zethu ziyimihlambi kazalusile. Zigcwele eGoli, eThekwini, nakwamanye amadolobha. Ziphila impilo yokuzibusa. Abelungu, ngokusithanda nokusifisela okuhle, sebaze bakhela lezizingane imizi eyiziphephelo empilweni yazo yobubi. Lemizi niyayazi, bafazi. Imizi ethiwa Talitha Home, ikhaya okuboshelwa kulo amantombazana onakelele emakhaya ethu, bafazi. Imizi ethiwa "Ekuthuleni," "Leselinyane" neminye enjalo eyakhelwe thina eGoli nakwezinye izindawo ukuze sizihlenge khona. Kuthini konke lokhu kithina? Ngisho wona nqobo amadoda ethu, aphi lapha? Kuwo into eyedlula zonke yimihlangano yemibango lapho bechukuluzana ngobuzwe. UMsuthu ethi kadlelani nomZulu; umZulu uthi yini lona iXhosa. Nithi yilokho okuyosilethela izibusiso kuNkulunkulu?

"Ungezwa bethi, 'Mayibuye iAfrika.' Konje

izobuya nje yake yayaphi? Ngiyabuza. Yake yayaphi iAfrika, lokhu ithina esiyixoshayo ngezenzo zethu ezimbi. Ngomoya wethu wokungezwani. Ngokuzondana kwethu sodwa, side sibhaca ngabelungu sithi bayasihlupha. Masizithobe sicele uxolelo lwezono zethu kuNkulunkulu."

Lenkulumo kaNkosikazi Mema iwufudumeze umhlangano. Basukume abaningi bayisekele ngezabo ezifudumeleyo. Abanye bakhuleka, abanye bahlabelela. Kwahamba kanjalo kwaze kwasa. Kwahlakazekwa-ke, naye uNkosikazi Moya wayekhona lapho njengoba besesishilo. Kwathi lapho uNkosikazi Mema ekhuluma ngomhlambi kazalusile, wazizwa esecabanga ngoDelsie ayemshiye yedwa ekhaya, ngoba engenaso isibindi sokucindezela ingane yakhe ukuba yenze into elungileyo.

Sizokuzwa-ke.

Kuthe kungakadluli namasonto amathathu emva kwalomhlangano uMoya nomkakhe baxoxa futhi kakhulu ngendodakazi yabo uDelsie. UMoya wathi kumkakhe.

"Ngiyethemba ukuthi sewake wakhuluma no-Delsie ngokuzigcina, MaDutshwa, sesadlula isikhathi sokuba unina akhulume isifuba nengane yentombazana yakhe; kodwa nakhona nje manje kuseyisona isikhathi sokumvusa umyale ngobuntombi bakhe."

Aphendule umkakhe ngokuhola umoya awukhiphe njengomuntu okhatheleyo.

"Kepha mina bengesaba ngithi uma ngikhuluma naye ngalokho angase asuke bese ecabanga zonke izinto ezimbi lezi ngabafana."

"Kanti-ke qha," kuphendula uMoya. "Uma ezwe iqiniso ngawe wena nina kuyobangcono kunokuba eduswe ngamanye amantombazana angaziphethe kahle."

"Uqinisile, Moya," kuvuma uMaDutshwa, "kepha ———"

"Kepha yini?"

"Mina bengithi usekhulile uDelsie useyakwazi ukuzigcina."

UMoya kwathi makazilahle phansi ukucasuka.

"Uyabona wena, uma uzobanenkani yeselesele lenqaba ukuphuma endlini uzozixabanisa nami," esho ngezwi elivevezela ulaka, kodwa ezibamba. "Unenkani yokuzazisa wena. UDelsie lowo wena osewumbona esekhulile yingane encelayo, ekuziphatheni ngalolohlobo. Usesesikhathini sokuba elulekwe unina ngobuntombi bakhe. Angezwa ngokutshelwa abanye? Angithi uyezwa?"

Avume ngekhanda uMaDutshwa; uyasuka lapho ungena ekamelweni lokulala walala.

Inkukhu inqunywe umlomo manje kuMoya.

Ngalenkathi uDelsie wayesengutisha ogcwele, osebhekwe kuphela ukuba ayoqala umsebenzi wokufundisa eManzimtoti. Sesibonile-ke ukuthi lapha ekhaya ubephathiswe okweqanda ngunina. Etotoswa. Engakhuzwa. Okukhulu kunalokho, engafundiswa nolunci ngunina ngokugcina isimilo sakhe. Kwathi nalapho uDelsie esezohamba ekhaya unina wambizela ekamelweni lakhe wathi kuye:

"Delsie, mntanami, usuyahamba lapha ekhaya. Uya kofundisa kubantu abazokubheka ngamehlo omabili. Usuyaphuma ezandleni zami ebezikusingethe, mntanami. Uyazi ukuthi ngikuthanda kangakanani, Delsie; futhi uyazi ukuthi bengide ngikuvusa nalapho uthanda ukuphonsisa. Kodwa ngikusole ngomoya omuhle ukuze ubone ukuthi angikuzondi. Nanka amazwi ami, mntanami, engithi mawabe umphako wakho. Ungamethembi noyedwa umuntu wesilisa,

noma engubani. Abantu besilisa bamanje bayizitha ezinkulu zabesifazana. Into abayifunayo kowesifazana ukumdonsela odakeni kuphela. Baxwaye, mntanami, ukuze usinde ehlazweni."

Lamazwi afileyo okuyala umntwana asuka amenza uDelsie acabange . . . acabange . .

"Uthini umama lapho ethi abesilisa bayizitha zethu? Ingani bengithandana noJohn Khuzwayo lapha ekhaya engiphethe kahle kakhulu. Ubutha bakhe buphi? Ngiye ngizwe nawoNomagula noNokuthela bengixoxela ngamasoka abo ukuthi abaphethe kahle kanjani; ebathengela izinto ezinhle, ebakhwelisa nasezimotweni bevakashela eThekwini. Ubutha babo buphi lapho?"

Kubuza imicabango kaDelsie, isuswa inkulumo kanina engasile.

Kangimuzwa umama ukuthi uthini nje.

Uma uMaDutshwa wayethe kumntanakhe: "Mntanami, isitha sakho esikhulu ngomunye wesifazana ozishaya isihlobo sakho, kodwa eqonde ukukwenza ufuze imikhuba yakhe emibi." Uma uMkaMoya wayesho njalo enganeni, eyivusa ukuba ixwaye amanye amantombazana "aziyo" ngothando lwasemadolobheni, ngabe wamsindisa engozini eyesabekayo eyehlela umntanakhe eGoli.

Hayi-ke, kuthe emva kwalokho uDelsie Moya wakhwela esitimeleni eMgungundlovu esiqonde eThekwini; esezodlulela eManzimtoti. Uyise nonina bamphekezela baze bayombeka eMgungundlovu. Sithe lapho sisuka isitimela wakhala unina.

Wakhala unina.

Yahamba-ke indodakazi yakhe nezeluleko zakhe ezabe ziyidida ingqondo.

Icala kwabe kungelikabani?

ISAHLUKO 3

SIYINI ISONO?

UMfundisi Thomas Gwebu wasusa ipipi emlonyeni ukuze amamatheke ngenkululeko. Wayehlezi ekamelweni lakhe lokuloba exoxa noMnumzane Amos Khona. UMnumzane Khona lona yiDikoni lebandla lakhe uMfundisi Gwebu. Babexoxa bemamatheka, benqekuza amakhanda kusobala ukuthi "badla" indaba emnandi.

"Yebo, Mfundisi," kusho uMnu. Khona, enqonqotha ipipi lakhe esithendeni sesicathulo sakhe. "Imikhuleko yethu izwakele, nakhu sesimfumene utisha wesifazana oneziqu zaseKoloni. Kangiquli ukuthi uyenayena."

UMfundisi Gwebu acobele ipipi lakhe kahle engakaphenduli. Alokhele lithi lingadonsa kahle aphendule.

"Nansi enye into ebongekayo ekulotisha ozayo, Khona. Abazali bakhe amakholwa. Kayikho into eyedlula leyo."

"Uqinisile, Mfundisi," kuphendula uKhona. "Kakhulu ngalezizinsuku lapho intsha izinikele ezintweni eziyize. Ingazikhathalele izinto zikaNkulunkulu. Konje, Mfundisi, uzohlalaphi utisha?"

"IKomidi inqume ukuba ahlale kwaNkosikazi Thwala. UNkosikazi Thwala njengoSihlalo wamakhosikazi omkhuleko, uyenayena muntu azohlala naye kahle, agcineke kuye."

"Inqume kahle kakhulu iKomidi Mfundisi. Selokhu kwashona uThwala nyakenye uNkosikazi Thwala

unesikhulu isizungu. Ngethemba ukuthi lotisha uzoba njengendodakazi kuye."

Avume ngekhanda uMfundisi Gwebu.

"Kakubuzwa lokho, Khona. Sonke sibheke lokho kulotisha ozayo."

UMfundisi Gwebu lona kwathi ukuba aqede ukufundela ubufundisi wagcotshelwa kulo ibandla lakhe laseWeseli. Ngenkathi esafunda esikoleni wayengumuntu othambileyo ezifundweni zakhe, noMfundisi omhlophe owayebafundisa iBhayibheli wayemethemba kakhulu uGwebu. Kwathi ukuba aqede ukufunda lokho uMfundisi lowo omhlophe wamkhomba lapho eManzimtoti ukuba abe ngumfundisi wakhona.

Naye-ke uGwebu wakuthokozela lokho kakhulu.

Indawo lena yaseManzimtoti indawo enothile kakhulu; elinywe ikakhulu umoba. Nezinye izilimo zasothungulwini. Zimila kahle kakhulu lapha. Abantu balapha kwakungabantu abanothileyo abaphucuzekile. Beziphaphamele zonke izinto zenqubela-phambili.

Imvama yabo bengamakholwa, befundisa izingane zabo ezikoleni ezinkulu. Lomuzi unabanumzane isibili abanezindlu ezinhle ezinkulu. Befuyile kakhulu. Bayasenga, bavube. Bayahlaba, badle. Bayalima, bavune, badle, besuthe.

Kulapha-ke lapho uMfundisi Gwebu athunyelwa khona ukuba azoba ngumalusi. Wafika uMfundisi Gwebu wasebenza wajuluka eshumayeza abantu, ehambela imizi ngemizi. Elinga ngakho konke ukuba isibonelo esihle. Isikole salapha ngenkathi yokufika kukaMfundisi Gwebu sasisincane kakhulu, kodwa ngokucophelela kwakhe saze sakhula saba nezingane ezifunda izincwadi zesihlanu nezesithupha. Kwasweleka ukuba bathole omunye utisha ozosiza wesifazana.

IKomidi lesikole lafaka isaziso ephepheni okuthiwa

"Ilanga laseNatal," sifuna utisha wokuzofundisa lapho. Lesisaziso safundwa nguNkosazana Delsie Zenzele Moya, wasamkela ngenkulu intokozo. Phela nakhu isikole siseduze nasekhaya naseThekwini futhi.

Nguye-ke lowo uDelsie ababekhuluma ngaye uMfundisi Gwebu nomDikoni uKhona.

Kuse ngomuso kuthunyelwe izingane esiteshini ukuba zihlangabeze utisha. Uthe lapho esefinyelele ekhaya zamyisa kwaMfundisi Gwebu.

UMfundisi Gwebu yimpohlo. Usemusha kakhulu, kwazise wayeseneminyaka engamashumi amabili nesithupha. Muhle lomuntu; uyakhanya ebusweni. Ikhala lithe mpo okwelomlungu. Amazinyo akhe amhlophe qhwa. Makhulu, ayalingana. Usebangeni elihle isibili, ukufa kwensizwa.

Izihlobo zakhe zide zimyala zithi njengoba efundela ubufundisi kungebe isu elihle yini eganwa: zithi akunasithunzi ukuba umfundisi abeyimpohlo isikhathi eside, ngoba lokho kunezilingo ezinkulu.

Lawamazwi wayede ewaziba ngelokuthi isifazana asingithathi neze. Kakubona abantu engibathandayo. Futhi mina ngikubuka kungcono ukuba yimpohlo kunokuba umuntu oshadileyo.

Bamvumele abanye: abanye bamphikise bathi, "Qha; ukushada komuntu ophethe umsebenzi omkhulu kuyinto enhle neletha isithunzi kuye."

Ngobani ababeqinisile?

UMfundisi Gwebu wayehlezi endlini yakhe yokufundela efunda iBhayibheli elungiselela usuku lwesonto. Uthe esenzenjalo wezwa kungqongqozwa emnyango.

"Ngena!"

Abeke phansi iNcwadi abheke emnyango.

Amantombazana ayephethe impahla katisha angene kuqala.

"Yini, bantabami?" Kubuza uGwebu, emamatheka.

Zibhekane izingane; bese ithi enye.

"Sihamba notisha, Mfundisi, sivela esiteshini."

"Habe! Uphi pho utisha?"

"Nangu phandle."

"Ngena Nkosazana Moya," kusho uMfundisi Gwebu, evula umnyango kabanzana.

Angene uDelsie. Kulowomzuzwana inhliziyo kaGwebu kubesengathi ishaya ngamandla, kodwa kubuye kuphele. Elule isandla.

"Sawubona Nkosazana Moya," esho emamatheka kamnandi eveza uthotho lwakhe lwamazinyo. "Sewufikile? Kuhle-ke. Uhambe kahle endleleni?"

"Ngihambe kahle kakhulu, Mfundisi," kuphendula uDelsie. UMfundisi Gwebu amnike isihlalo, besethi:

"Ngiyabonga, bantabami," ezinganeni. "Zibekeni khona lapho esihlalweni izimpahla lezo. Nangu uzukwa wenu nithenge amanzi amnandi esitolo."

Zibonge izingane; bese ziyaphuma.

"Salani kahle."

"Nihambe kahle, bantabami. Ningikhonzele emakhaya kubazali benu."

Zihambe-ke.

"Kuyabanda-banda namhlanje," esho kuNkosazana Moya. "Ngiyabona kwenziwa yilemvula eke yanetha izolo."

Asho amamatheke futhi. Noma wabemuhle kanjalo uGwebu kodwa okwakufike kubugculise ubuhle bakhe ukumamatheka kwakhe. Wabethi angamamatheka nje uzwe uphelelwa amandla. Nengane encane wabeyithatha kunina ethi udlala nayo ithi lapho ikhala, athi angayithatha ithule du ingane, nayo imamatheke.

Nakuye uDelsie kwathi lapho ebona uGwebu emamatheka wezwa esedonsekela kuye. Wezwa sekusengathi kade amazi. Base beyaxoxa-ke ngezesikole nezinye eziphathelele emisebenzini yabo. Kwathi emva kwalokho uMfundisi Gwebu wasemyisa kwaNkosikazi Thwala. Uthe ebuya lapho uMfundisi Gwebu inhliziyo yakhe yabisifile.

. . . . . .

UDelsie kakumthathanga isikhathi eside ukuba amjwayele uNkosikazi Thwala. UNkosikazi Thwala wabengumuntu othandekayo ojwayelekayo ngoba eyisikhulumi nesinteli. NgoMgqibelo othile babehlezi bobabili bexoxa njengenhlalayenza emva kokugeza izitsha. Bexoxa ngaye uMfundisi Gwebu.

"Yebo, mntanami," kuqephuza uNkosikazi Thwala, "uMfundisi Gwebu yinsizwa ethembisayo kakhulu. Selokhu afika lapha usesebenze imisebenzi emikhulu. Usekhiphe iningi labantu ekulibaleni yizindaba zemibuso; wabafaka umoya wokuzakha."

UDelsie uselalele nje; usekhamise nomlomo. Phela naye wabesengenwe umoya lowo, ongaqondakaliyo wokuthanda ukuzwa ngegama likaGwebu.

Ingabe yini eyabibangela lokho?

"Uyazi, mntanami, ukuthi yini ebulala isizwe sakithi kangaka?"

"Qha, Mama; ngitshele."

Asukume uNkosikazi Thwala athathe iBhayibheli avule isahluko esithile asibeke phambi kukaDelsie.

"Funda lesosahlukwana, mntanami, uzizwele okubulala isizwe sakithi."

Afunde uDelsie:

"Sibusisiwe isizwe esimesabayo uJehova."

Ayivale iNcwadi ayibeke phansi uDelsie.

Aqhubeke uNkosikazi Thwala:

"Isizwe sakithi sibulawa yikho lokho ukungazinaki izinto zikaNkulunkulu; osekusenze lokho saphenduka izilwanyazana ezibulalana zodwa. Nalapha lowo moya wawuvunguza ngamakhulu amandla, kodwa wawunciphisa uMfundisi Gwebu."

Kuthule umzuzwana . . .

"Umkakhe uphi?" Kubuza uDelsie. "Angikaze ngimbone selokhu ngafika lapha."

Amamatheke uNkosikazi Thwala.

"Kakaganwa, mntanami," kuphendula uNkosikazi Thwala. "Nakho lokho ngithi kuhle mina; kwazise yikho lokho okumenza azinikele kangaka emsebenzini weNkosi. Uzomuzwa lapho eshumayela ngomuso."

Ethuke uDelsie, azizwe esekhuluma ngezwi eliphakeme engazi ukuthi libangwa yini.

"Nguye ozobeshumayela ngomuso?"

"Yebo, mntanami; nawe uzomangala lapho umuzwa eshumayela. Ushumayela ngomoya onamandla isibili. Sengathi uhamba noNkulunkulu."

Ngalenkathi esamangele uDelsie ukuthi yini emenza ade ethanda ukuzwa igama likaGwebu liphathwe, naye uqobo lwakhe uMfundisi Gwebu wabemangele ukuthi yini eyenza imicabango yakhe ingasuki kuDelsie Moya.

Imicabango yakhe ejulile engazange imhluphe nje ngezinto eziyize ezifana nodaba oluphathelele nabesifazana!

Kuse okungaliyo. Kwasa libalele saka. Bheka-ke kuyinyanga kaDecember ihlobo limamatheka njengomlobokazi emamathekela umyeni wakhe. Kepha liphole kahle, umoya ovela ngaselwandle umnandi. Imithi nezithombo ezinde zide zigebela ngapha nangapha okwenkosi ivuma ngekhanda lapho ibingelelwa ngabantu bayo.

Pho, lokhu lelizwe ngelasothungulu, lihlala lembethe izevatho eziluhlaza ngisho ebusika. Ehlobo lisuka libe yimibalabala nje exhopha amehlo. Izithelo eziluhlaza zevathe izimbali ezemibalabala yothingo lwenkosikazi. Iphunga elivela kulezizithombo limnandi njengamakha. Uthi umoya ungaziphephula zigebele ngapha zikhiphe iphunga elimnandi.

Izithelo zobhanana, amasundu, ikhaba lommbila nelomoba kuluhlaza nje. Kuthi thaphu emoyeni.

Amagquma lawa azungeze umuzi nawo engazibekile phansi, eluhlaza nawo utshani obabusamila kahle, lokhu kwabe kusengamahlungu lapho ezintabeni. Nemithi lena efana nawowatela nogamthilini nayo iveza awayo amaqabunga aluhlaza.

Kukho konke lokhu kunwabuzela umfula Amanzimtoti. Unwabuzela okweshongololo udane uya ngapha nangapha, njengokuma kwezindonga zosebe lwawo. Nawo upholile kwazise kwenile lapha osebeni lwawo, utshani nemithi seziwemboze ngamagatsha awo aluhlaza.

Kakumfula ohamba ngamandla lona; noma phezu kwamatshe angenalutho amanzi awo ayagijima, kodwa lapho udlula khona, emhlabathini wezithombo nemithi, uhambisa okwonwabu. Kanti uqonde olwandle njalo umfula Amanzimtoti.

Izinyoni nazo zithokoza kulobobuhle. Zindiza zihlala phezu kwamahlamvu lawo anuka kamnandi. Zithokoza, ziqomisana. Zakhela izidleke zazo nazo. Kukuhle kudelile.

Uthe lapho uDelsie ngalelosonto kusasa ehogela lomoya, ebuka lobubuhle bomhlaba, wevathe ezemvelo yawo, wezwa naye esefudumala. Umoya wakhe sewuthokoza njengemvelo. Amehlo akhe amakhulu akhanya okwelanga. Wezwa esekhipha amazwi ethi:

"Hawu, kwaze kwabakuhle bo! UNkulunkulu wayeqonde ukuba sithokoze lapha emhlabeni. Bheka ubuhle bawo obungaka!"

Lomqondo wawusezinhliziyweni zabantu bonke lapho beqonde enkonzweni ngalelolanga, beyokhonza uNkulunkulu owadala izinto zonke.

Indlu yesonto yayigcwele iphuphuma ngenkathi uMfundisi Gwebu engena epulupiti.

Washumayela ngamakhulu amandla ngokuma kabi komhlaba.

Wathi umhlaba wonke uyahlanza, ngoba ulahla izifundo zikaJesu Krestu zoxolo, wazakhela izithombe ezibaziweyo wakhonza zona. Wathi konke lokho kuyize uma kungasekiwe egameni eliNgcwele likaJesu Krestu.

UDelsie Moya esekhamise umlomo ebheke ngqo khona epulupiti lapho. Amehlo akhe kusengathi awomuntu owethukile osamangele. Bakubona lokho abantu, kodwa bacabanga ukuthi "izwi" limngene kakhulu ezibilini.

Kuthe emva kwenkonzo uMfundisi Gwebu aphume noNkosazana Moya bahambele izingane ezigulayo phakathi kwomuzi. Kulapho-ke kwabakhanyela bobabili ukuthi bayathandana. Lokho kwavela lapho uDelsie ekhubeka etsheni uGwebu embamba ukuba angawi. Kwathi lapho embamba lowo mzuzu nalapho uDelsie esebonga bebhekene ngamehlo babubona bobabili ubuze bezinhliziyo zabo.

Besaba.

Kuthe kusihlwa uDelsie Moya wathi kuNkosikazi Thwala uye azizwe eyinqaba nje lapho bebobabili noMfundisi Gwebu. Alizibe nje lelo uNkosikazi Thwala kubesengathi kezwanga.

Kanti sekumkhanyele ukuthi inhliziyo kaDelsie

kayisaphelele, inxenye yayo seyikuGwebu. Kanti nakhona lena endlini yakhe uGwebu naye sekumkhanyele ukuthi inxenye yenhliziyo yakhe seyithathwe nguNkosazana Delsie Moya.

UGwebu wayelwa nemicabango yakhe ngaleyonkathi: ebubula okwomuntu ogulayo. Yonke imicabango yakhe ithe mbe kuDelsie.

"Nkosi yami," kububula uMfundisi Gwebu, ehla enyuka endlini. "Ngisize kulesisilingo esingehlele. Ngiyayithanda ngenhliziyo yonke yami."

Azesule ibunzi lakhe ngesandla esiqhaqhazelayo.

"Ngiyayithanda lentombazana, kepha kangiyiboni indlela."

Eme athi wokhela ipipi lakhe, isandla esibambe ibhokisi lomentshisi siqhaqhazela, ahluleke impela ukokhela ipipi. Alilahle laphaya. Aphinde sona leso sokwehla enyuka endlini.

Into ehlupha uGwebu kangako ukuvalwa kwesikole ekupheleni kwonyaka lowo. Sivalwa nje isikole uNkosazana Moya sekusengathi angase angabuyi ngonyaka ozayo. Ukhona nje lowomoya noma kusengowabasiki bebunda nje. Lapho uSathane esebambe khona uGwebu ngomphimbo yilapho esemenza uGwebu esabe ukuhlekwa abantu ngoba wayaziwa njengomuntu ongasikhathaleli isifazana. Usesaba ukuthi abantu bazokuthi "Kayingangamlomo." Into engelutho leyo kepha iyona isibili eyamkhalakathisela odongeni lolo olukhulu lolu ayekulo.

Kwafika omunye umcabango kuye wathi: "Yitshele intombi ukuthi uyayithanda: kakukho cala lapho. Uyasuka ubikela amadoda ebandla ukuthi usuzothatha lesosinyathelo."

Awubone ubuhle bawo lowomqondo, avumelane nawo. Kayikho nempela into embi ekutsheleni intombi

enhle, enesimilo ukuthi uyayithanda uma lolothando lungolweqiniso lulokotha izinto ezingcwele.

Avumelane nomqondo lowo.

Uvele futhi omunye umqondo ochitha lowo:

"Musukulibala ukubikela amadoda ebandla," kusho lomcabango. "Akundaba yawo lena. Bamba inyathi ngophondo wena nentombi nobabili. Amadoda lawo ayozizwela. Uma uyiyeka intombi lena izibuyele kubo iyokwenqatshelwa yini ukuba ifike iqome? Lomqondo ufike uwucime lowaya omuhle ngoba uGwebu useqala ukubalekela iqiniso, sekufika ukwesaba abantu kunokwesaba uNkulunkulu. Umqondo osusemqoka kuye ngowokuhlekwa abantu hayi wokwesaba uNkulunkulu.

Useyawulahla umqondo wokuthi lendaba kayibeke kahle emadodeni angayingenisi ngendluzula, ngoba uyisibonelo kubantu. Kuthi-ke emva kwesikhashana azibike kuDelsie. Ukumngenela ngothando uDelsie inhliziyo yakhe isafudumele kangako kungase kube ingozi, kusho umqondo omuhle. Angawuboni uGwebu.

Awulahle!

Sekufika elinye icebo elisekela leli, elizomkhaphezela isibili phambili. Lelicebo lithi kuye: "Hamba uyomcela kuNkosikazi Thwala uthi umcela ukuba azokusiza namhlanje kusihlwa. Uthi kuNkosikazi Thwala umcela ukuze nilungise futhi ngodaba lwamatikiti ezingane zesikole."

Lomcabango wamnqoba uGwebu. Wawuvumela.

Kanti sekuwukufa kwakhe lokho.

Nabala kwathi ilanga lapho seliya ngomutsha wendoda uDelsie waqonda khona kwaMfundisi lokhu phela wayesethumele kuNkosikazi Thwala wathi ufisa ukumbona ntambama balungise amatikiti nezinye izinto.

Afike uDelsie naye enqenile; engemnandi neze emzimbeni. Kuzwakale nje kuye enhliziyweni ukuthi kukhona okukhona.

Anele ukungena uGwebu amnike isihlalo, ahlale bese uyaqala njalo ukukhuluma. Ekhuluma kancane sengathi uyawabala amazwi onke awakhulumayo; futhi ekhuluma sengathi ufuthelene.

"Miss Moya," esho ehlala phansi embheka. "Ngithi uyazi ukuthi mina kangisiyena umuntu othathekayo yisifazana. Yikho lokho okwenza ngibe impohlo. Ngangizimisele impela ukuthi indaba yothando kayisoze ingene enhliziyweni yami naphakade, ngithi ngangizimisele nje ngoba namhlanje sengehlulekile. Uwena ongahlulile Nkosazana Moya."

Ethuke uDelsie lapho ezwa lokho; amehlo akhe amakhulu abakaze. Aphefumulele phezulu.

"Yebo, nguwe owenze ukuba ngahluleke, ngoba ngiyakuthanda. Ngikuthanda ngothando olwesabekayo oluyiscno."

Aphenduke abheke phandle ngesibuko sendlu. UDelsie ezwe engezwa. Athi ubeka isandla sakhe esifubeni abuye asisuse, kwazise sasivevezela sengathi ugodole. Abone esesukuma esihlalweni engazi ukuthi usukunyiswa yini. Yonke lenkathi amehlo akhe kawabhekile phansi. Kakhophozi. Athe mbe ebusweni bukaGwebu sengathi adonswa okuthile ebusweni bakhe.

"Kakuvumi nje nempela ngikuvumele ubuyele ekhaya ungashongo nawe ukuthi uyangithanda," kububula uGwebu, naye esukuma esondela eduze kukaDelsie. "Lendlela engiqhuba ngayo kangisho ukuthi yinhle. Inengozi, kodwa sekukude phambili sekukude emuva. Okungenani nje sengibheke noma yiliphi izwi olivezayo—khona manje."

"Uthini, Mfundisi?" Kubuza uDelsie.

"Ngithi ngingeke ngiphile ngaphandle kwakho." Asondele ambambe izandla zakhe zombili amsondeze kuye. Avume uDelsie. Athi esavuma ufike umcabango ngamazwi kanina; "Abesilisa izitha zabesifazana."

