

Athule uManamuza. Zedlule izinsuku, bevuka ekuseni bayofuna uBajwayele. Alokhu eyibizile imali uManephu. Athi noma eyikhipha uManamuza, ayikhiphe inhliziyo ingasemnandi kakhulu.

Usuze uyafika-ke uMgqibelo wokucelwa kwentombazane kaMabifeni. Ngoba indlu kaMabifeni isemgwaqweni lo obhekakwaStimbolo, bese kuthi ngesikhathi esifanele aphume kahle uManamuza, ecothoza, izicathulo zamasotsha sezikhazimula ukwesulwa umuntu sezimxhophha emehlweni. Namabhande asecebezela lawa aphanjaniswa esifubeni. Aluthathe kancane unyawo uManamuza, sisho isicathulo sithi “kle!” Alubeke, sisho futhi sithi “kle!” Ahambe njalo, kuyilesi, aze aye afike kwaMabifeni. Akukabikho muntu kulaba abamenyiwe nababhekiwe. Abakhona yizona izimbamgodi kanye-ke nesimame esiningi laphaya ebaleni emuva kwendlu lapho kuhlihlimuka khona amabhodwe angangena umuntu emi. Angene ngesango elikhulu namuhla uManamuza abese enikele emnyango wangaphambili kwendlu afike angqongqoze. Uvuleke umnyango azithele phezu komka-Stimbolo.

“Hhu!” kumemeza umkaStimbolo, eshaya izandla ukukhombisa ukujabula kwakhe. “Usufikile Ompi Manamuza! Kwakuhle, Ngena.” Angene uManamuza, elubeka kancane unyawo. Nescathulo onyaweni kube songathi siyalalela; endaweni yokuba sikhale kakhulu, sikhale ngeliphansi. Bamkhombise isihlalo endlini okuhlalwa kuyona, aye azishwathike kusona athule athi du. Dukuduku ebese kungena yena luqobo uAnti Mabifeni. Pho, kungena bani? Ikhulile intokazi lena; ithi ingani yinde, ibuye inesidumbu. Ingena ngosizi laphaya emnyango. Ize icishe ingene ngohlangothi ngoba uma ingena ibheke phambili nje, umnyango ungaba mncane kakhulu.

Abese esukuma uManamuza aphakamise isandla:
“Nkosikazi!”

“Kwakhle wafika Ompi Manamuza. Nabasemzini siba-
lindile.”

“Nkosikazi!”

“Nomnumzane ukhona kodwa usathe shelele okwamanje.”

“Qha, akunani. Laph’ekhaya sekusekhaya kimina,” asho eyelula imilenze, abeke izandla emadolweni, aze acishe amagomazi esuliwe awathinte ngesandla. Inhliziyo kodwa isithe hluthu uma ezwa umkaMabifeni embiza ngegama, lento engazange ike yenziwe kwelakubo. Kuthi kusenjalo kuqhamuke umkaStimbolo uza nesithetshana lesi sabelungu okubekwa kuso itiyi. Kusona-ke ubeke izingilazi kanye namanzana adungekile, asongathi afana netiyi elingafakiwe ubisi.

“Ake uthi ukukhipha isizungu Ompi Manamuza.” Amthelele esimehlaneni. Athathe uManamuza athi goje, kubabe emlonyeni, kodwa anambithisise ezwa lento ake wayithola eMgungundlovu.

“Phinda futhi, khona kuzoncibilika igazi.”

“Qha, makoti, kusalungile lokhu. Phela kuzokhulunywa udaba olukhulu. Sizokhuluma namakholwa. Akufuneki siqale ngokubusa, ebese siwaphoxa amakholwa.”

Amoyizele uAnti Mabifeni, ebona lokhu ukuhlonipha kukaManamuza, abese ethi kumkaStimbolo: “Myeke. Uqinisile uOmpi Manamuza. Kulungile uyophuza kamuva. Kungeke kube khule uyafika uMfundisi Madubedube akusekho muntu azokhuluma naye amphendule kahle.”

Asho ngenhlonipho ephindiwe uManamuza athi:
“Nkosikazi!”

Agqiqiqqizele umkaStimbolo eyophuma ngomnyango nesithebe. Athi lapho ephumile ebese kuphonseke ngaphakathi okungumfanyana kaMabifeni kwamagcino uBhuti. Kungena amehlo kuwahlahle asesiphongweni. Kungena endlini kuyagijima, kunele kungene kuziphonse endlini yokuhlala, kunikele kunina, oseyinqwaba laphaya emsamo esihlalweni esakhandelwa yena eshabhu. Kuthi la kungenile, kuthi gaga, kuthi qalaqala ebese kumbonile uManamuza, kumbuke phansi kumbuke phezulu ebese kubhuncana, kucabanga ukuthi liphoyisa, kuye ngakunina. Amaphoyisa ziwazi ngokunjalo izingane zaseGoli, ngoba phela achitha utshwala, agqibe imigodi, abophe onina kuze indlala.

