

# Inkanankana

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## INKANANKANA

### I

Izinkomponi zamalahle zasezivuthiwe. Zikhipha amalahle ubuthaphuthaphu. Abaninizo bahlangana bakha umfelandawonye. Umfelandawonye waqamba amagatsha ezindaweni ezikude eziningi. Lamagatsha anikwa umsebenzi wokuqomisa nokuqasha izinsizwa emazweni akubo, azithumele ezinkomponi zamalahle. Izinsizwa zaziqashwa kwaNgwane, kwaSoshangane, kwaNomahasha nakwezinye izindawo. Ziza ngamabhasi nangezitimela. Zithi zingafika ezinkomponi zingene ezinkeleketheni zimbe amalahle.

NgeMigqibelo zihlobe ziconse. Kube yilesa naleso sizwe sihlobe ngesiko lakubo. Kuqhudlwane ngemidlalo enhlobonhlobo. Zibuye zithole imvume kubaphathinkomponi ukuba zivakashele emizini ebudebuduze. Ziyozifunela okuphuzwayo futhi ziyoqomisa. Amasoka aphumelele, izishimane zehluleke. Izintombi zasenkangala ziyagqoka. Amatshitshi ayawa, awiswe izinsizwa zambhinca, abe amaqhikiza. Ziwithathe zihambe nawo ayozigana lapho zivela khona. Ezinye nokho ziwabambise udonga. Ziwenze ahlale ebheke okhalweni njalo, akhale ngontab' ezikude zingumasithela. Amanye amaqhikiza azame ukuzihuzula izingani zawo, ngoba engafuni ukuyokwendela "emakhaya" lapho kulinywa ngemikhono, lapho kudliwa izijabane, incwancwa, nezinkobe; lapho kuhanjwa ngezinyawo imimango emide. Izinkuni namanzi kuthwalwa kude ngamakhanda. Kugaywa ngemikhono ematsheni. Amanye azinikele ekulutheleni ngamanzi lolothanjwana. Luphole luphele nya.

Budebuduze nezinkomponi zamalahle kukhona indawo eyisabelo sabantu. Igama layo iSwartbymekeer. ESwartbymekeer uHulumeni waqoqela khona bonke abantu ase-

bedinwe impilo yasezinkomponi, neyasemapulazini, neyasemadolobheni, asebefuna ukuyozilimela amasimu nezingadi. UHulumeni wase ebabekela isikhulu esizoba yinhloko yabo. Isikhulu kwaba uZembe Nkosi.

UZembe wabumba ibandla lamadoda omuzi wase-Swartbymekeer, kanye namanye amadoda asezindaweni eziphethwe nguye. Walibiza ngokuthi uBandlakhulu. Nguye-ke uBandlakhulu owayethetha amacala, alungise tuthi izindaba ezithile emihlanganweni yakhe. UBandlakhulu wasekhethe amadoda athile ayisithupha wawabiza ngokuthi yiQoqo. IQoqo yilona elalisizana noSikhulu Zembe.

UBandlakhulu wathuma amadoda athile kanye noZembe ukuba kuyiwe ePitoli kuyocelwa ukuba umuzi waseSwartbymekeer unikwe igama lesintu. Leso sicelo samjabulisa kakhulu uHulumeni. Wathi nempela yena ufuna imizi yabantu inikwe amagama esintu, abazakuwazi abantu ukuthi aqondisa ukuthini ngoba angolimi abalwejwayele. Wathi yena ufuna ukuthi isizwe lesa naleso siqhube ngamasiko aso emvelo. Wukuthi nje lawo masiko angaphazamisi inqubekela phambili yesizwe. Kuthe lapho kuthiwa abalisho igama abalifunayo bathi bafuna kuthiwe kuseBaleni.

“EBaleni? Lisho ukuthini lelo gama?”

“Sisho ngoba sibekwe ebaleni nje, ehlané. Asikho oSuthu, asikho kwaZulu, asikho kwaNgwane. Kepha simile esigangeni nje.”

Abuyela eSwartbymekeer amadoda esethenjisiwe ukuthi azobuye aziswe ngomphumela wesicelo sawo. Emuva kwenyanga yabuya impendulo yathi,

“Isicelo senu siphumelele.”

Lacishwa-ke elithi Swartbymekeer. Kwachuma elithi kuseBaleni.

EBaleni ziyavakashela izinsizwa eziqhamuka ezinkomponi ngamasonto. EBaleni kuphuzwa obombuso, noma obomsebenzi. Obemali abukho. Yisicelo esasicilelwa ngu-Bandlakhulu lesa. Kuphuzwa obokwakha, obamalima, obezipheko—iminjonjo nemibondo, kuphuzwe obabayeni nobemithimba.

Amajaha avela ezinkomponi ayengahlabeki umxhwele eBaleni. Wona ayesejwayele obemali ‘yami’ emizaneni eseduze nezinkomponi. Uma evakashele lapha azohlala eside isikhathi engaphuzi. Azamule, azamule.. Kuthi ngelikade kube yima bebuthola.

Omunye walenuzi kwakungokaSilulu Masilela. Lapha kwaMasilela kwakukhona nentombazana esiqinile, uSizakele. Nakhona lapha ekhaya kwaMasilela ayefika amajaha avela ezinkomponi ezozifunela utshwala. Kanti kuzohamba kuhambe aze abone noSizakele. Phakathi kwalamajaha kwakukhona nelinye elivela eSwazini, uBhevula. Wayesebenza enkomponi ngaleso sikhathi.

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Kwaphela izinyanga eziyisithupha ezifihlile kwabadala uSizakele. Seberngubha kwamuma ematheni ukuthi uzothi ngokabani lomkhokha. Wayenqena ukuyogana kwaNgwane. Ukukhomba umnikazi ndaba kwakuzomsondeza ukuyoba ngumfazi kwaNgwane. Waphetha ngokuthula.

Yahamba imizuzu, namalanga nezinyanga. Lwafika olungathetheleli.

“Yise kaSizakele,” kusho inkosikazi kaMasilela.

“Useyagula yini!”

“Kabi.”

“Kumqale nini?”

“Entathakusa.”

“Ngiyezwa.”

Lashona kukubi. Kwasá. Lashona nelesibili. Obesithathu ubusuku bathi kawudabuli ntombazana. Wangena esezilahla kuSilulu Masilela unina kaSizakele.

“Sekukubi. Useyadlula,” waphuma futhi waphindela lapho umphefumulo usukhahlula ufuna indawo yokuphuma ubuyele kumniniwo.

Waphuma uSilulu wema ebaleni. Wakhuluma nabaphansi, ekhulumela phansi. Wesuka lapho waziphonsa lapho umphefumulo usuvalelisa khona, ethi angimbone ngoba angazi noma ngabaphansi noma izifamona ezidala lenhlikilili.

“Sizakele!”

“Baba.”

“Usuze uyedlula wedlulela ebumnyameni. Umsebenzi wabaphansi lo.

Ufa nje ubani?” kubuza uSilulu ngeliphansi.

“Nguye.”

“Uba?”

“ULubhede.”

“ULubhede?”

“Yebo.”

Waphuma uMasilela. Uthe nje esesegumeni, yazibika ingane. Wasale esememeza khona lapho.

“Kuyini?”

“Intombi,” kumemeza izwi lesalukazi.

“Kuzoba uPhikwase,” kumemeza umkhulu wako.

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Ibandla lakwaSikhulu Zembe Nkosi laqala ukubuthana ngasemvana kokubuya kwezinkomo inhlazane. Amadoda ayevela ezifundeni ezahlukene. Alibangise komkhulu. Ayevela koGalini, koMlomo, koKelesi, nakoBhiliti. Amanye avela ezinkomponi, koNyonyane, koDayimane, nako-Alibhiyoni, nasemapulazini awoSitini, nawoMagibela, nawoMani, nawoBhuletimbahi, nawoFanemeva, nakwamanye.

UZembe ngowozalo lobukhosi bakwaNgwane. Unamandla okuthetha amacala ombango nezingxabano phakathi kwabantu abansundu. Unikwe lawomandla ngokomthetho kaHulumeni. Abantu ubabhekele uHulumeni.

UZembe unesiqu, ukhuluma ngelincane, uluhlaza. Usho ngamehlo ahlabayo okwendlondlo. Unesiphongo esikhulu namadevu amade aphothwayo; uthi lapho esethetha icala, esecabanga kanzima, umbone ede ephulula wona amadevu akhe. Ukhuluma kamnandi nabantu. Ungumuntu wengevu. Akephani yinhlava. Akushiywa ukudla kwakhe. Kodwa lapho esekugweba uze ukhohlwe ukuthi lomuntu nguye lo, uthi ase kungomunye. Usho ekugweba ngesono sakho. Uzothi lapho esezakusika ngenkemba yesinqumo aqale ngokukulilela, akutoboze uze nawe wethembe ukuthi

uyaphepha esijeziweni. Uyothi eseya esigwebeni, kubande amathumbu. Akhulume akuphephethe kuhle kwegundane likuluma endlebeni.

Selibuthene ibandla lixoxa lizidlela ingevu, aqhamuke uZembe. Limbingelele ibandla,

“Nkosi!”

Ahlale esigqikini sakhe. Aqhwebe enye indoda, athi ukufethefetheza nayo ngesiBhunu. IsiBhunu usikhipha ngamakhala. Uma ulalele esikhuluma ngale ekusithekeni ungala nje ukuthi kukhuluma iBhunu. IsiNgisi uyasiphoqa nje; akasazi kahle njengoba azi isiBhunu. Kusukume umgwebi athi,

“Ummangali nguSilulu Masilela. Umangalela uBhevula Lubhede.”

Kusukume unobhala amemeze.

“Silulu Masilela, ukhona?”

“Ngikhona.”

“Bhevula Lubhede, ukhona?”

“Nkosi.”

Unobhala abesethi uMasilela makakhiphe isimangalo. Nebala asikhiphe, upondo neshumi losheleni, asibeke etafuleni likanobhala. Aphindele endaweni yakhe, athi ukufika khona ame.

“Thatha-ke, Masilela,” kukhuluma umgwebi, “okuyikhona ukumangalele kulelibandla lomnumzane.”

“Ngimangalele uBhevula Lubhede. UBhevula ufane noklebe oklebhule itshwele lami, uSizakele ozalwa yimina. Ngiyema lapho.”

“Ngiyamphikisa uSilulu,” kubuyisa uBhevula. “Lendaba ayilethe kulelibandla elihloniphekileyo, angiyazi.”

“Sukuma Sizakele,” usukunyiswa ngumgwebi, abese embuza,

“Uyamazi lomuntu wakwaLubhede?”

Du.

“Khulumal!”

“Yebo.”

“Uyathandana naye?”

“Qha.”

"Kodwa wake?"  
 "Ngake."  
 "Nini?"  
 "Angisazi."  
 "Kusenjalo namanje?"  
 Du.  
 "Ngiyabuza."  
 "Angazi."  
 "Lomntwana ombelethe emhlane ngowakhe?"  
 "Ehene."  
 "Wamazisa ngalomntwana wakhe?"  
 "Kunjalo."  
 "Sukuma Lubhede. Kunjalo na?"  
 "Kunjalo."  
 "Yebo-ke. Siyezwa. Kukhona othanda ukukukhuluma?"  
 "Kukhona."  
 "Khuluma."  
 "Ngihamba nendoda. Nayo ifuna ukuphonsa elayo."  
 "Kulungile, ayihlatshwa mvusi."  
 Isukume impunga uMtata wakwaHedane. Inongiyane ekhanda, imnene, ilindile, amehlo ayo agcwele umusa. Ithi lapho ikhuluma nawe iwambeke kuwe. Izwi layo liyandondozela. Nxa uyibukisisa uyathola ukuthi ngumuntu wasebandla.  
 "Mnumzane, nani beKunene. Ngiyabonga imvume. Mina ngithunywe ngumnumzane osiphethe, njengoba ephethe lo oweNkosi. Ngiyabuza, Masilela, uzelwe nini lomntwana?"  
 "Uma ngikhumbula kahle usezoqeda unyaka wesibili."  
 "Umbikele nini uLubhede?"  
 "Ubengekho lapha."  
 "Ngibuza ukuthi umbikele nini?"  
 "Ngiyakutshela ngithi wayengekho kuleli."  
 "Wayephi?"  
 "Angimazi."  
 "Nokho wambikela."  
 "Ngabikela umnumzane."

"Yeka lesiphukuphuku sendoda," kukhahla enye indoda, "phendula umbuzo wakhe. Uyakubuza ukuthi wambikela yini uLubhede? Sonke sithanda ukuthi usichazele kahle kuleyo ndawana."

"Angimbikelanga."

"Nanso-ke impendulo yendoda," kukhuluma enye indoda, "ungalokhu uzula nehlathi njengembabala ishaywe inhlamvu."

Iqhubeke impunga,

"Wo, ngiyabonga, Masilela. Usimze wasuyommangalela nje?"

"Yebo."

"Wakutshela nini lomntanakho?"

"Mhlazana engena endlini."

"Kuso sonke lesi sikhathi ezethwele akakutshelanga?"

"Kungavuka obabamkhulu beme ngezinyawo."

"Wena-ke wawusugijimela ukuyomangala?"

"Iqiniso."

"Wathi umangalela ubani?"

"UBhevula Lubhede."

"Sengizwile."

Wahlala phansi uHedane. Usezigwaze ngowakhe uMasilela.

Umgwebi wasecela ukuba iQoqo liyohlangana likhiphe isinqumo. Nempela aphakama amadoda eQoqo ayoqoqana odwa ngale esithe. Alithathanga mizuzu eminingi ngesinqumo. Yasukuma enye yamadoda alo Iqoqo yathi,

"Mnumzane, nebandla, icala kasilifumani kuBhevula. Silibona liphezu kukaSilulu."

Lathula ibandla du. Akwangabikho nothinta isikhwehlela. Asimze akhana ngamehlo amadoda. Imibuzo yagcwala emehlweni awo. Isikhathi semibuzo sesedlule. Munye kuphela osenethuba manje; iSikhulu. Wasukuma uZembe wasethi,

"Sukuma Bhevula nawe Silulu. Silulu!"

"Nkosi."

"Bengithi uyindoda. Usho ngobhebhenene. Lentshebe utshani nje?"

Laphubuka lahleka ibandla. Yakhuza induna. Lathula. "Ubuthe lelibandla," kuqhuba uZembe, "ulibuthele umbhedo wodwa. Yebo, ngiyakuzwela, Masilela, ukuzala akubhulwa. Umntwana yinja yona ihamba iyokukudonsela amanzi ngomsele. Sonke silapha nje sizele. Elendoda alivezelwa zinyo ngoba kungelendoda. Ngiyakudabukela. Nokho isikhundla sakho sobudoda usithunazile. Ufanele ukujeziswa. Siyezwa ukuthi umntanakho kakubikelanga ngomonakalo ngesikhathi esiyiso. Kepha esekutshelile, wenza iphutha elibi. Awumbikelanga ofanele ukubikelwa. Wasimze wathwala isinqukuza sekhandla wayobikela ibandla. Ibandla lenkosi akulona lokudlala iziphukuphuku ezilele phezu kwamehlo. Lomntwana wakwaLubhede wamshunqisela ngaziphi izinyamazane? Wamkhipha ngaliphi isango? Waze wambulala ehamba-ke umntanomntanakho, uyongibuza uzungiphale ulimi, ngifunga uSomhlolo e-Mbilaneni. Uyobuzwa ubuhlungu lapho lengane isigila imikhuba ezweni; isidla izithelo engafanele ukuzidla.

"IQoqo lami lithi unecala. Nami ngithi unecala. Ufanele ukushaywa. Ngiyakushaya ngoswazi. Inkomo nembuzi. Hlala phansi."

Labonga ibandla. Waqhubeka,

"Bhevula!"

"Nkosi."

"Awusekho kulelibanga ozenzele lona. Icala usuyaliqonda. Yebo icala leqiwa endleleni. Angivumelani neQoqo ekutheni awunacala. Yaziqhuba lokho. Nokho liwenzile umsebenzi walo. Liyabongeka. Anginalo ilungelo lokuzehlukanisa nesinqumo salo. Nami-ke ngithi awunalo icala. Vimba lomntakaMasilela; ubusulobola umfazi wakho. Hlala phansi."

Kwaduma u "Nkosi. Elethu, mngani."

Laliyachitheka ibandla. Seliyobuya ngomuso lizodla inkomo noma imbuzi yalo. Zagcwala izindlela. NoLubhede kanye nomphelekezeleli wakhe babamba ebheke kwaNgwane.

Wanele wafika ekhaya uBhevula waqoqa imali. Kwazanywa ukuthenga inkomo eNtilasifali. Nempela wayithola

esifundeni saseGalini ngoba ezakwaNgwane azilubeki eNtilasifali. Kwathunywa umuntu ukuba ayimukise. Wanele wafulathela umqhubi wayo, yawiswa.

Emuva kwesikhathi kwase kufika umbiko ovela kuZembe othi uSizakele weqe nengane. Akaziwa lapho ekhona. Ake beme abakwaLubhede ngamalobolo kuze kutholakale uSizakele.

## II

Umuzi kaBhevula Lubhede kwakungumuzi omncane, kukwandlu nganye. Wawakhe phansi kwegquma, ubheke impumalanga. Imisebe yelanga ingena ngomnyango ize iyoshaya emsamo lapho ilanga liphuma. Ngasohlangothini lomuzi lwangasekhohlwa kugobhoza umfula ongashiyo. UBhevula wabe esabuya ezinkomponi.

Indlu yayiyinye vo. Amadladla ayemathathu; elokupheka, elotshwala nelezimpahla. Okwesine kwakuyinqolobane eyayithe qekelele ngasenhla.

Isibaya simi endaweni yaso njengayo yonke imizi yabantu. Sasimi siqondene nomnyango wendlu. Kepha singasalali lutho. Sekuphele unyaka nesigamu izinkomo zangenelwa imbo embi yaziqothula nya, kwasala kukhala ibhungane ezibayeni zamadoda.

Umphathi wezempilo yezilwane wakwaHulumeni wabe esekhipha izwi elithi: zonke izinkomo ezikulesigodi esinembo kuhle ziqedelwe kubulawe nezingakaguli. Kwabikelwa izikhulu nezinduna zonke ngalelizwi. Zachazelwa kahle ukuthi inhloso yesimemezelo ukuvimbela lembo ukuba ingandi nezwe lonke. Amanye amadoda alisola lelizwi, abuzana ukuthi ukuze lembo ifike lapha yeza kanjani? Ayizanga ngomoya na? Pho wona umoya uyovinjelwa kanjani? Athi wona abona ukuthi kuhloswe ukubhubhisa izinkomo zemvelo khona bezothengiselwa lokhu okuyizimomfu, okunobhici, okunobisi olugcwele amanzi, okuthambile, okongiwayo njengabantu, okulaliswa ezindlini njengabantu. Baqinisa bathi umuntu onsundu angebe nayo indlela yokuphathwa kwezimomfu.

Kwathi ababemele umphathi wezempilo yezilwane bathi qha yonke lensolo ayinazimpande. Kepha idalwa iminjunju esuka ezinhliziyweni, isuswa ubuhlungu ngokulahlekelwa izinkomo zabo. AbakwaHulumeni babachazela kahle abantu ukuthi inhloso yinye vo, ukunqoba isifo sezinkomo. Kwavunyelwana. Kwembiwa izinkelekethe zemigodi.

Zabulawa nezingakaguli, zangcwatshwa. Abantu abaningi basale sebhalela ingcuba.

Kukuzo lezo nkelekethe lapho nezikaBhevula zangcwatshwa khona. Kwangcwatshwa izimbenambena zezinkabi, kwangcwatshwa izinsengwakazi. Lwaphela ubisi, kwathuthwa amagula ayobekwa enqolobaneni.

Kulezinkomo zikaBhevula kwakukhona inkabi emdubu, igama layo kunguMavukuthu. UQhathumunyu wayeyithanda kakhulu lenkabi. Kwathi nalapho ibulawa yona wavala amehlo akhe wakhalela phakathi. Nasebusuku obalandela walala ephupha uMavukuthu lowo. Bade bemuzwa esememeza ethi:

“Heyi, yona, Mavukuthu! iyaphi?”

Kwathi lapho engasekho uMavukuthu, sezingasekho izinkomo, kwasa ngokunye manje kumfana. Wazibuza waziphendula ukuthi kazi usezokwenzani-ke manje? Ikhaya akalejwayele emini. Ulejwayele ekuseni nantambama nasebusuku. Umfana owejwayelene nekhaya emini umnqolo. Kepha uQhathumunyu wayengekhona lokho. Wabiza izinja wayozingela. Ukubhulana namahlathi efuna nezibanda kwamenelisa nje; akwaze kwamhlaba umxhwele njengokwelusa. Isigcino waqala ukuhamba namanye amabhobhodlana nawo asephelelwe imisebenzi yokwelusa. Baqala manje baxoxa ngezobunsizwa bengezona; baxoxa ngemvunulo nokunye, benze izinqumo, behlukane baphindele emakubo.

“Intandane enhle ngumakhothwa ngunina.” Wangena exhibeni uQhathumunyu waxoxa nonina.

Ilanga liphumile empumalanga, ezintabeni zasoBonjeni. Likhuphuka ngesineke ngendlela yalo yemihla. Isibhaka-bhaka naso sicwebile. Emithini izinyoni ziyacula zenanela ukuphuma kwelanga nobuhle bemvelo engumsebenzi

wezandla zoMdali. Yileyo naleyo icula eyayo ingoma. Azilalelani, azishayelani ihlombe.

ULubhede umile, weyeme ngesibaya ubheke phakathi, kuso sona lesa esesoma. Uphakathi kwemicabango yase-mini edunga umculo ovela emithini.

UMaDlamini wafika wahlala phansi, buqamamana nomyeni wakhe. ULubhede akambonanga owakwakhe. Wezwa ngezwi nje selithi,

“Ngiyasesaba isifo esiqede izimpahla.”

Kwayima embona uBhevula, kodwa akaze amphendula ngazwi. Waqhubeka uMaDlamini,

“Sesize sishiywa ngabantwana besebancane.”

“Bayaphi?”

“Ngilapha nje, baba, ngicelwe ngumfana. Uthi angimcelele kuwe ukuthi ufuna ukuyozibambela itoho.”

“Umuphi lowo?”

“UQhathumunyu.”

“Uthini?”

“Uthi ucela imvume ake ayozibambela itoho emfimfini.”\*

“Kazi usekhohlisene nobani-ke.”

“Ngiyasho, ngiyaqinisa ukuthi usehuhene nabo oMadli-nyoni laba asebevame ukuba baningi lapha ekhaya.”

Wanxapha uBhevula wasethi,

“Lizoba linye elabo, ngifunga amaLokothwayo. Ngiyobasusa ngenduku bangayixoxi indaba; abangazi.”

“Sekwenzekile. Usushaye phansi, Lokothwayo.”

“Uthi lesiphukuphukwana esinguQhathumunyu siyazi ukuthi umsebenzi wasemfimfini awunsangu?”

“Angazi Lokothwayo. Nami ngiyazibuza ukuthi kazi Qhathumunyu wami uyowubamba na?”

“Uzibuza ukuthini lokhu nina bafazi okwenu ukukhohlisana nezingane bese niza kithi nizokusigcoba ngamafutha.”

UMaDlamini amamatheke abesethi, “Webantu, ake nimuzwe-ke uyise kaQhathu! Okwenu phela nina madoda ukukhukhulela izibi kubafazi benu. Akukho nolunci, Lokothwayo, engike ngacebisana ngalo nengane. Isuke yazicelela nje.”

“Ehene ngoba yazi ukuthi uzoyivuna.”

\* Okusansimbi okubizwa ngokuthi yithini.

“Ingithume kuwe phela.”

“Uthi ufuna ukuhamba nini?”

“Akangitshelanga.”

“Ngiyezwa.”

Kwaphela amasonto amabili indaba yabekwa kuyise. Ekuseni langa lithize, umfanyana owelama intombazana eyelama uQhathumunyu wayemi egumeni kwagogo wakhe ebambe isibhuzazana esimhlophe qwa. Endlini lapha kukhona uyise nogogo wabantwana. Sekuyisikhashana kuhleziwe. Lomfana uyafika nje nembuzi sekuyisikhashana kuhleziwe lapha endlini. Isalukazi sesithuma ingane ukuba ibize uQhathumunyu nonina.

Akubanga isikhathi nempela bafika bobabili. Nokusho bangena kanyekanye kwangathi bebehlezi ndawonye kanti qha. Kwathiwa makenyuke umfana ayohlala emsamo. Wamangala uQathumunyu ngoba wayengazange enyuselwe kulendawo selokhu abakhona emhlabeni. Akazanga ukuthi kwenzenjani. Yena wacabanga ukuthi uzoshaywa, uyise wenzela ukumbhudeka kahle angalitholi nelincane ithuba lokubaleka. Uvalo lwasimze lwamuthi nke. Wasala esequnga isibindi. Nembuzi esegumeni yaphuma engqondweni yakhe. Kwasala umcabango wokwenyuselwa emsamo.

Yathula indlu yathi du. Akazabanaka uBhevula. Wachathaza ugwayi edlelweni, wawubhema ngesandla, akazayisebenzisa intshengula njengasemihleni. Uthe ukuba awuqede wathintitha izandla. Nesalukazi naso ebekade sibhema owaso senzanjalo. Wathatha uBhevula wathi,

“Mntanami, Qhathumunyu, usuyahamba uyosebenza.”

Kwathi gidi enhliziyweni kumfana ngoba sekuyamkhaneyela ukuthi kanti akazukubulawa njengoba yena ecabanga. Waqhubeka uyise wathi,

“Uhamba ngeyakho intando. Awuthunywa muntu. Wena ngokwakho uthi ufuna ukuyosebenza. Ucelile kimi. Ngithi kulungile. Nalapho uya khona bazofika bakubuze ukuthi ufunani. Ngithanda wazi kahle ukuthi ukuyosebenza ukuyokwenda. Usushiya ikhaya lakwenu usemncane usuyogqala umLungu ezihlalele ngokuthi akakunike umsebenzi

wakhe uzokuwusebenza. Uzokuthi akakuholele imali yakhe. Ungakhohlwa ukuthi ngithanda uzithobe. Umlalele, umhloniphe. Uma impatho yakhe ingakugculisi, mvalelise ngomoya omuhle, ubusubuya lapha ekhaya kwenu uzokusazisa. Ungalokothi uhambe ngokuxhwanguzela ngoba ababuyisi baphambili; kunjalo nje isihlahla kasoniwa. AbeLungu bayisizwe esihlakaniphile. Banezindlela eziningi zokulinga umuntu ukuze bathole kahle isimilo nobuqotho bakhe. Bazakulinga ngezindlela eziningi. Ungeke ubabone lapho bekubekela ugibe. Uma beke bathola ukuthi ungumuntu oqotho bangephinde bakukhohlwe. Kanti nxashana bethola ubunqunu bakho bangephinde bakwethembe ngisho kokuncane. Lapha ekhaya ubukade ungumfana olalelayo nohloniphayo. Ubungesona isiphoxo nesichwensi. Ubungebi, ubungewona nomlalandle. Nalapha usuya khona ngithanda uziphathe kanjalo. Nali izinyane engikuphekela lona, ngithi ngumphako wakho, mntanami.”

Kwabongwa. Sathatha isalukazi sathi,

“Ngiyethemba, mzukulu, uzwa kahle ukuthi uyihlo uthini. Elami linye. Ungayidli imali. Uyigcine, ubusuyithumela kuyihlo. Eyokuqala ungayithinti nakancane. Uyibuyise ekhaya njengoba injalo yonke.”

Yahlathwa, yahlinzwa imbuzi. Kwakhishwa inyongo yayo yathelwa ezandleni zombili zomfana, nasezinyaweni zombili. Kwakhishwa amalulu anikwa isalukazi. Kwaphakwa okwangaphakathi nobubende. Kwasalukazi kwaphakwa imbuzi. Yadliwa kusihlwa, yadlelwa kwasalukazi. Kwabekwa umkhusu womlenze womphako. UQhathumunyu walala kwagogo wakhe ngalolo suku.

Ekuseni okulandelayo kusempondozamthini uBhevula wema ngasenhla kwesibaya wakhuluma nabaphansi bakubo. Wabanxusa ukuba bahambe nomfana. Benze indlela yakhe ibe yinhle ibe nempumelelo.

Waphuma uQhathumunyu. Waphelekezelwa isalukazi sethwele icansi, phakathi kwalo kugogelwe ingubo, yena ephethe ngesandla umphako.



UNgisana wayakhe ihotela elalondla abeLungu abemba igolide nemfimi. Izinkomponi zegolide ziqaqele intaba iNgwenya. Ezemfimi zehla nomfula—iMbuluzi eMnyama. Ihotela lona lalimi eduze nomthombo weMbuluzi libheke iNgwenya ngasentshonalanga. Ngasenyakatho yalo kusuka Amalotsha ehle nezintaba—oSilothwane noMathanda—aze ayongena eNkomazi. IMbuluzi eMnyama yona isuka ngaseningizimu yalo; ibheke kungathi ngaseMbabane, ibuye ijike ibheke empumalanga ngqo; yehle idabule ihlanze, idabule uBombo, idabule iPhuthukezi, iyozinganela olwandle isihlangene neMbuluzi eMhlophe.

Izisebenzi zazithi zingaqeda umsebenzi wazo wosuku bese ziqonda ehotela; ziqoqane khona zonkana. Ziphuze, ziphuze, ziphuze ugologo. Ziqale imidlalo edlalelwa endlini zidlale. Zibuye zicule izingoma zazo. Uma ubeka indlebe ulalela ungathi kuklabalasa izimpungushe ehlathini. Zixoxe izindaba ezahlukene, zixoxwa ngamaqenjana azo ahlukene ngobudala bazo, futhi ahlukaniswe nawukuthi “mina ngindiza nawaphi amagwababa.” Sezizidelisile ngokuphuza nangokucula nangezingxoxo zixhawulane, zehlukane; kube yilesi naleso siye kozishwathika ethendeni laso. Ezinye zendlalelwe khona ehotela ngoba vele zendlalelwa khona, noma-ke ngoba seziqhuba imbuzi, amehlo azo avaleka engakaxhwalibuka. Busondele ubusuku buzikhuze zithule du; zifikelwe ubuthongo obungumphumuzi wemizimba nezingqondo ezidiniwe, zilungele ingomuso.

Emsebenzini wakhe uNgisana wayesizwa owakwakhe kanye nezisebenzi ezinsundu eziyisithupha. Kungamadoda amathathu namabhungu amathathu. Amabhungu amabili ayesebenza phakathi endlini. Endlule, alungise imibhede. Ageze, esule phansi endlini. Kuthi lapho sekudliwa, nalapho sekuphuzwa, abe ngoweta, agqigqizele nezitsha nezingilazi. Lalilinye elisebenza ekhishini, ligeze amabhodwe, ligeze izitsha. Iyinye indoda engumpheki. Iyinye esebenza

engadini. Ingadi phela umgogodla wehotela kanti futhi ingumgogodla wempilo. Lendoda ilima, itshale, inisele izithelo. Enye ingeyokucanda izinkuni. Ungekho omunye umsebenzi wayo ngaphandle kokucanda izinkuni. Zonke lezisebenzi zenganyelwe nguNkosikazi kaNgisana. Ziqashwa uye, zixoshwe uye, zijeziswe uye. UNgisana yena ushayela ezinye ezisebenza imisebenzi ebuqamama nendlu yehotela. Kodwa nayo leyo misebenzi esekele lona ihotela.

Kulesikhathi uNgisana nowakwakhe bahlezi esithangameni kuvulande bayaxoxa. Ilanga lasentathabusika selibantubahle.

“Elsie! Usuzosebenza kanzinyana manje.”

“Ngani?”

“Ngengane.”

“Sizobambisana phela sobabili.”

“Nathi sizosebenza kanzima nokho.”

“Kuliqiniso. Futhi ingane yomfana ihlupha kakhulu kuneyentombazana.”

“Lokho kukhomba ukuthi iyoba isikhuthali.”

“Usho njalo?”

“Yebo ngisho njalo.”

“Sesiyoyicela ivuthiwe.”

Kuqhamuke ikhehla eselithatha ubumpunga, libhince amahiya. Ngaphezulu kwamahiya livunule amajobo. \* Ukuvunula ihiya lodwa ukuhamba nqunu. Umkhatshana walo uthe nje caba kahle ngaphezu kwehiya. Lithe lapho liza walibukisisa uNgisana, wathula du. Wasewubona ngezihlathi zehla zenyuka ukuthi uyathokoza emoyeni wakhe ukubona leli khehla eliyisisebenzi sakhe liza kubo nomkakhe. Naye umkakhe walibuka ngobuso obugcwele umusa. Uthe esuka uNgisana wayelivuthela ngesiNgisi; nalo lasikhafula waze wezwa naye enhliziyweni yakhe kuthi cosololo.

“Zithini izinhlupheko zakho namhla, Nduna?”

“Ngicela kesibonane kancane, Mnumzane.”

“Usungilethele izinhlupheko-ke.”

“Usuqonde ukungixabanisa noNkosikazi uma usho njalo.”

\* Imvunulo. Akufani nebheshu.

"Uthini-ke?"

"Zimi kahle."

"Kulungile, Nduna, ngiyeza khona manje."

Liphenduke ikhehla libheke ngalapho liqhamuke ngakhona. Lithathe amabangana amane libuye liphenduke libheke ngakubeLungu lisho ngalo olwabo,

"Uxolo kakhulu, Nkosikazi, sengisimze ngakhuluma nomnumzane ngingatholanga mvume enkosikazini."

Alibheke kahle uNkosikazi kaNgisana, amamatheke, abesevuma ngekhandanda andukuthi,

"Kulungile, Nduna, ungakhathazeki. Angithi ngesikini izindaba zamadoda awazingeni amakhosikazi? Mina ngizozingena kanjani ezenu nomnumzane wakho?"

"Ngiyabonga, Nkosikazi, nxa nawe ungizwela."

"Kulungile, ngamazwi owafunayo ngiyakuzwela."

"Ngiyabonga, Nkosikazi."

Lisithele ikhehla.

"Isimanga," kusho uNkosikazi, "abantu abaNsundu sebeyasimangalisa ngenhlonipho."

"Ngani?" kubuza uNgisana.

"Ulibonile nawe leli khehla."

"Abantu abaNsundu banayo ngokwemvelo inhlonipho. Kepha bahlonipha owesilisa kuphela. Owesifazane uhlonishwa kuphela engowozalo lwasebukhosini, noma-ke ezalwa isiphathimandla sendawo ethile."

"Ongeyena-ke?"

"Incane kabi; kwesinye isikhathi ingabikho neze."

"Kodwa mina bayangihlonipha kanti alikho ngisho ithonsi legazi lobukhosi emithanjeni yami."

"Wena phela ungowezizwe."

"Yena?"

"Owezizwe uhlonishwa kakhulu. Amakhosi aNsundu amzondile umuntu ophatha kabi abantu bezizwe."

"Akuyiyo-ke inhlonipho ukukhethe indlube ushiye inkobe. Sengizwile, salusuphuthuma kobizelwa khona."

Abesesukuma masinyane umLungu. Uthe ethi qhamu egcekeni langasekhishini, kudebuduze nomnyango walo, wayekhangwa abafana abathathu asebengena ebubhungwini,

bemi neNduna. Aphindele emuva ngokushesha uNgisana, abesememeza owakwakhe.

"Elsie! woza neno uzobona inhlanhla."

Nowakwakhe wasukumela phezulu, wangachitha sikhathi. Bathe lapho befika kubafana, uNgisana nowakwakhe, bema phambi kwabo bangathi vu.

"Sanibona," kubingelela omunye walabafana. Ababili abaze babingelela bona. Basimze bagijimisa amehlo okwesikhova sibanjwe unoxhaka. Bavume abeLungu kanyekane.

"Nifunani?" kubuza uNgisana.

Abafana baphendule kanyekanye,

"Sifuna umsebenzi."

"Msebenzi muni eniwaziyo?"

Impendulo ayaze yabuya masinyane. Naye umLungu akaze ababuza omunye umbuzo owokuqala ungakaphendulwa.

"Uyabuza umLungu uthi msebenzi muni eniwaziyo," kukhuluma iNduna, ngoba iyabona ukuthi seziyimise emthumeni.

Ababili basunduza owesithathu bathi,

"Khuluma!"

"Awukho umsebenzi esiwaziyo, baba, mtshele," kukhuluma lowo abamsunduza ngezindololwane bethi akakhulume.

Limtshele ngesikubo umLungu ikhehla. Naye abuye akhulume ngolimi lwakhe. Lihumushe futshi ikhehla,

"Uthi umnumzane uyabafuna abafana. Uzoniqasha. Kodwa-ke nithi awukho umsebenzi eniwaziyo. Ngakho-ke nizothola imali encane."

Bathula abafana abaze baphendula. Kodwa kwabonakala ukuthi ezinhliziyweni zabo banemibuzo abathanda ukuyibuza. Base bevuma kanye kanye,

"Yebo, mnumzane, kulungile."

"Ngizoniholela ishumi losheleni ngenyanga."

"Kulungile," basho ngamunye belandelana.

Indoda iphendukele ngakumkayo ifetheze ngesiLungu. Imkhumbuze umkhuba wakubo othi, "isifazane kuqala,

isilisa muva." Naye owesifazane awukhumbule. Abuze abafana ngamunye, uNgisana,

"Ubani igama lakho?"

"UQhathu."

"Elakho?" ekhomba owesibili.

"Dabula."

"Wena?" ebhekisa kowesithathu.

"UMadlinyoni."

Abesefetheza nowakwakhe. Bakhuluma isikhathi eside. Abuye abuzisise amagama abafana futhi. Baphinde bamtshelisisise futhi.

"Qhathu," kubiza yena uNgisana, "uzokuya kuNkosikazi ekhishini. Uyezwa?"

"Ngiyezwa, mnumzane."

"Dabula noMadlinyoni, iNduna izonitshela enizokukwenza." Aphinde akhulume nomkakhe. Baxoxa ende indaba ngabo abafana. Nabo abafana-ndini bakuzwa ngezizwela ukuthi indaba ingabo. Basimze bathithibala nje, bakhana ngamehlo bedidekile, bedinga ukuthi bazophendula bathini lapho sebebuzwa imibuzo ngoba isikwitikwiti sikude kangaka nabo.

Yathi ivuka inkosikazi yomLungu kwasekukudala uQhathumunyu wabasekhishini. Yabuza kumpheki ukuthi umfana wayo usephungisiwe yini itive. Wavuma umpheki. Yayisibuza kumfana ngesiZulu,

"Konje uthe igama lakho ubani?"

"UQhathumunyu."

Alaze lamxaka igama ngoba isiZulu wayesizwa kahle asikhulume kahle. Wayesethi akamlandele. Wamlandela umfana. Bangena endlwananeni ethe qekelele kancane. Athi akavule umpompi. Avule umfana. Kuphume amanzi ashisayo angene ebhavini. Athi akavale. Avale. Athi akavule omunye futhi umpompi. Amvule. Kuphume amanzi abandayo. Athathe umuthi onuka kamnandi osebhodloleni athi co co co amathonsana. Abesethi akasale egeza umzimba umfana. Wasephuma uNkosikazi. Ngokuthelwa lomshana onsundu amanzi asephenduka abamhloshana. Wakhumula wageza wonke umzimba, wazi-

gudluza ngechopho elaliseceleni kwebhavu. Uthe lapho eseqedile nya kwangena omunye wamabhungu asebenza nawo wathi akamlandele. Wamlandela. Balandelana baye bangena ekamelweni. Wayeqala ngqa uQhathumunyu ukungena endlini yomLungu. Lathi ibhungu akakhumule amahiya. Waqala wenqaba. Kodwa ibhungu lamchazela ukuthi lithunywe uNkosikazi. Wasewakhumula amahiya okhalweni; wakhumula nezinye izambatho ezisemzimbeni. Ibhungu lathatha iyembe elimhlophe lamgqokisa. Lathatha ibhuluko likakhakhi lamvunulisa. Lathatha intolibhantshi lamambathisa. Lathatha ikamo lathintathinta izinwele zakhe. Lamvula indlela ekhanda njengoba kwenza izicwicwicwi. Laselimdonsa ngengalo lammisa phambi kwe-sibukokazi. Wayengakaze asibone isibuko esikhulu kangaka uQhathumunyu. Wayazi ezincanyana ayevame ukuzibona emajaheni nasezintombini zakubo uma ziya konikina izihluthu zazo emabhudlweni.

"Ubani-ke lo?" kubuza uQhathumunyu ebhungwini emangele.

"Lo phela uvena."

"Hawu! Impela uqinisile ukuthi yini lo?"

"Nguwena."

Wazibona esengomunye umuntu uQhathumunyu, wazibona ukuthi nakuyo yonke inkathi ezayo useyoba esengomunye umuntu. Ukuphenduka kwezambatho ngukuphenduka komembathi wazo. Ukuphenduka komembathi wazo ukuphenduka kwempilo yakhe. Ukuphenduka kwempilo yakhe ukuphenduka komhlaba. Ukuphenduka komhlaba ukuphenduka kwenhlalo yomuntu emhlabeni. Bathe bephuma lapho yayisimlindlele iNkosikazi yomLungu uQhathumunyu. Imi nje ibambe inqodlana ide iyisundusunduza. Kulenqodlana kukhona ingane yomLungu, yomfana.

"Qhathu!"

"Nkosikazi!"

"Thatha lengane ngenqola. Uyiqhube uyise laphaya emgwaqeni uyokuyidlalisela khona. Lapho sengiyidinga ngizothumela izwi elithi sale usuyibuyisa."

Ayibambe umfana ayiqhube. Wavibamba njalo kwaze kwaphela izinyanga eziyisithupha. UNkosikazi wamtshela ngezikhathi okufanele ayibuyise ngazo ingane ukuzokudla nokuzoncela. Kodwa wayengenalo iwashi lapho ezobuka khona isikhathi sokubuyisela ingane endlini; nokho wayeyingenisa ngesikhathi okuyisona kube sengathi unalo iwashi abuka kulo. Ukuhamba nokusebenza kwewashi kwakuyinkinga kuQhathumunyu. Engazi ukuthi iwashi lisebenza kanjani. Endlini yomLungu wakhe lalikhona, yilo elenza ukuba asheshe ukubekisa izinti zalo ukuma kwazo. Kodwa kuthi lapho elandwa emgwaqeni abuke isithunzi abesedweba umgqana phansi. Wasidweba phansi zonke izikhathi zokulandwa komntwana. Leyomigqana yaba iwashi lakhe elalingageji ukumtshela isikhathi esiyiso sokuphindelisela ingane endlini.

Isithangama ebusika siliwozawoza. UNkosikazi wayithatha ingane wayilalisa egcekeni elinotshani obuluhlaza. Wathi kuQhathu akayokudla. Wathatha isigqiki wahlala eduze nengane eyayisongwe kahle ngezizingutshana yalaliswa phezu kwezinye izingutshana. Okuyingane kwakuyilokhu kuzidlalela kodwa, kuyaluzisa izandlana, kukhahlela nezinyawana.

Wanela waqeda ukudla uQhathumunyu wasephindela emsebenzini wakhe. Uthe lapho esondela ngasenganeni, wezwa omkhulu umsindo emoyeni. Uthe ethi qalaqala lwaluhlala ukhozi olukhulu phezu kwengane. Uthe unina wayo ethi hawu, kwasekukudala luyihwithile ingane soluphakama nayo. Lapho unina wengane wawa ngobuso waquleka. Umkhosi waye wahlatshwa izinkukhu, zawuhlaba zawulawula.

Ithe lapho iphakamela phezulu inyoni waselicoshile itshe uQhathumunyu, walidedela kuyo khona laphaya emoyeni. Akabanga esacabanga ukuthi hleze itshe lihlale phezu kwengane yomLungu. Itshe laye lahlala kuyo inyonindini. Kwaba ukukhululeka kwayo ingane. Yaphindela emhlabeni. Njengoba isisemoyeni ingane izofika ithi thanqa phansi iphele lapho. Ngokuphazima kweso uQhathumunyu weneka izandla zakhe. Umntwana wehlela

kuzo izandla lezo. Ukhozi lwansondo nalo lwaphuka uphiko, lwaphoqeka ukuba lubuyele phansi, liwushiye umbuso wakonyoni emoyeni. Lwehla lwehlela emhlabathini lapho kubusa khona umuntu. Pho, uti lungase lwemukeleke? Cha! Lwanele lwathi qathatha phansi izinkukhu zathi zimbiwe insele yazishiya zodwa. Zaba nalo qho. Zehla zadilika izikhukhukazi, amaqhude, namaxogwana. Zaduma nalo kwaba ububhudubhudu, kwaba ubugubhugubhu. Ukhozi lwavika ngophiko lunye lwaze lwalala phansi. Lude lugalela ngomlomo. Kwaye kwethuka isikhova esasizishwathike ezihlahleni sikwesikabhadakazi. Naso sethuka sazilahla amathambo sithi ngafa mina kababa. Zaluhlehlisa ukhozi izinkukhu. Zalududula, zaye zalukhweza phezu kukaNkosikazi owayeyilokhu ethe mbo ngobuso, engasanakwe muntu. UQhathumunyu esepethe ingane ngezandla. Zaluphonsa kunina ukhozi. Wavuka wagxuma, wathatha ngelikhulu ijubane wayongena endlini. Wamlandela uQhathumunyu. Wamfica esehlezi phezu kombhede. Wafika wamnika ingane yakhe. Kwaba yima esezokwethuka kakhulu futhi ngoba ubengasacabangi ukuthi angabuye ayibone, ayiphathe ngezakhe izandla. Inggondo yenkosikazi yathatha kade ngoba esehlushwa umcabango othi kusenguye noma sekuyisipokwe sakhe. Waze wakholwa ngoba esechazelwa umfana ngakho konke okwenzekile. Kodwa leyo ncazelo wayenza esebuya phandle, ngoba unele wayithi qithi ingane ezandleni zikanina waphindela phandle empini yezinkukhu nokhozi. Wayifisa ukubukela ukuthi kazi iyozala nkomoni. Nempela wabukela waze wadela. Ukhozi lwagcina ngokuzahlula izinkukhu ngoba lwazidlangela ngamazipho; lwahlala phezu kweqhude lwasuka nesiqa. Isikhukhukazi sabaleka asabe sisabheka emuva. Lwaze lwasala lodwa egcekeni. Kwayima ethatha induku elubulala. Wanda ukuluthatha wayolukhombisa uNkosikazi. Kwaba yima kuzodabuka imibilini kaNkosikazi akhale. Wakhala, wakhala, wakhala waze wabuya wathula.

“Kazi ngingabonga ngani, Qhathu,” kusho iNkosikazi yomLungu.

“Qhathul”

“Mnumzane.”

“Uyasazi isikole?”

“Angisazi, mnumzane.”

“Indawo lapho kufundelwa khona ukubhala nokufunda.”

“Angiyiqondi, mnumzane.”

“Ngizotshela omunye wabafana bami akufundise ukufunda nokubhala.”

“Ngiyabonga, mnumzane.”

“Uyafuna?”

“Kakhulu.”

“Kulungile.”

UQhathumunyu wasiqala isikole leso sakusihlwa ngokuhlwa okulandelayo. Wathenga ibhukwana lokufunda ngozuka, wathenga isileyidi ngotiki, impenseli ngotiki, wawuqala umsebenzi ngokwelulekwa ngowezizwe. Waqala ukufunda o—A; eBhe; nCi; eDe; eFu; yiGi; Ha.

\* \* \*

Langa lithize uthe engena ekamelweni uQhathumunyu wakhanga imali. Kwakusekamelweni lapha kulala khona abeLungu bakhe. Kuleli kamelo wayengena njalonjalo njengomuntu owayengumzanyana. Phansi kwakuthe chithi saka imali. Wayiqoqa kahle yonke ngesineke. Wayeseyibeka phezu kwetafula. Emuva kwamasono ambalwa wabuye wacoshwa unsumbulwana khona lapho. Kuwo lawo malanga wabuye wacoshwa usheleni nomfagolweni. Lokhu wakucoshwa esangweni elikudebuduze novulande. Leyo-ke wayithatha wayisa kuNkosikazi. Wabonga uNkosikazi, wathi uyacabanga ukuthi hleze ngabe iwe kumnumzane. Uzoke ambuze naye ngayo. Ngempela wambuza umnumzane wathi ngempela ngeyakhe uyethemba iphume esikhwameni yawela phansi.

UNgisana kwakuyisikoshi. Engakawuqali lomsebenzi awenzayo manje wayekade elisotsha. Zonke izisebenzi zakwakhe kwakungezesilisa, ezithanda; ikakhulu okungama-bhungwana. Wayevuka ekuseni kusemnyamana abizwe elawini lezinsizwa zakhe azembule izingubo. Ezinye zi-

bambane naye kushunqe uthuli. Elinye ibhungu lambuza langa lithile lathi,

“Kodwa uyisimanga, mnumzane. Umsebenzi wakho ofanele ukusetshenzwa isifazane uwunika thina madoda; ngani?”

“Yimuphi umsebenzi ongowesifazane?”

“Nangu uQhathumunyu engumzanyana. Umsebenzi wamantombazana lowo.”

“Wena ucabanga ngamantombazana kuphela.”

