

basesilungwini. Ugcwele umoya wasemakhaya wokuthi abantu basesilungwini ngamahuzwana angenalo imuva; alula. Ngakho uthi uma ebuya emsebenzini adle qede abese eyohoba emsamo yedwa aze ozele khona lapho alale. Kwesinye isikhathi laba ababoshiwe bafune songathi angangena kulemikhuba abayigilayo ngokuhlwa. Abavuthuze besekude uManamuza. Athi angenqaba ukungena kwabakwenzayo, bokhele usikilidi nensangu, babheme kushunqe isisi endlini; axhileke uManamuza akhwehlele amehlo aze abe bomvu. Laba ababhemayo bahleke baze balale phansi bathi: “Wena maningi Hlanzeni khehla!” Konke lokhu kungaze kwamkhathaza ngokuyaphi uManamuza; abathathise okwezintuthwane ezingenalutho.

Kuthe ngemuva kwezinsuku ezimbili esejele kwafika indoda nayo eseyinsansa njengaye. Nayo kubonakala ukuthi isenawo wona umoya wasemakhaya njengaye uManamuza, kodwa sekubonakala ukuthi isihlale iminyakana lapha eGoli, yaze yangenwa izindlelana ezingasile zasezinkompulazi. Ngoba-ke isingumuntu omdala kayisagangile njengabafana. UManamuza asheshe ejwayelane nayo, Kuthi noma sekudliwa, yona naye badle ndawonye. Ngoba nobusuku babubanda, izingubo zasejele zinganele, kusihlwa bamuzwe uManamuza eseliqhweba leli elinye ikhehla ethi: “Woza mntakababa silale ndawonye ukuze kwande izingubo.” Nebala embesane amakhehla, afudumale kuze kuse. Noma esebenza emgwaqweni athande ukuba ngandawonye.

Kusihlwa axoxe etshelana izindaba zasemakubo. Leli elinye ikhehla labe libanjwe ngamaphoyisa emzini wenkosikazi ethile khona eBenoni, amaphoyisa alifika lapho lithi liyabugqiba emgodini utshwala. Lona umsebenzi walo kwakungukumba imigodi yotshwala, liyimbela inkosikazi eyayibugaya ibudayise.

Uthi-ke nakuba esethole umblobo uManamuza, ihliziyo ilokhu ikhononda ngokuthi songathi kukhona okwasalela kodwa kulomhlobo wakhe. Useze iqiniso alithole lonke uManamuza inxa sebexoxa; esesho lona omunye ethi lapho ayesebenza khona bekuyaye kuthi uma sekonakele, isimame sesixabene naye, simshaye nangeziketeki zaso nje uma sekonakele. Naye ahambe esezithukusa ikhanda, elandelwa, ehambe ebhulwa ebusweni ngamalokwe amadala. Aqale athule uManamuza ezwa umhlobo wakhe emlandisa izinsizi zakhe eshaywa yisimame. Athi lapho eselele sekumnyama ahlekele phansi, ezwa lemihlola yokuthi ikhona indoda eyake yabhulwa ngabantu besimame ngamalokwe, yathula njena. Phezu kwalokho amangaliswe nayisibindi salomhlobo wakhe sokuba indaba elichilo kanjalo angaze esaba ukuyixoxa emadodeni.

Kuthi ngobunye ubusuku lapho iziboshwa sezilele, uyabuza uManamuza kumhlobo wakhe uthi: “Konje ntangayethu uthi elobusha abakubiza ngalo kumashibini lingubani?” Athi ukukhwehlela kancane lona omunye, abese ethi: “UManephu!” Ahlekele phansi uManamuza athi: “Cha, ziyakwazi ukuqamba izintokazi zaseBenoni. Nawe usunephuzela ukugcwalisa lelolizwi lazo?”

Kepha-ke kuthi noma uManephu kukhona songathi akuphelelanga kuye, kube kukhona uhlangothi lwezinto abonakala elwazi ngokukhulu ukukhalipha kobuchopho. Abonakale ezazi zonke izindaba zaselokishini laseBenoni. Azi amahlazo akhona, namacala akhona, nezigebengu zakhona, nobuhle nobubi bakhona. Azi imbala nezihambeli uma zifikile phakathi komuzi. Isiyekwa nje eyokuthi kwaSibanibani bugaywe bungaka, bathengiswa bangaka. Nemigodi yabo bonke abagayayo uManephu eyazi – emisha nemidala. Azi nezingxabano zonke zaseBenoni; ekutshela ngokuphazima kweso ukuthi umkaSibanibani wethukane nomkaNansinga ngelanga elingukuthi, bebanga ukuthi nokuthi – aze azi nokuthi loludaba luze lwangenwa

ngomkaNtazinge, kuvelwa emhlanganweni wamakhosikazi omkhuleko, lwedlula lwaze lwaye lwafika kuMfundisi.