Ahlehle uDelsie. Ahlehle engahlehli.

"Uthini, Mfundisi?"

Ephinda lona lelo aqale ngalo.

"Kangisho ukuthi uma ungala lapha ngingabuye ngilishumayele kahle ivangeli. Sengikwenze isithombe sami esibaziweyo mntakaMoya."

Ahlehle futhi uDelsie; ashaywe uvalo lapho ezwa amazwi amakhulu kangako. Sekukhanya nakuye manje ukuthi naye uyamthanda uGwebu. Khona lokho nje kumenze washaywa uvalo olukhulu. Afihle ubuso bakhe ezandleni zakhe, akhale. UGwebu ambambe amcindezele esifubeni sakhe, amvuse ikhanda ukuba ambheke.

"Musa ukukhala, Nkosazana," naye selivevezela izwi lakhe. "Musa ukukhala. Uma ngikwonile, ngixolele; musa ukungiqedela ngezinyembezi zakho."

Avume uDelsie ukuba ubuso bakhe obasebumanzi izinyembezi ukuba busondele eduze nobukaGwebu.

"Delsie, kawunginiki themba na?"

"Ngi——ngi——" ahluleke; kodwa aphonse izingalo zakhe entanyeni kaGwebu. UGwebu abeke izindebe zakhe kwezikaDelsie.

Kwaba ukuvumelana kwabo njalo lokho.

Selishonile ilanga. Izinkukhu sezilele. Izinja sezide zivungama nje lapho zizwa abantu bedlula ngendlela. Sekuzwakala kuphela ukuklabalasa kwezinyendle ziqomisana esikhotheni. Kayikho inyanga, seyafa. Kuhlwa ngobumnyama manje. Umoya sewuthule uthe nya, sengathi uzolandelwa isiphepho esikhulu.

Yebo silandele lesosiphepho, kodwa kungesezinhliziyo ezimbili ezazihlangene lapho endlini ngothando. Yiqhude lelo elakhalayo nalo seliphaphama, elabethusayo. Behlukana sengathi bethuswa umuntu engena engangqongqozile emnyango. Bethuke maqede uDelsie ahlale phansi ngokuzintshinga nje esihlalweni bese emboza ubuso ngezandla.

"Ngiyesaba, Mfundisi," ekhihlizela.

"Usholoni ukuthi 'Mfundisi'? Ngibize ngegama lami. Wesabani?"

"Ngesaba wena."

"Wesaba mina? Ukuthini lokho?"

"Gwebu, uyongivikela na ebuthakathakeni bami kuloluthando?" Kubuza uDelsie.

"Ngokuvikela kuze kubesekufeni," kufunga uGwebu, engayiqondisisi nenjongo yamazwi kaDelsie.

"Kulungile-ke, Gwebu," kusho uDelsie, "Kangisesabi."

"Banamathelane futhi . . ."

Ifike inkathi elukhuni. Inkathi yobuthakathaka bukaDelsie. Abheke kuGwebu ukuba amvikele; kube kuyilapho noGwebu engasenawo amandla. Kukho konke lokhukufisa kwakhe unembeza wakhe wawungasemuva engasawuzwa nokuthi uthini. Ngakho kwathi sekufika inkathi yokuba kuvele ubuqhawe bakhe, ubudoda bakhe, ukuhlonipha kwakhe uNkulunkulu wesuka wahluleka. Ukwahluleka kwakhe kwaba ukwahluleka kukaDelsie.

Bawa bobabili.

UDelsie wabuyela kwaNkosikazi Thwala ebusuku eseyisithunzi nje. UDelsie Moya obeye kwaMfundisi Gwebu ntambama esesele khona. Sekuyisithunzi sakhe nje esihambayo.

Zavalwa izikole, wakhwela ezimotweni ezivela

eMbumbulu zaye zamuthi caba eThekwini, wasekhwela isitimela esiqonde eMgungundlovu eselibangise ekhaya.

Izinyembezi zehla ezihlathini zaze zayothi ngci esifubeni sebhantshi, engazesuli. Engasazizwa nokuthi zikhona.

Ziyini izinyembezi ezikhalela osekwenzekile na?

Ziyize leze!

ISAHLUKO 4

IZITHELO ZENKANI

Sithe sifika nje isitimela esiteshini sase-Edendale ntambama kwasekubuthene izingane eziningi nabesifazana abasha esiteshini behlangabeze uDelsie. Sithe sima nje esiteshini babembona, begijima beya kuye.

"Ha! Nanguya uZenzele," basho kanyekanye.

"Usaphila kodwa, Zenzele?"

"Ngisaphila," kuphendula uDelsie ethokozela lokho kubunganyelwa okunjalo. "Nisaphila nina?"

"Sisaphila nathi. He, wazimuka bo."

"Akenibheke izingubo azigqokile. Kazi ngezamalini bandla!"

Bahleke bonke.

Baqoqe impahla yakhe yonke bamethwalela yona, bawela uMsunduze beqonde ekhaya eSiyamu.

Kanti uDelsie uhleka nje kakusahleki yena, kuhleka umlomo nje.

Zihambe izinsuku; ziphenduke amasonto. Amasonto aphenduke inyanga. Inyanga yethwase, ikhule ize iyophela. Kusondele futhi isikhathi sokuba uDelsie abuyele esikoleni, kodwa kungabonakali ukuthi uzo-

buyela. Kubakhanyele abazali ukuthi kukhona okuphethe kabi uDelsie. Abuze uMoya kumkakhe:

"Unani uDelsie?"

"Kangazi nami," kuphendula umkakhe. "Kepha ngiyasola."

"Musa ukusola; qiniseka," kusho uMoya. Kawumbuzi ngani ukuthi uyagula yini?"

Kubenzima lokho kuMaDutshwa, kwazise wayekuzonda kabi ukukhuluma isiminya nendodakazi yakhe. Kodwa kwamelwa ukuba akhulume naye namhlanje, ngoba elokufa kalitsheni. Ayibuze indodakazi yakhe ukuthi kayiphilile yini. Imtshele konke okuyiphethe kabi. Kuthi kawe phansi aquleke uMaDutshwa lapho ezwa lokho; kube kungasasizi lutho. Ambikele uMoya. UMoya athule njengofileyo lapho owakwakhe emenekela ngalelofu elibehleleyo. Isho inhliziyo yakhe ithi, nakhu ekade ngangikusho kumkami lapho ngithi kayale kahle ingane lena, ukuze kuthi mhla ifikelwa yizilingo ikwazi ukuzinqoba. Nakho-ke namhlanje. UMoya akubone ukuphila sekuyize. Ithemba lakhe lonke seliphelile.

Alibone ihlazo selimjamele emehlweni. Abezwe nabantu sebencinzana bodwana lapho bembona: "Nanguya uMoya nokuzazisa okukhulu; kepha intombi yakhe yamthela ngodaka."

Kuthi kazibulale uMoya, umkakhe usede ehwibila izinyembezi nje. Uyakhala. Usesaba nokubheka uDelsie. Usesaba nokubheka uMoya. Zinjalo phela izithelo zenkani. Wabesevuna namhlanje izithelo abekade ezihlwanyela.

Kwathi ngangomuso uMoya wabiza uDelsie; embizela kwelinye ikamelo. Uthe engena nje uDelsie wayebona ukuthi uyise uthukuthele wahluleka nokukhuluma, azizwe uDelsie uqobo lwakhe esembuza uyise.

"Baba, yini?"

UMoya aphenduke abheke uDelsie ngamehlo ahlabayo. Kudlule imizuzwana engakhulumi. Ngalena kwelinye ikamelo sebede bezwa kancane uMaDutshwa eyaluza endlini engenasikhundla. Uthe esuka uMoya wayethi:

"Kangifuni nokukubheka wena," esho kuDelsie. "Ungidumazile. Wazidumaza, wadumaza nesizwe sakini. Lomuzi wakithi omuhle kangaka sewuhlaziswe uwena. Kangifuni nokukubona nje."

"Baba, ngi . . ."

UMoya amphebeze, esathi uyakhuluma.

"Kangifuni nokuzwa izwi lakho ukhuluma. Ngikubize ukuba ngikutshene lokho ukuthi ngiyahamba khona manje; ngiya khona eManzimtoti ngiyobona uMfundisi Gwebu lowo odlale ngengane yami."

UDelsie asondele kuye elinga ukumphatha ngezandla. Kodwa uyise ahlehle, kubesengathi ubona inyoka endleleni. Ahlehle ngamandla.

"Musa ukusondela kimina ngane engcolileyo. Kangifuni ungiphathe. Kade ngangikuvusa ngithi yeka izindlela ezimbi; uzisondeze ezindleleni ezilungileyo. Wacabanga ukuthi ngidlala ngawe. Namhlanje kusile sewuyabona ukuthi ngangiqinisile."

"Pho, Baba, uyokwenzani kuGwebu lokhu kone mina na?"

"Ngiyomfundisa ubuntu, ngimdilizele phansi ehlazweni. Apheze ukuba athi enesikhundla esikhulu kangaka angakwazi ukuzihlonipha. Ahlazise izwi leNkosi."

"Kepha, Baba, kakusikhona ukwenza komKrestu lokho ngoba——"

UMoya athi nyentu umlomo wakhe, amehlo abe evutha ulaka.

"Nguwe lowo ongitshela ngobuKrestu namhlanje? Wena oziphathise okwenja ibuyela emhlanzweni wayo. Suka lapha!"

Asho emdumela ngamandla emlahla ngalena kwetafula. Ashayeke phezu kwesithetshana okwakubekwe kuso izingilazi zamanzi nezinye izitsha ezicwebezelayo zabelungu. Zafa zonke zaba imvuthu, uDelsie afumbeke phansi kube sengathi kuwa usakazana. Awuzwe lowomsindo esekamelweni uMaDutshwa. Eze egijima. Afike abone uMoya esegqunqe esemnyama njengezulu lizowisa amatshe; ingane yakhe iyizinqwaba phansi laphaya. Ashaqeke nje; kodwa abuye asombuluke.

"Moya! Yini?" Asho ekhothama elinga ukuvusa uDelsie. "Uyenzeni ingane yami?"

UMoya abheke isikhathi sakhe, asuke lapho adumele isikhwama sokuhamba aphume. Engathanga vu ngomlomo. Umkakhe abheke futhi indodakazi yakhe.

"Ubaba uthi uya eManzimtoti kuGwebu," kuphendula uDelsie. "Mina ngiyabaleka lapha ekhaya."

"Uthini, Delsie?"

Amphendukele unina uDelsie njengemamba uyinyathela emsileni. Amehlo akhe amakhulu ehla imvula yezinyembezi. Athi:

"Mama uyayazi into eyelwa ubaba eManzimtoti? Uyangibona lapho ngilele khona manje, lapho ngiphonswe khona ubaba! Uzobuya lapho angibulale."

"Suka lapha uzokubulalelani? Uyihlo lona umenza ingane nje."

"Mama," kuphendula uDelsie, ekhuluma sengathi unamalimi, "musa ukukhuluma nami kanjalo. Nginje nje namhlanje kungenxa yakho."

Akhamise umlomo unina, kodwa kungaphumi nelilodwa izwi.

"Ehene kungenxa yakho," kuphinda uDelsie. "Nguwe owehluleka ukungeluleka kahle ungitshele ukuthi intombazana kufanele yenzeni ukuze izivikele ezilingweni zabafana. Wena wawusuke ungitshele amanga odwa uthi umuntu wesilisa uyisitha sowesifazana. Ukhuluma ubheda nje."

"Hawu, Delsie, uthini kimina?"

"Ngiyeke ngikhulume Mama. Esikhundleni sokuba ungihlebele ngokuziphatha kwentombazana nangezilingo eziqondene nayo lapho ikhulayo wasuka wangibheca ngodaka emehlweni."

"Nkosi yami! Ngizwani ezindlebeni zami?"

"Noma uya esontweni ungishiye nje ekhaya; phinde ungicindezele ngihambe nawe. Phinde uhlale nami phansi ungeluleke ngezilingo zobuntombi."

"Iyahlanya lengane, qiniso," kusho unina ebamba ongezansi.

"Kangihlanyi, Mama, ngikhuluma iqiniso olaziyo nawe uqobo lwakho. Ungeke nje usho uthi wake wangeluleka wathini yonke leminyaka ngingaphansi kwesandla sakho. Kepha uyikholwa, uyakhuleka. Ngiyahamba-ke namhlanje."

Asuke aphume ashaye isicabha. Unina wasala wakhihla esikhulu isililo. Usevuna izithelo zokungalaleli izwi lomyeni wakhe. Namhlanje uselahlwa ingane yakhe uqobo, ayethi uyikhulisa kahle uma eyivumela yenza ekuthandayo, engayeluleki ngezilingo ezihaqe abesifazana namhlanje.

UDelsie uyasuka lapho ushayela uMfundisi Gwebu ucingo oluthi nango ubaba eza. Uma ekufica lapho ufile. Baleka, nami ngiyakhwela namhlanje siyohlangana lapho savumelana ukuthi siyohlangana khona

ngezincwadi zethu. Walushaya e-Edendale lolucingo, uMoya eseseMgungundlovu elinde imoto enkulu yakwaHulumeni ezosuka ngokushaya kwesine eMgungundlovu ifinyelele ngokukhala kwesikhombisa eThekwini kusihlwa. Ucingo lwafinyelela kuGwebu ntambama. Wayesazi ukuthi uDelsie umi kabi. Babelobelana phela, bakha amasu okuzihlangula ebubini lobo abasebengene kubo. Lwamfica eselungile. Kazabuza muntu. Nanguya eqonde emgwaqweni omkhulu eseyolindela izimoto ezivela eMbumbulu ziqonde eThekwini. Ayithole masinyane, lokhu phela zisezingingi seziphindela eThekwini. Nanguya esemuka okokuphela eManzimtoti. . . .

NoDelsie walulandela ucingo lwakhe ngokuwela uMsunduze akhwele imoto kwaMalinyana iqonde naye eMgungundlovu. Bahlangane noGwebu esitimeleni esiqonde eGoli esisuka eThekwini kusihlwa sifinyelele eMgungundlovu ngokushaya kweshumi kusihlwa. Izwi lakhe lokugcina kunina uDelsie:

"Ungivalelisele kubaba, Mama. Uthi kangimsoli kakhulu wayekuncenga ethi ngeluleke kwenqabe wena. Ngiqonde eGoli manje. Ngiyofela khona . . . ."

ISAHLUKO 5

UBEN TSHANI

UBen Tshani wabeyinsizwa engende kakhulu; ephakathi nje nomzimba olula, ohlangeneyo. Ubuso lobu, bungobomuntu okade ayebona, ngoba noma babukhomba ukuthi usemusha nokho sebunemithambo eqinileyo. Lokho kukhomba ukuthi igazi lakhe labe selizejwayele izinto ezidungayo. Amehlo akhe emnene,

ethambile. Into ayenamandla kuyo ukugqoka. Wabegqoka izingubo zemali njalo. Kusobala ukuthi usemgangeni wezinsizwa zaseGoli ezaziwa ngokuthi "Abaqhafi. Awokangikhathali." Izinsizwa ongeke uthi lapho uzibona uzicabangele ukuthi zafundiswa ezikoleni abazali abakholwayo.

Kanti zinjalo-ke. NoBen wabenjalo naye. Nalapha eGoli walethwa yikho lokho ukungakhathali ngezinye izinto eziyimpilo nenhlalakahle kwabanye. Lokho kwaza kwamenza wabaleka ekhaya, weza lapha eGoli, kwampunzi idla emini, kwandonga ziyaduma lapho kungayi lubuyayo.

Simbhekisise kahle lomlisa lapha, kwazise sizoxoxa kakhulu ngaye kulendaba yethu. Sithe amehlo akhe ayemnene; yebo ayenjalo, kodwa lapho uwabhekisisa wawungabona ukuthi kawamnene ngokupheleleyo. Kwabe kulokoza ezinhlamvwini zawo umlilo wolaka olukhulu. Amehlo omuntu ongakhathaleli nkobe zamuntu.

Ngalenkathi esimbona ngayo wayehla ngomgwaqo othiwa nguBree Street, eqonde eDoornfontein. Uhamba nje uhwaqabele lapha ebusweni sengathi uthukuthele. Uhamba ekhuluma yedwa okohlanya.

"Ngiphuze kakhulu namhlanje kanti ngisazokuya emdansweni. Kwenziwa ngoba ngizithele ku*brandy*, kade ngamgcina, lokhu besengide ngiphuza amanzi nje otshwala bakwaMasipalati."

Usho njalo uyehla ngomgwaqo lowo, waze wafika engosini yawo nomunye othiwa End Street, wachezuka ngawo wasebuya ehla ngomunye oxhumela kulowo othiwa nguRockey Street.

"Utshwala nesifazana izilingo ezimbi uma ungaziqanhelisisile. Bheka sengidakiwe, kodwa ngisaya kobona izintombi!"

Ngalenkathi wayesengena umgwaqo othiwa uSherwell Street. Uthe esahambe ibanga elincane wase uyangena kwelinye ijalidi. Aqonde endlwaneni elapho, afike angqongqothe emnyango angene. Angene bese uziphonsa esihlalweni esasiseduze kwomlilo.

"Yini, Ben?" Kubuza owesifazana owayehlezi yedwana lapho endlini. Igama lakhe uNkosikazi Mavila.

"Kakulutho."

"Kakulutho? Ingani bewuthe uzofika lapha noGladys besesihamba sobathathu siye emdansweni?"

Anxaphe uBen.

"Ngikusho lokho ngingabuzanga elangeni, mntakwethu," kuphendula uBen, amehlo akhe amnene esephenduke ababomvu.

Ingaphenduli lentokazi. Isukume iqonde engosini yendlu lapho kwakuhlala khona amalahle ngesaka elikhulu. Ithi phuthaphutha kulo, ibuye seyiphethe igabha elincane likagologo. Athathe ingilazi encane bese ethi chatha kuyo ithamo elizwakalayo ayinikeze uBen.

"Phuza bese ungitshena ukuthi unani nje wena namhla."

Athathe ayithi khehle uBen, azakhothe nezindebe zomlomo.

"Phela uGladys ungalile izolo."

"Uthini?"

"Ngaxoshwa nasemsebenzini," kusho uBen. "Yikho lokho enginakho Lizzie mntakwethu. Okunye futhi enginakho ukudakwa."

UNkosikazi Mavila akhamise umlomo nje. Ngumuntu obukekayo osentangeni yeminyaka engamashumi amabili nomuvo. Unomzimba omuhle kakhulu okhule ngesingezansi. Ikhanjana leli lithe mpo phezu kwentamo encane.

Uvuleke umlomo wakhe.

"Uthi uGladys ukwalile? Waxoshwa nasemsebenzini?"

"Uzwile," kubhodla uBen. "UGladys uthe engala wayeseqome inhlwenga elisebenza ekhishini ePakithawini. Okungixoshe emsebenzini yikuba kuthe ngisathukutheliswe yilokho, umlungu wami wasuke wathi kimi "Jim!" Ngamtshela ngathi, "UJim, izindlebe zakho."

"Ben!"

"Mina kangizange ngibizwe ngumlungu athi nginguJim sengathi ngiyinkengane. Saxabana-ke naye, wasengixosha."

"Yimihlola lena engiyizwayo, Ben," kuphendula uNkosikazi Mavila. "Kepha okungimangalisayo ukuthi uGladys ukwalile. UGladys lona okuvume ngesonto elidlule wathi uyokufa nawe."

"Phela siyesithi lapho sisola ukuziphatha kwezintombi ezifundisiwe kuthiwe sidlala ngazo. UGladys ungala nje ngoba eshelwa yinkilimane lona elizomgqokisa, limondle, lihlale naye endlini njengomfazi walo. Ligijime naye imidanso. Uliqome lisamkhulumise kanye, Lizzie. Angithi uyezwa? Lisasho kanye lathi ngiyakuthanda."

"Pho, uzokwenzenjani manje?" Kubuza uLizzie amehlo akhe ebakaza, esengenwe ukuzwela uBen, ishende lakhe.

"Uyafuna ukuya emdansweni?" kubuza uBen.

"Ngiye kanjani emdansweni sekonakele konke nje?"

"Sizohamba nawe, Lizzie, noma ngazi ukuthi uma esifica lapho uMavila kokufa gula linamasi."

UNkosikazi Mavila ahleke ngamhlophe qhwa. Besethi:

"Umyeni wami kakho lapha edolobheni ngalenyanga. Uhambe namasampula baqonda eThekwini naseKoloni. Wobuya ngoNowa, mntakwethu."

"Kulungile-ke; gqoka sihambe. Angifuni ukuphutha kulomdanso, ngoba ngizwa nasegazini lami ukuthi uGladys nenkilimane lakhe bazobebekhona. Ngifuna ukulibona kahle lelinkengane kengixoxe nalo kancane nje.

Lawamazwi awakhiphe ngezwi elipholile uBen kubesengathi uyadlala, kanti qha ayengafani nephimbo lomlomo. Amehlo akhe ayesegcwele inzondo nobubi bodwa. Uma uNkosikazi Mavila kwakungomunye umuntu ongazejwayele izigigaba wabeyokwenqaba ukuhamba aye emdansweni nomuntu osonge ngendlela enjalo. Wabeyokwesaba. Kodwa noma uvalo lwamshaya uNkosikazi Mavila, nokho ukuthanda ukuyodansa nokuyobukwa izinsizwa emdansweni omkhulu kangako, kwamenza azimisele ukuya. Wagqoka wahamba noBen ishende lakhe baya khona emdansweni.

Ivelakanci lomdanso.

Abantu benyathelana ubuningi. Indlu lena ihlotshiswe ngobucwazicwazi bezimbali zemibalabala. Izibani zikagesi zihlotshiswe ukuba zikhanye kubesengathi kulufifi. Zingathi bha.

Pho-ke bazibulele ngempahla abantwana babantu! Bedle okuvuza amanzi. Izintombi zaseAfrika zevathe eziveza imihlane nezifuba, ezimikhono ifinyelele ezindololwaneni. Izingubo ezilulana kodwa ezithe ne emzimbeni, ziwuveze njengoba unjalo ukubunjwa kwawo. Ezinye zalezizintombi zigcobe amafutha abomvu ebusweni ezihlathini okwezabelungu. Zawagcoba futhi ezindebeni zemilomo zicela amehlo phela ezinsizweni. Izintombi eziningi ezihamba imidanso kade zaphuma emagobolondweni okuhlonipha nokuba

namahloni phambi kwesilisa. Seziziceleia amehlo ngodli ezamanje, kudlule kungabindaba zalutho.

Zabe zinjalo-ke ngalobobusuku bomdanso oyivelakanci, ingaka nje eGoli. Indlu igcwele, kungekho ndawo yokudansa, bede besunduzana nje abantu lapho bethi bayadansa.

Nazo izinsizwa zidle onokusho bemisiko yemali. Into eyabe isobala kuzo naseningini lezintombi ukuthi zabe zimnandi ngaphakathi zifudumele zonke kwazise zazithe qhabu ingilazi.

Isifazana notshwala!

Kuthe kusenjalo kumnandi konke bese ishilo imintshingo yakwabo:

"Ngikhumbul'umam'eDikathole! Ngikhumbul'umam'-eDikathole!"

Zigonane izingane zabantu lapho sezizululeka. Isihlathi sesithe ne kwesinye. Izifuba sezihlangene, amehlo esebhekene ngokulangazelelana. Umoya sewuthule uthe nya ngaphandle, lokhu phela sekuphakathi kobusuku. Kakukhali nja ngaphandle. Inyanga kuphela eyabisibusa ngalenkathi, kwazise isibhakabhaka sabe siluhlaza sifana nolwandle. Kungekho nelilodwa ifu leli. Umoya upholile ufudumele kahle. Endlini . . .

"Ngikhumbul'umam'eDikathole! Ngikhumbul'umam'eDikathole!" kukhala izinsimbi zabelungu ezibanga umunyu lapho sebezishaya abazaziyo.

Zishaye ziqede izinsimbi. Baphole abantu, uBen noLizzie nabo baphole. Baqale manje abantu ukubhekana, sebethola ithuba phela. Izihlalo lezi zibekwe zencika ezindongeni zendlu, zahamba nazo izindonga, ukuze lapha phakathi kusale inkundla yokudansa. Lapho sebehlezi-ke babhekane bonke, abangaphesheya nabanganeno. Amehlo kaNkosikazi Mavila anamathele

ebusweni bentokazi ngaphesheya. Bese ephenduka ekhuluma noBen.

"Uyayibona leyantokazi egqoke ezivuzayo, ehlezi eduze kwaleyandoda esengathi inempandla?"

UBen abheke ngalapho uNkosikazi Mavila ekhomba ngakhona ngamehlo.

"Yebo, ngiyayibona. Yanhle bo!" kusho uBen amehlo akhe enamathele mbe ebusweni obuhle baleyo-ntombi.

Amamatheke uLizzie.

"Igama layo nguDelsie Moya; kodwa waziwa ngokuthi nguNkosikazi Gwebu."

Ethuke uBen.

Bashadile noGwebu lowo?"

"Qha! Bahlezi nje ndawonye."

"Ngifisa kabi ukumazi uNkosazana Moya. Ungengazise kuye, Lizzie?" Kuncenga uBen.

"Ngizolinga noma nginovalo."

"Uvalo lwani, Lizzie?"

"Kangithandi nazane."

Anxaphe uBen. Okhele usikilidi athi esadonse kabili awulahle phansi. Kubesobala ukuthi ubuhle bukaDelsie sebumbulele.

"Uthi kawenziwa yisikhwele nje, Lizzie?"

Uthe esabheke impendulo kuLizzie zasho futhi izinsimbi zabelungu. Asukume uLizzie abize uBen.

"Woza sidanse mntakwethu. Woza, Woza!" Asho evula izingalo zakhe.

Asukume uBen; kodwa amehlo akhe esanamathele kuDelsie. . . . Bazululeke, bazululeke. . . . Ngalenkathi uLizzie wabesedansa uyazibulala. Sengathi usedansa okokugcina. Wayesebonile ukuthi uBen usethathekile nguDelsie.

Kwafika enhliziyweni yakhe ukuthi uDelsie lowo

uzoba imbangi yakhe. Usedansa kanje nje sekuwukulwa kwokuzidela kowesifazana esebona amthandayo ephuncuka ezandleni zakhe.

Wadansa ngomzimba ngamehlo nangenhliziyo yonke yakhe, ethi wenzela ukuba uBen akhohlwe nguDelsie acabange ngaye kuphela.

Kanti ushaye phansi.

Bathe ukuba bahlale phansi futhi, uBen wazimisela ukusuka aye kuDelsie, afike amcele ukuba badanse naye. Phela uBen wabeseshisa, ugologo sewubila ekhanda. Engasakhathali. Uthe lapho ethi uyasukuma nje kwangena insizwa yaqonda kuDelsie imamatheka.

Azizwe uBen esethi, "Inja leya!"

Ethuke uLizzie ngoba phela ubengasazi ukuthi uhlezi noBen yonke imicabango kaBen isingakuDelsie. Abuze. "Ubani inja, Ben?"

"Ngisho lowamuntu osehlezi ecaleni kukaNkosazana Moya," asho amehlo akhe esebheje ebomvu.

"Nguye-ke lowo uThomas Gwebu indoda kaNkosazana Moya," kuphendula uLizzie. 'Naye uThomas lowo kakumuntu walutho, Ben. Bayeke lababantu uma ungathandi ukulimala."

Asukume, abuye ahlale futhi uBen.

"Musa ukuzenza isilima, Ben," kusho uNkosikazi Mavila. "Kodwa iyini lentombazana kuwe? Ungathi usayibone okokuqala bese uze uyigxumele kangaka? Mina uthini ngami? Ingani ngikunika amathuba amaningi lapho umyeni wami engekho? Namhla sewuyangilahla, ugijimela abanye?"

UBen abone ukuthi uma ezixabanisa noLizzie uzobe uzibulele, besecela uxolo.

"Ngixolele, Lizzie," esho emphathaphatha. "Kakulutho; ngenziwa ukuphuza kakhulu. Woza sidanse."

Bazululeke . . . . bazululeke.