Kwaba olukhulu uhleko elawini.

UNgisana wayekhuluma isiZulu kahle. Futhi wayecophelele ukusikhuluma ngendlela ebhadlile, njengokwenza kwabantu abaNsundu abathi lapho sebefunda ulimi lwabeLungu balufundisise bangadlali ngalo.

“Mina,” kuqhubeka uNgisana, “ngakhulela endlini vakwethu. Kwakungendlwana, yayishisa bhe. Zonke izisebenzi zakwethu zaziyesilisa sodwa. Ngaphuma ngaya kofunda esikoleni, lapho ngafica isilisa sodwa; abafundi, abafundisi kanye nezisebenzi. Ukuphuma kwami esikoleni ngayongena ebusotsheni. Amasotsha isilisa sodwa. Ngithe ngishiya ubusotsha ngangizoqala lomsebenzi. Ungase ungitshale-ke ukuthi isifazane leso ongibuza ngaso ngabe ngejwayelene naso kuphi?”

“Umsebenzi wendlu ngumsebenzi wesifazane,” kuqhuba ibhungu.

“Uyangifundisa?”

“Qha.”

“Ngesikini?”

“Yebo.”

Akunjalo ngesikithi. Ngesikithi umsebenzi ngowakhe wonke umuntu onezandla. Asinawo umsebenzi wendlu oqokelwe isilisa sodwa noqokelwe isifazane sodwa.”

“Kunjalo?”

“Kunjalo. Futhi . . .”

Anqunywe ulimi ngelinye ibhungu elibuza ukuthi,

“Nowokusala nengane?”

“Nonjani nonjani. Umlisa wenza umsebenzi wesifazane uphindwe kabili.”

“Njengoba wena wejwayele izisebenzi zesilisa, wawuzi-bonaphi izisebenzi zesifazane nokuthi ziphatha njengonwabu?” kubuza lona leli bhungu lesibili.

Athathe ahleke umLungu abesethi,

“Umlisa lapho ebasa umlilo, uthi echitha umlotha abethatha izibi zokuqala umlilo ngesinye isandla. Uyafika esitofini ufaka izibi weleka izinkunyana ugcina ngezinkudlwana, uphamba umlilo. Kanti owesifazane uthatha umlotha wodwa ayowuchitha. Abuyise udengelo, alubeke; abuye aphume ayofunana nezibi. Abuye nazo azifake esitofini. Aphume ayothatha izinkuni, abuye azifake esitofini. Alumeke umlilo. Eme awubhekisise ukuthi uyayutha yini. Kuyothi nxa usuthatha izinkunyana kube yima efaka izinkuni.”

Ahleke amabhungu ngoba lomzekeliso ubahlaba umxhwele, uyabakitaza. Aqhubeke umLungu,

“Nasekugezeni izitsha amadoda abamba inqwaba ngasikhathi sinye, kanti owesifazane uzozithatha ngasinye ngasinye. Into abayikholiwe abesifazane ukwenza into ngokukhulu ukunakekela nokuthi yenzeke ngobunono. Kanti indoda yona ixoshana nesikhathi. Okonakalayo ikubuyisele eceleni, iqhubekele phambili. Izitsha ziwela phansi kanye kanye zife, kanti okokuba bezisesandleni sowesifazane ngabe kuwe sinye noma ngabe kasiwanga sona lesa. Amadoda anamarata, siwathandela lokho; kepha angamadlabha kwesinye isikhathi, hayi ngaso sonke nokho. Abesifazane baphatha kancane; kepha bangamanono nokho. Sibathandela lokho. Ubumuku into ezondwa yiwo wonke umuntu wesifazane, ngisho nevila imbala.”

Esabaxoxela uNgisana, uQhathumunyu wakhangwa ulwembu lwehla ekamelweni. Bonke balubone bathule balubhekisise. Luthe seluhlala phansi lwabuye lwaphindela phezulu ophahleni.

“Sizofikelwa yisihlobo namuhla,” kusho omunye.

“Kazi esikabani phakathi kwethu?” kubuza omunye wabo.

Abanye bathi esomLungu; abanye bathi esomunye wabo;

abanye bathi esabo bonke; abanye bathi esikalowo olubone kuqala. Lwabaqagelisa isikhathi eside. Baze banqunywa imilomo ngumLungu owabatshela ukuthi ngesikubo lusho ukuqhubekela phambili njalo njalo uze uphumelele, noma ngabe uyawa, ungabe usuyahlala ulahla ithemba. Wasebuza ukuthi ubani olubone kuqala. Bathi uQhathumunyu. Wasebaxoxela ukuthi endulo kwelakubo laseSikotilandi, izwe lakubo lake lahlaselwa izitha ezazivela kwelinye izwe elingaphesheya kolwandle. Zayibhedula izitha eyakubo impi. Inkosi yakubo yabaleka yayocaha emgedeni. Ithe isahlezi khona emgedeni yabona lona ulwembu luzamana nokukhwela idwala elibushelezi. Luthi luyakhwela luwe. Lwazama njalo njalo. Lwaze lwayofika eduze nasekugcineni kwedwala phezulu, lwabuye lwawa. Kepha alwaze lwadela. Inkosi yalubukisisa. Lwabuye lwathatha phansi lwazama, lwazama, lwazama, lwaze ekugcineni lwaqwakela, lwananda phezulu lapho luqonde khona selujabula ngesithelo sezithukuthuku zalo. Yesuka lapho inkosi yazimisela ukuba iphume emgedeni iyokulwa futhi nezitha zayo, ize izahlule. Yaphuma. Yaqoqa amabutho ayo ayesehlakazekile. Yalwa, yalwa, yalwa izimpana eziningana, yehlulwa; kepha ekugcineni yazinqoba izitha, yaziguqisa, yazithelisa, yahlala yajabula.

“Namhla isizwe sakithi sesilwe izimpi ezinkulu eziningi. Ekuqaleni siyaye kubesengathi siyehlulwa, kepha ekugcineni siqobe. Bangingi kakhulu abakithi abafela olwandle bezama ukuwelela ngaphesheya. Kepha namhla ukuwela ulwandle kuyinto encane kakhulu.

“Nina nikholwa ukuthi ulwembu lolu lunibikela izintombi. Zona izintombi lezi aziyona insangu ebhenywa nayizishimane. Intombi ngempela uyayisebenzela. Ukuyikhulumisa kuthatha eside isikhathi, unyaka noma iminyaka, ikutshela ukuthi ayikufuni neze. Kepha uphikelele ngoba uyithanda. Ize ikuvume. Kothi nalapho isikuvumile kuthathe isikhathi futhi ungakayithathi. Uhlonzo lwendwangu oyithenge ngotiki lungefane nohlonzo lwendwangu oyithenge ngeshumi lawotiki.

“Abanye benu bazama ukufunda. Basazodilika kani-

nginingi kulemfundo. Kodwa oyophikelela okulwembu uyophumelela, avune izithelo zemfundo.”

Abheke isikhathi, abesethi abayoqala imisebenzi yabo yosuku.

#### IV

Ekupheleni kwezinyanga ezilishumi nane, uQhathumonyu wambikela umLungu wakhe ukuthi usefuna ukuphindela ekhaya. Wathi useyavalelisa kuyo leyonyanga. Ekupheleni kwayo usezobeka phansi umsebenzi. Wavuma umLungu. Wasethi ufuna ukubonana noyise womfana. Wasethumela umuntu ukuyombiza. Esefikile uBhevula wemukelwa ngomoya omnandi ngumLungu. Kwathiwa makanikezwe ukudla okudliwa nguye umLungu luqobo; wathi uyakholwa ukuthi njengoba chambe uhambo olude nensika isiwile. Nempela wanikwa ezishisayo. Washona saze saba bomvu. Eseqedile baqala inkulumo abizelwe yona uLubhede. Kwaqala yena uNgisana:

“Engikubizele khona, Lubhede, yilokhu.” Wathula umLungu wambheka emehlweni wambona ukuthi naye umbheke ezinhlamvini zamehlo. Uyathanda ukwazi ukuthi kazi yini abizelwe yona ngulomLungu abangazani naye ngaphandle nje uma evakashele umfana wakhe. “Into yokuqala,” kuqhubeka uNgisana, ngifisa ukukubona. Sengikubonile-ke. Ngiyabonga. Ngiyeneliswa ukuthi injalo iphuma edunjini. Wazala ndoda. Umfana wakho lo yindoda emadodeni. Okwesibili, ngicela umvumele lomfana ayekofunda esikoleni. Sengishilo ngathi yindoda lomfana. Yinye into afanele anikwe yona, imfundo.”

Athule uBhevula. Athukulule idlelo eligoqelwe kahle ehiyeni okhalweni. Abesehipha intshengula chlonywe ezinweleni abheme ngayo. Ngokunganaki nje naye uNgisana aphuthaze ipipi esikhwameni sebhantshi alikhiphe, alicobele, alilumeke ngomentshisi. Uvuthe ugwayi, adonse intuthu yawo.

“Ngiyakuzwa, mngani,” kukhuluma uBhevula. “Mina kangifundanga; angazi lutho ngemfundo leyo. Ukhona

umuntu wakwaNkosi engimaziyo engambona eBhabhutini. Wayefundile lowo muntu. Ngambona ngesikhathi ngisebenza ezinkomponi zakwaMalimaza.”

“UMalimaza ngumkhwenyana. Waganwa ngudadewethu engimelamayo.” Kukhuluma uNgisana enquma uBhevula ulimi.

“Ngiyezwa. Imfundo yalowo muntu ngayitusa. Kepha zikhona izinkulumo engizizwa zikhulunywa ngabanye abakini. Bathi umuntu onsundu akafanele afunde. Bathi ulungile uma engafundile. Bathi imfundo iyamona. Kepha iqiniso lokuthi imenza njani angilazi. Mina ngingumuntu ongafundile. Ngakleka izindlebe. Ngigcina umthetho kaMvelinqangi nomuntu wakhe iNkosi yesizwe. Ngiyezwa nje bengitshela lokhu nalokhuya ngemfundo.”

“Lowo muntu wakwaNkosi owambona efundile wayeziphethe kanjani?”

“Lowo? Inkosi yomuntu. Ezibeke kanjani phansi; okwengane. Lokhu wayesesikhundleni esikhulu enkomponi wayenomoya omnandi kabi kubo bonke abantu. Angakhethi muntu. Angasho ukuthi lo owakithi, lo owesizwe sakithi, lo owezizwe. Qha, hayi yena umfo kaNkosi.”

“Umuntu ofundile ufanele abe njalo-ke.”

“Kepha laba abasitshela ukuthi umuntu onsundu iyamona bakuthathaphi?”

“Emakhanda abo. Bona ngabe bathi ‘abanye’, bangathi wonke onsundu.”

“Lokho ngikwejwayele. Zona ngamvu inye phela, bese kuthiwa zonke sezinotwayi.”

“Kunjalo. Ngesikini nithi akunageza laswela isiyela, niqinisile. Imfundo eyiyona yona ithasisela kumuntu lokho ayikho, ikwenze kuphindwe kaningi njengokuyithola kwakhe. Imfundo egcwele ingcono kunemfundo engagcwele.

“Ngiyezwa mngani wami. Nakuba ngingazi ukuthi imfundo egcwele nengagcwele imfundo enjani. Mina anginawo neze amandla okumelana nezindleko zemfundo. Mina ngiyimpofana, uthwaqa.”

“Kodwa ngokwakho wena uyathanda ukuthi angafunda lomfana?”

“Ngiyathanda.”

“Kulungile. Yimina . . .”

“Kodwa usho ukuthi lomfana angaze abengcono kunami, abenolwazi olungcono kunolwami?”

“Angikuzwa ukuthi usho ulwazi olunjani.”

“Lwenhlonipho?”

“Wo, inhlonipho iyona nbloso enkulu yemfundo.”

“Ngiyezwa. Uma izomakha, ingamoni, ngithi kulungile.”

“Ngifuna ayekofunda esikoleni sokubutheka, lapho ezofunda ukuziphatha kahle, afunde ukuhlonipha, afunde ukukhuluma ebandla.”

“Kungathi sesibala amatshwele engakachamuselwa. Mina anginawo amandla okumusa lapho. Sengishilo ngathi anginalutho lokumfundisa ngoba phela imfundo leyo ifuna imali. Angithi kunjalo?”

“Kunjalo impela. Ifuna imali eshisiwe, hayi imadlana.”

Elobumpofu waliziba uNgisana. Kwangathi akalizwanga. Wasethi ake bayobethwa ngumoya, bazobuya bahlangane. Usayobona ukuhamba komsebenzi. Waphumela phandle uBhevula, nomLungu wathi shelele wayobonana nowakwakhe. Wayobonana nosihlalo wendlu. Bahlala umhlangano wendlu, benza isinqumo. Ukuthi usayobona ukuhamba komsebenzi kwakuwukuphatha emehlweni uBhevula. Kukhona lapho wayesehileka khona uNgisana. Ngakho-ke wasekhumbula umsizi wakhe.

Bathe ukuba baphume, behlukane, uBhevula waphumela ngaphandle komuzi ethi usaya “ngaphandle.” Wehla nesi-hosha ehamba nezinja zakhe, isimaku esimhlophe kanye nehubesi elibomvu.

Imbolwane yisilwane esiletha inhlanhla; kanti futhi siletha ishwa, siyimvimba. Oke wayibona uzama ngawo wonke amandla ukuthi ayibulale. Uma-ke eyibulele, yinhlanhla. Uma imehlulile isinyama.

Akahambanga ibanga elide, kwakhuza lapha, kwakhuza laphaya okuyisimaku. Kwavuka imbolwane, yazilahla amathambo. Layidumela ibhubesi. Pho okuyimbolwane

kuncane. Lakweqa ngaphezulu. Lithe liphenduka kwase-kulaphaya. Lakudumela futhi, lathi liyakuthatha lakweqa ngaphezulu, laye lazishaya esihlahleni, lenyela. Yabona imbolwane ukuthi kunzima. Yazilahla phakathi emgodini omncane. Kwakuyathe okuyisimaku kuzama ukungena kwehluleka ngoba umgodi umncane kakhulu kunakho. Wathi uzama ukumba uBhevula, wehluleka. Wasegawula uthungo olude. Walufaka phakathi. Waguqa ngamadolo wagoqoza ngalo phakathi,

“Wahlatshwa! Wahlatshwa! Emuva!”

Akaligwinyanga. Yaphumisa okwenhlamvu. Lokhu ugqoke ijazi, yazilahla phakathi ejazini, phakathi kwalo nomzimba, yagijima nonzimba. Lokhu ibhubesi liyibonile isithela kuye laziphonsa phezu kwakhe, wawa washaya amangqeshane. Lamphala ngezinzipho, lamthela ngezinde-nda, lamgingqa phansi. Imbolwane ndini yamsekeca ngamazinyo nayo. Wawuyathe uzama ukuyithintitha kwanhlanga zimuka nomoya. Lamphala ngezidladla ibhubesi, wazibika, “Ngilamleleni!”

Indoda ethile, egawula izinkuni zokubasa ekhishini, yezwa. Yamangala ukuthi lokhu izwi lomuntu wesilisa ngabe pho udliwa yini. Yalalela.

“Ngilamleleni!”

Idonse izembe iqonde ngakhona. Iphakamise izinyawo.

Ekugcineni imbolwane yathola imbobo yathi ntulu. Yaziphonsa phezu emthini. Wavuka phansi wazithintitha uthuli uLubhede, esemangele ukuthi kwenze njani. Akabesabona nokuthi imbolwane ndini ushone ngaphi. Ibhubesi laliyilokhu likhuzile phansi kwesihlahla. Wabona indoda isimemeza kudebuduze kwazise ukuthi nayo iyesaba.

“Yini?”

Kwayima ekhumbula ngembolwane uBhevula. Kwayima ebona ukuthi kukhona okubonwa yinja phezu esihlahleni. Akaze ayiphendula indoda leyo. Waqonda emthini. Wabukisisa phezuu, wakubona okuyisibanda sekuthe ne egatsheni. Waphindela emuva. Wathatha uthungo wakuthinta ngalo. Kwazilahla phansi. Phinde kufike,



Lakunqaka kusesemoyeni ibhubesi. Kwayima esezokwetha inganekwane eyethela leyondoda ebuzile.

“Ubesekefuna umLungu Lubhede,” kumemeza omunye wezisebenzi. “Woza ngikuse kuye manje.”

Isisebenzi samngenisa kuyo leyondlu aphume kuyo. Kepha umLungu engakangeni. Sasesiphuma sithi siyomazisa. Wasala lapho yedwa uLubhede ehlezi phezu kwesitulo esinomfonomfo. Wagijimisa amehlo nendlu. Wabona izithombe, izintaba nemifula, amahashi nezimvu nabeLungu. Wakhumbula ukuthi konje indaba kaQhathumunyu yokufunda abakayiphethi. Wancoma enhliziyweni ukuthi konje angase angene endlini kaQhathumunyu esikhathini esizayo ayifice igcwele amabhuku nezithombe njengayo le ahlezi phakathi kwayo. Kepha uyobe eseyidlozi. Wazikhuzisa futhi, angeke abenjalo uQhathumunyu ngoba yena akanawo neze amandla okumfundisa. Isibaya sakhe sabhuqwa isifo. Ezinkomponi wayehola uhlamvu nesigamu kuphela, ngenyanga. Angene uNgisana abuze,

“Ubusuye ngaphi?”

“Bengisathe shelele ngaschlathini.”

“Ngiyethemba ukuthi usakhumbula ukuthi indaba yethu siyishiyephi?”

“Yebo, ngiyafisa ukuba afunde umfana. Kepha amandla awekho.”

“Usungitshelile.”

“Kunjalo, mntanomLungu. Anginuki naseziko.”

“Lomfana,” kukhuluma uNgisana, “ngiyamkweleta. Ngimkweleta okukhulu.” Wathula wabuka ingane yakhe eyayisondela kuye, izihambela ingazi ukuthi kukhona omunye umuntu ehovisi likayise. Aqhubeke,

“Lengane, uyayibona?”

Avume ngekhandla uBhevula, avume kube ngathi akanakile.

“Okokuba uQhathu wayengekho, ngabe ayikho lengane.”

Lawo mazwi amethusa uBhevula.

“Ngabe ayikho, kwakwenze njani?” wabuza ethukile.

“Ukhozi lwayihwitha phambi kukanina. Unina wavala amehlo. Umfana wakho lo waba nengqondo emangalisayo.

Wacosha itshe phansi wayinemba phezulu nomntwana inyoni. Wayivithiza ithambo lophiko. Kwaba ukudilika kwayo ingane yami.”

“Ayaze yaphahlazeka phansi pho lokhu nansi ngiyibona iphelele?”

“Isimanga nami engingeke ngisichaze ngisho namhlanje. Ayilimalanga. Yathi yehla kwasekukudala uQhathu eseyilindele ngezandla. Yafika yahlala phezu kwezandla zomfana.”

“Awu, inganekwane.”

“Iqiniso.”

“Qhubeka.”

“Ngakho-ke ngizimisele ukumbonga lomfana. Nanso into engikubizele yona.”

Abheke phansi uBhevula edidekile. Akhiphe indlelo, akhiphe intshengula abheme. NoNgisana acobele ipipi, aphuthaze umentshisi, alumeke, adonse intuthu. Abukane amadoda. Aqhubeke uNgisana,

“Ngizomnika imfundo. Ngizomthumela esikoleni sombutho. Izindleko zonke zaso ziyothwalwa yimina.”

“Kulungile uyothi angaqeda bese uyazibuyisa izindleko zakho.”

“Ngithe ngiyamkweleta. Yimina okufanele ngimbuyisele engimkweleta khona. Akukho nokunci ayakukubuyisa kimina.”

Abonge uBhevula. Abesethi akubizwe yena uQhathumunyu. UNgisana abesethi akubizwe nenduna. Wayithatha phansi futhi uNgisana. UQhathumunyu wakhala. Akazanga naye ukuthi ukhalelani. Kodwa wakhala.

Wasethi umLungu kuhle asale esehamba noyise uQhathumunyu. Bazohamba ngosuku olulandelayo. Wathi kuyothi kungedlula izinsuku ezingamashumi amabili nesishiya-galombili, kusukela kulolo suku abesebuya uQhathumunyu. Wathi kuleso sikhathi uyobe eseqedile amalungiselelo enziwa nabaphathi bezikole. Uyomthatha ngemoto ayombeka khona esikoleni.

Kwakungelula ukubala izinsuku zenyanga kuQhathumunyu. Nokho wazi ukuthi uyobuya emuva kwezinsuku

ezingamashumi amabili nezinsuku cziyisishiyagalombili kusukela osukwini olulandelayo. Nokho akahluphekanga yilokho. Wazi ukuthi uzothatha induku ayisike ngomese, kuthi ngolulandelayo enze njalo kuze kuphele izinsuku ezingamashumi amabili nesishiyagalombili.

Akalalanga uQhathumunyu. Kwasa ephupha lokhu nalokhuya, imicabango yakhe yazula, yazula nomoya kwaze kwasa. Wayepherhwe ingxubevange yenjabulo nosizi. Wajabula ngoba eseyofunda. Kepha wayengenawo umqondo wokuthi ukufunda eqinisweni kuyini. Wayazi kepha ukuthi umuntu ofundile ukhuluma nomuntu okude ngephepha. Indaba yabo ivuthwe. Wayebabona abanye abangani bakhe befundelwa izincwadi zabo cziqukethe izifuba. Wayesejwayele ukubona umLungu wakhe efundana namaphephandaba, abesebaxoxela ngezindaba zomhlaba ezenzekayo. Ambone efundana namabhukukazi. Wabona ukuthi ukufunda lokhu kuyindaba egudwini. Kazi yena uyoba njani. Wazi ukuba uzokwahlukana nawontanga yakhe abasele ngaphandle esikoleni. Wakhumbula izinsuku eludibi lwamajaha aya emphakathini, eya eNkosini. Wabona enqondweni amajaha eshayana ngezinduku kusuka uthuli. Wabona usuku naye ake wagalelana namanye amashingana abafana kwaba ubunephunephu. Naye wayesenazo izibongwana abambonga ngazo owabo. Wayesesiqambile nesigiyo sakhe ethi naye uyogiya ngaso aqale phambi kwe-Sikhulu sesigodi aze ayogiya phambi kwenkosi yohlanga. Iyo leyo micabango eyayimphethe, yamphatha kwaze kwasa. Wamvusa uyise wathi kusile abahambe; bahamba. Ilanga labaphumela endleleni njengokwenza kwezihambi.

Lithe lifudumala babenyathela emimangweni. Njengokwenza kwama-Afrika, umfana waychamba phambili, uyise elandela. Izinkomo zemizi zazingcwele amathafa ziphume inhlazane. Izinkomazi zibhonsela amankonyane. Abelusi bexoshana nezigwaca, nemijekejeke. Abanye lapha bayangcweka, abanye bayabambana babhulisana umbethe, abanye bahlaba insema, izingqwele ziqhatha abancane. Abanye kuloluya lukhalo baqhatha izinkunzi, bayazibongela. Wabuka uQhathumunyu, wakhumbula injabulo

yasekwaluseni. Wayilinganisa nempilo yokusala nomwana womLungu. Wazizwa efikelwa ukuzisola nokuzeyisa. Wafikelwa inhliziyo ethi akasayi esikoleni lesa. Wathi, "Baba!"

"Uthini?" kubuza uyise.

"Uma ngingasayi esikoleni uyokungenzani uNgisana?"

"Uthandelani ukwazi lokho?"

"Angisafuni."

"Awusafunini?"

"Ukuya esikoleni."

"Ngani?"

"Ngizwa angisathandi, baba."

"Angeke akwenze lutho, mntanami."

Ezwe efikelwa injabulo enhliziyweni yakhe umafna. Uyise uyamvumela, uyamvuna. Wasethi,

"Kuhle, baba; angisenakuya."

"Ngiyakuzwa," kuphendula uLubhede. "Namuhla usuku lokuqala; olwakusasa olwesibili. Nxa kuphela amashumi amabili nesishiyagalombili usendleleni. Uya esikoleni."

Yanqunywa umlomo inkukhu kuQhathumunyu. Wazi ukuthi uma uyise eseshilo useshilo. Ayikho indawo yakhe yokudazisana naye inkani. Ayiyubakho noma ngabe useyindoda.

"Ngiyezwa, baba, ngiyohamba," washo esechiphiza.

## V

USizakele weqa nengane yakhe. Wakhwela isitimela esiya eJozi. Wayethi uzofika ahlale noSiyakayaka eJozi. Kepha uSiyakayaka wamshalazelela. Kwamnengisa ukubona uSizakele emlandela okwesimaku silandela umniniso ngomkhondo. Nokho akaze azibonakalisa kuSizakele ukuthi akamemukeli. Wamtholela indawo yokulala. Wasemthumela ngomfana kuleyo ndawo. Wamthatha umfana wambeka kahle khona. Wamlethela amanzi okugeza. Wamlethela nokudla.

Ebusuku uSizakele wasengenelwa ngabantu abathi

bathunywe nguSiyakayaka ukuzokumbulala. Bathi ube thembise iholo. Kepha abaze bambulala, basimze bamthatha ngemoto yabo bayomfaka csitimeleni esiphindela eBhilithi. Bamthengela ithikithi.

Sithe nxa sifika eSipilingi wehla uSizakele. Wathi uphosa amehlo wabona inkosikazi yomLungu ayaziyo, yokuzalwa khona eBhilithi. Waqonda kuyona. Yayisimthatha ngemoto isiya naye lapho yayihlala khona kulezo nsuku, ngoba yayikade ivakashile izobona umkhosi owawukhona eJozi kulawo malanga.

Ngakusasa lenkosikazi yafunda ephepheni ukuthi uSiyakayaka ulinyazwe kabi izigebengu zithi zifuna iholo lazo, sewusesibhedlela. USizakele wafisa ukuyombona. UMaFanemeve wamthatha ngemoto wammukisa khona esibhedlela.

USiyakayaka wayethi uSizakele akasawadli amabele. Kepha uthe lapho embona engena, eqonda kuye, wacabanga ukuthi isipokwe, wethuka kabi. Wafa.

UMaFanemeve wasemthatha uSizakele noPhikwase eya nabo kwakhe eGunwane.

\* \* \*

Kusempondo zankomo, ehlobo. Inyanga uMasingana. Umoya wasenkangala ufudumele, uyakhombisa ukuthi imini izoshisa. Izulu lingase lidume. Imigqa mibili. Omunye owabantwana babafana. Omunye owabantwana bamantombazana. Abantwana baphelekezwe ngonina noma ngogogo babo, noma oyise noma oyisemkhulu noma-ke izihlobo eziceliwe yilabo abangenawo amandla. Izikole zabaqalayo zimbili kulesikompulazi. Kuzo zombili imigqa iya iyakhula. Izingane zezisebenzi zaseGunwane.

Nxa ubekwe isitimela ebusuku eGunwane, uma kusehlobo ukhangwa, lapho uvuka, ubuhle bemvelo buhlobele umninibo. Kube sengathi lomuzi wazimilela, awuwona umsebenzi wezandla zomuntu. Ume phezu komngcele wezwe laseNtilasifali nezwe laseNatali. Awukude nemi-  
ngcele yaseFulesitati neyaseSwazini. Ilanga liphuma phezu kwezintaba ezingamaqwaqwasi, phezulu zingamathafa. I-

mvama yazo zikhomba phezulu. Ngasenyakatho ziyawa ziwele emathafeni aseNtilasifali. Umuzi ukhulile unemisebenzi yesitimela, neyezitolo, neyamafektri. Izisebenzi ezinsundu zilala zodwa njengoba kungumkhuba wezwe laseNingizimu Afrika. Zilala esikompulazi. Njengomkhuba owaziwayo, isikompulazi sithe qkelele. Kodwa unokusuka esikompulazi ngesikhathi isitimela singena esiteshini, usefice sisemile, uthathe ithikithi ukhwele kahle. Ngabe siseduze, kepha kukhona igebe eliphakathi kwedolobha nesikompulazi. Nxa usuka edolobheni ucishe uhambe ngezinqe lapho ulehla. Wehla uye phansi. Phansi laphaya kubekile. Ubusukhuphuka umqansana, ucishe uhambe ngezandla. Ubusungena esikompulazi. Uyabongeka Osemafini; abantu baseGunwane basenenhlanhla. Akukazaleli izinswelaboya kulelogebe. Mhla zazalela liyoba umphakathi wazo.

Izisebenzi ezingakagani nezingaganiwe zingalala ezindaweni zabeLungu bazo uma bethanda nazo zithanda. Ileso sidalwa saKhe sizizwa sikhululekile uma siphakathi kwalezo esazalwa nazo. Imbuzi ikhululekile nxa iphakathi kwezimbuzi; nemvu iyexwaya uma ungase uyifuyele phakathi kwezimbuzi. Umuntu ukhululeka kakhulu uma ekwabo kunokuba abephakathi kwezihlobo. USizakele wayelala emzini kaMaFanemeve.

“Nona,” kukhuluma uSizakele, “ngicela ukuba kusasa ngivuke kusempondozankomo ngimukise uPhikwase esikoleni.”

“Ngasikhathi sini?” kubuza uMaFanemeve.

“Kuseluvivi, ngezithuba zehora lesithathu.”

“Ekuseni kangaka, kutheni?” kubuza inkosikazi yomLungu imangala.

“Kuthiwe sisheshe sifike. Oyofika umugqa usumude angase angayitholi indawo yokufunda umntanakhe.”

“Ubani okutshela lokho?”

“Inhloko yesikole.”

“Izinhloko zabo kazithathi labonhloko bezikole zenu.”

“Uqinisile, uSizakele,” kuphawula umyeni kaMaFanemeve. “Sizakele?”

“Basi!”

“Mingaki iminyaka kaPhikwase yokuzalwa?”

“Angiyazi. Kodwa yena wazalwa ngoMsombuluko owandulela ulweSihlanu oluKhulu, ngonyaka wokuhambela kuleli koMntanenkosi waseNgilandi uJoji.”

Abale ngekhandu umLungu. Abesethi,

“NgoMashi ozayo uzoqeda iminyaka esishiyagalolunye.”

“Kulungile Sizakele ubophangisa uvuke, ngizonithwala ngenqola.”

“Ngiyabonga, Nona.”

Abazali nokuzinganyana bafike ngezithuba zawo-5 nawo-6. Manje isikhathi sesiphakathi kuka-8 no-9.

Abantwana abaphindiselwa emuva ngonyaka odlule usebanganise bonke umphathi-sikole. Aphumele phandle alinganise ngamehlo ubuningi bezingane ezifuna ukufundiswa. Yebo abazali bazo abazilethile, yibona abafisa ukuba zifunde, zingaze zafana neningi labo elashiywa izikhathi ngokuswela izikole, nangokucindezelwa imisebenzi yase-mapulazini besebenzela inkonzo yawoyise. Nakho belu okuyizingane komile, komele yona imfundo eyalethwa abefundisi. Okunye kwakho kuzobuyela emakhaya kujabhile ngoba kungafumananga indawo emabhukwini esikole. Pho kuzokwenza njani? Kuzolibhekisaphi? Kanti imfundo yabantu kayisiyo yini yeningi? Eyabakhethiweyo?

Iphume inhloko yesikole igijimise amehlo kuyikhanyele ukuthi iyokwamukela inxenywe yabo engaphezu kwesigamu. Iyokwenza okungumthetho. Ibisikhuluma, ikhulumela phezu ukuze izwakale ngoba abanye bem kude ngenxa yokufika muva,

“Nize nisize ningajabhi bazali. Nginikwe umthetho ukuba ngamukele inani elithile. Ngaphezu kwalelonani angisavunyelwe ukwemukela izingane.” Ithule ilalele ukuthi hleze kube khona ongaba namazwi ngalokho. Ezwe kuphela ukuphefumula kanzima kwesifazane okukhomba ukudabuka. Ibuye iqhubeka ngezwi eliphakeme,

“Njengoba imigqa yezingane imibili ngizokuzemukela kanjalo.

“Woza nengane dadewethu. Igama layo?”

“UPhikwase.”

“Isibongo?”

“Masilela.”

Abhale: MASILELA, Phikwase.

“Wazalwa nini?”

“Angazi. Kodwa uthe uBasi uneminyaka esishiyagalombili.”

“Uyalwazi usuku azalwa ngalo?”

“Qha.”

“Sineka ngane yami.”

Kusineke okuyingane.

“Amazinyo angaphansi nangaphezulu asekhumukile?”

“Yebo,” kuphendula unina.

Abhale: 11.1.30.

“Igama lombheki noma likanina wakhe?”

“Yimina unina wakhe.”

“Igama nesibongo?”

“USizakele Masilela.”

“Usushadile?”

Amamatheke uSizakele abesebuza,

“Uthandelani ukubuza lokho? Wena usushadile?”

“Ngishade nyakenye.”

“Mina angikashadi.”

“Ngiyezwa. Pho, nawe ube yilesibongo; nengane yile-sosibongo?”

“Asithathananga phela noyise.”

“Asikwejwayele lokho. Sengiyabonga.”

Izingane zimangele ngoba aziyiqondi yonke indaba, kanti nempilo yasemhlabeni aziyiqondi. Kuzona inhlupho le. Zishiyiswe ukuzidlalela zizomiswa la. Zifundekelwa ngesikole. Kazi yini yona isikole, sizozenzelani?

USizakele wayesebenza kwaMaFanemeve, iBhunukazi. Indodakazi kaMnu. van der Merwe owayakhe eduze nomuzi wase Bhilithi. UMaFanemeve wayakhiwe nguyise. Waye ukhamba olufuze imbiza. Uyise wayenabantu abaningi abakhe epulazini lakhe. Kulababantu akazange axoshe ngisho munye wabo. Akukho namunye oke ambike ema-

phoyiseni. Wathukuthelela owakwakhe ngokulanda amaphoyisa azobamba abafana bakhe ngoba bentshontshe amapentshisi akhe engadini yakhe. Wathi bantshontshe ukudla kukayise njengabo bonke abafana abamhlophe nabamnyama. Wayekade engekho yena luqobo. Yena wayezobajezisa ngendlela yokujezisa izingane. Abantu bakhe bepulazi ebathanda ngokungazenzisi. Unkosikazi wakhe yena wayezalwa eFulesitati. Kungelulaka kuyiva, lungafakwa. Izisebenzi zasekhishini zihlafuna bume.

ULetta indodakazi yabo yamazibulo, naye wayedla imbuya ngothi kunina. Kepha uLetta akathathanga nolunci ufuzo lukanina. Wasimze waba nguyise ngokubukeka nangesimilo. Wakhula edlala namantombazana abantu, eshaya nawo omakhweyane. Izisebenzi zika van der Merwe zazikhuzana zodwa uma zisebenza. Yayimhlelisa uMnu. van der Merwe indaba ethi: umLungu othile wafika komunye umLungu wathi: ungalokothi ushiye izisebenzi zakho zodwa. Isigqoko sakho siyonele sithi sithe zihlale phansi. Sincle sithi qhamu, ziwudumele. Esuke lapho umLungu ndini aqonde ezisebenzini athi kuzo; umLungu uyonimela njalo anganivumeli nakanci ukuba nihlabe ikhefu. Anosebenza nizilahle amathambo phambi kwakhe. Sithi singathi sithe isigqoko sakhe nihlale phansi nihlabe ikhefu. Sithi singasithi qhamu, ziwudumele. Esuke lapho umLungu ndini njalo, kwaba njalo. UFanemeve wayethi lowo okholwa impatho enjalo isithutha, kazishanga kahle.

ULetta van der Merwe wagana uMnu. du Raay, owayephethe isikole esimhlophe eGunwane. ULetta abantu babembiza ngelokuthi uMaFanemeve. Yilapho-ke uPhikwase aqeda iminyakana. Waze wasuswa ukuthi unina ayogana kwaMsithini, naye uPhikwase aguqule isibongo. Lapha kwaGert du Raay wayefana njengengane yakhona. Uma esebuyile esikoleni umsebenzi wakhe kukubheka ingane yentombazana uBabssie, mjalo kusihlwa uPhikies ageze uBabssie; uMaFanemeve ageze uPhikies. Kuthi nxa kukhona izihambeli zakwadu Raay athi uMaFanemeve uPhikies akathathe uBabssie bayodlala eduze naye nezihambeli zakwakhe. Uma eseyolala uPhikies athi makayohlamba ama-

zinyo, axubhe ngebhulashi. Athi angaqeda ukuxubha ayokhumula izingubo zakhe zasemini agqoke ezokulala, abeseya kuNona eyovalelisa.

Aphume ayovalelisa nakunina;  
“Lala kahle mama.”

Ekuseni uyobabingelela bonke. Okunye ayengakukhohlwa ngaso sonke isikhathi ukubonga.

Ngamaholidayi abeLungu babevamise ukuyovakashela izindawo ezithize—eJozi, ePitoli, ePhuthukezi, eMonti, eBhayi, eThekwini nakwezinye. UPhikwase wayehamba nabo. Uma kuhanjwa ngesitimela ede eyomhlola uMaFanemeve lapho engeniswe khona.

“Ake ungitshela, Sizakele,” kukhuluma uMaFanemeve, “liqondisani leligama likaPhikwase?”

Waphumisa okwenhlamvu uSizakele, wabalekela endlini. Umbuzo waphelela emoyeni okwesithukuthuku senja.

## VI

“Akanigculisi lomfana wakho,” kukhuluma umFundisi Vusumuzi, “akabukeki ehlakaniphile.”

“Kunjalo?” kubuza uNgisana emangala ngalengkulumo.

“Kunjalo. Angazi ukuthi wena uze wazimisela kangaka ngaye ngani.”

“Kungase kube njalo. Angifundelanga ukwazi ngabantu abahlakaniphile nabangahlakaniphile. Ngafundela ukubona inhlabathi, netshe eliqukethe imali. Okungenze ngizimisele ngalomfana ukuba ngikhombise ukubonga kwami kuye.”

“Ngabe umnike nje imadlana kwaphela lapho. Angithi le indlela abahambisa ngayo bonke abemba izimali. Angithi odilikelwe ngumgodi wanqamuka izandla noma imilenze, noma kwathiwa usengenwe isifuba somgodi unikwa imadlana kuphele lapho. Angithi iyona nkambiso ababonga ngayo owenu?”

“Iyona impela,” kuphendula uNgisana ethintitha ipipi lakhe, elithintithela endishaneni yomlotha ephezu kwetafula.

"Impilo yengane yami ingaphezu komcebo. Mamukele lomfana, phezu kokungaculiswa kwakho nguye."

Athule umFundisi Vusumuzi ecabanga. Umangaliswa yilomuntu wakubo. Yena wakoVusumuzi wejwayele ukuthi "ngiyabonga" njalo ngomlomo. Kwabanye ukubonga kufana nokwekhama igazi lakhe lowo ofanele ukusho njalo. Asukume abesethumela ukuba alethwe kubo bobabili lowo mfana. Abesethi futhi akubizwe noThisha omkhulu wesikole sakhe. Ahlale phansi. Angene umfana. Akaze amnaka nje umFundisi. Asimze axoxe nowakubo ezinye. Angene uThisha omkhulu. Atshelwe uThisha ukuba ahlale phansi esitulweni. Umfana yena umile phakathi nendlu.

"Mfanal!"

"Babal!"

"Ubani ozothwala izindleko zakho zesikole na?"

"Nguye lomnumzane," kuphendula uQhathumunyu ekhomba uNgisana.

"Uyakwazi lokho?"

"Yebo, Baba, ngiyakwazi."

"Uyombonga ngani-ke wena?"

Abenamahloni umfana ngoba engazi ukuthi lombuzo kodwa angawuphendula ngokuthini. Abheke phansi. Aphendule ngezwi eliphansi; impendulo iziphumele yona ngokwayo,

"Angazi, Baba."

"Kulungile, mntanami. Phindela kwabanye abafana, ngiyakwemukela."

Aphume umfana emuva kokuba esebongile: "Ngiyabonga kakhulu, Baba."

Abeselandisa uThisha omkhulu umFundisi yonke indaba ayixoxelwe nguNgisana. Abesegcina ngokuthi,

"Shongwe, ngiyojabula uma lendaba ungayixoxela abanye abafana besikole sakho."

"Yebo, Baba," kubonga uShongwe, "ngiyabonga. Ngifisa nami ukumbongela lomfana kulomnumzane ohloniphekile. Isisho senu ninandlu emhlophe sithi: 'Isihlobo sempele isihlobo lapho usekudingeni.' Kodwa nigcina ngokuthi:

ngiyabonga kakhulu. Thina-ke siyaqhubeka sithi: nango-muso."

Akaze abesakhuluma uNgisana, wasimze wavuma ngekhandha. Aqhubeke uShongwe,

"Bengifisa ukwazisa nabakithi ngalesenzo esincomekayo salomnumzane . . . konje ubani?"

"Ngisana," kusho yena uNgisana.

"Somnumzane Ngisana. Ngizokuyibhala kuphephandaba lethu 'Izwi LamaSwazi!'"

"Ubusumthumela lona ayozifundela leyo ndaba," kusho umFundisi Vusumuzi.

"Yebo, Baba," kuvuma uShongwe. "Ngithanda ukwazi igama lakhe ngempela."

"David Gordon Stuart. Kodwa kulelo phepha unga-bhala nje uthi 'Ngisana'."

Abonge uShongwe avalelise aphume. Basale abeLungu baxoxe ezaphesheya.

UQhathumunyu wayenamahloni. Athi uma ekhuluma nomuntu, kakhulu omdala, abhekise amehlo akhe phansi. Abanye bathi umuntu onjalo inyoka. UQhathumunyu ngumntwana ovela ekhaya labantu. Umntwana womuntu othi nxa ekhuluma nomuntu omdala ambuke ezinhlamvini zamehlo, ukhomba ukwedelela. Eqinisweni udliwa impama noma inhlanekela.

Nanso-ke imfundo afika nayo esikoleni saseMponono uQhathumunyu. Yikho engamgculisi umFundisi ngoba engakhombisi ubuthatha. Wakhulumela phansi ngomoya ophansi. Asibagculisi isimilo esinjalo abeLungu. Bona bagculiswa amathatha. Bathi umuntu onamahloni uyi-ngozi ngoba bacabanga ukuthi unonele phakathi, akafundeki; akubhalwe lutho ebunzini lakhe, nasemlonyeni wakhe; bathi angase abe ngumbaxambili.

"Unjani lomfana ofikayo?" kubuza umFundisi ebuza kuThisha omkhulu. "Sinjani isimilo sakhe?"

"Angikasiboni ngoba usafika."

"Nina bantu abaNsundu nithatha kade ukubona isimilo somuntu."

Athule nje uShongwe ecasulwa yilencululo. Kuze kuqhubeka yena umFundisi,

“Mina sengimlime ngamhlakula.”

“Kulungile phela, Mfundisi. Sesiyoicela ivuthiwe. Kodwa avukabazi abantu abaNsundu.”

“Sengiqede amashumi amabili eminyaka neminyaka eyisihlanu ngisebenza phakathi kwabantu abaNsundu. Ngi-bazi kahle.”

“Angikuphikisi kulokho; kodwa ungase uqede eminye iminyaka engako ungakabazi.”

“Kanti bayizilwane na? Akubona abantu?”

Abeseyiziba ngamabomu uThisha leyo, aqale ezinye. Bese beqhubeka nazo beyikhohlwa njalo ekaQhathumunyu, yesimilo sakhe esingabonwa ebunzini.

Ngesikhathi emukelwa eMponono uQhathumunyu wayengazange azibone izindonga zesikole ngaphakathi. Lokho kwamdida uThisha omkhulu ukuthi uzomfaka kuyiphi incwadi, ngoba akezanga nancwadi evela kwesinye isikole ekhomba ukuthi ubefunda ncwadini. Naye umfana akazanga ukuthi angase abe kusiphi isigaba. Nokho lokho akubanga inkinga kuThishela. Wamnika umsebenzi wokumhlola, encwadini yokuqala. Wamnika izibalo, isiZulu nesiNgisi. UQhathumunyu wagqashula ngemiklomo ephuzulu. Wasengeniswa ekilasini lencwadi yesibili. Khona lapho umfana wadla ubhedu njalo. Kwathi ekupheleni kwalowo nyaka wahlolwa ngomsebenzi wencwadi yesithathu. Waludla nakhona, wagqashula ngemiklomo ephakeme. Umbiko wonyaka wonke wathunyelwa kumnumzane Ngisana. Naye wammangalisa lombiko.

UQhathumunyu wayesefunda iBanga leSine. Sekuwunyaka wakhe wesibili eMponono. Wanela wangena umhloli wacela izingane ezifunda iBanga leSine. Wamnikeza uThisha. Wathi azilungisele ukuhlolwa. Zanyakaza. Wayengakabheki neyodwa incwadi kaThisha. Wayengakayi nakwamanye amakilasi; kepha wayeqonde ukuyibona umsebenzi wekilasi elifunda iBanga leSine. Wathi ake baphume abafundi kebayobethwa umoya phandle.

Kodwa bangayi kude; uzobadinga emuva kwemizuzwana.

Ekilasini uyazibeka izibalo emcengezini umfo wakwa-Mchunu; unogwaja ozikhundlakhundla; izibongo zakhe owayebongwa ngazo ngabafana besikole lezo, ngoba babengamesabi, ngoba wayeyisihlobo sabo.

Bathe beziqeda wayebhaceka imibuzo yesiNgisi umhloli. Bayidumela nayo abafundi kwaba ubunikiniki. Baqeda. Wesulwa umcengezi. Kwabhalwa futhi imibuzo yesiZulu. Baduma navyo. Bayiqeda.

Akubanga eside isikhathi kulawo mahora wabatshela imiphumela yokuhlolwa kwabo.

“UQhathumunyu,” sekukhuluma uMchunu, “ungehlule. Ushaye wagogoda.”

Akwaze kwamngalisa lokho uQhathumunyu ngoba wayazi ukuthi uyishaye yonke imibuzo. Uthe lapho esebhala umbiko wakhe umhloli wathi;

“Umsebenzi walomfana ungaphezu komsebenzi walabo afunda nabo. Kuhle edluliselwe eBangezi leSihlanu uma lokho kungenzeka.”

Lalingekho iBanga leSihlanu eMponono. Ngakho-ke akwaze kwenzeka.

Ngalusuku lumbe uQhathumunyu wayelande iposi la-sesikoleni. Wafika eposini wabanika isikhwama seposi. Basivula, bakhapha izincwadi, bafaka ezinye, basivala, basikhiya, bamnika. Waphuma wangena indlela. Akazange angene nasezitolo abuke izimpahla njengokwenza kwabafana bonke. Wezwa umzimba wakhe ushona phansi, kanti futhi ufikelwa uvadlwana nokujabha. Akaze azi ukuthi kubangwa yini. Amadolo akhe wavezwa ukuthi akaqinile njengasemihleni. Wacabanga ukuthi ngabe uzongenwa umkhuhlane. Nokho waziqinisa wahamba. Waphakamisa izinyawo ezisindayo. Uthe engena egcekeni lesikole wahlangana nomFundisi.

“Usubuyile mfana wami,” kusho umFundisi ebeka isandla sakhe sokunene emahlombe omfana.

“Yebo, Baba,” kuphendula uQhathumunyu ngeliphansi kungathi udiniwe.

“Usulambile, mfana wami, ngiyabona; woza kimi.”

Bangena endlini yomFundisi yokufundela. Waphuma

ngomunye umnyango umFundisi. Wabuya masinyane esepethe isinkwa esibhece ngojamu. Wamnika. Wathatha isihluthulelo umFundisi wavula isikhwama. Phakathi kukhona nekaQhathumunyu. Wamnika kanye nezabanye abafana, nezawothishela. Wayibhekisisa umfana imvilophi, isandla esiyibhalile wasazi. Kepha wafikelwa ukwesaba naye angakwazi ukuthi kuqondani. Wazimukisa kubaninizo zonkana. Waye eseyongena endlini lapho elala khona. Wahlala phezu kombhede wakhe. Wakhapha incwadi esikhwameni, wayiphenduphendula eyibuka kube sengathi kukhona azokubona ngaphandle. Ezwe inhliziyi yakhe ishaya ngamandla, abone nezandla zakhe sezithuthumela. Ayivule, ayifunde:

Qhathu,

Ngibhalelwe ngumFundisi wangitshela ngempumelelo yakho emangalisayo ezifundweni mhlazana nihanjelwe ngumhloli wezikole. Ngiyakuhlaliselela kakhulu, mfana wami. Usebenze kakhulu kunalokhu. Ngizake nginivakashele ngenye imini. UDan uhlala ekubuza njalo. Akakukhohlwa.

Yimina,

Owakho njalo,

D. G. Stuart.

*Okusele:* Izulu line kabi namhla ntambama.