Akulalelisise konke lokhu uManamuza. Athi ngemuva kwezinsuku ezithile abese elibona iqiniso lokuthi uManephu nguyena muntu amdinga ngempela lapha eBenoni. Kusheshe kumkhanyele ukuthi uma bengaba ludibi lunye noManephu bangamthola ekuseni uBajwayele. Athi lapho eyithi fahla lendaba kuManephu uManamuza aphenyule phezulu athi: “Awu, ngingubani mina? Yini engingayazi lapha eBenoni? Ukube ngiliphoyisa ngabe sengibaqede nya bonke laba abagaya utshwala. Ukube nginguMfundisi ngabe ibandla lami sengalinquma lonke ngoba ngabe ngazi izono ezimbi zabo bonke abalandeli bami. Nentombazane yakho mina ngingayivumbulula ngisho isizishwathike kowesabekayo umgodini. Ibe yona iyini kimina ngoba kusho wena yise oyaziyo uthi yingane ekhulele le emakhaya, kayazi lutho ngedolobha? Ayikakwazi nokuthubeleza kwasesilungwini. Mina ngizazi zonke izindlu zamahumusha lapha; ngisho nezilala abantu bamasampula imbala. Ayikho into eyenzeka lapha kuleliBenoni mina ngingayazi. Uma unoshelenyana unganginika wona mhla ngiphumayo wenzela ukuba ngiyothenga ugwazi ukubuyisa ingqondo yangaphandle kwasejele. Ngingawubhema kanye njena, ngithi ukuthimula, kuvuke usinga oludala, lithi lishona bengiyitholile intombazane leyo. Konje uthu ubani igama layo? UBajwayele! Ngeke lingikhohle. Thula nje wena mntakababa, mhla ngiphumayo ngiyokulungisela zonke izikhalo zakho. Ungesabi lutho. Ubobatshele abakini eButhunqe ababalekelwe ngabafazi babo ukuthi ababokhwela isitimela beze kuManephu waseBenoni, ohlala eDuvaside, eBenoni, eNtilasifani. Izincwadi ngizifundelwa ngumfanyana wami lapha esakhelene nabakubo. Ngiyaye ngimthengele uswidi nezikwibhisi, ukumholela. Akayifundi incwadi wala isibhalwe amakilikobhe asemakhaya, ayixazulule wale uthi wafunda phesheya eMelika, kanti ufunda ibange lesine eBenoni!”

Ahleke aze enqike ngodonga uManephu lapho eqeda lenkulumo ende. Kuthi ngelikade, avume uManamuza athi: “Kulungile. Kepha kuhlupha ngoba wena uzohlala isikhathi eside lapha ejele.”

“Akulutho lokho. Singakulungisa nje. Inkozikazi le engiyisebenzelayo umkaStimbolo ngingakunika izwi ulise kuyona, ebese izongikhipha ejele.”

“Uma kunjalo kungalunga kakhulu. Uyabona-ke Manephu sengifuna ukuphenduka ngiye ekhaya ngoba kangazi ukuthi uZulumacansi wenzani kubantabami.”

Kunjalo wena okaNomadinane.”

“Uyabona, mina ngingumnuḿzane kwelakithi.”

“Baba.”

“Nginezintombi eziningi, ezinhle kabi. Zizalwa yintombi kaMemunce, ngezikhathi zayo okwakuthiwa vela muntu omuhle, ivele intombi kaMemunce!”

“Kunjalo mntakababa.”

“UZulumacansi uzothi uma ebona ngithe nya abese ethikazisa enye ingane yami, kanti lokho angikufuni noma ngikubone. Lentombazane eyelama uBajwayele sengiyibekele uMadundube, umfana kaMcikilishwa, iphoyisa lezintombi eButhunqe bukaMagayi.”

Athi ukuphakamisa amehlo uManephu abese ethi: “Kepha, mntakababa, ukhuluma songathi unamandla okuvimbela uZulumacansi kulokho akufunayo, kanti ukuntazise waze wazoshayeka eBenoni ungalazi!”

“Thula lesisimba-mgojana! Uwena ongatshela mina ngoZulumacansi? Ubona ngoba ngihluphekile ngifuna umntanami?”

Ashwelezise uManephu, yedlule, kulalwe.

Kuthi ngezinsuku zokugcina zikaManamuza ejele kwenzeke into engandile. Kuthi ekuseni ngalanga limbe kufike umphathi wejele ehamba nodibi lwakhe. Azibize zonke iziboshwa. Ziphume zigijima, ziklele ebaleni zimangele ukuthi kwenzenjani.