Kuthe kusenjalo, lapho bonke ababedansa sebezinikela entokozweni leyo. Lapho izinsimbi zabelungu sezishaya umunyu lapho sekungathi bandiza emoyeni abantwana babantu, kwasuka esibi isidumo. . . Kwathula umoya.

Sekusuka enkulu impi endlini. Izinsizwa ezimbili sezibambene ngezihluthu. Zilwela ukufa. Kwafa zihlalo, kwafa zibuko zendlu, zaphihlizana ngamanqindi, sezibomvu igazi. Zibuye zidumelane. Zimuhluzane ngamakhanda. Izingubo lezo zemali sezifana nezidwedwe. Kakho olamulayo. Esikhundleni salokho bayabaqhatha uqobo. Nabesifazana bayaqhatha. Bayahleka lapho omunye ewa phansi. Phela into enkulu lena kulababantu. Iyathandwa futhi yejwayelekile.

Kuthe kusenjalo awe phansi omunye. Athi esawe phansi, abese ephezu kwakhe omunye. Kanti usekhipha ummese. Kamukho owabona ukuthi wawukhipha nini, wawuvula nini. Into nje bawubona sewehla wehlela kulowo olele phansi. . . .

"Mbambeni bo!" Kusho izwi lowesifazana. Lasho kwabanda esiswini. "Mbambeni bo, uzomgwaza!" Engakaligwinyi! Ummese ungene esifubeni.

Sisuke isidumo. Banyathelane ngezinyawo sebeqonde emnyango. Khona lapho kuselubhici olunjalo, indlu ibemnyama sekucinywe izibani.

Ngayo yonke lenkathi yobhudubhudu intombazana leyo eyahlaba umkhosi yathi "Mbambeni bo!" yabisakhonkobele khona lapho eduze kwalowo ogwazwayo. Seyahluleka nokunyakaza uvalo. Bagijima nje beqana, bewisana, beqa phezu kwayo. Ithe isekulesosimo yezwa izwi eduze kwayo linyenyenza.

"Delsie, woza siphume. Sheshisa!"

Yethuke.

"Ubani lona okhulumayo?"

"Yimina, Thomas."

"Hawu! kanti kawufanga, Thomas, mntakwethu?"

"Thula wena," kuphendula uThomas. "Woza siphume."

Banyonyobe baze baphumele ngaphandle. UDelsie amphathaphathe uThomas kubesengathi uyaphupha.

"Kakubulalanga, mntakwethu?" Ebuza ngezwi elivevezelayo.

"Ngisindile," kuphendula uThomas, "kodwa ungigwaze kabi. Akuzwe nawe. . . "

UDelsie afake isandla phakathi kwehembe, ezwe isandla sesimanzi igazi.

"Nkosi yami! Igazi!"

"Ehene, igazi lami lelo. Ligobhoza nje kungenxa yakho."

"Uthini uThomas bandla?" Kubuza uDelsie evula amehlo akhe athi nge.

"Uthi nginani? Angikubonanga uqabula uSamson phambi kwabantu abangakaya?"

Bayahamba njalo behla ngoEloff Street, baqonde ngasedolobheni.

"Musa ukubanesikhwele, mntakwethu. Kanti kawungethembi yini?"

"Kangikwethembi yini; lapho ubuwenzani wena? Uyazi ukuthi ngingakushaya khona manje mina!" Esethukuthele evutha uThomas.

Asibone isiphosiso sakhe uDelsie azicelele uxolo kumntakwabo.

"Ngixolele phela mntakwethu. Bengingazi ukuthi ungibonile. Bengizidlalela nje ngenziwa ubumnandi beculo leliya ebelishaywa izinsimbi." Amehlo akhe afuze akanina uMaDutshwa lapho esezincengela.

Luphole ulaka lukaThomas lapho ebona amehlo amahle kangako esegcwele izinyembezi. Bese ethi nje.

"Delsie zibheke. Kangifuni kuthi sesingene ezinhluphekweni ezingaka sibuye sixabane sodwa, sixabaniswe yize."

Bathule bobabili. Baqinise ezinyaweni.

"Ungigwazile uSamson, uyezwa? Ngiyopha." Kusho uThomas. Bahambe ngamandla futhi. Kanti bahamba nje bakhona ababalandelayo.

Beqa imigwaqo nje beqonde ekhaya izithunzi lezo ezibalandelayo zibeke kancane nazo emva kwabo. Bathe lapho befika engosini kaEloff noMarshall base bethatha uMarshall, umgwaqo odlula eduze kwasenkundleni enkulu yamaphoyisa nabaseshi. Bahamba njalo ngawo beqonde eMaleyi Kamu, baze bafika lapho behlala khona endaweni eyivungu. Kulapho-ke babehlala khona uGwebu noDelsie, okwendoda nomkayo. Yonke lendlela bahamba nje bayabalandela qho labobantu. Baphume nabo emdansweni babeka njalo emva kwabo. Bathe lapho bengena nje eyadini lelo elabe limnyama bhuqe ngaphakathi sengathi kakuhlali muntu kulo, sengathi kuhlala izingulube. Abantu bahlala beminyene njengezinhlanzi ethinini. Leliyadi linamakamelo amahlanu ngaphakathi, lilinye lihlala umuzi. Baqonde kwelinye lawo. Wangena yedwa uThomas, uDelsie wadlulela engosini yeyadi lelo eya endlini encane.

Kanti ngawo lowomzuzwana nje behlukana noThomas Gwebu sekuwukwahlukana kokuphela. Kabasewubuye babonane ngalamehlo asemhlabeni.

Uthe lapho uGwebu engena nje ekamelweni labo ethi uyaphenduka uvala isicabha basebemdumela labobantu ababili ebebekade bebalandela. Uthe ethuka base bephezu kwakhe. Uvalo lumuthi heqe, kuyilapho kungasekho nasikhathi sokuphefumula. Izwi alikhulumayo wathi nje, "Hawu, madoda, yini?"

Kwabakuphela njalo; kalikhiphanga elinye base bemlahla phansi njalo bobabili. Omunye wasekhipha ummese emgwaza. Wamgwaza wamjuqa.

Lithe lapho igazi seligobhoza nomphefumlo wakhe uGwebu wezwakala esethi:

"Kanti nguwe lona, Samson? Ungibulalela intombi yami ngoba ngenqabe uyiphoqa? Kawudelanga ukungigwaza emdansweni, sewungilandela ukuba uzongiqedela endlini yami? Nawe awuzukulunga, mfowethu." Washo efa.

Uthe ukuba agcine ngalelo basebesikhaphezela laphaya isidumbu sakhe beshaya utshani. Konke lokhu kwenzeka ngomzuzwana omncane; futhi akuzwakalanga neze ngisho nezwi lodwa leli lokukhala. Bathe besithela wayephuma uDelsie endlini encane eza kweyakhe; akazi ukuthi sekwenzeke inhlekelele lapha endlini. Eze, athi eseseduze nje ashaywe uvalo ebona kusemnyama endlini. Kufike kuye ukuthi mhlawumbe uGwebu uqulekile enziwa ukopha kakhulu kwenxeba. Lumqede lolovalo, aziphonse esicabheni asivule. Asivule maqede sibuyele naye ngaphakathi. Ezwe unyawo lunyathela isidumbu sikaGwebu. Atshenwe inhliziyo ukuthi ngumuntu lowo amnyathelayo. Uvalo lumcande kabili ame nje.

Kanti usephethwe isiyezi, sekuthi makawe. Athi uyaziqinisa kwale. Ezwe amehlo egcwala inkungu, inhliziyo iduduzela ngamakhulu amandla. Aphele umoya. Uthe ukuba aqabuke kulobobuhlungu ezwe ulimi selusombuluka esememeza.

"Maye babo! Ngafa!" bese efumbeka phansi, esequleka. . . .

. . . . .

Sizobuyela emdansweni manje ukuze siyothatha eminye imikhondo yalendaba esale khona. Sizomshiya

lapho uDelsie Moya nesidumbu sikaGwebu, uThomas Gwebu owaqala kahle kakhulu indlela yobuntu, kanti uzokufa ngommese eGoli, egwazwa yizimbangi.

Kuzovela ukuthi kanti noBen Lutshani wayeseduze nabo ngalowomzuzu.

Kuthe lokhu uGwebu noDelsie baphuma emdansweni izibani zisacinyiwe, kanti zizobuye zokhelwe masinyane sebehambile. Sezokhelwa umninindlu yomdanso naye esevuswe ebuthongweni umsindo lowo owabe ususengozini yokubiza *oPick Up* bazobuza ukuthi kwenze njani. Afike maqede akhanyise, ancenge onhloko kayivuthwa ukuba bamhloniphe bayeke umsindo. Qha, bezwe nabo, bese umsindo uphela. Uqhubeke futhi umdanso.

UBen noLizzie babesankonkothelene njalo, baze bahlukaniswa ukukhanya kwezibani. Zithe ukuba zikhanye nje uBen wayiqothula yonke indlu ngamehlo efuna uDelsie Moya. Phinde ambone. Kwabayinqaba nje ukuba lokho kumenze uBen anengwe yikho konke okwabe kusemdansweni. Ezwe esefisa ukuhamba naye. Inhliziyo ikhale impela ithi makaphume ngaso lesosikhathi ahambe. Ezwe elunywa izinyawo zithi, hamba! hamba! hamba!

Abheke uLizzie nobuhle bakhe obusekelwe amakha namafutha abelungu, ezwe engasabuthandi nalobobuhle, esedonswa ubuhle obabusengobemvelo bukaDelsie. Budonsa buthi, "Ngilandele! Ngilandele! Ngilandele!"

Ezwe esethi kuNkosikazi Mavila. "Lizzie, ngiyahamba manje."

ULizzie abakaze nje ome umlomo. "Uhamba uyaphi, Ben?" "Ngiyakolala ekhaya. Kakuvumi ngihlale lapha manje."

Aphukule umlomo uLizzie athi: "Kakuvumi uhlale ngoba uMiss Moya esehambile?"

"Qha, kakunjalo," kuphika uBen. "Langiyini naye? Ngiyahamba nje ngoba kade kulwiwa; inhliziyo yami isiyimbi."

"Mina-ke? Uzongishiya lapha ngedwa?" "Asihambe phela," kusho uBen. Kubelukhuni lokho kuLizzie umuntu wemidanso. Anqikaze.

"Uyabona, Lizzie," kusho uBen. "Ngiyahamba mina manje. Kukhona okungidonsayo okuthi mangihambe khona manje."

Akhamise uLizzie ethi uyaphendula kodwa amnqume ulimi uBen. "Kangilandeli yena uNkosazana Moya. Bengizomlandela nje ngiyamazi khona ukumazi? Ngiyahamba ngoba kuthi mangihambe. Kuphela nje."

Baphumele phandle; bese uBen emsondeza eduze kwakhe uNkosikazi Mavila emanga. Yathi cosololo inhliziyo kaLizzie lapho eseqatshulwa. Wasethi:

"Uma ungishiya, Ben, ubozongilanda phela ngemoto ekuseni."

Avumele phezulu uBen enzela ukuzikhulula. Bese-ke bevalelisana, ehamba uBen.

Kazi ukuthi uyaphi, uzwa kuthi kahambe nje. Uthe esahambe ibangana elincane ahlangane noSam Montsi, umngane wakhe insizwa yomSuthu. Abuze uMontsi.

"Yini ngalesisikhathi, wethu? Uyaphi?"

"Ngiyakolala, mfana."

"Uyakolala? Ngalenkathi? Umdanso kuyikhathi uzobamnandi kangaka?"

"Kwalile ukuba ngihlale Montsi, emva kwempi leya."

"Bekulwiwa yini?" Kubuza uMontsi.

"Bagwazene."

"Khona emdansweni?"

"Yebo; kubangwa isifazana, intombi enhle ngokumangalisayo Montsi."

"Amaphoyisa?"

"Nelilodwa. Zithe zikhanyiswa nezibani basebenyamalele labo akade belwa; kakusikhathi eside kwenzekile lokho."

Acabange ingcosana uMontsi wasethi:

"Mina nasi isihluthulelo sendlu yami. Hamba uyolala khona, ngifuna sixoxe ekuseni lapho ngifika. Mina ngisaya khona emdansweni lowo. Kukude eSofaya ulapha nje, ungeke ufinyelele khona manje."

Asithathe isihluthulelo uBen engazi ukuthi usithathelani nje. Bahlukane.

Nanguya uBen ehamba ngamakhulu amandla ngawo lowomgwaqo othiwa nguMarshall eseqonde lapho kuhlala khona uMontsi. Kanti uMontsi lona uhlala kulo iyadi uqobo lelo okuhlala kulo uDelsie noGwebu.

Uthe engena nje eyadini wabehlangana namadoda amabili ebaleka, ephuma ngaphakathi. Kanti yiwona lawa agwaze uGwebu. Amgudluzela ecalcni, anyamalale ebusuku. Athi uBen esakhohliwe ukuthi ingabe izigebengu yini lezo ezwe izwi lowesifazana liqandula.

"Maye babo! Ngafa!"

Alizwe liphuma endlini eseduze kwaleyo kaMontsi abeqonde kuyo. Alizwe libanda esiswini. Kufike kuye ukuthi lelizwi lesililo liphuma kumuntu ogetshengwa yilababantu ababili ahlangane nabo bebaleka. Pho, uBen wabeyinsizwa enesibindi ekade yabibona. Umgovu omdala waseGoli. Angabesabuza, aphonseke lapho isililo sivela ngakhona. Adumele isicabha asivule athi lapho engena akhubeke awe phansi. Kanti ukhutshwa isidumbu sikaDelsie Moya.

Avuke sengathi uvuswa ngempama. Okhele umentshisi abone ikhandlela etafuleni. Alokhele.

Athi qalaqala endlini abone intombi idindilizile phansi, ayinyakazise, ayiphephethe. Dukuduku iphaphame, isukume ime ngezinyawo. Ithi bhadabhada sengathi idakiwe, ayibambe alinge ukuyihlalisa phansi.

Pho, injani ingubo. Ingubo leyo kasilika abeyigqokile ingasabonakali igazi. Izinwele sezisombuluke zonke. Iphenduke ibheke ngakuye athi esayibhekisisa, umoya uvunguze ngaphandle uze ungene ngomnyango ucime nesibani.

Aphuthaze esikhwameni efuna umentshisi ngesandla esiqhaqhazelayo. Awuthole okhele futhi isibani. Avale isicabha. Aphenduke athi lapho ephenduka athi ngqwa ubuso nobuso nalentombi.

"Habe! imihlola yani yona lena? Ubani lo?"

Akhamise umlomo uBen ngoba lentombi useyibonile nguDelsie Moya—nguDelsie Moya! Ezwe inhliziyo ishaya ngamandla kubesengathi ibaselwe.

Abuye ambheke, kodwa abone ukuthi amehlo akaDelsie abheke phansi, ngaphansi kwetafula. Kawabhekile njengamehlo omuntu, ajamele, agqolozile. Agcwele inkungu yovalo. Ezwe naye sekuthi kabheke lapho kugqolozele khona uDelsie. Abheke! Abheke kanye kabili ome umlomo.

Asibone isidumbu sikaGwebu, insizwa leyo ayibona iqonda kuDelsie emdansweni, ngenkathi esethi uya kuye naye, uyomcela ukuba badanse naye uDelsie. Insizwa athi uNkosikazi Mavila isoka likaDelsie elihlala naye. Nansi manje ifile!

Nangu noDelsie ecishe wafa. . . Yimihlola mini nje lena?

ISAHLUKO 6

ITHUNZI LOKUFA

Bathi abadala ukufa, "kudla fumuka, kudla silaza," kepha kakwejwayeleki. Kepha phezu kwalokho kwenzeka mihla yonke kakujwayeleki. Kuthi khona ukufa kokuzuma kwesabeka ngokumangalisayo. UBen Lutshani wabengesiye umuntu okwesabayo ukufa. Ubungwenya bakhe eGoli basebumenze agudlane nokufa izikhathi eziningi, engasakwazi nokuthi kuyini. Kodwa lokhu kwanamuhla kukaThomas Gwebu kwamqeda nya amandla. Okwabangela lokho yingoba uGwebu lona babekade benaye emdansweni ngaso lesosikhathi; ephilile, ehleka, edansa nabantu bonke. UGwebu lona futhi wabesondelene ngenhlalo noDelsie Moya owabefiswa nguye uBen.

UBen wayengazi ukuthi uDelsie lowo umlangazelela kangako nje, uzohlangana naye khona ngalobobusuku. Azizwe esemanzi uBen kubesengathi unethwe imvula. Kungelona uvalo lodwa olwenza lokho, kodwa kuwukwethuka nokumangala. Azithuntuthe kubesengathi inja kade isemanzini. Bese uyaphenduka ebheka uDelsie.

"Uwe lona, Nkosazana Moya?"

Ethuke uDelsie ezwa umuntu angamaziyo embiza ngegama.

"Ungubani wena?" Asho abambe umlomo sengathi ufuna ukukhala. "Ungubani wena? Ufunani lapha?"

UBen athi uyaphendula imchilizele ecaleni intombazana isondele esidumbini somufi. Ithi:

"UGwebu lona ulaleleni lapha phansi?" Ibuza kuBen sengathi seyilahlekelwe ingqondo.

Akhothame uBen amboze isidumbu ngengubo. "Ufile lomuntu, Nkosazana Moya."

"Ufile? Uthini uma usho njalo? Ubulewe ubani? Ngitshele. Wena ungubani?"

Kubesobala kuBen ukuthi ingqondo kaDelsie kayiphelele kahle. UGwebu ufile! UGwebu lona oyisithandwa sakhe ababaleka naye ekhaya beza lapha eGoli, ngoba bezofihla ihlazo labo. UGwebu owabeyikho konke kuye, nguye lona olele phansi laphaya eseyisidumbu!

Akhothame uDelsie asisho isililo esikhulu. Amyeke uBen ukuba akhale, ukuze inhliziyo iphole. Akhale, akhale, akhale, kuze kome amehlo. Akhulume uBen manje.

"Nkosazana Moya, kuzofuneka ngiyobikela amaphoyisa masinyane ngalomhlola, umthetho usho njalo, uthi uma ufunyanisa isidumbu noma ingozi embi, gijima uyibike emaphoyiseni."

Athule uDelsie kubesengathi kezwanga.

Umoya phandle sewuqala ukuvunguza ngamandla lokhu nezulu kwakusengathi liyaphendula. Usho umoya waseGoli sewuvunguza sengathi indlu leyo izophephuka. Selihlome selimnyama ngasempumalanga. Umbani uqale ukubaneka ngokuphazima kweso ulandelwa ukuduma okubi sengathi kudubula isibhamu. Ubenyezele umbani ulikhanyise lonke iyadi lelo elimnyama. Ushaye endlini abakuyo sengathi uthunywe ukuba nawo uyokonakalisa phakathi.

UBen ancenge futhi esebona ukuthi izulu liyeza nokuthi isikhathi siyahamba.

"Nkosazana Moya, ziqinise, mntakababa. Uhlale khona lapha endlini; ngisaya emaphoyiseni ngiyowa-

bikela lomhlola singaze sibenecala. Kodwa, Nkosazana Moya, uthi uma bengiyisigebengu ngabe ngiyazihlupha kangaka ngingakwazi nokukwazi?"

"Maye! Ngizokwenzenjani?" Kububula uDelsie. "Amaphoyisa azongibopha uma efika lapha."

"Angeke akubophele ize amaphoyisa, Nkosazana. Ngiyawazi kade ngahlala lapha eGoli."

Ahambe-ke aqonde eMarshall Square, abuye nawo amaphoyisa nodotela wakwaHulumeni.

Afike udotela asihlole isidumbu ukuze asibone ukuthi ufe nini, kanjani. Athi angasihlola athi kumseshi omkhulu owayephethe lelocala:

"Kasikabandi isidumbu. Ngiyabona ukuthi ufe ngehora leshumi nambili ebusuku."

Ngalenkathi kwase sekubuthene abantu abakhe lapho ejalidini, bemi bebukela.

Abaseshi babheke engosini yendlu befuna abakufunayo. Bese bebuzisisa kudotela wakwaHulumeni. "Inxeba linjani dotela elimbulele?" "Libi kabi," kuphendula udotela. "Lijulile kakhulu."

"Angabe uzibulele noma qha?" "Ekubukeni kwami ukuma kwalo kakusilona neze inxeba lokuzibulala."

"Kanjani?" "Ngoba lingaphansi kwobambo lwesihlanu ohlangothini lwesinxele. Kulukhuni kakhulu ukuba umuntu azigwaze inxeba elinjalo ngisho angabayinxele."

Aqede-ke udotela. Abaseshi basibheke isidumbu, basihlolisise. Bathathe izifanekiso zokuma kwaso nezendlu nezenxeba. Balinganise ibanga kusukela lapho silele khona nomnyango. Benze yonke inkithinkithi lena eyenziwayo lapho kuhlolwa icala elibi kangakho. Bathe bangaqeda sathathwa isidumbu leso ngemoto

yakwaHulumeni sayiswa endlini yezidumbu engaseduze kwejele labesifazana entabeni.

Baqale-ke abaseshi ukubuza sonke isimo sendaba kuDelsie nakuBen. "Uwena obuhamba nalomuntu?" Kubuza umseshi kuDelsie.

"Yebo, Mnumzana."

"Ake ulande phela ukuthi beniphi kwenzenjani. Uqaphe amazwi akho ungazibophi ngolimi lwakho."

UDelsie akhothe umlomo, abesethi:

"Besisemdansweni sobabili. Kuthe khona lapho uGwebu lona baxabana nenye insizwa khona emdansweni, balwa kabi kakhulu. Leyonsizwa yagwaza uGwebu."

"Bekubangwani?" Kubuza umseshi.

"Kangazi ngoba balwe ngisayophuza itiye," kusho uDelsie eqamba amanga.

"Lowomuntu abaxabane naye emdansweni uyamazi?"

"Qha. Bengiqala ngqa ukumbona izolo."

"Unjani ebusweni?"

"Into eyangenza ngimbhekisise kahle amehlo akhe," kuphendula uDelsie. "Abebomvu efana negazi. Ehlaba njengawenyoka."

"Babengabangi wena nje?" Kubuza umseshi.

Akhophoze uDelsie athi ukunqikaza. Kodwa aphike. Abuze umseshi ukuthi emva kwempi leyo kwenzekani.

Aqhubeke uDelsie futhi. "Kuthe kusemnyama saphuma eholweni seza lapha ekhaya." "Naningalandelwa muntu?" "Qha asibonanga muntu esilandela."

"Lomuntu owayelwa noGwebu kazange amsongele?"

"Kangizwanga ngoba ngafika sebebambene. Nangemva kokuba esemgwazile kangibange ngisa-

mbona. Sithe ukuba sifike lapha uGwebu wayongena lapha endlini mina ngadlulela endlini encane laphaya engosini yeyadi. Kangihlalanga isikhathi eside, ngithe ngibuya ngahlangana nabantu ababili bephuma begijima. Ngaqonda lapha endlini. Ngithe ngithi ngiyangena ngangizithela phezu kukaGwebu ese———ese——— esefile?"

Azibambe izinyembezi seziwohloka. "Kawuzwa-nga msindo wokuxokozela nokuwa kwento efana nesidumbu somuntu." "Qha, Mnumzane."

"Wasewenzani-ke?"

"Ngamemeza ngathi, Maye babo! Ngasengiquleka emva kwalokho. Ngithe ngiphaphama kulesosihlwathi ngabona lomfowethu esesendlini."

Bathande ukuzwa kuye uBen abaseshi ukuthi uze athi abelapho nje endlini kwakwenze njani.

Qha alande kahle konke umfo kaLutshani enge-nqene lutho phela yena, ngoba azi ukuthi amaphoyisa angeke nje asimze ambophe engenzanga lutho kuwona.

"Nami bengikhona emdansweni ngababona labo-bantu belwa. Kanganaka nje ngoba ngingazi noyedwa kubona. Futhi nokulwa lokhu kusegazini kubantu bakithi abayizinhlanya."

"Ungasitshela ukuthi wayenjani lowomuntu owayelwa nalendoda?"

"Qha, banumzane; ngoba njengoba sengishilo ngathi kanginakanga nje kakhulu. Kodwa amehlo akhe angithatha impela ngoba abebomvu klubhu. Into nje ngithi mhlawumbe yinkilimani noma yiShangane ngoba ngamuzwa ekhuluma nomunye wakubo ngezilimi ezishwabeneyo.

Sahlala thina sonke lapho emva kokucinywa kwezibani. Kuthe sezikhanyisiwe ngabona umufi lona nayo lentokazi uNkosazana Moya bengasekho.

"Uyazi kanjani igama layo ningazani nje?" Kubuza omunye umseshi.

"Ngayizwa ngaso lesosikhathi ngiqala ukubabona ngitshenwa ngenye inkosazana eyisihlobo sami, ngoba ngangifisa kakhulu ukumazi loNkosazana. Kuthe lapho sebengekho emdansweni nazo lezozinsizwa engithi zabe zikhuluma olunye ulimi sezingekho, ngezwa ngifikelwa isifiso esimangalisayo sokuba ngihambe.

Kwala esenqaba ethini lowo engangihamba naye, kodwa ngaze ngaphuma. Ngithe ngisendleleni ngathi nqwamanqwa nomhlobo wami okwathi emva kokuxoxa ngimtshena ngomdanso lowo wanginika isihluthulelo sendlu yakhe ngoba ethi ngingase ngibulawe izigebengu uma ngiya lapho ngilala khona eSofayathawini.

Nempela ngeza lapha. Kanti ngiza khona uqobo lapho kuhlala khona laba ekade ngifisa ukubazi. Ngithe lapho ngingena nje esangweni ngazithela kubantu ababili bephuma begijima khona lapha eyadini.

Ngithe ngisadinga ukuthi yini nami ngase ngipha-ngisa ngiqonda endlini yomngane wami ngezwa izwi lowesifazana lithi Maye babo!" Athule uBen; akhothe ulimi.

"Wase wenzani?"

"Ngaqonda lapho izwi livela ngakhona. Kanti ngizozithela kulesisimekemeke. Kuthe lapho sengi-mvusile uNkosazana Moya lokho wayequlekile ngathi ngizoya kobiza amaphoyisa masinyane ukuze singangeni ecaleni. Ngaya-ke eMarshall Square, ngabika khona. Eza amaphoyisa ngo*Pick Up* nami ngikhwele kuye. Yiwona nje lawa angibuzayo lemi-buzo."

"Kuphela nje?"

"Kuphela, Makhosi."

Abaseshi bafune, bafune endlini okungakhomba

oyena enze lokho. Bafune eside isikhathi. Bese bethatha ikheli likaBen. Bathi bangase bamfune futhi masinyane eMarshall Square.

Bakhulume bodwa. Omunye ethi, "Kusobala ukuthi bamgwaze nje lapho intombazana ingena nje endlini encane. Kusobala ukuthi bese beqaphile, okuthe engena nje endlini babemjuqa."

Athi omunye: "Ngithi mhlawumbe yibo uqobo labaya ababelwa naye emdansweni. Mhlawumbe bamlandela; bathi lapho bembona eqonda ekhaya bagijima ngaphambili bamlalela khona lapha eyadini. Limnyama kabi naleliyadi, futhi linezingosi ezimbi. Bathe lapho bembona engena yedwa endlini bamdumela bamsheshisa ukuba bamqede intombazana ingakabuyi endlini encane."

"Kungezwakali nelilodwa izwi leli?" Kubuza omunye.

"Inxeba libi; futhi lafika kumuntu owayekade opha kwelinye inxeba esephela amandla. Wasuka wathi fohlololo phansi waphela. Kusobala ukuthi ubulawa ngumuntu noma ngabantu abamaziyo akade futhi bemsongele. Noma lowo akade elwa naye emdansweni ngomunye wabo noma qha, sizobona. Kodwa ngithi ngomunye wabo uqobo."

Baqede bahambe abaseshi.

Bahambe abaseshi asale uDelsie noBen bebhekene okweziphukuphuku.

Kulapho-ke kwaqala inkambo eyahlukileyo kweyakuqala empilweni kaBen Lutshani. Kulapho-ke indlela yakhe yaqala amazombezombe aze ayombeka kude. Kulapho-ke impilo yalababantu bobabili yaba into ehlangeneyo kwaze kwabasekupheleni noma behlukana ngezenzo.

Kulapho-ke kusizani ukuba side sisho njalo? Masiqhubeke nendaba yethu sizizwele.

