

DOUBLE TROUBLE

AGNES KIMBERLEY

Thandi arrived back from school to find her gogo crying. Her sister Babalwa was yelling at her. Thandi couldn't believe what her twin sister was saying to Gogo, who was very old, and nearly blind. She had been taking care of the girls since they were babies.

"I don't know how you expect me to eat this food!" shouted Babalwa.

"There's nothing wrong with the food, Babalwa," said Gogo softly, "It's a perfectly good stew."

"I hate stew!" Babalwa threw her lunch in the dustbin. "I'm hungry, Gogo. Now make me a sandwich."

"Oh, Babalwa," Gogo moaned, but she got up and began taking the bread out of the bread bin.

"And stop calling me Babalwa!" Babalwa yelled at her Gogo again. "My name is Thandi. Surely you know the difference between the two of us?"

Lately Babalwa had been trying to convince everyone that she was Thandi. It was as if she was ashamed of the way she was behaving and wanted the blame to fall on her twin.

"Hello, Gogo," said Thandi, walking up to her and kissing her on the cheek.

"I can tell you apart even if nobody else can," Gogo kissed her back. "How are you? Did you have a good day at school?"

"Yes," Thandi smiled at Gogo. "Sit down, Gogo, and I'll make the sandwiches. The stew smells



good. I'll dish a bowl for myself."

"I'll have one too, with a slice of bread." Gogo sat down gratefully.

"Why do you always have to be so nice?"

Babalwa sneered.

"Why do you always have to be so bad?" Thandi asked her. "What on earth is the matter with you, sis? You're going to get yourself expelled from school if you carry on the way you are."

That night Thandi lay awake, unable to sleep. It was about three months ago now that Babalwa had started behaving very strangely. Thandi wondered if something had happened and her sister wasn't telling her.

Babalwa had been suspended from school for a week. It was like she didn't care.

"Why are you sitting there staring at me like that?" Babalwa suddenly opened her eyes and looked at her sister.

"I'm just wondering when you are going to stop doing all these bad things, Babalwa."

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Published in South Africa by Fundza Literacy
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PEDAL FORWARD

MOTEBANG DISENE

I was walking with my uncle from the mall to home when a group of my friends passed us at speed. I coughed from the dust they were making.

"Exe, Mtibza," my friend Sboniso greeted me. "You better come and witness when the X Factor beats Double-X Boys in Siluma Park."

He sped away after I promised that I'd be there. I lied.

How was I supposed to go when I did not have a bicycle? All of my peers had their own bicycles – it was only me who didn't. This made me isolate myself from my friends and peers. I played marbles alone while they rode their bicycles.

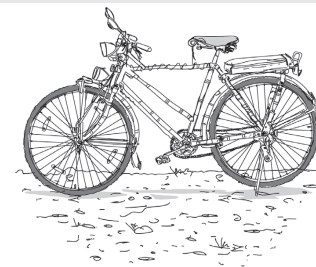
"What will they be doing there?" My uncle saw through my lies. I told him how it sucked not having a bike and that I had to watch from the far side of the park with girls when other boys were racing and stunting on their bikes.

My uncle simply replied, "I will get you a bike, don't worry."

I was so happy. Every day I would clean his room and run errands for him without expecting something in return. I knew he'd be getting me a gift that would be the dearest gift to me. I polished his shoes, mopped his stoep, and did everything that I had never done when he had asked me to before.

My uncle surprised me. He didn't buy me a brand-new bike; instead he opted to fix and resurrect an old one for me. He used a frame that had been abandoned on top of his roof. The only thing he bought were tyres; the other parts he collected from people he knew.

On Saturdays we sat in the backyard and fixed my bicycle. As each weekend passed, the bicycle



started coming to life. I had the luxury of witnessing the making of my bike. Me and my uncle worked on it; he could work while he drank and smoked. The only time we stopped was when he started to get drunk.

Phew! After tiring months, my bike was completed. After putting on the chain, my uncle lit another cigarette. Puffing out the smoke, he asked, "So what are you going to name it?"

Mmm. I hadn't thought about that yet.

"I think I should name it Spencer – for 'speed' and 'enter' because I'll be entering races with speed." We both laughed out loud.

My first ride on Spencer took me back in time to when Sbonelo taught me how to ride a bike. He gave me a push-start and yelled, "Pedal! Don't stop pedalling forward!"

Oh, man! Look at me now, riding my own special bike, I thought on that first ride. It almost felt like Sbonelo was behind me, yelling.

Me and Spencer officially got the X Factor badge. We were officially in the crew. We did wheelies, spinning around like those BMWs in the So You Think You Can Spin show.