“Mama,” kusho umfana, “ubaba ulaphaya kwa-Anti Mayekiso. Akasakwazi nakuhamba.”

“Yini?”

“Kade bephuza!”

“O Thixo wami! Ngizoyenzenjani lendaba? Bengimtshelile ngathi angabe esaphuma! Ngibizele uAnti Stimbolo.”
Iqhantshise okwengxangxa ingane iya emnyango. Ngokuphazima kweso angene lo obiziwe, ungena usephfumulela phezulu ukugqishazela.

“Sizokwenzenjani? Uyise kaBhuti ulaphaya kwaMayekiso, manje bathi bebona kodwa ukuthi kuza uMfundisi bayamphuzisa. Ngisize mntakwethu uthumele umfana wakwakho omkhulu amlande. Uma efika manje uMfundisi angathini kodwa?”

Agqishazele umkaStimbolo ayophuma ngomnyango, athi la ephuma aqale ukumemeza: “Stifan! Stifan! Ukuphi

uStifan? Yiza Stifan!” Eze lona obiziwe ebashiya abanye abafane abafake amabhulukwe acije phansi beyisiqumbi ngasesangweni elingena ngemuva komuzi. Afike umkaStimbolo ahlebele endlebeni kumfana wakhe.

“Kulungile mama.”

“Umbuyise nakanjani mntanami. Yanele imali yetaxi?”

“Siyobona phambili mama.”

“Lalela Stifan, imoto uyingenise izoma emnyango wangemuva. Lihlazo elibi leli mntanami.”

“Kulungile mama.”

Agqishazele aphindele kuAnti Mabifeni. Athi ethi uyangena azithele phezu kwamadoda asègcwele indlu. Kuze uMfundisi Madubedube ukuzokhongela umntanakhe mathupha. Uhamba namadikoni akwakhe kanye nezinyeke izikhulu zebandla, ukumzimazisa. Ethuke umkaStimbolo angenelwe ngamahloni. Akhohlwe nje ukuthi uzokwenzenjani ngoba inhliziyo imtshela ukuthi akahambe ayohlebele endlebeni, abike asekwenzile. Manje ukuyohleba phakathi kwabantu abakhulu ngukuphoxa. NomkaMabifeni yisimbelambela laphaya esihlalweni ngoba umuntu lona mkhulu. Uthi angahlala phansi angaphindi anyakaze, ebese kulokhu kuziwa kuyena njena.

Asheshe abone umkaMabifeni ukuthi kuziwe kuyena. Amoyizele kahle abese ethi: “Sebehambile abantwana?”

“Yebo.”

“Hhayike kulungile mntakwethu.”

UMfundisi Madubedube uthe uma engena wayohlala eduze kukaManamuza. Bayaxoxa-ke bobabili, amadoda

onke athule alalele, amanye abuka lesisimanga sokugqoka sikaManamuza.

“Mna, mfo kaNomadinane,” kusho uMfundisi, “ndingowaseKoloni. Kuthi kuseXilinxe.”

“Kukude lapho Mfundisi. Kuzwakala nangegama lakhona ukuthi kusemajukujukwini.”

“Kodwa, ndikhulele apha eGoli. Nolwimi lwakuthi andisaluthethi kakuhle. Abantu eGoli bathetha zonke izilwimi; zininzi. Kumnandi nakum xa ndiva umntu wakwaZulu esithetha kakuhle isiZulu.”

“Kunjalo Mfundisi. Phela sekwaba khona nokubhunguka. Abantu basuka emakhaya, bafike bakhe imizi lapha, babe nezingane. Zithi zikhula izingane ebese zikhuluma zonke izilimi lezi. Thina le emakhaya silokhu sanamathela kolwawomame ulimi. Nasemasikweni kunjalo.”

“Ewe. Uthetha inyani.”

Amahloni asesukile kuManamuza, usekhuluma ngokunganaki nje. Ingilazana leyaya, nomzimba iwukhiphe inkwantshwana abe eyizwa. Manje usencibilikile. Uhleli ngasefasiteleni uMfundisi ngoba libalele, kuyashisa. Uselokhu ekhipha iduku ezesula ngalo ebusweni.