Ithi inhliziyo kuBen hamba-ke manje sewuqedile obuze ngakho lapha. Ithi enye, ushiye umuntu wesifazana yedwa odakeni olunje? Kodwa kwathi kahambe, wezwa ukuthi kweswelekile ukuba ahambe. Wezwa nje egazini ukuthi uzongena kwenye ingozi engaphezu kwalena uma engahambi.

Ukubaseduze kukaNkosazana Moya kuye emlangazelela kangakho kuyingozi kuye eyedlula eyesidumbu sikaGwebu, esabe silele endlini yezidumbu kufunwa osibulele. Wezwa kufika kuye ukuthi njengoba ehlezi phansi nje uNkosazana Moya, ebhekise ikhanda phansi ufuna umduduzi.

Kodwa lomqondo umethuse, uBen, awesabe kakhulu.

"Yebo, mangihambe manje; sengiqedile," kusho inhliziyo yakhe.

Asondele kuDelsie athi: 'Nkosazana Moya sengizohamba manje ngoba——"

Ngqo! Ngqo! Ngqo! Kungqongqoza esicabheni.

Asukume esethukile uDelsie amehlo akhe sengathi azothi qathatha phansi. Athi lapho ethi uyavula uBen amkhuze:

"Kawukahle, Nkosazana Moya, kuvule mina," kusho uBen, esondela eduze kwesicabha. "Kungase kuvele enye ingozi lena ezayo."

Bese uyasidumela njalo isicabha esivula sithi nge; yena eme emva kwaso.

Kungene intombazana esentangeni yobuqhikiza nje. Ingene kuphole endlini lokhu phela nakhu umoya busufudumele; futhi ingene kade kubhekwe okunye okwethusayo. Ingene qede ime ithi khimilili, ibheke uDelsie, ibheke uBen ngamehlo abuzayo axwayile.

Ubuso bayo buvele obala manje. Ubuso obungebuhle ngokubabazekayo; kodwa obunogazi. Ubuso obupholile, bomuntu ongamethemba, umuntu onesimilo esihle. Lokho kukhonjwa ukuchachamba kwegazi ebusweni.

Amehlo lawa engemakhulu njengawakaDelsie kodwa emhlophe qhwa. Engesabi lutho, embheka umuntu engenqeni lutho. Amazinyo emhlophe qhwa. Ubuso buyindilinga enhle encanyana. Ikhala limi lithe mpo lathi ukucija kancane, umlomo umncane.

Angene uNosimilo Dhlomo, emamatheka, kodwa lokho kumamatheka kwome ngayo leyonkathi lapho engena endlini egodole kangako.

Lentombazane yakwaDhlomo emaKhabeleni yayikhuliswe kahle abazali bayo. Yafundiswa kahle yasondezwa isencane eduze kukaJesu Krestu. Esikoleni lapho yayifunda khona yayenziwa inyumbazana amanye amantombazana, ngoba izicwecwile ezintweni ezimbi, ingajwayelene nezindlela zokuqoma. Yazi ukuthi iyoqoma sekufike isikhathi sokuba lokho kuqoma kuphelele emshadweni ongcwele. Lokho kwenza ukuba iqanjwe igama lokuthi "uSistele" esikoleni kuthiwa phela izenza ikholwa. Kodwa kayiqedanga esikoleni; kwashona uyise yasala yodwa nje nonina. Nango-ke unina eseqonda eGoli lapho wabe ngowakhona yena ethi kungcono ayoziqhukuzela khona edolobheni lakubo kunokuba ahlale emapulazini emaKhabeleni. Kodwa lokho kwabakuhle ngoba uMaMsomi lona wabengumfazi "oyindoda." Enesimilo esiqinile, ekhuthele, eyikholwa ephilele into ayaziyo. Wafika eGoli wakha eOrlando, elokishi elikhulu labantu eliseduze nase-Nansifili.

Wabengomunye wamakhosikazi asebenzelana nezinhlangano zabezisifazana abamhlophe ezithiwa "National Council of Women." Yena eyilungu

legatsha labamnyama. Lawa makhosikazi amhlophe yiwona aqamba imisebenzi ebongekayo yokusiza abesifazana abamnyama nezingane zabo emadolobheni.

Izindawo ezifana no"Talitha Home" lapho kuboshwa khona amantombazana abantu afundiswe ubuntu, angayiswa ejele, "Ekuthuleni," lapho kuhlala khona amantombazana abantu, "OLeselinyane" enye futhi indawo yentsha yakithi, "OMthuthuzela," indawo evikela amantombazana nezingane zawo zezihlahla. Izindawo zezibhedlela zezingane emalokishi nezinye. Lababelungu-ke bamsiza uMaMsomi ukuba atholele ingane yakhe uNosimilo umsebenzi omuhle nabelungu abakholwayo eYeoville. Lababelungu uMnumzane noNkosikazi Goodwill babeyizihlobo zendlu emnyama. UNkosikazi Goodwill ezinikele kuyo kakhulu. Bafane nabazali bakhe impela uNosimilo bamvikele nakumashayakhothe ezinsizwa zaseGoli ezicekela phansi izingane zabantu.

UNosimilo lona-ke ukuze bazane noDelsie, phezu kokungafani kwezimilo zabo kwaba kanje: uDelsie wafika lapha eGoli wathola umsebenzi wokuba umzanyana wengane yomlungu. Ede ehamba nayo eya enkundleni yokuphola yabelungu ethiwa iJoubert Park. NoNosimilo wayede evakashela enye intombazana kuyo leyonkundla eyisihlobo sakhe, uma yena uNosimilo esahlaba ikhefu emsebenzini. Bade bebonana noDelsie lapho, baze bathathana nje ngezinhliziyo. Kusukela lapho uNosimilo Dhlomo wazimisela ukuba alinge ngawowonke amandla akhe ukubuyisela uDelsie endleleni yobuntu. Ede emkhulekela ukuba abuyele endleleni. Naye uDelsie, noma wabeselahle konke ayenakho kobuntu, wabemhlonipha kakhulu uNosimilo, ngenxa yesimilo sakhe esihle, elinga uma bendawonye ukuba aziphathe ubuntu.

Kunjalo-ke. . . . Eme emnyango uNosimilo ema-ngele. Abone uDelsie ukuthi wethukile umngane wakhe ebesesheshisa embingelela.

"Sawubona, Nosimilo," emsondeza eduze kwakhe. "Uphumaphi ekuseni kangaka?" Kwasekuqala ukusa.

Amamatheke uNosimilo. "Bengisemlindweni wamantombazana esontweni lakithi," kuphendula uNosimilo ngezwi eliphole njengobuso bakhe. "Ngase ngithi kangidlule lapha ngibone umamekazi ohlala la-phaya ngaphesheya. Ngase —— ngase ——"

Akhohlwe ukuthi uzothini ngoba nakhu usebonile ukuthi kakuhleziwe kahle lapha ekhaya.

"Musa ukwesaba, Nosimilo," kusho uDelsie. "Ufike kahle kakhulu lapha kimi namhlanje. Kangi-zange ngikuswele njengoba ngikuswele namhlanje, mntakwethu."

Izwi lakhe linciphe; izinyembezi zigcwale emehl-weni. Afune isidwejana azesule masinyane, azihleka-hlekise. Akhohlwe nje uNosimilo ukuthi kwenzenjani. Ingabe lomuntu uBen ungumseshi ozobopha uDelsie. Ezibuza. Uphi pho uThomas Gwebu isoka likaDelsie? Yona lendlu sengathi kade ingenelwe izigebengu zatha-tha impahla zayiphonsa phezu kwenye? Yini nje, bandla?

NoBen usethule nje asakhulumi, ngoba phela e-ngakaziswa kuNosimilo, isiko lesilungu phela lelo. Usede ethinta isikhohlela singekho, edane ezesula ubuso sengathi uyajuluka engajuluki.

"Nosimilo," kuzwakale izwi likaDelsie futhi, "Ngisebuhlungwini obukhulu, mntakababa. UGwebu kasekho, ubulewe kuyo lendlu, khona izolo lokhu."

UNosimilo agqunqe abemnyama, asondele kuDel-sie ambambe ngezandla zombili.

"Musa bo, Delsie! Uthini?" Ngezwi eliveveze-

layo. Anqekuze ikhanda uDelsie. "Ngiqinisile, Nosi-milo. Kasekho uGwebu."

"Nkosi yokuthula! Kodwa yini, Delsie?" UDel-sie ayilande yonke indaba njengoba sesiyazi aze aqede, uNosimilo ethule elalele. Uthe lapho eyiqeda uNosi-milo wathi nje, "Hawu, Delsie, mntakwethu, ngida-buka kabi kakhulu. Ngeswele nokuthi ngizothini kuwe."

Kuthule kuthi du endlini isikhathi eside.

Yisikhohlela leso sikaBen esabenza bakhumbule lapho bekhona. Ethuke uDelsie, kube yikhathi ekhum-bulayo ukuthi kukhona umuntu ofana noBen lapha endlini.

"Habe! Uxolo besengikukhohliwe, Mnumzane."

"Lutshani," kuphendula uBen.

"Ngixolele Mnumzane Lutshani. Ingqondo yami kayisathathi kahle. Nosimilo, lona nguMnumzane Lut-shani, lona nguNkosazana Dhlomo.

Baxhawulane. UBen athi: "Ngiyadabuka, Nkosazana Dhlomo ukuba sazane phezu kosizi olukhulu kangaka."

"Yebo, Mnumzane Lutshani," kuphendula uNosi-milo embheke emehlweni, "kunjalo. Kodwa intando ka-Nkulunkulu ayinakuvinjelwa."

"Njengoba sewuzwile uNkosazana Moya eyilanda lenkinga yendaba, Nkosazana Dhlomo, nami nje sen-gifisa sengathi ukufika kwakho lapha kungaba likhambi elikhulu kuye. Usosizini olukhulu kakhulu."

"Ngiyabona, Mnu. Lutshani," kuphendula uNosi-milo emonyozela ngamehlo akhe athambileyo. Aphen-dukele ngakuDelsie athi, "Delsie, ngicela ukukhuleka."

Avumele phezulu uDelsie. Baguqe ngamadolo khona lapho bobathathu akhuleke uNosimilo Baguqe phezu kwegazi likaGwebu, elachitheka lapho ngabo

lobobusuku. Phezu kwegazi lomuntu owabeyisikhonzi sikaNklunkulu, kodwa wehluleka, wafela ezeni. Baguqa labo bobathathu, intombi eziqhenya ngobukholwa bayo, nensizwa eyagcina ukukhuleka mhla iphuma esikoleni, nentombi ezalwa amakholwa, kodwa yona engazange ikhuleke.

Ukhuleka nje uNosimilo uBen kalalele; into nje uyacabanga. Ingqondo yakhe isebenza ngamakhulu amandla . . . Ibuza . . . ibuza . . . ibuza?

Ibuzani? Iyeza impendulo. Baqede, abesethi uNosimilo:

"Kawazi nawe, Delsie, ukuthi ingabe ubani obulele uGwebu?"

"Neze, kodwa ngiyazindlekela nje. Kepha ngimesaba kabi uDick lowo!" kuphendula uDelsie. "Futhi ngesaba imibuzo engizobuzwa yona enkantolo ehlola ukufa kwabantu abafe ngokungaqondakali."

Aphendule lapho uBen athi: "Ungesabi neze lapho, Nkosazana Moya. Ukhulume iqiniso olaziyo kuphela, leli olilandise abaseshi. Ungagudluki neze lapho. LoDick othi uyamesaba ngubani Nkosazana Moya?" Sekubuza uBen.

Esabe ukumusho uDelsie, anqikaze. Abesethi: "Ngumuntu nje owake waxabana noGwebu sisanda ukufika lapha eGoli, wamsongela."

"Babebangani uma lombuzo ungemubi?" Kubuza uBen.

"UDick wayengeshela ngenkani, uGwebu engafuni. Ngelinye ilanga uGwebu wamfica khona lapha endlini yami. Balwa."

"Njengoba lokho ungakushongo emaphoyiseni, ungabe usakusho enkantolo ehlola ukufa," kusho uBen. "Ungaze utshene abaseshi nje emva kwalokho. Kangizukubuza ngoDick lowo futhi: into nje wena ulande

indaba njengoba uyilande kubaseshi. Ungesabi lutho, abaseshi bayamfuna manje obulele uGwebu."

"Qha bengingeke nje nempela ngimphathe uDick kubaseshi ngoba lapho sebembuza ngalendaba wayezokwazi ukuthi bayizwe ngami, bese uyangibulala."

"Akubulale?" Kwethuke uNosimilo.

"Angibulale isibili. Kawumazi uDick, Nosimilo, imamba ingcono kunaye. Uyongivumela mhla wambona nawe, Mnu. Lutshani."

UBen amonyozele lapho ezwa lokho ngoba yena wabengumqhafi waseGoli ongesabi nsizwa.

"Ngithi kungangcono usuke lapha, Nkosazana Moya, uyohlala nezihlobo zakho," kusho uBen.

"Nami bengizosho lona lelo, Mnu. Lutshani," kusho uNosimilo. "Delsie woza uzohlala nami size sibone isiphelo salendaba." Avumele phezulu uDelsie. Bahlukane.

UBen aqonde endlini yomngane wakhe ethi uzothi zu ubuthongo amahora ambalwa kungakasi; kodwa phinde ubuthongo. Imicabango yakhe ikhandane okwezando zigxoba amatshe. Ecabanga ngamantombazana amabili awashiye wodwa endlini yethunzi lokufa. Ubuntu nobuqotho bukaNosimilo Dhlomo kwamthatha kakhulu. Selokhu afika eGoli uBen Lutshani wabeyazi izinhlobo ezimbili zabantu besifazana. Yizo lezo ayezijwayele, ehamba nazo. Uhlobo lwokuqala olwamantombazana afana noDelsie. Amahle, akhanyayo, anesasasa. Agqoka eziconsayo adlale ngemali nothando. Impilo yawo injabulo kuphela, injabulo yothando olungaphele mkhuba, nokuzenzela akuthandayo ngobuhle bawo. Amantombazana asebenza kubelungu abawaphatha kahle, kodwa abadumaze ngokungenisa ezindlini zawo izinqwabanqwaba zabafana ababize athi "amadoda"

awo. Lamantombazana ahamba imihla namalanga. Ahlala nezinsizwa adle imali yazo: nazo zidla eyawo.

Uhlobo lwesibili lwabesifazana ayebazi uBen yilolo lwabesifazana abangasebenzi kubelungu, kodwa abagaya utshwala ezindlini zabo. Abashendeza namadoda aphuza kubo.

Wayebazi bonke labo uBen. Kepha amantombazana asesigabeni sikaNosimilo Dhlomo wabengawejwayele. Lamantombazana kawadumile kakhulu lapha eGoli, abukelwa phansi ngoba aqhuba ngendlela ebukelwa phansi abaphucuzekile. Ubukholwa kubantu abasha emadolobheni yinto engajwayelekile. Iyesatshwa. Amantombazana anjalo kanalo iwozawoza lamantombazana adansayo nawahambayo amakhonsathi. Yikho nje uNosimilo wamethusa kangako uBen, wamethusa wamthumba inhliziyo. Kodwa nokho inhliziyo yakhe igxile kuDelsie. Ezwe esezibuza: "Yini nje eyenza lentombazana igxile kangaka enqondweni yami; kuthi nalapho sengizwe okungaka ngayo, kodwa ngiyifise kangaka?"

Azixolise ngokuthi: "Ngiyazi okungenza ngiyicabange kangaka. Kwenziwa ngoba ngiyibone okokuqala ngqa ethunzini lokufa, kanti besengiyibone kancane kuqala. Yikho lokho okwenza ingasuki engqondweni yami." Ezikhohlisa nje.

UDelsie wabenjalo lapho usandukumbona. Wabethandeka kakhulu. Insizwa beyiphambana ngaye. NoBen wabesephambene ngaye, noDick lowo ongaziwayo wabesephambene ngaye.

Kwamkhanyela uBen ukuthi isimilo kuDelsie kasikho kahle; nazi nezigigaba zaso. Kwamkhanyela futhi ukuthi uNosimilo uyenayena ntombazana enesimilo ngempela, umuntu wokufiswa. Kodwa inhliziyo yakhe yanamathela njalo kuDelsie.

USolomon kaDavida wathi endulo :

"Ngokuba izindebe zomfazi omubi ziwuju; nolwango lwakhe lubushelezi kunamafutha."

ISAHLUKO 7

INKANTOLO YOKUFA

Kuse ngomuso uBen awatshele amantombazana ukuthi naye usahamba ngoba usemi kabi ngomsebenzi. Awethembise ukuthi bayobonana ngomhla lowo eliyohlolwa ngawo icala lokufa kukaGwebu phela.

Umthetho wakwaHulumeni ikakhulu emadolobheni wamisa lezizinkantolo zokuhlola ukufa kwabantu abafe ngendluzula noma ngokungaqondakaliyo. Ithi ingezwa bonke ubufakazi ikhiphe isinqumo sokuthi ubulewe yini lowomuntu, noma uzifele nje. Yileyo-ke ababekhuluma ngayo. Awanikeze ikheli yomngane wakhe lowo ukuze ambize ngayo lapho esedingeka enkantolo.

Bahlukane uBen aqonde ePasi Hovisi eyogxoba isipesheli sokufuna umsebenzi. Afike abantu behla benyuka okwezinyosi. Abanye bemi belandelana bebheke eminyango yamahovisi lawo ababeze kuwo. Bemi izinhla ezinde, ezinyakaza kancane njengeshongololo. Athi angaqeda ophambili kungene owesibili, udwendwe lunyakaze njengeshongololo. Angene phakathi lowo ehovisi kube ende inkathi emile. Umlungu ngaphakathi mhlawumbe engekho ngaleyonkathi. Mhlawumbe ekhona nje esazihlalele exoxa nabakubo izindaba zezwe. Ngenye inkathi athi nje umlungu ethi uyabheka ukuba amlobele isipesheli sakhe kungene omunye; badle indaba. Baqede ngesikade bese emenzela lowomuntu isipesheli sakhe.

Udwendwe lunyakaze kancane luqhubekela phambili.

Akubuke lokho uBen adlulele phambili.

Abone iphoyisa limile lithe phuhle eduze kwelinye ihovisi, aqonde kulo ehamba enyonyoba phela ehloniphа. Afike ethule isigqoko khona lizokumsheshisela phela ngoba elihloniphile.

"Baba, kungaphi ehovisi lokunyathela iminwe?"

Limuthi jeqe uBen sengathi kalutho bese lithi:

"Laphaya!"

Liwalazise isandla lapho lithi "laphaya." Akhohlwe nje uBen ukuthi lowo "laphaya" uphi. Kodwa azamthole, afike nakhona abantu belandelana udwendwe lolu. Bengena ngabanye nalapho benyatheliswa iminwe, bese bephuma namaphepha lawo okunyatheliswe kuwo iminwe yabo, beya kwelinye ihovisi. Bafike lapho athathwe lawomaphepha abhekisiswe ngezingilazi ukuthi lowo muntu kazange aboshwe yini. Aqede-ke lapho usephuma uqonda ehovisi lelo aqonde kulo. NoBen eme kulolodwendwe kuze kufike isikhathi sakhe enzelwe akufunayo. Waphuma engasayithandi indaba yokuma emahovisi "unyaka" abelungu bedlala ngesikhathi nje. Uthe esahambe ibangana nje ahlangane nomlungu onemotho eqonde khona ePasi Hovisi eyofuna isisebenzi sasekhishini, sokupheka nokulungisa indlu. Lomlungu uhlala ePakithawini, indawo yezigwili zaseGoli, abeseyamthatha uBen. Asheshe athandeke kubelungu uBen futhi ekhuthele esebenza ngamandla.

Kuthe esenezinsukwana eziyishumi nesiphohlongo elapho wathola incwadi ivela kuNkosazana Moya embikela ngosuku lwecala. Acele kubelungu, bamvumele. Aqonde khona. Awafice esesenkantolo, uDelsie esefile uvalo. Kepha uNosimilo elinga ukumduduza.

Awabingelele uBen beseyala uDelsie ngokuthi

aphendule imibuzo abuzwa yona kuphela. Akhulume iqiniso angaqageli izinto njengokuthi uzindlekela uDick.

Inkantolo igcwele ithe swi abantu bezolalela. Phela uThomas Gwebu noDelsie Moya babaziwa kakhulu eGoli, kwazise babengabantu abahamba imidlalo, imidanso, amakhonsathi nakho konke okuyigugu kubantu abaswele ukuthi benzani ngesikhathi sabo sokuphola. Kwakuyindaba esematheni lokho okwabangela uGwebu noDelsie babelapha eGoli kanti babengabantu abakhulu abathenjiweyo eNatali. Kodwa lokho kakwabandabazalutho kulababantu baloluhlobo lwempilo eGoli ngoba oyikho kabanandaba nakho. Into abayithandayo kuwe ukuba ubengomunye wabo. Usebenzele, uphilele ukuzithokozisa kuphela. Ingomuso lizibhekela okwalo.

UGwebu noDelsie babephila leyompilo "Kangikhathali mina." Yikho nje babethandwa benodumo olukhulu lapha eGoli. Bonke-ke lababantu bagcwala enkantolo bezolalela ukuthi kuzovelani enkantolo abangahamba bexoxa ngakho bethi:

"Nizwile-ke ukuthi uGwebu ufe kanjani? Sathini thina? Kasishongo ukuthi uzokufa kabi?"

Sebesho njalo ngoba esevelelwe ingozi phela. Kulapho-ke buphelela khona lobubuhlobo balababantu. Uthi omunye wabo angavelelwa ishwa, esikhundleni sokuba bamkhalele, bamsize, ubezwa sebeqhwebana izinqulu ngaye. Sebethi wayenzani wayethi ungcono kunathi. Yikho-ke nje bebuthene lapho. Bazozizwela okubi okungase kubaphe into yokuhlafunwa ngemilomo kuze kuvele elinye ishwa futhi. Besebehlafuna lona.

Kuthule kuthi du lapho umthethimacala engena. Indlu isukume yonke, aze ahlale phansi. Bahlale phansi bonke. Athi angahlala esihlalweni sakhe esiphakeme aphonse iso lakhe elihlabayo kubantu ababekhandene

enkantolo, kubesengathi uthi "Woshi, naze nayithanda into ebuhlungu bo!"

Basebephenya amaphepha ayesetafuleni "Dokotela Jones." Angene ebhokisini lawofakazi udokotela wakwaHulumeni.

"Nguwe ohlole isidumbu salomuntu uThomas Gwebu?"

"Yimina. Ngabona amanxeba amabili ommese. Elinye ngithi laselikhona ngenkathi egwazwa elesibili, belingajulile kakhulu. Kodwa elesibili engithi yilo uqobo elimbulele belilibi kakhulu. Lisenhlafunweni yesandla sokudla."

"Angabe uzibulele?" Kubuza umthethimacala. "Qha!"

"Ubona ukuthi ubulewe?" "Yebo."

Aphume ebhokisini udotela. Kungene uDelsie. Lapho-ke inyakaze yonke indlu. Abangane bakhe besifazane bambhekisise befuna ukubona ubuso bakhe ukuthi budabuke ngeqiniso na. Befuna nokubona ukuthi uzilile yini na? Bambone edabuke ngempela; ezilile. Badabuke ngoba babethi bazothola emnandi indaba lena yokuxoxa.

"Nguwe obuthandana noGwebu?" Kubuza umthethimacala.

"Yebo, Mnumzane," kuphendula uDelsie ngelincane.

Wabe unaye emdansweni kusihlwa mhla ezogwazwa?"

"Yebo. Kasizange sahlukane emva kokuba engifice khona."

"Kwenzekani emdansweni?"

"Kwathi sisahlezi nje sobabili, ngethuka sengibona umuntu esondela kithi. Wabhadlaza inhlamba eyasusa uthuli lokulwa, ngoba uGwebu wathukuthela base

beyalwa. Bathe lapho sebebambene kabi impela lowomuntu wagwaza uGwebu."

"Uthi lowomuntu kawumazi ukuthi ngubani?"

"Qha, Mnumzane, ngangiqala ukumbona."

"Kazange uGwebu akhulume ngalomuntu kuwe ngaphambili?"

"Qha, Mnumzane."

"Wayengenavalo lokwesaba umuntu othile noma abantu abathile?"

"Ngokwazi kwami wayengenazo izitha ngaphandle kwo——" Anqikaze athule.

"Ngaphandle kwani?" Kubuza umthethimacala, ngezwi lokufutheka.

"Ngaphandle kokuthi ngake ngamuzwa ethi munye kuphela umuntu amesabayo lapha eGoli."

"Igama lakhe?"

"Wathi nguDick Mthakathi."

Bavungame abantu enkantolo lapho bezwa lelogama. Iningi labo lalimazi uDick Mthakathi. Lazi futhi okwakwesatshwa uGwebu kulomuntu. Emva laphaya uNosimilo uyakhuleka ngenhliziyo ukhulekela umngane wakhe. UBen usehlanganise imihlathi sengathi yome nkwe. Amehlo akhe asebheje ababomvu ulaka. Kayazi nento ayithukuthelele ngaphandle kokuthi uhlushwa ukubona intombi yakhe ibuzwa imibuzo sengathi iyisiboshwa. Umqondo lowo oyize.

"LoDick Mthakathi wayekhona ngalobo busuku emdansweni?" "Qha, Mnumzana."

UThomas wake wakutshela ukuthi umesabani uDick?" Anqikaze uDelsie kancane. Besethi "qha," eqambamanga.

Umthethimacala alobe phansi. Uyasuka uthi:

"Ungamkhomba lomuntu owagwaza uGwebu uma umbona?" "Yebo, Mnumzane."

Kakukho lutho olunye ongasitshela lona?" "Qha, Mnumzane."

Ubufakazi bukaBen bufane nalobo abuvezela amaphoyisa; buhlangane kwenye indawo nalobo bukaDelsie. Kwasekufakaza noNkosikazi Mavila, noSam, umngane kaBen efakazela ukuthi ngempela nguye owanika uBen ilungelo lokuya kolala endlini yakhe? Bese kuphetha umseshi omkhulu ophethe icala lelo; elanda ngokuya kwabo esifeni leso; nokuhlola kwabo indlu; nokubuzisisa kwabo uDelsie noBen; nokuvumelana kwabo nomqondo kadokotela wokuthi kazibulele uGwebu, ubulewe.

Isinqumo somthethimacala sithi-ke: "UGwebu ubulewe ngumuntu noma ngabantu abangaziwayo."

Iphele-ke indaba ngakulolohlangothi.

"Sibonga kakhulu, Mnu. Lutshani," sekusho uNosimilo lapho sebemi ngaphandle kwenkantolo ku-Joubert Street.

"Ngiyethemba uNkulunkulu uzonigcina njalo," kusho uBen ngelivevezelayo.

"O, Mnu. Lutshani," sekuphahluka uDelsie, "sengathi nawe iNkosi ingabanawe. Ungasikhohlwa, mntanomuntu; mhlawumbe siyobuye sikudinge futhi. Akwaziwa."

UBen usezimisele ukuyibamba ngophondo manje inyathi. Useyabona ukuthi uma bahlukana namhlanje noDelsie angase angabuye ambone futhi.

"Nkosazana Moya," asho asondele kuye ebamba isandla sakhe, "siyobonana nini futhi?"

UDelsie ajeqeze uNosimilo kuqala engakaphenduli. Kanti uNosimilo usegudlukile wathi ukuhamba ibanga elincane. Enzela khona ukuba bathole ithuba lokukhuluma bobabili.

"Kangazi," ephendula uBen. "Uyabona kasazani

kangakho. Okwenza ukuba ufise sibonane futhi yini, Mnu. Lutshani?"

Agwinye amathe uBen engakaphenduli.

"Kodwa uhlala khona lapha eGoli, Nkosazana?"

"Ehene, ngisebenza ngapha eYeoville. Kodwa ufunelani ukungibona? Kangi —— kangi —— naso neze mina isikhathi."

"Ngiyakuncenga, Nkosazana : ngivumele ngikubone futhi. Ngiyazi kangilutho kuwe, kodwa ngiyacela nje ukuba uvume sibonane futhi."

Ahleke uDelsie, abesethi: " Kodwa ubuphukuphuku lobu Mnu. Lutshani."