Uza uphethe inqwaba yamaphepha. Zinele ziphelele phambi kwakhe aqale athi: “Nonke eniboshiwe lapha nginizele nezindaba ezimnandi. Kufike kuleli namuhla umzukulu kaKhwini Vitoliya. Labo abanamacala amancane, angewona awokweba nawegazi, futhi abagwetshwe isikhathi esingeqile ezinyangeni ezintathu kusukela manje bayakhululeka. Lokhu uHulumeni ukwenzela ukukhumbula ukuhambela koMntwana waseNgilandi kuleli.”

Zibange omkhulu umsindo iziboshwa ngenxa yokujabula. Abanye basonge izandla baphakamise amehlo babheke ezulwini bekhuleka, bebonga uMdali ngalesosehlo; abanye basimze bamemeze bathi; “Wule!” abanye bahleke nje. UManamuza kaNomadinane waseButhunqe bukaMagayi wadumela isigqokwana sasejele, asithi hlwi ekhanda, agxume aye aphumele obala phambi komphathi egiya.

“Shonini bafana, nithi; ‘We mfokazana ndini U-yo-thath’ - eka-ba?”

Bahleke abelungu. Iziboshwa lezi ezisengabafana zisho zithi: “Khehla! Khehla! Khehla!” Lezi esezingangaye zisho njengoba ezinxusile, yena-ke athi lapho esegwiya aphenandle athi:

“E-ka-Ma-namuza! Namuza! Namuza!”

Into emjabulisa kakhulu uManamuza ukuthi uzokhululeka kanyekanye nomhlobo wakhe uManephu. Nebala bathi beya esangweni base bephangelana.

## ISAHLUKO IX

Lena ekhaya eButhunqe sebemangele nje ukuthi konje angabe wadliwa yini umnumzane. Kubuye kubelesele uBongiwe ingane kaDumezweni, kuthi njalo ekuseni uma evuka noma eseyolala akhale athi: “Uphi umkhuyu? Ngifun’ umkhuyu wami mina. Ngifuna engithinta yapha!” Asho ekhomba edolweni.

Lokhukubelesela abadala baze bakubuke ngelinye iso. Basole songathi kukhona ingane ekuhlolayo ngokuba ilokhu ithi ifuna uyisemkhulu. Abanye bathi pho angebe esabhala na, asho nokuthi wahamba kanjani? Usengafike awuhlabe inhlali nje, athule athi du na, khona nxa ekufice kulukhuni ukuthola uBajwayele? Abanye babe novalo lokuthi eGoli yindawo yezigebengu, bathi mhlawumbe izigebengu zathi ukuba zibone ukuthi uManamuza ufuna ukuziphazamisa kuBajwayele zamgodukisa. Leli limphathe kabuhlungu unina kaBajwayele. Athi: “Musani ukukhuluma kanjalo ngomntanami ngisekhona. Khona lapho esonakele kangakanani nithi usengasasazela uyise ngezigebengu? Ningakusho lokho ngaye ngifile mina. Futhi nje ubani othi umntanami wahamba nolayitha? Senimbambile lowolayitha wanitshela ukuthi wathathwa nguye uBajwayele? Anibokuyeka ukukhefuza izindaba zabantu ningazazi. Mina ngingalimaza umuntu zibekwa nje, ngifunga uMemunce eseMgeni!”

Ziyaphuma izalukazi zazeButhunqe ebe zithi zizombona ngokuhlupheka okumvelele sezinyobozela. Ezinye zithi: “Hho, hhayi onina kaBongani! Konje akathandi ukuba kuthiwe unina kaBongani? Uthi ufuna kuthiwe ngunina kaDumezweni?”

Ziphendule ezinye zithi: “Musani ukudlala ngomntakaMemunce ehluphekile. Yona inhliziyo uyithathaphi? Yimuphi umfazi ongathula kudilika umuzi

wakhe udilizwa ngukuhaha kwendoda ihahela izinkomo, ize idayise ngabantwana? Futhi umntakaMemunce akazange athi yena ufuna ukuba kuthiwe ngunina kaDumezweni ngoba izibulo lakhe kakade uBongani, nanguya eganele kuMasovenyeza.”

