



Rise to fame

Zimkhitha Mlanzeli

CHARACTERS:

JOSEPH:	Matric learner	LAUREN:	Lerato's friend
ATHI:	Joseph's best friend	KHANYA:	Lerato's friend
LERATO:	Popular girl in matric	ZINZI:	A feisty girl in matric
NOZI:	Quiet, bookish matric girl		

SCENE 1

It's break time. Joseph is sitting on a wall at the sports field. Athi comes and joins him. Zinzi is sitting behind Joseph and Athi is listening to their conversation.

JOSEPH: Hey, man, howzit?

ATHI: *(giving Joseph a special handshake)* Eita! Oh, you won't believe this. Check here.

Athi hands Joseph his phone. Joseph looks at the photo of the girl on the screen.

JOSEPH: Who's this?

ATHI: That's Lizalise – my date for the dance.

JOSEPH: You found a date? When? I mean congrats, bra.

ATHI: Thanks, man. She goes to church with me. We're in the same worship team.

JOSEPH: I thought you said those girls are stuck up – holier-than-thou types.

ATHI: They are, but she's different. We're in the same baptismal class. I've got to see another side of her.

JOSEPH: *(faking enthusiasm)* That's cool, man.

ATHI: I must say, I'm impressed. She's tight – a serious five, easy!

JOSEPH: Yes, she is. That must put her at the top of your leader board!

ATHI: She's right up there – above Prudence.

JOSEPH: Good for you! I haven't even got a leader board.

ATHI: Well, you know you can't really get a date if you don't ask anyone. You know that's how it works, right?

JOSEPH: I don't know. I kinda feel like the right girl is out there waiting for me – waiting to fall into my lap.

ATHI: You're just too chicken to ask anyone. No jokes – the dance is next week, bra.

JOSEPH: What's the big deal about this stupid dance anyway? I don't even want to go.

ATHI: What?! I know you're lying. We've been talking about this dance for three years.

JOSEPH: Yeah – and I've grown up since.

ATHI: You cannot not go!

JOSEPH: You'll be cool on your own. Anyways, you won't be on your own. You'll be with your five – easy!

Lerato and her friends walk past them giggling. They sit on the steps close to the boys.

ATHI: *(jerking his head towards Lerato)* I see you're still holding a candle for that one.

JOSEPH: Very funny.

ATHI: It's strange. Didn't you two used to be best buddies once upon a time before she changed and went all ice princess and diva.

JOSEPH: I guess. But I'm not in her league now, that's for sure.

ATHI: Have you tried? I mean ...

JOSEPH: I know the kind of guy Lerato dates and I'm not him.

ATHI: But I don't get it. You're a good-looking guy and can get any girl you want. Okay, maybe you're right about Lerato, but any other girl.

JOSEPH: Ja ne, life is safer when you have no ambition.

ATHI: You feel me? You gotta lower your bar and go for ... that girl.

Athi points to a girl sitting across the school playground near the tuckshop.

JOSEPH: Naah!

ATHI: *(laughing)* You mean she'll squash you and break your bones.

Zinzi leans over and interrupts their conversation.

ZINZI: The way you guys talk about girls, you don't deserve to get a date! You make me sick!

Athi and Joseph turn to look at Zinzi.

ATHI: *(laughing)* Hey, you're just jealous. I bet you don't even have a date. You're just desperate for my handsome friend here to ask you.

ZINZI: In your dreams! I'd rather go with my brother. I wouldn't waste my time with you losers! You're pathetic! The way you talk about girls as if they're objects, things, not human beings with feelings!

Zinzi walks off disgusted with Athi and Joseph.

ATHI: Hey, she's given me an idea. Bradley is going with his little sister!

JOSEPH: I haven't got a little sister in case you hadn't noticed. It's simple – I'm not going.

ATHI: All I'm saying, Joe, is that there is no way you are not going to go!

Keenan and Margie walk past holding hands. When they walk past Lerato's group, Lauren and Khanya gasp. Lerato is looking down at her phone.

LAUREN: *(looking at the couple)* OMG – they're official! I can't believe it! Just yesterday he was with you, Lerato.

LERATO: *(looking at a screen pic of her matric dress)* Oh, please! They won't last.

LAUREN: *(taking the phone from Lerato)* Let's see your dress again. This is gorgeous. You'll definitely take the crown.

KHANYA: You'll be hot. They can't touch you.

LERATO: *(clicking her tongue and tossing her weave over her shoulder)* Keenan will be sorry he ever messed with me. Nobody dumps me and gets away with it.

LAUREN: Yes, friend. Without you, there is no Keenan. He won't stay popular for long. Right, Khanya?

KHANYA: *(rolling her eyes)* Yes, you're the hottest girl at this school. You'll be fine. You'll replace Keenan in no time.

The school bell rings and they start walking to class. Zinzi is walking behind them. Nozi enters carrying lots of books. She bumps into Lerato and her pile of books scatter on the ground.

LERATO: *(shouting)* Watch where you're going – freak!

NOZI: I'm sorry ...

LERATO: Don't speak to me. You're contaminating my air with your 'freakness'. *(to her girlfriends)* Now there's a girl who won't be asked to the dance.

ATHI: *(coming over with Joseph)* Hey, that's not nice. She said she was sorry!

LERATO: And who are you – her bodyguard? Look, girls, it's the dynamic duo – Harry Potter and The Nutty Professor.

KHANYA: *(to Athi and Joseph)* I'm sorry, do we know you?

ATHI: Don't be stupid, Khanya. I may have changed a bit since we all started Grade 1 together, but not that much.

KHANYA: Well, you've picked up some weight along the way, that's for sure.

LERATO: And, Joseph, I'm afraid you've just been left way behind, honey. You still have a voice somewhere in there? I mean, there's the strong silent type, but I think you've taken that a bit too far. I can't even remember what your voice sounds like.

KHANYA: Wasn't it all high and squeaky?

The girls laugh.

ZINZI: *(comes up and helps gather Nozi's books)* You know, Lerato, you and your princesses should go to the dance with these pathetic boys. You have so much in common. All you care about is how 'hot' you are ... and that's all those boys care about too. What you look like. I heard them talk. They deserve girls like you. *(laughs)* Then they'd learn what's really important.

LERATO: *(to Zinzi)* They deserve us – are you crazy? You are the kind of girl they deserve. You've got such a big mouth. Why don't you ask one of them yourself. Shame! Two freaks together – a match made in hell.

Lerato and her friends laugh as they strut off. Joseph helps Athi and Zinzi pick up the remainder of Nozi's books.

JOSEPH: *(mumbling to Nozi)* I'm sorry about Lerato. That was rude.

NOZI: Don't you worry. I can look after myself.

ZINZI: It's about time you realised what kind of a person Lerato is, Joseph. What would you guys score her now, hey? A big fat five?

JOSEPH: *(stuttering)* No, no, really. I promise, we're not like that.

ZINZI: I don't know, you boys are all the same. Come, Nozi, let's go.

Zinzi walks back to class with Nozi, and the boys follow slowly.

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