Wayibeka phezu kwetafula incwadi umfana. Wathula wathi du. Wezwa igazi lakhe lishaya ngamandla ezindlebeni. Wezwa inhliziyi yakhe igcwala umunyu. Ayithathe ayifunde okwesibili, efunisisa ukuthi ngabe yini embi equkethwe yilencwadi. Ayibeke etafuleni okwesibili. Aphonse amehlo efasiteleni abone umFundisi Vusumuzi eza neno, ehamba kancane, izandla zakhe zibambene ngasemuva, ebheke phansi, ede ema ebuka le nale. Weza, weza, weza. Uthe lapho esekude buduze, wasukuma uQhathumunyu wema emnyango ukuba abonwe umFundisi. Nabala wambona Kepha akaze asho lutho, wasimze wamqhweba ngesandla, waphenduka waphindela emuva endlini yakhe. Bangena endlini. Wandukuphenduka

abheke ngakumfana. Wasethi akavale amehlo bazothandaza. Nempela kwaba njalo. Kepha akazawuvula umlomo ukuthandaza umFundisi. Wavala amehlo, wathula ebheke phezu. Wathula nomfana, naye wathandaza ngenhliziyi. Ekugcineni umLungu wathi: Amen. Ahlale phansi esitulweni umFundisi. Athi nakumfana akahlale kwesinye. Ubuso obubika ezimbi awaze wabuswela; nobuso obugcwele ukwesaba awaze wabuswela. Kepha umfana, emuva komthandazo wezwa kungathi itshe elikhulu liyasuka emahlombe akhe. Wezwa efikelwa isibindi.

“Ungadabuki, mfana, wami,” kukhuluma uVusumuzi. “Ubudoda abukhulelwa, usuyindoda.”

“Yebo, Baba. Yini?”

“Indoda iqunga isibindi noma kunzima kangakanani. Ngiphethe indaba embi,” esho edonsa iphephandaba eliseceleni kwakhe, alibukisise.

“Ivele ephepheni?” kubuza uQhathumunyu.

“Yebo.”

“Abendlu yakwethu?”

“Akubona. Isihlobo sami uNgisana,” abheke phansi umFundisi kube sobala ukuthi akasakwazi ukuzibamba.

“Ufile?”

“Ufile.”

Wasemnika iphephandaba emkhombisa lapho ezozifundela khona.

UNGISANA NOWAKWAKHE BAMINZILE

Wanele wafunda lawo mazwi uQhathumunyu, walahlekelwa umqondo. Wazibona esehamba phandle phansi kwemithi. Wabuye wabuya umqondo. Wabona umFundisi esemi eceleni kwakhe isandla sakhe sokunene simgaxe entanyeni yakhe.

“Ngicela ukubona iphephandaba futhi Baba.”

Wamhola ngengalo umLungu. Bangena futhi kuleyondlu. Iphephandaba likhona lapho phansi, lapho elilahle khona engasazi. Alicoshe umFundisi amkhombise kuwona lawo magama ake wawafunda. Afunde,

“Intatheli yethu isibikele ukuthi uMnu. Ngisana nowa-



kwakhe baminzile ekuseni namhla. Baminze eMbuluzi eMnyama. Batholwe emotweni yabo ezansi nebhuloho. UMnu. Ngisana ubephethe ihotela lasePopes.”

UNgisana wathola incwadi evela kumhlobo wakhe uVusumuzi imxoxela ngempumelelo kaQhathumunyu, nokuthi umfana lo uthole imiklomelo engavamile ukutholwa abafundi. Yamthokozisa. Kwafika emphefumleni wakhe, njengakubo bonke abanhliziyo zifana neyakhe, ukuthi injabulo yami mayibe ngemisebenzi kunokuba ibe ngomlomo. AbeLungu bathi isihlobo yisihlobo ngemisebenzi. Ngoba imisebenzi iyabonwa iyasiza. Amazwi awabonwa, awasizi. Intwana encane inkulu kakhulu kunamazwi akhethiwe, acwengwa. Wathatha isheke walibhala imali ngegama lomphathisikole, walithumela ngaye. Wasebhalela uQhathumunyu embongela ngempumelelo; kepha akaze amtshela ukuthi umthumele imali. Wanela wazifaka eposini lezo zincwadi wathatha imoto wakhwela nowakwakhe balibhekisa eMbabane, kanti sekulusuku lwabo lokugcina emhlabeni abakwaStuart. Ingane yabo yasala ekhaya, ngoba yasikhulakhulile, isingumfanyana. Isihamba nabafana babantu kuyoshaywa izinyoni emahlathini nasemifuleni, nasemavungwini, nasezihosheni.

Lalikade lina ebusuku obungaphambili. Uthe nxa efika eMbuluzi wafika ukuthi igcwele, amanzi ahamba ngaphezulu kwebhuloho. Ibhuloho alibonakali. Kodwa izigxobo, ezikhombisa ukuphakama kwamanzi ngaphezulu kwebhuloho, zazikhomba ukuthi imoto ingawela. Wayiqhuba umntanomLungu, kanti elingatsheli, ngabe waphindela emuva. Wayiqhuba okukugcina. Kwakungasekho bhuloho lapho. Lalikhukhulwe ngumfula. Imoto ingena nje isingena esizibeni.

## VII

Ukufa kukaNgisana okwamzuma engakawenzi namalungiselelo ngemfundo kaQhathumunyu kwamkhathaza umFundisi Vusumuzi. Akumkhathazanga ngoba kungasekho ongase akhokhele imfundo yomfana eMponono, wakhathazeka ngoba umfana lo wayethembisa kakhulu ukushisekela imfundo, futhi kanti nobuchopho unabo. Uma kungasekho ongamqhuba injongo yomsebenzi wokuphucula nokusiza indlu eNsundu iyofiphazeka. Futhi wayekhathazwa ukuthi lomfana wayehola umvuzo wakhe. Isizwe esimhlophe, kakhulu esamaNgisi, asikuthandi ukuba isethembiso sephulwe. Emithethweni yaso kukhona ethi owephula isithembiso angahlawuliswa kakhulu noma avalelwe ejele. Ngakhoke wazama ukuba kutholakale intwana yemali efeni likaNgisana yokuba iqhube lomfana njengesifiso somufi. Wabhalelana nalabo ababeliqoqa. Izinhliziyi zabo zazingelukhuni, kepha inhliziyi yomthetho ilitshe lona lingaqhekezwa ngesandla nje, lingaqhekezwa kuphela ngesando uma lilula noma ngodalimede uma liqinile. Nokho izinto ezenzelwa ukuqhekeza umthetho zazingekho ke esandleni sikamFundisi Vusumuzi. Ngakhoke walishiya limi njalo idwala lomthetho. Akaze akhonona ngalokho, weneliswa; akaze asola muntu. Waphenduka wabheka eNgilandi.

Wabhalela izihlobo zakhe eNgilandi. Yazinikela intombi yeNgisi: “Ngizozithwala izindleko zemfundo yakhe, ngaphandle kwezindleko ezingaphandle.” Kuleli lakithi lomzansi besebaningi abazinikela ukuthwala izindleko zemfundo yomuntu onsundu kanti bona bamhlophe, abalandela isibonelo saleyo ntombi. Bamethwale umntwana womuntu bachithe izimali ezishisiwe, abanye babo bengazange bambone ngamehlo, kuphela ukuthi bezwe isicelo esiphuma kulowo osikhiphayo noma naye abamazi kungabahluphi. Abanye babo bangathandi ukuba amagama abo aziwe izwe. Abanye balaba beLungu abanenhliziyi enje

ababona omalivavuzwa, esingathi abazona izicebi, kepha bacebe ngenhliziyo. Omunye angasho ukuthi isikhathi sesisondele noma sesifikile lapho sekuzodingeka kubekhona abaNsundu abanezinhliziyo ezicebile. Yathi intombi iyomethwala aze aqede incwadi yesishiyagalolunye.

Ekuhloleni kokugcina eBangeni leSine uQhathumunyu wagqashula ngemiklomelo ephezulu. Waba ngowesibili emgqeni wabahlolwa kuleli Banga kulo lonke lakwaNgwane. Imali yentombi yaseNgilandi yamngenisisa esikoleni esikhulu eQhudeni. Isikole saseQhudeni sasinamagatsha amaningi okufundisa abafana. Abanye babefundiswa ukulima, abanye ukwakha, abanye ukucija, abanye izinsimbi, abanye imfundo yekhanda kuphela. Yena wangenela eyekhanda ngoba ikhanda lakhe licijile kanti futhi inhliziyoyakhe isekulimeni. Imali yokugqoka neyezinye izindingo yayisemahlombe akhe. Leyo-ke wayezoyifoloma ngezakhe izandla. Wacela kubaphathi besikole ukuba bamnike isivanjana ukuba azilimele sona. Bambuzisisa imibuzo eminingi ngoba kwabamangalisa lokho ngoba babengakaze bahlangana nakho phambilini. Wabanika injongo yakhe okaLubhede. Umphathi omkhulu wesikole wasethi lomfana makanikwe isivande, anikezwe zonke izimfanelo zakhona—kanye nenhlwayelo; abesexolelwa kuyo yonke imisebenzi yasesikoleni yezandla ukuze athole ithuba lokubheka ingadi yakhe. Lokho wakwenza umphathisikole ngoba iningi labantu lalikhola ukuthi kukhona umkhathi phakathi kwemfundo yezandla neyekhanda. Bathi eyekhanda iyodwa, eyalabo abahlakaniphile; neyenzandla iyodwa, eyalabo abangahlakaniphile. Lowo moya wawumningi esikoleni. Abafundi bebandlululana, begconana. Uthe-ke uma ethola lesi sicelo wazimisela kakhulu ukumkhuthaza lowo mfana ukuze abe yisibonelo kwabaningi.

UQhathumunyu wayekhuliswe ngendlela yesintu endala, emphekayo umfana, alungele ubunzima. Indlela emfundisa ukuthi usindiso lwakho lusezandleni zakho; impilo yakho isezandleni zakho; isihlobo sakho sempela nguwe luqobo lwakho. Okucabangelayo ukuthi uyilokhu nalokhu mkhombise ngezenzo ukuthi awukhona lokho kepha uyilokhu

athi wena uyikho. Abafana bamkhipha inyumbazana; bathi uyimbala kabili.

“Imbala kabili,” wayevame ukubatshela, “isidalwa sikaNkulunkulu. Ayisona isidalwa sikaSathane. Nami ngiyisidalwa sikaNkulunkulu.” Abafana bamjivaza, bamhleka baze bathi uyisihlwandlebe nokunye. Imijivazo, esikhundleni sokuba ibengamanzi okucisha isifiso sakhe, yaba amafutha.

Mhlazana kuvalwa isikole ekupheleni konyaka lowo aqala ngawo uQhathumunyu, kwaba wusuku lwezinkulumo. Enkulumeni yakhe umaqhuzu wesikole watshela umbuthano ukuthi uQhathumunyu ngengadi yakhe wenze imali engu—R47.27. Wathi futhi iziqathe azithumela embukisweni owawukwaManzini ngoJulayi zathola umklomelo. Waqhubeka umaqhuzu wathi uyethemba ukuthi ngonyaka olandelayo bayoba baningi oQhathumunyu kulesikole nakwezinye. Ngonyaka olandelayo babambalwa oQhathumunyu; phakathi kwabo kukhona omunye wamahalanjono ayekade emjivaza.

NgemiGqibelo uQhathumunyu wathatha izithelo zesivande sakhe wahamba wayozithengisa edolobheni kwaManzini, lapho wayesenezihlobo zamakhosikazi abeLungu athengisa kuzo, engasahambi ememeza emajikeni. Wayesenamawoda aziwayo. Amanye amakhosikazi aze afika nasesikoleni azobona isivande sikaQhathumunyu. Ehlobo nasebusika zazikhona izilimo kwazise isithwathwa sasingekho kulesi sifunda. Ingadi yamchuma ngoba naye eyithanda.

Isikole langalithile sehlelwa inhlanhla. Kwafika umFundisi oliJalimane owayephetha isikole sokufundisa abantu kwelinye lamazwe amane eRiphabhliki. LomFundisi kwakuyisazi esihlonishwayo ngolwazi lwaso ngezomhlaba. Wayekade ehambele inxenye yesonto lebandla lakhe elikwaNgwane. Wanela wezwa umphathisikole saseQhudeni ukuthi ukhona lapho lomFundisi, waseyomcela ukuba akeze esikoleni lesi azokhuluma ngezolimo kubafundi, nakubafundisi bezingane.

KwakuliJalimane loqobo; limehlo aluhlaza ahlaba nje-

ngawendlondlo. Ephakathi nendima ngesiqu somzimba nangobudala, ngobude elindile, ekhanda athi amaSwazi "labalela", esho impandla. Ekhuluma ngelincane elihlabayo kube ngathi uyacula noma uyashumayela. Kwathi kanti ingcweti yolwazi kepha inkulumo yakhe wayenza yabalula, yezwiwa kahle nangabafana abasacathula elwazini nasolimini lwesiNgisi, ngoba pheia wayekhuluma ngalo. Inkulumo bayilandela ukusuka ekuqaleni kuze kube sekugcineni.

"Umhlaba ungumgogodla wempilo. Ufana nomuntu. Uyadla uyesutha; uyalamba; uphelelwa ngamandla njengomuntu. Udinga ukondliwa, ukunakekelwa, ukuphathwa kahle. Uyisikhwama esiphethe umcebo wezwe. Ungunina wesizwe. Kinina bafana ngithi ningalokothi nikhohlwe umhlabathi. Uma nifuna impilo nomcebo bhekani umhlaba; kuwona kukhona uju; kuwona kukhona ubisi; kuwona kukhona igolide; kuwona kukhona impilo." Wathi kwelakubo eJamane kukhona amasimu aseqede inkulungwane yeminyaka engaphumali. Kepha namuhla athela ngaphezu kwakuqala.

Lenkulumo yaphendula iningi labafundi. Namathishela nawo athinteka. Lokho kuthinteka kwawo kwaba sobala lapho esefundisa amakilasi awo.

Uma engayanga ukuyothengisa izilimo edolobheni, umfo kaLubhede wayeqonda emfuleni, ayodoba izinhlanzi. Nazo azithwale aye kozithengisa khona edolobheni. Langa lithize eseziphethe, phakathi kwazo kukhona enkulukazi, wahlangana nezinyanga ezimbili. Zamcela ukuba azinike ikhanda lenhlanzi enkulukazi. Waqala wala, kodwa zamncenga zaze zathi zizomnika osheleni abasihlanu ngaleli khanda. Wase uyavuma. Kasazi noma zasezimdlele "isiwisa" yini. Wazibuzisisa uQhathumunyu ukuthi zize zimkhalele kangaka ngekhandla lenhlanzi nje yini kangaka.

"Sinomsebenzi namhlanje. Sibizwe ngamaShangane asebenza ezinkomponi zemfimi eZulwini. Afuna siyowaphathaphatha ngomphunyuka. Akaphelele-ke umphunyuka bemphethe uma kungekho amafutha alenyamazane."

"Pho," kubuza uQhathumunyu, "ukuba aningificanga ngiyiphethe beniyosebenza kanjani?"

"Awazi wena thina siyazi," kuphendula enye.

"Yikho ngibuza ngoba angazi. Kepha ngiyathanda ukwazi."

"Wena ungumuntu wencwadi. Uma ubhala incwadi uyazi ukuthi izohamba kanjani ukuyofika kude le lapho iya khona. Nathi sazile ukuthi siyophumelela kanjani."

"Ngiyabona. Kodwa nazi kanjani?"

"Ngizokutshelela, mfana," kukhuluma enye, "ngiyabona ukuthi uyawuthanda lomsebenzi wethu. Kungathi kukhona abaphansi abafuna ukuqhuma kuwe. Uma siphuma ngomsebenzi siyaye siyibone indlela yethu ukuthi izoba njani. Siyizwa kubafana bocingo. Yibona abakubonile wena ukuthi uwena ozositholisa lenyamazane. Uma sisuka lapha kuwe siyohlangana nomunye ozositholisa amafutha ephumalimi. Lowo-ke uvela kude."

"Kuba yisilwane sini-ke iphumalimi?" kubuza uQhathumunyu.

"Usemncane kakhulu ukwazi ngaleyo nyamazane. Asivalelisi."

Zesuka zangenela indlela ezihamba ngayo. Akhumbule umfana, abesememeza,

"Anikanginiki belu leyo mali."

"O, sondela ndodana sesikhohliwe. Uwena osenze saze sakhohlwa."

Asondele nebala. Enye ibeke phansi umgodla, iwuqhaqhe, ikhiphe isikhwanyana phakathi. Phakathi kulesikhwama kugcwele imali. Isikhwama sona sesabamnyama insila. Kepha ngaphakathi sihlobile, nemali ephakathi iyabonakala ukuthi umfagolweni, isikoshimane, isibhakada,\* uhlamvu, unsumbulwana nokunye kwezimadlana. Amehlo omfana wesikole agijima, wabala izinhlamvu masinyane kodwa akazaziqeda. Yakhipha isibhakada yasifela ngamathe, yashaya isikhala sekhandla layo ngaso: yandukunika umngani wayo, naye wenza njalo. Kwayima enikwa umfana. Naye akabanga esaba nemibuzo ethini, wasuke wathi: "Akuvaleliswa, akubongwa." Wafulathela.

Imali ayithola ngezandla zakhe iyona eyayimembesa neyayimsiza kwezinye izindingo zasesikoleni. Uma isi-

\* Uhlamvu losheleni abahlanu.

kole sivaliwe wayethola ithuba elihle kakhulu. Isikole naso simnike umsebenzi. Langalithize umphathisikole wambuza umfana ukuthi yini afuna ukuyoyifundela uma eseyiqedile incwadi yesishiyagalolunye. Waba lukhuni kakhulu lombuzo kumfana. Ukuqhubekela phambili nemfundo yimali. "Imali indlela yokuya nakuba kukuphi ngaphandle kwaseZulwini." Imali wayengenayo. Phambili kumnyama.

"Angazi ngoba imali anginayo."

"Ukuba ubunayo?"

"Bengizolanga ukuyofundela ukulima."

Wathula umphathisikole akabasaya phambili. Akwaze kwazeka noma uyagculiswa impendulo noma akagculiswa.

Ngonyaka angena ngawo eQhudeneni uQhathumunyu, unyaka okwafika ngawo iqhude elisha elizophatha isikole. Lalivela phesheya eNgilandi. Kepha seliqede iminyaka esihlanu eRiphabhliki lapho lafika lafundisa khona lapho lafunda isiBhunu khona. Lalibahleka othisha abangasazi. Libuze ukuthi, "Uneminyaka emingaki ubudala bakho?" Athi uma ephendule wathi ama-25, bese lithi, "Uneminyaka ema-25 eMzansi-Afrika kodwa awukalwazi olunye lwezilimi zelizwe. Akubudoda lobo."

Yena ufeleba wanela wathatha izintambo, wakhwela imoto waqonda kuMongameli wemfundo eyocela imvume. Wayithola kodwa kwathiwa angabobaphoqa ngenkani abantwana abangasifuni. Futhi abosifundisa ngesikhathi sakhe esingekho ezinhleni zemisebenzi yesikole, nokuthi uzoqala ngabafunda iBanga leSihlanu neleSithupha. Cishe bonke abafana namantombazana bazinikela. Wabona umLungu ukuthi intsha ineso lobudoda, kodwa abaphathi sikhiye abavulile.

Leli qhude aligcinanga ekubafundiseni isiBhunu sodwa, labafundisa nezimpawu zokukhuluma ngamasayini. Labanikela izimpawu ezimele ongwaqa nonkamisa. Lezimpawu bazifunda ngokukhulu ukushiseka abafana. Kuthe lapho sebefundile, wabahlola baphasa. Wabathatha wabasa eNkosini ukuba bayoyibonisa ukuthi sebayakwazi ukukhuluma ngezindwangu. INkosi yakujabulela lokho. Yayisithi

abehlukaniswe izigaba ezintathu. Abanye bema kudana nayo. Abanye yabathumela ngaphesheya komfula kude. Abanye besithathu bema nayo. Yayisibanika umlayezo labo abemi nayo yathi abawuthumele kulabo abemi ngaphesheya komfula. Bawemukela umlayezo abangaphesheya nabo bawedlulisela kulabo abakudebuduze neNkosi. Bona-ke base becula njengokusho komyalezo. INkosi yamangala. Yabuye yaphinda omunye. Nawo bawuthatha mthwalo ulula abafana. Yadela iNkosi yayisibanika izinkomo ezimbili. Baphindela esikoleni.

UQhathumunyu wayengomunye walabo ababemi neNkosi ngesikhathi inikeza imiyalezo.

Sebehamba bephindela esikoleni yaba namazwi eyawakhuluma kubo bonke abafana. Yathi bakhula nje kuningi abasazohlangana nakho empilweni yabo. Mabakhule beqaphile. Okunye kuyoba kuhle, okunye kuyoba kubi. Okunye kuyoba isilungu, okunye kuyoba imvelo yabo. Bona-ke kuhle bazimisele ukuba bathathe okuhle nokuyoba nosizo kubo nasezweni lonke. Yathi, "Ezintweni zemvelo vesikini noma yesintu kukhona ezinhle, kukhona ezimbi. Nina khethani ezinhle. Esilungwini kukhona okuhle nokubi. Nina khethani okuhle. Ukuthi lokhu kubi yinina enizozibonela; nokuthi lokhu kuhle yinina enizozibonela. Uma ningakwazi ukwehlukana okubi kokuhle, niyobe anifundiswanga. Umuntu ofundile ufanele ukucwenga okuhle kokubi. Ningakhohliswa ukuthi izinto zesilungu zinhle zonke; futhi ningakhohliswa ukuthi izinto zesintu zinhle zonke. Nina-ke njengamaSwazi: yesabani uNkulunkulu, yazini uMswati, thandanani nabakini." Lapho kwaduma kubafana u"Bayede, wena waphakathi."

Ngamazwi eNkosi athi umuntu ofundile ufanele abozicwenga izinto. Noma ngezesintu noma ngezesilungu noma ngezesiNdiya noma ngezani. Imfundo enhle iletha isimilo, iletha ukuziphatha kahle kanye nenhlonipho. Imfundo encane ingushevu. Amazwi ezazi lawo. Imfundo yebo ididiyela izinto ngezinto, iveza amasiko ngamasiko, izinkambiso ngezinkambiso engqondweni yomfundi; angabe esazi ukuthi emuva kukuphi, phambili

kukuphi, kube kude emuva kube kude phambili. Umuntu ofundile ukubona kulichilo ukuyosebenza phakathi kwabantu bakubo abasephansi ngempucuko; akafanele ukuyosebenza emaphandleni ngaleyo mfundo yakhe; ufanele ayekosebenza koludumayo lapho naye ezobonwa ukuthi ukhona phakathi kowabo abafundile. Imfundo yempenseli ngeyempenseli. Mayingaxutshwa nevezandla. Impenseli mayihlale ihlonywe ngaphezulu kwendlebe ngaso sonke isikhathi ukuze wonke ohlangana naye abone ukuthi isifundiswa lesi. Uma engawutholi umsebenzi oqondene nemfundo yakhe edolobheni elikhulu okungcono angasale ethatha noma yiwuphi umsebenzi angase ahlangane nawo ukuze ahlale edolobheni ngoba kuyidolobha elikhombisa ukuthi usosibanibani uphucukile noma ufundile. Isazi ngempela esingumliba weAfrika sathi: imfundo eyenza umuntu aphelele "imfundo yomphefumulo, eyekhanda neyesandla." Ziningi izinto enizohlangana nazo emfundweni, anozicwenga. Amazwi nemfundo isilinganiso sokulinganisa lokho okuphambi kwakho, uthole kahle isisindo sako.

### VIII

UKhisimusi wesibili wamfumana ekhaya uQhathumunyu. Amakholwa ayeselidlanzana endaweni yaseLume. Inkolo kaKrestu yayisaqala. Kodwa ngosuku lukaKhisimusi abantu babenyathelana, babengangoZulu eshaya ingoma. Njengoba indlu yesonto yayisencane, kwakusontelwa ngaphandle, phansi komuthi. Isikhulu sendawo uMntanenkosi Gebhu, wacela bonke abantu bakwabo (abasibo abakhe, abakwabo) ukuthi ngalolusuku babohlaba, baye esontweni bayozwa amazwi eNkosi yamakhosi. Yena kodwa wayengelona ikholwa. Naye luqobo wabakhona enkonzweni kaKhisimusi. Futhi wabacela abantu bakwabo ukuthi kuhle bonke babophatha imadlana yokunikela ngesikhathi senkongozelo. Futhi wabacela ukuthi indoda nendoda kuhle ikhiphe imbuzi, yena uzokhipha inkomo, amakhosikazi, leyo naleyo, akhiphe izitshana zommbila; wathi abanumzane abathile baboleta amagobongo otshwala. Kanti

njalo akagcinanga lapho, ngoKhisimusi kuphela, oweNkosi. UmFundisi wamnika insimu. Wathi leyo nsimu eyaseNdlunkulu; izolinywa ummemo oyokwenganyelwa induna yakhe. Ukudla okuyovunwa kuleyo nsimu okwaseNdlunkulu. UmFundisi lowo ngumatwana waseNdlunkulu. Abantu beNkosi yamaSwazi neyaseZulwini abahambele kwamFundisi bayophekelwa lokho kudla, kanti naye umFundisi uyodla khona. Abantu babemlindela ngabomvu uKhisimusi esigodini saseLume. Abanye baze baqhamuke kwezinye izigodi. Kugidwe, kujatshulwe kube njeya. "Uzelwe!" bamemeze.

Emuva kukaKhisimusi uQhathumunyu wahambela lapho kuzalwa khona unina eyobona ugogo wakhe noyisemkhulu.

"Ngizwa ukuthi wena usulahle abazali bakho wayohlala nabeLungu," kuphawula ikhehla elinguyisemkhulu.

"Angibalahlile, mkhulu, ngibuthekile."

"Ubutheke kuphi lokhu kawukho kwaZombode, awukho eZitheni, awukho eNsuka, awukho naseMbambangwe? Ubutheke kuwuphi umphakathi?"

"Ngibutheke enhlonhleni yeNkosi."

Ikhehla lalimthanda kakhulu umzukululo walo. Ezinsukwini zalo lona lalingesikhulu isilomo seNkosi; liliqhawe; liyingwazi. Lalikhulele eNkosini libuthekile. Liyingcweti enkulu kwezombutho. Umuntu owake wabutheka limbona behlangana endleleni, nongazange abutheke limbona behlangana endleleni. Uma kusebandla kuxoxwa noma ngabe kuthethwa icala noma kukhulunywa indaba ethile lalibabala ngeminwe ukuthi lowaya wakhulela esilulwini, ngumbongendlu; lo usihlalabafazini. Lo-ke indoda yebandla. Lisho libatshela emehlweni. Athi othi uyabhodla limtshela ekhaleni, "Uzokwenzani ungumfazi nje. Uma uzizwa thatha ezakho. Ngingumgod' uyagcina." Umuntu owake wabutheka uyahlonipha, uzibeke phansi enkulumeni nasezenzweni, unobuchopho obubhadlile, akayena unompamlomo, unesimilo esihluzekile, uyayazi imithetho yezwe. Lambuza imibuzo eminingana umzukululo ngempilo yasembuthweni lowo lapho ebutheke khona. Waliphendula umfana, ngoba naye wayevele azi mhlophe ukuthi uzodutshulwa

ngemibuzo. Leneliswa ikhehla ukuthi cha impela uyafundi-swa umzukulu, kepha lasola ukuthi lombutho ungeke ubumele ubunzima bendlala. Ngeke uyilwe impi. Izisu zabo ziyawetshwa. Kuthiwa mabakhuluphale njengezingulube. Wamhlubulisa iyembe umfana wamfisa ukuthi ugcwele.

“Awu, uthi ijaha lombutho leli? Thina sasingeke simelane nento enje. Abantu ababenomkhaba kwakuba abantabenkosi. Nabo imikhaba yabo yabaqeda empini yaseMshada. Ababulawanga abeSuthu, kepha babulawa amanoni abo. Nani niyoba njalo. Pho yona lenkosi ithi iyokwenzani ngezingulube?”

Kwakusekwindla. Omama bethi nxa beyofula baqhamuke ezinkalweni behlabe uhide. Kuyobabona kanye okungabafana ukuthi nabo sebebuya. Kuzisondeze eduze nendlela abahamba ngayo kubaculele:

“Khokhela, khokhela gijane,

Lomgwajwan, ongendlela wawunyathela.”

Bakuphose imfe, nommbila. Bese kuwuthatha kugijima kuqonda eziduluni okuzibasile kuyowosa. Kuwudle ungakavuthwa nakahle.

Umsindo mkhulu emasimini. Kuyalindwa.

Izindlebe zabantu zihlala zivulekile, zilalele ongase amemeze. Akusesona isikhathi sempa. Kepha kuseyiso isikhathi sezilwane eLume. Akukhona ehlanzeni. Kusemngceleni walo. Isilwane singabonwa kuhlatshwa umkhosi, sikakwe sibulawe.

UQhathumunyu noyisemkhulu bakha isibaya sezimbuzi. Basiphica ngophico. Ilanga selibange ngaphezu kwamakhandla. Libasile ngomlomo ikhehla ngoba phela lalingakhulumi kwakungumsakazo.

“Thula, mkhulul!”

“Yini?”

“Lalela.”

“Ini?”

“Uhlaba umkhosi, ngiyamzwa.”

Okhalweni olungaseningizimu iyadweba indoda nezinja, iyamemeza,

“I—nyanda le—yo!”

“Izikhali zami. Phangisa mntanomntanami.”

Wagijima waqonda elawini. Wazicaphuna waphuma nazo. Amajozi amathathu kanye nenduku yomnquma.

“Umshiyelani undzangu?”\*

“Naye uyamfuna?”

“Musa ubusabuza. Konakele lapho konakele khona.”

Uthe eqhamuka nondzangu umfana wayesemi uyisemkhulu. Alibanga lisathi vu ikhehla. Lathula njalo. UQhathumunyu lamthela ngemikhonto emibili, labamba indlela. Naye akabasabuza mbuzo. Walandela njengenja. Nezinja alizange libe lisazibiza. Kepha zasimze zalandela. Enye yazo yezwakala seyihlaba umkhulungwane. Nezinje zasimze zazisukela ngokwazo zahlaba umkhulungwane zalandela. Emihleni ziyayezitshakadule uma zibona ukuthi sekuphethwe izinduku kuyozingelwa. Wathi uzama ukulikhulumisa uQhathumunyu wawukhuluma nomoya.

Bathe bethi qhamu babona amahlelele amadoda eyoshona kwezinye izinkalo eziphambili. Lasho lavuma endala yezimpi ikhehla lakwaMaseko:

Awukhithika njani majaha,

Awukhithika njani bo zinsizwa,

Webonkaba yashona.

Thina siyakufa singakayigwaz’eMshada

Khithi, khithi, mpongo.

Layihuba waze walivumela nomzukulu. Lokhu ubephethwe itwetwe, wezwa naye umfana esefikelwe isibindi. Ehla amaphaphu lokhu abesephakeme. Uthe ephonsa amehlo ngasemuva wabona umalume wakhe eza ngelikhulu ijubane. Naye wanela wafika akazanakwa muntu. Wange-na engomeni wavumela uyise.

Amahlelele aphambili aye angena emzini wendoda uMasholovane Lukhele. Wabona uPhundu ukuthi kulomuzi ilapha izophakwa khona yinduna. Bathe bethi bangena emagcekeni omuzi kaMasholovane, wayeqhamuka ngasendlini uMasholovane. Amadoda ayesethule du. Izikhali ziphansi kwemilenze, zicwebezela. Waqala ukukhuluma uMasholovane. Wathi kubona lobo busuku kufike ibhubesi lagxuma

\* Inhlendla.

lahlala ngaphakathi kwesibaya, lagaxela isithole lahamb naso. Kuthe lapho lisigaxela zadabula isibaya izinkomo zemuka. Kuze kube yilesikhathi azaziwa ukuthi ziphi. Akhuza umhlola amadoda. UPhundu yena wavela ngelokuthi, "Awuyilandelanga ngani lembube ethethe inkomo yakho na?"

"Ngesabile, ndoda."

Ahleka amadoda. Kazahleka neze uPhundu, kodwa wabuza omunye umbuzo:

"Kawuhambanga ngani ukuyofuna izinkomo zakho?"

"Ngibone ukuthi okungcono mangihlabele amadoda umkhosi ayongifunisa."

"Kawuphenduli Phundu," kuphawula enye indoda. "Ubuza ukuthi kawuyanga ngani ukuyofuna izinkomo zakho na?"

"Hayi, ngesabile. Hleze ngizithele phezu kwalo ibhubesi lingiklebhule."

"Wesaba ukuklejulwa ibhubesi?"

"Kuliqiniso."

"Suka lapha lelidubunga, leligwala. Lesilevu utshani. Awundoda yalutho. Uyindoda ngoba unomfazi. Kuthi angikuhlabe ngejozi manje."

"Kahle Phundu!" kukhuza induna. "Ayisukume phansi!"

Abahambanga indawo ende bafika lapho liyidlele khona inkomo. Abahambanga elide ibanga ukusuka lapho. Bathe bethi memfu egqumeni balibona lizihambela ngaphesheya komfula ibhubesi lamsondo.

"Kungangembuzi kanti. Sizokuhlaba mathupha thina majaha," kusho enyey ezinsizwa.

"Siyoyicela ivuthiwe," kusho uPhundu enganakile.

Lasithela esigodini. Dukuduku kwezwakala isibhamu. Sakhuza kanye sathula. Yalumela indawo. Iminyovu isihlakaziwe. Kwasiphuzela izinwele.

"Qhathula!"

"Mkhulu!" wasabela ngelivevelayo umfana.

"Uma ngisala, uzophindela ekhaya."

Akabasaphendula umfana. Ngenye imini lel Wagiya

uPhundu. Kepha akekho owamvumela ngoba amadoda ayesejuluke emanzi. Uthe ethi uthalaza umalume wakhe umfana akabesambona, wayesesithele ngezihlahla kufunwa lapho ingase ibe ngakhona imbube. Kanti kufunwa ufunwayo. Eceleni, eduze nalapho kumi uQhathumunyu, lakhuza ichalaha.

"Hawul hawul hawul!"

Yaphendula imbube. Yaphendula kwabanda esiswini kwathi mo.

"M——HHHHH——"

Zasho kanyekanye izinja kwangathi zitshelene,

"Kle—kle—kle—"

Kwaba ukunyamalala kwazo. Zaye zavela emakhaya abaninizo.

Kwakungumzuzu omunye ongandile lo. Inja isilwane esinesibindi kabi.

Lelo dlanzana elalihamba noPhundu lagcwala amagatsha emithi. Abanye babo bakhwela nemikhonto yabo, abanye yasala ngaphansi, eyabanye yadilika isiphezulu. Akwazeki ukuthi abanye ababekude noPhundu bona benza njani kulowo mzuzu onzima. UQhathumunyu, naye owayehamba noyisemkhulu, wazibona eshlezi phezulu egatsheni lomuthi. Wabona uyisemkhulu emi kudana nenye indoda. Yathi qhamu imbube eduze noPhundu, nenye indoda. Ayaze yabanaka imbube yahamba phambi kwabo ngesikhulu isizotha. UPhundu wayethi usemi nendoda kanti usemi nomoya, ndoda ndini kudala wabaphezu kwesihlahla. Akabanga esabuza umfo kaMaseko wayiphonsa umkhonto owaye wema esiphangeni. Wazibongela, Phundu siyabheka, Sinamehlo eMangcamaneni, Sibheka ongaphansi Sibheke ongaphezulu."

Yayisimi phezu kwakhe imdabula ngamazipho nangamazinyo. Kodwa wayeyihlabe wayikhubaza impela. Umalume kaQhathumunyu wayengekho kulabo abasemagatsheni njengezinyoni. Wayesithele nabanye abathe ukuzwa ukukhuza kwebhubesi baphakamisa izinyawo baqonda khona,

kwayilowo wathi ngingase ngiyigwaze kuqala ngizibonge. Basho bawuzwa umbhongo webhubesi ukuthi sekonakele, ukhona eselimphele. Bagijima. Into eyathi ayibamise ukuthi bathi bethi qhamu babona abantu besemithini. Nokho abaze bema ngoba bayezwa ukuthi limphethe lowo elimphethe. Bathe besamangaliswe ilenkinga balibona linephuza umuntu, kwayilapho esememeza uPhundu.

“Niyabukela magwala ndini. Wafa Phundu siyabheka, Sinamehlo.”

“Wafa ubaba nikhwele phezulu emithini magwala ndini!” Kusho uCopholoza, indodana kaPhundu. Lokhu abekade ebambe umkhonto ngengalo yokuphonsa wawubuyisela kwesobunxele, wahosha induku wayiphonsa emlenzeni wenye indoda esesihlahleni, wayifahlaza umlenze waba imvuthu. Ayibonanga isehla lapho yaze yayothwalwa. Wayedlula ngejubane eqonde lapho uyise eshikishwa imbube. Waye waziphonsa kuyo. Wayigwaza embonjeni, isikhali sadabula umlomo kabili saphumela ngaphansi. Uthe ethi uyasihosha saqina. Wayesekhona uQhathumunyu, esehliswa umunyu kayisemkhulu, wawumbela emhlabankomo owakhe umkhonto wazisho naye,

“Qhaqhamba mngomeni

Awuvuthwa wehlu’ amalangabi.”

Izikhali ezalhlaba lapho zaba ziningi. Kepha alaze lafa. Alaze labe lisamluma umngani walo ngoba umlomo usuvalwe isikhali. Kwaze kwaba isikhathi belidikadika. NoPhundu eshlezi nalo ede esho ethi,

“Ligwazeni majaha. Wafa, Phundu siyabheka, Sinamehlo eMangcamaneni.”

Ababekude babememeza umuntu wesibhamu owayebuqamama naye:

“We Ve—ke. Baphela abantu benkosi. U—phi nesibha —mu?”

Lalingasabhongi ibhubesi laselindindizela okwezulu elibi. Othi baphela abantu benkosi akasazenzi, kuyazisho ukuthi bayaphela. Selihleli phansi eduze nomngani walo uPhundu siyabheka. Naye uhlezi eduze nalo akasalinakile usebukela

amajaha elinikiza ngezikhali. Nalo kalisamnakile selilalele amajozi angena esikhumbeni salo. Ngelikade wasondela owayephele isibhamu. Wasikhulula. Lalala.

Udubula ukudana nalo. Akuphelanga mizuzu eminingi waphangalala noPhundu.

UQhathumunyu wafika selifile noyisemkhulu esefile. Yayimphele ingebhe.

“Ekabani imbube?” Umbuzo owabuzwa. EkaPhundu oyihlabe amanxeba amabili kuphela? EkaCopholoza? Elakhe lokuqala linye. Kwasekulandela amaningi. EkaVeke, oyilalise ngesibhamu? Ibingasafi nje. Okokuba akufikanga yena akwazeki ukuthi ibiyozala nkomoni.

“Eyami,” kubanga uVeke eyibamba ngomlenze okuyikhona kukhomba ukuthi uyayibanga.

“Eyakithi,” kusho uCopholoza, naye eyibamba ngomkhono.

UQhathumunyu akakhulumanga zwi kepha wabamba umkhonto wakhe ngesandla sokudla wathi uza kuwumbela kuVeke.

“Kahle, mshana,” kwakhuza umalume wakhe. Nembala akabe esamgwaza.

Isinqumo senduna nenxenye yamadoda asaze semukeleka kwabanye. Uma inyamazane ibangwa ibuyela endlunkulu. Ithathwa isikhulu. Ibhubesi libuyela eNkosini. Lathwalwa. Ukuyofika emzini weNkosi ilanga lonke nesiganyana kusukela ekuphumeni kwalo.

Lapho isikhipha esayo isinqumo iNkosi maqondana nokuthi elikabani yachaza umehluko phakathi kwesibhamu nomkhonto. Yathi isibhamu izulu. Sishaya siqede khona lapho. Umthetho wokuzingela bayawazi, kuqhuba iNkosi. Inyamazane ungayihlaba kulesi sigodi kepha ingafi ize iyobanjwa izinza zabanye abantu kwezinye izigodi. Kepha eyakho. Uzobelokhu umemeza njalo uthi “Ibo — mvu!” Uze uyofika lapho ifele khona. Kodwa mawazi ukuthi uyihlabe kuluphi uhlangothi, ngoba uma uke wathi “kwe-sokudla”, kanti inxeba lingakwesobunxele uyemukwa. Ibhubesi elikaPhundu.

“Zwakala



Copholoz' ibhubesi  
Emlonyeni ngejozi lakhe," sekusho iNkosi.  
INKosi yayisimnika izinkomo eziyisihlanu umufi. Kwayima  
ephindela emuva eyongcwaba uyise uCopholoza.

## IX

Bahlolwa abafundi. UQhathumunyu wahlolwa okokugcina encwadini yesishiyagalolunye. Banela baqeda balibhekisa emakubo. Imali yentombazana yomLungu ebikade imsize nayo kwaba unyaka wayo wokugcina. Wayengazi ukuthi uma ephumelele wolibhekisaphi. Indlela yokuqhubekela phambili yayingekho emqondweni wakhe. Ukuqhubekela phambili nemfundo imali. Imali yayingekho. Akakabi naso isihlangu esikhombisa ukuthi wazi umsebenzi othile. Uzobopha icansi ahambe ebetha amagama ngamadolo efunana nomsebenzi.

Kunjalo kulabo abaphuma ezikoleni bengakayitholi incwadi ethi bafundele umsebenzi othile nothile. Onayo uthi engakaphumi esikoleni, engakaqedi, atshelwe ukuthi wena uyosebenza umsebenzi owufundele endaweni ethile. Imfundo iyamkhulula oyiphethe. Kwakumnyama phambili kumfo kaLubhede. Nokho akalilahlanga ithemba. Wathi uzothi angasithola isitifiketi asisonge asifake ebhokisini, abese eqonda enduneni yesigodi sakubo, athi ayimuse esikhulwini, isikhulu simnike inxusa, inxusa limuse enkosini, enkosini embule ingubo angene. Uyocela ukuba asiselwe izinkabi, kanye namajokwe azo, nekhuba. Abesekhonzele indawo enhle yokulima. Abeselima ngezindlela azifundile eQhudeni. Embe igolide njengokusho komJamane.

Amagama alabo abaphumelele ekuhlolweni encwadini yesishiyagalolunye amenyezela kumaphephandaba esilungu nawesintu. Aphuma ngesonto lokuqala kuNhlojana. UQhathumunyu wayelindele kwamFundisi Vusumuzi. KwakungoLwesine evikini lokuqala lonyaka omusha. Iposi lesikole ngalolo suku lalandwa nguye luqobo. Into yokuqala umFundisi waqhaqha iphephandaba lesilungu kuno-

kuba aphenyisise izincwadi. Walisombulula, waphenya amakhasi waze wafika lapho kubhalwe ukuthi:

### *University J. C. Results.*

"Sondela," kusho umFundisi.

"Wasondela umfana, amaphaphu esephezulu. Uphe-  
thwe uvalo. Wabona,

LUBHEDE, Qhathumunyu Lufulwakhe.

Wagxuma waphonseka phandle wayobikela abangani bakhe. Kazi wayeyobikela yini okokuba lalingekho elakhe igama?

Emuva kokujabula nabangane bakhe waphindela ku-  
mFundisi.

"Baba, ngijabule kakhulu ukuthi nami senginesitifiketi."

"Ngiyakubongela, mntanami."

"Yebo, Baba."

"Usuzokwenze njani-ke manje ngesitifiketi lesi?"

"Baba angazi."

Lempendulo yamthokozisa umFundisi Vusumuzi, ya-  
mnika ithemba elisha ngalomfana. Abesekhuluma ethi,

"Engithanda ukuba ukwazi, mntanami, yilokhu: manje yima uqala ukungena emfundweni. Imfundo ngempela iqala mhlazana uzalwa, iyogcina mhlazana kuphuma umphefumulo. Imfundo enhle, nenesithunzi yakhelwe phezu kwezinto ezintathu: YESABA UNKULUNKULU, KHONZA INKOSI, THANDA UMZALWANE. UNkulunkulu ukubheke ukuba umsebenzele. Abantu bakini babheke izinto ezinkulu kuwe. Babheke ukuholwa noku-  
boniswa izindlela zempilo eziyizonazona. Zihloniphe wena. Usebenzise kahle imfundo leyo encane osunikwe yona. Hamba-ke, mfana wami, uyosiza abantu bakini." Wamxh-  
wula.

Wabonga umfana wavaelisa. Indlela yakhe eqonde kubo idabula edolobheni. Emgwaqeni, phakathi eMbabane, wahlangana nomunye wezisebenzi zasemahovisi emfundo, wasemtshela ukuthi uzwe ukuthi uMongameli wemfundo uyamfuna.

"Pho, okokuba awuhlangananga nami lapha emgwaqeni?"

"Ngikwazisa ukuthi ngizwe ukuthi uyakufuna. Akangithumanga ukuba ngiyokufuna."

"Ngiyezwa. Ngabe ungifunelani?"

"Nami angazi. Uma uthanda ukwazi qonda khona ehovisi lakhe."

"Ngihole."

Bangena ehovisi bamfica umnumzane. Indoda esukile yawushiya umhlaba, umdondoshiya. Izinwele zayo ziqhakazile; ikhuluma ngelihlabayo, ikhulumela phezulu kube sengathi iyacula. Isineminyaka engamashumi amabili neminyaka emine yafika kuleli hovisi. Abayazi kahle bathi kuyo yonke leminyaka yahleka kanye vo. Yayigula ilele esibhedlela. Kwathi lapho umongikazi eyilethela itiye ekuseni yamamatheka. Wanela walibeka eduze lelo tiye wagijima wayobikela umphathi wabo. Lokho kumamatheka kwaze kwabikwa nakumaphephandaba. Naye uQhathumunyu wayekwazi lokho. Wayeseke wambona kani ngana ezikoleni ayekade efunda kuzo. Wanela wangena wabingelela. Naye wabingelelwa.

"Lona," kukhuluma umabhalane, "nguye uQhathumunyu Lubhede."

"Lubhede?"

"Yebo, mnumzane, obekade efunda uJ.C. eQhudeni."

"Manje sengiyakhumbula. Hlala phansi Lubhede."

Abonge, ahlale.

"Ubusholile ukuthi ngiyakufuna?"

"Qha, mnumzana. Yima ngizwa ngaye uJohn lo. Ngihlangane naye laphaya emgwaqeni."

UJohn wasengenisa incwadi equkethe amagama abafana baseQhudeni abaphumelele kuJ.C. Wayithatha uMongameli wayibukisisa; wasekhuluma,

"Qhathumunyu Lufulwakhe Lubhede. Nguwena kambe lowo?"

"Yebo, mnumzane, yimina."

Lokhu ubekhuluma ngesiSwzai, wasilahla manje. Wangena olimini lwakhe ngoba usengena emthanjeni wendaba.

"Engikufunela khona yilokhu; into yokuqala ngiyakuhlalisela empumelelweni yakho ekuhlolweni kulencwadi."

Abonge umfana.

"Okwesibili, umphathisikole saseQhudeni ungitshelile kabanzi ngawe. Uthe awunawo amandla — imali — ukuze uqhube isifiso sakho. Wangitshela ukuthi ufisa ukuyothola imfundo ephakeme kwezolimo. Ngiyathokoza ukuzwa umfana ongangawe ukuthi unalowo mqondo. Angithi kunjalo?"

"Yebo, kunjalo, mnumzane."

"Yebo-ke. Ngikucelele imali ethile kuNobhala wakwa-Hulumeni. Ngabanenhlamba wanginika. Ngizokuthumela ngayo ekholiji elifundisa ukulima nokuphathwa kwezilwane. Uma uyemukela lemali, isivumelwano sizoba ukuthi uyothi ungaqeda imfundo le ubusubuya uzosebenza phansi kukaHulumeni iminyaka eyisihlanu. Uma leminyaka emisiwe isiphelile usungayosebenza lapho uzibonela khona uma ufisa. Imali ozoyinikezwa izoba ama-R120. Kuyolungiswa usuqedile ukufunda ukuthi uyoyibuyisa ngayiphi indlela. Uyonikwa ithuba lokude ukhipha kancane, kancane ngenyanga. Angithi uzwa kahle?"

Waphendula ngokuthi uzwa kahle. UMongameli wabuza futhi ukuthi uyayemukela yini leyo mali anikezwa yona. Wavuma.

"Kulungile. Sizokuthumela esikoleni eNdakane. Isikole engisaziyo leso. Ngiyazi ukuthi ngikuthumela embizeni; kubaswa ngaphansi, kuvalwe ngaphezulu. Ngiyethemba awuyikubaleka lapho uzwa ubunzima bomsebenzi."

Wahleka uQhathumunyu, ekitazwa ukuthi yena angase axoshwe umsebenzi.

"Ngisazoke ngishaye ucingo lokukucelela indawo, ngoba izikole zivulwa ngoLwesibili oluzayo. Awobuya kusasa ekuseni uzozwa ngempendulo. Uma singaphumeleli lapho, sesiyozama kwenye indawo. Nokho usuyozwa khona kusasa. Hamba kahle."

Kwathi kuvulwa amahovisi wayesemi egcekeni umfo kaLubhede. Wathi ukuba angene ehovisi uMongameli wathi akangeniswe umfana. Wangukutshe-lwa ngempendulo yocingo: "Siphumelele." Wanikezwa amaphepha esivumelwano ukuba awasayine. Usuku kwa-kuwuLwesihlanu. Kwathiwa uyokhwela ibhasi ngoMso- mbuluko olandelayo.

Kusukela ngoLwesihlanu ntambama izulu lana imvula enkulu. Layithela kwaze kwaziSonto ntambama.