Ziqhubeke lezi zakuqala zithi: “Akake alunge. Uyaye acabange ukuthi useyinto enkulu ngoba nakhu enezintombi eziningi, ezihambe zidayiselwa abantu abakhulu. Umuzi wakhe usecabanga ukuthi ngowenkosi. Ucabanga ukuthi izingane zakhe izingilozzi. Nampo olayitha ngaphambili sibabekile. Nangu uBajwayele usemtshengisile ukuthi kuyabalekwa nje nendoda ngisho ihamba namasampula. Usuke unina kaBongani athi akukhulunye okuhle, sibe thina silibona nje iqiniso. Siyizingane yini kodwa bantu!”

Zizabalaze lezi ezinye zithi: “Qhabo bo, inkulu lendaba yelobolo. Musani ukumhleka umntakaMemunce ngoba ehlelwe silingo selobolo. Wonke umfazi ozele siyamzela. Sonke sizosala emakhaya, izingane zibaleke uma sizozahlukanisa namasoka azo ngoba sijahe ilobolo.”

Ziqhubeke zikhuluma kanje izalukazi zize zingene kwezinye izindaba. Laphaya ngemuva zimshiya ecabanga ngoManamuza noBajwayele unina kaDumezweni.

Kuthi ngelinye ilanga ivuke kuphuma ilanga intombi kaMemunce, ibhukule ilibhekise kwaZulumacansi. Lapha endleleni kayisahambi isindiza phezu kwezindwani zotshani. Ihamba ikhuluma yodwa ngenxa yokuthukuthela. Ithi lapho isizoqhamuka ngakwaZulumacansi izwe ifikelwa ngamadlingozi, kuthi kayikhale kakhulu. Izibambe ithi: “Ngeke nje ngike ngikhale ngidude lomthakashana osengonele umuzi wami. Ngifuna ukumfundisa namuhla.”

Itheleka emabaleni intombi kaMemunce kayisadle nkobe zamabele. Ingene ingakhulekile, ngenxa yokufuthelana.

Ngasexhibeni ihlangane noQimbile, udadewaboZulumacansi, ebese ithi: “Uphi uZulumacanzi?” Athi dlengelele uQimbile ezwa umkhwekazi egagula umkhwenyana ngegama emzini.

“Ngena endlini mama, ngizokubizela yena.”

“Hhayi mntanami, kasisekho lesosikhathi.”

Abone uQimbile ukuthi kayisengangaye, akhombe endlini enkulu athi: “Nanguya laphaya, unamadoda khona.”

Sinikele khona isalukazi. Sifike sime ngasemnyango sithi; “We Zulumacanzi, ufunani kimi wena? Sikweletu sini sakho esikimi? Uphi umyeni wami nomntanami?”

Lumuthi heqe uvalo uZulumacansi, kodwa lusheshe luphele, luqedwa ukucasukwa uba simphoxe kangaka lesisalukazi ephakathi kwabanumzane. Ngakho athule nje. Mamo, intombi kaMemunce emnyango!

“Yimihlola kaMemunce yini? Ngakhuluma nawe Zulumacansi wachiza nje? Kangibuzi umyeni wami kuwe? Nomntanami? Bobabili usubathengise ezinswelaboyeni zakho eGoli?”

Abone uZulumacansi ukuthi uma eqinisela ethula sizomphoxa kabi emadodeni lesisalukazi. Aphume. Uphuma usemoyizela. Athi ethi uyasikhulumisa sithi: “Usineka nobani intanga yakho lapha? Ngifuna umyeni wami mina nomntanami. Uma ungababeki lapha ngisayokuzwa umthetho.

Ngenxa yovalo oselumngenele uZulumacansi ebona ehliwa kangaka, elomthetho nebala limethuse, angabe esacabanga ukuthi konje singaya ngaphuzu lini emthethweni isalukazi. Kufike kuyena isu lokuthi okungono ukuba awubhule

lomlilo. Nebala aphenjule ngomoya ophansi athi: “Cha, mkhwekazi wami, woza edlini ukuze sikhulume kahle.”

Kube songathi isalukazi usithume ukuba sihayize. “Ngingumkhwekazi wakho namuhla uma usuhluphekile? Kawunahlazo lokungibiza kanjalo? Kawuzukungigininda amadodlwana namuhla? Khuluma bo, ngifuna uyise kaDumezweni noBajwayele.”

Ehlise izwi ngokuthe xaxa uZulumacansi, ethi wenzela khona naso sizokwehlisa elaso izwi angezwa amadoda asendlini. Singezwa lutho isalukazi. Akhiphe isihlalo kwenye indlu uZulumacansi athi: “Awu, mkhwekazi wami, hlala phansi sikhulume kahle.”