" Sewuyathukuthela yini?" Kubuza uBen esenovalo. "Qha; kodwa uzongicasula khona manje uma uphikelela, bese ngikhohlwa nayinto enkulu ongenzele yona."

Uthe uBen esathi uyaphendula kwaqhamuka uNosimilo.

"Hawu, Delsie!" esho ehleka. "Kohanjwa nini?"

UDelsie ethuke abesethi nje kuBen, "Sala kahle, Mnu. Lutshani."

Bashone engosini kaEloff noMain Street.

Asale yedwa uBen.

ISAHLUKO 8

IZIKHUBEKISO EZIMBILI

Utshwala Nesifazana

UBen noSam bahlezi endlini kaBen ngolunye usuku bexoxa ngezigigaba lezo.

"Uthi kawukamboni umngane wakho omuhle uNkosazana Moya kusukela mhla kokuhlolwa kwokufa kukaGwebu?" Kubuza uSam.

"Phinde," kuphendula uBen, ngezwi lokudabuka. "Sengilibhuqe lonke iGoli ngimfuna. Ngehluleka."

USam ahleke, abesethi: "Uma benginguwena mina bengizobonga uNkulunkulu ngalokho. Izintombi ezinamehlo afana nawakhe ziyingozi, wethu. Ngiyakwazi engikukhulumayo. Musa ukudlala ngomlilo libalele."

"Suka lapha!" kusho, uBen ecasuka. "Ufundisa ubani ngesifazana? Uthi ngimlandela nje ngiyazenza yini? Ngimfuna ngazi kahle mhlophe ukuthi ngiziho-shela amanzi ngomsele."

"Bengithi sewubone weneliswa ngaye," kuphendula uSam, "ngoba ulapha nje uvela kude ngenxa yalentombi. Wasinda nakubaseshi ukuba bangathi nguwe obulele uGwebu.

"Ngimbulalelani?" Kubuza uBen.

"Bheka ukuba uthi ungabazi bobabili lababantu, kodwa khona lapho uficwe endlini yabo omunye wabo esefile."

"Yize lokho. Yinto yawo amaphoyisa leyo ukuba ede esizingela ngo*Pick Up* sengathi siyizigebengu sonke."

"Kodwa phela kwakusolisa ukubakhona kwakho lapho endlini enesidumbu," kuphikelela uSam.

UBen awahebeze ngesandla amazwi akhe. "Letha igabha likagologo lelo oze nalo, siphuze." Balivule, baliphuze.

"Lizongenza kengithi ukumkhohlwa kancane uDelsie;" kusho uBen ezesula umlomo ngeduku. Abesethi: "Uyazi, Sam, kayikho into eyedlula utshwala. Labo abathi buyisono bayabheda nje. Kabazi lutho. Utshwala buqeda izinhlupheko, bukuqinise inhliziyo. Yini yona itiye, amanzi ezingane?"

"Nami ngihamba nawe lapho wethu. Letha ngigojele lokho okusele besesihamba siyekobuka izithombe ezinyakazayo zabelungu."

Bahambe sebeqonde ebhayisikobhu. Bangene, babuke izithombe.

Kuthe ngenkathi yokuphola, uSam abone enye intombi ayaziyo izihlalele yodwa, besecela uxolo kuBen eya kuyo. Asale uBen ejeqeza endlini leyo enkulu, ebuka abantu ababegcwele kuyo. Uthe esabheka nje kwesinye isihlalo, ezwe uvalo lumuthi heqe. Ezwe igazi ligijima. Abhekisise futhi kulesosihlalo. Yebo, nguye isibili lowaya uNkosazana Moya. Uhlezi nensizwa. Abheke awanameke amehlo akhe kuye, naye uDelsie azaphenduke abheke kuBen.

Ahlangane amehlo abo . . . .

NguDelsie Moya isibili. Ugqoke ezimnyama zikasiliga, eziliveza kahle ibala lakhe elimpofu. Athe ukuba ahlangane amehlo abo, uDelsie wakhophoza wabheka phansi. Kodwa izigodi zivele ezihlathini zakhe . . . amonyozele kancane. Kuthi kusenjalo uBen abone nje ukuthi utshwala abuphuzile buzothi kaye kuye ngodli uDelsie; leyonsizwa ithi ukunyenyeza kuDelsie bese

iphuma, angabesabuza uBen, besephonseka kulesosihlalo ahlezi kuso uDelsie.

"Uxolo, Nkosazana Moya," esho esheshisa. "Nginenhlanhla ngikubonile namhlanje."

UDelsie amuthi laphalazi ngamehlo athule athi du.

UBen ashaywe luvalo, kubesengathi uDelsie kazukukhuluma naye nempela. Kodwa abubone ubuso bakhe sebuncibilika lapho ethi:

"Nami ngiyathokoza ukukubona futhi, Mnu. Lutshani."

Angene lowomuntu owayehlezi noDelsie kodwa athi lapho embona ehlezi nomunye, ahlale kwesinye isihlalo.

Ishe indaba lapha; kabasamnaki nokumnaka.

"Kade ngangifisa ukukubona, Nkosazana Moya," kukhefuzela uBen. "Kusukela mhla sahlukanayo ngaloluyasuku phinde behle ubuthongo, nokudla angisakwazi ngicabanga ngawe."

Amehlo kaDelsie avuleke athi nge lapho ezwa lokho. Athi ukugudluka ecaleni kwakhe kancane. Akubone lokho uBen, kodwa angakunaki ngoba usefudumela manje.

"Amehlo akho lawa amakhulu kavumi ngilale. Ngicabanga ngawo imini nobusuku.

"Kodwa yini nje kangakho?" Kubuza uDelsie, emjamela.

"Uthando, Nkosazana," kububula uBen. "Ngikuthanda kuthi mangife. Futhi ngi ——"

"Letha lapha isigqoko sami leso," kusho izwi elibi limnquma ulimi uBen.

Bethuke bobabili kubesengathi kudume izulu. Kanti izwi laleyonsizwa eyayikade ihlezi no Delsie. Kusobala ukuthi yayithi uBen uzoshesha asuke lapho eduze kukaDelsie. Sekuthi lapho embona enamathele engasasuki,

yafikelwa ukuthukuthela kwesikhwele esibi. Izwi layo laqhaqhazela sengathi ngelomuntu ogodole. Sevahluleka nokukhuluma. Kodwa okhona kwabethusayo, ikakhulu uBen owayengamazi kahle lomuntu, amehlo akhe ayehlaba njengawenyoka. Amehlo ebomvu klebhu ekhanya inzondo nobubi bodwa. Amehlo esabeka. Manje ayeseyaluza ulaka.

Ayenjalo alensizwa uDick Mthakathi lowo ebesesizwile ngaye ethi uDelsie uyamesaba. Kanti amehlo akhe anjalo nje kawadlali; naye uqobo isimilo sakhe sifana nawo. Sibi sinjengawo.

"Hawu," kusho uDelsie, "Sewuyahamba yini, Dick?" Athule athi du. "Pho, uyangishiya yini mina?" Useshaywa uvalo manje uDelsie. Angaphenduli uDick, athathe isigqoko sakhe aqonde emnyango.

Asale uDelsie ebeke isandla sakhe esifubeni ethi, "Maye ngafa uDick!"

Asukume. "Ngizomlandela ngixolise." UBen amdonsele phansi esihlalweni. "Hlala phansi; owaphi yena lowa muntu onesikhwele nokweyisa okungaka?"

UDelsie amvumele uBen ukuba amvimbele angamlandeli uDick, ngoba kayikho into eyayithandwa nguDelsie njengokweshelwa insizwa. Ahlale phansi, azi kahle kamhlophe, ukuthi amehlo kaDick ayesegcwele igazi. Kuthe ngemva kwesikhashana baphumele phandle bahlale bobabili phakathi kwemotho yomngane kaBen. Aqale-ke uBen eshele kuDelsie.

"Lalela, Nkosazana," esho esondela kuye, embamba ngezandla zakhe, ebamba ezikaDelsie, "Ngikuthanda ngayo yonke inhliziyo yami mntanethu. Kangizenzisi. Futhi ngifuna ukuba ube umkami; kangiqonde kudlala ngawe."

Isifuba sikaDelsie sesigubhazela nje. Amehlo ase-

vulekile sengathi wethukile. Kodwa eqeda nje uBen wasemphendula.

"Mnu. Lutshani ungakhulumi nami kanjalo! Uyezwa?"

"Ngixolele uma ngonile, Nkosazana Moya." Kuxolisa uBen. "Kangiqonde kudlala ngawe. Wangithatha mhla ngikubona okokuqala ngqa emdansweni, kuze kube namhlanje. Kakuvumi ngikukhohlwe."

UDelsie elule isandla abambe uBen esifubeni ngaso athi: "Musa musa bo! Musa ukungikhohlisa, ukwenza kwenu lokho nina besilisa lapho nibona umuntu wesifazana emuhle. Niye nicabange ukuthi niyamthanda ningephile ngaphandle kwakhe. Kanti uzonele asithele nje besenibona omunye senisho njalo nakuye. Nidlala ngathi iziphukuphuku zenu, kanti nifuna ukusicekela phansi nje."

Amethuse lamazwi uBen akade engawabhekile.

"Uqinisile, Nkosazana Moya," ephendula. "Sinjalo thina kodwa hayi sonke. Bakhona nakithi abaneqiniso. Ngikuthanda ngempela mina, futhi ngiyethembisa lapha ngithi——"

"Musa ukwethembisa, Mnu. Lutshani. Izithembiso zenu seziliqedile izwe. Uthi ngabe sinjenje thina sifazana esimnyama uma izethembiso enizenzayo nisaseshela niyazigcina?

"Yebo, kodwa ——"

"Thula ulalele nami, kengikhulume. Uma ngingakutshena okwangiletha lapha eGoli ungamangala. Kodwa ngeza lapha ngoba isoka lami lephula isithembiso elasenzayo kimi. Langona. Ngayeka ukufundisa ngabaleka nalo ngeza lapha eGoli. Ingane yami yafela esibhedlela salapha eGoli sakwa-Bridgman lapho ngabelethela khona. Ifa nje selingilahlile. Kuthe ngisesebuhlungwini obukhulu ngafikelwa ukuzinikela

ebubini njalo, ngoba ukulunga ngingaboni usizo lwakho. Kuthe sengiphilile ngasebenza ngazondla. Wabuya futhi lowo muntu esengibona ngimuhle ngingasenawo nomthwalo wengane. Wazibhuqa phansi exolisa ngaze ngamxolela, ngoba ngangisamthanda futhi sebuphelile nobuntombi bami. Uyabona-ke? Nguye lowomuntu owangenza nganje; uthi-ke wena ngingalalela indoda lapho ithi iyethembisa yethembisa ize leze."

Abone uBen ukuthi uhlangene nowabo namhlanje, anyathele kahle.

"Uqinisile kulokho okushoyo; kangiphiki. Kodwa ngesiZulu sithi "Kakulahlwa mbeleko ngakufelwa." Ungeke ulahle lonke izwe leli ngoba wadunyazwa umuntu wabamunye. Mina ngize kuwe ngazi ukuthi kade ngangiqonywa; kodwa ngize kuwe ngesifiso engingazange ngibe naso. Isifiso sokuba ngikuthathe ube umkami. Yebo, nami kangisiye umuntu ozethembile ngokulunga, kodwa ngiyazama ukuwa ngivuka. Ngiyakuthanda Nkosazana Moya."

Kuthule emva kwalokho. Inyanga yayisiphezulu, ikhanya ithe bha; kungekho nelokubika ifu leli. Umoya uthule upholile. Kuzwakala amathilamu nezimotho kuduma kude edolobheni. Bede bezwa ukuxokozela endlini yomdanso kubuye kuthule lapho izinsimbi sezishaywa. Kodwa enhliziyweni kaDelsie uxolo lwalungekho. Yayiyaluza ikhathazekile. Imiqondo mibili. Omunye uthi, "myeke lomuntu ngoba sewuqome uDick." Omunye uthi, "mqome lomuntu obukeka elungile; uzisindise kuDick."

Wezwa esaba kodwa laphuma izwi.

"Ngifisa kabi ukuba ngikukholwe konke okushoyo kimina," kusho uDelsie.

"Ngethembe Nkosazana Moya," kububula uBen, esefikelwa ithemba elikhulu.

"Uthi uyangithanda, Mnu. Lutshani?"

"Ngenhliziyo yonke yami," kuphendula uBen.

"Kulungile-ke nami ngiya — ngiya — ngiyakuthanda."

Kubekuphela. Babuyele endlini. Dukuduku uDelsie acele uBen ukuba ambizele umninimotho leyo ukuba imyise ekhaya lapho esebenza khona eYeoville. Amphelezele uBen. Kuthe lapho sebehlukana athi uDelsie kuBen:

"Noma sengikuthanda nje Ben, ngifisa sengathi ngabe kasizange sibonane."

"Sekwenzenjani-ke?" Kubuza uBen.

"Usengozini enkulu, Ben. Baningi abangifunayo lapha abazokuzonda."

"Izingozi zenzelwa ukuba sizakhe," kusho uBen.

"Uzigcine, mntakwethu, uyezwa? Ungahambi wedwa uma uvakashela komaOrlando nakhona eNewclare. Uzigcine, Ben."

UBen ahleke nje abesethi. "Ungesabi wena, Delsie ngizozigcina kakhulu."

Bahlukane-ke . . .

ISAHLUKO 9

AMAKHOLWA

Usuku lweSabatha lwavela luluhle lufana nomakoti ehlobele umyeni. Lizothile lipholile libantu bahle. Nezintuli zingekho zaseGoli ezaziwayo. Limnandi isibili. UBen Lutshani uthe ukubaqede ukugeza izitsha zokudla kwasemini waya endlini yakhe ethi uyakucambalala. Phela wabesaphethwe ubuthongo bangayizolo kusihlwa elibele uDelsie. Futhi ekhathazwe nayimicabango

ayecabanga ngayo ngoDelsie. Kazathanda nje nokuya esontweni.

"Lingangixolela kancane isonto lelo," ekhuluma yedwa.

Usuku lweSabatha usuku olufanele kube usuku lokuphumula nokuya ezinkonzweni, kodwa lapha eGoli yilona lusuku lwegazi. Ngalolusuku utshwala bungangamanzi okuphalizikhumba. Abantu babuphuze bubadake babe umquba. Bayasuka lapho bayabulalana bodwa ngemimese nangezinduku. Kwezinye izindawo ngalolusuku kakuhanjwa nje nempela, kwesatshwa abantu abazimisele ukubulala abanye bengone lutho. Iningi labantu, ikakhulu intsha efundisiwe, ibuthana ezinkundleni zemidlalo ngesonto bezithokozisa ngemidlalo leyo. Isonto kabalikhathalele kangakho. Bathi sebekhathele izintshumayelo zesihogo masonto onke beqalekiswa ngabefundisi abashumayela ulaka lukaNkulunkulu kuphela, hayi ngomusa wakhe.

Lunjalo-ke lolusuku lapha eGoli. Luyaphithizela sengathi usuku lwempi.

Naye-ke uDelsie Moya aphume lapho esebenza khona egqoke kahle, zona ezifana nezawomaqumbana isibili. Izingutshana ezimfushane eziveza amadolo. Ibhantshi linemikhono emifushane eveza izindololwane, nocezwana lwesigqoko oluthe chwa ekhanda lakhe. UDelsie uya esontweni nje kade agcina; uyiswa amazwi akhulunywa umngane wakhe uNosimilo Dhlomo owathi kuye, emfundela isahluko esisencwadini eNgcwele:

"Ngajabula lapho bethi kimi asiye endlini kaJehova."

Yikho-ke nje simbona ehla phezulu eYeoville eqonde esontweni laseMelika elikuBuxton Street, eDoornfontein.

Kwakushumayela umuntu omusha kakhulu ngalelosonto. Insizwa nje, kodwa enobuso obukhanya umlilo wenkolo nothando lukaNkulunkulu; insizwa enezwi elipholile nolimi oluthambileyo. Intshumayelo yakhe wayithatha encwadini kuGenesisi, isahluko sesishiyagalombili, isigaba sesishiyagalolunye.

"Ijuba kalifumananga ukuphumula konyawo lwalo; labuyela kuye emkhunjini, ngokuba amanzi ayesebusweni bomhlaba wonke: waselula isandla sakhe, walithabatha, walingenisa kuye emkhunjini."

Ngezwi elipholileyo, elifudumele ngomoya waseneka lesisahlukwana phambi kwebandla ekhombisa ukuthi lelijuba, libuyela nje emkhunjini kaNowa, laselahlulekile konke lapho lalindizela khona ukuthola indawo eyomileyo nefanele ukuphumula, laselindize phezu kwezintaba. phezu kwamagquma: lawela imifula lanqamula amahlathi namathafa, kodwa phinde liyithole indawo efanele ukuphumulela kuyo.

"Amanzi ewusibekele wonke umhlaba!"

Libuyela emkhunjini kaNowa nje selahlulekile. Kalibuyeli ngokuthanda. Qha! Libuyela ngoba selikhathele. Selilambile. Selomile. Selikhumbule lapho livela khona.

Ekhaya !

Njengendodana yolahleko okwathi lapho seyahlulekile lapho yayithi izothokoza khona, yakhumbula ekhaya lapho kungakhona. Yabuyela khona. Yasindiswa.

Esho ukuthi ijuba umoya wesoni; esiphuma ekhaya silahleke. Sihambe siqede izinkalo ngezinkalo zenjabulo sithi sizothokoza; kodwa sahluleke ukuthola injabulo yempela. Kuthi lapho sesikhathele isono; nesono sesidlale ngaso, sikhumbule uJesu. Sibuyele kuJesu; afike uJesu asamkele ngothando lwakhe olumangalisayo.

Uthe lapho esebheka ibandla lakhe amehlo akhe esekhanya sengathi abona izulu:

"Zihlobo zami ezithandekayo," esho ngezwi elivezelayo, "uma ekhona kithi namhlanje ofana nalelojuba makenze elakwenzayo nalo, abuyele kuJesu. Njengoba lelojuba langena ngentunja eyodwa emkhunjini eyayivuliwe, nawe kayikho enye ongangena ngayo ngaphandle kukaJesu Krestu, uMsindisi wethu."

Athobise izwi lakhe:

"Ijuba kalikufumananga ukuphumula kwonyawo lwalo; labuyela kuye emkhunjini ngoba amanzi abesibekele wonke umhlaba: welula isandla sakhe, walibamba walingenisa kuye emkhunjini — INkosi inibusise nonke. Amen."

Abesifazana abaningi basebekhala izinyembezi ngalesosikhathi. UDelsie Moya engomunye wabo. Ngalowomzuzu wabengekude nombuso weZulu. Wabeseduze nje nesibuko somkhumbi. Kodwa kangenanga emkhunjini.

Uthe lapho ephuma elandela abanye ababephuma esezizwa ukuthi namhlanje ngingomunye umuntu wezwa amakhosikazi amabili ekhuluma ngegama lakhe enyenyeza.

"Uyayibona leyantombazana?" Kubuza umkaMvangeli. "Yebo, ngisho yona leyo egqoke ingubo emfushane okuthiwa 'imfashini'."

'Yebo, ngiyayibona bo," kuphendula inkosikazi enguSihlalo wamakhosikazi eSililo.

"Kangisho neze ukuthi inesimilo lengane," sekusho futhi umkaMvangeli.

Bethuke abanye, bathi, "Hawu, uthini Mvangelikazi? Kepha sibona sengathi umntwana olungileyo. Ubukeka futhi ehlabekile yilentshumayelo."

UmkaMvangeli ahlanganise imihlathi adonse ishali alisondeze emzimbeni kube sengathi uzwela amakhaza.

"Kangisho lutho-ke," ngezwi lesihlakaniphi. "Kodwa ngiyaliphinda elokuthi kanaso isimilo. Nithi yini eyangenza ngithumele amantombazana ami amabili esikoleni ngalonyaka? Ngangibehlukanisa naleyontombazana ehlubule ithi igqokile."

Bebane ngamehlo omame abakholwayo.

"Kanabazali yini lomntwana, bandla?" Kubuza omunye.

"Abazali bayo baseSiyamu. Yabaleka ekhaya lengane seyonakele yeza lapha eGoli izophila impilo yesono. Namhlanje iyisilingo ezinganeni zethu. Nawe nje, Nkosikazi Dlamini uma ungaqaphi izomonakalisa umntanakho uJane. Kawuboni nokuxoxa kwazo?"

Nempela ngalesosikhathi uDelsie wayemi noJane Dlamini, kudebuduze nje nalawamakhosikazi. Kodwa kwakungaxoxi yena. Yena wayelalele konke okukhulunywa yilawamakhosikazi ngaye. Wona ethi ayamhleba, kezwa uDelsie.

Bese ithi enye.

"Nithi kungebengcono siyikhulekele lengane yabantu ngoba yawela ngengozi esonweni?"

"Ngiyezwa ukuthi ulinga ukuthini wena," kusho umkaMvangeli, ngokufutheka. "Mina ngithi kuyimfanelo yethu ukuba sigcine izingane zethu zingahlangani nalengane eyonakele kangaka."

Amazwi ekholwa lawa; ikholwa elishumayela uKrestu obethelwe! Kalifuni nokuzwa ngokuba uDelsie akhulekelwe, asondezwe phansi kwentende yezandla zabo.

"Mina ngiyamphikisa uMvangelikazi," kuphikelela leyonkosikazi. "Ngibona kufanele siyisondeze kithina

lengane ikakhulu uma iwile esonweni; sizame ukuyibuyisela endleleni."

"Yibuyisele phela wena endleleni," kusho uSihlalo epetula umlomo. "Thina kasidlelani namaphulampiko."

UDelsie agudluke . . . .

Kazangena embusweni weZulu ngalololusuku ngoba isicabha sasivaliwe yilamakhosikazi.

Uma lawamakhosikhazi ayeze kuye njengonina abamzalayo afike athi kuye: "Mntanami, siyathokoza ukukubona esontweni namhlanje. Ungabe usaphutha phela. Uze nasezinhlanganweni zamantombazana nezabesifazana. Usejwayele ungesabi lutho." Ngithi uma babekwenzile lokho ngabe lendaba yaphetheka ngolunye uhlobo kunalolu oluxoxwayo lapha.

Imicabango kaDelsie yayisigijima ngalenkathi. "Kanti amakholwa lawa anje? Uthi lapho umuntu ezisondeza kuwo amkhiphele ngaphandle athi uyisoni? Kulungile-ke, angahlala nesonto lawo lelo; mina kangikubuye ngilubhade olwami unyawo kulo."

ISAHLUKO 10

UDICK MTHAKATHI

UBen Lutshani simshiye engena endlini yakhe emva kokugeza izitsha zokudla kwasemini, ethi usathatha isihlwathi. Uthe nje lapho ekhothama esombulula izintambo zezicathulo zakhe wezwa kungqongqoza umuntu emnyango. Waziphonsa khona ecasuke efile. Wawuvula, wawuthi nge.

Uthe ukuba uthi nge umnyango wethuka wafa, lapho ebona umuntu omile lapho ngaphandle. Umuntu onamehlo esabekayo inhlansi yawo. Amehlo emamba.

Amehlo kaDick Mthakathi. Kwakunguyena lowo omi lapho emnyango. Njengenhlalayenza uDick Mthakathi wayegqoke kahle ephelele; isudi elihle elimnyama elinemishwa emincane emhlophe. Nezicathulo zesikhumba esithambileyo ezibomvu. Futhi nalezizingubo zimhlala kahle kakhulu emzimbeni.

Kodwa ubuso bakhe bumnyama besabeka; bunyukubele bububi. Lamehlo awathi mbe ebusweni bukaBen, agxile kubo imizuzwana impela. Uthe esuka wayengena endlini uBen engazange athi kangene. Angene maqede ahlale phansi. UBen Lutshani wayengesilo nempela igwala; futhi enesibindi esesabekayo. Sesilibonile iqiniso lalokho, lapho engena endlini kaDelsie ezwa isililo. Kodwa naye uBen uqobo lwakhe wezwa efikelwa uvalo lapho ebona uDick engena endlini yakhe. Kodwa lubuye ludlule uvalo. Abuze ngezwi elipholile uBen.

"Ufunani lapha?"

Angaphenduli uDick; asuke akhwathaze esikhwameni akhiphe umentshisi nosikilidi. Okhele abheme, sengathi uhlezi endlini yakhe.

"Ngisabhema." Asho njalo kubekuphela nje.

Abheme, abheme, abheme!

"Ungubani wena igama lakho?" Ebuza kuBen.

"Yeka igama lami; ungitshele okufunayo lapha endlini yami?" UBen usethukuthele usebila. Bheka isimo ayekuso. Abone indoda angayazi ingena endlini yakhe ngendelelo engakho. Iyasuka lapho imbuza igama lakhe, esikhundleni sokuba kube nguyena phela ozibikayo kuqala eze ngakho.

"Uyabona, wethu," kuqhubeka uBen elinga ukuphola, ngawo onke amandla, "uma uze lapha uqonde impi uzoyithola."

"Ngiyezwa ukuthi sewuyalwa wena," kusho uDick.

"Yebo uma uzongedelela."

"Kulungile-ke. Mina elami igama nginguDick Mthakathi."

"Kangilibuzanga."

"Ngize lapha ukuzokudonsa ngendlebe, mfana ngoba ———"

Amnqume ulimi uBen.

"Uzongidonsa ngendlebe nje bewucelwe ngubani?"

"Kangizukunqakisana nawe ngamazwi," esho uDick ekhipha usikilidi emlonyeni ewulahla laphaya. "Bengizokuvusa ngoba ngiyabona ukuthi ugaqela eziko——."

"Kuliphi iziko?"

"Ngokweshela uDelsie Moya. UDelsie Moya ongowami sekumnyama sekunjani. Ngikubone konke okwenze kuye izolo umfunela imoto emva kokumeshela isikhathi eside."

"Uyini wena naye, uzongishayela imithetho nje?" Kubuza uBen.

"UDelsie lowo intombi yami engizimisele ukuyifela. Ngize lapha nje ngoba ngiyabona ukuthi usengozini enkulu. Ngizokuvusa ukuba uyiyeke lentombazana kusukela namhlanje."

Kuthule kuthi du endlini emva kwalokho izinsizwa zingcwekisana ngamehlo. Kuphume igundane emgodini engosini yendlu. Lithi qala-qala lizwe ukuthi abantu bakhona endlini, kodwa likhohlwe ukuthi bathuleleni kangaka. Liqhubekele phambili endlini. Lithi lapho lithi lizobheka ngalapho lake lathola ngakhona imvuthuluka yezinkwa aphendule uBen:

"Ngiqala ngawe mina ukuzwa insizwa itshela enye ukuba iyeke ukuqomisa intombi yayo; ingeyona nomkayo womshado."

Lithi lingezwa lowomsindo igundane, libuyele emgodini ngelikhulu ijubane.

"Usho njalo?" Kubuza uDick.

"Ngisho njalo."

"Uzimbela igodi ngezandla zakho."

"Kulungile lokho kakundaba yakho. Qeda oze ngakho lapha, uhambe." Izwi likaBen selivevezela.

"Ungasho ukuthi kangikutshelanga. UDelsie Moya kashelwa muntu lapha eGoli ! Uyezwa?"

UBen angaphenduli, asondele kuye. UDick asukume ambheke emehlweni. Asondele kuye uBen athi:

"Phuma lapha endlini!"

Avule isicabha, eme ngemuva kwaso.

"Phuma, ngingaze ngikuphathe ngezandla zami."

Athathe isigqoko sakhe uDick, aqonde emnyango. Uthe esaphuma nje aphenduke abesethi kuBen. "Sizohlangana futhi," asho ephuma.

Asale yedwa futhi uBen inhliziyo yakhe iduduza.

"Wabeqinisile uDelsie ukuthi uDick lona kakumuntu, inyoka," ekhuluma yedwa. "Uzongingenela endlini yami ngendelelo engakaya sengathi ungena endlini yengane yakhe." Ahlanganise imihlathi, amehlo akhe avuthe umlilo. Afumbathe izandla. "Uthi siyohlangana futhi? Uqinisile; sizohlangana futhi iNkosi imsize omunye wethu."