Laphaya kuvulande wangemuva umkaStimbolo usemise okomuntu ofelwe. Wonke umsebenzi uphethwe nguye. Uma ebona uStifan ethe nya, uvalo seluthi kalumthathe. Usegijime waphonseka ekamelweni lentombazane ezocelwa wayitshela konke. Ingane laphaya isikhale amehlo asebvomu, uba izophoxeka kubantu basekhakhayo uyise ezidlele amabele. Manje kayikho nendlela yokukhipha umkaMabifeni ngoba phela uyena obheke abantu

abakhulu. Wonke umsebenzi ubekwe ezandleni zomkaStimbolo. Manje yena usekhohliwe nje ukuthi konje uzothathani ayihlanganise nani. Namantombazane lawa okuyiwona angoweta asemi emangele njena ukuthi kuzokwenziwa njani.

Ngalena endlini uvulele emlonyeni uManamuza exoxa noMfundisi. Kuthi uma amaxoxo esefuna ukuya ngasekuhilaneni, abese engena umkaMabifeni, afake olunye udaba. Kuthi kusenjalo kuzwakale umsinjwana wokuxokozela ngasesangweni. Kuqhamuka isixuku sabafana bahamba bazungeze ibhala, uStifan uyaliqhuba. Esangweni likaMabifeni beme, bephikisana. Abanye bathi: “Asingene la ngoba baningi abantu ngemuva. Simngenise simuse ekamelweni alale khona.”

Anikine ikhanda uStifan: “Kuthiwe akabongena ngemuva.”

“Ingani uthe wena bathe akubongenwa ngemuva nxa kuyimoto!”

Asuke yena mathupha uMabifeni, lokhu nguye lona oqhutshwa ngebhala, athi uzama ukuma aye afumbeke kulona ibhala futhi.

“Kahle Ompi. Kahle,” kusho abafana bemhlalisa phansi. “Kukhona abantu abakhulu ekhaya.”

“For goodness’ sake, pho nimeleni manje?” kuthetha uMabifeni.

“Abanye bathi asingene ngemuva, abanye bathi asingene ngomnyango wangaphambili, Ompi.”

“Okabani lomuzi lapho mina kuzothiwa angingene ngomnyango wangemuva?”

“Owakho, Ompi!”

“Ngenisani ibhala mani . . .” asho elandelisa inhlamba. Bahleke abafana. Yonke lento kayizwakali laphaya endlini okukhona kuyo uMfundisi. Bayasibona nje isixuku kodwa kabanakile kahle ngoba kakade abafana baseGoli bavama ukuhamba bema izixuku emgwaqweni.

Balivule isango, bamngenise ngebhala umnumzane. Banele bangene wonke umuntu osendlini amehlo awaphendule awabhekise ebhaleni. Lapho uAnti Mabifeni ezwe inhliziyi icwila, eswele ukuthi usukuma kanjani ayothatha uMabifeni ngempama.

Lime kwavulande ibhala, asukume uMabifeni athi: “Thank you boys.” Antenge aye angene endlini. Kwale kodwa, noma esedlile alukhumbule ulaka lomkakhe, angaze aya lapho kukhona abasemzini. Aqonde ekamelweni lakhe. Phela uma bexabene nomkakhe, intokazi lena isuke ihlale phezu kwakhe nje, ingabe yelula amazwi. Ajanqule ajanqule, lokhu umuntu mncane, ithi lapho isimbona eqwayiza amehlo amhlophe, bese isuka, isike yamtshela kodwa yathi: “Uphinde futhi!”

Lokhu ukuba apitshizwe kanjena engakukhohlwa uMabifeni; engakhohlwa noma esehabule izinyembezi zikaKhwini. Kuthi uma engaphuzile, futhi eholile abange ekhemisi eyofuna umuthi wokuzacisa umkakhe. Uyaphuma lapho uyokwedlula esitolo sezingubo zamakhosikazi, athenge ekanokusho. Afike ahambise ingubo phambili athi: “Mkami lengubo ingikhumbuza wena kuse uwena. Wo, yonakala nje.”

“Wo, ukuhlupheka mntanomuntu. Angazi ukuthi umuthi ngingawutholaphi wokunginciphisa nami ngifane nabo bonke abantu.”

Abese elimonyula ibhodlela lasekhemisi uMabifeni athi: “Nakhu abelungu bami abathe ake ngikuza ne, hleze kukusize.”

Ngelinye ilanga athi usadinwa yimithi engamsizi: ngelinye ilanga ayizame. Njalo nje kodwa uma kuphele inyanga, angakhohlwa uMabifeni ligabha lokuzama ukunciphisa lesisindo esiyaye sicishe simkhiphe umphefumulo. Namuhla-ke uthi noma esedlile, akakhohlwa kodwa ukuthi uma eke wangena lapho kukhona abakhongi, bayonele baphume nje umkakhe awukhiphe umphefumulo wakhe aye awujike laphaya, ucoshwe zinkuku. Athi uma ekucabanga konke lokhu, buthi damu utshwala, angabe esantenga kakhulu, ahambele phezu, aye angene ekamelweni labo, akhumule izingubo ezingcoliswe libhala, afake ezinye.