“Kangifuni sihladlwana sakho mina,” isho intombi kaMemunce isithatha isilahla laphaya, naso isihlalo sizishaye awaso amagenugenu: “Ngifuna ukuba usho ukuthi wamusaphi uyise kaDumezweni noBajwayele. Uma ungakwenzi lokho ngisayokuzwa umthetho. Nango mina nango wena, ngifunga uMemunce. Lezinkonyana zigcwele isibaya njena, zizoke zinciphe. Ngiyabona ukuthi awukangazi kahle.”

Acabange acabange uZulumacansi aze athi ngenhliziyo: “Uma engisa emthethweni umkhwekazi wami amaNgisi ayomlalela ngoba isimame ayasihlonipha.” Enovalo lokuthi hleze alahlwe licala kade emangalelwe ngumuntu wesifazane, akhethe ukuba asale esebhuquza nje enzela ukuba igwebu lize lehle entombini kaMemunce.

“Qha bo mame, uyabona, konke lokhu engikwenzayo ngikwenziswa ukuba ngiyithanda ingane yakho. Njengoba ingekho nje nami kangikho. Nawe mame uyazibonela ukuthi muhle kanjani uBajwayele. Uthi ngingewudele wonke umhlaba ngiwudelele yena? Lokhu engikwenzayo yikhona ukuwudela.”

“Ufuna akutshela kanjani ukuthi akakufuni?” Limhlabe kwamancane leli uZulumacansi, kodwa asheshe abone kulona ukubhoboka kwegwebu.

“Cha, mame, yena angangitshela impela, kodwa kangikuzwa konke lokhu akushoyo. Lokhu icala likuwena, wena owazala umuntu omuhle? Uma engala akusho ukuthi nakusasa uyongala. UButhunqe bungaka uthi ikhona enjengaye? Ingani uhleli nje nawe onke amakhosikazi alapha eButhunqe akhuluma ngobuhle bezintombi zakho? Bayakuzonda sikhuluma nje.”

Ithule intombi kaMemunce, isakhohlwe ukuthi konje ingaphendula ithini. Ngelikade ebese ithi: “Kangibuzi konke lokho. Ngibafuna bengithinta lapha abami. Uzwile?”

“Ngiyezwa Memunce. Nami ngizozilahla amathambo ukufuna umntanakho. Okungenani usengasale esephindela kuwena. Ngiyokwaneliswa ukuba ngilokhu ngimbuka ngamehlo nje.”

Lamazwi ayithambise intombi kaMemunce, ilungise izingubo qede ebese ihalakashela iyophuma ngesango, imshiye emi uZulumacansi, ingamvalelisanga. Inele iphume ngesango isithele, aphefumule kakhulu uZulumacansi, esekhohliwe ukuthi amadoda asendlini ayambuka. Sanele sasithela umphele isalukazi wasuka kahle waye wathatha isihlalo esasisalokhu imilenze siyibhekise phezulu, wabuya wangena emadodeni, akabe esakhuluma kakhulu.

Uthe lapho eshleli phansi, enye indoda yathi: “Ngumlilo lomkhwekazi wakho, mntakaBhekokwakhe.” Avumelane amadoda. Athule nje uZulumacansi, engagezwisisi kahle ukuthi amadoda akhuluma naye.

Isalukazi sihambe siye sifike ekhaya, sifike sibatshela abantabaso ukuthi simenzenjani uZulumacansi. Zihleke izintombi zikaManamuza zithi: “Ukube ubaba ufana nawe mama ngabe kade angena endleleni uZulumacansi.”

“Phela mina kangincengi nkomo zamuntu. Akuthi ngihamba endleleni bengiqalaza izinkomo zabantu, bese ngithi umntanami ngiyodayisa ngaye lapho kukhona izinkomo eziningi. Izwe life kangaka nje eButhunqe yingoba amadoda asevilapha ukusebenza alibale ukuthi ayothola izinkomo mhla kwalotsholwa amantombazane. Ngifuna ukuba bafunde esikoleni abantabami, hhayi ukuhamba bekhali ama lobolo bewaletha laph'ekhaya.”

Zimvumele izintombi zakhe okaMemunce. Zimvumela nje nazo inhliziyo isinandiswe ukuba uthe unina engekho kwafika incwadi ivela kuyise eBenoni. Zithi uma zimtshela ngayo izingane, athi ukumoyizela, abese ethi: “Yiletheni lapha incwadi yekhehla lami!” Bayilethe.

“Ngibizeleni umakoti azoyifunda.”

Asukele phezulu unina kaBongiwe, ayivule efunde: “Ngilapha eBenoni. Sengiwutholile umkhondo kaBajwayele. Into ebembi ukuba sengiphuma ejele. Ngikhonzeleni kuBongiwe.”