Kukhona isiziba esiseduze nomuzi waseMbabane. Igama laso uMantsholo. Sime ogwini lweMbuluzi eMnyama. Amanzi aso awahambi. Kukhona nemisele eyembiwa kudala kuzanywa ukudonsa amanzi aso. Leyo misele ayizange imgelezise uMantsholo. Kuthiwa isiziba sakwa- Mnisi, esasibeka amakhosi akhona endulo. Kwakuthi nxa amakhosana ebanga ubukhosi, ebugaqele, athathwe asiwe kusona. Angeniswe phakathi emanzini nomlilo uvutha. Ashone phansi. Kothi okunguyena ovunywayo aphume nowakhe usavutha. Owaliwayo aphume usucimile owa- khe. Unqamuke khona lapho umbango. Uma uke wa- phonsa itshe kulesiziba lina kudabuke amawa ezinta- beni. Kuwo lawo malanga abeLungu abathize baphi- kisana. Omunye wathi uthanda ukubona ngamehlo ukuthi nabala lingana yini uma ejikijele isiziba lesi. Omunye wathi liyokuna imvula embi, eyingozi. Baphikisana-ke. Baze babekelana imali. Nempela baqonda kuso. Wathatha itshe walisho phakathi kuMantsholo. Kuthiwa akabonaze abesayithola leyomali abheja ngayo. Lana kwadabuka izindonga, kwavela amawa ezintabeni, kwadabuka amabhu- loho, kwemuka izikebhe emifuleni kwanjeya.

NgeSonto uQhathumunyu wavalelisa abazali bakhe. Uyise wabajabula, wathi induku enhle igawulwa ezizweni. Waphuma libuyile umfana. Wathi engena eMbabane wayesemanzi nte. Wayehamba ehlamba imifula egcwele, kwazise ukuthi wayeyinhlambi. Athi angafika emfuleni ogcwele—noma ngabe sewugola izintethe—akhumule izembatho azifake ebhokisini, abesengena. Ahlambe nga- sine, esinye sibambe ibhokisi. Angenele ngasenhla

kwezibuko enzele ukuthi ayophuma khona ezibukweni khona ezokwazi ukukhuphuka.

Kwasa ngoMsombuluko libalele nasebukhweni bezinja. Ngehora leshumi emini, abazokhwela ibhasi babuthana esiteshini, lapho batshelwa ukuthi ayikho ibhasi evela kwaManzini eya eBhilithi. Ibhuloho elisoSushwana lidi- likile. Bazolindela ibhasi eqhamuka eBhilithi, ezofika ngeho- ra lesine ntambama. Iyona ezophindela eBhilithi ngoba nayo ingeke ifike kwaManzini.

Nempela yaqhamuka ngaye u-4. Yedlula yayokuma kho- na oSushwana lapho abantu babehlanjiswa ngezikebhe. Neposi nezimpahla kwakhwezwa kanjalo. Ngo-7 kusihlwa yatheleka isiphindela enkangala.

Phakathi ebhasini kwakugcwele amajoyina, avela e- Siteki nakwaNomahasha, ayosebenza eJozi. Awuyizwa indlela uma uhamba namajoyina. Kepha kudingeka ube owejwayele. Uma ungakawejwayeli ungeke ulukhohlwe usuku olubi. Uma uyokwehla eBhilithi uyavuthwa lushu. Akushuka ngomlomo uze uthi nse. Phakathi kwakukhona intombazana. Ayiphatha ngomlomo, yathukuthela yaze yabiloza, kwathi ayiqhume. Elinye ijoyina lezwakala se- lithi,

"Ikhafulele esifubeni khona izobhodla inhliziyoyi."

Intombazana yabantu ingazi nayo ukuthi kanti isiyazi- khulula, yaphubuka yahleka. Kwaba ukuwanqoba kwayo lokho. Aqala ayikhulumisa kahle. Ayipha imiphako yawo.

Ayihlalanga isikhathi eside ibhasi esiteshini eMbabane. Wakhwela umhambisi wayo insizwa yeBhunu, kodwa ngo- kuzalwa eyakwaNgwane. IsiSwazi isikhipha ngamakhala. Isho nokusho ithi,

"Ulimi lwami lwasekhaya isiBhunu, olwesibili lwasekhaya isiSwazi."

Wayithinta ibhasi, yamvumela. Ithe nxa idlula umngcele, washintsha umholeli womuntu, kwangena owomLungu. Waphonsa amehlo ngasemuva uQhathumunyu wabona ku- bhalwe epulangweni SWAZILAND. Umholeli weSwazi wasala khona lapho, walindela ukukhwela ngakusasa.

Yesuka lapho yagijima emagcekeni asenkangala. Yedlula Etshenilembube, yangena emahlathini eFulakifanteni. Zasho izinsizwa phakathi zathi:

“Fiyo-fiyo-fiyo-fiyo,

“Shayela Wili liyakushiya ilanga.”

Kwanga iyezwa nebhasi, yaguqula amaphimbo.

Alalele umhambisi; ezwe sezishaya ingoma yazo enkulu, endala eyaqanjwa abaqamba iJozi:

Yekhwela sekhwele Nomajoyina siy’eGoli!

Akulalwa.

EGoli, siyahlopheka,

Laph’izingada zibal’amafidi.

Akulalwa.

Lapha bakhona bangani bethu, basemankenteni kuyesabeka.

Akulalwa.

Yavungama ibhasi phezu komgwaqo. Zavungama izinsizwa phezulu ebhasini. Nomhambisi webhasi wazizwa eseyivungama naye. NoQhathumunyu yaze yamngena egazini.

EBhilithi yangena phakathi kwamabili.

“Wena uya eNatali?” kubuza iphoyisa lakwaloliwe.

“Yebo,” kuphendula uQhathumunyu.

“Inhlupheko inkulu. Ibhuloho lesitimela eliseMkhondo likhukhulwe ngamanzi. Sizwa ukuthi nina ngapha ngakini niphonse amatshe esizibeni esihlonishwayo. Nikwenzeleni lokho?”

Akazawuphendula umbuzo ngesiziba umfana ngoba wayengakezwa lutho ngalokho. Kepha wabuza ngalokho okuqondene nohambo lwakhe.

“Asinakusithola isitimela esibheka khona kusasa?”

“Siyobakhona esiyosuka lapha ekuseni njengasemihleni. Kepha angazi phambili ukuthi kuyomiswa kanjani.”

“Piet Retief lapha,” kumemeza iphoyisa lomuntu. “Zonke phansi.”

Kwaba ubugwaqagwaqa bamabhokisi nemithwalo ngoba abantu babengazelele. Behla bonke. Bakhonjwa embhasini ayesemi, eseduma esebalindele. Aphuma alande-

lana. Ayengamashumi amane nemivo. Adonsa kwasengathi abuyela eSwazini.

Isitimela esasivela eNatali sasilindele eMolimani. Naso basifica sesishisa, sesibalindele. Babizwa phezulu.

Ilanga lase libantu bahle. Sadonsa, sajikijela phansi kwezintaba zaseDumbe, sagudla ezaseZungeni, sashunqa salibhekisa phansi kwezaseHlobane, sayoqhamuka eFilidi. Sadlula eFilidi sayongena eDandi. Sadlula nakhona sadonsadonsa sangena eGilonko. Sathi sithi nsi yayisimi kudala inyelenyele evela eGoli. Wakhwela eseqonde eMgungundlovu.

“Pietermaritzburg!” kumemeza izwi ngaphandle.

“Ngwane,” kusho omunye umfana osesitimeleni, “asehle. SekuseMgungundlovu lapha.”

Wayiqukula impahla yakhe uQhathumunyu, wehla. Walandela abanye abantu abehla kuleso sitimela. Bangena emgodini bayophumela eduze nendlwana yokulindela.

Kwase kuqhamuka ithekisi.

“Ndakane!” Kumemeza umninithekisi.

Abafana, noQhathumunyu, babizwa phakathi.

INdakane isikole esifundisa abantu ezolimo nokuphatha kahle imfuyo. Sakhonzelwa lenkolo ebukhosini bakwaZulu. Sanikwa. Kwase kubaseMakhholweni. Abantu abakhile lapho amakholwa. UmFundisi obekwe isonto lapho yisona sikhulu samakholwa. Athela ngaye.

Abantu abakhile ingxubevange, kepha bonke bangama-kholwa. Iningi labo uZulu, ingcosana abeSuthu nemithonselana yamaSwazi. AmaSwazi wona afika ngesikhathi sempi yamaNgisi namaBhunu.

“Yikhona-ke eNdakane lapha,” kusho omunye wabafana abakhwele imoto, esho kuQhathumunyu. “Ubobabona abafana bangakudaki.”

Akubanga eside isikhathi efikile, yakhala insimbi ethi sesiqalile isikole. Abafundi bema umugqa. Kwaqhamuka uMfundisi uNxumalo. Akululaka iva. Walwa impi yamaJamane namaNgisi ka-1914. Abafundi bamesabisa okwenyoka. Wakhuza indesheni kwathula tu. Wababuka phansi phezulu ehla nomugqa. Uthe nxa efika ekugcineni

kwawo wakhuzwa ulwayitheni! Zaphenduka izinsizwa. Akubona abantwana phela abasatotobiswayo. Zikhweqe zezinsizwa lezi. Zaphenduka. Wakhuzwa 'ufowadi mashi.' Zaphonsa unyawo lobunxele phambili kanyekanye kwase-ngathi zihanjiswa umshini. Bangena eholweni yekholiji. Abafundisi sebe me endaweni ephakeme, bakake umfundisi omkhulu, umnumzana Benzeni Zulu. Omunye futhi wathandaza. Omunye wesithathu wafunda amazwana encwadini enkulu athi,

"Ukuqala kokuhlakanipha kungukumesaba uSimakade, nokwazi okuyingcwele kungukuqonda."

"Nibuthene lapha," sekukhuluma uZulu, "ukuzofuna ukuhlakanipha, imfihlo ngolwazi lwempilo yemfuyo nolwazi lomhlaba."

Wandukubafundela imithetho yekholiji abafanelwe ukuyigcina.

Baphuma bayongena ezindlini zokufundela. Bangena ngezigaba zabo zokufika—abasha, abaneminyaka emibili, emithathu. Babhalisa amagama abo. Kwaphela lokho batshelwa ngezikhathi zokufunda ezindlini nangaphandle. Kwaphela lokho, kwathiwa abaphume kulungiswe imisebenzi ethile yangaphandle. Baqonda ezinkanjinini zezinkomo ukuyozahlukanisa. Wayengazange azibone ezinye zezinkomo uQhathumunyu. Wabamba ongaphansi ebona ezobisi, amajezi, amafilizi; amabele kungathi izimbiza zotshwala. Wabona ezenyama, izinzima, izimpemvu, nezibubende. Zikhuluphele! Izingulube. Bedlule lapho bayongena enkanjinini yezimvu. Nazo zazikhuluphele zitanasa, zikhuluphaliswe ngezigaba zazo—izimvukazi, amaxhukazi, izinqama namahamula. Lolu uhlobo loboya, lolu olwenyama. Babuye baye ezibayeni zezingulube. Abone ofeleba bezinkunzi, ezinkulukazi, ezingamudla nomntwana. Basondele emahokweni ezinkukhu. Nakhona wabona ezamaqanda, ezenyama, ezinika inyama namaqanda; ezibomvu, ezimnyama, ezezimpangele, ezinamabala, kuyabhuzwa nje.

Ngesikhathi behamba nezinkambu wabona imizi yabantu eyakhe khona, eMakholweni. Eyakubo imizi mikhulu,

izindlu zayo amaqhugwane athandwe ngokukhulu ukucoleka. Izindlu zinamagama. Kukhona izibaya ezinkulu. Kepha lapha kukwandlunganye. Izindlu zakhona orontabuli abanamafasitela angangeso lenyoni.

Ekuqaleni konyaka ikholiji lalikhetha umfana ezifikini ozoba ngomunye wabathathu okuyibona beyibhuloho phakathi kwabafundi nomphathi-kholiji. Leso sifiki esikhethwayo ngonyaka wokuqala siba induna yesibili, kuthi ngonyaka wokugcina sibe induna yokuqala enkulu. Isifiki sasikhethwa nguye umphathi-kholiji esizana nomphathimalawu. Kwakuphenyisiswa imibiko evezwa izincwadi ezivela ezikoleni lapho bevela khona abafundi labo. Leyo mibiko yayithunyelwa kumphathi-kholiji ngabaphathi—zikole lapho kuvela khona abafundi; inikezwe ngasese. Kuyothi abafundi bese bezikhethela omunye umfana abamthandayo ukuba naye abe ngomunye walabo abathathu. Izinduna lezo zazaziwa ngokuthi: "abakhulu abathathu." Kulowonyaka inkatho yadla uQhathumunyu.

"Nguye-ke lo," kukhuluma inhloko yekholiji, "ozongeni swa ebandleni labathathu. Nginethemba lokuthi nizomlalela, nimhloniphe, nimsise, njengoba nenza kwabanye. Ophika lo uphika mina."

Zagcwala amehlo zazezehla kuQhathumunyu. Wasi khumbula isisho esithi: ukubekwa esikhundleni ukubulawa. Iningi labantu lithatha izikhundla ngendluzula noma ngobuchakide. Into yokwebiwa ayinaso isithelo esihle, iyavuza ngaphansi. Nesikhundla esithethwe ngendluzula noma ngobuchakide asinanhlanhla, asichumi. Iningi labanjalo liyehluleka, abanye bawe sebelichilo elibi, abanye baziphanyeke. Yikho okukhalisa uQhathumunyu.

"Ukhaliswa ubumnandi besikhundla," kuphawula esinye isixhwanguxhwangu somfundi.

Ikhholiji laseNdakane laliyithanda kakhulu imidlalo, phezu kwemfundo enhle eliyinikeza abafundi. Lalinabadlali abadumile bebhola, nabesibhakela, nabethenisi, nabejubane. Kanti nasemfundweni belu likhipha izingqweqwe.

Phakathi nalowo nyaka ikholiji lake laqhathwa nabagijimi abamhlophe, ababevela phesheya, ababevakashele kulo leli

IoMzansi-Afrika ukuzoqhudelana nezikole zabamhlophe Umphathi—kholiji wacela ukuba kebazoqhudelana nabafana bakhe. Abagijimi banamasu okudlala. Umphathi—kholiji wayengabhekanga ukuthi abafana bakhe bazonqoba. Kepha wayephethwe umoya wobudlali, wokuthatha amasu abagijimi abadumile.

Ngalolo suku lalibalele nasebukhweni bezinja. Umoya umnandi. Ude uphephetha kancane uqonde ukupholisa imizimba eshisayo yabadlali. Izulu kulobo busuku lalithe fa fa.

Kwakubuthene izibukeli ezimhlophe nezinsundu, zizobona ukuthi kazi iyozala nkomoní.

Zadumelana izingqungqulu. Baluthatha ubhedu abeLungu kumncintiswano webanga lamayadi ali-100. Baluthatha futhi kumncintiswano webanga lamayadi angu-220. Izinkwa zaminyana embizeni emncintiswaneni wamayadi angu-440. Owabambana nomgijimi omhlophe kwakungumfana waseMachunwini waseMtshezi. Lokhu ithemba lase lilahlekile labuye labuya. Abafundi babengaphindi. Babelelwe ngokuthi yilowo nalowo uyogijima kanye.

Kwadanyelwana kumayadi angu-880. Umfana wakwaMphemba wabambana nomgijimi womLungu kusukwa emgqeni waye wangena emgqeni wokugcina.

UQhathumunyu wayekhethelwe ibanga elide. Wayelejwayele ekhaya lapho kuba nomgijimo njalo wamajaha ebusika kwaManzini. Naye wayeyingijimi. Kepha akabonaze alukholwe usuku mhlazane enqotshwa ijaha lamahiya. Wabona kamuva ukuthi wayeqale kabi Waqala kabi wacina kabi.

Kwasekusele umncintiswano munye zwi. Futhi lowo wawunewozawoza. Kuzogijinywa amamayela amabili.

Waqhashisa okwenhlamvu umfo kaLubhede. Wo, wayithinta lapho ingaphathwa khona ingijimi yomNgisi. Yashaya amaqakala okwentondolo, iwashayela phezulu. UQhathumunyu wayibona isivela ngesifuba eceleni kwakhe. Zaphothana phezulu. Izinkwa zaminyana embizeni; imbiza yavalwa ngaphezulu yabaselwa ngaphansi. Umugqa wokugcina wawusulibangana lokuphonsa itshe. Zasukuma

izibukeli zema ngezinyawo. Bambiza owabo.

“Qhaqhamba Mngoma!

“Waqhatha, waqhatha, waqhatha.”

Umsindo ezibukelini usuqhumisa izindlebe. Wadubula kanye, kabili, umfo kaLubhede, wayidudula ngesifuba intambo. Kwaduma elikhulu ihlombe ezibukelini.

Omunye owakhuluma lapho sekunikezwa imiklomelo kwaba yiyo leyo ngijimi eyaqhudelana noQhathumunyu. Yambonga ngamazwi amahle obudlali. Yambonga ngo-R2.

“Ngithasisela ngo-R2,” kumemeza enye eyathatha ubhedu komunye umncintiswano.

Enye yabeka R2 futhi. Uthe lapho esekhuluma uMongameli wabagijimi wathi uzake abonane nebandla labagijimi abamhlophe ukuthi kungenzeke yini ukuthi uQhathumunyu ake ayogijima phesheya eNgilandi. Bona bangamthwala ngendiza, babuye bambuyise ngayo. Wacina ngokumklomela ngo—R50. Wandukumupha R4.

Omunye owambongela kwaba ngumngani wakhe, umfana womSuthu, wakwaMatshu, uMahaheng. Babelala eduze nomunye. Kwakuthi sebesemibhedeni baxoxe ngezobusha. Omunye axoxe ezakubo nomunye ezakubo. Ulimi ababekhuluma ngalo isiNgisi ngoba phela omunye nomunye wayengalwazi ulimi lomunye.

“Ngiyawabonga amazwi akho, Mahaheng, umona kawunawo.” Kukhuluma uQhathumunyu, ephenduphenduka ecansini lakhe, ekhahlela umoya.

Baxoxa baze behlulwa ubuthongo. UQhathumunyu waphupha sekuhlezi uyisemkhulu, uPhundu, eceleni kwakhe. Limbuka ikhehla limamatheka. Kodwa alaze lathi vu. Lithe lisuka lalimnika undzangu. Uthe lapho embuka londzangu wabona ukuthi ngulowo elagwaza ngawo imbube. Lamkhomba phesheya okhalweni. Uthe nxa ebukisisa wabona intombazana izihambela ingamnakile. Yasondela yaze yafika kuye. Ithe nxa ifika kuye yema isibona. Waphaphama. Kepha isimo sentombazana sema emqondweni wakhe. Asaze sanyamalala njengamaphupho onke. Wakhathazeka ngalentombazana waze wasizwa ukuzunywa ubuthongo. Uthe esebuya ephaphama akabasayi-

cabanga. Wayikhohlwa njalo.

Wanela wavuka waqonda kumphathi-malawu ukuyocela imvume yokuya eMgungundlovu.

Ithe ikhala insimbi ka-9 ekuseni wayesemi emnyango ePosini. Wacela ibhuku lokulondoloza imali. Waligcwalisa, wabanika kanye no R30. Wacela ipheshana lokuthumela imali elithiwa i-“money order”. Waligcwalisa, wabanika kanye no R30. Waphuma.

Uthe lapho eseyongena ekholiji waphambana nomfana osiza umpheki ophekela abafundi. Babingelelana. Kodwa umfana yena wamshalazela, akaze athanda ukuba amehlo akhe ahlangele nawakaQhathumunyu.

“Kwenze njani, wethu, wahushuzela nje?”

“Lutho,” washo eyosithela ngemithi umfana.

Wema uQhathumunyu. Yathi enye akamlandele, yala enye. Wamangala ukuthi yini edala lokho. Uyamazi lomfana, akawona umnyemu. Kazi unani namuhla.

Wangena ekholiji ngesikhathi abathi abadala ‘isikhathi esibi endodeni.’ Uma ufika ngaso uyalilelwa, kuthiwe awuzalwanga indoda; uyofica impi ilwa; noma ufile inswelelaboya igunya umuntu. Wahlala phansi wazitika. Wathi zimbiwe insele. Kodwa inhliziyo yakhe yacabanga njalo ngokushalaza komsizi wompheki.

Wanela waqeda, waphuma waqonda elawini. Uthe engelelana wakhangwa ukuthi ibhokisi lakhe ligudlukisiwe, labhekiswa kwenye indawo. Wayenendledlana ethile yokubeka izimpahla zakhe ukuze asheshe abone ukuthi kukhona isandla esiziphathile. Walifika kepha likhiyiwe kahle. Kodwa akazakholwa. Waphumputha isikhiye. Wavula. Ezinye izimpahla zakhe azisekho. Kuphume ibhulukwe neyembe nebhantshi. Pho ziphume kanjani? Inkinga.

Waphuma wayobikela umphathi—malawu. Wayibeka yonke indaba kanye nensolo yakhe. Wasecela ukuba avunyelwe alandele lowo mfana kubo.

“Imvume yokuphuma emingceleni yasekholiji isezandleni zomphathi—kholiji,” kusho umphathi—malawu.

Umphathi—kholiji wayengekho. Waze wafika ngokuhlwa. Yaphakwa ukuyovimbezela uSithela kubo. Ku-

ngahlwa kwenile. Bathe bengena lapho becabanga ukuthi angase abekhona waphuma ngomunye umnyango. Bayaphuma sebehamba, umi phandle uyabaklolodela. Akabonaze abesangena endlini. Waze waqeda eNdakane uQhathumunyu eyilokhu asithela njalo uSithela. Wasithela nezambatho kanye nemali engu-R1.87. Kwasinda kuphela imali eyayisisebhange kanye neyayisisendleleni ilibangise kwaNgwane.

## XI

AbeLungu banesisho esithi: “Akukho moya ophephetha ungenzeli noyedwa ubuhle.” Nxa besichaza bathi: uma wena uwiswa ibhayisikili lakho likulimaze, nalo lilimale, wena udabuka kabi; kepha udokotela uyacula ngoba ethole umsebenzi, nomkhandi wamabhayisikili uyajabula ngoba naye ezothola umsebenzi. Kunjalo noma kulwa izizwe. Lezi ezingalwi ziyathokoza ngoba zizothumela izinto ezizodingwa yilabo abalwayo, zibathengisele ngamanani aphezulu.

AmaBhunu namaNgisi ake athathelana izikhali athana qhwa qhwa qhwa. Ajikijelana ngawombayimbayi nangezibhamu, abambana nangamabhayinede kwawa izinsizwa nhlangothi zombili. Izikhali abuye azibeka phansi, axhawulana, axolelana, abuyisa ugologo aphuzisana, acobelelana izinqawe abhemisana, aganiselana; amasotsha abangabalingani; akhisana abangabakhelwana; bonke basebezibiza ngokuthi bangabaseMzansi-Afrika.

IBhunu elaliyisicebi kwathi lisekamu lawo lezwa selibizwa ethendeni lomhloli wempi. Kwase kuphele amasonto amathathu iqalile impi. Lithe lapho lifika lakhangwa ibhunu lomuntu owayevela endaweni yalo.

“Ufunani lapha?” labuza ngonya.

“Ngilandela wena. Ngifuna ukuyokufa lapho nawe uyofa khona.” Impendulo yebhungu leyo.

UmLungu akathandanga neze ukuba lomuntu wakhe abe lapho. Uma efuna ukumsiza ngayesale esebenza imisebenzi yasekhaya. Futhi isitha lesi kwakungesona esabantu aba-

nsundu, kwakuyisitha sabo bona abeLungu, kulutwayi lwabo abazozwayela lona. Bona babekwazi abakulwe- layo. Yena wayengakwazi.

UmLungu wathi makaphindele ekhaya ngokuphazima kweso. Futhi kwakungelulaka kuyisihadahada. Kepha enehliziyo yobuntu emangalisayo. Kanti kawabekwa abemabili.

AbeLungu abanye balikhalima, nempela lakhalimeka. Base bembika enduneni. Induna yathi lomfana uzizele yena, uthi ufuna ukulwela umLungu wakhe afe naye. Ubuqhawe obunje abuvamile emhlabeni. Makayekwe. Nempela wayekwa. Waba nolukhulu usizo kumLungu wakhe. Emsebenzela ngazo zonke izindlela ezidingeka empini.

Onyakeni wokugcina walinyazwa inhlamvu umLungu. Lamthatha lamlayisha ehashini lalo ibhungu lomuntu, lathatha indwangu emhlophe layibophela endukwini laqonda ekamu lamaNgisi, kanti yilapho kukhona isibhedlela. Lithe ukuba limbeke laselinikwa umsebenzi wokwelusa amahashi amasotsha amaNgisi. Lambheka umLungu walo egula waze wasinda. Wanele wasinda wasethunyelwa ekamu leziboshwa zempi. Alazanga ukuthi bamthumele kuyiphi indawo. Mhlazana ezohamba umLungu wacela imvume azoxhawula kumuntu wakhe. Eqinisweni kumfowabo. Wavunyelwa. Zabambana izandla, esimhlophe nesinsundu, izinyembezi zagcwala amehlo kubo bobabili.

Ngosuku lwesithathu kwathiwa akayokweqela amahashi uTshotsho, lelo bhungu phela, njengasemihleni, kanti sengokokugcina lokho kuweqela kwakhe. Wabonwa ngelinye isotsha eselele phezu kwenjomane yakhe afika ethwele umLungu wakhe ngayo. Anamathela phezu kwawo amaNgisi.

Kwakusemagcekeni aseFulesitati. Athelwa kwabukela unogwaja owayezihlalele eceleni kwesiduli. Kwakhuza okungumfanyana womSuthu okwakuzelusele izinkonyana zikayise. Sakhala isibhamu esotsheni. Lasikhulula nelinye. Laphinda elokuqala. Laphinda elesibili. Wasithela esigodini uTshotsho. Awaphindanga esambona, wadukisa umkhondo ngendlela eyisimanga. Wanele wathi sithe,

waphenduka wabheka emuva wenyusa esinye isigodi esiphindela emuva. Amasotsha awacabanganga ukuthi uTshotsho angase adukise umkhondo wakhe ngalendlela. Wabuye wanqamula ezinyaweni zawo.

Wehla enjomaneni wangena odongeni olukhulu. Wahlala lapho kwaze kwahwalala. Kanti inhlamvu imthole ethangeni, yangena yayophuma ngaphambili kodwa ithambo yaligwema. Leyo ngozi wayibona esehlile. Wathatha uthi walufaka edukwini waluhloma enxebeni lwayophuma lapho kuphume khona inhlamvu. Wasethela umuthi owawusesikhwameni ewuthethe esibhedlela. Kwasa edulile eLangwane. Wanqamula izintaba zasoThaka wayongena ekhaya.

Isotsha leNgisi lamnika iphephandaba uMenslik—elabantu uThandabantu—walithatha walifunda. Lase liphawula isotsha lithi,

“Uma ngingahlangana naye lomuntu ngingamethulela isigqoko.”

Lalisho uTshotsho ngoba iphephandaba laliqukethe indaba yokweqa kwakhe. Kepha uMenslik akaphawulanga lutho. Wasimze waququda imihlathi. Wabona ukuthi iphephandaba alikalikhiphi iqiniso lonke ngoTshotsho. Umuntu akayona inalithi yona icasha emehlweni libalele saka. UTshotsho ufile. Baningi abeLungu abawile kulempi. Kepha bona bawele emsebenzini wabo; baphuma emakhaya abo bezimisele ukulwa behlomile. Kepha uTshotsho akahlomanga. Yebo wathi uyofa lapho kuyofa umLungu wakhe khona. Kepha yena wakoMenslik akafike, usawadla; kanti uTshotsho usefile. Wavala amehlo wabhekisa inhliziyo yakhe phezu ecelela umphefumulo wesihlobo sakhe seqiniso. “Isihlobo ekudingeni isihlobo ngempela.”

Impi yaphela. Zonke iziboshwa, nhlangothi zombili, zakhululwa zaphindela emuva lapho zavela khona—emakhaya azo.

UMenslik wayezwe amahemuhemu athi imizi yamaBhunu eminye yashiswa izitha, nemfuyo yawo enye yabhujiswa. Kazi owakhe uyowufica na? Owakhe wawusele ezandleni zabantu abaNsundu.



“Kodwa wena ungase usethembe isandla esimnyama,” kuphawula elinye iBhunu elalihamba noThandabantu.

UMenslik kazange awuvule umlomo wakhe ukuphendulana nombuzo lowo. Wathula waququda imihlathi.

Uthe ethi qhamu emzini wakhe wamangala! Indlu yakhe isiyinhle ngokwedlula. Izinkomo zigcwele inkambu. Izimvu ziyaphethuka, zibanga umsindo zibiza amazinyane azo achwazayo. Wangena ngaphakathi. Ukufika kwakhe kwakungaziwa muntu. Futhi akakho kubantu owayazi ukuthi usawadla amabele noma akasawadli. Indlu yakhe yinhle ngaphakathi nangaphandle. Wabamba ongaphansi. Umbheki wepulazi walanda iNduna. Isifikile yayisimlandisa umninipulazi.

“ . . . ngathi ukuba ngizwe ukuthi isiyibhedulile eyakini, nokuthi izitha zenu ziyazitika emfuyweni yenu, ngase ngithatha izinkomo kanye nezimvu ngazigquba ngazekhweza phezulu entabeni. Sasesakha isibaya. Emini besizivalela esibayeni, lithi lingashona sizivulele zidle. Izimpahla ngazithwala ngayoziraka emhumeni. Langa lithize yatheleka eyamaNgisi. Yakubuza ngayiphendula ngokuthi ngizwa ukuthi sewafa. Ngathi indlu le sengekaHulumeni. Izimpahla sezithuthiwe, nezinkomo zagqutshwa. Yakholwa, yadlula yayoshona kuloluya lukhalo. Dukuduku sezwa sesibizwa oThaka lapho safike satshelwa ukuthi impi iphelile, kuxolelwene. Izimpahla ezathunjwayo zizobuyiselwa kubaninizo. Nalabo ababecashi emigedeni nasemahlathini kuhle baphume babuye ezindaweni zabo. Kepha ngathi lapho ngibuza ngawe kwabakini enahamba nabo kwathiwa awaziwa noma wafa noma usaphila. Yilapho sesizobuya silande izinkomo entabeni sikhuphe nezipahla zakho emgedeni.”

Uthe lapho ethi ufuna ukubuza ngoTshotsho ukuthi wagcinaphi, wangena emnyango uTshotsho.

“Hawu, ubani lo?” kubuza umLungu engawakholwa amehlo akhe.

“Yimi mnumzane,” ephendula ngeliphansi, “ngizwa ukuthi usukhona. Ngizokubona ukuthi ngempela nguwe yini.”

“Yimina impela, Tshotsho. Ngiyathokoza ukuthi kanti nawe usawadla amabele.”

“Yebo, mnumzane, kuthokoza mina ukuthi nawe usawadla.”

“Eyakho uzobuya ungixoxele, ake siqhubeke nalena yeNduna.”

INduna yaqala ukubala izimpahla ezafa, ezalahleka, nezazalwa. Waphuma wayozibala wazifumana nempela zihambelana nokulandisa kweNduna: Wanikina ikhanda. Wakhumbula umbuzo womngani wakhe awubuza besendleleni: Kwayima ezothi kuTshotsho akakamxoxele ngokwehlukana kwabo ekamu lempi yamaNgisi, kuze kubenamhla. Wayilanda kahle yonke uTshotsho.

Kwaphela iminyaka emibili impi iphelile, wabiza bonke abantu bepulazi lakhe uThandabantu. Sebephelele wakhuluma wathi:

“Madoda aNsundu, impi le ephelile inginike isifundo esikhulu. Yima ngifundile ngomuntu oNsundu. Umenzi uyakhohlwa; umenziwa akakhohlwa. Enangenzela khona ngesikhathi sempa seniyakukhohlwa kepha mina ngingeke ngakukhohlwa. Ukuze nani ningakhohlwa kuhle nibe omenziwa.

“Indaba kaTshotsho niyayazi nonke. Mina ingicoba inhliziyu, ngizizwa ngimncane kunoTshotsho.

“Yonke lemfuyo eniyibonayo neniyaziyo sengiyayithengisa. Indlu le kanye nepulazi leli sengiyakuthengisa. Indlu ngiyithengisa namathumbu ayo. Akukho nolunci engilushiyayo. Ngokufisha ipulazi nakho konke okuphakathi kwalo. Inxenye yendawo kunqamula ngomfula kuze kuyosithela kuloluya lukhalo, kuyoshaya kulowa mfula indawo engiyipha uTshotsho. Ngimnika futhi amashumi amane ezinkomo, nekhulu lezimvu namahashi ayisishiyagalombili, nenxenye yempahla yendlu kanye-ke nekalishi. Umuzi lo wami ngiwunika induna yenu kanye nenxenye yempahla yendlu, kanye nepulazi lonke ngaphandle kwesiqephu esengisinike uTshotsho Msithini. Impahla yonke—izinkomo, izimvu, amahashi nani nani ngiyakuthengisa. Uma nina nikuthenga ngonithengisela

ngenani elingaphansi. Nina nonke nizohlala kuleli pulazi njengendawo yenu, phansi kweNduna yenu uSozwe Msithini. Yena akayikuxosha ngisho namunye kini ngaphandle komuntu oyoba isigilamkhuba. Naye lowo kuyodingeka amangalelwe kuMantshi, kuthethwe icala lelo. Uma icala lobugilamkhuba limlahla, aboshiswe, achithwe. Ongekho kuleli pulazi namhla niyomamkela nonke, ngokuthanda kwenu, nibuye nimbophise ngokuthanda kwenu. Kepha uTshotsho uyokwenza akuthandayo esabelweni sakhe."

UTshotsho kaSozwe kaTshwalabenyoni Msithini wabonana noSizakele eGunwane. Bethembisana. USizakele wamkhomba eBhilithi kuSisulu. Akachithanga sikhathi uTshotsho wabizwa khona kwaMasilela. Wacela wavunywa; walotsholiswa. Wathi yena ucela ukuba inkomo ayibuthe namathumbu ayo. Wavunyelwa kwathiwa akakhiphe izinkomo eziqeda ukhalo lwentombi ngoba uyena othe ufuna ukuthwala inkomo namathumbu ayo. Kwathiwa usengowakwaMsithini uPhikwase. USisulu wathi lokho ukuvuma ngoba amathumbu kaSizakele kungawentombazana, wathi wayengeke avume okokuba lawo mathumbu ayengumfana. Banele bamnikeza abakwaMasilela akabasachitha sikhathi uTshotsho. Wasondeza isigogombelana sakhe.

UmLungu owayakhelene noMenslik wanele wezwa ukuthi umakhelwana wakhe usenikeze indawo yakhe kubantu abaNsundu wayesethi naye usezolithengisa nelakhe ipulazi. Naye uzolithengisela abantu.

Umkhosi wahlatsiwa walawulwa. Baqhamuka amangana onke bephethe izinhlamvu, ompondo abagibele, onsumbulwana, izikoshimane, izibhakada. Banela bayiqeda ukuyithenga indawo base beyayidabula bayayehlukani-sa.

Yebo uSozwe wayebekwe ubuduna ngumLungu. UmLungu isilwane esimangalisayo, esingathengwa ngolimi, kepha esithengwa ngezandla nangobuchopho. Inhlebi akayithandi umLungu futhi akayijivazi kepha usuke abeseyotshela lowo ohletshwayo ukuthi usibanibani uthe wathi ngawe. Ungaphinde umhlebele umLungu? Omhlebayo usuke

ezithela isisila athele lowo amhlebayo amakha ngoba wenza ukuthi amehlo omLungu athi mbe kuye ukuze iqiniso lolimi lwenhlebo liphumele obala noma amanga, uma kuyiwo aqhume obala. UmLungu uzobona ukuthi alikho iqiniso olimini lwenhlebi, edlule azibonele ubuqotho bomhletshwa. Uyesuka lapho uphendukela inhlebi. Nanso ingozi. USozwe Msithini akabekwanga ngobunyoka bakhe, wabekwa ngobuqotho bakhe. Ubuqotho babasobala nasezitheni zakhe ngesikhathi engumlawuli wepulazi ngesikhathi umninilo esempini. Ngobuqotho bakhe wazenzela ugazi oluhle kubantu. Uthe ethi umLungu uyena osezoba umphathi wabo esabelweni sabo basho ngalinye bonke: "Elethu."

Indawo ngesilungu yayaziwa ngelokuthi iSwartland. Bathe lapho sebeyithethe ingeyabo wathi uthi omunye ayibizwe ngegama elinye eliyisintu bambiza ngohlanya nesiphoxo.

"Indawo siyiphawe ngumLungu. Uyena lowo mLungu owayiqamba ngalelo gama elithi Swartland. Usuphakamisa ukuthi siqambe amanga sithi saliphiwa ngumuntu? Yebo bakhona abanye asebeguqula amagama awoyisemkhulu bewabiza ngezilimi zezinye izizwe bethi impucuko leyo. Nawe usuthi kuyoba ubuntu obuqotho ukuqamba amanga na? Yeka igama lelo lime njalo ngoba liyohlala liyisikhumbuzo ezizukulwaneni zethu. Uyothi nozihambelayo limkhangela leli gama athande ukuba azi ukuthi laze labakhona ngani, kanti uma sesiliguqulile angeke nje anake. Hoxisa lowo mbono wakho."

Isibonelo sabantu baseSwartland sakhanga nalabo abathenga ipulazi lomakhelwane. Lona kwakungelomNgisi, negama lalo lingeleliNgissi, i"Fortuna."

## XII

Inxenye engenkulu kakhulu yabantu baseLume kwase kungamakholwa, ngoba phela kwakuyindawo yabantu, ingaphansi kweSikhulu. ingeyona indawo yomLungu. Izikhulu zazibemukela ngomoya omuhle abefundisi zithi abashumayeke kubantu bazo. Zibavumele bashumayeke nasemizini yazo. Abefundisi zibazisa, zithi bangabantu beNkosi. Leyo Nkosi ingase ibe eyasemhlabeni noma eyaseZulwini.

Umfundisi ofike kuqala endaweni yeSikhulu washumayeke, uyena ozoba ngumfundisi waseNdlunkulu. Uzovunyelwa aqambe ibandla lelo alimele. Kuthi ozofika muva angabesayithola indawo uma engeyena walelo bandla eliphethwe ngumfundisi owafika kuqala. Utshelwa kahle ukuthi usekhona umfundisi oshumayela izwi likaMvelinqangi kuleso sifunda.

“Qhubekela phambili, muntu weNkosi, uyolima lapho kungakalinywa khona.”

Amabandlabandla emhlabeni awayona impilo. Ayaphikisana, ayahliphizana ngezindlela asebenza ngazo, ayathinzisana. Abantu badideke.

Abafundisi bokuqala ngqa abeLungu. Yibo ababemukelelwa yizikhulu. Zibangenise ezindlini zazo kumaqhugwana, zibahlalise phansi phezu kwamacansi. Baphiwe amasi avutshwe kahle ngomcaba, bawaddele ezinkambeni ngezinkezo ezicijwe ngemithi; baphuze utshwala babuphuze ngezinkamba ezibunjwe ngedongwe. Uma uke wabala utshwala bomuntu omkhulu uhamba ungasavalelisanga. Noma wena ungabuphuze bamukele njengemfanelo bese unika abantu bakuphuzele. Uyajathuliswa yilokho omkhulu.

Sekukhona nabeLungu abanamapulazi. Kepha lababeLungu abayinambithi kahle indaba yokukholisa abantu emapulazini. Izikole zivele zingekho.

“Angikwazi ukufunda incwadi. Ngakhulela emapulazini.”

Amakholwa ikakhulu kwakuyisimame nenzalo yaso, kakhulu abafana. Amantombazana ayevame ukungakholwa aze agane. Enye yendiswa kumuntu wesithembu. Ukukholwa akuyivumeli, kanti vele abubhekani nesiko lokwendisa amantombazana.

Izimoto kazaziwa ngoba imigwaqo kayikho. Abefundisi bahamba ngamashashi nangezinyawo. Izimvula zibanethe babemanzi nte kangangoba bathi nxashana befica umfula ugwele bawangenise amashashi njengoba benjalo, bangazihluphi ngokukhumula izembatho zabo ngoba sebengamanzi. Amabhuloho awekho. Abantu bawela ezicancweni, amabhuloho emvelo akhiwa nguMvelinqangi ngamatshe nange-mithi ezimilele.

Umfundisi ungolukhulu usizo kubo bonke abantu ngaphandle komsebenzi wokushumayela izindaba zeNkosi. Ubafica abantu behla benyuka beya kwamfundisi. Omunye uvela ukuyobhala incwadi kwamfundisi. Omunye uhlome incwadi othini aluqhekeze phakathi waseyifaka phakathi, ngoba engenalo ibhantshi elizoba nesikhwama lapho angayifaka khona. Uya koyifunda kwamfundisi.

Akuzincwadi zodwa ezibasa kwamfundisi. Umfundisi ngumuntu ofundisiwe. Unolwazi oluthize ngaphezu kolwazi lweBhayibheli. Unolwazana lwemithi yesilungu elula—okhwinini, ongisawoti, okhasitaloli neminye. Kanti futhi nodlawu uyaluqonda ukusebenza kwalo. Nabangakaphenduki baba ngamakholwa bayavakashela impela kwamfundisi. Izindlela eziya kwamfundisi kazilali amazolo.

“Mfundisi, angilalanga ebusuku. Isisu.”

“Baba angisadli. Yizinyo.”

“Mfundisi, ake ungifundele nansi incwadi yami.”

“Mfundisi mane ungikwebhahlwebhele incwajana. Uyi-se kaBaleni useGoli. Ngifuna ukumazisa ukuthi phinde ayisabekwa eziko. Ikati selilala eziko.”

Beza bamthwalele amathanga, izilimo—amantongomane, izindlubu, omunye inkukhu; omunye iqatha; omunye izithelo zasendle—amatulwa, amaganu, amanumbela, umfomfo, amakhiwa.

Amadoda aqhubela abafazi nezingane wona asalé ema-

khaya. Athi wona azakuba amabhuloho phakathi kwemizi yawo nabaphansi. Kepha izinhliziyi zawo zimhlophe ngasenkolweni. Abafazi babo nezingane zabo bazikhulule ngomoya omuhle. Yiwona akhipha izimfanelo ezibizwa yisonto. Umfundisi akadlali kubo, akathonseli phansi. Yiwona athumela izidlo kuye ngabantwana nangamakhosikazi awo. Nxa kukhona umsebenzi wamadoda kwamfundisi, amadoda anabafazi abangamakholwa kuphuma wona ayobambela amakhosikazi awo noma izingane zawo.

UMaDlamini kanye nesisu sakhe basebengamakholwa, sebebhehlelelwe. Baziqokela namagama abawathandayo. Bangabe besasabela uma umuntu ehabiza ngalelo gama labo elidala. Kepha uLubhede wathi uMaDlamini babomphehlelela ngegama lakhe lokuzalwa elithi uNonhlanhla. Wathi abantwana bangaphehlelelwa ngamanye amagama noma ngawaluphi ulimi. Wayekholwa ukuthi abantu bakubo namagama akubo akuwona umsebenzi kaSathane. Wayekholwa ukuthi nabo bona boBhevula badalwa nguye uMvelinqangi othiwa uNkulunkulu. Wayekholwa ukuthi amagama esintu anesithunzi kubantu. Wawuvumela-ke umuzi wakhe ukuyokholwa.

Ngalesikhathi uhlezi eduze nesibaya ngasempumalanga uBhevula, kwazise ukuthi kwakusesekuseni. Wayelola izembe lakhe emlalazini. Ezimisele ngalolo suku ukuyowisa izihlahla evungwini, zithi zingoma abesezishisa alime ingqatho. Abheke esibayeni, inkabi yinye vo. Acabange ukuthi kazi ziyoze zime yini kulesibaya. Kazi ziyobe zivelaphi. Acabange nangokuthi athathe uNobayeni ayomnganisela indoda esuthayo. Kepha uHulumeni useshayengenduku phansi wathi makuphele nya ukwendisa umntwana ngenkani. Kodwa makuvume yena umntwana ukuthi lowo muntu anikwe yena uyamenelisa. Ubani ongase athandwe uNobayeni? Omunye wabafana bakwaMnisi? Qha, angeke. Unjani umfana kaMdokwane? Naye qha, ucu aluhlangani entanyeni. Kazi kodwa bangamlobolela ngezinkomo ezinhle na? Noma bakhethe imixhopho okuzolayela kuwo lonyaka. Lamadoda amaqonqela.

“Yeka isifo. Yeka ulandapense. Angiyukumkhohlwa noma nini.”

Abuye aqhubeke nokulola imbazo leyo. Yoho-yoho-yoho, kusho izembe livumela umlalazi. Kuzwakale inyoni icula. Athi qala qala. Abone umthondolo uthe lwi phezulu kwehlahla lesango lesibaya. Athule uBhevula athi du, amehlo akhe ethi mbe enyonini eculayo. Uyazi ukuthi umthondolo uza nombiko othile.

“Kazi zingase zivelephi?” wazibuza yena ngenhliziyo. Hleze kuqhamuke umuntu othile azokokha umlilo kwaLubhede. Akambonanga noMaDlamini efika ehlala phansi kude buduze naye. Umcabango wakhe wawulwa neyokuthi kazi nyoni ndini uza naziphi. Wambona owakwakhe sekukudala ehlezi phansi. Abafazi babantu bahlala phansi bathi vithi nxa beletha indaba kubayeni babo. Uma kungenzeki ukuthi bahlale phansi okungenani baguqa ngamadolo noma bakhothame. Umyeni inhloko yomkakhe. Umkakhe ingane yakhe. Izinkunzi kazibekwa zibe zimbili esibayeni sinye. Umfazi othi nxa eletha umbiko endodeni afike ayitshela emi yisiphoxo, uphoxa abazali bakhe, usho ukuthi kabamfundisanga inhlonipho.

“Namhla uyogawulaphi Baba?” kubuza uMaDlamini ngeliphansi.

Kwaba ukuphuma kwakhe emicabangweni yakhe embophile uBhevula. Kubesongathi uvuswa ebuthongweni. Waphefumula kakhulu kwaze kwathuka umthondolo wesuka wandiza, washaya amaphiko wayosithela ngale kwesixhobo samatshe.

“Ngiyogawula esihosheni. Ngifuna ukuyokwendulelisa khona kulonyaka. Uyafika uQhathumunyu ingqatho isivuthiwe.”

“Ngiyezwa, Lokothwayo,” kuphendula umkakhe ephephe ushana, ngalo edweba umugqa oyindilinga phansi. “Usuyogawula singabuya.”

Yamxaka uLubhede lenkulumo kaMaDlamini. Waphakamisa amehlo wambhekisisa owakwakhe ngalenkulumo ethi “singabuya.”

“Phi?” wabuza ngelokushiseka.

“Kwamfundisi.”

“Siyokwenzani?”

“Angazi nami.”

Athule uBhevela edidekile ukuthi uzothini ngoba nomkake uthi akazi. Kube indaba engenakhanda. Akubone lokho uMaDlamini abesethi:

“Nanguya umntwana esibuyeni, uthi sibizwa ngumfundisi.”

“Uthi unibiza nobani?”

“Sobabili nawe.”

Wadideka kakhulu manje uLubhede. Angase abizwe umfundisi kwenze njani. Yena akalona ikholwa. Yebo umuzi wakhe wawuvumela ukuba uyokholwa. Akaze athole nowodwa umlayezo ongaye ophuma kumfundisi. Kazi namhla kwenze njani? Ngabe izingane zakhe zingile? Ngabe ubizwa ngendaba ephathelene noMaDlamini? Yebo bonke bayizinja zakhe. Isono sazo sizothwalwa nguye. Ibandla liyothi zimshaye izinyoni.

“Biza leyo ngane kuze yona luqobo lapha.”

“We Hlamukile!” kumemeza uMaDlamini.

“Ma.”

“Ake uze neno ntombi.”

Wagijima uHlamukile. Esefikile kwasekukhuluma uMaDlamini.

“Tshela uyihlo, ntombi, ukuthi ukuthumeni umfundisi.”

“Uthe angizokunibiza nobabili nobaba.”

“Usibizelani Hlamukile?” kubuza uLubhede.

“Angazi, Baba.”

“Bayaphila?”

“Yebo.”

“Ngesikhathi ekuthuma ubenamile noma qha?”

“Abenjengasemihleni.”

“Akukho abantu abafikile namhla noma-ke izolo?”

“Abekho. Kufike iposi. Umfundisi ngamuzwa esebiza unkosikazi. Ngithe ngizwa ngezwa sengibizwa. Kwathiwa angizonibiza.”

“Utheni, akashongo ukuthi sisheshe?”

“Akashongo njalo.”

“Ngabe ikhona incwadi efike ngeposi. Pho, wake wangibizela iposi nini?”

“Angazi,” kuphendula uHlamukile.

“Uthini wena MaDlamini?”

UMaDlamini wathi kuhle basheshe baye kwamfundisi. Nebala bahamba.

“E, Buthelezi! Shenge!”

“Sikhona ngenani. O, yini Baba, senikhona?”