Amemeze: “Bhuti!”

Pho, umemeza bani? Ngokuphazima kweso okungumfanyana kwakhe ebese kulapha.

“Biza uStifan nize naye lapha.” Aphume uBhuti, babuye noStifan.

“Stifan!”

“Ompi!”

“Ngithatheni noBhuti bantabami ningiphakamise ningikhweze phezu kwekhabethe. Uyabona, kufuneka uMfundisi akhiphe imali engehlisa lapha. Ngizokunika umpondwe, Stifan, nawe futhi Bhuti. Ningamtsheli unyoko niyezwa.”

“Siyezwa.”

Bamdumele sekuqine nemizimba abafana sebezohola imali eningi kangaka. Baye bambeke phezulu kwekhabethe.

“Biza uManamuza Stifan!”

Endaweni yokuba enze njengoba ethunyiwe uStifan, asuke abange kunina.

“Hhawu, Mnumzane Mabifeni! Wenzani lapho?” kusho umkaStimbolo.

“UnguManamuza wena?”

“Hhayi, Mnumzane Mabifeni, uManamuza angeza kanjani ngoba uye okhuluma noMfundisi?”

“Biza uManamuza. Okabani lomntwana ozocelwa?”

Aphume egqishazela umkaStimbolo aye la ekhona uManamuza. Afike akhulumele endlebeni kuyena. Isukele phezulu into kaNomadinane, lokhu phela manje bonke isibatshelile ukuthi yona ingubani kwelaseButhunqe. Zisho izicathulo zithi. “kle! kle?” zibheke ekamelweni likaMabifeni. Awuvule umnyango umkaStimbolo angene uManamuza.

“Nguwe lowo Manamuza?” Aqalaze uManamuza ezwa izwi livela phezulu, kodwa engaliboni ukuthi livelaphi.

“Yebo mnumzane. Ukuphi?”

“Usukhohliwe yini? Ingani wathi kukhwelwa emthini? Manje angithi ikhabethe libazwe ngomuthi? Ngisemthini manje.”

“Bese ngididekile. Kepha, umuthi wasendlini yomkhwekazi? Umkhwenyana akangeni endlini yomkhwekazi. Lichilo elibi lelo.”

“Akulutho lokho lapha eGoli Manamuza.”

“Cha, phela sifuna umsebenzi wengane siwuphathe ngobunono, ingabikho impoxo.”

“Abakunaki lokho lapha eGoli.”

“Uma kunjalo-ke, kulungile, umuthi nalowo ngoba phela esilungwini kakade imithi itshalwa abelungu. Ayisekho imithombe emizini yabanumzane.”

“Kunjani ngalena?”

“Qha, kusahamba kahle.”

“Ungibonile unkosikazi ngingena? Bese ngehlulekile ukuhamba, abafana beboleka ibhala bangithwala. Sengingcono kodwa manje. Ngiyabona uvalo lungishaye kakhulu emnyango.”

“Uvalo lwami?”

“Iyeke leyo Manamuza, Eyami ngedwa. Ngilungile uma ngilapha?”

“Ulungile, kepha-ke, awu, abakhwenyana bazongena endlini yomkhwekazi?”

“Hamba ubabize wena.”

Zihlekleze izicathulo zibheke kuMfundisi.

“Wo, nina bakwaMadubedube usefikile umnumzane. Sengilithumele-ke izwi kuyena lokuthi nizokokhela umlilo, nicela ubuhlobo obuhle. Ke, isiko lakithi thina Zulu lithi uma kuzokwenziwa lokhu, labo abazokokhela umlilo basuke bezokwehlisa umnumzane emthini—ngoba phela

ingane yakhe lena kubuhlungu nakuyena ukwehlukana nayo. Ngizwa-ke ukuthi laba abakwaMabifeni, abayiloZulu oya ngasemaBhaceni, bona bethulwa emthini ngompondo abahlanu.’’

Laba bangakwaMfundisi bathule babhekane kuqala, ebese kusuka idikoni elikhulu, lihoshe isikhwama phansi kwejazi, lisikhiphe isikhova lisibeke etafuleni phambi komkaMabifeni.

‘‘Sithi siyabucela ubuhlobo obuhle nina bakwaMabifeni.

Yehlikani emthini. Kodwa-ke, thina ngokwakithi, siyaye sithande ukuba umnumzane simbone ehlike emthini. Ukuze amasiko avumelane, sihlanganise ubuhlobo obuhle, sibona kufanele simbone.’’