Wasuka lapho uDick wahamba njalo ngebhayisikili waze wangena ejalidini elincane elisengosini yemigwaqo Market noNugget. Wangena kwelinye ikamelo lapho kwakuhlezi abalisa ababili. Uthe ukuba angene bethuka lapho bembona enyukubele ebusweni. UDick azintshinge esihlalweni abesethi:

"Akedeleli uyafa lomfokazi; kepha unesibindi impela. Ngikubonile lokho." Babhekane abalisa.

"Ake uyixoxe phela Dick sizwe," kusho omunye

umlisa onamehlo abomvu asengathi awomuntu wensangu. Nobuso bakhe bomile buyitshe. Igama lakhe kwakunguMsuseni Sithole; eyisandla sokudla sikaDick Mthakathi. Kunguye owayenza konke okubi okuhloswe uDick.

"Kangizukuxoxa lutho," kubhodla uDick. "Into nje engiyiqondile ukuba ngize ngimtshele kahle. Wena, Msuseni ungahlukani nami ikakhulu ngoMgqibelo kusihlwa nangeSonto. Nginesu elibi engiliqondile ngifuna ukumlungisa ngalo; uma lahluleka ngizofuna elinye. Lalelani-ke, madoda, nginenekele isu lami lelo."

Aleneke-ke obala, ekhulumela phansi sengathi uyesaba, ede ejeqeza phandle. Nabo abalisa labo ababekade beyigila imikhuba lapha eGoli bethuka lapho bezwa lelisu namhlanje elakhiwe nguDick Mthakathi.

Pho, babengalokotha yini bamkhuze, bathi kaveze elinye? Yekanini! Ubani lowo ababengamkhuza? UDick lona wabengakhuzwa lapho esezimisele ukwenza into; omkhuzayo wabezenza isitha sakhe.

Nabo-ke bathule, bavume konke akushoyo kubesengathi bayakwenamela kakhulu. Anele ukuqeda bahlukane-ke bobathathu . . .

ISAHLUKO 11

ISIHLOBO SEQINISO

UBen futhi simshiye khona kwamlungu wakhe endlini yakhe emva kokuphuma kukaDick. Wabesankemile nje ekhohliwe ukuthi uDick uhloseni. Nobuthongo sebuphelile nekhanda lakhe lisaduma nje, ehluleka nokucabanga kahle. Uthe esathi uyakhothama futhi ukuba ezohlala phezu kombhede acambalale wezwa futhi sekungqongqozwa emnyango:

Ngqo! Ngqo! Ngqo!
Athukuthele afe.
"Ubani-ke lowo?"
"Yimina uSam."
"O!"

Avule. Angene uSam echachambile ebusweni efana nomakoti ebona umyeni wakhe. Egqoke ephelele, kusuka esigqokweni sakhe semali kuze kuyothi ngci ozwanini lwesicathulo esicwazimulayo. Kuzwakala nephunga elincane lamakha amnandi. Phela ilokhu bahlukana mhla kwebhayisikobhu leya uSam eshiya uBen eshela uDelsie. Abuze-ke uSam: "Kwasale kwa-banjani ebhayisikobhu sengihambile?"

"Ayidlule leyo," kuphendula uBen.

"Kulungile phela uma ungathandi ukungitshela," kusho uSam. "Kodwa ngizokudonsa ngendlebe nam-hlanje."

"Imihlola lena!" kuphendula uBen, ehwaqabala. "Nawe uzongidonsa ngendlebe?"

Ethuke uSam manje.

"Uthini, Ben? Ubani futhi okade elapha? Ubezothini nje?"

"Bekufike umuntu oweyisa kabi, uDick Mtha-kathi." Ajamele uSam ngoba uSam wabesegxume wema ngezinyawo. " Ungenwe yini, Sam?" Kubuza uBen. USam ephuze ukuphendula; kubesobala ukuthi ushaywa uvalo. Kuthe ngesikade wakhuluma.

"UDick Mthakathi ubelapha ezokudonsa ngen-dlebe?"

"Ehene; kade elapha," kuvuma uBen. "Pho wena wethuswa yini kangaka?"

"Bengize ngaye uqobo lapha; ngizokuhlebela ngaye."

"Uzongihlebela ukuthini ngaye?"

"Ngiyamzindlekela ukuthi nguye owa ——."

"Owenzani?"

"Akunani."

Acasuke uBen futhi; kufike kuye ukuba asondele kuSam ambambe ngomphimbo amklinye. Kodwa azi-bambe, abesethi:

"Yisho oze ngakho, ndoda, ungiyeke ngizihlalele."

"Leyontombi eyakuphambanisa ikhanda ngalo-buyabusuku uyayazi kahle isimilo sayo, nalapho ivela khona?" Kubuza uSam ngezwi elifudumele impela. Engasahleki.

Amehlo kaBen athi ukuvuleka kancane ukuthu-kuthela; abuye avaleke.

"Uhlushwa yini kulokho wena?" Ebuza kuSam.

"Yilutho. Into nje njengesihlobo sami angikuvuse, ungaze ukhalakathele esiweni ngaleyontombi. Ngisanda ukuzwa kuthiwa kayiziphethe neze kahle."

UBen wabekwazi naye lokho ukuthi kuliqiniso; kodwa wezwa enengwa nje lapho uSam ethi uyamvusa. Yena bani uSam ongathi uzovusa yena?

Aphendule ngezwi elipholileyo elamethusa uSam.

"Letha phela ubufakazi obukuvumelayo."

"Ngazi ukuthi lentombi isamthanda uDick lowo. Wena uyishende nje layo."

Ayinyathele emsileni, bakhwekazi! Uthe eligwin-nya nje uBen wabesemphethe. Wamdumela ngo-qhoqhoqho kwasengathi ufuna ukumbulala khona lapho. Wamdlukuzisa okwenja inikiza inyama.

"Uthini?" Esho ngezwi eliqhaqhazelayo. "Uthi ngiyishende lakhe! Uyini wena, uyinja nje?"

Asho emphonsa ngamandla amakhulu odongeni lwendlu. Avuke kube sengathi uyahlanya uSam.

"Phuma lapha endlini!" kusho uBen. "Uthi uyisi-hlobo sami kanti uzoqeketha amanga lapha!"

Aphume uSam; kodwa alintshinge kuBen elokugcina.

"Ungasho ukuthi angikutshelanga. Isalakutshelwa sibona ngomopho."

Avale isicabha uBen ahluthulele, bese ecambalala. Imicabango yakhe yonke ibuye; iphithizele ekhanda lakhe. Ikhandane ngamandla amakhulu nangenkani enkulu ngangoba waze wakhuluma yedwa manje.

"Ingabe ngiphonsisile ukuba ngingamvumeli uSam angitshele konke akwaziyo? Mhlawumbe ubezongihlebela okukhulu ngalentombazana. Sengikhumbula futhi ukuthi uDelsie kazange angitshele ukuthi kukhona buhlobo buni kuye noDick. Lona loluvalo olungaka athi umesaba ngalo uDick lubangwa yini? Impela ngiphonsisile ukuba ngingamvumeli uSam akhulume."

Athule, athule, athule .... Kubuye, kwale, avuthe futhi.

"Suka lapha bo! Yini yona uSam ukuba angaze angihlebele ngentombi engayazi futhi yenZule yena engumSuthu? Uqale nini ukwazi ngezimilo zabantu engenaso nje naye ngisho esokubika kubo! Ingani ngikhuluma nje uhlezi nomfazi womqasho."

Aphenduke abheke odongeni .... dukuduku .... azumeke ubuthongo obukhulu.

ISAHLUKO 12

UTHULI LWEZICHWE

Kukho konke lokhu, phezu kwazozonke lezizigigaba, phinde nje kufike enhliziyweni kaBen ukuba amyeke uDelsie. Lokho wabengathandi nokukucabanga. Ayeke intombi enhle kangakho? Suka lapha! Baqambe bashilo, uma becabanga ukuthi uzokwenza okushiwo yibona.

Bangobani nje bona? Imiquba lena! Yilokho okwenza ukuba kuthi ngawo lowoMsombuluko azimisele isibili ukuba ahambele uDelsie njengoba wabemethembisile. Izitsha zabelungu zokudla kwakusihlwa kwakhala ubugeqegeqe ezigeza, wawungathi uyalwa. Nabelungu bezwa nje ukuthi kwonakele ekhishini; kazi ubhoyi ungenwe yini namhlanje? Amapuleti lawa awahlanganise aze abe yisithupha, uyasuka uwesula wonke kanyekanye, ede ekhweza elinye ngemuva kwelinye ewesula. Lithe lithi nqe ihora lesikhathi lesishiyagalombili wabeseqedile. Waphonseka endlini yakhe, waziphathaphatha ezenza muhle phela, ukuze abukeke kuNgofanaye wakhe. Aqede lapho abambe indlela eseqonde khona. Afike seyimbheke ngamehlo abomvu intokazi yakwabo uDelsie Moya. Imbingelele ngamazwi avuza uju.

"Sewufikile, mntakwethu?" Kubuza yona.

"Bengingavinjelwa yini nje, mntanami?" Kuphendula uBen. "Uma ngicabanga ngawe kuthi angihlanye. Bheka futhi ukuthi kuyigugu elikhulu kangakanani ukuthandwa intombi engesona isishimane, kodwa ebangwa izinsizwa."

"We, mame! Yiziphi izinsizwa ezingazihlupha ngami?" Izisholo nje; yenzela khona ezogobhozisa amazwi othando.

"Ingani sikubanga nalowamfokazi uDick."

"Lokho kusho ukuthi usengozini enkulu, Ben."

"Yebo," kuphendula uBen; umqondo wakhe ukhumbula amazwi kaSam : "Uyasazi isimilo sayo na?" Wazizwa ebila ulaka khona lapho; wafikelwa umoya wokufisa sengathi kungavela umuntu khona lapho aphike naye inkani, khona ezomfundisa.

UDelsie abone ukuthi kukhona akucabangayo athi :

"Hawu, wathula kangaka, mntakwethu? Kanti kawuthokozi yini uma ulapha kimi sisobabili nje?"

"Ngijabula ngiyafa nginawe ngane yami," kusho uBen, kodwa esezizwa enqenile nje engazi ukuthi ungenwe yini.

"Pho, yini uphole sengathi kawujabuli?" Kubuza intombazana iphukula umlomo. Intombazana eseyejwayela izindlela zothando ezingahloniphiyo imithetho kaNkulunkulu. "Uma uthokoza yini ungabonakalisi ukuthi uyangithanda?" Amehlo ayo amakhulu agcwala izinyembezi.

UBen aphefumulele phezulu.

"Ben uma ungithanda yini ungiphathe kabi kangaka?"

Uthe uBen esethi uyasombuluka . . . Ngqo! Ngqo! Ngqo! Emnyango.

Yethuke iphonseke laphaya intombazana. Amehlo esegcwele uvalo. Seyifuna nokukhala.

"Ukhona ongqongqozayo emnyango," kunyenyeza uBen.

Isuke intombazana imkhulumele insumansumane nje ithi :

"Awubheke! Sekuze kungqongqoze umuntu ude uqhaqhazela nje. Kanti ubuyaphi lapha?" Iyanyenyeza.

"Kahle bo," kuncenga uBen.

"Ngikahleni? Uzodlala ngami nje, ungenza isilima sakho?" Seyithukuthele seyibiloza, amehlo lawa asevutha umlilo. Seyahluleka nokukhuluma. Isifuba lesi sesigubhazela nje: sibohla, sikhukhumala.

"Delsie uthini uma usho——."

Ngqo! Ngqo! Ngqo! Ngenkulu inkani.

Luphele ulaka kuDelsie, kufike uvalo. Anyenyeze:

"Ngiyesaba, Ben."

Anyenyeze uBen: "Buza uthi ubani ongqongqozayo ubuze sengathi uwedwa. Buza."

"Delsie," kusho izwi phandle, "vula emnyango."

"Ungubani wena?" Kubuza uDelsie.

"Vula wena bo."

"Ngivule ungubani wena?"

"NginguDick Mthakathi."

"UDick?"

"Ehene. Wena uthi ngiwubani?"

Bebane ngeziqu zamehlo oDelsie noBen endlini. UBen ezwe ukuthi lufikile usuku lokufa namhlanje. Kade ayezwa ngokuhlangana kwezinsizwa ezindlini zezintombi, zigwazane. Kungaye namhlanje. Besesishilo sathi uBen wabenesibindi esesabekayo uma sekukubi. Wabengesabi lutho nje nempela, nokulwa lokhu ekwazi kahle. Uthe-ke ukuba ezwe uDick ezibika, wezwa ethokozela impi. Inhliziyo yakhe yagcwala ulaka olunthokozisayo.

"Pho uzofunani lapha?" Izwi likaDelsie seliqhaqhazela.

"Ngizofuna lokho okufunwa nguBen lowo."

"Sengilele, Dick. Uzuze ngomuso."

Bezwe inhlamba embi ivela phandle kuDick.

"Uma ungavuli ngizosibhodloza isicabha lesi!"

UBen asondele kuDelsie athi, "Mvulele angene!"

"Hayi, ngingeke mina," kuphendula uDelsie emkhapheza.

UBen ambuyisele ecaleni, avule emnyango. Angene uDick enuka insangu. UDelsie amuthi nhla ngamehlo aziphonse phezu kombhede wakhe akhale. UDick aphenduke avale emnyango, abesethi:

"Sahlangana futhi wethu," ngezwi elipholile. "Ufunani lapha ?"

"Wena ufunani?" Kubuza umfo kaLutshani.

"Ngikubuze ungibuze, ndoda?"

"Ehene, ngoba uwena ofice mina lapha endlini." UBen esakhuluma ngelipholile naye. "Mina ngize lapha entombini yami lena," ekhomba uDelsie.

"Intombi yakho?" Kubuza uDick. "Ike yakutshela ngami lentombi yakho?" Amehlo akhe esefana nawebhubesi.

UDelsie laphaya embhedeni ukhihla isililo.

"Ngizokutshela-ke mina ngalentombi yakho," kuqhubeka uDick. "Intombi yami lena. Ngeyami kusuka ozwanini kuye kuthi ngci okhakhayini. Kangiyihlanganise nakhafula. Uyezwa? Ilapha entendeni yesandla sami lesi osibonayo esake sayilwela, iyophelela kuso futhi"

UDick usephenduke isilwanyana. Amehlo asebomvu klubhu. Umlomo lo sewuvevezela nje. Ubuso sebumnyama bhuqe. Usahluleka nokukhuluma.

UBen aphenduke abheke uDelsie ambone ekhala. Inhliziyo yakhe ivuthe; angabesabuza, aziphonse inhlamvu kuDick. Isuke-ke impi enkulu egcekeni lomlungu, endlini yesisebenzi somlungu. Kulwa izinsizwa ezimbili zibanga intombi khona lapho kwamlungu. Zidumelane kube ububhudubhudu. Kuzwakale ukukhefuzela kwazo lapho ziyisana ngapha nangapha. Ezwe uBen ukuthi uDick usephuthaza ummese ekhukhwini. Asivumele isandla leso siye ekhukhwini. Sithi siphakathi, uBen amkhube uDick amlahle phansi. Awe njengesaka lamalahle, nakhu phela isandla sisesikhwameni. Uthe efumbeka phansi, uBen wayesemphethe ethi uzomklinya uqhoqhoqho. Kanti kabuzanga. UDick aphonse umlenze phezulu uhlangane nesisu sikaBen, enkabeni. Aphele

umoya uBen, athi ukuba nesiyezi kancane. Avuke uDick aphonseke kuye futhi; ummese kakawukhiphi. Aphonseke ngesibhakela ethi umlahla ngaso phansi. Asivike uBen.

Yena uqhoqhoqho kaDick awubambe. UDick anamathele kuye naye, embambe ngekhala. Abuye aphuthaze futhi esikhwameni efuna ummese, uBen akuzwe lokho awuyeke uqhoqhoqho kaDick, amshaye ngawo onke amandla akhe enhlafunweni ngesibhakela. UDick adinsileke phansi, alale isihlwathi.

Isikhathi eside kakhulu . . . Igazi seliphuma ngomlomo.

Lumshaye manje uvalo usecabanga ukuthi uDick usefile. Amemeze uDelsie owabebukela lempi enkulu ekhosobele embhedeni.

"Letha amanzi simthele ngawo."

Awalethe; bamthele ngawo ebusweni. Avuke uDick; asondele uBen ethi isaqhubeka futhi impi, kodwa uDick aqonde emnyango. Awuvule abesethi:

"Ungahlulile namhlanje ndoda; kodwa ingomuso ngelami. Liseduze nalo. Mhlakwalo kawubuye uwadle amabele."

Avale isicabha aphume.

"Ben! Ben! Ngiyesaba, mntakwethu," sekusho uDelsie, eziphonsa kuBen, "Uzokubulala njengoba abulala u———" Azibambe. Ethuke uBen ezwa lokho. Abuze:

"Delsie! Uthi uDick wabulala ubani?"

UDelsie amjamele nje kubesengathi kezwanga.

"Ngitheni? Kangikwazi engikushilo, Ben."

"Awukahle, Delsie," kusho uBen, amhlalise phezu kwombhede, yena eme nje eduze. "Uthe uDick uzongibulala ngoba wabulala omunye, kawamusho ukuthi

ngubani lowo Delsie, ngitshele uma kunguye uDick owabulala uThomas Gwebu."

"Kangishongo mina," usebhoka usekhahlela manje uDelsie.

"Ulibambile izwi lakho, Delsie. Ubuqonde ukuthini wena?"

"Lutho! Suka nawe lapha kimina!"

"Delsie usengozini enkulu wena. Uma uDick umsola ukuthi nguye owabulala uGwebu hamba uyobikela amaphoyisa okwenza umzindlekele. Abaseshi basamfuna namanje owabulala uThomas Gwebu. Uma kukhona okuzindlayo kuyise kuwona uwahlebele."

"Wena babashana! Ngizibophe? Kawazi ukuthi ngafakaza ngathini enkantolo ehlola amacala okufa?"

"Kungcono lokho kunokuba uhlale uthule kanti ukhona omzindlekelayo. Futhi ufanele ulicabangele igazi likaGwebu, elachithwa ngenxa yakho."

Ashaye phansi ngonyawo uDelsie.

"Ngiyeke wena bo! Isiphukuphuku lesi!"

UBen abambe ongezansi.

"Uthini, Delsie?"

"Ngithi ngixege, mfokazi. Kanginasikhathi nesilima mina."

"Ukusho kimi lokho?" Kubuza uBen efutheka. "Ngenzeni-ke kuwe manje?"

"Ngiyeke wena bo! Kanginandaba mina nawe. Ingani udlala ngami nje."

Adinge nje uBen ukuthi uyinyathele nini emsileni, isivuke unqathunqathu nje. Abuze: "Ubeqinisile uDick lapho ethi wena ungumfazi wakhe womqasho?"

Aphenduke okweqhimilili uDelsie; kubesengathi uzomudla ngamazinyo uBen.

"Musa bo ukude ungigolomba wena. Ungibuzani nje? Ngithe phuma lapha endlini yami!"

Azibuze uBen. "Ingenwe yini lentombazana? Konje ngiyenzeni, madoda, intombi lena? Ingabe iziba lesisehlo sanamuhla, yenzela ukuba ngikhohlwe yilesisigemegeme esicishe sangehlela?"

Kanti kazi uBen ukuthi okunengwe uDelsie ukuba athi eze kuye, asuke amhloniphe. Uhlobo olufana noDelsie lwamantombazana oluphilele injabulo nezinkanuko zenyama kalubafuni abesilisa abaluhloniphayo. Luthi bazenza amakholwa. Zona zifuna abesilisa abangakhathali ngesimilo somuntu wesifazana. Abafika bamphathe ngobulwane, abone ukuthi insizwa le engancengi lutho.

UDelsie udunyazwa yilokho. Ngoba uDelsie wabesezinikele empilweni yokuphilela isono.

Isenzo sikaBen wasibona simehlisa, simedelela, simenza into engelutho. Kanti isenzo sobuntu bempela. Yena wasibona siyisenzo segwala, somuntu oweyisayo. Usefuna amasu okuba amkhombise uBen ukuthi yena kenziwa njalo insizwa, kanti unezesheli ezigcwele iGoli lingaka nje.

UBen Lutshani wabengakwazi ngalokho ukuthi usezithezele olunenkume.

ISAHLUKO 13

INHLIZIYO YESILO

"Delsie, uthini nje, kodwa?"

"Ngisho njalo."

"Kangikuzwa mina ukuthi uthini. Kuduma ikhanda nje."

UDelsie noNosimilo Dhlomo babehlezi bobabili endlini kaNosimilo lapho esebenza khona. Bexoxa nge-

zindaba ezithandwa abesifazana, zezingubo nemidlalo. Kwaze kwangena indaba eyenzeke kuDelsie ngayizolo njengoba sesixoxe ngayo esahlukweni eselanywa yilesi.

"Kade ngangikutshena, Nosimilo, ukuthi ukuba ikholwa edolobheni elifana naleli ukuzilahla usaphila," kusho uDelsie, okhela usikilidi, ebhema phela.

"Ukhuluma umbhedo nje manje," kuphendula uNosimilo. "Mina ngifuna ukuzwa ukuthi uthini."

"Lalela-ke, Nosimilo," kusho uDelsie. "Njengoba kade ngisho nje, uDick noBen bahlangana endlini yami dade balwa impi embi. Bengingazi ukuthi uDick uzofika izolo ngibheke uBen yedwa nje. Sithe sisahlezi nje watheleka uDick, dade."

"Balwa, ndoda, ngikutshene. Uvalo selungiphethe ngithi umsindo uzovusa abelungu. Kodwa kabezwanga ngoba indlu yabo ikude nalena, ezethu zisebenzi zisemuva kakhulu. Bengithi bazogwazana. Bheka-ke umuntu esehlezi nesidumbu endlini futhi."

"Kubangwani, Delsie?" Kubuza uNosimilo.

"Kubangwa mina, dade. Phela ngasuka ngaziyala ngaqoma uBen kanti noDick ngisamthanda. Bobabili bathi ngingowabo, dade. Hayi suka, nawo amadoda lawa ayacasula!"

"Kodwa nawe phela, Delsie——"

"Ngiyazi ukuthi usuzoshumayela wena," emvala umlomo. "Lalela lapha ngixoxe lendaba. Balwa-ke, ahlulwe uDick. Bese uyasonga njalo. Ngiyazi-ke mina ukuthi njengoba esongile nje uzombulala impela uBen uma ebuye wamfica endlini yami."

"Wena ubabhangqelani, Delsie?" kubuza uNosimilo izinyembezi sezigcwele amehlo. "Yini ungamali omunye ukhethe abemunye omthandayo?"

"Yikho nje ngithi wena oyikholwa kawazi lutho. UDick ngingelokothe ngimale, ngidla ingqephu nje

ngiyithengelwa nguye. Naye lomuntu uBen ngizwa ngimthanda nje noma engenamali."

UNosimilo ayaluze esihlalweni. Efikelwa usizi nokuzwela umngane wakhe uDelsie osengene umkhono nesiphanga esonweni. Ambheke ngawo lawomehlo akhalayo athi:

"Hawu, Delsie, kodwa waphikelela nje ebubini? Uyoze uzihloniphe nini wena; ulinge ukuba yikholwa. Uzinikele eNkosini yakho?"

"Ngiyeke wena, Nosimilo," kugqashula intokazi yakwabo. "Mina kangide ngikukhethela amabala ngithi yeka isonto uze emdansweni. Pho, wena uzikhathazelani ngami ngalapho?"

"Delsie, ngenziwa ngoba ngiyisihlobo sakho seqiniso," kuphendula uNosimilo.

Azibe uDelsie aqhube indaba yakhe:

"Namhlanje ekuseni ngisasebenza endlini yomlungu ngibona sekufika uDick. UDick uthi uma ngifuna ukuzisindisa angangibulali mangenze intando yakhe. Ngavumela phezulu, Nosimilo, ngoba ngisakuthanda ukudla amabele."

"UDick uthi yenzani-ke futhi manje?"

"Uzokwenzani uma sengikutshelile; lokhu uzobuya ungishumayeze nje? Ngimzonda kabi uBen manje;" esho ngezwi elibandayo.

"Usenzeni-ke uBen, lokhu bengithi luyasha kuye," kubuza uNosimilo, kusahlwile nje kuye.

"Usho uBen? Kangisafuni nokumbona mina; ubeyini, lokhu udlala ngami nje?"

"Uthi kakukho nje okubi okwenzile kuye, mhlawumbe wakhuluma kabi wethuka?"

"Engikwenzile kwani? Amazwi ani?" Kufutheka uDelsie eshaya phansi ngezinyawo. "Usezalwe noDick endlini yami nje wabezofunani?"

"Delsie mntakwethu, musa ukuzehlisa kangaka," kuncenga uNosimilo. "Kanti besekunguwena yini oweshela uBen? Uthi ubuntu lobo umuntu wesifazana azilahlele phansi ezinyaweni zowesilisa."

"Mhlawumbe uyamthanda." Alisho lelo uDelsie ngolubi ulunya.

UNosimilo aphendule ngokuzotha okukhulu.

"Qha, kangimthandi, Delsie. Ngithanda wena. Ngizwela wena. Uwena osengozini eyedlula akuyo yena."

Angakushayi mkhuba nje konke lokho uDelsie ukuncenga kukaNosimilo. UDelsie wayesegcwele uvalo lukaDick Mthakathi kuphela, esephambene ikhanda. Kuyilapho noBen naye esaphambene nje ekhohliwe ukuthi lentombi iqondeni ngaye. Kodwa kwathi noma ezwa efikelwa ukuyesaba, wezwa kufika ukufisa okukhulu, ukuba ambone uDelsie. Wafisa ukumbona phezu kokuba isimilo sikaDelsie esesazi.

Kunjalo ukuhuheka uthando lwomuntu wesifazana ongenasimilo. Luyadonsa ngoba naye uyakwazi ukuzithandekisa. Lumnandi, ngoba kalwesabi hlazo nokusolwa. Naye-ke uBen wezwa uthando lukaDelsie lumnqoba; phezu kokuba uDelsie wabeseziveze ububi bonke bakhe.

Injalo-ke inkambo yabaziphethe ukuba baphilele injabulo kuphela.

ISAHLUKO 14

"IMPINDISELO NGEYAMI!"

Kwadlula izinsuku ezimbili uBen wathola incwadi ivela kuDelsie. Ilotshwe ngamazwi agcwele umusa nothando. Incwadi evamise ukulotshwa yintombi efundisiwe iyilobela isoka layo.

Mntakwethu wami,

Sengathi sekudlule iminyaka engabalwayo sahlukana nawe, baba wami. Woza phela uzobona umntanakho ngoMgqibelo kusihlwa. Ungalokothi uphuthe; wobe ungaphule umoya wami uma wenze njalo. Ngifisa kabi ukuba ngikubone ngikugone nje ezingalweni zami, mntakwethu. Ungakhubeki enhliziyweni okwenzeke ngoMsombuluko. Konje ngathi kangisakufuni nokukubona? Ngangibheda nje ngenziwa ngoba ngikubona sengathi awunginakile; kuyilapho kuthi angife nje ngawe. Uze phela, mntakwethu, ngoMgqibelo uzongiduduza, fana.

Ingane yakho,

Delsie.

Uma umfana ethola incwadi efana nalena iphuma entombini yakhe, uye aphambane ikhanda. Aphelelwe nayingqondo. Azibone esenezimpiko sekuthi kandize. NoBen wathi ukuba ayithole leyoncwadi egcwele uthando olungakho waloba impendulo khona lapho ethi ukufa kuphela okungamenza aphuthe ngoMgqibelo kusihlwa.

Kuthe ngabo lobobusuku kwafika umngane wakhe uSam ezombona. USam wayengakakhohlwa mhla

uBen ecishe emenza kabi ngeSonto ntambama. Wabesenovalo olukhulu kakhulu. Ungena nje endlini kaBen ungena ngohlangothi sengathi inkalankala. Kodwa kuthe lapho uBen embingelela ngenkulu intokozo sathi gidi isibindi kuye wabesethi:

" Ben, ngize lapha nje ngizokusindisa kwenkulu ingozi. Ngizwe enkulu indaba ezokwenza ubone impela ukuthi usengozini."

Angaphenduli uBen; kuyaluze amehlo nje.