“Sesikhona mfundisi.”

“Kuhle-ke Lubhede. Kuhle impela. Sakubona. Sakubona nawe Mama.”

Abaxhawule ngesandla esifudumele esinempilo. Ezwe ukuthi ezabo azinayo impilo. Ziyabanda zikhomba ukwe-thuka kwezinhliziyi zabo. Nomkamfundisi abaxhawule ngomoya omnandi naye.

“Nisaphila-ke Baba?” kubuza uButhelezi ngezwi elijabulile.

“Siyaphila Baba. Nina ninjani?”

“Siphilile nathi. Asikaboni lutho olubi.”

Izwi elithi asikaboni lutho olubi libe enkulu induduzo emphefumulweni kaLubhede. Alukho olubi ababizelwa lona umfundisi. Ehle amaphaphu.

“Siphange, Baba,” kukhuluma uMaDlamini, awakhe amaphaphu cyilokhu ephakeme.

“Hlalani phansi bakwethu.” Abakhombise isitulo. Bahlale. ULubhede esihlalweni, uMaDlamini phansi ecanisini. Asukumele phezulu uMaThusi, inkosikazi kamfundisi, amemeze izingane ngasekhishini. Asukume uButhelezi akhiphe isikhiye esikhwameni sebhulukwe sangasemuva. Athathe ibhokisana lensimbi alivule ngaso. Afake isandla phakathi siphume nemvilophi edwetshwe imigqa eshaye isiphambano nhlangothi zombili. Imigqa mikhulu imnyama. UMaDlamini wake wezwa kuthiwa imvilophi enjalo isuke iletha umbiko wesifo, izilile. Kepha uLubhede wayengazange ezwe inkulamo enjalo. Kuthi akaqhume amemeze uMaDlamini abuye azibambe. Esabe ukuthi kuzothiwa luhlanya. Asondele ngasetafuleni nemvilophi uButhelezi. Ayibeke phezu kwetafula. Uthe lapho ngabe

uhlala phansi kwaqhamuka uMaThusi ephethe itiyi. Ali-beke phezu kwetafula. Abuye ayisuse etafuleni imvilophi uButhelezi, ayifake esikhwameni sebhantshi sangaphakathi.

“Ake nehlise izindenda,” kusho uMaThusi ebanika amakomishi abakwaLubhede.

UMaDlamini walithatha elakhe wabonga walibeka phansi, lahlala lapho laze laphola, waseliphuzisa okwamanzi. UBhevula yena wanela walithatha wasede elithela esosini waliphunga ngalo ngomjaho.

Ngesikhathi bephunga itiyi wayiziba umfundisi indaba ababizele yona. Kuthi nalapho imbuzi igudla iguma ayithele ngamanzi. Banela baqeda du ukuphuza uMaThusi waqoqa amakomishi, wabiza ingane yawathatha yaphuma nawo. Wandukukhipha imvilophi futhi esikhwameni umfundisi ayibeke phezu kwetafula.

“Asingene endabeni,” kukhuluma uButhelezi ephakama esitulweni. “Ake siguqe sibonge kumninizinto zonke.”

Baguqe, avale umnyango uMaThusi. Akhuleke umfundisi athi qabuqabu abeseyeka. Baphakame bahlale, uvulwe nomnyango.

“Sondelani etafuleni nonke,” kukhuluma uButhelezi.

Nembala basondele bahlale ezitulweni ngaphandle kuMaDlamini. Wama ngezinyawo kodwa egobile wabamba amadolo. Ahoshe incwadi phakathi emvilophini. Ayisombulule ayibeke phezu kwetafula. Andukuhosha kuyo leyo mvilophi amaphephaphepha aluhlaza emali. Ayibale ngephepha ngalinye.

“Isiyonke ama-R30.”

Wadonsa incwadi ephuma phakathi waqala ukuyifunda kahle ngesineke ephakamisa izwi abuye alehlise, abuye agcizelele emazwini athile njengendlela yokufunda kahle incwadi uyifundela abantu ukuze inhloso yombhali ibekwe obala ibonwe ngamehlo ezindiebe zabafundelwayo.

“Baba nomama,

“Ngihlabene njengobabamkhulu, uPhundusiyabheka. Bekade kunomncintiswano lapha ekholiji. Besiqhudelene nezingijimi zabeLungu ezivela phesheya kwelamaNgisi.

Sigijime ibanga elingangokusuka kwaMbila kuya kwaMbhoke. Ngabashiya.

Indaba yonke ngoyeneka kahle ngomlomo lapho ngifika ekhaya.

Nganikwa umklomelo waba ama-R50. Kwathi izigijimi nezibukeli zangibonga ngama-R10. Isiyonke imali eyabekwa ezandleni zakwaLubhede yaba ama-R60.

Kuwe-ke Baba, ngithumele ama-R30. Inxenye yayo enye engako ngiyithele yonke ebhange.

Ngiyababonga abakithi ngalempumelelo. Ngiyabonga noMvelinqangi.

Ngiyaphila. Ngifisa ukuzwa ngani.

Khonza kakhulu kumama nasekhaya.

Salani kahle,

Yimi indodana yenu,

Qhathumunyu Lufulwakhe.”

Zehla kuMaDlamini. Wahluleka manje ukuzibamba, waqhuma,

“Wu-u-u! wul wu!! wul weMalangeni!”

“Nazo-ke izinkomo zendodana. Naso isipho sikaMenzi wakhe,” kukhuluma umfundisi Buthelezi. “Nginyanibongela kakhulu nina bakwaLubhede ngalenhlanhla engandile.”

“Yebo, Shenge,” kunanazela uMaThusi, “sonke siyababongela. Ukuzala ukuzelula amathambo basho abadala.”

“Mina ngibonga wena Baba, kanti futhi naye umama wethu angimkhohliwe. Imisebenzi yakho yonke le. Imizamo yakho mide mayelana nalomfana wami. Kungathi washiya ikini kwaZulu wazosiza mina ngedwa.”

“Kunjalo Shenge,” kuthatha uMaDlamini, “nami ngisho njalo ngithi abantu bakwaButhelezi beza ukuzosiza thina othwaqa, esinganuki naseziko.”

“Ayangithokozisa amazwi enu,” kuphendula umfundisi.

“Kodwa uyedelela lomfana,” kukhuluma uBhevula ebutha imali etafuleni. “Ukwazi kanjani ukuhlephula izinkomo zingakafiki esibayeni sazo?”

“Qha, Lubhede,” sekuphendula uButhelezi, “akadlalanga ngazo. Uzigcine kahle impela.”

“Useyoyipha abeLungu, bazozitika.”

Aqale phansi umfundisi achaze ukuthi imali esebhange iyazala. Uthi lapho usuyikhipha uyikhiphe isinamankonyane.

“Ngiyabonga, Baba, incazelo yakho. Mina ngiyezwa. Kodwa ngabangasekho esibesabayo. Yibo abamlethele lenhlanhla. Imali le akuyona eyakhe. Bekufanele ayithumele kimi yonke njengobunjalo bayo. Nami anginakuyenza lutho ngaphandle kokuba ngiyibike kubanikaziyo. Ngizonele ngifike ekhaya bese ngiyokuyibeka emsamo kwagogo wakhe. UMaDlamini lo abesegaya ukhanjana, bese ngibabikela ngalo oyisemkhulu. Ngishweleze, ngoba phela bayashesha ukucunuka. Bangase bamlimaze ngengozi, kuthiwe ingozi kanti kukhona abakuzondile.”

“Uzoyihlalisa emsamo kuze kubenini?” kubuza umfundisi.

“Ngizonela ngiqede ukuyibika bese ngiyithatha ngiyokuyisebenzisa.

“Uzokuyisebenzisa kanjani-ke?”

“Izinkomo. Izinkomo. Akukho okunye, Baba,”

“Yonke?”

“Yonke iyophelela khona. Ngifuna izinkomo.”

Avume ngekhandu uButhelezi, kodwa kubonakale ukuthi akeneliswa ukuthi ngayo yonke lemali akusekho nokuncane azokuthenga ngaphandle kwezinkomo zodwa. Amadoda akithi izinkomo azikholwe ukwedlula. Umnumzane owesuthayo ubonwa ngomhlambi wakhe. Abantwana bakhe bayesutha, abagoleli izimpukane emlonyeni. Kuyasengwa kwethiwe; amagula uwafica echichima. Onina bapheke izinkobe, bazigaye; bathulule amagula, bavube amasi. Abafana bathathe umlaza bayosengela ubisi kuwo benze ihongo. Noma ngabe ayisabekwa imbiza eziko izingane ngeke ziyizwe indlala. Abafana bayakleza ekwaluseni, amantombazana athi angabona ukuthi amagula asasunduza izivimbo athathe izinkamba avule umunge akhiphe umlaza

ayowuphuza. Umnumzane onomhlambi wezinkomo ubaneqiniso lokuthola umalokazana. Kuthiwe intombi kasi-banibani izodla izinkomo. Izozidla ngoba zikhona, izibona. Ingeke izidle isibaya somile. Ngempela izidle, ayiphikiswa, ayaliwa. Yaliwa kuphela uma yazelwa okubi—ubuthakathi kuphela. Okunye kuyafulelwa—ubuvila, ubunuku, ubusela, nokunye kuyazitshwa; zishaywe izinkomo, kuphume imithantikazi, izithole; kuphume izinzibulazana, izindlezana nemimvemve yazo; izinzimakazi, izinhlamvukazi, izinco nezincokazi, amalunga namalungakazi, izintusi nezintusikazi, izimpemvu nezimpevukazi; kuphume amahlawe, iziqengqe, amagodla, izingcungu; zikhishwe nguye umnumzane luqobo, azikhiphe ngayinye ngayinye. Ziphume zishulungane ziyoshona ngokhalo. Lokho ukwakhiwa komuzi.

“Asihambe KaDlamini. Salani ngomusa nina bakwa-Buthelezi.”

“Buthelezi, sesibongile,” kusho uMaDlamini.

“Hambani neNkosi bakwaLubhede.”

Wanela wafika ekhaya uBhevula wayibeka imali emsamo endlini kwagogo kaQhathumunyu. Wakhulumana nabaphansi. Akayanga esibayeni njengasemihleni. Yahlala lapho kwaze kwalunga ukhanjana. Selulungile wabiza uyise omncane. Lafika labikela abaphansi ikhehla. Laphuza lolokhamba. Ngakusasa, kusempondozankomo, wawithatha uBhevula wahamba.

Kwaphela amasonto amabili ehambile wathelaka nezimazi ezine, amankonyane amathathu, amaguqa amabili, izithole eziyisihlanu, izinkabi eziyisihlanu, nenxahi elilodwa. Zasezixubene nezakhe azithenga ngeyakhe imali.

Zabhonsa kwaze kwacishe kwasa mhlazana zifika esibayeni sakwaLubhede. Ngakusasa zithe lapho ziphuma inhlazane omakhelwane babamba ongaphansi. Abanye bathi nansi inkinga; abanye bathithibala; abanye bathi abaqhume umhobholo. Bangeke bambongele owakwa-Lubhede bonke.

### XIII

Wathi ukuba agane uTshotsho, uSizakele wayeseqashisa kwabanye abantu indlu yakhe eGunwane. Yena wabopha wayohlala emzini wakwaMsithini eSwartland. Wangena endlini kaThandabantu.

Ekuvulweni kwezikole uPhikwase waphindela esikoleni eGunwane ngoba isikole sasisacathula eSwartland EGunwane wayezohlala kwaMaFanemeve.

Kwakumnyama kuPhikwase, engaqondi ukuthi uyothi angaqeda incwadi yesithupha eGunwane abesenzenjani. Kwakuthi lapho ebuzwa owabo noma othisha, abaphendule ngokuthi uyophindela ekhaya ayohlala asize unina emsebenzini wasekhaya.

Ezinye izingane ziye zibe nayo imiqonjwana mayelana nokuthi nxa ziqeda incwadi yokugcina kuleso sikole zingahle zifundele lokhu nalokhuya.

Langalimbe uPhikwase wayehamba namanye amantombabana kuviwa esikoleni. Babehamba ngomgwaqo. Bathe isesondela lapho umgwaqo unqamula ujjantshi bezwa nitimela sikhala, sixwayisa abantu nezimoto. Bahamba zgamandla. Bathe sebeseduze kukajantshi bafica izimoto sezimi uxhaxha nhlangothi zombili. Nabafikayo bame. Khona lapho kwase kuqhamuka iloli ethwele abantu abaningi. Yona eyasejozi, ivela khona nalabantu. Kepha ayaze yema. Yazigudla lezo ezimile iqonde phambili. Ithe nxa isiphakathi nezimboto yema. Wabuza ngesiBhunu umshayeli wayo:

“Nimeleni lapha na?”

“Isitimela sesiseduze,” kuphendula omunye wabashayeli.

“Nidlala ngesikhathi nibadala,” kusho umshayeli weloli.

“Dedelani othina sihambe,” washo eyinika amafutha.

“Shayela Wili, siyobona abafazi bethu emakhaya,” kusho izwi kwabaphezulu elolini.

Ithe nje lapho ithi qathatha esipolweni, laba phezu kwayo

ikhanda lesitimela esivela emsahweni. Awangaphambili amasondo eloli ayeseqile isipolo, nomshayeli wayo esephumile engozini.

UPhikwase wavala amehlo.

Uthe ewavula sase sisithele emsahweni sesihlaba umkhulungwane oqhathumunyu, sesibika ingozi esivele. Lawo mantombazana ayekade ehamba nawo akabanga esawabona. Akazanga nokuthi abaleke nini, ashone ngaphi.

Iloli isiyizimvuthu. Ababekade bephezulu iningi labo lilimele. Abanye sekuyisiphihli, abanye sebeyizingini— amakhanda, imikhono, imilenze kunqamukile. Abanye baphilile saka. Umqhubi weloli akanawo ngisho umyocu wodwa lo.

UPhikwase wabona abantu nabeLungu sebeshiye izimoto emgwaqweni sebesiza abalimele. Naye wagijima wayosiza. Waklebhula ezinye izembatho zakhe wabopha amanxeba amabi kakhulu, anegazi elitsazayo.

Kwaqhamuka zimoto, maloli, ma-ambulensi, bantu, abongikazi, odokotela, amaphoyisa. Kwaba olukhulu usizi.

UPhikwase wakhwela kwenye iambulensi waye wafika esibhedlela.

“Ube olukhulu usizo kubantu bakini, ntombazana,” kukhuluma umongameli wabongikazi. “Ngiyezwa ukuthi abantu abathathu ngabe bafe khona lapho okokuba awudabulanga izembatho zakho wababopha. Isenzo esincomekayo kakhulu leso.”

Akaze aphenhula uPhikwase. Kwaze kwaqhuba yena futhi uMethiloni.

“Ufundaphi?”

“Esikompulazi.”

“Ufunda liphi iBanga?”

“EleSithupha.”

“Uzothi ungaliqeda ubusuyofundelani?”

“Angikazi.”

“Awufuni ukuyofundela ubongi na?”

“Angikazi.”

“Mina ngibona ukuthi igatsha elikufanele yibo ubunesi.



Ungaba umongikazi ophambili, ube olukhulu usizo kubantu bakini."

Umongameli wabongikazi wacina ngokupha intombazana incwajana exoxa ngezobongi. Behlukana uPhikwase waphindela ekhaya.

Kusukela lapho uPhikwase wazizwa efikelwa isifiso sokuba abe ngumongi. Wabuya wabonana noMethiloni ngesifiso esisha. UMethiloni wamkhuthaza, wamethembisa usizo.

Waqala ukubhalela ezibhedlela ezifundisa abongi. Wacela indawo yokufunda. Zabuya zalandula. Wabhala zabuya zalandula. Zonke zibika into yinye; "Kugcwele". Waze walahla ithemba, waxola.

Phakathi nenyanga uNhlolanja, ngenxa yokulahla ithemba, wacela ukuyovakashela kwaninakhulu eBhilithi. Wahlala amasonto amane khona. Wabuyela kubo. Wafika eSwartland ngoLwesine. Kwathi ngoLwesihlanu, emini yasekuseni, kwafika umfana evela emzini wenduna elethe ucingo. Zazingamashumi amabili nesishiyagalombili kuNdasa. Ngesikhatli efika umfana wafika izingane zodwa. Abazali bengekho behambele oThaka ngekalishi. UPhikwase yena wayeyokukha amanzi emthonjeni. Ucingo lulethwa ngesandla, oluthathayo alusayinele. Abantwana bamtshele umfana ukuthi udadewabo uyokukha amanzi. Waqonda ngasemthonjeni, waphakamisa izinyawo uSondundu.

"Nansi incwadi yakho yocingo."

"Ivelaphi, Sondundu?"

"Swartland. Kazi wena awazi yini ukuthi ucingo lukhishwa eposini lalowo oluya kuye?"

"Ngiyakwazi lokho, muntu wabantu," washo eyithatha. Wathatha impenseli kumfana wasayina. Ubhala umile, uthwele imbiza yamanzi ekhanda uyiyekelele.

Wacela wafika ekhaya wayithi qithi phansi imbiza, waqonda ekamelweni lakhe. Waluhosha emvilophini ebomvu waselufunda. Lubhalwe ngesiZulu:

"Isikhala sokufunda sesivulekile. Usazimisele noma qha? Methiloni. Mkabayi Hospital."

Kulolu cingo kuchonywe ipheshana elimhiophe elibhalwe ngamagama aluhlaza. Iphepha azolisebenzisa lapho esephendula lolu cingo.

Uthe ephuma ekamelweni wayebona inqokumbane yabazali bakhe iza. Impendulo yathunyelwa emuva kwamandina ngalo lona lolu suku.

"Ngisazimisele."

UTshotsho waqonda esiteshini ukuyomlungisela indawo yokuhamba ngesitimela. Lwafika usuku, wakhwela uPhikwase. Uyise wamqhuba ngenqokumbane wayombeka esiteshini iSwartland, wamthathela ithikithi. Ibhokisi lakhe eligcwele izimpahla zakhe walinikeza kubasizi bezihambi. Umninilo uyohlanganna nalo eMgungundlovu. Elinye elilingene, eligcwele izingubo ezithize nokunye okuthize wayezokuphatha ngezandla kanye nobhasikidi womphako.

EGunwane wehla wayolindela imeyili. Wafika wahlala esihlalweni esingaphandle, kwazise ukuthi kwase kusele imizuzwana embalwa iqhamuke imeyili. Wafika amantombazana amabili ehlezi kuleso sihlalo. Amxoxisa waze wawejwayela. Kodwa ayethi uma emxoxisa angambuki, azishaye sengathi anamahloni. Abasizwanga isitimela ngesikhatli sibika ukuthi sesiyangena. Kwathi nalapho ikhanda laso lisondela epulatifomu abaze banaka, basimze bacabanga ukuthi amakhanda lawo ade eshendula esiteshini ehla enyuka. UPhikwase waze wabona ngezindlu zabantu ezikhanyisiwe ukuthi kanti iyo uqobo. Inde, ibophele izinqola ezesabekayo. Iza kancane kube sengathi imile.

"Yiso ngempela," kusho enye intombazana.

"Kodwa, dade," kuphawula enye, "uthi wathumela igama lakho wacela ukugcinelwa indlu esitimeleni?"

"Kunjalo," kuphendula uPhikwase.

"Kuzodingeka uyobonana nogadi kuqala."

"Impela," washo esukuma, "anongibhekela impahla yami."

"Kulungile, nango esephuma ehovisi ugadi."

Wayesemi egcekeni ugadi. Isitetelegu seBhunu lakwabo esimadevu abomvu, nentshebe ebomvu. Uyena osuka

eGunwane ayokwehla eMmnabithi, alnidele esikhuphukayo ayokwehla futhi eGunwane.

UPhikwase waba ngowokuqala ngqa ukusondela kuye azobuza ngamalungiselo endlu.

“Ubani igama lakho?” kwabuza ugadi ngezwi eligcwele unya.

“P. Msithini.”

“Mana laphaya,” ekhomba ngomunwe buqamama.

AbeLungu nabo babuza ngezabo izindlu. Uthe ukuba abaqede wase eqhweba uPhikwase ngesandla esiphethe impenseli. Wambuza igama futhi. Wanda ukumtshela ukuthi unamba 525 F. Wasephindela emuva emthwalweni wakhe lapho ewushiye khona. Uthe nxashana efika esihlalweni wafica itshe selome inhlama. Amantombazana ansondo aseshaye utshani nebhokisi lakhe. Kuphela ubhasikidi womphako osamlindile. Nokho akaze acabanga ngobubi; wacabanga ukuthi ayokumlindela esitimeleni. Akaze ashaywa nalualo oluncane. Wathatha ubhasikidi waqonda esitimeleni. Wawuyathe qalaqala akaze abona mantombazana. Kwayima lumfikela uvalo lumthi nke, nke, nke. Abheke phakathi ebhasikidini. Lokhu unesivalo, wabona ipheshana lihloniwe esivalweni. Walihosha, walisombulula, wafunda okubhalwe kulo:

“Siphukuphuku ndini. Sikuyula amehlo. Hamba kahle. Izimpahla zakho wozithola ekufeni.”

Wavala amehlo uPhikwase wadinda isililo. Wema lapho okwesiduli sikasawothi. Kanti iphoyisa lomLungu lakwaloliwe liyambona. Kuthe lapho sesizosuka isitimela lasondela kuye lamkhulumisa ngesiZulu. Lambuza waliphendula ngezwi elinesilokozane. Laselithi akakhwele lizofika kuye masinyane lizohlola isikhalo sakhe. Lase lisithela esixukwini. Wakhwela wafuna indlu yakhe, wayithola. Wema emnyango ngaphandle. Sadonsa isitimela.

Masinyane lasondela iphoyisa selihamba nogadi. Wavula umnyango ugadi, wafica amantombazana amabili phakathi. Acelwa ukuba ake eme ngaphandle kancane. Kwase kugena uPhikwase nephoyisa elimhlophe, owesithathu kwaba nguye

ugadi. Yilapho-ke iphoyisa selizothatha isitatimente ngesimo sempahla elahlekile. Wayichaza kahle yonke—imibala namanani ayo. Wawachaza kahle namantombazana lawo. Lathatha igama lakhe nekheli lakhe. Lathatha nalelo pheshana alifca ebhasikidini. Iphoyisa lehla esitesheni sesibili kusuka eGunwane, lapho imoto evela eGunwane yayisililindele khona.

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Kwaphela amasonto amane walandwa uPhikwase, wayokhomba amantombazana kwamaningi. Wawakhomba kalula. Ibhokisi lakhe nalo walikhomba kalula phakathi kwamanye. Lavulwa. Phakathi wafica ukuthi ezinye izimpahla azisekho. Phakathi kwalokho okwakungasekho kwaba izingubo zokugqoka, namacici kanye namakha.

Agwetshwa amasela. Waphindela eMgungundlovu uPhikwase.

#### XIV

UQhathumunyu nomngani wakhe babekade bevakashele kwelaseMangwaneni, kubo kaGezindaba umngani wakhe. Isitimela sigcwele siyaphuphuma. Abantu abazokhwela bayanyathelana. Kwambombela kalufakwa. Abazokhwela sekubutata, yilowo nalowo uthi yimi phambili. Bonke bafisa ukuthi sithi sithi nsi kube ifasitela liqondene naye ngqo, noma-ke, okungasenani abeseduze nalo. Abantu sebephindela emsebenzini eMgungundlovu nakhona e-Thekwini, nakwamanye amadolobha asezansi. Inhlahlala ukuthi oQhathumunyu bathenge amathikithi akasekeni; nokho nakhona kugcwele.

Banela bakhwela bema ngaphandle. Kwaze kwafika umhloli wamathikithi. Bacela usizo kuye. Wathi uyadabuka ngoba isitimela siyachichima.

Kwenye indlu yakwasekeni kunamantombazana amathathu. Ade ephuma engena njengokwenza kwabantu esitimeleni. OQhathumunyu abaze bawanaka, nawo awaze abanaka. Enye yawo yadlula eduze kukaQhathumunyu. Kwathi ngoba eme endaweni okudlulwa kuyo, yamgudla.

Iyazedlulela iyokha amanzi okuphuza. Kwabasengathi isimthwebulile owakwaLubhede. Igazi lakhe latshuza okwenhlanzi idweba amanzi; kwabasengathi weqe umbhulelo womthakathi. Wawuzwa ukhuphuka ezinyaweni, ngenilenze uye ushaye okhakhayini. Emqondweni wakhe kwangathi angathi uyayazi, negama layo uyalazi. Wabheka ngalapho isithele ngakhona yaze yabuye yaqhamuka. Ithe lapho ithi qhamu, amehlo ayo azithela kwawakhe. Yawawisa awayo njengemvelo yesifazane. Uthe ethi uzama ukuyikhulumisa, alaze laphumela izwi. Wagcina ekhulume ngenhliziyo kuphela. Usededile manje lapho izodlula khona. Ukubona kanye ukubona kabili. Ithe lapho isingena endlini yaphendukela ngakubafana, yababheka, yabuza.

“Ngabe nintula indawo yini bafowethu?”

“Kakhulu dadewethu,” kuphendula uGezindaba.

“Ngiyabona.” Yasho ingena phakathi.

“Ngabe uyayazi yini?” kubuza uGezindaba kumngani wakhe.

“Usho ngani?”

“Qha, ngiyabuza nje, mfana.”

“Ameblo ami ayayicala, ngqa.”

“Kazi eyaphi?”

“Kulungile, ngenani,” sekusho yona iveia emnyango nobunye ubuso bamantombazana amabili.

Babonge, bangene. Phakathi babingelele, bahlale phansi embhedeni. Amantombazana ahleli kolunye uhlangothi lwendlu.

“Lona,” kukhuluma uGezindaba, “nguMnu. Lubhede. Mina nginguGezindaba Thwala.”

“Lona,” kukhuluma enye yamantombazana, “nguNks. Kgoadikgoadi. Lona nguNks. Msithini. Mina ngingu-Nozipho Gumbi.”

Abafana basho kanye kanye,

“Siyabonga ukunazi.”

“Nathi siyathokoza ukunazi,” sekusho amantombazana nawo kanye kanye.

“Niyaphila-ke?” kubuza uGezindaba.

“Siyaphila,” kuphendula uNks. Gumbi, “nina ninjani?”

“Sikhona. Liqhanyukiswaphi pho?” kusaqhubeka yena uGezindaba.

“Singabasenkangala,” kuphendula uNks. Gumbi.

“Kuphi nenkangala?”

Uthe lapho ngabe uyachaza ukuthi kuphi nenkangala isitimela sathi memfu eMgungundlovu, onduku zibomvu. Ngempela ubomvu. Uthule phansi esigodini uthe du, sengathi ukhumbula ezakudala ezinkulu.

Isitimela sithatha isikhashana esidana sehla entabeni. Side sisithela sibuye sivele. Wayeqala uQhathumunyu ukwehla ngesitimela emini kulendawo. Wayikhohlwa nentombi leyo emgudlile yamlumba kwaze kwanyakaza imizwelo. Uyabukela, ubukela isitimela eshla intaba kungathi siyabukisa. Ubuhle obunjeya bemvelo nesitimela buyawuduza umphefumulo odabukileyo, nogudluliweyo. Uselikhohliwe lelo lishwa naye usenanela ubuhle bezandla zaKhe. Siyasongana isitimela sansondo sisongana nentaba siyehla. Sesisongana okwemamba yezihosha beyishaye umgogodla. Ikhanda laso lithi alihlangane nenqola kagadi; libuye liqhele kungaze kuvele ingozi. Sitshuze siyongena esiteshini esikhulukazi. Sime sihlabe ikhefu, sesiphukuhla amagwebu. Sibavumele abehlayo behle.

“Sesiyehla lapha,” kusho uGezindaba esukuma.

“Nathi siyehla,” kukhuluma uNks. Gumbi, “musani ukusithela isinyama nisishiye esitimeleni.”

“Kanti nilibangisephi?” kubuza uQhathumunyu.

“EMgungundlovu,” kuphendula uNks. Msithini.

Kwehliwe. Izinsizwa zasiza amantombazana ekwehliseni imithwalo yawo futhi ngoba zona azinawo.

“Siyabonga bodadewethu umusa wenu nesihawu senu,” kubonga uQhathumunyu.

“Abanesihawu,” kukhuluma uNks. Kgoadikgoadi okhuluma isiZulu ngobunzima, “bayohawukelwa. Nathi siyabonga, bafowethu, ukusisiza kwenu.”

“Pho,” kubuza uGezindaba, “kuphi noMgungundlovu lapho nilibhekise khona?”

“Wu,” kukhuza uNks. Msithini, “sakholeka abantu bakwaZulu, webantu, nemibuzo yabo engapheli.”

“Kanti enkangala abantu bakhona ababuzani yini imibuzo?” uGezindaba kungathi ufikelwa ukujabha yilobuphoxo.

Ahleke kakhulu lawa amabili.

“Mhla walubeka enkangala, eGoli,” kuphawula uKgoa-dikgoadi, “uze uyigcine esiswini sakho leyo mibuzo.”

Lushe uhleko kulawa amabili.

“Uyozithola usunje,” yasho yamisa ucikicane wayo into-kazi yomTshwana.

Zaluhudula futhi uhleko izintombi.

Wavula isikhwama sakhe somphako uNks. Msithini wakhipha indebe waqonda empompini eseduze ethi uyo-phuza. UQhathumunyu wathi yaze yazimba yazishiya zodwa. Walandela.

“Uxolo, Nkosazana,” washo ngelivevezelayo eliphansi.

“Yebo, kulungile,” kusho uMsithini ngelipholile, eqhubeka nokugcwalisa inkomishi ngamanzi.

“Ngithanda ukukuvulela isifuba sami. Ngithe nxa ngikubona ngafikelwa uthando olungandile.”

Lokhu ibisiyigcwalisile inkomishi, ayizange ibisawaphuza lawo manzi. Yema yathula du. Ayanyakaza ayathi nyaka. Yadonsa amashiya, yambula izinkophe, yambukela nxanye, yamthatha phansi yamusa phezulu ngeso. Amehlo agcwala izinyembezi eziyisiboniso senhliziyo evutha ulaka, ezithi phinde muntu wabantu alufakwa. Yamenyanya yafa. Kwathi ayiqhume. Ithe isuka yayibhekisa phansi inkomishi yawathi chithiyane onke amanzi phambi kukaQhathumunyu. Yesuka lapho yagqishaza ngezitho zayo ezigcwele yaphindela kwamanye. Wayibukisisa umfo kaLubhede. Wasala lapho eseyisithombe. Waze wakhululwa ithekisi eyaqhamuka ejikeni yema phambi kwamantombazana, wasememeza umshayeli.

“Esibhedlela!”

Athatha imithwalo yawo amantombazana angena phakathi, yadonsa yayosithela ejikeni. Yathi idonsa uQhathumunyu wayesemi nomngani wakhe. Bema lapho kwaze

kwaphela imizuzu elishumi. Yayisibuya ibathatha ibasa ekholiji.

Ekholiji bathi bangaqeda ukudla kwakusihlwa bathola ithuba lokufunda amaphephandaba nezincwadi ezinye. Lokhu kubathatha ihora. Kulandele imizuzu engamashumi amathathu yokubhala izincwadi eziya emakhaya noma-ke bahlabe ikhefu. Kulandele ihora lokufunda amabhuku abawahosha eqoqweni lawo.

Kulobo busuku wathatha iphephandaba lesiZulu. Amehlo akhe ahlanguana nesihloko esithi:

“ZAPHELA IZINKOMO IMPUKANE”

Wathanda ukuyifunda lendaba ngoba bafunda ngakho ukufa kwezinkomo.

“Emngceleni wezwe lakwaZulu nelakwaNgwane sekuqhume isifo sezinkomo esaziwa ngokuthi wuNAKANE. Lesifo sithwalwa impukane ethile. Kuzwakala ukuthi lempukane iza nezinyamazane. Kulendawo esikhankase kuyo kunamahlathi amakhulu emvelo. UHulumeni wase-Riphabhliki kanye nowakwaNgwane wenza imizamo yokubulala lawo mahlathi. Amabhanoyi andiza ngaphezulu kwamahlathi afafaza umuthi wokubulala impukane. Izinkomo zifa uyaca. Lendawo iseduze nomuzana wase-Golela.”

Wathi eliqeda kwakungena umphathi-kholiji. Kwasengathi ubelindele yena ukuthi aqede. Wafika wabatshela ngalesisifo. Wathi abomnyango wemfundo bamcelile ukuba abanike idlanzana labafundi asebeqeda kulowo nyaka ukuba bahambe bayosiza emsebenzini othile wokulwa nempukane khona le enhla nezwe lakwaZulu. Laba bafundi bayoba ababheki bemisebenzi yokugawula imithi engumuzi walempukane. Bazobuye basebenze imisetshenzana eminingana eyahlukene. Wasebiza amagama alabo abazothunyelwa mayelana naleso sicelo. ElikaQhathumunyu laba ngelinye. Esewonke aba ngamashumi amabili nambili.

Ngosuku lwesine kwatheleka ibhasi yakwaloliwe, yabathatha yachitheka nabo yaye yabathi qithi esiteshini sezindiza saseMgungundlovu. Wayesemi ufeleba wendiza. Bahle bakhonjwa kuyo ukuba bangene. Umsizi womshayeli

wasebangenisa. Wathi abashiye phansi imithwalo yabo, uyena ozokuyingenisa endaweni yayo.

Wavungama umshini wabeLungu. Wasuka. Waphakama. Wakhwela. Wadundubala emoyeni. Wandanda emoyeni. Waphonsa amehlo phansi uQhathumunyu. Kepha akazabona lutho kuphela isithabathaba esiluhlaza, esinamabadlana amnyama laphaya nalaphaya. Wathi uhlala wawuhlala eGolela. Iloli yakwaHulumeni yayisibalindele. Bakhwezwa kuyo. Yabasa emalawini.

“Sakubona Qhathumunyu,” kubingelela elinye ijaha elinesihluthu esibomvu.

“Sakubona Nkosi.”

“Ubekwa yini lapha?”

“Ngibekwa izinyawo. Wena ubekwa yini?”

“Kodwa uphuma ngaphi, lokhu thina sazi ukuthi use-Natali?”

“Nami ngibuze ukuthi wena ubekwa yini lapha.”

“Thina kasibuzwa. Iphumile. Sesinamalanga silapha.”

“Kwenziwani khona lapha?”

“Sigawula lamahlathi owabonayo. Kuthiwa lempukane ebulala izinkomo icasha lapha ehlathini.”

“Kunjani emakhaya Nkosi?”

“Kuphiliwe. Into nje sesiphethwe umthetho othiwa inakana.”

“Onjani-ke lowo?”

“Wonke umuntu omdala uthela upondo. Onjani nonjani.”

“Nowesifazane?”

“Hayi, owesilisa kuphela.”

“Owesilisa ongasatheli imali yeminyaka naye uyayithelela inakana?”

“Kakhulu.”

“Ngiyabona. Okubi ukuthi imali ayifolonywa. Empeleni wenze kahle uHulumeni ukunithelisa ngoba lemali iyovikela imfuyo yenu.”

“Usho ngoba wena ungakatheli.”

“Ngikhuluma iqiniso.”

“Iqiniso la . . .” akabanga esaligwinya uNkosi, yamnqa-

mula phezulu induna yesikwata isimthethisa ithi insimbi kudala ishayile. Wasala khona lapho uQhathumunyu, kwayikhona ekhumbula abafana bakubo afike nabo.

Abafana bakhonjwa ithende labo bodwa. Babeka khona izimpahla zabo. Banikezwa ukudla. Badla.

Abafundi banikwa umsebenzi wokubheka izisebenzi. Babamba futhi lolo hlobo lwempukane ethwala unakana. Bayimukise ezingcwetini ihlinzwe phambi kwabo, icwiywe. Babuke izibilini zayo ngosibonakhulu. Bedlule babambe amakhizane okuthiwa athwala ukufa kwezinkomo njengomkhuhlane wasogwini nokunye. Nawo bawacwaninge babone amagciwane okuyiwona athwala izifo ezithile njengoqhuqho.

Langa lithize, phakathi kwenyanga yesithathu, abafundi bakhwela iloli bayobamba izinhlanzi eNgwavuma. Inhlanzi ibambeka kahle ngesikhati sasekuseni nantambama. KwakunguMgqibelo. Abadobanga luhlangothi lunye. Abanye bawelela ngaphesheya. NoQhathumunyu wawela. Bazibamba ubuthaphuthaphu.

UQhathumunyu angene emanzini ethi uwelela nganeno. Uthe ephakathi nomfula wezwa eshaywa unoxhaka emlenzeni. Wazi ukuthi yini lcyo. Wabona ukuthi uwagcinile namuhla amabele. Wathula wathi du, akathi nyaka. Wabheka okhalweni lwakhe. Wawubona umese wakhe usekhona. Wawuhosha kahle. Abangani bakhe abanakile. Baqhubeka nomsebenzi. Wathi nombonayo akazanaka ukuthi sewusengozini embi. Wawehlisa kahle ngomlenze umese. Waze wezwa kahle ukuthi manje usewufakile phakathi emalakeni esilwane. Ngenhliziyo wabonga amadlozi akwaLokothwayo ngoba esebona ukuthi usephumile esiswini sesilwane.

“Heyi wena,” kumemeza omunye umngani wakhe, “umeleni lapho na? Uzoke ubanjwe onomhashu.”

Akaligwinyanga. Wawugxumeka ngamakhulu amandla umese. Abangani bakhe bezwa ngoba esezibonga.

Qhaqhamba ongadliwa

Izangoma, odl'izindumba.

Yagxuma yabuya phezulu ingwenya. Yamyeke ingazimi-sele. Wawela. Isiyalenga inyama emlenzeni.

"Ithambo kalifahlakanga, majaha, ngoba ngisanyathela."

Ayibonaze isahlala emanzini ingwenya. Bayibona isivela ngaphesheya. Wathatha isibhamu uthisha wayiphihliza ubuchopho. Ngesikhashana bambopha ukuze igazi lingo-phi lonke. Nokho lase licishe laphela. Ngesikhashana vase ibaleka emgwaqeni iloli. Yaye yema esitolo. Uthisha washaya ucingo elushayela eGolela.

Ubuhlungu base bumpethe kabi umfana. Esejuluka. Kungasaziwa ukuthi ivozala nkomoni.

Ithe ima iloli eGolela, yayisiduma indiza. Wakhishwa masinyane, kwenziwa izaba. Wayesefakwa ebhanoyini.

"Salani nifunda, majaha, ngonakana. Sengiyofunda kini." Washo emamatheka umfo kaLubhede. Kepha ubuso bakhe bubika ezinkulu.

Yaphakama indiza. Yangena emafini. Yayingeyohlobo lokuphuthuma, engagijimi ethi woza moya. Isikhathi sezinye yasifinyeza ngesigamu semizuzu. Yathi ihlala phansi wayesemi nenalithi udokotela. Akabasamkhumula nezembatho. Wasale wamgxumeka ngenalithi bume. Iambulensi yayisiduma. Nayo yesuka naye yachitheka. Lapho ingena edolobheni ayizange ime ngisho naseminqamulweni yemigwaqo. Umthetho wayivumela. Yayilokho ihlabe umkhulungwane njalo.

## XV

Isihambi sima okhalweni sibamba ongaphansi, sibhekisi-se lesigodi esinothe kangaka kepha sibe singenayo imilimela. Sizibuze enhliziyweni yaso: kazi kubangelwa yini. Pho ubani ozosiphendula. Izivande zivuthiwe ziphelele. Nemizi isihambi asiyiboni. Nokho omunye wayo siwubone uthe lwi kude impela nokhalo esimi kulo. Kazi sizoyibuza kuphi indlela. Isigodi sihle, kepha asakhelwe muntu.

"Sakubona, Baba."

Isihambi sethuke ngoba kade singamboni owesifazane

ophezu kwesihlahla somfomfo osuvuthwe wambhlophe qwa.

"Yebo, Mama, angikuboni. Libusa ngani kulesigodi?"

"Mina ngiziphilela ngemithi muntu wabantu. Nokho qhubeka, uma unenhlanhla, uyofike usinde kwaLubhede."

KwaLubhede. Konje kungase kube nguye lowo. Bese sibuzo.

"Kuyadliwa yini khona kwaLubhede lowo?"

"Yebo, nabakwami bavukele khona."

"Ubani yena loLubhede?"

"UBhevula."

Sibuze indlela masinyane. Owesifazane asilayele kahle njengokwenza kwabantu,

"Usudukile Baba. Phindela emuva. Yona uyishiye kulesiya sihlahla somdoni. Yona iphambukela kwesobunxele. Ngena yona. Uyothi nxa usuwele umfudlana ubusungena umzila wezinkomo. Uphendukele kwesokhohlo. Hamba ngawo-ke; uyoze ukukhweze igquma; ubusuyiqaphela yona kwesokunene. Thatha yona-ke, uthi wolokhlo phansi futhi ikukhombe kwesokudla. Leyo iyokudonsa iyokuweza umfula. Uzothi ungakawuweli lowo mfula ubusuthi nankuya umuzi enhla nommango. Uyothi usukude buduze nalowo muzi, ibisikuphambukisela kwesokudla. Ndanda ngayo-ke leyo. Uyothi uthi memfu okhalweni ubuwubona umuzi ngaphesheya komfula ubhekene nawe. Yiwona owakwaLubhede."

"Kukude! Ngiyofika likuphi ilanga?"

"Uzofika khona manje."

"Indlela yokududuza isihambi leyo. Sengiyayazi. Ngiyabonga, Mama. Sala kahle."

"Ake ubheme phela, mntanami."

"Akusekho lutho, Mama," sisho sihosha idlelo esikhwameni, sichathaza ugwayi esandleni saso sobunxele. Asondele owesifazane awemukele ngesandla sakhe sobunxele. Abonge. Abesebuza:

"Liqhanyukiswaphi, Baba?"

"Ngiqhamuka emphakathini."

"Isibongo?"

"NguMavuso."

“Yebo-ke Nxele. Uthunywe khona kwaLubhede?”

“Yebo.”

“Ngiyabona, mntanami. Salusuhamba kahle.”

“Yebo, Mama, nawe ubosala kahle.”

Ezansi kwendlela esihosheni sibone amantombazane nabalobokazi beshaye izindwendwe, bethwele izimbenge zizigwele izithelo zezinhlobonhlobo—amanumbela, amakhiwa, amatulwa, imifomfo, amahlala. Kuququhumba omakhwecyane ezintombini. Bahamba bevika izinyoka ngoba phela nazo ziphila ngezithelo zasendle, zizibanga nabantu. Bazothi bangafika emakhaya bazethule phambi kwawonina nawoninazala. Yibona-ke abazakuzaba; babele abantwana ngezigaba zabo, babele oyise babo kanye nomuzi wonke. Badle imithi yemvelo.

UBhevula wathi ufuna ukubonga abakubo abaphansi. Wathi lowo mbongo uzowuphuza nomakhelwane, nabanye abantu benkosi abangase bamvakashele ngalolo suku, muzukwana emuhle. Wathatha isitsha uMaDlamini wacaphuna amabele wawacwilisa. Wathatha esikhulu wacaphuna ummbila, nawo wawenza njalo. Esebuphekile, wabuhluza uMaDlamini waqonda kumnumzane wathi:

“Sekulungile ukudla kwakho, Baba.”

Wangena edladleni uLubhede. Buyahaza, buyacwayiza, buyaphuphuma. Asunduze imbiza ethile, abesekhulumela phansi eyinika abaphansi.

“WeZintombi!”

“Sengikhona, Baba,” kukhuluma intombazanyana yakhe eqala ubutshitshi.

“Kulungile, mntanami. Hamba uye kuMnisi, nakuNcongwane, nakuMahluza nakuShabangu noManana uthi ake bazongibona kusasa.”

Aphume umntwana agijime ajikeleze nemizi yawomakhelwana.

Kuyaphuzwa. Amakhosikazi aphuzela endlini. Amadoda aphuzela esibuyeni. Indaba enkulu kunazo zonke namhla cyonakane. Abanye bayasola, basola iNkosi noHulumeni ngokuthelisa abantu imali yonakane. Abasolayo bathi ngabe kutheliswa kuphela labo abasendaweni leyo esihlase-

lwa isifo. Hayi lonke izwe. Impi ilwiwa yilabo ebahlaseleyo. Abanye bathi iNkosi ithathe kahle impela. Abanye bathi ngabe kutheliswa kuphela abafuyile. Ongenankomo uhlushelwani? Abanye baphendule ngesiga esithi: “Nongenankomo uyayidl’inyama.” Abanye babuze ukuthi yini kuthiwe ijokwe lizothwalwa yibona bodwa, kepha abeLungu abanemuhlambihlambi yezinkomo akuzwakali ukuthi bona bazotheliswa malini. Onolwazi abakhuze, abachazele ukuthi nabo baphakathi embizeni. Bona bazothelela inkomo nenkomo abayifuyile. Iyinye bazoyithelela ngosheleni nozuka.

Iyekwe injalo eyonakane. Omunye aqale ingoma. Ayihayeyedwa isikhashana, alandelwe enye indoda; kulandele enye futhi, alandele namanye ize ivuthwe ingoma Ayivungame amadoda ize igcwale umoya. Akhombe ngezithupha. Achwaye aze aqethuke, kube sengathi asephethe izihlangu ngakwesobunxele. Ayilahle ingoma aqale ukuphikisana ngezobusha babo ngesikhathi beseqisa okwamankonyane.

Baphuza obombuso. Obombuso abukhethi. Obukhethayo obusetshenzelweyo. Lobo abusibo obomnumzane, obalabo abamsebenzele. Bungaphuma endlini buphumile ezandleni zakhe. Isiceli siyayazi indawo yaso. Sihlala ngaphandle, silalele ozosibiza, osaziyo uma ekhona; kanti noma engekho asinakuncishwa. Naso sizobizwa ngomunye ongasazi athi:

“Wensizwa enezinwele ezimhlophe!”

Sisondele siphuze sesule umlomo, sibonge siphindele phandle. Uma amajaha emaningi akuvamile ukuthi ayobanjelwa onke, ngaphandle kokuthi umnumzane awanike ukhamba lwawo odwa. Lokho kuya ngokuthi buningi na. Uma bulingene abaninibo kuyobanjelwa ingcosana kuphela.

“Wenwele zibomvu!”

“Nangu!” kusabela enye enesihluthu esibomvu.

“Hlola lapha!”

“Nkosi!” lisho lishoshobala lihlala lizinza. Linikezwe ukhamba. Ilubambe insizwa ngazo zombili. Iphuze, iphuze, iphuze. Igcinine ngokuthatha ithamokazi. Isukume, ibonge ngezandla zombili izihlanganisile. Iye komunye

wezinsizwa chamba nazo; akhamise bese ilithela emlonyeni wakhe lelo thamo.

Umnumzane yena uphuzela kumancishana. Ophuza naye kulolo khamba ngomkhulu kunaye. Ukubizwa ngumnumzane athi ake uthi cabucabu kumancishana ukuphakanyiswa. Kodwa yini ongayiphuza lapho. Umancishana ungumancishana njengegama lakhe. Umane ubeke umlomo nje.

“Akenilalele madoda,” kukhuluma enye.

Kuthule cwaka.

“Angisenalutho bantu beNkosi. Sengiyanihambisa ngalokhu,” esho ebakhombisa ukhamba oselumi phambi kwabo, uBhevula.

Asho kanyekanye amadoda.

“Lubhede, Lokothwayo, Lwandle luwelwa ebusuku, emini luwelwa abasekhabonyoko.”

“Phakamisa wethu,” kukhuluma uManana, “siphuze sichitheke kusakhanya, izinswelaboya sezandile.”

“Kunjalo, Manana,” kusho uNcongwane eluphakamisa, “kuzoze kufike abamilomo mide. Kanti kuhle ukuwela imifula usabonwa ngabantu, izwe seliyalumela. Abantabethu bayothi sasiyophuza kwaLubhede.”

Banela baluqeda lolo khamba, abanye abavela kudana bavalelisa. Labo abalalela iseluleko seNkosi. Abantu baboshesha babuyele emizini yabo kusakhanya. Umnumzane avale utshwala ngesikhathi. Isisu sibekelwa ngaphandle. Ukudla komnumzane akuqedwa. Nangakusasa bayobuye bamvakashele bazophuza isitshodo.

Yeka imali! Yeka impande yeziga! Lafa izwe lawokhokho, ladungwa yimali. Imali ngeyezinye izigigaba eziza nempucuko. Ngabe awukayiboni ngamehlo. Ungase ubaxoshe abakuzela nemali? Ungake usibeke isicabha emnyango utshwala bungakapheli ngaphakathi. Umhlolol! Yeka imali, yeka umthakathi wezigodo. Wayiqeda impilo yomuntu eqotho. Washo umfana ecula belalele abalaleli wathi,

Imali yami, yek imali yami;

Imali yami, yaphelel etshwaleni.

Tshelan' ubaba ukuth' imali ngiyiqedile.

O, ngamshintshumpondo

Ngamenz' osheleni

Ngafik' eGoli ngaphuza kancane.

Ababeyilalele yabahlaba umxhwele, bamemeza bathi: “Yiphinde mfana.”

Wayiphinda. Bona bathi makaphinde ingoma kanti yena uthi bathi makaphinde aphuze yona imali yakhe leyo.