## ISAHLUKO X.

Kwafumaniseka ukuthi ngemuva kwencwadi lena ayibhalele ekhaya, usala uyanda umsebenzi wokufuna uBajwayele eBenoni. UManamuza wathi noma efuna ukuba abhale enye incwadi, lesosikhathi asabe sisaba khona ngoba nangu noManephu uyamkhathaza; izinto akazilungisi ngalokhokukhawuleza okuthandwa nguManamuza. Encengile uManamuza, naye akhiphe isineke. Naso lesosineke ngelinye ilanga sicishe sithi kasiphele ngoba phela mihla yonke uManephu umshusha emshushile ngohlamvu. Kodwa athi lapho ebuya uManephu, esekhipha imibiko yokuhamba kwakhe, aneliswe uManamuza ukuthi kakumiwe ndawonye.

Kuthi ngokuhlwa ngelinye ilanga ubuya uManephu akamnandi.

Athi noma ethi ukhuluma izinto ezinamahlanya uManamuza angaze ahleka uManephu. Nasebusweni agqunqe angabi mnandi. Azibambe azibambe uManamuza aze azilahle amathambo.

“Kwenzenjani namuhla mntakababa? Wabonakala ungemnandi?”

“Akukho lutho.”

“Lokhu angikaze ngikubone unjena?”

“Akukho lutho.”

Athule uManamuza ecabanga. Athathe ebeka, athathe ebeka kuze kufike kuyena ukuthi hleze mhlawumbe umhlobo lona ucasukwa zinkulumo zikaManamuza ekhala, esenqaba ukukhipha imali. Abese ebhoboka athi: “Uyabona mntakababa imali lena nami ngiyazi ukuthi uyayidinga ukuba uhambe, udle ukhwele izimoto ufuna

lentombazane. Kodwa-ke angisilo ibhange. Nami lapha ngingohluphekile njengawe nje. Uma ngikhala ngisuke ngikhaliwa yilokho.”

“Ubani okhulume indaba yemali? Ngoba uma ungafuni ukuba ngimthole umntanakho uyosuke ungayikhiphi imali! Angingandaba mina. Umntwana akusiye owami. Uma unganginiki izinyawo ngeke ngihambe. Umsebenzi wakho lowo.”

“Pho, lokhu into engaze isixabanise yileyo, yini ekugqunqisile?”

“Okunye”

“Sengihlale nawe kangaka ungengihlebele?”

“Vala umnyango. Kukhona into engifuna ukuyikhuluma nawe.”

Asukumele phezulu uManamuza ecabanga ukuthi kuza isifuba esisha ngoBajwayele. Athi lapho ebuyile wahlala phansi aqale uManephu: “Uyabona wena Manamuza uzozixabanisa kabi nami.” Ethuke uManamuza ezwe kuxega amadolo.

“Ngani Manephu?”

“Uyabona, uyafika wena lapha eGoli. Kawazi muntu. Watholwa yimi ejele ngakuthatha ngaze ngazokukhonzela lapha ekhaya kwaStimbolo. Manje wena usubona ukuthi uhlakaniphe wedlula mina . . .”

“Ngakuphi engikwenzile kodwa Manephu?”

“Usufuna ukukhipha mina esikhundleni.”

“Siphi isikhundla?”

“Laph’ekhaya?”

“Kube yimina isimba-mgodi? Ungihlolela mhlola muni Manephu?”

“Ufuna ukuba yinduna yomkaStimbolo.”

“Amanga aphindiwe lawo, uma kukhona okutshela lokho.”

“Ngimdala lapha eBenoni mina Manamuza. Ungeke ungikhohlise.”

“Mveze-ke lowo okutshela lawomanga.”

“Ngiyazibonela mina, ngingesiyo ingane.”

“Ubonani?”

“Manje uma umkaStimbolo efuna ukwazi izinto zesiZulu akasazibuzi kimi; usuzibuza kuwe ngoba wena, yena ucabanga ukuthi wazi kangcono kunami?”

“Waze wafudumala nje Manephu?”

“Ngoba-ke uwena osewetheniwe laph’ekhaya; zonke izinto sezibuzwa kuwe ngoba wena unolwazi olungcono kunolwami, lusebenzise-ke lololwazi uhambe ngalo uze umthole uBajwayele. Mina angiselutho.”

“Musa bo! Kodwa kwenzenjani kangaka ngoba angiyazi lento okhuluma ngayo?”

“Uphikelani ngoba iqiniso selaziwa yiBenoni lonke?”

“Lokuthini?”

“Lokuthi njengoba umfana kaMfundisi Madubedube ecela intombazane ka-Anti Mabifeni; nalaba bakwaMabifeni njengoba besizwa umkaStimbolo, uwena osunquma zonke izindaba, ubeluleka ngamasiko nezinto okufanele ukuba zenziwe.”