Even nowadays, when I wake up late, I use Spencer to get to school on time. I also run errands quickly and efficiently because of Spencer's help. Though he has changed colourwise, Spencer's help is still, importantly, the same. ■

A BEAM OF LIGHT

LILITHA GIQO

On a Saturday evening in a labour ward at the Groote Schuur hospital a young girl had just given birth to a beautiful baby girl whom she named Lilitha. Lilitha means 'a beam of light'. This teen mother saw this baby as a light – a glimpse of hope in her dark-filled life. My mom (the young girl) had just buried her parents a few weeks before she gave birth to me. Many times she thought of committing suicide, but I gave her a reason not to. Falling pregnant at an early age and losing both parents at the same time is not an easy thing, especially for a teenager. But my mom survived it all because of me. I am Lilitha 'Hope' Gqo. I gave my mom a purpose in life. ■



Write a paragraph

Write about your name – who gave it to you, what it means to you.

MY NAME

MAGOLENG WA SELEPE

Nomgqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa
Look what they have done to my name...
the wonderful name of my great-great-grandmother
Nomgqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa
The burly bureaucrat was surprised
What he heard was music to his ears
'Wat is daai, sê nou weer?'
'I am from Chief Daluxo Velayigodle of emalu podweni
And my name is Nomgqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa.'
Messia, help me!
My name is simple
And yet so meaningful
But to this man it is trash...
He gives me a name
Convenient enough to answer his whim...
I end up being
Maria...
I...
Nomgqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa



BLACK AND PROUD

PHUMLA KHUMALO

Sweet as sugarcane,
skin black like soil, and
eyes shining as a coin.
I'm glowing as the morning sunshine
and slow as the evening sunset.
Healthy as a lemon tree,
strong as a stallion and nothing
can prove me wrong.
I'm black and proud
I can read what's written!
Speak what's spoken!
I can do whatever can be done!

I'm black and proud
I'm intelligent and also
talented like you.
I'm stable like you and
more stable than you.
It's true I'm stronger than you
I'm black and proud
I cry when I'm sad,
shout when I'm mad,
laugh when happy...
I'm black and proud.

THE DOO-BE-DOO SONG

ZAKHELE MKHIZE

I remember when Freshlyground composed the 'Doo-Be-Doo-Be-Doo' song. Those days were lit. I remember the whole country was happy – that song brought pure joy. I remember my grandmother and grandfather beshayo ama-get down. We would laugh at them. Those were happy times, even the beatings disappeared in those times. I remember my mother played that song over and over. She would dance all around the house.



Every time that song came on the radio we would be overwhelmed with excitement. Oh boy! those were days of laughter and happiness. I remember that people came together and were sensitive to the needs of others and their right to be different.

MY GRANDMA THANDI, MY HOME

SINGATHIWE ATHIWE MTHETHWA

Urban can feel so foreign sometimes. I have been dreaming about going back home a lot these days. I miss my Gogo. I imagine walking through the gate and the first thing I'd hear is her shouting at anything she sees wrong in the house, with the loud jazzy sounds of Hugh Masekela in the background, and the smell of freshly cut grass, egcekeni, home. It's true what they say: "Home has never been the walls but the people".

I remember when I was younger, about seven or eight, she would yell, "Hambisa okwe-lady uziqhenye". It only started making sense the more I grew. I remember she would take me wherever she went and show off her first granddaughter, not that I am complaining. I kinda loved the attention, my favourite was hers. She always looked at me like she'd never seen anything more precious.

She would make and sing music with me and made sure I was fed, more like overfed. How I wish to come back to Gogo Thandiwe's soft, filling dombolo and beans, but that's one wish even God can't make true. I can't come back to her shouting, her food nor the loud jazz music anymore.

Dad says years back she woke up one morning and started knitting in preparation for a baby girl. When he asked her, she replied, "Uyeza uSingathiwe."

"But Mama, who is that?" my Dad would ask in

curious confusion. Dad says that she would just smile and say, "She is my Singathiwe."

A few weeks later my parents learnt they were pregnant and it was a girl.

Till today nothing flatters me more than realising she knew about my arrival before my parents even figured they had conceived. Most found it to be expected since she had a gift and was a sangoma, but to me it meant more.

I remember feeling lemon was sweeter compared to when the thief took her and we had no choice but to let go. I swear I felt robbed, why do I feel that way? Is it because they hid it from me till two days before they, well we, laid her to rest. Was it because I never got to say goodbye?

After the funeral when everyone was gone all that lingered was the scent of her. I swore if I threw that scent in a wishing well all the wishes in the world would come true.

Silver lining: though she is physically gone I know she is with me everywhere I go. She is my guardian angel. My grandma Thandi. ■

Write your memories



What are some of your memories? Write at least three sentences (or paragraphs), each one starting with the words: I remember...