Aphuma amadoda avalelisa libantu bahle kwaLubhede. Nalawo ake athi zila zila kwaba ngoba ebona isihambi siza ngasenzansi komuzi. Athanda ukuba asibingelele abuze nezindaba ukuma kwazo lapha sivela ngakhona. Siza kahle; osibonayo uyakholwa ukuthi sivela kude, sibukeka sesikhathele. Siphethe izikhali ezimbili nengedla.\* Sivunule amahiya sagcina ngelibomvu ngaphezulu. Sivunule amabheshu ezimpunzi. Uthe ukuba asibone uBhevula, washaywa oluncane uvadlwana; okungazange kumeze. Sithe nxa singena emabaleni omuzi sakhuleka:

“E! nina bakwaNgwane; nina beKunene!”

Saqonda ngasenhla kwesibaya. Samisa izikhali zaso kanye nengedla. Sahlala phansi khona lapho. Sathulula ugwayi sabhema, sibhema ngentshengula. Wasondela uBhevula kanye namadoda amabili. Nabo bahlala phansi kude buduze naso. Basibingelela ngamunye njengendlela yesintu. Naso savuma.

“Liqhanyukiswa ngaphi?” kubuza uNcongwane.

“Emphakathini. Ibono elomlomo, beKunene, aphelile.”

Abukane odwa amadoda. Lomuntu uthi uphuma emphakathini kodwa wona akamazi. Akaze akhulumisana; asimze akhana ngamehlo kuphela.

“Wazalwa indoda, muntu weNkosi. Besidlayidla. Kepha sesesule umlomo,” kukhuluma uLubhede.

“Isisu somhambi singangesisu sikangcede,” kuqhubeka isihambi.

“Pho,” kuqhuba uLubhede, “libangiswephi?”

“Ngilibangise kwaBhevula Lubhede.”

“Yebo-ke,” kuphendula yena uLubhede umoya wakhe ushona phansi.

\* Wuhlobo oluthize lwenduku ecijiwe.



“Angazi noma ngiyaphosisa yini uma ngithi kukhona kwalomnumzane lapha ekhaya?”

“Kukhona muntu weNkosi.”

“Uphi pho yena umnumzane?”

“UBhevula Lubhede yimina.”

“Ngiyabonga, Lubhede. Ngiphuma eMbabane. Ngithunywe kuwe; ngithunywe iNkosi yasekantolo.”

Lokhu amadoda abehlezi buqamama, asondela eduze nesihambi manje. Sithule. Sibuye siqhubeke sesibona ukuthi asahleli.

“Ngisuke khona izolo emini yantambama. Ngokungawazi umuzi wakho ngehle njalo ngesihosha ngalibhekisa emphakathini wakini, eLudidini. Sengivela eLudidini njengoba ningibona nje. INkosi yasekantolo ithi fika kuyo masinyane. Inendaba ephuthumayo.”

“Ngabe ndaba yini?”

“Phinde! Ngabe ngiyaqamba.”

“Ngiyakuzwa muntu weNkosi,” kusho uBhevula.

“Kuzodingeka sitotobe namhla nje, ukuze kuqale kuyavulwa emahovisi sesilindele.”

“Ngiyezwa. Isibongo ngingathi ungubani?” kubuza uLubhede.

“Mina ngingowakwaMavuso.”

Abize ingane uBhevula. Ayitshela ukuthi ayitshela unina amlethele ukhanjana. Asukume asithele ngesibaya, achithe amanzi, abuye aqhamuke. Uthe ehlala phansi wayeqhamuka uMaDlamini nokhamba. Athi ulubeka phambi kukaLubhede athi uLubhede akalubeke phambi kukaMavuso. Enze njalo unkosikazi, abesethi uBhevula, sengi-hwaye inzika muntu wakwaMavuso. Kuzokwehlula.”

Sibonge isihambi. Asibongele namadoda ahlezi lapho. Abuphungule uMaDlamini. Uthe uma ethi uyasukuma wathi uLubhede akahlale phansi. Wahhlala. Wasemlandisa ngesihambi nokuthi size naziphi. Sithe ukuba siphuze wabuza uLubhede.

“Kodwa ngokubona kwakho ayinzima lendaba engifunelwa yona?”

“Kubukeka kuyindaba ebuhlungu,” kuphendula uMavuso.

“Uma singaphuma lapha ekukhaleni kwezinkukhu zokuqala singafika eMbabane kungakavulwa emahovisini.”

“Kulungile, Lubhede, ngokwazi kwakho.”

Amakhosi ayahlonishwa. Ahlonishwa ngezenzo, ngenkulumo, nangemvunulo. Abamhlophe bagqoka baze bakhokelele uma beyomiswa ebhokisini noma elababekwe amacala noma elawofakazi, noma beyizibukeli. Bahlonipha umthetho. Umthetho ubukhosi. Kanti nabansundu lokho bakwazi ngokwemvelo yabo.

UBhevula waphelkezelwa ngumakhelwana wakhe uManana. Bavunula baphelela. UBhevula wavunula amahiya amane, nezimpunzi; wavunula umbhenso\* okhalweni, emaqakaleni wagaba iziphandla ezimnyama, wahiza inkonyane empunga, ekhanda wahloma usiba lweqhude elibomvu. Waphatha umgobo onenjubo yemfene ekhomba ibutho lakhe, iNyonebomvu.

\* \* \*

“Nkosi!” kukhuleka uMavuso.

“Nkosi!” kukhuleka uBhevula noManana kanyekanye.

“Yebo, madoda,” kuvuma inkosi yenkantolo.

“Nguye uBhevula Lubhede lo?” kukhuluma uMavuso.

“Sawubona, Bhevula.”

“Nkosi!”

“Bhevula, ngiyajabula usufikile. Ngikubizele indaba enzima.”

“Ingani Nkosi?”

Athule umLungu elungisa masinyane indlela ezokwenza umbiko ungabhidlizi imizwela kaBhevula. Aqhubeke ngokubona ukuthi iNkosi isaququda imihlathi kanti yena uthanda ukwazi masinyane:

“Ingendodana yami, uQhathumunyu?”

“Ingaye, Bhevula, ngiyadabuka.”

“Ngabe kasekho umntanami?”

“Yebo, Bhevula.”

\* Imvunulo yezinsizwa eyenziwe ngesikhumba senkomo.

“Ufile?”

“Ufile. Ngithole ucingo oluvela eMgungundlovu kuthangi ntambama. Ngaso leso sikhathi ngasengithuma uMavuso.”

Abambe amehlo uLubhede. Zehle izinyembezi. Acishe ukuhlaba ngobuso phansi. Ambambe uManana.

“Udliwa yini Nkosi?” kubuza uManana.

“Kuthiwa ubulawe ngamanxeba engwenya.”

Leyo mpendulo akayizwanga uBhevela.

“Kawukahle kengibashayeke ucingo futhi,” kukhuluma iNkosi yenkantolo. Ilugwedle ngamandla. Ilalele, izwe ukuthi bakhona abasakhuluma ocingweni. Ikhahlule ocingweni.

“Izwi eliphuthumayo! Inkosi yasekantolo ekhulumayo. Yebo. Nangu uyise kaQhathumunyu. Yebo. Hm, hm, hmmmmmm! Nimngcwaba nini? Ngasikhathi sini? Uzofika. Namhlanje. Angazi. Angazi. Ngemoto. Qha. Ngiyabona. Kulungile. Ngiyabonga.”

Iphendukele kuLubhede imbene ukuthi manje usethule. Ibisikhuluma.

“Bathi abakamthuni. Yima bezomthuna namuhla nta- mbama ngehora lesine.

“Yeka umfana wami; yeka igugu lami; waze wayofela ezizweni. Wangcwatshwa ngingasambonanga! Kungenxa yemfundo yenu beLungu. Angisayikubona ngisho nethuna lakhe.”

Wayesekhohliwe nokuthi ukhuluma neNkosi yasekantolo, umuntu ohlonishwayo. Kwenza iminjunju ese imgwaza enhliziyweni.

“Sonke siyadabuka ngalombiko. Ngizokwenzela umzamo ukuba uphuthume uyofika esidunjini.”

“Nkosi!”

“Futhi ngizoke ngikhulume neNkosi yaseMgungundlovu ukuthi bakuvumele usithwale, sibuyiswe ekhaya sizofihlwa khona.”

“Nkosi!”

Inkosi iphathe inkinojana. Kukhale insimbi ngaphandle. Kungene umfana. Ibisithi umfana kabize umshayeli we-

zimoto zakwaHulumeni. Idonse ucingo ikhulume nomphathi wamaphoyisa. Iqede. Ibuye ilunyakazise ikhulume nomphathi wezimoto zakwaHulumeni. Iqede. Angene umshayeli akhuleke.

“Shayisa!”

“Nkosi!” eshaya indesheni ekhombisa ukuthi ukhuluma nobani.

“Uzothatha nangu uBhevela kanye nalendoda chamba naye umuse eMgungundlovu. Sengilungisile noSayitsheni. Uzophuma lapha uqonde khona uyothatha izincwadi nemi- yalezo. Imoto uzoyifika isikulindele khona.”

“Nkosi!”

Ibheke isikhathi; 9.30. “Uzothatha inqola ubusuzothatha uBhevela, phuthuma.”

## XVI

Kuliqiniso izwe lidinga abongikazi kakhulu. Izifo ziya ngokwanda. Odokotela seziyabagabha. Izingcweti ziyaphiceka. Izifo ezindala ziyaziwa, namakhambi oku- zixwayisa asekhona. Ezintsha ziseyinkinga. Ophethwe yizo akayokongiwa esibhedlela.

Umsebenzi wabongi mkhulu. Bayonga, bayancenga, bayatotobisa, bayafunza, bayachatha, bayageza, benza no- kuningi okunye. Iziguli zidinga abongi abanesihe, aba- bekezelayo. Impilo yesiguli ayikho kangako ezandleni zamakhambi esiphiwa wona, kepha ikakhulu isezandleni zabongi. Umongi uyafundiswa ukuphathwa kweziguli. Uyisandla sokunene sikadokotela. Uhlonipha abongikazi abakhulu nawodokotela. Athandane nabongi abanye. Ufundiswa ukubekezela, isihe, umusa ezigulini nasezihlo- tsheni zazo. Ufundiswa ukuba nobuso obuhle ngaso sonke isikhathi, ubunono, nokunakekela iziguli nomsebenzi wakhe wonke. Ufundiswa ukuhlangezeka komzimba, kwempilo, kwesimilo nokwenkulumo.

UPhikwase wayefundiswa ubongi. Eboniswa ulwazi lwemithi. Efisa ukuthi athi angaqeda imfundo leyo abese- buyela kubo eSwartland ayosebenza khona, phakathi kwabantu bakubo.

“Phikie!”

“Sister!”

“Kukhona isiguli esiza ngebhanoyi. Kuthiwa sesophe kakhulu. Lungisa izinto zokufaka igazi. Ngisaphuthuma esiteshini samabhanoyi. Sheshisa.”

Ayeke ukulungisa amacansi, uPhikie. Aphuthume kulo ikamelo lalowo msebenzi. Amabhodlela aklelile. Amabhodlela agcwele igazi eliphilayo. ElabeLungu nelabantu.

Abanye abantu banikela ngegazi labo, balinikelele ukuyophilisa abanye abanjengaleso siguli esisemoyeni. Baya kuleyo nhlangano eyenza lowo msebenzi wokudonsa igazi ligcinelwe izingozi zalolo hlobo. Baqala ngokuhlolwa ukuthi baphilile, nokuthi igazi lelo abalinikezayo liphilile yini. Bese-ke lihoshwa ngemishini lifakwa emabhodleleni. Lihlale liphilile.

Azibhekisise lezo zimbiza uPhikwase. Abhekisise imibhalo namaphepha akhomba ukuthi elomuntu noma elomLungu. Athathe izinsimbi zamashubhu, nokunye, akuqoqele lapho kusetshenzelwa khona. Akubeke etafuleni. Athintithe icansi. Ahlanganise izinqanyana zezinsimbi, zime ngezinyawo ezintathu. Afake amashubhu alinganisele, abone ukuthi kulungile.

“Sakubona, Mongi,” kubingelela udokotela egijimisa amehlo ukubona ukuthi uPhikwase ulungise kahle yini njengomfundi.

“Sakubona Dokotela.”

“Ngumsebenzi oncomekayo. Uyoba ngophambili umongi.”

Ahlabeke umxhwele umfundi. Amamatheke kahle.

Kungene umphathi wabongikazi egijima, abuze:

“Wenze kanjani Phikie?” Athi qalaqala. Eneliswe.

Abesethi:

“O, ngendlela emangalisayo. Empeleni bengingeke ngikunike lomsebenzi okokuba bengingakwethembile. Indlela ephambili.”

“Umsebenzi wakhe uyancomeka,” kukhuluma udokotela eqhamuka ekamelweni lapho egqokela khona, esegqoke ephelele.

Kungene omunye wabongi naye esegqokele lowo mse-

benzi. Egcekeni kume iambulense. Kuyona kwehliswa ibhungu eseliphelelwe ngamandla nengqondo. Lithe lilaliswa embhedeni wayephangelala esandleni uDokotela Khumalo. Wezwa ukuthi inhliziyo isasebenza kahle, noma isiphelelwe ngamandla. Kepha igazi eliningi liphumile.

Wadonsa umesana endishini wasika umthanjana, athathe ishushu elisuka ebhodleleni alifake kuwo. Leza igazi eliphuma ebhodleleni langena. Wahhala walibheka. Wasukuma wenza eminye imizamo ayaziyo. Sathathwa isiguli sayolaliswa endlini ethile. Salaliswa sodwa.

“Sekulungile,” kusho udokotela, “uma kuvela okunye okunzinyana usuyokungibiza ngocingo,” washo ephuma.

\* \* \*

“Sinjani isiguli sakho, Mongi?” kubuza umphathikhholiji laseNdakane.

“Sigula kakhulu. Silele. Siphelwe ngamandla,” kuphendula umongi Msithini, emnikeza ifomu ukuba ayigcwalise.

“Kulungile, Mongi,” kukhuluma umphathikhholiji, “thatha usiba ngizokunika konke okudingekayo, besengisayina kuphela.”

Nempela adonse usiba umongi Msithini abuze:

“Igama lakhe?”

“Qhathumunyu Lufulwakhe Lubhede.”

“Igama likayise?”

“Bhevula.”

“Ikheli likaBhevula?”

“Lume School, P.O. Lizwelabantu, Swaziland.”

“Isikhulu?”

“Bhembe Nkosi.”

“Isifunda?”

“Mbabane.”

“Sengiyabonga Mnumzane.”

“Kuphela?”

“Kuphela Mnumzane.”

“Linjani inxeba?”

“Alibukeki. Ngizwe kunyakaza amathumbu, ngoba yimina ebekade ngiligeza.”

“Ngiyabonga Nesi. Ngimfisela asinde umfana wami.”

“Sonke.”

“Sengiyabonga. Sala kahle Nesi.”

“Yebo, hamba kahle, Mnumzane.”

Livuse ikhanda ibhungu. Livule amehlo lithi qalaqala, libone umongi ehlezi eceleni kombhede walo. Lithulise licabange, lizame ukubuyisa umqondo lifuna ukwazi ukuthi lapha kukuphi, lifike kanjani, kwenze njani. Labona ukuthi lilele endlini ecwazimulayo. Kunesigubhu esikhulu sesibani phezulu. Lithe lapho lizama ukuvuka walicindezela phansi ngesandla umongi, wathi,

“Musa ukuvuka. Thulisa unganyakazi. Lala.”

“Kanti sengiphi?” labuza ngezwi lokwethuka.

“Usesibhedlela. Bunjani ubuhlungu?”

“Angizwa buhlungu mina.”

Lanela lasho njalo lavala amehlo lalala.

“Uthini Mongi?” kubuza umongikazi omkhulu ethukile.

“Usethulile, Sister. Biza udokotela.”

Abongi abasenazo izinyembezi. Umthombo wazo sewa-sha. Nemizwelo yabo seyoma. Impilo yabo, imihla nge-mihla, izungezwe izidumbu. Uthi ecimeza lowo ocimezayo kube bona bezishayela ikhwelo, bekhuluma ngamazwi emihla, ngoba imizwelo yabo yosizi sezayomisa. Bayasiso-nga bayaxoxela. NoPhikwase sewabanjalo. Kepha manje amehlo akhe asagcwele izinyembezi angazazi naye ukuthi zivelaphi, zidalwa yini. Sezehla ngezihlathi. Zikhomba isimo semizwelo yakhe kulomzuzu. Kepha yena akazanga ukuthi kukhona into enjalo ekhonjwa ngamehlo akhe.

“Uyamazi yini lomuntu Nesi?” Kubuza umongi omkhu-lu.

“Angimazi, Methiloni.”

“Awumazi?”

“Angimazi.”

“Pho?”

“Yini Methiloni?” naye abuze ngokwethuka.

“Izinyembezi?”

Kwayima ezibona ukuthi amehlo akhe ayachiphiza.

“Nami-ke angisakuqondi lokho.”

Akakwazi naye lokho umntakaMsithini. Kwaziwa ngabaphansi noMdali wezinto zonke.

\* \* \*

“Kunjani Sister?”

“Usethulile Dokotela.”

Asondele kuye udokotela amxilonge. Abambe yonke imithambo yempilo. Amyeke. Eme abambe ukhalo, anikine ikhanda umzimba wakhe wehle.

“Hmm -mmm. Usehambile.”

“Senza njani manje Dokotela?” kubuza umphathi-bongi.

“Makasiwe endlini yezidumbu. Nginikeze ifomu leyo.”

\* \* \*

Sekuwusuku lwesithathu namuhla umphefumulo wehlu-kana nesidumbu. Sesaphola ngoba igazi selema, laphola. Isidumbu sithulile kuleyo ndawo. Sihleli sodwa. Abongi kabongi izidumbu, bonga imiphefumulo esesemizimbeni ephilayo. Bazama ukuyilibazisa ize ikhohlwe uhambo lwayo oluya eZulwini. Ihlale ishisise imizimba eluthuli nomlotha nomhlabathi neyikho konke okusemhlabeni. NguPhikwase kuphela ongakasikhohlwa. Namhla usuku esiyofihlwa ngalo. Ude ethi shelele. Asondele avule umnyango ngokwesaba njengoba enzile ngovivi, njengoba enzile izolo kusihlwa. Angene ngokunyonyoba.

“Thi!”

Lumshaye lumphinde uvalo uPhikwase aphelelwe nanga-mandla okubaleka.

“Thi-i! thi-i!!”

Kuphele nya ukwesaba. Kufike isibindi. Asizwe sesi-khwehlela isidumbu. Aqunge isibindi, asondele.

“Ngiphuzise amanzi, Dadewethu, ngidinwe kabi,” kukhuluma ofile.

\* \* \*

“Sister! Sister! Isimanga! Usebuyile!”

“Ubani?”

“Umuntu wengwenya.”

“Musa ukungethusa wena,” waphendula ngeliphansi enganakile.

“Woza Sister, phangisa, uthi womile, ufuna amanzi.”

“Uqinisile kodwa?”

“Kuvuke abaphansi.”

\* \* \*

“Qhathumunyu!”

“Sister!” asabele ngezwi eliphile saka.

Bambhudukeza ngokushesha abongi. Bamkhiphe ngokushesha angaze abone ukuthi uphakathi kwezidumbu. Bamkhiphele phandle. Bamethwalisane bamuse embhedeni.

“Usuvukile mfowethu?” kubuza uPhikwase emamatheka, amehlo akhe egcwele injabulo.

“Yebo, Dadewethu. Ngiphuziseni amanzi.”

Wanikezwa. Waphuzisa okwenkomo ibikade iboshelwe. Kungene udokotela wakhe uKhumalo nobuso obethukile. Akabasabuza kubongikazi ukuthi kunjani, wasimze waqonda kumuntu obekade esyisidumbu.

“Ndodal!”

“Dokotela!”

Wanela wezwa impendulo ephilayo akabesabuza mbuzo. Wamdumela wamhlola ukuthi nenipela umphefumulo usubuyile, inhliziyo isiyashaya, useshisa yini. Udokotela wezwa eyakhe inhliziyo isishaya kakhulu. Andukuphendukela kumongi athi:

“Sister, shaya ucingo—ubize uGama. Uthi nje ngithi akaphuthume.”

Aphendukele kumfana,

“Usubuyile ndoda?”

“Bengikade ngiye ngaphi Dokotela?”

Akazawuphendula lowo mbuzo uKhumalo. Waphendukela kumongikazi Msithini wabuzisisa ukuthi umbone kunjani ukuthi usebuyile. Uthe lapho ngabe uyamphendula uNesi Msithini kwangena uDokotela Gama ngesidumo. Wasemtshela uKhumalo ukuthi umbizelani. Wamdumela uGama wamxilonga naye.

“Ubuye ngokuphelele,” kukhuluma uGama. “Uma kuvela okunye kuyobe sekungokusha.”

“Ngiyabonga, Mbhokane. Injobo ithungelwa ebandla. Nami ngimfice esenjalo.”

“Kodwa usebuthakathaka,” kusho uGama.

“Yebo,” kuphendula uKhumalo, “uzodinga ukunakekela kakhulu.”

Baphumele phandle odokotela nabongi, beme khona.

“Nimbone kanjani ukuthi usephapheme?” kubuza uDokotela Khumalo.

“Angazi nami,” kuphendula umphathi-bongi. “Ngi-bikelwe uSister Mbatha owengamele indlu yeziguli. Wathi naye ubikelwe umongi Msithini.”

“Bengizedlulela ngakhona,” kukhuluma umongi Msithini, “ngasengimuzwa ethimula. Ngavula umnyango, ngangena phakathi. Ngasondela. Wasethi angimphuzise, udiniwe.”

“Ngiyabonga kakhulu, Nesi,” kubonga uDokotela Khumalo. “Umsindisile.”

Baphindela csigulini futhi. Wasibuza uKhumalo,

“Kunjani, ndoda yamadoda?”

“Ngizwa ngidinwe kabi, Dokotela?”

“Udinwe yini?” kubuza uGama.

“Ngihambe indawo ende kabi. Ngifuna ukulala,” washo wawala amehlo walala.

“Ake simyeke alale,” kukhuluma uDokotela Khumalo.

“Ake uhlale umbheke njalo Mongi Msithini. Uhlale eduze kwakhe. Sekungumntanakho.” Bahleka abanye. Kwaphunywa, kwashiywa uPhikwase esibhekile njalo isiguli.

UPhikwase iSwazikazi laseSwartland. Ukuvunula kwamaSwazi lawo asavunula ngokwemvelo wayengakaze akubone. Yena ukhuluma isiNguni saseNtilasifali esibizwa ngokuthi isiZulu-siSwazi. Ingxubevange yesiZulu, isiSwazi, isiSuthu, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiLungu. Uvame ukubona izimoto ezibhalwe “SD”, izazana zithi ukufinyeza uSobhuza Dlamini.

Esangweni lesibhedlela kungena imoto, ijiphi, SG 45. Kwehla insizwa egqoke ukhaxhi, ibhulukwe elifisha, ibha-

ntshi elinamankinobho acwebezelayo, iyembe, konke ukhaki. Iziphika zebhantshi zibomvu, kuzona kubhalwe ngezinsimbi ezicwebezelayo ukuthi "SP"; isigqoko sinca-nyana siyindingilizi, sinebhanjana elincanyana elibomvu. Ebunzini kukhazimula isigqoko somqhele wobukhosi. Emilenzeni ifake amagomazi kakhaki. Izicathulo zinkulu, zibomvu. Iphethe isinqamu somshiza. Ihambela phezulu. Iqonde komunye umuntu wezisebenzi zasesibhedlela. Ibuze ekubuzayo. Ayilayele ngokuyikhombisa ngesandla. Ihambe ngokuqokaza iqonde ehovisi likamphathi-bongi. Ihlangane naye emnyango wehovisi lakhe. Imbingelele ngendlela yamasotsha. Bakhulume. Ibisimnika incwadi. Athi ayilande abanye.

Emotweni kuphume amadoda amabili aphakathi nendima yobudala. Avunule isiSwazi. Ahambe kanye nalo iphoyisa baqonde ehovisi likamphathi-bongi.

"Nguye uyise walomfana lo," kukhuluma iphoyisa ngalo lukaNdlovukazi.

Kungene udokotela Khumalo. Sekubingelelwene, kungene uPhikwase abikele udokotela ukuthi usephapheme umfana. Udokotela athi asale sebehamba noyise nezihlobo zakhe.

Wanela wabona uyise wathokoza. Kodwa waphicwa yinto yinye. Ukuthi yini elethe uyise lapha. Udokotela usemfundisile uyise womfana ukuthi yini nani nani okufanele ayixwaye enkulumeni yakhe nesiguli.

"Kunjani Lufu?" kubuza uBhevula.

"Baba ngidiniwe. Ngihambe indawo ende."

"Uyaphi?"

"Nami angazi."

"Ubuhambaphi?"

"Bengihamba nabantu abaningi. Abahle. Begqoke izingubo ezinhle, ezimhlophe.

Sithe sisendleleni base benyamalala. Kwaqhamuka ubabamkhulu uPhundu wamemeza wathi angiphindele emuva umama uyangifuna. Angaze ngathanda ukuphindela emuva. Wasekha uswazi ethi uzakungishaya. Kwaba ukuphindela kwami emuva."

UBhevula kanye nabahamba naye bathathwa uDokotela Khumalo wayobalalisa kwakhe. Baxoxa kwaze kwathi akube phakathi kwamabili. Kwasa baphumula, becabanga ukuthi hleze kubikwe okunye ngomfana. Ngokuhlwa okulandelayo yaphuma iSG 45 yaphindela kwelakwaSomhlolo.

Yamkhathaza kakhulu uKhumalo indaba yesifo salomfana. Waphenyisisa imiqingo yezincwadi. Waze wangenena empilweni yengwenya. Ingwenya ilala izinsuku eziyisishiyagalombili. Ilale sengathi seyafa. Wakholwa ukuthi umfana ubengafike kepha ubelele esengwenya.

Abangani bakaQhathumunyu bacela kumphathi-bongi ukuthi bafuna ukubona umngani wabo. Banikwa uPhikwase ukuba abase.

"Qhaqhamba mngoma," kusho uGezindaba engena emnyango elandelwa uTawana.

"Gegeda kwelaseMtshezi," kuphendula isiguli simnika isandla.

"Yisho Ngwane!" kukhuluma uTawana.

"Yisho mbubana yasoSuthu," naye simnika esinye isandla.

"Kunjani ndoda?" kubuza uTawana.

"Sengiphilile bafana. Into embi singixhwalisile isilwane somthakathi. Ngingephinde ngigijime."

Bamnika izithelo ababemphathele zona bezikhe ensimini yasekholiji.

"Ngiyasesaba isibindi sakho," kuphawula uGezindaba. "Ukuba kwakuyimi ngabe ngagxuma ngabuya la," wakhomba phezulu emoyeni.

"Ngani?" kubuza uQhathumunyu.

"Kepha wena wathula wathi du kanti isilwane siyakudla."

"Wawungeke ugxume. Ngabe yatshuza nawe-ke uma wawungazama ukugxuma."

"Kepha wena lowo mqondo wawutholaphi?"

"Izwe lakithi elezilwane. Izinyoka ezimbi, izingwenya, izimbube, obhejane, izimvubu, amankentshane, izingwe nokunye okuningi."

“Wazisindisa ngomese,” kukhuluma uTawana. “Onge-nawo-ke?”

“Isu liyazakha, mngani. Ngabe akukakubhadami ukufa. Noma ngabe yini—induku, ingubo, isidwaba, kulungile. Bakusonga kahle ngesineke bese bekududulela phakathi emlonyeni wayo.”

Kunjalo isu liyazakha uma umuntu esebhadamekile. Uma exoshwa isilwane ugijima ege lapho angeke uma bekungenjalo. Izaba ziyenziwa. UQhathumunyu wasindiswa imfundo ayinikwa abadala, nabo ababeyithole kwabadala, bona babeyithole mathupha, ngokuba phakathi kwezilo.

## XVII

Abantu baseSwartland bahlangana, bacebisana ukuthi kungakuhle bakhe isibhedlela. Bavumelana. Basebeya kuNdabazabantu wesifunda ukuyocela imvume.

Owabangumkhulumeli walabo ababeyobonana noNdabazabantu kwaba uGawosi Nkosi. Abanye balalela kwaze kwabasekugcineni. UGawosi kwakuyindoda ekwazi ukukhuluma nabeLungu.

“Nikhala ngani-ke namuhla madoda ami aseSwartland?” kubuza uNdabazabantu, iSikoshi esimehlo aluhlaza.

“Nkosi,” kuphawula uGawosi,” sizocela ukuthi uHulumeni asisize. Sifuna ukwakha isibhedlela khona endaweni yethu.”

Sekuxoxiwe kabanzi, kwahlolwa onke amasu, uNdabazabantu wathi abaphindele emakhaya. Isicelo sabo kanye nezizathu zabo lezo abazibekayo uzokukuthumela kwabakhulu. Iyothi ingabuya impendulo babizwe bazofundelwa yona.

Kwaphela izinyanga ezimbili nesigamu babizwa ukuyofundelwa impendulo. Impendulo yathi kulungile. Kuzobanjiswana. UHulumeni uzobanika yonke impahla yokwakha ethengiweyo, kusukela esipikilini kuye kungcwe-cwe nomcakaco. Bona bazobumba isitini. Babuye basi-sondeze esizeni. Bazoqasha abakhi, babaholele. Umakhi

wakwaHulumeni uyena ozoveza indlela yokwakha. Ngu-yena ozoba ngumhloli wokwakha.

Labonga ibandla. Lachitheka lenamile. Laqala ukuqoqa imali. Laqasha umakhi. Isakhiwo sasukuma. Saphakama. Saphethwa. Savulwa isibhedlela. Savulwa ngumsizi ka-Nobhala woMnyango wezempilo eRiphabhliki.

Ekucedeni kwakhe ukufundela ubongi uPhikwase Msi-thini wanikezwa isikhundla sobongi khona ekhaya kubo eSwartland.

Ngokuzalwa, uPhikwase wayeyisikhwishikhwishi sento-mbazana. Lokho kwawenza umsebenzi wakhe wachuma, wenaba, waceba. Akathathanga isikhathi eside kwaba-luqweqwe lomongi. Wazizwa noma ehamba, noma ehlezi, noma ekhuluma, noma ethule, noma elele, noma ebuka ukuthi ungumongi ngempela.

Baqala abantu baseSwartland ukuthola imithi nawodoko-tela kalula. Ulwazi lwemfundo lwaqala ukulwa nolwazi lokwethwasa. Ulwazi lwamathambo lwacelwa inselelo izi-nsimbi zokupopola eziphathwa odokotela. Badeda ubu-mnyama badedela ukukhanya. Zadabuka izinkungu kwa-vela ilanga. Ilanga umuthi omkhulu wezifo; ikhambi lemve-lo lokubulala amagciwane. Izenzo zinamandla kunamazwi. Ukutshela umuntu ukuthi makakhohlwe izingedla, akholwe odokotela abakude naye ukumbhinqa. Iqiniso ukusondeza kuyena lololusizo.

“Woza ungihumushele mntanami,” kusho indoda, isho entombazaneni egqoke ingubo emhlophe, enebhande elimhlophe, nesigqoko esimhlophe esithe caba ekhanda esinophikwana ngaphambili, efake izicathulo ezimnyama ezinezithende ezimfushane namasokisi esifazane ansundu. Impofu. Inamashiya amnyama bhuqe. Okokuba yaba isilisa ngabe yaba ihwanqa. Umzimba wayo ulingene, ayisona isidudla, kanti ayilona noswazi. Igcwele, ayiyinde ayimfushane, iphakathi nendima.

“Kulungile, Baba,” kuvuma uPhikwase ngeliphansi, “khuluma.”

“Tshela udokotela ukuthi ngibonga kabanzi. Ukwanda kwaliwa ngumthakathi.”

Ahumushe ngesiBhunu uPhikwase kwazise ukuthi udokotela lo iBhunu. Kepha akaze asazi ngesiBhunu isaga esithi 'ukwanda kwaliwa ngumthakathi.' Agcine ahumushe umqondo oqukethwe yilesisho sesiZulu.

"Kulungile," kusho udokotela, "kodwa mtshela ukuthi besekusele amahora ambalwa agoduke lomkakhe."

Ihumushe intombazana.

"Awu, kunjalo Dokotela?" ibuze yethukile indoda. Yekhuze ishaye izandla.

"Impela."

"Kunjalo mntanami?" ibuze kumongi ngoba nguye olibhuloho.

"Usho njalo udokotela."

"Hmmm-mmm. Buza ukuthi uzophaphama yini ekuhlinzweni?"

"O, kahle nje," kuphendula udokotela.

"Mtshela ntombi ukuthi ngiyabonga. Nowokuqala . . ."  
Liphele izwi lendoda. Zigcwale amehlo "Wahamba. Wathathwa yikho lokhu."

"Uthi lodokotela wawumbizile yini udokotela?"

"Mtshela ukuthi qha."

"Uthi angikutshela ukuthi wamsonta-ke uma kunjalo."

"Hayi, Dokotela, musa ukungihleka. Akunjalo neze neze. Thina esingazi lutho siyifa lezazi. Wafela ezandleni zawosiyazi." Ithule du.

"Uthi wayephatheke kanjani ngesikhathi esebunzimeni?"

"Ngabhula esanusini. Sathi bamloye ngenyamazane embi yasolwandle, ivimbela. Sasesingikhomba ogedleni. Sathi yilona lungangisiza. Lolu gedla lwaluvela kwaZulu. Ngalubiza. Lwangibiza inkanyiso, umpondo nosheleni ngaphandle. Lwathi kangilethe imbuzi emithi luzosebenza ngayo. Lwathi phu phu. Isifo sathi ngiya phambili. Lwabopha imbuzi lwayosithela ngokhalo. Kwasa engasekho."

Ayibeke kahle yonke indaba ngolimi lukaPewula uPhikwase. Anikine ikhanda udokotela, emangele. Kodwa kwaba yinto angayiqali ngoba nxa befunda bayatshelwa ngomncintiswano kwezokwelapha.

"Nc-c-c-c-c. Pho, namuhla yini ekwenze ubize mina?"

"Mtshela, mntanami, ukuthi okokuqala nguweni ongi-bonise indlela. Okwesibili ukuthi: ukubona kanye ukubona kabili."

Leso sisho wasihumusha kalula ngoba nangesiBhunu sikhona.

"Uthi udokotela uqinisile. Uyakuvumela naye. Ukubona kanye ukubona kabili. Uthi ubotshela nabanye ukuthi baboqaphela izingedla ezihamba zizula, zithwele imihlanti zithi zingohodoba."

"Kunjalo, mntanomlungu. Buza mntanami ukuthi uzokungibiza malini."

"Uthi angikutshela ukuthi lutho."

"Hawu, lutho?" Wethuka umuntu omdala ngoba kuyinto angayejwayele.

"Lutho. Lona ngudokotela wesifunda. Udokotela wesifunda akabizi mali."

Ingaze yakholwa indoda. Icabange ukuthi uyantela.

"Mhlawumbe ungibona ukuthi ngiyimpofana, ngingeze ngaba nayo inkanyiso. Yebo ngiyiyo. Kepha umcebo ungewuthenge umphefumulo ophumayo."

"Uthi-ke sekulungile. Sengizosale ngikuchazela mayelana nomsebenzi wakhe."

"Dokotela!"

"Yebo."

"Yamukela-ke isiphana sami engizokunika sona. Ngikubonge nje."

"Uthi uma kuyisipho nje uzokusamukela. Uthi inkanyiso yomsebenzi wakhe akayifuni."

"Abafana bazokumbambela amaqhujana amabili. Uzo-fika anike umkakhe amphekele."

"Uthi uyabonga kakhulu."

Ibikhuluma yodwa indoda:

"Abaphansi bangangibulala uma ngingasawukhanyise-langa lomsebenzi onje."

Wavalelisa udokotela, wahamba. Abafanyana sebemi



eduze nemoto bephethe amaqhujana amabili. Avule ngasemuva kwemoto umniniyo, azifake phakathi zombili.

"Lodokotela osebenze kangaka akangibizi lutho?" kubuza indoda kuNesi. Ngiyesaba. Ungiphatha emehlweni. Uqonde ukungithathela ummeli azokungihlasela."

"Kuliqiniso lokhu akutshela khona" kukhuluma uPhikwase.

"Yebo mntanami. Mina ngicabanga ukuthi inkanyiso yakhe useyoyibiza kanye nenkomo uma esebona ukuthi isiguli sesiphilile. Noma-ke angayibizi kuze kufike isikhathi sokumphothula."

"Yaneliswa, Baba, yilokhu akutshela khona. Uyeke yonke lemicabango."

"Uma sekusho wena, ntombi yami, ngiyeneliswa."

Langa lithize wavula iklilini njengasemihleni uPhikwase. Wezwa eshaywa ngumoya omubana oqandula ethanjeni uze uyozwakala phakathi kwalo emnkantsheni. Wabheka ngaseNingizimu wabona amafu eza neqhwa eqhamuka. Wathatha ijezi waligqoka ngaphansi kweyunifomu. Phela ayigqokelwa lutho ngaphezulu iyunifomu yabongi. Wamemeza omunye wezisebenzi:

"Phoyisa!"

"Nesi," kusabela ibhungu.

"Basa lapho kulindela khona iziguli ezizopotsholwa."

Wandukuthatha amabhuku wabhala. Waqeda. Ngalolo suku kulindelwe udokotela. Wabeka kahle zonke izimfaneko njengokwenza kwabongi.

Phandle seliyakhithika. Ezintabeni sekumhlophe ungqoqwane. Lingabanjalo kwelasekangala baningi abazotholwa sebedindilizile emigwaqweni, nasezigangeni. Wabheka ucingo. Wacabanga ukuba ashaye udokotela ngesimo seqhwa namhla. Walubamba. Kodwa akaze alunyakazisa. Wabheka isikhathi. Kusele imizuzu elishumi nanhlanu kushaye u-10. Udokotela ungena ngo-11. Kwangena intombazanyana iza ikhefuzela. Isijulukile kanti liyakhithika.

"Sakubona Nesi," isho yesula ubuso ngesandla.

"Sakubona Mephi. Musa ukwesula ubuso ngesandla.

Sebenzisa iduku."

"Ngumuntu futhi!"

"Futhi?"

"Yebo, Mongi."

"Ufile?"

"Angazi."

"Uphi?"

"Emgwaqweni laphaya eGqumeni likaShaka."

"Ufikile eduze naye?"

"Yebo. Ngumama ofikile."

"Nawe?"

"Qha, mina ngithunywe ngumama."

"Utheni?"

"Uma?"

"Yena."

"Phuthuma akasakhulumi."

"Akafike kodwa?"

"Angazi."

"Phoyisa!"

"Nesi!"

"Phangisa."

Ngesikhashana wayesemi eduze nomongi uPhoyisa. Uzwe elokuthi makaphangise. Uyazi ukuthi kungathiwa makaphangise kukhona osekukhona, okudinga kuphuthunywe masinyane. Uyamzonda osindwa izinyawo umongi.

"Sengikhona," kukhuluma uPhoyisa.

"Wenze kahle. Thatha uhlaka. Thatha izingubo ezine uzibeke phezulu. Thatha omunye umuntu. Phuthumani kwaHlongwane."

"Kwenze njani Mongi?"

"Ngithe phuthumani, Phoyisa. Awungizwanga yini? Uyozwa phambili."

"Sengizwile. Konakele." Waphuma uPhoyisa masinyane. Wabamba ukhonjwana lwendlela olunqamulela kwaHlongwane.

UPhikwase wenza ikhofi ngokushesha. Walihluza. Walicwengela ebhodleleni eligcina ukushisa kungaphumi.

Wathatha izidlada zokuyikela izandla zakhe eqhweni elikhithikayo. Wathabatha ibhayisikili wangenela umgwaqo.

\* \* \*

“Sakubona Mongi.”

“Sakubona Dokotela.”

“Ngiyadabuka ukwephuza namuhla Ucingo lwakho lungifice ngingekho. Unjani lomuntu wakho?”

“Uyethembisa.”

“Kunjani ndoda?” kubuza udokotela ensizweni. Imbheke ngamehlo. Impendulo ayikho. Aphendukele ephepheni elilengiswe odongeni ngasekhanda lensizwa elichaza ngesimo segazi layo. Alifundafunde. Andukuthatha insinjana elibhodlelana encanyana ayifake phakathi kwamathanga ensizwa ngasembilapheni. Abesebuza:

“Uvelaphi lomuntu?”

“Amapasi akhe akhomba ukuthi uvela eLangwane. Uqonde kuyo lendawo yaseSwartland,” kuphendula uPhikwase.

Adonse leyo nsinjana esemathangeni ensizwa udokotela. Ayifundafunde. Abesekhuluma ngezwi eliphansi.

“Ugogwe ngamakhaza. Uzoswabuluka emuva kwamahora amabili nesigamu.”

“Ngiyabona Dokotela.”

“Umnikeni?”

“Ngifike ngamphuzisa ikhofi elishisayo khona lapho ngimfice khona.

“Kuphela?”

“Kuphela.”

“Waliphunga?”

“Kahle.

“Okunye?”

“Ngithe ukuba ngimfikise lapha ngamsonga ngomqingo wezingubo, ngamlalisa.”

“Usebenze kahle impela Mongi. Ngizomjova ngekhambi elizomfudumalisa kakhulu. Ngibonise izincwadi zakhe.” Azibuke abesethi, “Hmm-m- Uyizemithithi.

Elomthelo. Hmm-mm. Volksrust 188/14/00255. Ake ngishaye eVolksrust.”

Abambe ucingo alunyakazise.

“Kulungile Nesi, uyaziwa. Makalale njalo. Kuzothi ngehora lokuqala emini umphuzise umuthi nekhofi. Uma kukhona okubi ungishayele ucingo. Kepha uma eqhubeka kahle usuyoze ungishayele endlini yami ntambama ngo 4.30. Sala kahle Nesi.”

“Hamba kahle Dokotela.”

\* \* \*

Phakathi kwabahambeli ababehambela eklilini kwakukhona nezinsizwa ezaziguliswa isibomvubomvu sakwaMsihini. Enye yazo, eyayiqonde ukuzozibika, yatholwa isigogwe iqhwa phansi kweGquma likaShaka. Ezinye zazingakhohwa ukuthi uPhikwase use litshitshi. Zazicabanga ukuthi kudala aba iqhikiza. Nokho ziziduduze ngokuthi zala abantu ziye ebantwini; nangokuthi noyishayile kakayosi; noyosile kakayidli; noyidlayo udla icala. Zehla zenyuka. Ziphambana zodwa ezindleleni.

Zazifika zizidlise satshanyana eklilini. Ezinye zide zimcela amakhambi.

Iposi lalimlethela izinqwabanqwaba zezincwadi ezivela ezeshelini. Iningi lazo wayengasalifundi ngoba azi ukuthi isihloko sazo sinye vo. Ezinye zifike ekuseni, kepha uyoze azifunde ngokuhlwa, noma ngakusihlwa ngosuku olulandelayo. Mhlawumbe angazifundi nje neze. Kuye zasezifana namaphephandaba, wona afundwa emuva komsebenzi. Wayevame ukufunda ezibhalwe ngezandla ezinhle ngaphandle. Ababhali bezinye abazi, abezinye angabazi.

Enye yalezi nqwabanqwaba yayinesitembu saseSwazini, izwe ayelizwa ngendaba.

“Kazi yini-ke lena engibhalela iseSwazini.” Wanxifa. Wayilahla phezu kwetafula engayifundanga. Yaye yawela ngale kwalo. Yayokwethusa impukane eyayizicashela ngenxa yokwesaba umongi. Yethuka yahlala phezu kodonga. Wathatha isifutho wayibulala. Wangena embhedeni walala. Ekuseni wathatha umshanelo washanela.

Wahlangana nayo isiphakathi kwezibi. Wayicsha wayithi ji phezu kwetafula. Yacasha lapho, engasayinakile, kwaze kwaba kusihlwa ngosuku lvesithathu ifikile. Wathi uthatha iBhayibheli amehlo akhe ahlanguana nayo futhi. Wanxapha. Wayithatha wayifunda:

“Ngikhumbula ngikubona esitimeleni. Ngikhumbula isihawu sakho. Ngikhumbula ubunono bakho. Ngikhumbula ubuhle bakho. Lezizinto zozine zizele zakha uthando olugxilile. Ngicela ukushada nawe.

“Yimi okukhumbula ngothando.

“Khumbula.”

Incwadi ndini yasimze yamxaka umntakaMsithini. Akazayilahla, akazayishisa. Wasimze wayikhalakathisela ebhokisini lezibi. Uthe lapho eseyochitha izibi wayikhipha futhi. Wayibeka kanye nezinye ezivela kubangani bakhe.

Wayenela aphaphame ebusuku acabange ngalolu hlanya lomuntu. Wacabanga ukuthi kumbe uzokhumbula. Phinde, kwahlangu zimuka nomoya. Wathi kumbe uzombona emaphusheni. Phinde.

Leyo ncwadi yandulela inqwaba yezinye Zazifika ngokulandelana, kuhle kwamanzi esiziba esidabukile. Kwangathi naye lowo mfokazi sewuyahlanya. Izincwadi zakhe wayezishiyanisa ngamalanga amane kuphela. Ngelesihlanu ubhala enye. Kwamcasula kakhulu uPhikwase lokho. Nokho wazifunda zonke ethi hleze athole igama lalomuntu. Langalithize waziqoqa zonkana izincwadi zombhedo wahlanya. Wayengalwazi lolu hlanya olubhala luseSwazini noma lungumSuthu, noma luliSwazi, noma luliShangane, noma luliNyasa, noma luliBhulantane, noma luliZingili, noma luyiNzule, noma luyini nje. Wathatha iphepha elinsundu wazigoqa kahle ngalo. Walibopha. Wathatha uyinki wakhela, wabhala amagama amathathu ngaphezu kwekheli: C.O.D.

“Phoyisa! Thatha nankumthwalo uyowulahla eposini.” Alithathe uPhoyisa iphasela alifunde abesethi,

“Hm. Ngumuntu wasemzini!”

“Uthini Phoyisa?” kubuza uPhikwase kubesengathi akezwanga.

“Ngithi lifana nomuthi wesintu leliphasele.”

“Uqamba amanga. Awusho njalo. Musa ukungibhinqa. Kodwa nje uthini Phoyisa?”

“Ngabe imbilapho isizondela isilonda na?”

“Umuntu wasemzini kabani?” abuze esethukuthele.

“Uzwile kanti?” washo ehleka uPhoyisa. “Salisiphela Nesi. Usungaze uzonde kawusintombi yini? Thina sibheke abakhwenyana.”

Akaphindanga wamphendula ngazwi uPhikwase, wasimze wamfulathela ngoba esenengiwe. Waliphuthumisa eposini iphasela uPhoyisa. Lahamba lalibhekisa kwaNgwane, lapho lalivele khona.

Kwaphela iviki linye lihambile iphasela le C.O.D. Kuthe phakathi nesonto lesibili yabuya impendulo. Wasibona isandla sikaKhumbula. Wazizwa esemamatheka, kodwa akaze azi ukuthi yini emenza amamatheke. Kepha cishe ayishise engayifundanga. Wazibamba ekhumbula eyalwa ngabadala ukuthi ukushisa incwadi ungakayifundi ukuzibangela ishwa. Wayivula wayifunda:

“Lafika kahle iphasela lami. Ngiyabonga, Nkosazana. Langibiza u-25c. Into esele, ongakangithumeli yona, inhliziyi yakho. Siza ungiposele yona. Yimi. Khumbula: Qhathumunyu Lubhede.”

Kwasa manje nge kuPhikwase. Lamngena endlebeni iphela umntakaMsithini. Wayathe uyalithintitha lanamathele. Wagcina ethethe amaphepha wabhala.

## XVIII

UBhevula Lubhede wabavumela abafundisi. Wathi abashumayeke izwi likaMvelinqangi emzini wakhe. Wavuvumela nomuzi wakhe ukuba uzinikele eNkosini. Wathi kepha yena uyoba libhuloho kokudala nokusha. Ikhanda lakhe liyoba kokusha kepha izinyawo zakhe zibe kokudala. Wathi uMaDlamini angazinikela. Angabhaphathizwa, aqini-swe abeyilunga eliphelele lesonto. Kepha isichqo angasidilizi noma ngabe sekunjani. Lesisinqumo wasenza

emva kokuba sebexoxe izinsuku ezinde noMfundisi Buthelezi. UBhevula wathanda kakhulu ukwazi ukuthi uMvelinqangi ngabe weneliswa yini kumuntu othi useyazinikela ebukholweni. Weneliswa owakwaLubhede ezimpendulweni zomfundisi ukuthi uNkulunkulu ufuna inhliziyo yomuntu kuphela ibemnene.