Asukume uManamuza. ‘‘Wozani nina bakwaMadubedube.’’ Zisho izicathulo zibeke ekamelweni, kulandela uMfundisi namadikoni nawo onke amadoda. Ahlale phansi athule nje uAnti Mabifeni ngoba engakazi ukuthi indaba izoqulelwa ekamelweni lakhe. Baye bangene, uManamuza eseyiphethe ngazo zombili izandla imali.

‘‘Nampa abakwaMadubedube abathize bathi bathi; bathi Mabifeni omuhle, ogeza ilanga lingakaphumi, ngoba uthi angageza seliphumile lifiphale ilanga, bathi yehlika ngoba bafuna ukukhuluma nawe; bafuna isihlobo esihle; bazokokhela umlilo. Bathi-ke nantu uthi ozobambelela kulona inxa wehla.’’ Amnike ompondo abahlanu abaliphapha. Abathathe uMabifeni ehlike.

Uyafika phansi, uhlala phezu kombhede, uyathula nje. Aqhubeke uManamuza, lokhu lapha emnyango isiphelele yonke iBenoni: ‘‘Ke, uma uMabifeni esehlikile emthini,

avulwa umlomo, ngalokhu thina esithi yingqaqamazinyo, ukuze akhulume. ’’ Uthule nje uMabifeni.

‘‘Ngelakithi isiko-ke ingqaqamazinyo ngompondo ababili.’’

Aziggashule izikhova ezimbili zawopondo umdikoni omkhulu azinike uManamuza.

‘‘Nabo-ke Mabifeni omuhle, bathi amazinyo akwaMabifeni mawaqaqueke.’’

Athi ukuwehlela uMabifeni, lokhu nalokhu abeekuhabulile sekuthe damu, ikakhulu ngenxa yovalo ngokucishizwa ngunkosikazi uma uke wonakala lomsebenzi omkhulu kangaka wakwakhe.

‘‘Abakwabani bona lababantu?’’

‘‘SingabakwaMadubedube mhlekazi,’’ kusho umdikoni.

‘‘Ningena ngobani laph’ekhaya?’’

‘‘Ngentombazane uMagileta.’’

Abese ethi nyelele uManamuza, eya la kulala khona uMagileta. Kuthi ingani bezimncamisa izicathulo uma zikhala, manje angabe esafuna ukuba zibange umsindo, zone umsebenzi wamahumusha ewuhambisa kahle kangaka. Aye angene ekamelweni. Ufica umkaStimbolo uyayiduduza intombazane isakhala. Ayiduduze masinya noManamuza.

‘‘Thula mntanami, akonakele lutho. Zonke izinto ziphethwe yimi manje. Ngiziphethe ngendlela yawokhokho bakho. Uyoba nenhlanhla lomshado ngalokho. Nomfundisi ujabula kabi ngoba konke kuhambe ngesizotha.’’

Izesule izinyembezi intombazane, igeze ubuso, lokhu ibisigqokile abese eyibamba ngesandla uManamuza, ayihole aye angene nayo ekamelweni la kukhona abakhongi ilandelwa amanye.

“Uyabazi lababantu Margaret?” kusho uyise.

“Yebo baba.”

“Ubazi ngobani?”

“NgoFiniyase.”

“Abakwabani?”

“AbakwaMadubedube.”

“Kulungile-ke, mntanami.”

Ayithathe ngesandla futhi intombazane uManamuza aye ayibeke lapho eyisuse khona.

“Niyabona-ke banumzane bakwaMadubedube, ukuze sikhulume kahle sizoya endlini okuhlalwa kuyona.” kusho umnumzane. Basuke bonke baye lapho kusale khona unina kaMagileta.

“Kushukanwe-ke lapho balobolisane baze baqede. Kungene izidlo zasemadolobheni, amatafula asecebezela. Kudliwe kube kuhle kube njeya, lokhu uManamuza uhleli eduze kukaMfundisi. Yena esakhe isihlalo kasisondele etafuleni njengezinye. Uthe qhwa kusona, wahlalela kude, ukudla ulokhu ekuthi hloko ngemfologo khona laphaya, inyama lena ayiqobe kahle kuqala ngommese, abese ewubeke phansi, ayidle-ke ngemfologo. Athi noma ezama ukulingisa laba abanye, kubonakale ukuthi akezwani

nalendlela. Acele ukhezo. Bamnike lona, akungenele ngalo ukudla.”

Kudliwe-ke kuthi kungaqedwa bahambe laba basemzini. Kube yisikhathi-ke libuya lonke iBenoni, lizobungaza uManamuza. Bambonge abanumzane ngobuciko bakhe, kuphuzwe kube njeya, kwehlukane kujatshulwe.