“Awu, yini embi lapho?”

“Qhubeka-ke uzobona.”

“Musa ukusonga; akusikho ukukhuluma kwendoda lokho sisaphendulana.”

“Mina ngakuthola uhlupekile, manje usungephuca isinkwa sami. OmkaStimbolo, nomkaMadubedube noAnti Mabifeni bonke izinto bebezibuza kimi, ngibatshela, bese benginika ozukwana. Manje kabasezi kimi, sebeza kuwe. Imali yami isizodliwa nguwe; ngiphile kanjani mina?”

“Uthi sengingaze ngithathe imali ngoba ngitshela abantu isiko lakithi?”

“Mamo, ulwazi yimali lapha eBenoni! Ayikho into kamahhala. Uma wena ungayithathi, kusho ukuthi bonke abantu izinto bazozibuza bangezi kimina ngoba wena kawubizi mali. Bese ngilimala mina.”

“Uyabona Manephu, mina ngingumuntu wakwaZulu. Kithi kuseButhunqe bukaMagayi. Mina ngizalwa nguNomadinane kaSidawane kaMpondonde. Angisiye umfokazana ongahamba ecela otiki. Ngihlala lapha endlini yakho nje ngidla eyami imali. Uma isiphelile ngiyoya eGoli kumntanami uDumezweni, afike anginike. Nalokhu ukuba ngithule ngingambhaleli yingoba yena uvuna unina kuloludaba lukaBajwayele. Kodwa uma sekonakele, leyo kungaba eyomndeni.”



“Kusho ukuthini konke lokho?”

“Kusho ukuthi kayilona iqiniso lento onginameka ngayo. Kwafika umkaStimbolo kimina wathi abahlobo bakhe bakwaMabifeni bazokwendisa intombazane yabo, bayendisele kwaMfundisi Madubedube. AbakwaMabifeni, wathi umkaStimbolo abakwaZulu. Bakhulela eGoli amanye amasiko esiZulu kabasawazi kahle. Uthi-ke umkaStimbolo wase ebatshele ethi lapha kwakhe kukhona ikhehla elafika noManephu, liphuma emakhaya kwaZulu, lifuna umntanalo. Lelikhehla wathi ucabanga ukuthi lingabasiza ngokuba libeluleke ngamasiko ngoba beqala ukwendisa futhi bethanda ukuba bahambe ngendlela okuyiyonayona yasemakhaya Weza kimina-ke.”

“Akangitshelanga ngani mina? Abuze kimina?”

“Kubuze kuyena lokho ngoba kakade mina kangisiye umuntu waseGoli.”

“Angabe esanginaka yini mina sekukhona wena sazi sakho konke?”

“Musa ukungibhuqa Manephu ngoba leyonto izosixabanisa. UmkaStimbolo ngamtshela lokho engikwaziyo, futhi kangizange ngithathe mali yakhe. Mina angishongo ukuthi uma umuntu ebuza into eqondile ngizogwingciza ngilingise olayithana balapha eGoli.”

“Yikho lokhu umenyiwe njena? Uwena osuyongena ngomnyango wangaphambili kwa-Anti Mabifeni, uhlale kosofa. Shono zonke izinsuku ngiyaye ngikubone wesula amagomazi nezicathulo namabhande obusotsha—ukuthi usulungiselela ukucelwa kwentombazane kaMabifeni. He, kudela umuntu oyoke akubone Manamuza ungena ngomnyango wangaphambili kulobuyabucwazicwazi

bakwaMabifeni, uhlale kosofa bakhona, udlele etafuleni ngommese nemfologo . . .!”

Ahleke uManephu aze enqike ngodonga.

“Kudela oyothola imbobo yokulunguza engabonwa, akubuke usuhleli etafuleni ngezakho izingubo zobusotsha, amahumusha alapha eGoli esekhuluma isiBhunu . . .!”

Abuye ahleke kakhulu, aze angqubuze udonga ngekhandla.

“Ala mastaha! Kade ngangiyibona imihlola eGoli! OManamuza baseButhunqe bayohlala ematafuleni nodokotela kanye nabameli baseGoli? Cha, mfana kaNomadinane usuqhubile uma usuhamba nabantu abakhulu kangaka—ngoba phela izikhulu zaseGoli ziyobe ziphelele kwaMabifeni ngoba nabo abantu abakhulu!”

“Awu, uMabifeni mkhulu inxa kwenziwani, Manephu? Umuntu nje, njengabanye.”