"Funda lencwadi," kusho uSam, eyiphonsa phambi kwakhe.

Ayithathe uBen ayibhekisise ngaphandle.

"Yivule uyifunde," kusho uSam. "Imvalaphu kayivalisisiwe."

Ayifunde uBen.

Delsie wami,

Woza lapha kimi khona kusihlwa nje sizolungisa udaba lwethu lolo.

Owakho,

Dick.

Uthe ukuba ayiqede, engathanga vu ngomlomo, waqonda engosini yendlu wakhipha embizeni eyayihlezi phezu kwesitofu esincane sikaphalafini, igabha elincane likagologo. Waphuza ithamo impela elizwakalayo. Wesula umlomo wabesethi:

"Uyithathephi lencwadi, Sam?"

Ngiyikhonjiswe intombi yami uSizakele. Phela ngumngane kaDelsie. Uthi uSizakele uyinikwe nguDick uqobo lwakhe ukuba ayidlulisele kuDelsie. USizakele ucabange ukuba angikukhombise yona kuqala ngoba uyazi ukuthi uDelsie yintombi yakho."

"Umhlola lona!" kubabaza uBen. "Kukhona okukhona, okuzovela, ngifunga uNokuthela." Asho eyiphonsa kuSam incwadi leyo.

"Uzokwenzenjani-ke, manje?" Kubuza uSam.

" Ngiyabonga, Sam, lokhu ongenzele khona. Ngiyadabuka nje ngoba ngingeke ngiyigcine leyo-ncwadi. Kawakho amanye amazwi, wethu. Phuza ithamo lapho egabheni bese ungixolela kengicabange kancane."

"Kanti uDelsie lona usalobelana nalomuntu uDick?" Ezibuza uBen, emva kokuba uSam esehambile. "Baqondeni-ke? Ubani lowo abamsongele?"

Ingqondo yakhe ivuleke. Ezwe esecabanga isu elithusayo ngobungozi balo. Abone ukuthi noma liyingozi, nokho makalenze uma ezothola iqiniso eliphelele ngobuhlobo obuphakathi kukaDelsie noDick. Futhi ikhanda lakhe labe lisabila emva kwethamo lelo likagologo; uvalo lungekho nempela ngaleyonkathi. Azilungiselele ukulenza lelocebo. Athathe indwangu enkulu lena ayizongolezele entanyeni ivimbele amakhaza, yaze yathi ngci emlonyeni. Yawufihla wonke umlomo ubuso nezindlebe. Kabesabonakala kahle ukuthi nguye lowo ngempela. Wathatha isiqwayi esifushane waphuma. Nanguya eqonda eYeoville lapho kusebenza khona uDelsie. Afike afune ingosi yomgwaqo eseduze eyithunzi, bese ethi ne ecaleni kothango lwendlu yomlungu esengosini. Eme khona azoqondana nesango lendlu lapho kusebenza khona uDelsie. Sekumnyama impela manje.

Athi esamile lapho imicabango yakhe isebenze.

"Kodwa isiphelo saloluthando lwami nalentombi sizoba yini?"

Athi engakaziphenduli livuleke isango langemuva lakuboDelsie, aphume anqangqatheke uDelsie athi qalaqala bese uyahamba ngamandla, eqonda ngaku-Harrow Road. UBen abeke kancane ezithendeni zakhe. Ehle njalo ngalomgwaqo eqonde eDoornfontein,

athi angafika engosini yawo noRockey Street akhuphuke kubesengathi uqonde edolobheni, kanti uzothi angafika engosini kaRockey Street noSherwell Street, aphendukele esandleni sokukhohlo esehamba ngoSherwell Street. UBen uyamlandela belu.

Afike uDelsie angene kwelinye ijalidi elimnyama nje ngaphakathi, uBen ambone ekhuluma nowesifazana, owayephuma kwenye indlu kulo leloyadi. Azenzise umuntu ongenayo nje naye uBen. Dukuduku uDelsie angene kuyo leyondlu aphume kuyo lowo wesifazana. Kuhlwe kuBen ukuthi njengoba uDelsie esengenile nje lapho endlini uzokuzwa ngani okuyikhona akubizelwe nguDick lapho. Uzokubona kanjani okwenziwayo phakathi endlini leyo. Lokhu uze abelapha nje ubabele khona lokho ukuba ezwe; abone ukuthi buhlobo buni lobu obusekhona phakathi kwalababantu. Athi qalaqala ngapha nalaphaya, abone umhume nje omncane ogudle indlu leyo aye ngasemva kwayo. Angabesabuza, ahambe ngawo azafike ngemuva kwendlu leyo angene kuyona uDelsie. Ngenhlanhla abone ukuthi isibuko esingemuva kasiphezulu kakhulu; uma ecokeme kancane angalunguza ngaphakathi. Sembozwe ngendwangu lena enezimbotshana yabelungu, kodwa imnyama yona, wabona uBen ukuthi uma esondela esibukweni abeke iso libelinye nje kwenye yezimbobo zendwangu angase akubone okwenziwayo ngaphakathi.

Kanti uBen ushabasheka nje enza konke lokhu owesifazana lowo obekhuluma noDelsie usolile lapho ebona uBen engena eyadini. Phela abantu abahlala emayadini athengisa utshwala banamehlo abukhali nezindlebe ezilula kakhulu. Bethuswa isithunzi nje. Uthe-ke naye lapho ebona uBen eqalaqalaza wasola wacabanga ukuthi mhlawumbe umseshi noma ishinga nje. UBen ulunguze nje esibukweni owesifazana lowo

usehlaba umkhosi. Usebiza omunye walezizinsizwa ezihlezi lapha endlini.

"Kukhona umuntu lapha engimbona ezulazula lapha. Niqaphe ningawavuli amagabha lawo otshwala, ngisaba sengathi umseshi."

"Ushone ngaphi?" Kubuza umlisa lowo.

"Unyamalele khona lapha egcekeni, mhlawumbe ungasemuva kwendlu."

UBen yena usalunguza endlini, ubona uDick nenye insizwa noDelsie. Bafulathele isibuko leso alunguze kuso. Abone ngokuyaluza kwezandla zabo ukuthi bashuka intshukane isibili. UDick yena ekhuluma eqephuza isibili ngoba wayede ejamela uDelsie, ejamela enye insizwa leyo; eshaya isandla kwesinye lapho ekhuluma. Kubesengathi uDelsie kakuvumi lokho okukhulunywa nguDick ngoba wayede enqekuza ikhanda sengathi kavumi. UDick amjamele, amkhombe ngomunwe. UBen ezwe nje amazwi, kodwa izinhlamvu zawo angazizwa. Kodwa ade ebamba ngalinye lapho uDick ephakamisa izwi. Athi esadinga uBen ukuthi ngabebathini abone uDelsie ehleka emva kokukhuluma kukaDick. Bese uDick esondela kuye emqabula. Bahleke bobathathu. UDick asondele ngasesibukweni akhothame akhiphe igabha elincane likagologo. Abuyele nalo etebhuleni. UDelsie asukume athathe izingilazi ezintathu ezazihlezi ekhabhathini azibeke etebhuleni. Asondele kuDick abeke isandla sakhe ehlombe likaDick. UDick athele ugologo ezingilazini baphuze bobathathu.

"NoDelsie?"

Yebo, noDelsie ayigambalaqele eyakhe besebegonana noDick. UBen elokhu ezishwaphuluza nje ecabanga ukuthi uyaphupha.

Bese lizwakala izwi likaDick sekhulumela phezulu manje.

"Ungaphuthi enkantolo, Delsie, icala lona lihle."

Avume ngekhanda uDelsie.

Bahleke.

"Ungaphuthi enkantolo . . ."

Kalizwanga elinye uBen, ngaso lesosikhathi kwahlwa kuye.

Lowomlisa owayehletshelwe ngowesifazana ukuthi kukhona umuntu olapho ejalidini wayesembonile uBen elunguza endlini. Emva kokunqikaza isikhathi eside wathatha induku wamnyonyobela ngemuva. Uthe nje uBen esakhohliwe ukuthi lokhu akubonayo ngabe yini, wagadla lomfo, wamshaya esiphundu uBen.

Wolokohlo phansi!

Ukuwa kukaBen kubethuse abasendlini bacime nesibani ngoba nakhu phela bebephethe nogologo. Sithi singacima nje isibani aphume aqhashe . . . NoDick aphume egijima, bahlangane emnyango naleyo eshaye uBen.

"Yini? Kwenzenjani?" Kubuza uDick kuyo.

"Umuntu lapha engimbone elunguzza endlini."

"Uphi?"

"Nanguya ngemuva."

Baye khona, bamfice uBen esadindilizile sengathi ufile.

"Uthi kawumbulalanga nje?" Kubuza omunye.

"Mkhahlele ubone ukuthi kanyakazi yini." Kusho uDick umuntu onenhliziyo elukhuni.

Bamkhahlele kodwa abe isidikinyane nje.

"Mngeniseni endlini simbone ukuthi ngubani," kusho uDick eqonda endlini.

Bamngenise, bakhanyise isibani. Ethuke abheke phezulu uDick lapho ebona ubuso bukaBen.

"Mamo!" ebamba ongezansi. "Ubani lona? Lomfo ungiqondile qho! Kade saside sihlangana naye, namhlanje ungihlasela emzini wami uqobo."

"Mhlawumbe ubelandela uDelsie," kusho omunye.

"Nami ngiyabona yikho okumbeke lapha," kuphendula uDick. "Kodwa usindile ngoba nakhu sesakhe elinye isu lokumgudluza. Uma bekungenjalo ngabe uzithele ophathe."

"Mfake ummese simlahle phandle," kusho lensizwa ekade inyonyobela uBen. "Ubani oyokwazi ukuthi ugwazwe ngubani?"

"Qha," kuphendula uDick, "usebonwe ngabantu abaningi lapha singeke sisamgwaza. Uma ngangifuna ukumbulala ngabe kade ngambulala. Kodwa —" Azibambe uDick.

UBen avule amehlo abubule.

Amamatheke uDick ezwa lokho kububula.

"Uyabubula?" Esondeza ubuso bakhe eduzane kukaBen. "Uyabubula? Usazobubula, ndoda."

UBen angaphenduli, kodwa avuke kancane eme ngezinyawo azithuntuthe uthuli. Asondele kuDick, amehlo akhe esevutha ulaka.

"Sekukaningana sihlangana nawe, Mthakathi," ekhuluma ngezwi elipholileyo, kodwa eligcwele intukuthelo. "Kodwa kuzozonke lezozikhathi kawungibheki njengensizwa uthi masilwe siqedane inkani. Uye usuke ungisongele; ngingazi ukuthi ungibekela luphi usuku nolunjani lokhu sisuke sisobabili kuphela."

UDick ajame nje ezwa lokho kodwa kubonakale ukuthi usethukuthele usebila, ikakhulu ngoba nakhu kukhona nabanye abantu endlini.

Aqhubeke uBen:

"Nakhona manje mina ngizimisele ukulwa nawe

njengendoda sibhekane, ngoba uxolo phakathi kwakho nami kalukho, uDelsie Moya esadla amabele."

Impendulo kaDick ibe angayilindele.

"Mbopheni izandla!" esho kulabobalisa ababili. "Uyedelela lomfokazi uphatha igama lentombi yami ngendelelo engakho!"

Athi uyazabalaza, phinde. Zimbophe izinsizwa.

"Wosinda ngakho ukungivelela ngasemva njalo," kusho uBen. "Mhlazana sabhekana nawe wokudla inhlabathi ngomlomo, ndoda."

UDick ajeqeze abangane bakhe ababili, bamamatheke bonke.

"Mhla sihlangana, mfo kaLutshani kuyoba okokugcina ngci. Yikho nje ngingafuni ukukuphatha ngalezizandla zami. Kade ngakutshena ngathi myeke uDelsie. Wena unenkani ngoba uzethembile. Ngiyabona ukuthi ulapha nje bewulandela yena."

Izwi lakhe ligcwale ulaka nenzondo manje asondele kuBen.

"Inkani yakho izokuphosa esiweni. Uyezwa?"

Ambambe uBen ngomphimbo, lokhu phela uboshwe izandla; amklinye.

UBen abe uyathe uyayaluza uDick amklinye nje isibili. Agoloze amehlo, akhiphe ulimi; ibunzi selimanzi izithukuthuku. Zibhekane izinsizwa lezo, sezibona uBen sengathi useyafa, noDick engasamyeki. Zinqikaze zesabe ukumkhuza; ngoba uDick lona wabesabeka. Kuthe lapho sezithi ziyamkhuza, uBen aquleke kubesengathi uyaphela nya. Abe insobonsobo nje ezandleni zazo, lokhu phela umi phakathi kwazo. Kube yinkathi uDick emyeka ukumklinya.

"Cishe ngambulala, kanti bengithi kangifuni ukumbulala," kusho uDick ephefumulela phezulu. "Mkhumuleni izandla nimphonse phandle, ejalidini."

Bamthwale enjalo uBen bamlahle phandle okwesaka lamalahle.

Kudlule eside isikhathi elelc lapho uBen enganakwe muntu. Abambonayo bacabanga ukuthi udakiwe nje, ngoba phela into ejwayelekile leyo ukubona indoda ilele ikhamise umlomo, kanti idakiwe.

Izulu, lokhu belibalele nasebukhweni bezinja, liqale ukuhloma; amafu aqoqane ngamandla esibhakabhakeni. Aqunqe abemnyama, agijime aqonde ngasempumalanga-ningizimu lapho iziphepho zezulu ziqala ngakhona. Athi angafika lapho akhandane abe into emnyama nje. Bese lide linyazima. Liqale libe imidwa nje yomlilo esengathi idwetshwe esibhakabhakeni imazombezombe. Ilanguzela okwelangabi lomlilo kaphalafini. Yenze njalo nje ilandelwa eduzane ukuduma. Nakho kusandonda nje kwazise lisekude izulu. Bese kuqala umoyana ombana nje obandayo uphelekezela izulu. Ulikhwezele. Lisondele-ke izulu manje. Umbani sewudlala ngamandla, seliduma lisakazeka. Umoya sewukhwishiza njengomfazi ebulawa isikhwele. Dukuduku liyithele imvula. Abantu bavale izibuko neminyango, uBen uyedwa lapho phandle. Isiwulukuhlu sokuqala semvula samvusa wema ngezinyawo sengathi wethukile. Inkungu ithi dwi ekhanda akhumbule konke okumehleleyo. Abambe indlela naye eqonde ekhaya lapho esebenza khona. Usemanzi imvula, kodwa kungekho angakwenza. Imicabango yakhe imphekezele . . .

"Impela uDelsie udlala ngami," kugijima imicabango. "Futhi kanaso neze isimilo; wabeqinisile uSam. Nguye lona uDelsie obhalelana noDick amhambele endlini yakhe, ebusuku, afike khona aphuze utshwala! Kanti impela uDelsie lona kanaso nempela isimilo."

Lisayithela imvula; kodwa ahambe angayicasheli

ngaphansi kwovulande bezitolo. Athi okungenani kanethe nje abe udaka aze afike ekhaya.

Imicabango yakhe imphekezele . . .

"Ingabe bebakha qhinga lini laphaya endlini? Mhlawumbe baqonde mina, ukungenza kabi. Kodwa khona uDelsie esemubi angahlangana noDick ngami?"

Kuqhamuke imoto yamaphoyisa- u*Pick-up* ize indiza; ifike ime eduze kwakhe. Amaphoyisa aphonseke kuye.

"Special! Uphi hamba loskhathi?"

Asikhiphe sesiyingcuba nje simanzi. Asibheke amaphoyisa, amnikele sona athi "Wena hamba busuku fana kalolayitha, you skellum." Asintshinge kuye.

Isuke futhi imoto kudekude. UBen elule izinyawo, imvula liyayithela njalo. Useyasondela manje ekhaya.

Imicabango yakhe imphekezele . . .

"Ungaphuthi enkantolo . . ." wayethini uDick lapho esho njalo kuDelsie? Inkantolo yani? Qha, okungcono ukuba ngiye kuDelsie uqobo ngoMgqibelo njengoba engibizile ngimbuze ukuthi obani lobubunyoka abenzayo.

"Ngithi ngingambuza ngimphimise okwamathe."

Kanti ukuza kwakhe kuDelsie ngalowoMgqibelo sekuwukuzibulala.

Engazi yena!

ISAHLUKO 15

INDLELA YABABI

UMgqibelo lowo wamfica uBen esome imihlathi ukuzimisela. Wabesengomunye nje umuntu. Esebukeka egugile, ome imihlathi. Phela konke lokhu kwa-

kubangwa ukuziphatha kwakhe. Inhliziyo yakhe yabivunguza okwesiphepho, ihlushwa uthando luka-Delsie Moya. Engalali kahle, engasadli nokudla. Okwabe kumhlupha yikho lokho ukwazi ukuthi lentombi ayithanda kuthi kazibulale, yona idlala ngaye nje. Imenza ishende kepha kungavumi nempela ayiyeke. Khona lapho futhi uBen wayesengenwe kakhulu umkhuba omubi wokuphuza. Yena nangaphambili engakabonani noDelsie, esazilibazisa ngawo-Nkosikazi Mavila nezinye izintombi. Kodwa bungamehluli utshwala. Buqale ukumahlula utshwala lapho esengenwa uthando lukaDelsie Moya. Lumngene lwamqeda, ukuphuza lokho uzikhohlisa njengabobonke abaphuzayo abacabanga ukuthi utshwala bubenza bakhohlwe izinhlupheko zabo. Naye-ke wayethi angafikelwa ukumkhumbula uDelsie nokuzindlekela isimilo sakhe, agijime ayophuza. Aphuze ukuze adakwe isibili ethi uzokhohlwa izinhlupheko lezo.

Yikho-ke lokho okwasekumbangele ukuba onde, aguge esentangeni yobunsizwa.

Uthe lapho engena endlini kaDelsie wethuka naye uDelsie ebona umuntu esephenduke ixhegu nje. Ashaywe uvalo. Abuze.

"Hawu, Ben, wonda kangaka? Uyagula yini?"

Angaphenduli uBen, kodwa amehlo akhe athi mbe ebusweni bukaDelsie. UDelsie ahleke aze akhutshwe umbhede bese uyahlala njalo phezu kwawo.

"Yebo, yimina lona oseyixhegwana, mntaka-Moya," kusho uBen ngelomunyu. "Ngingabe ngigugiswe yini konje?"

UDelsie ayaluze embhedeni. "Ben, yini nje kodwa amehlo akho ebomvu kangaka?"

"Agcwele igazi!" kuphendula uBen, esamjamele njalo.

"Agcwele igazi eligcwele enhliziyweni yami."
"Ukuthini lokho?"

"Lalela, Delsie. Kangizile lapha ngoba ngithe encwadini yami ngiyeza. Ngilethwe enye into. Amehlo ami ekujamele nje abone lukhulu; nezindlebe zami zezwa lukhulu. Nakho-ke okungilethe lapha."

"Kangizwa ukuthi ubheda uthini, Ben," esho ngokuntela. "Ukhuluma sengathi kufe umuntu. Nobuso bakho sebunyukubele sengathi kukhulu okubonile. Uboneni-ke?" Awubuze lowombuzo esondela kuye emphathaphatha ebusweni ezigudla kuye.

Kufike kuBen ukuthi kamkhaphezele emsamo amwule ngempama athi, "Laphaya engikubone kusihlwa uqabulana noDick ubuyofunani khona?" Kodwa anqikaze angakwenzi lokho; kuyilapho uDelsie esezibheca kuye isibili. UBen athambe, elule izandla ethi uwolela kuzo uDelsie . . . azelule . . . athi nje uDelsie esangena kuzo, umnyango wavuleka ngendloviyangena. Uvuleke uthi nge isicabha sishayeke odongeni lwendlu, kubesengathi sizohlakazeka.

Aphonseke phakathi uDick Mthakathi elandelwa abalisa abathathu, begqoke kahle nje.

"Yini lomsindo esiwuzwayo?" Kufutheka uDick, esondela kuBen. "Sizwe kukhala izwi lowesifazana lapha endlini? Uwena obewukhala, ntombi?" Ejamela uDelsie.

"Ngi—— ngi——" Kungingiza uDelsie.

Ashaqeke nje uBen ekhohliwe ukuthi muhlola muni lona owenziwayo. Umcabango wakhe ugijime njengonyazi uthi ingabe isu likaDick leli lokumcupha? Abuze.

"Uthini, Dick, uma uthi uzwe umsindo?"

"Khipha isipesheli sakho sisibone," impendulo

kaDick. "Kawazi ukuthi awuvunyelwe ukubasendaweni yabelungu ngalenkathi?"

"Ngikhiphe ipasi?" Kubuza uBen, kuhlwile nje kuye. "Ipasi lani? Uyini wena ungibuza ipasi nje?"

"Ndoda, musa ukuchitha isikhathi sethu, veza ipasi lelo elikuvumela ulale endaweni yomlungu ebusuku."

"Ngikhiphe ipasi ngilinike wena? Ungubani wena " UBen useyathukuthela manje; sekukhanya ukuthi uyacushwa nje kuphela.

Ankewuke uDick. Akhuthuze esikhwameni sakhe esisenqulwini, akhiphe ozankosi abacwebezelayo.

"Uyakwazi lokhu?" Ebuza uBen.

"Uzankosi lowo."

"Khipha isipesheli sakho-ke, usheshise!"

"Wena uyini?" Kuphikelela uBen. "Uma ungumseshi wempela ngikhombise incwadi yakho yakwaHulumeni kuqala. Wena, Mthakathi, kade saside sinqubuzana nawe ezindaweni engingalindele ukuba ngikubone kuzo ungumseshi; futhi wenza izenzo ezingamfanele umseshi. Yini-ke into ezongenza ngikholwe namuhla ukuthi ungumseshi wena?"

"Uchitha isikhathi nje wena Dick," kugwavuma omunye umlisa.

"Mfakeni izinsimbi," kusho uDick.

Bathi bangamfaka, uDick ammukule ngempama emlonyeni.

Afune ezikhwameni zikaBen aze athole isipesheli, asithathe asidabule asilahle laphaya.

"Sikubophela ukungabinapasi lasebusuku," kusho uDick. "Sikubophela futhi ukuba sikufice lapha endlini kaDelsie ungabiziwe, uzokulwa naye ngoba ekwalile. Konje kade wawumsongela?"

UBen akhamise umlomo nje lapho ezwa lokho.

Kumkhanyele bha ukuthi yikho lokhu okwakuqondwe ukuba kwenziwe kuyena.

"Uthini uma uthi bengize lapha ngoba ngiqonde ububi? Ingani ngibizwe yiyo lentombi yathi ngize ngifike namhlanje? Wadabula isipesheli sami kanti uzobuye uthi kanginaso."

"Thula umsindo wena," akusho uDick lokho emshaya ngesibhakela emlonyeni. UBen ophe umlomo. Ophe athule athi du esakhohliwe nokuthi uzothini. Kanti uDick lona ugila lemikhuba nje ungumseshi, usebenzela uHulumeni? Kanti uDick noDelsie bahlose lokhu ukuba bamenze isilo sengubo badlale ngaye kanjena? UDick useqonde ukuba aboshwe ngamacebo ukuze asale noDelsie wakhe engasahlushwa muntu. NoDelsie uyakuvuma lokho? UDelsie okade ezibheca ngaye ethi uyamthanda?

Aphakamise ikhanda lakhe abheke uDelsie amehlo abo ahlangane; kodwa akaDelsie awe phansi masinyane.

"Delsie," uBen esezincengela ngezwi elivevezelayo, "Delsie uyakuzwa lokhu okukhulunywa ngulomuntu?"

"Ngizothini, Ben," impendulo kaDelsie leyo. "Ngakutshela ngathi uDick isoka lami; kangifuni ukumala. Wena wade ungibelesele. Musa ukukhala ngami."

Habe! isho njalo lentombi namuhla? Kanti impela umhlaba ufile nya inkohlakalo?

UBen akhothamise ikhanda lakhe alibeke ezandleni zakhe eziboshwe ngozankosi; akhale.

Bamqhube baphume naye. Athi lapho esesemnyango ezwe uDick enyenyezela uDelsie.

"Ungakhohlwa engikutshele khona. Ubesenkantolo ekuseni ngomuso."

Yebo-ke, nakho okwakuyelwe nguDelsie endlini

kaDick ngalobuya busuku. Babeyokwakha lelisu lokuba bamenze nje; bambophele amanga!

Impela ububi obenziwa abantu kwabanye abantu lapha eGoli buyesabeka, kusho uBen ngenhliziyo, eseqhutshwa amaphoyisa sengathi isigcwelegcwele.

ISAHLUKO 16

ENKANTOLO

Bamqhube uBen abafo bakhona bengancenge zinkobe zamuntu. Bamqhuba nje yena kaboni nalapho ehamba khona kwazise imicabango yakhe yayikude kakhulu. Sekumkhanyela manje uBen ukuthi yonke lenkathi elandelana noDelsie ubegaqela eziko impela. Wakubona sekusobala manje ukwenza kukaDelsie kuye ngalawamasonto adlule ukuthi kanti kwakuqonde kulolubhici. Kepha ingabe yini ebangele uDelsie amzonde kangakho aze amenzele ugibe olubi kangako? Ngeke kube uvalo lokwesaba uDick, ngoba uDelsie noma wabemesaba uDick wabekwenza athanda ukukwenza engambuzanga uDick. Pho, yini kangakho kuDelsie? OkukaDick kwakusobala, ngoba babengazani noDick, futhi yinto yakhona leyo ukuba izinsizwa ezibanga intombi zingabukani kahle. Kanti uBen kazi ukuthi isono sakhe kuDelsie yikuba angamphathi njengoba esejwayele ukuphathwa isoka. UDelsie wabebheke ukuba uBen amkhiphe emsebenzini ahlale naye elokishi njengomfazi wakhe womshado. Amthengele izingubo amondle kubenjeya! Futhi wayebheke ukuba uBen angakhathali ngesimilo sobuntu, angamhloniphi neze. Ebheke ukuba njalo nje uma bendawonye uBen angamhloniphi. Esejwayele leyompilo phela uDelsie.

Uthe-ke lapho ebona uBen "edlala" ngaye wacasuka, wabona ukuthi uyameyisa; uchitha isikhathi sakhe, uthando lwakhe oluvuthelwa ngezenzo ezimbi lwaphenduka inzondo. Nakho-ke okwabe kuguqule uDelsie.

Kodwa uBen wabengakwazi konke lokho!

Lingene icala ngoMsombuluko ekuseni uBen eqala ngqa nokungena ebhokisini lasenkantolo waqhaqhazela wajuluka wabamanzi. Wabakaza nje ebona abantu bembheka kalucezu bebona isiboshwa ebhokisini. Asondele lona ohumushayo athi phakamisa isandla sokudla ufunge uthi: "Konke engizokukhuluma iqiniso lodwa, ngisize Nkulunkulu!"

Umqhubimacala asukume eseneka icala amangalelwe ngalo uBen.

"Ben Lutshani, umangalelwe ngokungena ngenkani endlini kaDelsie Moya lapho esebenza khona kwamlungu uqonde ukugila umkhuba omubi; kwathi lapho amaphoyisa ekubopha walwa nawo wenqaba ukuboshwa; wenqaba nanesipesheli sakho? Uyalivuma lelicala noma qha?"

Aliphike impela uBen. Kubuzwe ukuthi unaye ummeli na? Alandule. Umqhubimacala abize ufakazi wokuqala wakwaHulumeni uDick Mthakathi.

Umqhubimacala ambuze:

"Nguwe obophe lomuntu?"

"Yebo, Mnumzane; ngabizwa ngummangali uDelsie Moya."

"Wakubiza ephi yena?"

"Esendlini yakhe eYeoville lapho esebenza khona. Mina ngangidlula ngomgwaqo lokhu ngangisebenza ebusuku ngalelolanga, ngezwa izwi lowesifazana likhala. Ngaphonseka phakathi ngamfica lomfo phakathi endlini ebambe intombazana leyo ngomphimbo

eyiklinya. Ngithe nalapho ngimbopha walwa nami impi enkulu."

"Nguye isibili lona?"

"Kakungatshazwa lokho Mnumzane ngoba ngamfica khona endlini isibani sivutha ngambona kahle."

Ngokungabi nammeli uBen angakwazi ukumbuza imibuzo uDick.