Ngalelolanganga afike ebusuku kwaStimbolo uManamuza ufika usethwelwe litaxi. Antenge aye angene endlini yabo benoManephu. Amfice uManephu esezisonge ngombhadlwana wakhe engosini.

“Bafika abanumzane baseBenoni manje! Bafika besuthi, behambela phezulu. Thina zihlwa silala izisu zikhecekile, lithi lingashona sikhumbule imigojana yethu.”

Athule nje uManamuza. Aqhubeke lona omunye: “Suka! kusho lona omunye.”

“Sekuthiwa suka kimina namuhla? Kuyosa okungaliyo. Ngiyobona ukuthi uBajwayele uyomtholelwa ngubani.”

“Kade wawumfuna ungamtholi. Sekuze kwaphela imali ngithi mlande ungabuyi naye. Manje sengaziwa ngabantu abakhulu kulelizwe. Ngikhulumile nabo; najabula ngoba ngibaphathele umsebenzi kahle. Bathe bazozama ukungisiza.”

“Usungihlamuke ngempela Manamuza? Mina engakuthola ejele ungazi muntu? Wo, akuqali ngami ukuba umbeki wenkosi azithele isigcwagcwa. Kodwa uze ukukhumbule lokhu, Manamuza, ukuthi mina nginguManephu igama lami. UBajwayele ngingamncinza kanye, anyamalale uze ufe ungazange umthole!”

“Siyokhuluma nawe kusasa, wena Manephu.”

Balale.

ISAHLUKO XI

Uvuka ekuseni uManephu uthi kuManamuza: “Uyabona Manamuza, mntakababa . . . Konje akusashiwo ukuthi Manamuza? Sekuthiwa Ompi nakuwe? Wo, akulutho nje lokho mntakaNomadinana, yizinto zamahumushana alapha eGoli asephephuka nomoya. Mina ngizokubiza ngelakho lomdabu.”

Aphendule ngelokunqonga lona omunye, lokhu akakuvuki embhedeni: “Ufunani?”

“Sengifile ugwayi. Loyampondo onginike wona mntanenkosini ngiwushutheke lapha, ngibona nami ngehlelwa yinhlanhla. Kepha-ke, izandla zokuguga kazisakwazi ukuba into ziyifake endaweni yayo. Mhlawumbe ngithe ngithi ngiwufaka esikhwameni, ngawufaka emoyeni njena, azicoshela lamagundanyana azalwa ngumkaStimbolo. Uma ubungangithi falakahla ngoshelenyana ababili bengingahamba ngiye ngikhokhe isikweletu seJuda elingalapho sizoyongconda khona, ukubona intombazane. Ngingeke ngiqhamuke ngingayiphethe lemali. Linolaka leliyaJuda. Lingathatha inqina lengulube ligxuzwa umhluzi lingijikijele ngalo phakathi kwabantu. Awulazi wena . . .”

“Awu, Menephu, abafazi basesinkompulazi bakushaya ngamalokwe, amaJuda akujukujele ngamanqina ezingulube?”

“Ukuhlupheka mntanomuntu. Uma sekukubi ngempela kungasuka kuphume wonke umndeni walo, umkalo, nomakoti bakwalo, nabakhwekazi, bangisukele bonke kuthi hlokololo, indaba esihamba ngayo nawe ize izwiwe yilo lonke ilokishi, kanti sesimtholile lapho ekhona uBajwayele, noma wena udane uthi mina kangenzi lutho nje . . . Uma-ke sike savela phambi kwamehlo abantu ngendlela yeJuda,

izitha zami ziyosuka ziyotshela uBajwayele ukuthi wena uyamfuna, amahuzu amcashise. Likhulu iGoli leli Manamuza; ungaladeleli. Umuntu angaduka kulo ungaphindi umthole.”

“Cha, likhulu lona . . .” asheshe athule uManamuza, ekhumbula into ayibone eSofaya, wabuye wayoyibona eAlexandra Township, kuzo zonke lezizindawo esiwa nguManephu ukubona iJozibele. Uthula nje ushaywa luvalo lokuthi uma engake aye eSofaya uBajwayele kungamhla engephinde amthole.

Enye inhliziyi ithi akenqabe nemali uManamuza, ebona izinto zihamba kancane. Kanti uManephu yena umsebenzi uyawenza ngempela nje. Okumbambezelayo ukuba usuke aqale ngokuba ayokumba imigodi kuqala, ngesinye isikhathi lize lishone elibele yilokhu.

“Wena Manephu usungenza umtapo wemali.”