Wathi uMaDlamini angalokothi asuse isicholo eluke izintambo ekhanda. Wathi izintambo ekhanda lomfazi isinqwazi. Wathi isidwaba singalahlwa. Waqinisa wathi yena uyizwe kahle incazelo yomfundisi. Wathi uyakholwa ukuthi uNkulunkulu ukhonzwa ngenhliziyo emnene, emhlophe, nemsulwa. Inhliziyo enjalo ibonwa ngezenzo zekholwa. Isicholo nesidwaba kumuntu wesifazane kuyisifungo nesibopho esithi ungumfazi wendoda. Wathi ngomthetho wesikubo umfazi oshiya isidwaba ekhaya abhince imidweshu kanti uya kubantu, ichilo elibi lelo. Indoda yakhe iyahlawuliswa, kuthiwe umfazi wakhe uhambela umhlaba nqunu, uyawethuka ngenhlamba. Uma ediliza isicholo kanti indoda yakhe isawadla kukhuzwa imihlolo. Wathi amantombazane akhe angagqoka imidweshu leyo ngoba awakabi nezifungo asezifungile.

Uyise omncane kaBhevula wathi umkhosi wokubongela umfana mawenzelwe ekhaya kwaLubhede, uphelele khona lapho, kube into yomndeni wakwaLubhede. Kuphele ngalokho. NoMaDlamini wawuseka impela lomqondo kayisezala. UBhevula kepha wathi qha. Umndeni womfana usumbaxa-mbili. Owakubo wakwaLokothwayo. Kukhona futhi nowasesontweni. Wathi nokho uzoke abonane noButhelezi ongumengameli womndeni wasesontweni. UBhevula yena ngokwakhe wathi ithuba uzokulinikeza kumfundisi okunguyena ezonquma. Umfundisi wathi awubeseekhaya nasesontweni ugcine ekhaya.

Imizi yaseLume yakhiwe isintu—amaqhugwane. Eminye mincane—ondlu-nganye; eminye mikhulu—amanxuluma. Noma ondlu-nganye, noma amanxuluma ubuhle bayo buyafana. Akekho noyedwa urontabuli. Ngamaqhugwane jikelele. Indoda iyazigobela idladla layo kepha indlu ibizelwa umakhi ozokuyakha ngobunono, izintungo zime

zenze isasasa. Luthi lungaphela uphahla kusondele amakhosikazi, nawo ayifulele ngobuciko.

Imizi ihlalelene kudana, igcwele isigodi sonke saseLume. Phakathi nesigodi kukhona igquma elinethafa elihle phezulu. Phezu kwegquma ethafeni kume indlu eyahlukile. Idonsile, yinde, inamagumbi amane, inamafasitela amathathu ohlangothini lunye. Umnyango ubheke entshonalanga, uvumela umuntu angene emile. Ifulelwe ngongcwecwe waphendlwa wababomvu. Udonga lwayo lusukile emhlabeni, lucakacwe ngomcakaco omhlophe. Iyamkhanga oyibuka kude, afise ukusondela angene phakathi ayibuke ngaphakathi. Ngokumiswa kwayo kuleli gquma nayo iyaziqhenya, ngoba iyabakhanyisela bonke abakhe kulesigodi.

Phakathi kulendlu kugcwele abantu bayaphuphuma, amakholwa namabhinca. Umsizi womfundisi abize ingoma ethi 'Nina misebenzi yeNkosi bongani iNkosi, niyidumise niyibabaze kuze kube phakade'. Wayiqala. Yavungama indlu. Zasho ngamakhulu izalukazi, ahoshoza amakhehla, amanye awo abambe izincwadi zokucula azibhekisa phansi ngenxa yokungazi indlela yokuzibamba; atswininiza amantombazanyana; baklabalasa omakoti. Wabona amakhehla esede elekuza amakhanda enanelana nesigqi sengoma yokubonga imisebenzi yezandla zaKhe. Ithe iphela ingoma wayesemi phambi komfundisi uQhathumunyu.

"Bantu beNkosi," kukhuluma uMfundisi Buthelezi ngeliphakeme, "lomfana omi phambi kwami naphambi kwenu, usunduze itshe leliba, waphuma engcwabeni. Indaba yakhe seniyayazi kakhulu. Uze lapha endlini yeNkosi ukuzobonga eNkosini yakhe ngokusinda kwakhe engozini embi. Njengoba emi phambi kwenu, kuhle nani nonke nimbongele kuSomandla. Yenyusani izinhliziyi zenu kanye naye."

Abesekhuluma nomfana ngezwi eliphansi. "Kungamandla nesihawu sikaSomandla ukuba ekusindisile engozini. Ngakhoke ufanele uMbone. Shono ihubo 103."

Alithathe ihubo umfana:

"Bonga uSimakade mphefumulo wami;

"Konke okungaphakathi kwami akubonge igama lakhe elingcwele.

“Bonga uSimakade mphfumulo wami

“Ungakhohlwa akusize ngakho;

“Okusindise ekufeni . . .”

Abesemthandazela embusisa umfundisi. Wanela waqeda umfundisi wasetshela ibandla ukuthi abakwaLubhede bacela amakhohlwa abavakashele, ayobabongisa emzini wabo.

\* \* \*

Umndeni wakwaLubhede ubuthene. Ulele endlunkulu, endlini kwasalukazi. Uphelile wonke; amadodakazi kaBhevula namadodana. Kukhona uyisekazi, kukhona uyise omncane, ikhehla lebuthe loMgadlala. Balele bonke emadlozini njengenkambiso yabantu.

Eldladleni buyabila. Bugcwele imiphanda, ingwebu isiphuphumela phansi. Bebukade buhluzwa kusihlwa, buhluzwa amadodakazi kaBhevula. Athe ukuba abaqede abikela uyisemkhulu omncane. Weza, wangena, wabubuka wakhomba ukhamba oluthile, wathi akaluthathe alubeke emsamo. Enza njalo. Wasekhuluma nabaphansi ebanika lona. Wasekhomba olunye oluncane wathi akaluthathe aluse endlunkulu.

Ekuseni umuzi wonke usalele cwaka, kusempondozankomo, laphuma ikhehla nyelele, laqonda ngasenhla kwesibaya. Ikhehla likhuluma nabakubo abangasekho, oyisemkhulu, oyise, abafowabo nabanewabo, nawogogo wabo. Ubanika inkomo yabo. Akekho ombonayo kepha bayazi.

Ekuseni kwathiwa uQhathumunyu makangene nesijula, ahlabe umhlophe. Wangena esidonsa ngesokudla. Azamnaka izinkomo kepha umhlophe waqala ukuyaluzana nesibaya usubikelwa ngumzimba. Uyaluze, wehla wenyuka nesibaya, ume ubheke uQhathumunyu, ubheke isijula asiphethe kanti yena uthi usifihlile, uyaluzise ikhanda. Asithele ngenye inkabi uQhathumunyu, asondele ngasohlangothini lwangakwesokudla lomhlophe. Awuhlabe ungamboni, awuhlabe ohlangothini lwangakwesokunene eduze nesiphanga. Uthe lapho uthi ususa umkhonto wasinameka

umfana. Sayesadabula iphaphu eduze nenhliziyo. Ahlale phansi umfana. Ingeze yawa.

“Iphinde,” kumemeza uBhevula.

Esesibili sadabula inhliziyo, yawa. Libongele ikhehla elinguyisemkhulu.

Ayidumele amadoda ayihlinze, kube ubuklukluklu. Ithe ukuba iphele ukuhlinzwa kuyobikelwa ikhehla. Yilona elizobakhombisa ukukhishwa kwezitho zenkomo yamadlozi. Insonyama yomnumzane wesigodi.

Libakhombise. Bazikhiphe. Ibisithuthwa isiwe kwasalukazi. Ithuthwe yonke kusale kuphela amantshontsho abahlinzi. Babase abafana kosiwe amantshontsho. Nangasesibayeni kuyosiwa, usi lugcwele umuzi kaBhevula. Ikhehla yilona elayifaka emlonyeni kuqala ngqa.

“Nansi inyoka?” kumemeza uQhathumunyu egijima eyothatha induku. Uthe lapho ethi uyayibeka induku enyokeni kwakudala layibamba ikhehla elinguyisemkhulu.

“Kahle mntanomntanomfowethu. Wenzani? Kawuboni yini ukuthi idlozi leli?”

“Inyoka le, Mkhulu. Indlondlo,” kusho umfana, ebangisana induku noyisemkhulu.

Yaze yalanyulwa uBhevula ofike wathatha lenduku wase-  
thi.

“Lalela otshelwa khona ngabadala, mfana. Musa ukudazisana nabo inkani.”

“Uxolo, Mkhulu. Bengingazi. Ngenziwa ngoba inyoka isilwane engisizondayo.”

“Kulungile, mntanomntanomfowethu. Oyihlomkhulu laba.”

Phezu kwehlaha lesibaya izithandele inyoka eluhlaza ethe fahla fahla amabadlana amhloshana. Ayethukile neze. Ithule du. Kuphela inyaliza ulimi.

“Awuboni uyakhuluma,” kuqhubeka ikhehla. “Uze lapha ngawe njengabo bonke abantu namhla. Wena uthi yindlondlo. Indlondlo iluhlaza cwe. Futhi yona iluhlanya. Ngabe kudala ibalekile.”

Ikiphe ulimi kaninginingi inyoka, inyaliza. Usethule uQhathumunyu uthe du. Usekhuluma ngenhliziyo kuphela.

Libuye liqhubeke ikhehla.

"Bheka, usethukuthele. Ubona ukuthi uyameyisa. Yibo laba abakukhipha emlonyeni wengwenya, mzukulu."

"Kati! Kati!! Kati!!!"

Akwabalula ukwemuka ikati inyoka esisemlonyeni libaleka nayo. Waxoshwa umangobe. Esebanjiwe wacindezela phansi ngokunakekela, ukuze angabadabuli ngezinziphopho, waphuphuthwa endlebeni. Bagcina bamemukile.

"Habe, ikhanda hlofo hlofo," kwekhuza ikhehla. "Ithathe mfana uyingcwabe laphaya ngasenhla kwesibaya. Ubeke amatshana amathathu phezu kwengcwaba layo."

UBhevula wabiza umfanyana wamnika inso nobende nedlala wathi akathathe iqatha alise kumfundisi. Wabiza umfana omunye wathi akathathe insonyama ayimukise kumnumzane wesigodi.

"Nomfundisi usenesethulo?" kubuza ikhehla elinguyise omncane kaBhevula kuBhevula.

"Qha, akanaso."

"Pho?"

"Ngiyamupha nje njengendoda engumngani wami." Akaze athanda ukuba athi 'kufanele', ngoba u 'fanele' uzoletha eminingi imibuzo.

"Ngizwa ukuthi besekukhona nomunye umfundisi ethi uzocela ukuba naye avunyelwe akholise abantu khona lapha eLume. Angithi kunjalo?"

"Kunjalo, Baba."

"Nizopha nize nidinwel"

"Simchithile lowo."

"Nimchitheleni yena?"

"Uthe yena ungowelinye ibandla. Lokho asakuthanda ngoba uma kunjalo abantu beNkosi bazokwehlukana phakathi. Isigcino bangezwni."

"Nasenyamxosha pho?"

"Asimxoshanga, sithe akedlulele phambili lapho kungakabikho bafundisi. Naye aye kozilimela lapho kungakalinywa khona."

Ithe ihlahlelwa ekuseni uQhathumunyu nonina nawodadewabo bavukela esontweni. Emini atheleka amakholwa nomfundisi. Umsebenzi wokubongela uQhathumunyu waphela khona esontweni. Lapha ekhaya sengumthandazo omfushane nentshumayelo emfuphi kuphela. Bese-ke kuba isiphetho.

Imihlambi yabakhelwane igcwele eceleni komuzi kaLubhede. Okungabafana kunyakaza ekhaya, kuhle kwamanqo ebona isidumbu. Kuyaphethuka, kuhle kwezimpethu zinyakaza esilwaneni esifele endle.

"Azikhiwe," kumemeza insizwa. Nempela zikhiwe. Zithelwe phansi. Abafana sebewejwayele lowo msebenzi. Abasathunywa ukuthi wena dumela lo, wena lowaya. Zinele zithelwe phansi kube ububhudubhudu. Bangachithi sikhathi futhi badumelane kube ubunikiniki. Owasabayo zimbona kanye izinsizwa bese zima ngasemva kwakhe ziphethelwe izinswazi. Uzothi othi uyahlehla zimklwibhile ngasemva zithi; 'kuye'. Uzoze naye ashayele phambili avule indlela yakhe ngoswazi aluphethe ngesandla. Buphele ubugwala angenwe isibindi.

Iyothi ingadliwa inhloko umndeni ubuyele ngasesibuyeni usuyokudla eyonmdeni. KumaSwazi umganga\* udliwa amadoda, asikele izintombi esezindle nezingakendi, kuthiwa zona zingababuyisi bezinkomo. Onina kabanikwa umganga, kepha banikwa eyomlenze, ngoba kuthiwa bona bayimpi esekhaya eyadla izinkomo.

Amakholwa adla odwa ngaphansi kwezinduna zasesontweni. Inele yakhishwa eyawo yanikezwa kumfundisi, yena wayinikeza izinduna zakhe ukuba zibabele abantu. Iqembu lamakholwa ladlela esibuyeni kwaMaDlamini.

Inone inkabi inhlama! Ububende ngamafutha. Okungabafana namantombazanyana sekungamafutha, sekuncinca imilomo nezisu. Isidliwe yaphela, kulethwe umhluzi ngezinqoko, ngezindengelo, ngezinkanjana. Uphungwe, uphungwe. Uyothi ungaphela besekubongwa. Kuqala munye wasekhaya. Lapha-ke kwaqala ikhehla uyisemkhulu kaQhathumunyu. Wasisho isibongo sakubo, wehla nezithakazelo zaso, wabeka lapho ebeka khona. Kwayima

\* Inyama yesifuba yenkomo noma yembuzi.

kuzovungama umuzi wonke kanyekanye uthathe lapho lithathe khona ikhehla ubeke lapho libeke khona:

“Lubhede, Lokothwayo; Bhambo-lunye, zingabazimbili wafuza ekhaya konina.”

Akugiywa. Uyahlekwa ogiyayo kuthiwe isidlakudla esigiyela ukudla.

Zaphuma izinkamba, zasiwa emadodeni, zasiwa kumakhosikazi, zasiwa emakholweni. Amakholwa awabuphuzi utshwala. Kepha inhlonipho yesintu ayayazi kahle. Umuntu akabuzwa ukuba lokhu nalokhu uyakudla yini? Uma umuntu umbuza lowo mbuzo uyothi angikudli kanti ukulambele, uthi leyo indlela yokwala nokudla kwakho. Umbuzelani umuntu wenkosi? Uqondeni? Uma unokudla ofuna ukumupha khona, muphe ngaphandle kombuzo. Naye uzokwamukela ngazo zombili, abonge kakhulu. Andukucela abantu benkosi abakudlayo bazomdlisa, babonge yena ngoba ukudla okwakhe, ukuphiwe. Uma isikhulu sike sakupha ukudla wathi uyabonga ngoba ungakudli, sikususa ngenduku, nangenhlamba, uze uzenyanye nawe. Ukuphiwa isitsha sakho kuthiwe esakho ukubusiswa. Ukukholwa akuzanga ukuzodabula izinkambiso zomuntu ezinhle, kufake ezimbi esikhundleni. AbeLungu abakushayimkhuba ukwemukela into komunye ngesobunxele. Kepha abazange nakanye bathi abantu abalahle indlela yabo ehle yokwamukela kumuntu ngezandla zombili, babonge.

Umfundisi Buthelezi wayengelona iSwazi ngoba wayenguzulu. Kepha wayengumuntu ofundisiwe ngempela. Ofunde imfundo yakwaMalandela, nemfundo yasesikoleni eyalethwa ngabeLungu. Wayefunde imfundo eyaphucula izwe laseAfrika. Imfundo yokuzithiba, uthobeke amakhosi omhlaba, uthobeke imithetho yezwe, uthobeke abakhulu nabancane kunawe ukuze abakhulu bakwethembe ukuthi uyosebenza kahle kubantu babo, ukuze futhi nabancane bakuthathe ngokuthi unguyise ungunina wabo, uyisihlobo sabo. Ukubhinqa omunye ukumzondisa, ukutshala imbewu yobutha, imbewu eyoba nezithelo ezimuncu. Uzwe lowo

esonga ethi: ngiyoze ngikhule nami. Ukuhlala phansi naye nixoxe ngalokho oze ngakho uyamngoba, akethuki. Isizwe esimhlophe sinamasiko ehlukene kakhulu kunalawo abantu abaNsundu. Kepha bona bazidela, bazijikijela ngezinhliziyi eziphansi kulowo msebenzi ababehamba ngawo. Wathi ohlatshwe iva abaze basho ukuthi: zikhiphe wena. Kepha kwaba yibo abazohlala phansi benabe, bathathe unyawo lwalowo olimele balubeke emathangeni abo, bathathe usungulo babangule iva. Bathule emlonyeni du, kusebenze izenzo kuphela. Izenzo zinamandla kunamazwi. Akekho umuntu emhlabeni ongathandi ukusizwa. Ukusiza umuntu kunendlela ethile ukuze kube lusizo lwe-mpela. Wayefunde kanjalo-ke uButhelezi, umfundisi waseLume.

Abafundisi omthwalo waboshwa. Ikakhulu lowo osebenza kahle kakhulu. Uthi ephakathi nomsebenzi, ewaphonsile emanzini amadoba akhe, csezibona nezinhlanzi azozikhipha, kuthiwe beka phansi lolo doba ubophe umthwalo uyodoba kweminye imifula. Nempela alubeke ekhumbula izifungo azenza mhlazane ethathe lelo jokwe lobufundisi. Kwabanjalo nakuye umfundisi waseLume. Amakhowa wona ayekwazi lokho ukuthi weza, uyohamba futhi njengenyoni engena ngomnyango endlini indize, indize phakathi isigcino ithole imbobo ngefasitele iphumele phandle. Kepha abanumzane abakwazanga lokho. Bona bathi useyothunjwa isifo kuphela. Banela bezwa ukuthi useyahanjiswa bathuma amanxusa kuMongameli wakhe ukuthi akangamsusi. Amanxusa abuya nelokhthiu incazelo yonke mabayithole kuye uButhelezi. Yena-ke wayichaza ngokuthi wafakwa amatomu njengehashi. Wacela ukuba bamkhulule ngezimhlophe izinhliziyi.

Kwathi sekwaba yiminyaka ngeminyaka wawulokhu uzwa amakhehla angamabhinca ethi: “Thina singamakholwa akwaButhelezi.” Esho eyala intsha yaseLume ayeseiyibona ihamba izindledlana ezingawagculisi. Kungekhona eLume kuphela lapho abantu basebezibiza ngokuthi bona bangama-

kholwa akosibanibani. Esho ngoba lowo sibanibani aye-wahlabe umxhwele.

Usuku kwaLubhede lwalwa ngeculo, nangomthandazo, nangamazwi amahle omfundisi awabeka ebongela abantu baseLume ngokusinda kwensizwa engozini embi. Wathi lomfana akasona isibani esiyokhanyisela umuzi wakwabo kuphela, kepha isigodi saseLume kanye nezwe lonke leNkosi.

Bachitheka abantu izisu zabo zingaseqiwa gundane. Abanye behlomile ezindukwini, abanye njalo baphonse ezinkambeni nasemaphaphasini. Baphathele abantababo emakhaya.

## XIX

Imizi yaseLume yakhe ngendlela leyo eyejwayelekile kubantu. Umuntu uzakhela umuzi wakhe nomaphi. Akacabangi ngabanye. Uzicabanga yena namalungelo aqondene naye kuphela. Umuzi wakhe naphakathi kwamasimu abantu uyawumisa. Uwakha edlelweni lempahla. Izinkomo ezidla lapho zibhekwe ngabelusi. Bazimele ngemuva abafana. Umuzi wakhe endaweni yomnikazi. Uzwe umuntu ethi 'indawo yami. Angiyibangi namuntu. Umuntu kababa. Amanxiwa kababamkhulu lawa. Ngingeze ngathikaziswa impumakude.' Oyisifiki kulesosigodi adliswe imbuya ngothi. Ufanele akhonze kaningi. Akhuleke emasangweni amaningana. Akhonze endodeni ethile okuyiyona izomnika indawo yokulima. Yona imthathe imuse kumnumzane noma-ke enduneni yesigodi. Uzofika athi, "wena wasekuthini, ngilethe kuwe nansi inkomo yakithi." Induna izobanika inxusa layo ukuba libase emphakathini kwaSikhulu. Phambi kokuba simamkele iSikhulu, sithande ukwazi ukuthi lomuntu weNkosi o lethwe kuso uzowuthola yini umhlaba lapho ezokuzibekela khona inhlwayelo. Lowo mbuzo uphendulwa yileyo ndoda ayinkomo yakubo. Izovuma. Andukuba iSikhulu ne-

bandla laso sivume ukuthi siyamankela umuntu weNkosi. Uma singase sizwe ukuthi qha akazukuyithola indawo yokulima, sengajezisa lowo omlethile, sithi uzodlani lomuntu.

Inkomo yakubo, uzoyithatha ayoyinika inxiwa eliphakathi namasimu abantu. Kwesinye isikhathi isifiki sibekwa edlelweni lezimpahla. Othi uyakuphikisa lokho naye atshelwe lelo lizwi: "Indawo yami. Umuntu wami." Athule umuntu wabantu eluse izinkomo zakhe nezingulube ukuba zingathinti ukudla kwesifiki.

Kube umsebenzi womfana ukuba ahlale esondweni lempahla. Uma ike yangena emabeleni esifiki uyobamanzi nte. Uyosinda ngokulambisa.

Ukulima kwabantu baseLume kufana nokwabantu bonke. Ongenayo inkabi uphalula, alime, ahlwayele, ahlakule ngomkhono. Onezinkabi usukela isiganga asidwebe ngegeja kusale utshani buthe siphu. Athathe imbazo agawule ihlahla; athathe ummbila awusakaze phezu kwamagade. Adonsisc izinkabi ihlahla lelo phezu kwamagade. Lowo kuthiwa wenza ngconc. Omunye ufaza ummbila esigangeni abesedweba ngegejana. Uyothi uqala ukumila ummbila kudala utshani bahlangana ngaphezulu kwawo. Aphise utshwala umuntu. Ameme ilima. Abantu sebephuzile balunyathele ngezinyawo ukhula bathi bayahlakula. Kepha kuyona leyo ndlela yokulima, ukudla akubuyi ekhaya. Kuba yinala ukudla kuthi phihli.

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Isigodi saseLume sangenwa isifo sokwemuka kwenhlambathi. Abanumzane babefuyile. Imihlambi ibulala inyoka. Ikhwele intaba iyodla ngaphezulu enkangala. Ngesikhathi sasebusika yehle iyodla esigodini, idle amahlanga. Abafana bathole ikhefu, bathole nethuba lokudlala. Imizila ekhwela izintaba seyabhuduka yabomvu. Amanzi athole indlela elula yokugijima. Adabule izinkelethe zezindonga. Kwagquzuka ezinkulu izingquzuma zamatshe. Enye yagquzuka entabeni. Yashaya amanye ayilandela. Abantu baphuma czindlini babaleka, bebona izingquzuma zehla



zithe saka, zilalisa imithi. Komunye umuzi zalalisa inqolobane, komunye zalalisa uhlangothi lwesibaya. Inhlanhla izinkomo zazingakangeni.

Kwafika isifo sezinkomo sabhubhisa. Isigodi sasala sikhalelwa yibhungane. Lokhu utshani base bugugudekile, bathola ikhefu. Bakhula. Imizila yamilwa utshani, izindonga zamilwa imithi. Ukuguguleka kwema, kumiswa utshani nemithi. Akubanga minyaka eminingi zabuye zagcwala futhi izinkomo esigodini saseLume. Utshani baqala ukuqothuka, nezindonga zanda. Ukuguguleka kwenhlabathi kuhamba nemilimela. Kwemuke ukudla okunye sekuvuthiwe, amathanga, amabhece, iziqwanga, amantongomane, izindlumbu, izindumba, nezinye izilimo.

Kwalandela isigemege me sendlala. Yangabekwa eziko. Bagcwala izinkoalo beyokwethckela ezihlotsheni. Bathengisa ngezimbuzi nangezinkomo ukuze bathenge ukudla. Amathumbu abalublaza ngoba basebephila ngemifino. Baphila ngokuphuza amasi. Abangenankomo baqala ukusenga izimbuzi baphuza amasi azo.

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Usuku lokunikeza uQhathumunyu umsebenzi esigodini saseLume lwaba lukhulu. Kwakukhona inxusa elivela emphakathini lithunywe iSikhulu, uMntanenkosi Bhembe Nkosi, ukuba lizoba umlomo wakhe nendlebe yakhe. Kukhona induna ephethe isigodi saseLume. Kukhona umLungu ophethe ezolimo esifundeni saseMbabane, umnumzane Luchwachwa. Nguyena uLuchwachwa olette uQhathumunyu. Kukhona amadoda cishe onke esigodi.

Inxusa elavula umhlangano, labeka ingqikithi yawo. Layibeka inkanankana. Aququda imihlathi amadoda. Kwaphela ukuchwensa, kwaphela ukuthi lo ngumhlaba kababa. Zahlabeke umxhwele izifiki. Kwathi abathathe izinduku abazukulu bezakhi-kuqala.

Izindaba ziza nenxusa, zivela kuMntanenkosi Bhembe. Kanti nakuye kaziveli khona, zivela eNkosini yezwe.

“Usho njalo umlomo ongawakhulumi amanga,” kukhuluma inxusa. “Olwa nendlela eya enhlalakahle ulwa naye.

Uyakwazi-ke yena ukuziphendulela. Induku yakhe niyazi ukuthi ayihlali phansi.”

Zophela ngaphakathi emadodeni.

Wawuqala umsebenzi wakhe uQhathumunyu. Abantu bashiya amanxiwa abo bakhonjwa intaba. Bayekeliswa amasimu abo ayelinywa okhokho babo. Imizi yasuswa emilimeleni nasemadledweni, yakhiwa ngaphansi kwentaba, lapho intaba ihlangana khona nesigodi. Owesuka kuqala kunayo yonke ngowenduna uLuhosha Maseko. Kwalandela okaBhevuva. Yilapho nawokhanda-limtsihela-okwalo babona ukuthi kuyanyakazwa, akudlalwa. Abanye baduba, baqoma ukuthuthela kwezinye izigodi. Kulabo izwi lathi: izwe lonke limaseko mathathu.

Wafaka izikhonkwane uQhathumunyu. Wazifaka zabazine, esinye nesinye egumbini kumagumbi amane omuzi; wathi lo ngumuzi. Onke amanxiwa anikwa izinamba zawo. Owenduna uLuhosha waba ngunamba 1. Inamba yowakwabo yaba u-25. UQhathumunyu wayebeka izinamba kuphela. Umsebenzi wokubeka imizi emanxiweni amasha wawenziwa induna nebandla elincane layo—Isolomuzi.

Imilimela yasala ibethwa ngumoya. Uthe ukuba uQhathumunyu aqede ukuhlelana namanxiwa, wehla wayohlela amasimu. Waphonsa insimbi yaqonda. Wayigoqa. Wayiphonsa yavundla. Uyiphonsa nje ufaka izikhonkwane. Wathola ubude nobubanzi benzimu. Yanqamuka phakathi insimu yendoda. Wafaka inamba. Wedlulela phambili. Nalapho kwayileso. Wanela waqeda ukuhlela amasimu, wathatha umbhobho wawumisa. Abantu babophela izinkabi. Adwetshwa amasimu. Abantu bakhonjiswa ukuthi nxa sebelima ikhuba liyohanjiswa kanjani. Ngalandlela kuvinjelwa ukuguguleka kwenhlabathi.

Umnininsimu wabanjwa ngendlebe ukuba angalokothi alime phakathi kwaleyo ndawo eshiywe phakathi kwamafolo amabili. Angabushisi utshani obuyomila kuleyo ndawo, angayigawuli nemithi, angashisi angenzini. Uma ake wenza noma yini kuleyo ndawo uyobekwa icala ajeziswe. Inhlawulo isuka enkomeni iye ezinkomeni eziyisihlanu.

Yawaba induna amasimu. Ukwabiwa kwawo akubanga mayelana nezinamba zemizi. Umuzi ongunamba io awuthathanga unamba io wensimu. ULuchwachwa wayethe kuhle abantu banikwe izinamba ezizovumelana nezinamba zezindlu zabo. Kepha uLuhosha kanye nebandla lakhe wabona ukuthi leyo ndlela iyodala ukungezwani phakathi kwabaholi nabantu baseLume. Kwacelwa ukuthi kuhle kube yilowo nalowo azanyelwe ukuthi athole insimu yakhe endala, noma nje engasayitholi yonke. Noma ingabe seyihlanganiswe nenye lokho kuyobaduduzwa. Bayoduduzwa ukubaseduze nalapho babekade belima khona. Wavuma uLuchwachwa.

Idlelo laphonswa phezulu ezintabeni nasezigangeni ezingaphedu kwezintaba. Ukusuka edlelweni usuya kwesinye isigodi esakhelwe ngabanye abantu. Okwenzeke eLume nakhona kwagcina kwenzekile.

Kwakukhona abanye abantu bakwesinye isigodi, sakwaHlahla, ababekade benamasimu kulesigodi saseLume. Futhi kukhona abaseLume abanamasimu kuHlahla. Ukudatshulwa kwamasimu aseLume kwabephuca amasimu abo aseLume abantu bakwaHlahla. Lawo masimu abo anikwa abanye bakhona eLume. Kwathi abaseLume baqhubeka nokulima lawo masimu abo akwaHlahla. AbakwaHlahla base becela labo abaseLume abalima kwaHlahla ukuba nabo basale sebeyeka ngoba nabo sebeyekile ukulima eLume.

“Silima amanxiwa awobabamkhulu. Singeze satshelwa ngumuntu ukuthi asifanele.”

Bavungama abakwaHlahla. Imvunga yakhula. Abaze bayizwa nje into ethi bona bayekeliswe imilimela yabo eLume, kodwa abaseLume bona baqhubeka nokulima endaweni yakubo. Babikela induna yabo. Yona yathi kuhle baye kuLuhosha. NoLuhosha indaba yamehlula. Wazithintitha ngelokuthi akanawo amandla akwephuca abantu abanxiwa awokhokho babo. Akuyena owephuca abakwaHlahla amasimu abo eLume. Wabakhomba kuLuchwachwa.

Nempela badumelisa kuLuchwachwa. Naye wazithintitha. Babuya ngenduku yombangandlala. Wathi yena aka-

ziphethe izindaba zombango. Base beya kuSikhulu Bhembe, okunguyena ephethe abaseLume. Yena wahlanganisa ibandla labakwaHlahla nelabaseLume. AbakwaHlahla bayibeka kahle indaba ebahluphayo. Bayibeka ngamazwi aqhathumunyu. Abaze bavuma neze abaseLume ukuyekeliswa amanxiwa abo. Lamehlula uBhembe. Wathi okungcono abayozibika eNkosini. Balibonga lelo abakwaHlahla nabaseLume. Bancela bafika emakhaya zaphenduka izinhliziyu. Bathi abasayi ukuyozibika eNkosini.

AbaseLume babophela izinkabi bayolima amasimu abo akwaHlahla. Ummbila usumadlebe ngamabili noma ngamathathu babophela ezabo abakwaHlahla. Baqonda emasimini lawo. Bayifafaza phezu kommbila osumilile inhlwayelo. Bafaka izinkabi zalima.

Bathe ukuba bakuzwe lokho abaseLume, bathuma amadoda ukuyobona ukuthi kuliqiniso yini abakuzwayo. Abuya athi kuliqiniso. Base betshela induna yabo. Yona yathumela kuMlobokaziwemfene okunguyena eyinduna yakwaHlahla.

“Sithunye kuwe, Gama,” kukhuluma uBhevula, “ukuzobuza ukuthi bakutshelile yini abantu bakho ukuthi sebeyolima ummbila wethu.”

“Abangibikelanga.”

“Yebo-ke, Mbhokane. Nokho usuzwile.”

“Ngizwile ngomoya.”

“Mbhokane. Uthini-ke ngokwakho?”

“Anginazwi.”

Ahamba aphindela eLume amadoda engatholanga lizwi kuMlobokaziwemfene.

Waqhuma ummbila. Wakhula ngamandla. Kuthe lapho usumadlebe mathathu noma mane, zabethana. Abophela ezawo izinkabi amadoda aseLume. Ahloma aphelela. Akwangabakho mfana obamba intambo njengasemihleni. Yabanjwa indoda. Avuka kusempondozankomo. Lithe liphuma ilanga ayecebomvu amasimu, lokhu izolo abeluhlaza. Lathi lifuthumala ayeqoqana emzini kaMlobokaziwemfene amadoda akwaHlahla. Enye yathunyelwa kwa-baseLume abalimayo.

“Uthi uGama,” ikhuluma ngephika, “qhubani izinkabi zenu lezi nizilethe kuye.”

“Hamba umtshela ukuthi akuzona ezakhe,” kuphendula uBhevula.

Akubanga mizuzu eminingi siphindele nalclozwi isithunywa, yaphuma cyakwaGama yehla ngonimango. I-hamba kancane. UBhevula wasethumela esakhe isithunywa kuMlobokaziwemfene sayomtshela ukuthi:

“Uthi uLubosha Nkosi phindisela abantu bakho emuva, bangawuweli umfula.”

“Ngitshelwe uBhevula lokho,” kukhuluma uMlobokaziwemfene ngezwi eligcwele unya. “Phindela kuye umtshela aphumele obala sidindane manje. Angisakhulumi.”

Banela bawela umfula abakwaHlahla yahlangana. Kwezwakala nje ukuthi, “Lume, Lume, Lume, Lumile”. Kwezwakala ukuthi, “Sahlahla, Sahlahla, Sahlahla, Sahlahlela.” Kwakhala ihawu, kwakhala ijozi. Kwaba ubuklebhuklebh. Yahlahla cyakwaHlahla. Yawela umfula. Yashiya izidumbu zayo ezine. Ayabisawela nekaBhevula. Wayikhomba ekhaya cyakwakhe uMlobokaziwemfene. NoBhevula wenza njalo.

Ithe ukuba ifike esigodini cyaseLume yahlala phansi. Munye ewaqhuba izinkabi wayozibeka ekhaya, wahlaba nomkhosi. Abafazi bakhweza izidwaba.

UBhevula wathuma izinhlozi ukuyohlola ukuthi yenzani ekaMlobokaziwemfene. Zithe zibuya zazibika ukuthi isisendleleni. UBhevula wayesethi ayicashe evungwini cyakhe.

Ilanga lase liya ngomutsha wendoda. Yazichoma ekaGama. Yavukisa okwengwe ilindele umuntu ekaLubhede. EkaMlobokaziwemfene ayabisathola nelinci ithuba lokuzakha. Nokho yazabalaza. Lwayigwaza uLume lwemuka nayo. Yabaleka yaze yayofika phansi kukaHlahla. Yilapho yafika yema khona. Yalungisela ukugalela futhi. Kodwa uMlobokaziwemfene Gama, wayengasekho. Akekho owamazi ukuthi ukuphi.

Wanela washaya impalampala uBhevula wadumelisa kuMlobokaziwemfene wathi,

“Namuhla ngiphindisela amagama akho okungeyisa,” washo emdumela. Kepha uMlobokaziwemfene akazanga ukuthi walilahla phansi nini ihawu lakhe waboleka empunzini. Wamxosha uBhevula wamshonisa esixhotsheni samatshe. Wamfica wangwaza emsundulweni walahleka phansi. Akamphindanga. Wasemshiya khona lapho. Akatholwanga waze wadliwa ngamanqe. Nokho uBhevula uthi wamshiya emqhaqhile.

Wancle wezwa uMntanenkosi Bhembe ukuthi kuyaliwa wasethumela kuMntanenkosi Mthonga wakwaHlahla wathi abahlangane bobabili. Yibona ababekisa impi izikhali phansi.

## XX

UQhathumunyu wafika ekhaya esekhathele uhambo kanti nensika isiwile. Imilenze isishayana yodwa. Akabanga esaya naselawini ukuyobeka izimpahla zakhe nje ngasemihleni. Kepha wasimze waqonda ngasesibuyeni.

Kwasengathi ufika emzini olukhuni. Unina nodadewabo bahlezi khona lapho. Wanela wathi qhamu egumeni wahlala phansi. UMaDlamini wadideka noma indlala, noma ukudinwa, noma isifo, noma ukudabuka, noma ukudangala. Ongambonanga uZelusile ngoba wayehlezi efulathele. Akabasachitha isikhathi unina.

“Sakubona, Lufu!”

Kwayima ezwa noZelusile. Waphonsa amehlo, wambona umfowabo. Wagxuma wazilahla kuye wahlwithahlwitha zonke izimpahla aziphethe umfowabo. Wayozibeka elawini. Wabuya wazombingelela.

“Yebo, Mama. Aphelile.”

Kwayima kumkhanyela unina ukuthi ingane iphethwe inkengane.

“Sakubona, mfowethu,” kubingelela uZelusile esebuya elawini

“Yebo, dadewethu. Lamulani.”

Waqhumuka wahleka uZelusile, ithathakazi.

“Indlala phela imehlula kabi umntakababa. Umfazi

wakhe uyochithwa yisisu sikaQhathumunyu esingumgodi kawugcwali.”

“Suka lapha lempakana,” kukhuza unina enengwa ubuthatha. “Musa ukugcona umntanami. Uyambona usefile ukulamba.”

“Ndodani le chlulwa inkengane?”

“Ngena exhibeni umphekele umdokwe. Phangisa.”

Nempela wesukela phezu uZelusile. Wangena, wagwabula itshe, wathintitha imbokodwe.

“We Ma!”

“Musa ukuba ulokhu unginemeza wena. Kangiyona nentanga yakho.”

“Asaphelile amabele embizeni lapha.”

“Kulungile.” Wasukuma masinyane wathatha imbenge waqonda enqolobaneni. Washesha wabuya nawo chambela phezu. “Yamukela ugaye ngokushesha.”

“Kazi umalokazana uyomthethisa yini?”

Adonse isikhuni uMaDlamini athi uyakujikijela okuyintombazana, isikhuni sashaya isikhundla.

“Ngiyomthathaphi umalokazana ngimdinga nje.” Aphendukele kuQhathumunyu. “Ngiphangise Lufu. Baphi oyihlo?” wabuza ngokushesha.

“Ngiphangiseni ngokudla.”

“Useyakulungisa phela udadewenu.”

“Obaba noNcongwane ngibashiye kwaMahluzi basehlisa izindanda. Kuyabuswa khona.”

“Ngiyabona fana,” washo ngelizinzile manje elikhombisa ukuthi amaphaphu asehlile abuyela endaweni yawo. Abe-sebuza futhi, “OManana noKunene baphi bona?”

“Schlukene nabo okhalweni esikhaleni seNgwe. Bathatha ngendlela eyobaweza ezansi nomfula.”

“Wemfowethul!” kumemeza uZelusile exhibeni.

“Uthini?” kubuza umfowabo esikhundleni sokusabela.

“Kukhona inqwaba yezincwadi zakho ezivela eposini.”

“Ziphi?”

“Elawini.”

“Letha idokwe lelo.”

“Letha idokwe!” kukhuluma unina ngezwi elikhahlulayo.

Akazayilandela eyomdokwe abakhala ngawo, uZelusile, wasimze waqhubeka neyezincwadi eziyinqwaba phezu kwetafula elawini.

“Ngiyethemba phela phakathi kwazo kukhona nevela kumuntu wasenzini. Angithi nawe uyethemba, mfo?”

Akazaphendula uQhathumunyu. Wasukuma wengama eguma, wabhaka esibayeni. Udaka kuphela. Izinkomo zisedlelweni. Ezansi kwesibaya ubona amankonyane ayisihlanu. Amabili alele, amabili adla utshani, elilodwa liyatshakadula. Lelula, liqinisa imisipha yalo. Phezu kwesibaya ubona amagula amathathu phezu kwamahlahla. Elikhulu kunawo wonke seliyaphuphuma, isivimbo sesijikeke kude. Ubunfezi buqoqane. Afise ukuyozisiza, kodwa wesaba ukuthi unina uzokumthethisa. Abheke ilanga alibone lehla nesibhakabhaka. Aziduduze enhliziyweni ngokuthi akusasele sikhathi esingakanani uZelusile agaye umcaba, unina athathe igula, avule umunge, akhame umlaza; uthi nxa usuphume wonke alibhekise phansi igula athulule amasi, awathululele ezinkambeni, avube. Nolwakhe luyobe lukhona lapho. Abuke ezansi emilimeleni. Abone ukuthi bonke abahlakulayo isifazane, kanye nemithonselana yamaxhegu. Ezinkalweni kuqhama amadoda aseLume. Ahamba ngamabili, ngamathathu, ngamane; amanye ayisixuku. Amanye etshethe izinduku, amanye amajazi. Alibangise emizini yawo. Liphelile icala. Kuleyo micabango waze wakhishwa ngunina owayephendulana noZelusile.

“Bazolotsholwa ngani bona labo bantu basenzini? Ingani yilokhu uhobe ekhaya, awuphumi uyogana.”

Yaqhamuka isiphethe idokwe intombazana, ihleka, ikitazwa ngamazwi kanina. Yase ikhuza ngelincane.

“Wuu—aaa. Akazukumlobola ngezakhe. Awami amabhaka awayikulobola mfazi. Lo ozofika angiqhoshele emzini kababa!” Awubeke phambi komfowabo umdokwe. “Phunga kababa ususe esemehlweni.”

“Wena uyisithwalambiza nje kawuyikubaqhoshele lapho uyokwenda khona?” kukhuluma uMaDlamini. Akaze ayingena neze leyo nkulumo uQhathumunyu. Waphakamisa

ukhamba waphunga umdokwe. Wayibheka ngamehlo kuphela intombi yakwabo esiyosithela ngeguma iqonde ngaselawini lakhe. Waphunga, waphunga, waphunga. Uthe ukuba unina abone ukuthi insika isiqinile, wabesebuza ngeliphansi, elikhomba ukuthi manje usengena kwezinkulu.

“Nihambe kanjani, mutanami?”

“Licishukudliwa yinja. Kodwa labuye labadla bonke.”

“Baphi?”

“Abakithi nabakwaHlahla.”

“Ngiyezwa, mutanami.”

“Umuntu inkomo, inhlawulo.”

Athinte isikhwehlela uMaDlamini, kepha singabikho. Aqhubeke umfana, “Wonke owayekhona. Owashaya nongashayanga; owagwaza nongagwazanga; owabulala nongabulalanga. Kuthiwe nje ‘bonke ababekhona ababuye ngapha, ababengekho ngapha.’ Kwasekuthiwa, ‘nonke inhlawulo yinkomo emunye.’”

“Yebo-ke, baba.”

“Ubaba zimbili. ULuhosha zinhlanu. Umntanenkosi uBhembe zilishumi.”

“Bona babulawa kangaka ngani?”

“Ubaba nguyena owahola abase Lume?”

“Angithi uLuhosha wayegula, akayanga?”

“Kunjalo, kepha uyena owayiphaka. Uyena owathi ubaba akathathe isikhundla sakhe.”

“Umntanenkosi-ke? Angithi nguyena owalamula kanti abambikelanga?”

“Kunjalo, Mama. Yena limdlele ukuthi abantu bakhe babengeke bahlome engazi yena. Uma kuliqiniso ukuthi wayengazi, limlahlele ukuthi wedelelwa ngabantu bakhe amandla akhe enawo ukubenza bamhloniphe, bamazi. Abantu, abazithathela izikhali bayokulwa ngaphandle kokuba bazise umntanenkosi, bayingozi ezweni. Kuyakhomba ukuthi akabafundisanga.”

“Kanti abeLungu banjani?”

“Ngani?”

“Ngalesi sinqumo.”

“Akubona abeLungu. Icala beliphethwe ngamanxusa avela ebukhosini eMdimba. Belingangenele nasenkantolo njjengawo wonke amacala. Belithethwa ngaphansi komuthi nengawo onke amacala esintu.”

Kwaqhamuka uZelusile ephethe ithapho lezincwadi ezivela eposini. Azithele emathangeni omfowabo owayenebe phezu kocansi. Azithathe uQhathumunyu ngayinye ngayinye, azibukisise.

“Le iphuma ku . . . Le kwa . . . Le e . . .” Phakathi kwazo kukhona ipheshana elimpofana elibhalwe ngesiNgisi nangesiSwazi. Afundisise okubhalwe kulona.

“Phuthuma eposini. Kukhona incwadi yakho engakhishelwanga imali efanele. Kudingeka u-5c.”

“Waze wedelela lomuntu,” kusho uQhathumunyu elilahla phansi. “Akabazi abantu, ngifunge uPhundu.”

“Hawu, mfowethu, ulilahlelani kodwa?”

“Anginamali yokudlala mina, dadewethu. Lomuntu uyisichwensi.”

“Pho, uzokulenze njani?”

“Bekufanele ngilishise. Kepha ngizohlonipha umfundisi okunguyena ephethe iposi, ngoba uzojabha, apha theke kabi uma ngithulile ngalencwadi. Engizakukwenza yilokhu.” Wabuye walicosha. Wakhapha usiba lokuloba, wasebhala ngasemuva ukuthi,

“YALIWE.”

“Lithathe dadewethu, uliphindelisele eposini. Umfundisi uzokuyiphindelisele lapho ivela khona leyo ncwadi.”

“Ngenjani-ke leyo eyaliwayo, Lufu?” Kubuza uMaDlamini enganakile nje. Akazamphendula uQhathumunyu. Kepha wabesekhuluma yedwa.

“Ngisekhaya likababa. Ngihlezi phakathi komndeni wakwethu. Pho ngihlushwe yini kangaka engingaze ngiyokhipha imali nayo ngingenayo?”

“Yebo,” kuphawula uZelusile, “kepha kasiphelele.”

“Ubani ongekho?”

“Umkhula \* wami.”

“Wasekhakhakho kambe?”

“Angikabi nalo phela mina.”

\* Inkosikazi yomfowethu.

“Kanti yimuphi lowo mkhula wakho ngaphandle kwa-lowo wasekhweni lakho?”

“Ngisho walapha kwaLubhede.”

“Thatha lencwadi wena uyibuyisele eposini.”

Nempela wayithatha wayosithela ngaselawini kodwa akangenanga khona.

Kwezwakala uBhevula csebhongela ngasenhla kwesibaya. Ubonga abakubo asebalala. Ubonga impilo nokuphepha ezingozini. Ucela isandla sabo. Wagcina ngokuhuba izingoma zenipi.

UQhathumunyu wayesecambalele elawini, naye ebalisa, ekhumbula izinsuku ezingabuyeli emuva; izinsuku zasesi-koleni lapho naye wayephakathi kowabo, bephikisana ngobunsizwana obungapheleli ndawo.

Kwangena uZelusile emamatheka, esonge izandla ngasemuva.

“Qagela, mfo, ukuthi ngikuphatheleni.”

“Indaba.”

“Washaya phansi.”

“Lutho.”

“Washaya phansi.”

“Incwadi.”

“Washaya khona.” Wamnika.

“Usubuya eposini?”

“Ehenc.”

“Impela oyothatha wena uyobona.”

“Uyobonani?” wazibuzisa kanti uhlabeka umxhwele.

“Ukuthi kazidliwanga yimpi ezakwabo.”

“Ngiyobe ngiyokwenzani emizini yabantu. Yebo uma usubhubhile okababa.”

Wahleka uZelusile wandukumnika incwadi leyo. Wayithatha uQhathumunyu wayiphenduphendula. Ibhale uT.5c. Wabhaka esitembini efuna ukuthola ukuthi igxotshwe kuyiphi indawo. Kepha akazabona lutho. Akazawathola kahle amagama asesitenjini. Akazathola kahle noma ivela eRiphabhliki noma kwaNgwane.

“Usufike wangikhokhela leyo mali, dadewethu. Impela

ngiqinisile amabhaka akho ngiyowadla namathambo awo. Ngiyabonga Lokothwayo. Ukuba nodadewethu onjengawe kuhle ngokungangabazeki.”

“Ngicindezelwe ngumfundisi. Bengingeke ngiyikhiphe phela ngoba ubusuyalile wathi awunamali yokudlala.”

“Elami lelo kababa. Angiliphiki.”

“Ngakhoke bengizokwesaba uku hethiswa kutliwe ngidlala ngenali.”

“Bengingeke, dadewethu. Bengisho ngoba nginengiwe. Futhi uyazi nawe bengikhathele kabi. Nomqondo ungafuni ukuhlushwa. Awubonanga ukuthi usuke kanjani laphaya esibuyeni. Ngisale ngazisola kabi. Nokho isiphelile, wakwethu; impi yomndeneni kayingenwa.”

“Umfundisi usizondile isenzo sokubuyisela incwadi emuva ingafundwanga.”

“Utheni?”

“Uthe ngize ngikutshela ukuthi usakhasela eziko.”

“Kulungile. Sengiyabonga Lokothwayo. Salusuyongi-gayela umcaba, izinkobe useziphekile umama.”

Aphume uZelusile, uthe uma esithela ngeguma wambiza umfowabo.

“Zelusel!”

“Mfowethu!”

“Ngifuna umcaba ocolisiwe, phela. Ungagxobi sengathi usilela amahashi.”