Aphume ebhokisini kubizwe uDelsie oyena icala limi ngaye.

"Delsie Moya! Delsie Moya!" Kumemeza iphoyisa phakathi enkantolo.

Kungasabeli muntu.

Liphumele phandle, lizungeze inkantolo limemeza.

"Delsie Moya! Delsie Moya!"

Nkwe!

"Delsie Moya! Delsie Moya!"

Umthethimacala alihlehlisele ntambama icala ukuze kuzwakale ukuthi uDelsie wenzenjani.

Ingene inkantolo futhi ntambama.

"Delsie Moya! Delsie Moya!"

Nkwe.

Lichithwe icala uBen aphume phambili.

ISAHLUKO 17

ISIFUNDO ESILUKHUNI

"Nkosi yami!" kububula uDelsie eziphonsa phansi embhedeni wakhe emva kokuqhutshwa kukaBen nguDick Mthakathi nezihlobo zakhe. Wasala uDelsie nemicabango yakhe eshisayo, ebuhlungu.

"O, Nkosi yami," ephinda futhi ngezwi eligcwele

izinyembezi, "ngingeke ngilokothe ngiye enkantolo ngomuso ngiyokhuluma amanga odwa ngoBen. Kepha uma ngingayi uDick uzongibulala."

Kunjalo phela. Wabecabanga ukuthi uma esukela uBen, eziphindisela uyobe wenze into eyomjabulisa, imphumuze. Kanti qha. Yilo lelithuba lokuba athokoze phela ngoba isitha sakhe sabe sesisesandleni sakhe. Kodwa phinde athokoze.

"Ngizokwenzenjani kodwa?" ebubula ngobuhlungu obukhulu benhliziyo. Avuke embhedeni athathe ijazi lakhe alembathe phezu kwazo izingubo zasekhishini lezo ayesazigqokile. Aphume nanguya eqonde khona lapho kuleyondlu ayekade ekuyo mhla bakha isu lokwenza lobububi kuBen. Agijime ngejubane okukaJudas kaIskariot eya kozibethela. Naye uDelsie wayeya khona ukuyozibethela.

Afike lapho angqongqothe kwenye indlu. Bamvulele angene. Bambingelele ngenkulu intokozo ababelapho endlini, kubesobala ukuthi uyaziwa lapha ekhaya uDelsie.

Indlu lena yabe iyinhle ngaphakathi inezimpahla ezinhle zabelungu zemali. Kukhona nopiyane engosini yendlu. Ifana nje nendlu okwakuhlala kuyo uNkosikazi Mavila. Abaniniyo kwakungabantu abafana naye uNkosikazi Mavila nendoda yakhe, abantu abahlala ndawonye bengashadile. Sekuyinto eyejwayelekile lapha eGoli ngangoba abantu abahlezi lenhlalo bayaziwa nje kakhulu bahlonishwe futhi ngisho abantu abakhulu. Kwabe kugcwele nezincwadi ezindaweni zazo, namaphephandaba esilungu nawabantu.

Endlini leyo ngalenkathi kwakuhlezi abantu abayisithupha bonke begqoke kahle impela; futhi bede bekhuluma isiNgisi nesiBhunu.

Abesilisa bebane nabesifazana ababili. Kuyabhenywa osikilidi, kuyaxoxwa. Yebo, nabo abesifazana labo bayabhema, baphonse imilenze phezu kweminye. Kuyathokozwa nje impela ngakho konke, kwazise kwakude kuphuzwa nogologo. Izintombi lezo seziqala ukudakwa; seziyabheda nje. Ukungena kukaDelsie kubathokozise bonke bamgxumele bonke lapho endlini.

"Nangu uNkosazana Moya," kusho enye intombi eyabisidakwe isibili, "Uvelaphi ngalenkathi? Siphi isithunzi sakho uDick?"

"Usabuza uDick wena," kusho enye intombi, "sibe thina sazi ukuthi uDelsie uthanda uBen Lutshani."

Kuhlekwe.

"Hayi mina bo ngiyekeni," kuphendula uDelsie ehlala phansi. "Sebengihluphile labo bafokazi. Ngizozilibazisa nje lapha ngoba sengikhathele yibona bengilandela."

Bamthelele ingilazi aphuze. Abize enye bayigcwalise ayigambalaqe yonke. Amehlo akhe avuthe umlilo manje, afudumale naye. Ulimi lusombuluke. Omunye wabalisa ababelapho asondele kuye kube kuhle nje kuDelsie abeke ikhanda lakhe esifubeni somlisa lowo.

Sebedakwe bonke lapho endlini, kakho osanake omunye. Kanti nezulu libi phandle lapha, linomoyana omubana obandayo. Lomlisa azisondeze kuDelsie amcele ukuba baphumele phandle, avume uDelsie; phela usewudaka nje. Beme eside isikhathi lapho phandle bekhuluma imbude nje bede beqabulana.

Yonke lenkathi uDelsie uyaqhaqhazela sengathi ungenwe amakhaza. Nejazana lakhe akade elambethe kasalazi ukuthi ulibekephi. Bangene endlini, bese beyavalelisa njalo sebethatha imoto phandle behamba. UDelsie kasazi ukuthi wenzani nokuthi uyaphi. Useyisisulu nje salomfana ongenasimilo naye. Lomfana usedlala ngaye nje. Utshwala bubi noma buphuzwa

umuntu wesilisa, kodwa uma sebuphuzwa owesifazana ububi babo budlule kakhulu.

UDelsie kazange azi ukuthi izinto azenza ngalobobusuku zabe ziyini; kazange azi nokuthi ekhaya wabuyela nini. Into ayaziyo ukuthi waphaphama lapho kusayo kumpondozankomo wazibona elele phansi, enhlabathini engembethe lutho, kuphela izingubo lezo ayekade ezembethe. Izingubo ezilulana. Eseqhaqhazela nje amakhaza.

Wezwa nje emzimbeni ukuthi kasaphilile neze kahle; kasayazi into ahambe eyiyo. Azisondeze aziphonse embhedeni angene phakathi kwezingubo. Athi uyalala kungavumi. Ikhanda selinkenketha manje sekuthi kalisakazeke. Usejuluka usemanzi, kepha egodola, egedezela.

Kanti usengenwa umkhuhlane njalo. Pho, lokhu ufica umuntu onomzimba obuthaka osukhandlekile, ungaphumuli nasebususku uhamba imidanso. Umzimba wakhe engawuboneleli, ewenza zonke izinto lezi eziwubulalayo.

Umkhuhlane ungene kuleligobongo lomzimba uze uzoshaya phakathi egazini. Agule uDelsie ngabo lobobusuku kube sengathi kade agula. Amehlo asebomvu klubhu imithambo lena esebunzini seyiqanse isiyimichilo. Inhliziyo seyiduduzela ngamandla amakhulu.

Kuse, abelungu badinge nje ukuthi uphi uDelsie bezwa kuthule kuthe du ekhishini; phinde balibone netiye lasekuseni. Umaqumbane avuke athi usayobheka endlini kaDelsie ukuthi kwenzenjani. Amfice uDelsie egquma embhedeni, esemanzi ukujuluka, ezibinya okwomuntu olunywa isisu. Ethuke kakhulu uNkosikazi omhlophe ebona intombazana seyinjalo. Aphonseke endlini, ashaye ucingo abize udokotela wabo.

Afike udokotela amhlole uDelsie. Athi kalale angavuki, bade bemphuzisa umuthi lowo abenzele wona, athi uzobuya futhi ngomuso azomhlolisisa ukuthi unani.

Ntambama kufike uNosimilo Dhlomo ezombona.

"Nosimilo," kunyenyeza uDelsie; phela usahluleka nokuphefumula, "uyangazi into engiyiyona mina; kodwa ububi kakusiyona into engangizimisele yona ngisemncane."

"Ngiyazi, mntakwethu," kuvuma uNosimilo, ngezwi elipholile.

"Uyazi nawe ukuthi yimina engenza nokuba uBen aboshwe. Namhlanje ngiyabubona ububi bami. Kuthe sengicabanga ngengikwenzile, ngesaba ukuya enkantolo ngiyoqamba amanga ngoBen." Athule ephefumula ngamandla. UNosimilo ambambe ngesandla.

"Ngabulawa uDick, Nosimilo," eqhubeka kancane, "nguye umuntu okwathi mhla ngimbonayo wangiholela ebubini njalo. Nguye owayengilandela njalo engidonsela phansi noma ngithi ngiyavuka. Nosimilo, mntakwethu, ngiyakucela ukuba uma ubonana noBen umtshele konke lokhu engikutshele khona. Uthi angixolele konke engamenza khona okubi. Uzokwenza lokho, Nosimilo, mntakwethu?"

UNosimilo avume ngekhanda kungavumi ukuba akhulume umlomo sewubibitheka.

Kuthule isikhashana, abesethi uDelsie, ngezwi elincane impela.

"Nosimilo!"

"Ngiyezwa, Delsie."

"Ngicela kuNkulunkulu ukuba enze ukuba uBen nawe nize nithandane ngelinye ilanga uBen athole kuwe Nosimilo, umuntu ozoba insika noma eseshade naye, ngoba kimina wathola izibi zodwa. Nawe, Nosimilo, uthole insizwa efana noBen ezihloniphayo.

Ngilinge ngawo onke amandla ukuba ngethembeke kuBen kodwa ngehluleka." Akhale izinyembezi ezishisayo.

UNosimilo akhumbule amazwi awaphiwa unina omzalayo mhla emukayo lapha emhlabeni.

"Mawungangilahli ebusweni bakho; ungasusi kimi uMoya wakho oNgcwele; mawubuyisele kimi injabulo yosindiso lwakho, ungiphase ngomoya ovumayo."

Awalandele ngezwi elipholile lawamazwi kubesengathi uwafunda encwadini. Ade ewaphindaphinda azathule uDelsie esule izinyembezi emehlweni.

"Lalela futhi, Nosimilo," kusho uDelsie, "Ungakhohlwa yisicelo sami nesifiso sami ngawe noBen. Ngineqiniso lokuthi uma uBen engathola umuntu ofana nawe angaba umuntu impela. Ngithi mina uthando lwentombazana ezinikele kuJesu njengawe nje lungamsiza uBen lumakhe."

Ethembise uNosimilo ukuthi kayikumxwaya uBen ngoba emazi ngaye uDelsie kodwa ngothando wathi lokho wokubeka ezandleni zikaNkulunkulu owazi izinto zonke.

Abonge uDelsie ephenduka ebheka ngasodongeni lwendlu ezumeka ubuthongo.

Ngomuso ekuseni afike futhi udokotela amhlole uDelsie aphethe ngokuthi makayiswe esibhedlela ayohlinzwa. Ithemba lonke wathi lisekuhlinzweni kwakhe. Nempela athathwe imoto yeziguli imyise khona esibhedlela.

Udokotela nababheka iziguli basebenze ubusuku nemini besebenzela ukuba aphile . . .

ISAHLUKO 18

KWANTWELA EZANSI

Uthe ukubezwe uNosimilo ukuthi uDelsie usesibhedlela waqonda lapho kusebenza khona uBen eseyakombikela konke abebekuxoxa okuqondene noBen. Amfice uBen eseqedile ukusebenza esesendlini yakhe, ehlaba ikhefu. UNosimilo amangale ebona uBen esengomunye umuntu, lokhu phela kwabe sekuyinkathi ende bahlukana, uBen esondile, amehlo lawa esengene phakathi ezigodini zawo, esemnyama nasebusweni sengathi ushazwe amakhaza. Ezwe ebanosizi kakhulu impela, ngoba wabekwazi okumphethe kabi. Babingelelane ngenkulu intokozo, noBen ethokoza kakhulu ukubona umuntu akade amgcina.

"Habe, nguwe lona Nkosazana Dhlomo?" Embingelela ngenkulu intokozo. "Ngenzeni-ke kodwa ngihlaselwe nguwe nje namhla?"

Amamatheke uNosimilo athi: "Qha, kawenze lutho, Mnu. Lutshani. Ngithunyiwe ngumhlobo wami uNkosazana Moya."

"Hawu! Besengimangele ukuthi ngihanjelwa nguwe nje ngigeze kusiphi isiziba." Bahleke. Besebeqhubeka futhi uBen athi, "Uthini uNkosazana Moya?" Izwi lakhe lingabimnandi neze neze.

"Ungathukutheli, Mnu. Lutshani," kuncenga uNosimilo. "Lalela engize ngakho lapha kuwena."

Ayilande yonke-ke indaba njengoba injalo; kazashiya nelilodwa izwi. Eyilanda ngezwi elaphukileyo nangamehlo agcwele izinyembezi.

Abuze uBen: "Usesibhedlela nje manje?"

"Ehene, kodwa udokotela uthe kangahanjelwa aze abengcono impela."

"Qha, Nkosazana Dhlomo," kuphendula uBen; "kangimbambele magqubu uNkosazana Moya, noma engenze kabi kakhulu. Nami nginezíphonsiso zami. Futhi kusobala ukuthi icala uma likhona kuye likubazali bakhe abahluleka ukumbeka endleleni yobuntombi, bamtshele ngezilingo ezihlupha abesifazana baleminyaka. Ngiyamxolela ngenhliziyo yami yonke."

UNosimilo abesethi: "Ngicela ukuba sikhuleke, Mnu. Lutshani; sikhulekele isihlobo sethu uNkosazana Moya, nathi sizikhulekele."

Baguqe, akhuleke uNosimilo, akhuleke njengamhla ekhuleka ngalobuya busuku isidumbu sikaGwebu sigxaza igazi silele endlini. Akhuleke ngenkolo enkulu, ngethemba elimangalisayo nangamazwi afana nawo-mntwana ethi kunina: "Mame, ngiphe isinkwa phela!"

Ithe iphela leyonyanga uDelsie wabesezilungiselela ukuphindela kubo eSiyamu.

UNosimilo wamfica ebopha uqobo ngeSonto ekuseni ephume ngayizolo esibhedlela. UNosimilo abambe ongezansi.

"Yini, Delsie? Kuyiwaphi?"

"Usabuza? Ngiyakhwela namhlanje ntambama ngisaya ekhaya," kuphendula uDelsie.

"Ungadabuki, Nosimilo, ngizimisele ukubuyela ekhaya, ngiyoqala khona impilo entsha ongifundise yona lapha eGoli ngobuqotho bakho obungashintshiyo. Ngithanda ukubuyela ekhaya ngiyotshela ubaba ukuthi udlala ngobuholi besizwe uma ememeza emihlanganweni ethi "Mayibuye iAfrika" uma izingane zakhe engazi-fundisi ubuntu; uma engamphethe kahle umkakhe, uma yena uqobo engesona isibonelo esihle kwabanye. Ngidonse umame ngendlebe ngithi kuye, kakusizi lutho

ukuya emihlanganweni yamakhosikazi, uma eshiya indlu yakhe yodwa nabantwana bakhe bamantombazana, engabafundisi lutho ngemizimba yabo, nokuphila impilo yobukholwa, nokuzihlonipha. Nosimilo mntakwethu, ngingelokothe ngihlale lapha eGoli besekhona oDick noBen. Kungenzeka babuye bangehlule, ngiwe futhi. Inhliziyo yami ithi mangibuyele ekhaya ngiqale khona impilo yobukholwa. Ungikhonzele kuBen; ngethemba ukuthi nizohlala kahle naye njalo."

UNosimilo ehluleke nokuphendula; kodwa kukho konke lokho kudabuka ezwe efikelwa enkulu intokozo. Ukuzimisela kukaDelsie ukubuyela ekhaya ayozakha busha, kwamenza abonge iNkosi elethe ukukhanya kwayo enhliziyweni kaDelsie. Amtshele nokuthi uBen umxolele ngenhliziyo yonke yakhe; kubesobala ukuthi uDelsie Moya ubuyela ekhaya esesimweni esingcono kakhulu kunesimo ayekuso mhla ephuma ekhaya.

Ntambama uNosimilo amphekezele uDelsie, amyise esiteshini esikhulu saseGoli, akhwele uhazane lwesitimela esisuka ntambama siqonde eThekwini.

Ahambe-ke uDelsie Moya esebuyela ekhaya eSiyamu.

* * * * *

Kusukela mhla lokho-ke uNosimilo noBen babeyizihlobo ngempela bede behambelana njalo. Kuthe ngelinye ilanga uBen athi kuNosimilo usathanda ukuyozingela uDick Mthakathi akezwe ngaye ukuthi uphi, wenzani. Kwamfikela nje lokho uBen ukuba athande ukuba ake ambone uDick, akhulume naye.

Abuze uNosimilo. "Uzihluphelani nje, Ben, ngokuthanda ukubona uDick?"

"Nami kangazi ukuthi ngingenwe yini kodwa ngiyafuna isibili ukuba ngimbone nje imizuzwana eyingcozana."

UNosimilo athi: "Uma bengiwuwena bengizomyeka nje azihlalele lapho ekhona; ngoba manje ungase uzivusele amathambo afileyo."

Azibe nje uBen, kodwa ezimisele ukuba amzingele uDick, athi uma emfica amshaye, amshiye ulimi kube kuphela. Asuke lapho aqonde lapho ecabanga ukuthi uDick angase amfice khona eDoornfontein.

ISAHLUKO 19

KWAMTSHEKULA

Abadala banesaga esithi: "Woqotha uzufike kwaMtshekula." Lokho kufana nokuthi "kakukho qili lazikhotha emhlane."

UDick Mthakathi waphindela ekhaya emva kwecala engaseyena umuntu ophile kahle, ingqondo lena yakhe sengathi iphambene ulaka selumphendule ingwe eke yahlaselwa. Uma wabekhona uDelsie ngaleyonkathi wabezombulala khona lapho, bese ezibulala naye. Noma ukwonakala kwecala likaBen, loniwa nguDelsie kwabe kukubi nakho kakhulu, kodwa into eyafika yamthukuthelisa isibili inkulumo kaJack Mlilo, omunye walabobalisa ayede ehamba nabo uma ezogila imikhuba. Kwathi ngemuva kwecala uJack Mlilo wathi kuye:

"Wethu, Dick, mina ngigeza izandla kukho konke lokhu. Uzwile ukuthi utheni umlungu osiphetheyo lapho ekhuluma ngokwonakala kwecala likaBen? Uthe amacala ethu asevama ukungaphumeleli enkantolo ngoba sengathi kakusiwona amacala eqiniso. Uthe sengathi thina nawe abantu esibabophayo siyabashaya, sibakhele ubufakazi bamanga, wathi uma singaqaphi

uzosiceba komkhulu ahlolisiswe amacala ethu. Ukuzwile konke lokho, Dick?"

Anyukubale abe yizulu liphendula uDick.

"Ngizwile. Uthini pho ngalokho? Sewuyabaleka?"

"Kangibaleki, Dick; ngithi nje asiyeke ukusukelana nabantu bengone lutho ngenxa yezintombi."

Athule uDick; kodwa athi ngomcabango wakhe: "Ucabanga ukuthi kuzothi ngoba sekushisa bese ethi uyahlehla kanti besihamba naye kusekuhle? Sizobona."

Bese imicabango yakhe ibuyela kuDelsie.

"Lentombazana ingenze nje? Idlala ngami icishe ingenze kabi nakubelungu bami iyongenza isiphukuphuku nasenkantolo? Ngizoyilungisa, naye lowamfokazi uLutshani, ngizomlungisa. Ngisuke ngamedelela ngicabanga ukuthi uDelsie kamthandi kakhulu kanti kakunjalo. Sizobona oyohleka ekugcineni."

Nanguya ehamba nalemicabango emibi yonke eya lapho kugaywa khona utshwala obuthiwa isikokeyana nesigomfane, obumbelwa emigodini bubilele khona lapho.

Uyaziwa lapho kulelojalidi uyesatshwa futhi: ngoba ulaka nenzondo yakhe bekwaziwa. Wamfica ekhona lapho uJack Mlilo ephuza esedakiwe nje uqobo. Umlomo lona sewude uvuleka nje amazwi eziphumela. Ebhediswa utshwala.

UDick azenzise sengathi bebengaxabene.

"Kunjani, Jack, mfana?" Embingelela. "Sewulapha? Kade ngikufuna."

"Ngilapha, baba," kuphendula uJack. "Bewungifunelani, ndoda yezigigaba."

"Bengifuna size khona lapha kesizomanzisa imiphimbo, mfana," kuphendula uDick.

Bayimanzise-ke imiphimbo leyo, baze badakwe babe imiquba.

"Uzihluphelani wena, Dick, ude ulandela uLutshani: ingani usekwahlulile nje?"

Ayinyathele emsileni: "Wahlule ubani?" Kubuza uDick, ethukuthela. "Wahlule ubani. Ngake ngehlulwa mina? UGwebu waya ngaphi? Kangimyisanga emathuneni?"

"Hawu!" Izwi likaJack Mlilo lelo. Wakhipha lelo nje, kodwa walikhipha maqede utshwala baphela ekhanda. NoDick wethuka eselikhiphile, wabona ukuthi usefile. Wagxuma wema laphaya.

"Uthi hawu? Konje sewuzogijima uyongiceba kwabakhulu?" Engakaligwinyi lelo, bese ephonseka kuJack emgwaza. Amgwaze kanye, kabili, kathathu . . . kaningi impela. Engasazenzi naye, into emenzayo wabesephambene ingqondo, enziwa uvalo nenzondo. Umsindo wokuwa kukaJack, nokukhala kwakhe, kwaletha abantu beza ngamajubane bezobona ukuthi kwenzenjani. Umninindlu inkosikazi eyayilishende likaDick, ingene iphonseke endlini. Ithi ingenile futhi iphume sengathi inhlamvu yesibhamu, amehlo esegoloza nje, seyahluleka nokuphefumula.

"Maye! Maye!" Imemeza igijima ingazi nokuthi iyaphi. "Nangu umuntu ebulala omunye bo!"

UDick lapha endlini usebomvu igazi, kepha uyahleka. Uhlekisa okwomuntu osangene ikhanda ongayazi into ayenzayo. Ummese agwaze ngawo uJack Mlilo usawuphethe. U*Pick-up*, imoto yamaphoyisa, yafika lapho lokhu umkhosi bawuhlabe bawulawula, yamfica esawuphethe esasinekile!

Imthathe imuke naye . . .

* * * * *

UBen Lutshani agalcleke kulelojalidi ezofuna uDick lowo ngawo lowomzuzu imoto yamaphoyisa iphuma naye. Seyifikile eyakwaHulumeni ezothatha isidumbu sofileyo uJack Mlilo. Wezwa okushiwo abantu nabo sebexokozela nje engekho ozwayo ukuthi ubani uthini. Sekuxokozelwa nje. Asuke lapho aqonde kuNosimilo eseya kombikela ngalomhlola osuwenzekile.

"UDick Mthakathi, uboshiwe; ubulele uJack Mlilo, omunye umseshi."

ISAHLUKO 20

UTHANDO YIMPILO

Uthando luyinto edlula zonke emhlabeni. Luyathokozisa kunezinto zonke, lujabhise futhi kunezinto zonke. Lunamandla angehlula impi enkulu, kanti futhi lubaphakamise ngobukhulu balo, lubenze abantu abanesithunzi nodumo. Baningi olubafica benodumo, behlonishwa lubadilizele phansi, phansi phansi ekudelweni.

Lunjalo uthando.

UNosimilo Dhlomo wabengazi ukuthi uthando lukaBen luzomngena kanjeya; kodwa kwathi lapho uBen ethi usayofuna uDick, wezwa efikelwa uvalo uNosimilo lokuthi uBen angase alinyazwe nguDick. Uthe eseluhlolisisa loluvalo waluzwa luyinto egcwele enhliziyweni yakhe. Wezwa engasathandi nje ukwahlukana noBen.

Wazixolisa ngokuthi kwenziwa ngoba uBen eyisihlobo sakhe benoDelsie. Kodwa nakho lokho uthe

esekuhlolisisa wakubona ukuthi kakulona iqiniso, iqiniso lime obala lokuthi uyamthanda uBen.

Kwafika amahloni amakhulu ukuthi uBen lona umthanda nje akakakhulumi lutho yena ngothando kuye. Amanye amahloni afike lapho esecabanga futhi ngempilo ebikade iphilwa nguBen lapha eGoli azabonane noDelsie nje.

Kodwa kukho konke lokho, okwabakukhulu kuye ukuthi uBen usengene ungenile enhliziyweni yakhe. Wezwa efikelwa amahloni nokuthokoza nkathi inye.

Abuye azixolise ngokuthi kakukho okubi akwenzileyo kuDelsie noBen besaqhuba bobabili: kazange eme phambi kukaDelsie ngoBen. Eqinisweni uma uDelsie kathathanga isinyathelo sokuba akhaphezele uBen kuye wabengeke nempela avume nje ukuba uthando lwakhe luze lube kulesisimo olwabe selukuso. UDelsie uqobo lwakhe wamncenga ukuba inhliziyo yakhe ithambe ngakuBen uma sekuhambe izinsuku; wathi kungamthokozisa yena Delsie uma bengavumelana noBen ngothando.

Lokhu kwamnika ikhefu elincane uNosimilo noma inhliziyo yakhe yayisinda. Lemicabango yayigijima ngamakhulu amandla engqondweni yakhe, waze waphuma ekhishini lapho ayesaqedela umsebenzi wangemuva kokudla kwasemini, waya endlini yakhe ethi uyocambalala.

UBen wamfica lapho eseze ngodaba lokumbikela ngokuboshwa kukaDick Mthakathi.

Ethuke embona ekhotheme ubuso bakhe ebumboze ngezandla.

"Yini, Nkosazana Dhlomo?" Kubuza uBen. "Ngathi ngizokuxoxela indaba ngakufica ukhala?"

Aphakamise ubuso bakhe uNosimilo, alinge ukumamatheka.

"Kakulutho, Mnu. Lutshani; ngiphethwe ikhanda nje."

Bathule isikhashana, abesethi:

"Zindaba zini lezo oze nazo?"

"Sengizosale sengixoxa lena ebengithi ngizogcina ngayo ngoba nakhu uphethwe ikhanda."

UNosimilo ahleke.

"Kanti unezindaba ezingaki?"

"Zimbili zwi," kuphendula uBen, esondela eduze kwakhe ehlala phansi. "Eyokuqala yilena: Ngiyakuthanda, Nkosazana Dhlomo. Ngikuthanda ngayo yonke inhliziyo yami. Ngiyazi kangikufanele neze; nokuthi bengihlezi inhlalo eyahlukile kakhulu kweyakho, Nkosazana. Kodwa phezu kwakho konke lokho ngiyazibika kuwe ngenhliziyo yami yonke."

UNosimilo athule athi du, kodwa amehlo akhe engawagudluzi nje ebusweni bukaBen.

"Ngiyazi," kuqhubeka uBen, eyaluza, "ukuthi ukukwedelela ukuba ngikhulume kanje kuwena, Nkosazana; kodwa ngathathwa isimilo sakho nobuntombi bakho ukuze ngikuthande kangaka. Noma ngingakufanele, kodwa ngineqiniso lokuthi uma ungangizwela ngingaba umuntu ongcono kakhulu ngikhuthazwe ngiphaswe nguwe."

Ngoba uNosimilo wabeyintombazana ethanda iqiniso engayifuni inkohliso, kwathi lapho uBen esezibika kanjalo kwafika kuye umbuzo wokuthi. "Wena uyamthanda uBen na?" Awuphendule, masinyane: "Yebo, ngiyamthanda nami."

Pho-ke usazofihlelani kuye ukuthi uyamthanda?

Athi angaqeda uBen uNosimilo ambheke ngamehlo akhe angesabi lutho athi kuye.

"Ngiyezwa, Mnu. Lutshani ukuthi uthini. Uma uneqiniso impela lokuthi uthando lwami lungase lube

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into enkulu kuwena, ngiyavuma nami ngiyakuthanda noma ngingaziboni iziqu lezo ongibabazela zona."

Athule.

Asukume uBen ambambe ngezandla babambane ngoxolo nokubonga okukhulu.

Uyasuka lapho uBen uyamxoxela ngokuboshwa kukaDick ngoba egwaze uJack Mlilo.

Kwathi mhla lithethwayo lelocala lamlahla uDick Mthakathi wanqunyelwa ukuphanyekwa ePitoli.

Kuze kubenamuhla nje iningi labantu kalazi ukuthi uThomas Gwebu wabulawa ngubani.