“Phinde mntakababa. Ukuba ngitapa kuwe uthi ngabe ngisasebenza? Ukuba unemali engangeyokuphala izikhumba ngabe kade bayithatha abafana lapha eGoli. Into, nami ngingumuntu oqotho, ofuna ukuba aziphilise. Ngivuka ngiqhwandaqhwande openyana lapha nalaphaya ukuze ngihambe ngiyovalala amacala ami. Indoda nawe uyazi ukuthi ihlala namacala njalo nje.”

“Kunjalo Manephu.” Abakhiphe osheleni ababili anike umhlobo wakhe. Abonge ancincize uManephu athi: “Ho. uze ungibheke namuhla lapho ngiyoqhamuka khona. Ulalele ukuthi ngiyoqhamuka ngihlabelela ngithini. Ngiyobe sengibuya nezwi lokuthi landa uBajwayele wena.”

Athi eqeda ukukhuluma uManephu abe ephonseka emnyango, agcwale indlela. Aqale athule uManamuza esacabanga. Kuthi dukuduku abese esuka elandela

uManephu. Usuka nje sekukhona nenhliziywana yokucasukwa ukuba uManephu elokhu emenza ingane ngoba ebona ukuthi uManamuza akakwazi ukuba azifunele ingane yakhe. Aphume esangweni, aqalaze, abone uManephu ehla ngomgwaqo, asuke emlandela. Akuqalazwa eGoli, ulokhu uhamba songathi uyafika uhambe wethuswa yizitezi. Ngakho uManephu ahambe njalo engazange abheke ngemuva. Athwethwe uManephu ephuma kulomhubhe angene kulo aze aye afike komunye ophakathi kwamajalidi sengathi kuchithwa kuwona izibi zonke zedolobha. Ngaphakathi kothango kwakhiwe, kuqashiwe, kukhona abomdabu nabaxube igazi. Izingane zidlala ebaleni, zihlanganise ngomsindo.

Banengi-ke abantu bayehla bayenyuka lapha emhubheni. Angaze abonakala kalula uManamuza phakathi kwabo. Ahambe njalo uManephu emhubheni aze aye angene esangweni elithile. Esabe ukulandela uManamuza. Eme eduze kwesango, alunguze ngaphakathi ngembobo okhetheni. Ambone umhlobo wakhe ngaphakathi enyuka eya lapho kukhona abesimane abakhuluma isiBhunu nesiSuthu. Uyafika laphaya uManephu uyakhuluma naye ngesiBhunu. Kumcasule lokhu uManamuza ukuba kube khona into eyenziwa nguManephu imehlule yena. Athathe isikhathi eside uManephu ekhuluma; akhulume aze aphakamise izandla zibheke phezulu efunga. Uthe esakubuka konke lokhu ngembobo uManamuza, wabona uManephu esengena endlini nalababesimame akhuluma nabo. Wema embotsheni, esakhohlwe ukuthi konje wenzenjani.

Kwathi nya, nya, uthe ebona uManamuza kwakuvuleka umnyango obe uvaliwe kufika uManephu. Kwaphuma kuwona umsindo owesabekayo, amazwi kodwa kungawesimame, bethetha ngazo sonke izilimi zaseSoti-Afrika. Lenhlanganisela ingezwakali kuManamuza. Uthe

esamangaliswe yilokho, wabona uManephu ephuma eqhantsha, ehlehla emnyango, ebaleka. Ulandelwa yizalukazi zakhona ezikhuluphele, zihambe zimbhula ngamalokwe asegugile, nangamasaka kanye nemishanelo. Omunye umshanelo umshaye uManephu aye afumbeke phansi. Kufike kuManamuza ukuthi njengoba lempi engaphakathi iyeza, noma isekude, akabe eqala yena ebaleka. Kepha abuye azikhuze. Uma ebaleka, basale bambulale uManephu, uyoba yini? Anamathele embotsheni.

Uthe ezwa nje, esalokhu equlusile, kwakuhlala isicathula esishisayo ngemuva kuye. Wethuka wacishe wawa phansi ethi ngamaphoyisa. Uthe ephenduka wabona izinsizwa ezine, ezinye ngezomdaby, ezinye ngabantwana bamantombazane. Zimehlo abomvu zonke. Zimbuke phansi zimbuke phezulu kanyekanye. Aphakamise isandla athi:

“Awu, nina basendlunkulu, ngenzeni?”

Akaligwinyanga lelo. Zakhwela zazehlela izinsizwa kuyena ngesicathulo. Pho, lokhu ubhayizisa okwempatha yaseButhunqe ngempela engasazi nesibhakela, ehluleke nokuvika uManamuza. Bamngqubuze bamngqubuze laba abane aze awele phansi, alale athi thwi. Bakhumule amabhande bamdaxabule ngawo bethetha bethi: “Ya? Wena mseshi? He?” Abasathe lapho ephaphama ethi uthi: Hhayi angisiye umseshi. Ngihambe ngifuna intombazane yami eyabaleka ekhaya!” basuke bathi: “Kuthiwe ilapha? Ubani okutshela ukuthi lapha sifihla abantu ababaleke emakhaya?”