“Kasazi Manamuza. Phela sengilokhu ngizizwa nezingane zalapha ekhaya, nezakwaMabifeni zilokhu zikhuluma ngo-Ompi Manamuza! Cha, usuqhubile uma usufike lapho.”

Lingamphathi kahle leli uManamuza lokuthi nezingane zaseBenoni sezimbiza ngegama. Ikakhulu kumdumaze lokhu ukuba azi ukuthi laphaya kwaMabifeni, lapho esengumuntu omkhulu ngokuphakanyiswa ngumkaStimbolo, ubizwa ngegama zingane, zithi nguOmpi Manamuza, into engaziwa kobukaMagayi. Abuye azibuze yena ukuthi uOmpi lona lulimi luni; usho ukuthini. Esabe ukuveza ubumpatha bakhe kuManephu ngokubuza ukuthi uOmpi yini. Kuthi ngoba kodwa leligama livele ngakoMabifeni, abantu abadinga ulwazi lwakhe, abese eziduduza ngokuthi hleze kube yigama lenhlonipho. Aphike ngokuthi akunani, noma lingaze libe ngelenhlamba alisoze lamlimaza

kangkanani ngoba akahleli lapha eBenoni. Uyothi angaziphindelela eButhunqe bukaMagayi iphele leyonhlanjana. Futhi-ke noma engaze anikwe igama elibi ngamahumushana aseGoli, abe eyini wona ngoba abafokazana njena abangenayo ngisho imbuzi yodwa lena. Kumanelise lokhu ukuthi noma engazi ukuthi ushoni uOmpi, akusenacala.

Athi lapho eledlulisile leli lokucasulwa ukubizwa ngegama akhumbule elikaManephu, lokuhlala etafuleni nabantu abafundisiwe. Lumuthi heqe uvalo. Azibuze ukuthi kambe yena wayevumelani ukuba aze angene kuloludaba. Kodwa wayengazi ukuthi luzohamba luze luphotheke kanje. Wayethi yena ludaba njena lwabantu abangehlukile kakhulu kuyena; abantu abafana noMabifeni. Anele ezwe elodokotela etafuleni, kuthi akangayi ngosuku lolo. Abuye azikhuze athi akumfanele okaNomadinane ukuba esabe amanye amadoda, yena eyinduna kwesikaChief Dumdumu, eButhunqe bukaMagayi, ezalwa nguNomadinane! Ikakhulu kumphathe kahle ukuthi uyongena ngomnyango wangaphambili, ahlale nabanumzane, kanti oManephu bayobe bebhulwa ngamalokwe yisimame ezimbizeni, bethunywa behliswa benyuswa ngoba kungabafokazana.

“Cha, Manephu, angikwephuce sinkwa ngoba angifuni sinkwa. Ngiyoya nje emsebenzini wakwaMabifeni, ngoba ngibizwe umnumzane. Nami ngifuna phela kengibone abanumzane baseBenoni, laba odane ungitshela ngabo.”

“Uyokuya ngempela Manamuza? Kawesabi ukuhlala etafuleni nabantu abakhulu? Uma usuthi uhlabo idombolo ngemfologo, bese ligxuma lingcolise ingubo kamakoti kadokotela?”

“Liyobe ligxumelani? Ngiyomane ngithi shwele!”

“Mina nginguwena bengingeke ngiye.”

“Ebese ekhaya ngithi ngabonani eBenoni ngoba uwena ongangisheshiseli ungitholele uBajwayele?”

“Yikho lokhu usungikhipha esikhundleni njena?”

“Uyabona Manephu, ukuze siyiqede lendaba thatha nangu umpondo uhambe uyokwenza lokho okuthandayo ngawo ukuze ubone ngempela ukuthi mina angifuni ukukwephuca isinkwa.”

“Wena okaNomadinane!” Asho eyithatha ngazo zombili izandla. “Uyabona-ke angiseyukuphinde ngikukhulumise. Ungumnumzane uqobo lwakhe. Lalela, ngiyakuhlebela, ngizwe umkaStimbolo ehlebela uAnti Mabifeni ethi uzokulungisela ikamelo elihle ngaphakathi endlini enkulu, ulale khona ngoba usezwile ukuthi wena ungumuntu omkhulu eButhunqe. Isikhundla sakho usitshelwe ubani umkaStimbolo?”

“Kanti kawumtshelanga yini wena lokho?”

“Cha.”

“Uthe-ke uma engibuza mina, ngamtshela ukuthi ngingumuntu onjani kwelakithi.”

“Away Manamuza!” Asho ehleka aze aye enqike ngodonga futhi.”

“Yini uAway, Manephu?”

“Hhayi, yisaga sezingane zesikole uma zithi umuntu uyaqhubeka!”