“Kazi umkakho uyomtetemela kangakanani. Sesiyo-yicela ivuthiwe.” Wahamba wayongena exhibeni. Akabesaphendula noQhathumunyu, kwayima elula isandla ethatha incwadi phezu kwetafulana. Wayivula. A, isandla sejwayeleke kancane. Ikheli liyaziwa kakhulu. Agijimise amehlo egameni. A, nalo uyalazi. Ezwe inhliziyo yakhe isishaya ngamandla sengathi ungenwa yisifo soqhuqho. Afunde masinyane,

“Hamba uyobonana nodadewethu uBabandlile ofundisa esikoleni saseZulwini.”

Ayiphinde futhi isho lokho. Abuye ayifunde imtshele lokho. Ayibeke phansi. Acabange. “UBabandlile. EZulwini. Uyafundisa.” EZulwini uyazi. Kepha izikole

ezilapho ziningana. Uyomthola kanjani pho yena lowo Babandlile ndini? Athulise, adle ingqondo. Wavuka wathi gubhu. Wathatha ibhayisikili wabizwa phezulu walishova.

Uthe nxashana eyongena emabaleni akwamfundisi wablangana nentombazanyana yomfundisi. Wabuza ukuthi umhambeli wezikole ukhona na. Yaphendula yathi ukhona. Okwamanje usacambalele laphaya endlini lapho engeniswe khona.

“Sakubona Dlamini.”

“A, nguwe mzala? Sakubona.”

“Ninjani-ke, mzala?”

“Siyaphila. Ninjani nina?”

“Siphila sisonke, mzala.”

“Ngijabula ukukubona. Ngizwa kuthiwa benivakashele eMbabane. Nibuye nini?”

“Ngifika namhlanje, mzala.” Wabona uQhathumunyu ukuthi uDlamini uzomngenisisa endabeni ebuzwa yibo bonke abaseLume. Wasemquma ulimi. Wayibeka inkanankana ayeze ngayo. Wavula amabhuku akhe uDlamini wabheka izikole eziseZulwini namagama abafundisi bazo. Latholakala nelikaBabandlile Kunene. Wathatha impenseli uQhathumunyu wabhala,

B.K., P.O. Box 1, EZULWINI.”

Wavalelisa waphindela ekhaya. Akuphelanga malanga amaningi yabuya impendulo esivela kuNksz. Kunene.

“Kulungile. Ungafika sizobonana.”

\* \* \*

UBabandlile wayezalwa ngunina omkhulu kaPhikwase.

“NginguLubhede waseLume.”

“NginguKunene waseNkanini.”

“Ngiyathokoza ukukubona Kunene.”

“Ngingenjabulo yokukubona Lubhede.” Baxhawulana. Yameba ngamehlo intokazi yamamatheka. “Uze watholaphi ukuthi sekukhona nawoBabandlile ezweni?”

“Emoyeni. Uza nazo phela umoya.”

“Usunomsakazo?”

“Owemvelo.”

“Lo nguLubhede waseLume, isihlobo sami. Lo, Mnu. Lubhede, nguNksz. Nciphile Nxele esisebenza naye.”

“Ngijabula ukukwazi Nkosazana Nxele.”

“Kuthokoza mina ukukwazi Mnu. Lubhede.” Baxhawulana. “Kazi sigeze kwesinjani namuhla size sihanjelwe abaseLume?”

“Lapho kukhona isidumbu namanje ayoba khona,” kuphawula uBabandlile.

“Ha!” Kubabaza uNciphile. “Ngabe sifile webantu!”

“Bengivakashele umngani wami ongumlimi laphaya eLangeni. Ngase ngiyaphambukela.”

“Uyakukhulisa wena Nciphile,” kuphawula uBabandlile, “uqamba amanga.”

“Umuntu omdala ongangami uqamba amanga?”

“Uqamba amanga, suka!” Akabasathi vu uQhathumunyu. “Ungabe umdala-ke nawe. Ingane le esakhasele eziko. Woza siye endlini.”

Ziyifake phakathi insizwa.

Absenzelwa itiye ephunga. Zamthatha zambonisa isikole sazo esihle.

“Singeze sakubonisa ingadi yethu ngoba ungumlimi. Uzosiheleka ngoba ingadi yethu kayiqaqile,” kukhuluma uBabandlile.

“Kanti-ke iyona engifisa kakhulu ukuyibona ngoba iyona engiyaziyo.”

Zamthatha zayomkhombisa nayo. Amazambane avuthiwe. Otamatisi sebebomvu. Amaklabishi ayasonga ngamandla. Amakhelothi adabula umhlaba. Izintanga zihlanza ngamandla. Yathokoza inhliziyi yomlimi.

Baphindela endlini. Kwalungiswa elihle itafula. Badla. Behlisa ngonamanede. Emuva kwalokho wasevalelisa uQhathumunyu.

“Kulungile Lubhede,” kuthatha uBabandlile, “abake habonana bayophinda babonane futhi.”

Bamkhapha oNkosazana Kunene noNxele. Bamthatha isigamana semayela.

“Umuntu akawezwa umfula,” kukhuluma uNksz Nxele.  
“Hleze angabasabuya.”

“Ngiyakwazi lokho,” kuphendula uQhathumunyu. “Kushiwo maqondana nomuntu wase . . .”

“Hamba kahle,” kusho uBabandlile emnika isandla exhawula. NoNciphile enze njalo. Aphenduke amfulathela aphindele emuva. Uthe lapho esengaphesheya komfudlana, esebambe ummangwana wezwa izwi.

“WeLufulwakhe!”

Waphenduka, wabona intombazana iza kuye kancane.

“Ake uzongibonisa nanku umhlola.” Yema.

“UBabandlile lo ngizogcina ngixabene naye.” ULufu wakhuluma yedwana. Nokho waphindela emuva.

“Thatha nali iphasela lami uyongiposela lona.” Wafulathela uBabandlile, wathatha ngejubane.

Iphasela-ndini lisongwe ngephepha elinsundu ngaphandle kwabhalwa ukuthi,

“Leli phepha uyoliqhaqha usuphakathi eposini.”

Wangena eposini, kepha wasekhohlwa ukuliqhaqha. Walinika intombazana esebenza eposini. Yalithatha intombazana, yalibuka yayisibuza ukuthi alikakhelwa ngani? Kwayima ekhumbula. Wasethi ayiqhaqhe iphepha elingaphandle. Yenza njalo yayisithi, 12c.

Wakhapha imali wayinika. Yayisimnika ipheshana elikhomba ukuthi lelo phasela liyothwalwa ngokunakekela. Wathatha izinyawo waqonda emnyango. Esengaphandle waphonsa amehlo ephepheni wabona ukuthi libhalwe ukuthi,

“Mnu. Q. L. Lubhede, P.O. Lume.”

Kwathi akazisakaze odongeni. Waqunga isibindi waphindela phakathi,

“Nkosazana, leli phasela elami. Liza kimi.”

Ayaphendula intombazana yasinze yalanda umphathi-posi.

“Impahla inganikezwa ezandleni zaseposini ayiseyona eyakho ize iqede indlela yayo.”

“Angizwa ngoba . . .”

“Sengikutshelile. Kuningi ongakwazi. Hamba.”

Waphumisa okwenkukhu inethiwe.

Kwaphela izinsuku ezine lafika ezandleni zakhe futhi. Eposini lakubo lalandwa uZelusile. Walisombulula. Phakathi Iduku likanokusho eliluhlaza okwesibhakabhaka, elinemibala emhlophe. Uqhotho lwezinsizwa lwasentanyeni oluluhlaza okwesibhakabhaka olunemibala emhlophe. Imvilophi eluhlaza okwesibhakabhaka. Wayiqhaqha ngezandla eziqhaqhazelayo, esephefumulela phezulu. Phakathi igama lodwa:

“PHIKWASE GERTRUIDA MSITHINI.”

Emvilophini kukhona nocu lobuhlalu obuluhlaza okwesibhakabhaka nobumhlophe. Wabiza uZelusile, wamnika bona.

“Funda nansi inkinga. Inkanankanal”

“Iphumaphi?”

“Kulo.”

“Igama?”

“Likhona.”

“Hal Zaze zabamnandi izindaba zakho mfowethu. Ngizokufundela nempela. Obuluhlaza: UTHANDO. Obumhlophe: ENHLE.”

## XI

“Uyakhuleka uLubhede, kinina bakwaMsithini. Ukhulekela isihlobo asibonile, esimbonile,” kumemeza uGwalagwala.

UGwalagwala induna yepulazi likaBotha. Umuzi wakhe useSwazini. Akaqali ukunyathela emagcekeni akwaMsithini. Ufika njalo angaxwayi. Kepha namuhla uxwayile, ulunyelwa umzimba.

Wafika ekuphumeni kwelanga. Kepha wahlala lapho izinkomo zaze zabuya inhlazane. Zasengwa zabuye zahnjiswa zaya emadlweni, eyilokhu ephungana nezimpukane nezibawu. Kwathi ngelikade uTshotsho wathuma ingane.

“Biza lomfokazi osezipukane emzini wami, kesizwe ukuthi mhlola muni eza ngawo.”

UTshotsho noyise omncane kanye noMaMasilela bahlezi endlini. UGwalagwala abaze bambingelela njengasemihleni. UTshotsho wathi,



“Khuluma Gwalagwala. Mhlolo muni owuletha lapha emzini wami. Ufinqe amazwi akho. Anginasikhathi sokulalela imilando.”

“Msithini, Muvulane oluhlaza. Ngicela isihlobo esihle kinina bakwaManyovu. Siboniwe sathandwa kwaMsithini thina bakwaLubhede Lokothwayo.”

“Ngabe mihlola mini-ke le engiyizwayo! Phinda futhi ngizwe.”

“Sithandiwe kwaMsithini, Baba, thina bakwaLubhede.”  
Azithukuthelise uTshotsho, aze anqekuzise ikhanda samuntu osethukuthele.

“Indoda enkulu engangoGwalagwala isukele ukuzongiphoxa emzini wami ngizibuthile!” Asukume ahambahambe ibangana efulathele uGwalagwala. “Mina ngahanjwa izinhlamvu zamaNgisi. Uma indoda ingiklinela ngizwa sekwehla amathonsi egazi ehlela enhliziyweni athi co co.”

“Impela, mntanomfowethu, indoda yomuzi wayo izosiwela nje.”

Abheke phansi uMaMasilela. Acoshe ushana adwebe indilinga emhlabeni. Athi ubheka uTshotsho afice ukuthi uyambuka. Abeseyihlikihla indilinga.

“WeDeliwel” kubiza uTshotsho ngokukhahlula.

“Baba!”

“Biza udadewenu. Asheshel!”

Angene ekhasa ngamadolo uPhikwase. Amehlo awabhekise phansi. Ahlale eduze kukanina. Afihle amehlo ngonina. Athi ukweba umkhongi ngamehlo. Wajuluka wamanzi ebunzini, zaze zageleza izithukuthuku.

“Phikwase!”

“Baba!” ngelinci, eliphansi eliveczelayo.

“Uyamazi lomuntu?”

Impendulo ingabikho. Athi uzama ukuphendula lingaphumeleli izwi. Abambe umphetho wengubo kanina adlale ngawo. Abuye abuze esekhahlula uyise.

“Ngibuza kuwe, Phikwase, ngithi uya . . .”

“Yebo.” Washo ngelincane kabi. Nokho bamuzwa.

“Uthi klebo!” Unina esho ngelinengiwe. “Uthi angi-

kuthele ngempama. Awukaqedi neminyaka emine uqede ukufunda, usuwazana nabantu.”

“Sengizwile,” kukhuluma uyise, “phuma.” Kwayima ebhekisa kumkhongi,

“Ngiyezwa Sithebe. Kepha namuhla anginazwi.”

“Msithini! Muvulanel!”

“Hamba kahle.”

“Salani kahle.” Waphuma wahamba uGwalagwala.

Kwanela kwadlula isonto lalinye wabuya esezidlisa satshanyana emagcekeni akwaMsithini uGwalagwala Sithebe. Akubanga kanye, kabili, kepha kwaba kaningi. Kwathi ngelikade, sekubuhlungu izinyawo, amphendula aMsithini. Invulamlomo. Isikhwehlcla sikaTshotsho. Itshali likanina. Iduku likanina. Isicelo (ngoba phela wasale eseshaya izinyoni ezimbili ngatshe linye). Wabonga umkhongi.

Akuphelanga masonto amaningi wabavula umlomo; wahloniphisa umkhwekazi. Watshelwa ukhalo lomntwana.

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UMnumzane Botela kwakuliBhunu elalinepulazi eduze naseLume. Wayejwayelene naye uBhevula. Umuzi kaBotela wawusesifundeni saseLangwane eNtilasifali. UBhevula nguye owasiza uyise kaBotela ngezinkabi zakhe ekuthengeni kwakhe ipulazi.

UBhevula wathatha umngani wakhe balibhekisa enkangala.

“Hamba ungibike, mfana.”

“Umnumzane usaphumula.”

“Hamba ungibike.”

“Usanda kufika. Ngiyesaba.”

“Ngithi hamba ungibike kumnumzane. Uthi nangu uBhevula ufuna wena.” Akabasaphendula umfana. Wasimze wafaka izandlana esikhwameni sebhulukwe. Wakwiziza ngesiBhunu.

UBhevula wayephethe uswazi olude lokushaya izinja. Umfana akazanga ukuthi uBhevula uluhoshe nini uswazi. Waluzwa seludabula inyama yakhe. Wakhala waqandula. Wagxuma waya phezulu, waye wawa. Uthe evuka lapho

yayisiphambene imivimbo. Wathi galo yephuka. Waphuma ngesidumo umkaBotela. Wabona umfana wakhe eseyongena ehlathini ngelikhulu ijubane samuntu ehlathwe iqulo lezinyosi. Umfazi wabiza indoda yakhe ethi ayize nesibhamu, naba abantu bezohlasela, sebegwaze nomfana wakhe. Kepha uBotela waziphumela kahle nje. Kawumethusanga neze umbiko womkakhe.

“Ho ho ho—sakubona Bhevula.”

“Yebo, mnumzane. Sengishaye umfana wakho. Uchwensa kabi. Ngibathe akayekongibika kuwena, ungibiza ngesiphukuphuku.”

“Abafana basenkangala bayedelela, Bhevula. Wena uyindoda yamadoda.”

“Uthini lomuntu, Dawid?” Kubuza umkaBotela ebuza kuBotela. “Musa ukuma eduze kwakhe uphethe umkhonto.”

“Ubofundisa abafana bakho inhlonipho,” kuphendula umLungu kumkakhe.

“Tshela labangani bakho bahambe. Bangafiki bashaye abafana bami lapha.”

“Kulungile,” kuphendula indoda yakhe ngesilungu. Wanxapha umfazi wasithela.

“Abafazi bayasihlupha. Uphumaphi lapha enkangala Bhevula?”

“Ngiphuma kwaNgwane, mnumzane.”

“Lunjani uhlaza kwaNgwane na?”

“Luluhlaza mnumzane.”

“Ngiyajabula ukukubona lapha, Bhevula.”

“Nami ngiyabonga mnumzane. Ngize ngendaba kuwe.”

“Ngabe ungenza iNkosi,” washo emomotheka umntanomlungu.

“Uma ngize kuwe uyiyoyi.”

“Ukhala ngani-ke?”

“Ngamathole, mnumzane.”

“Ufuna ukulobola na?”

“Yebo, mnumzane.”

“Indlu yokugugela?”

“Umalokazana.”

“Ukuphi lomalokazana?”

“ESikhwahlande.”

“Swartland?”

“Yebo.”

“Wo, izintombi zasenkangala ziyachwensa, Bhevula. Azikwazi nokulima. Azikwazi nokugaya. Uyozikhalela izinkomo zakho Bhevula.”

“Ngiyozifundisela, mnumzane.”

“Yena uyothatha indoda yakhe ayohlala nayo eSwartland. Wena usale ugolela izimpukane emlonyeni.” Ahleke kakhulu.

“Iziga zokuzala phela lezo mntanomlungu. Nawe uzele.”

“Nokho induku enhle igawulwa ezizweni. Ufuna amathole amangaki?”

“Ishumi nesihlanu. Wena usuyothatha ezami eSwazini uyozibeka enhlonhlweni ekhona kwaNgwane.”

“Uthatha umalokazana odulile. Balobolisa okwamakhosi abantu basenkangala.”

“Iqiniso.”

“Lomalokazana uzothatha sonke isibaya sakho.”

“Zizoba zenza umsebenzi wazo phela.”

“Kulungile Bhevula. Uzozithola izinkomo ozifunayo.”

“Ngiyabonga kakhulu, mngani wami.”

“Angikhohliwe ukuthi nguwe owasiza ubaba kokuningi.”

“Ukusiza umuntu ukuzilondolozela usizo oyoludinga kusasa.”

“Uzozidinga nini lezinkomo?”

“Enyangeni ezayo, mnumzane.”

“Kulungile. Hambani laphaya endlini yomngani wenu enimshayile. Sizokuninika ukudlana ngoba ngiyabona nensika isiwile.” Wabakhomba indlu yabafana ethe qekele.

“Mfana!”

“Mnumzanel!” kusabela umfana ehlathini lapho engene khona.

“Phangisa!”

Waqhamuka ngejubane umfana.

“Wena awuwazi amaSwazi. Awafani nabantu base-  
nkangala. Ngifuna abafana abahlonipha abantu abadala.  
Hamba ubanike uphuthu nenyama. Ubabilisele nekhofi.”

Wabathatha umfana kodwa cyilokhu ebaxwayile, ebheke  
njalo oswazini. Uthe lapho uBhevula elubamba ngengalo  
yokuphonsa wagwema umfana. Wakubona lokho uLu-  
bhede waselubuyisa kweyobunxele. Badla, bavalelisa  
kuBotela nakumkakhe. Bahamba. Wababukisisa umka-  
Botela naye exwayile, wanikina ikhanda.

\* \* \*

Unyezi uthe kla. Inyanga igcwele swi. Inhlamba nechilo  
ukuyolobola umntanomuntu ebumnyameni benyanga.

Abantu baningi namuhla emzini kaTshotsho kaTshwa-  
labenyoni. Bayaphithizela. Bathulisa izingane lapho zizi-  
bangela umsindo. Zithulathule, zibuye zisukeleke. A-  
khuza amagovu. Izingane zabona umuntu egijimela ngase-  
sibayeni. Zaduma zabalekela ngasesibuyeni konina. Bazi-  
buza ukuthi zibalekelani.

“Uyakhuleka uLubhede, wakwaLokothowayo, Bhambo-  
lunye,” kumemeza izwi eceleni kwesibaya. “Ukhuleka  
kinina bakwaMsithini, bakwaMuvulane oluhlaza.” Wathu-  
la. Lathula ikhaya. Zathula izinja. Kwezwakala ezabakhe-  
lwana ngaphesheya komfula. Laqhubeka izwi lendoda:

“Ukhulekela isihlobo esihle. Asibonile wasicosha phansi  
njengetshwele licosha ibele.” Wathula futhi walalela.  
Waqhubeka:

“Ukhuleka ngezinhlamvukazana ezinc. Ukhuleka nge-  
ntusikazi. Ukhuleka ngewasakazi. Ukhuleka ngezithole  
ezinc ezibomvu. Ukhuleka ngenzibulazana emasavutshiwe,  
enenkonyane enkone. Ukhuleka ngamaguqa amabili,  
elenduna elimpunga nelensikazi elinsundu. Ukhuleka nge-  
waba eligodlile. Ngibika inzibulazana eyimpevu kamama.  
Ngibika isipheko sawomama inhlamvu. Ngibika inkabi  
empunga yenjomane egqize ngamanqina, enebala elimhlo-  
phe ebunzini, kababa. Ngiyema lapho.”

Kwezwakala isalukazi sesithi,

“! il ilil khula ntombi kaMsithini.”

Omunye wasikhuza. Kepha sathetha naye, sithi asi-  
zange simdlele lutho.

Wasondela esibayeni umfokazi eqaphela ukuthi izifa-  
mona nezesheli zingamlimazi.

UPhikwase wazibala ngekhandla izinkomo ezimenyezwa-  
yo. Kwathi kanti ubethukile wezwa efikelwa isibindi no-  
kuziqhenya. Abazali bakhe bayothokoza. Ulotsholwe  
ngasuku lunye waphela nya. Impela bayesutha abasekha-  
khakhe.

Zasondela. Zithe ukuba zibeseduze nomuzi zazibika.  
Zabhonsa. Yezwakala nenjomane nayo seyizibika.

Bathe bengeniswa endlini yabo abayeni, wayephuma  
uGozolo eyongena exhibeni elinotshwala. Waphuma no-  
khamba lugcwele. Walungenisa endlini kwabakubo. Wa-  
sukuma wagida. Waphuma esethi uyobamba imbuzi.  
Kepha wayifisa isiboshiwe egumeni. Wabiza abafana bakhe  
bayihlaba, bayihlinza, bayipheka. Yadliwa yaphela ngabo  
lobo busuku.

Ekuseni wasondela umndeni wakwaMsithini ukuzobinge-  
lela abayeni nokuzokhuluma ubulanda. Kwangeniswa  
omkhulu umphanda wamiswa eziko. Kwasekungeniswa  
utshwala ngezinkamba bathelwa emphandeni. Wangena  
umndeni wakwaMsithini. Lokhu ungaphezu kweshumi,  
kwaqala munye wawo:

“Sanibona, bayeni.”

“Yebo,” kuvuma abayeni kanye kanye.

“Sanibona bayeni.”

“Yebo.”

“Nisaphila ekhaya?” Kubuza umfowabo kaTshotsho o-  
mncane.

“Yebo sisaphila,” uphendula kuGozolo.

“Ake usitshele Gozolo ukuthi ugqigqizela emaxhibeni  
ami nje uza nani?” kukhuluma uyise omncane kaTshotsho.

Akazaphendula uGozolo. Kwaphendula umkhongi.

“Sengikhona, Mlingani. Ngakutshela phela ngathi  
ngiyeza. Phumani nginikhombise engiza nakho.”

Amakhosikazi aphuma ahlala ngaphansi kweguma. A-  
madoda asondela eduze nesibaya. Wazisondeza uGozolo.

Zinjani! Amadwala. Ungathi ziyagezwa. Wazikhomba ngayinye ngayinye uGwalagwala. Eyesipheko ikhuluphele iyatanasa. Kwabuyelwa endlini. Wasukuma uGozolo wathunga utshwala.

“Ngiyabonga, Mlingani wami,” kukhuluma uyise omncane kaTshotsho, ebhekisa kuGwalagwala. “Namuhla awuseyena umkhongi usungumlingani wami. Ngibonga imifino. Ungilobolele. Ukhalo lomntwana uluhlanganisile. Sengiyakuphekela. Ngikuphekela impevukazi eyisiqengqo.”

“Msithini! Muvulane.”! Kubonga abayeni.

Wanikwa umkhonto uGozolo. Waphuma nawo waqonda esibayeni.

“Kewuyone nje inkomo kadade,” kusho izintombi zaseSwartland, “uzosibona kahle wena. Akusikho eSwazini lapha, kusenkangala.”

Eyesipheko yaze yawa ngelesithathu inxeba. Izintombi zamhlawulisa uGoc uGozolo. Futhi ayibhodlanga. Wanela wayithi gxa ngomkhonto yavuka uhlanya inkomo. Yathi kayibaqede abantu. Yamthatha ngebunzi uGozolo yamhlala emahlaleni kodwa ayaze yamlimaza. Yathi iyamqeda wagwema, wayigwaza wayijuqa.

Kulesi sikhathi uPhikwase wayemi endlini ebambe insika enzela khona ugege\* lwakhe lungenakushesha lufe. Lutho ukuba luwe zasezishaya ingoma izintombi.

Zahlinzwa izinkomo. Ugege lwalunganonile kwakuyinhlama. Lwanela lwaqedwa ukuhlinzwa, zaludumela izintombi zasenkangala zadlala ngalo. Inyama yalo isesikhumbeni salo. Zadonsisana ngalo zaze zayongena endlini lapho luyobekwa khona. UGozolo eziphethe ngoswazi, eziklwibila.

Ekuseni ngakusasa uyisemkhulu omncane kaQhathumunyu wacela ukubona umakoti wakwakhe. Wangeniswa uPhikwase eseqoke esenomfonomfo; ephelkezelwa izintombi zakubo. Awu, akuntombi isibomvubomvu; nguntombi-zonke-ziphelele.

Zaphekwa izinkomo. Kwaphuzwa kwajatshulwa. Kodwa abadala asibajabulisanga isenzo sokufa kogege. Kudebduze nomuzi kuhlezi amakhehla amabili, uKhonya

\* Inkomo eza nabakhongi lapha bezolobola. Ifike ihlatshwe.

uyisemkhulu omncane kaQhathumunyu noKlaya uyisemkhulu omncane kaPhikwase.

“Kunjalo, Mlingani,” kuphendula uKhonya “vela ngabaphansi. Bayakhuluma.”

“Kazi ngabe basolani?” kubuza uKlaya.

“Angazi.”

“Kukhona nokho abakusolayo.”

“Kukhona.”

“Kudingeka kuyiwe ezinhlayeni.”

“Nami ngonele ngifike ekhaya ngithathe izinduku ngizozizwela.”

Kuqhamuke umntwana azobabiza. Basukuma bamlandela.

Abayeni badla kuqala. Imithwalo yabo isiboshiwe. Bathi bangaqeda baphuma, bayohlala entabeni, ngoba bangenakudukuza ubusuku. Babuya kusihlwa sebenyonyoba. Ukusa kwaziwa yibo, baphuma bangena eya kubo.

Engakahambi uGwalagwala wakhuluma kuKlaya wathi, “Mlingani, sengicela umfazi wami asale eseyongibasela umlilo.”

“Ngiyezwa, Mlingani,” kuphendula uKlaya, “kulungile. Ungishaye ekhanda vele. Nokho phela ungabongifuthezele. Ubonginika ithutshana. Futhi kuseyingane lokhu.”

“Usekhona umama. Uyozifundisela. Uyokuchatha nxa kuphethwe umkhuhlane.”

## XII

“Ngiyamemezela, isimemezelo somshado phakathi kukaQhathumunyu Lufulwakhe Lubhede, insizwa yalapha ekhaya; noPhikwase Gertruida Msithini, intombi yaseSwartland, eGunwane, eNtilasifali. Uma ekhona owazi utho olungavimbela laba bantu ukuba bangahlanganiswa ngokomthetho makakhulume sizwe. Uma engakhulumi athule njalo. Lesi isimemezelo sokugcina.” Kumemezela uMfundisi Buthelezi, waseLume. Ngalo lolo suku uyamemezela uMfundisi Motaung wase Swartland.

“Ngiyamemezela, isimemezelo somshado phakathi kukaQhathumunyu Lufulwakhe Lubhede, insizwa yaseLume, eMbabane, kwaNgwane; noPhikwase Gertruida Msithini,

intombi yalapha ekhaya. Uma ekhona owazi utho olungavimbela laba bantu ukuba bangahlanganiswa ngokomthetho makakhulume sizwe. Uma engakhulumi manje, athule njalo. Lesi isimemezelo sokugcina.”

“Nginezwi,” kukhuluma izwi ebandleni.

“Sukuma sikubone,” kusho uMfundisi Motaung.

Amehlo ebandla lonke athi fu endaweni lapho kuhlala khona isilisa, lapho kuzwakele khona izwi. Lumuthi nke uvalo uPhikwase. Avale amehlo. Abuye awavule. Naye abheke ngasezwini. Ahlangane nensizwa eluhlaza isimi. Igqoke insudi emuyama, enebhantshi elidekazi elithi alifike emadolweni. Linamahlombe amade, ligewele izikhwanyana yonke indawo, ngaphambili nangasemuva. Insizwa inamehlo abomvu sengathi ibhema insangu, inde, yondile. Abeseyikhumbula uPhikwase ukuthi ingenye yalezo zase-Swartland azijabhisile. Wathukuthela wafa, wazizwa efikelwa ngamancla esilisa. Wezwa inhliziyi yakhe ithi akayitshela eyikho. Wabuye wazibamba.

“Hlala phansi,” kusho uMfundisi Motaung, “usuyosinoxela emuva kwenkonzo.”

Yaqhubeka inkonzo abantu sebeyiqhuba ngamadolo. Yaphethwa ibandla lacelwa ukuba kelihlale phansi, kuphume abantwana kuphela.

“Sukuma, nsizwa, usitshela okhala ngakho,” kukhuluma ugosa. “Unobhala weSigungu sesonto uzobhala wonke amaminithi alolu daba.”

“Kanti sekusenkantolo yini lapha esontweni?” kubuza insizwa.

“Musa ukungibuza lowo mbuzo. Angiyona intanga yakho. Ubani igama lakho?” Kubuza ugosa.

“USihlalanempi Sibeko.”

“Uhlalaphi?”

“Khona lapha eSwartland.”

“Usushadile?”

“Yebo.”

“O, ngiyabona. Sitshela-ke ukuthi uthini.”

“Ngithi mina Sihlalanempi angivumi ukuba lentombazana iyokwenda kulomfokazi.”

“Isizathu?”

“Nami izinkomo nginazo. Nakuba eseyingoduso, izinkomo ziyakhiphana.”

“Wakwethembisa yini lomntwana?”

“Qha.”

“Niyezwana na?”

“Uyangiphika.”

“Kodwa wake wakuvuma?”

“Akazange.”

Laphubuka lahleka ibandla.

“Musani ukuhleka bandla Singeniswe endabeni enobuciko esingabaziyo.” Kukhuluma ugosa. “Seningofakazi. Thulani nilalele nje.”

“Bangihleka ngoba ngivezeni?” kubuza uSihlalanempi.

“Ubulima,” kusho enye insizwa.

“Ungasho njalo, nsizwa, kimi. Zinganqanuka phakathi khona manje.”

“Sengishilo.”

“Thula wena!” kukhuza ugosa. “Ngiyabuza futhi Sihlalanempi. Uthi lentombazana kayigane wena?”

“Yebo, ngisho njalo.”

“Ufuna owesingaki umfazi?”

“Owesibili.”

“Kukhona yini okunye ongasitshela khona?”

“Akukho.”

“Hlala phansi, sengizwile. Phikwase!”

“Baba!” Athi uyasukuma ugosa athi makahlale phansi, akhulume ehlezi.

“Angithi uyamuzwa lomuntu wakwaSibeko?”

“Yebo.”

“Uthini-ke wena?”

“Anginalo nelilodwa izwi kulomuntu. Umsizi lo. Into emnyama sengathi ikhuza izulu. Ngizokuyenzani.”

“Ubani lowo?” kubuza uSihlalanempi efuthelwa ulaka, eshobashoba esitulweni.

“Ngisho kuwe siphoxo-ndini,” kusho intombazana.

Wasukuma uSihlalanempi wabheka kuPhikwase. “Ngi-kuthela ngempama khona . . .”

Akaligwinyanga. Wasukuma uTshotsho waqonda kuye, engathi vu. Wabona ugosa ukuthi manje sezimbi, wavimba uTshotsho ngesandla.

“Usufuna ukona icala Msithini. Phindela endaweni yakho.”

Nempela waphindela nokho wasethi,  
“Sesiyohlanguana nawe ebandleni lenduna mfana.”

Umfundisi wasephetha ngokuthi indaba ebekwe uSihlalanempi ayiphethe lutho. Asikho isizathu esingavimbela umshado.

\* \* \*

Phambi kukaNdabazabantu eGunwane, kuhlezi uQhathumunyu nengoduso yakhe. Yona ihlezi kwesobunxele. Emuva kwakhe kuhlezi impelesi yakhe. Eyengoduso ihlezi ngasemuva kwayo. Uyabachazela ngomshado uNdabazabantu. Uyabayala, uyabafundisa.

“Wena ungowaseMbabane,” kukhuluma iNkosi, “eSwazini. Uhambe lonke leli banga uzocela ukushadiswa nalentombazana yalapha eGunwane. Kubangwa yini lokho?”

“Ngiyithandile, Nkosi.”

“Azikho yini izintombi kwelakini na?” Sambuza isiKoshi singahleki, simgqolozela ezinhlamvini zamehlo.  
“Ziningi Nkosi.”

“Awucelanga ngani enye yazo ukuba ushade nayo?”

“Angiyibonanga engingase ngiyithande ukwedlula le.”

“Ungitshela ukuthi ufuna ukushadiswa nayo ngoba uyithanda ukwedlula ezinye?”

“Nkosi.”

“Wena-ke, Phikwase, okukwenze washiya izinsizwa zakini wayozihlanganisa nempumakude yini?”

“Ngiyamthanda.”

“Ungitshela ukuthi azikho ezinye izinsizwa ozithandayo?”

“Azikho.”

“Thana Nkosi!” Kukhahlula iphoyisa lomuntu elimi eduze.”

“Shi-i-i,” kukhuza iNkosi, “musa ukuthikameza isi-

fazana. Ntombazana usho ukuthi nguye lo zwi omthandayo?”

“Nguye kuphela.”

“Thana Nkosi! Awuzwa yini?” Kusho iphoyisa futhi.

“Thula!” Sekusho uNdabazabantu ngelokunengwa. “Sekuyisikhathi esingakanani nihandana?”

“Iminyaka emibili.”

Wasebayala. Wabadonsa ngendlebe maqondana nobuqotho bomshado. Wathi kuyamthokozisa ukuzwa ukuthi sebenesikhathi esingaka bethandana.

“Seniqinisile kulenkantolo naphambi kwalaba bantu abangofakazi, nathi niyathandana. Aniveli ndawonye. Nihlanganiswe uthando. Lenkantolo isivumile ukunishadisa. Hambani-ke nihlalisane ngalo lolo luthando eningitshele ngalo.”

Usuku olulandelayo lwaba olokwemuliswa kukaPhikwase Gertruida nguyise. Usuku lokuboshwa kwefindo lomshado endlini yesonto. UTshotsho wawisa umhlophe. Ejabule ngoba intombi yakhe iphume kuye imhlophe, imsulwa; imshiya imgcwalisele isibaya.

Ngalolo suku ikhehla elinguyisemkhulu wakhe omncane lamngenisa kwagogo wakhe, uPhikwase, lamnika amakhambi waphalaza, wageza umzimba ngawo. Waphuma lapho wayogqoka. Akasemuhle umntakaMsithini uselilanga. Iveyili lamvumela ngoba emsulwa, ezigcinele lolo suku. Engabuphanganga ubude.

Waphuma nezimpelesi zakhe ezine, nazo zigqoke ziconsa. Amakalishi amane ayemi egcekeni elinde ukumthatha amuse endlini yesonto. Abakwabomyeni bahamba ngeloli abafike ngayo. Amahashi adonsa amakalishi kungawekhethele, izisadula zezinkabi. Elokuqala lalidonswa izimpunga. Elesibili kungelikamakoti namantombazanyana amabili abambe iveyili, lidonswa ezimhlophe. Elesithathu elezimpelesi lidonswa ezibomvu. Kugcine elikaTshotsho nowakwakhe elidonswa ezinsundu. Amahashi ahlotshiswe ayaconsa nawo. Futhi awejwayele lomsebenzi.

Phakathi endlini yesonto sebhahlisiwe abakwabomyeni.

Phakathi kwabo kukhona uyisemkhulu omncane kamyeni. Ikhehla elinongiyane. Ilona elimele indlu kaBhevuva. Livunule liphelele ngemvunulo eliyivunula uma liyogida umkhosi weNcwala.

Endlini kukhona noNdabazabantu waseGunwane, kanye nowakwakhe.

Wangena umakoti. Wathatha indawo yakhe esenhla. Igosa lathi umyeni akathathe indawo yakhe engakwesokudla kukamakoti.

Inkonzo iphethwe ngumfundisi womSuthu, uKeaboca Motaung. Igagu lomfundisi. Wabiza iculo ngesiZulu, nangesiSuthu nangesiNgisi nangesiBhunu. AbakwaNgwane babengayejwayele lendlela. Kwaba iculo elithi,

Yankulu injabulo  
Komyeni nomakoti,  
Abahanjelw'u Jesu  
Emzini waseKanal"

Zalishaya izinsizwa nezintombi. Zadabuka kumakoti. Zaye zathinta ezomyeni. Indoda kayikhali. Nokho zehla kuQhathumunyu ezwa abafowabo nodadewabo bemshayela elikhulu ihlombe ngamaphimbo abo. Laphela.

Wasondela kubona uMfundisi Keaboca Motaung. Wababuza imibuzo ebuzwayo. Bamphendula. Wabahlanganisa. Wathatha indandatho kumyeni wayifaka emunweni kamakoti. Waphakamisa wabhekisa ebandleni wathi:

"UQhathumunyu noPhikwase sebeyindoda nomfazi . . ."

Akaligwinyanga umfundisi, laqhuma ikhehla lakwaLubhede labanga emsamo endlini yesonto, laphinda lagiya labanga emnyango. Bethuka bashayana ngamakhanda abantu sebethi seliyabashaya. Athi azama ukulikhuza amagosa:

"Kahle, kahle Ndlavela, kusesontweni phela akugiywa."

Alaze lawanaka. Kepha umfundisi wathi awamyeke umuntu omdala azidelise. Wanela washo njalo zamvumela izinsizwa zaseLume. Zalithatha ngezibongo zalo. Lapho indlu isimi ngezinyawo. Umakoti wabamba umyeni wakhe wamqinisa ngazo zombili izandla, wahlahla amehlo ethukile, kwaphela ukuthi ugoyle. Wamamatheka uMfundisi

Motaung. Wamamatheka uNdabazabantu.

"Nqama dubula kumaLokothwayo,

Hlosi likaKhawuyeza

Elathwal' amehlo

Nxa libon' abafu.

Mhudula nkunz' ingaphakathi

KwelabeSuthu."

Laze ladinwa lazimela. Lanikina ikhanda selikhefuzela, isifuba sehla senyuka,

"Kuth' angiphuz' igazi. Kuth' angiphuz' igazi."

Waqhuba umsebenzi umfundisi. Wasebayala abashadayo.

"Namuhla niqala impilo entsha. Uthando luyabaselwa njengomlilo. Lubaselwa ngezenzo ezinhle nezincomekayo. Mntanami, Phikwase, mina ungigculisile ngendlela obukade uziphethe ngayo kusukela ebunganeni bakho kuze kube namuhla. Namuhla usuyokwakha owakho umuzi. Mkwenyana, ungibonele kahle ingane yami. Namuhla muhle kunabo bonke labantu abagewe lepha endlini."

Zahleka izintombi.

Yavalwa inkonzo. Kwaphunywa esontweni kwaqondwa kwaMsithini. Zamthatha ngenkani izintombi zasenkangala umkhwenyana. Zayomkhweza ekalishini likamakoti. Zaziyathe ezaseSwazini zifuna ukuthatha umakoti zimfake enqoleni yakubo, phinde. Zashaya phansi. Zesuka izinsadula ezimhlophe. Kwakhala isondo phansi phezulu, kwasengathi nazo ziyayizwa impikiswano. Dela wena owake wazibona! Wayeqala ngqa umuntu wakwaNgwane ukukhwela ekalishini. Kwase kungumsebenzi kamakoti ukumbamba angawi.

KwaMsithini emagekeni zaqhudelana kwesuka uthuli. Zayithatha inkundla ezasenkangala. Zazisonga izinkalo zazo wathi azinakuvuka kusasa. Laphakanyiswa igoso lazo.

Kwakhishwa ukudla kwadliwa.

Ngakusasa kusempondo zamthini zaphuma izinsizwa zaseSwartland ngezinkabi zekhethelo zalibhekisa kwaNgwane.

Impahla kamakoti yakhwezwa elolini. Lowo kwabangu-

msebenzi kaGozolo. Ithe isikhwezwe yonke, uKlaya wahola uPhikwase ngengalo wamngenisa esibayeni. Wammisa phakathi. Wamthela ngenyongo ebunzini nasezinyaweni nasezandleni. Wamhloma inyongo ekhanda. Wasekhuluma nabakubo abangasekho ebika ukuphuma komntwana, ebacela ukuba bahambe naye. Wayekhulume la phansi. Wamthatha wammisa ngasenhla kwesibaya ngaphandle. Yilapho-ke esemyala.

“Mntanomntanami,

“Phikwase, ophikwe ngabaphezulu

“Wavunywa ngabaphansi.

“Ngithi, phuma-ke, mtanomntanami usaluyosikhonzela isihlobo emzini. Phuma-ke ntombi enhle kaTshotsho kaTshwalabenyoni kaKhweletsheni. Khumbula ukuthi uyokwendela kwaNgwane. Wena uzalelwe wakuhlula enkangala. Ulalele umlingani, unyokozala. Uthathe izeluleko kuye kuphela. Uhlale endlini yakho. Uxwaye abakulethela izindaba ngoba yibo labo abangase bakuxabanise nomuzi wakwaLubhede. Uhloniphe, Phikwase, mtanomntanomfowethu. Ube yinono njengoba ubukade uyilo. Khumbula ukuthi uvela kude. AbaseSwazini bazakubheka ngamchlo abukhali. Elincane iphutha olenzayo bazothi ‘A, lusha luyafika.’ Ukhumbule isisu somkhwenyana. Ungakhohlwa ezabalingani nomndeni wonke wakwaLubhede. Isandla sakho sikhululeke, Phikwase. Ukhumbule ukunakekela ulimi lwakho. Ulimi lungumlilo oshisa imizi yabantu. Ungathi ufika usagoyile ube uxova abantu ngolimi lwakho. Khumbula amazwi ami, ungawakhohlwa nanini. Uma uke wakhohlwa iwo uyozingenisa emachilweni. Amachilo owenzayo ayokwenza abakwaNgwane bathi abakwaMsithini bazala impaka. Yeka ihlazo lomlobokazi efika esemiswa ezigcawini kuthethwa amacala adalwa nguye ngolimi lwakhe, nangezenzo zakhe. Hamba-ke Msithini, Muvulane, uyoikhonzela isihlobo eSwazini.”

Akasakhali uPhikwase sewuze waba nesilokozone, wavuvuka amchlo. Wagcina uyisemkhulu ngokumbamba ngenqalo futhi wayomfaka elolini. Wafulathela uyisemkhulu

sezigwele amchlo nakuye. Bakhwela bonke abakhwelayo. Yaduma iloli. Yadonsa. Yayosithela ngegquma.

\* \* \*

Umthimba yawudiliza kwamfundisi ngokuhlwa.

Umthimba ovela kude ubanedumela. Abantu bathanda ukwazi kakhulu ukuthi kazi usibanibani uze wakhangwa yini kude le, azishiye zizelwe ezawosibanibani nawosibanibani. Izintombi zifise ukuyibona imbangi yazo; uma zike zalithola ithuba, ziyoyigxeka, zihleke zome. Izinsizwa ziyabonga uwabo zithi waze wasilethela ezakwelinye izwe. Nathi kesiyobona le nale. Induku enhle ngegawulwa ezizweni. Iningi lezinsizwa zaseLume sezibuya khona ezizweni. Ezinye zazo sezizibonile izinduku ezifanele ukugawulwa. Sekusele ukuthatha izembe kuphela.

Akubi intsha yodwa ekhangwa umthimba ophuma kude. Amakhehla, izalukazi, amadoda, amakhosikazi, bonke kuba uwashiywa-washiywa.

Iziganga zaseLume zagcwala izindwendwe zilibhekise kwaBhevu. Bahlobe abantwana babantu bayaconsa, kusengathi yibona abayobukwa kanti qha. Amakhosikazi nezintombi bathwele emakhanda. Bathwele izipheko. Utshwala, amahewu, imidokwe, izijingi, izindlube nokunye okuningana. Baphekise umakhelwane wabo.

Langena emini ilanga. Wasondela umthimba. Wanela wathi memfu okhalweni bawadedela abafana baseSwartland amahashi. Alishumi nomuvo munye. Bawadedela ngesiko alaziyo. Eza ngezinhlal ezimbili. Phakathi, ukuya phambili linye. Inkabi emhlophe qwa. Oyigibele nguyena ophethe indwangu emhlophe yomshado. Amahashi ahlobe ayavuzwa. Isiganga sithe ukwelula kahle, sidonsela ekhaya. Washo omunye wezibukeli wathi:

“Phumani nonke bo! Phumani nibukele! Isimanga!”

Amahashi kawavamile kwaNgwane. Nalawo akhona izinoko, osadonki. Abakaze bawabone, ikakhulu eLume, agila lemikhuba abayibonayo. Isimanga abasilethelwe umfana kaBhevu. Ngeke bamkhohlwe nanini.



“We, nayithinta inkangala,” kusho omunye ozimele buqamama.

Eza, eza, eza. Athe uma eseseduze nesango, adabuka phakathi. Isihlanu satshuza ngasohlangothini lwangakwesokunene nomuzi, esinye satshuza ngasekhohlwa. Aye aphambana ngasenhla komuzi. Aphindela khona ngasesangweni. Eligitshelwe ngophethe indwangu lona lithe ukufika esangweni lema, laqondana nesango ngqo. Owalibukisisa ngemikhuba eliyenzayo wehluleka ukubachazela abanye abadume neshumi babuya nalo. Liphakame, ligiye, lilale phansi. Oligibele wayelokhu ememeza ethi,

“Vula emnyango. Vula esangweni.”

Athe ebuya okwesibili amahashi, yayivehlisa umthimba iloli eceleni komuzi. Waqonda ngasesangweni. Lapho akasadlaliseli amakhosikazi akwaNgwane asenza imingaliso nawo ngokwawo, asthukutheliswe ngamahashi. Avunule izidwaba zawo zikanokusho. Aphethe amashoba ezinkomo nawezinkonkoni, nemishanyelo.

Umakoti waqala ngokwaba. Waba ukwaba okungazange kubonwe eLume. Uyisezala wembeswa ngejazi lemali; kwabekwa phambi kwakhe isibhalala semali; kwabekwa necansi; kwabekwa indishi enkulukazi yokugezela, phakathi kukona insipho nethawula. Uninazala wembeswa ingubokazi yemali; wethweswa indwangu yokubopha ekhanda emnyama. Phambi kwakhe kwabekwa indishi yokudlela, nesithebe, necansi, nomshanyelo. Kwalandela uyisemkhulu ongasekho, nesalukazi sakhe esisekhona. Kwalandela uyisemkhulu omncane nesalukazi sakhe. Kwasekulandela umndeni wakwabo Qhathumunyu. Bonke banikwa izingubo nezindishi zokudlela. Kwasekulandela wonke umndeni wakwaLubhede. Kepha umyeni akabelwanga lutho. Izinsizwa zaseSwartland zasondeza inkabi enkone nenkatshana emdubu kwathiwa umgano kamakoti neshoba lawo.

“Nina bakwaLubhede,” kukhuluma uKlaya Msithini, “nango-ke umfazi wenu. Sengininikile. Ngimbeka ezandleni zenu ngemhlophe inhliziyo. Izinto engithanda nizazi nazi; umntanami usemncane. Ukhulele esikoleni.

Ngamfundisa umsebenzi othile. Akakayazi imisebenzi yobufazi. Wena-ke ninazala uze umfundise njengomntanakhoh. Lo ngumntwana wasenkangala. Ukulima enkangala ngumthwalo wamadoda. Nakho akakwazi. Ningabesenithi-ke lokhu akakwazi ngoba elivila. Nisize nimbuyisele kimi uma esenidinile. Ningamchithi bese nimkhomba izintaba.”

UKhonya Lubhede wabonga abakwaMsithini ngoba bemlethele umphekeli.

“Mntanomuntu,” kukhuluma uMaDlamini ebibitheka “umfazi uyazikhonzela. Uzikhonzela ngezandla zakhe. Lapha kwaLubhede kuyadliwa. Ubokwazi abakhula bakho. Wazi zonke izihlobo zalapha endlini. Mina ngizoba isitha sakho sokuqala. Umntanami lo ubengazi, engihlonipha, engesaba, engilalela, engondla, engembathisa. Namuhla wena uzokumehlukanisa nami.” Wadabuka wakhala uPhikwase. “Umntanami usuzomehlukanisa noyise. Kazi kuthini ukuthi ‘Yazisa uyihlo nonyoko, ukuba izinsuku zakho zibe ziningi.’ Indoda yakho le usuzokuyehlukanisa nabendlu yakwabo.”

Wasukuma umthimba wayongena endlini. Wabuye waphuma waqonda esigcawini. Wadibana nekhetho zaqhudelana futhi. Izinkwa zaminyana embizeni. Zathi ziyolala ngomhlane izinsizwa zasenkangala, zishaya umoya ngonyawo, zaziythatha inkundla.

ULubhede walalisa izinkabi ezimbili. Utshwala bungamanzi. Abantu bahamba zibonvu, balala bengeqiwa gundane.

Unina kamakoti wanela wehla eloloni wayongena endlini. Ekuseni kwangena umlingani wakhe uyise kamyeni ukuzombingelela. UBhevula wamfika enenye inkosikazi ahamba nayo. Lwamshaya lwamphinda uBhevula uvalo. Kanti naye umlingani wakhe selumshayile.

“Sakubona Mlingani,” kubingelela uBhevula.

“Yebo,” kuvuma uSizakele.

“Uwena ozala umakoti noma unguninakazi?” Kubuza uBhevula ethukile.

“Wancela kimi. Igazi lami. Wena?”

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“Mina ngizala umyeni. Usangibona?”

“Kahle. Nguye lowo mntwana.”

“Awu, nguye?” wazibuzisa uBhevula kanti uzwe kahle.

“Nguye kanye.”

“Yenzeka inkanankana!”

Wawuqhatha umunyu uQhathumunyu.

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