Bamdinde bamdinde aphinde aquleke futhi. Bamthathe baye bambeke lapho umhubhe ungena khona emgwaqeni omkhulu, babaleke. Alale lapho uManamuza engasezwa lutho imizuzwana. Kuthi ngelikade ezwe ethintwa ngumuntu lapha eceleni. Athi ukunyakaza, elinga

ukuvuka. Ahlangatshezwe yizwi elilusizi lithi: “Hhawu, mntakababa, ubekwa yini la? Udliwa yini kangaka? Nguwe lona osunjena?”

Athi uyaphenduka uManamuza kufumaniseke ukuthi bamshaye kabana noma engalimalanga. Umzimba ucubekile. Amvuse uManephu emhlalisa ngesinqe.

“Kodwa udliwa yini kangaka mntakababa?”

Kuqale ukuthi dwi kuManamuza.

“Wo, qha, Manephu ngificwe yizigebengu kabana lapha zangishaya zaphonse zangilimaza kabana. Ngiyabona zingivusele isenyelo engasitholiswa lihashi ngivela kwaSonkohlo.”

Kuthi akahleke uManephu; kubuye kuthi akabuze ukuthi uze wathi elimala njena uManamuza ubeyaphi. Kodwa azibambe.

“Zinjalo phela izigebengwana zalapha eGoli, mntakaNomadinane. Umuntu ziganga ngaye libalele lithe saka.”

Asuke lapho ayofuna ikebhe, limthathe limuse ekhaya uManamuza. Atatazele uManephu efudumeza amanzi, lokhu umkaStimbolo akekho; amthobe umhlobo wakhe, athele umanyazini, kushunqe kube njeya. NomkaStimbolo athi lapho efika atshelwe lendaba, naye axhamazele nezimehlane eza kuManamuza. Lonke lolusizo kuthi ngemuva kwezinsukwana lumsindise.

Usinda nje inhliziyo kayisekho. Uselokhu evuka ekhononda njalo ekuseni ethi ehlushwa liphupho elibi. Ubasalale aphuphe kusha umuzi wakhe ekhaya. Manje kube songathi angabe eshambile. Ithi enye inhliziyo akasale eshamba

noma engayitholanga intombazane. Kepha abuye acabange uZulumacansi nommeli wakhe. Asibone isikhonzi sasenkantolo sesizilandile izinkomo zikaZulumacansi ezazilobole uBajwayele. Athi angeke ahambe lengane ayishiye ngemuva. Uthi ngokunye ukusa ecabanga ngaleliphupho eselimphe kabi, uzwa uManephu ethi kuyena: “Yenza ushelenyana wokugcina-ke mntakababa ngiyozifunela upholoni wokugcina ngoba phela usuyahamba.” Acasukwe kucinane isifuba uManamuza, ezwa kuthiwa useyahamba engakakwazi lokho yena. Kuqale kuthi akale nemali. Kodwa abuye ayikhiphe. Abuye naye uManephu, amsike ngobunono, badle, nesinkwa.

Kuthe kuphakathi nokudla uManephu wabona uManamuza engaseneme. Akaze akunaka kakhulu lokhu, wanamathela kupholoni. Wasukuma uManamuza, wathi ukuphumela phandle. Uthe ebuya wase ephethe induku. Wanele wangena nje endlini wayigaxa emahlombe kuManephu; wayiphonsa wayiphindelela.

“Kahle Manamuza, hhawu! Sekwenzenjani?” Waphendula ngenduku okaNomadinane waseButhunqe bukaMagayi. Kwabhiza lucezu lwesinkwa lwaya le; kwasuka lucezwana lukapholoni lwathatha ngejubane lwaye lwaphuma ngomnyango, lwacoshwa ngamakati.

“Kahle Manamuza bo! Nangu umuntu eganga ngami. Kahle sikhulume phela!”

“Kawungitsheli ngani ukuthi wahamba kanjani mhla ngilimalayo? Uphi uBajwayele? Kade kwasa ungethembisa yena. Lemali engilokhu ngikunika yona uthi ngeyokudlala? Landa uBajwayele!” Asho ayigaxe.

Ethuke kakhulu uManephu uma evukelwa nguManamuza kanjena. Abe novalo lokuthi mhlawumbe useyazi uManamuza ukuthi mhla eshaywayo wayesephuze waze