

*Sizwe... Nyika... Nation!*¹

By

Getrude Vimbayi (Munhamo) Pfumayaramba

“what next....”

Dedicated to the people of Zimbabwe.

We are stronger together, one people!!

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Characters

Sihle Bhebhe

Chiedza

Tino

Father of Sihle

Chorus

Prologue

As the audience enters and waits for the play to begin, they sit strategically positioned in a semi-circle facing the stage. Mbira strings play in the background "Zimbabwe yakauya nehondo" instrumental. Enter Sihle stage right, holding a winnowing basket with rice in it. She is winnowing and pounding the rice in the traditional duri. Enter Chiedza stage left. She is making zviyo, a traditional meal from finger millet. They are both dressed in black and are out of mind and sight of each other, yet so close. Tino enters centre stage. A small fire is in their midst with a clay pot frying some onions and garlic and the aroma fills the air. Small twigs on the side, chirongo and a few clay pots are set backstage. Light is dimmed and warm. They sing to the instrumental. They stop.

Play begins....

Chiedza: June 16, 1976, South Africa: Troops and police open fire on a peaceful school children's demonstration. The colonial government presides over the largest massacre of its young black population since South Africa came into existence. Hundreds of them die and thousands are wounded. When the Prime Minister is asked for a comment, he simply says, "There is no crisis" (*Al Jazeera*).

Sihle: 7 April to 15 July 1994, Rwanda marks a genocide that claimed over 800 000 lives of their own kinsmen. Hutus and Tutsi now live in harmony. What is

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harmony, does it even exist? The United Nations and all the world powers stood still and watched day after day after day as people were savagely murdered. No interventions!

Tino: 1982/83, Zimbabwe: “Whenever you have operations, you are bound to have one or two incidents but not the mass graves that they talk about. Where are they? You travel the lengths and breath of Matabeleland and you won’t find a mass grave, Gukurahundi well Gukurahundi was a moment of madness.” Zimbabwe 1983. (Robert Mugabe; BBC).

Lights up. Sihle and Chiedza set up their market stalls and Tino enters.

Tino: Fresh bananas, apples orange just 50 bond each please. Get some, Madam.

Sihle: Apples, chillies and very juicy tomatoes that will bring a rich thick tasty texture to your stews, buy some for your wife... so you don’t have to complain of rubbish food. (Madomasi anemuto unonakisa usavi).

Tino: Dollar dollar for more, dollar for more, get your fresh fruit and veggies. (Dora hobo dora hobo).

Sihle: Nankama onion, amashalots masalu doba phela, 5 Rand kuphela.

Tino: Madam we even have very comfortable bras and panties only 50 cents for two and I will give you a discount if you buy more.

He laughs.

How many should I pack for you? (Mabra, mapanty, ma piticot enyu ayua)

Chiedza: Heyi heyi imi. Noise. Have you forgotten that this very noise you are making caused the council police to be called just two days ago and we were raided pano.

Tino: Haaa, so how do you suggest we sell our good “magrette thether” the Shona old queen of this market, full of wisdom?

They laugh.

Chiedza: Hoooo itai henyu, don’t say I didn’t warn you.

Tino sits down and places his products on the side as he prepares to eat. He washes his hand in a dish and waits.

Tino: Aka kamundeverere kanepamuromo aka (this little Ndebele girl is rude).

Chiedza dishes out the sadza and vegetables and meat she has been cooking and serves. They sit in a circle and get ready to eat.

Chiedza: Umwe nemumwe 2 mari yake munhu kana aguta anofarisa ka (each person gives me your \$2 I don’t want any problems of following up, yet one would have eaten and is full. When one is full usually, they become a fool).

Tino: Haaa momz kani, ah come on mother, we always pay your money every time wani.

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Chiedza: But it comes after days and I end up getting a loss, give me the money or no food.

She picks up the plate of sadza. They all hand her the money, sit and eat.

Tino: So Sihle, how did it go at the passport office? I heard you nailed it at the singing competition.

Sihle: The competition was amazing Tino. wena, (insert a song – “umoya wami awuseko lapha kangela usukhatshana kontuthu ziyathunqa, umoya wami bo hayi awuseko lapha, wona usukhatshana kontuthuziyathunqa”)

The sing together.

Tino stands up and begins to imitate an announcer.

Tino: And the winner is Sihlesenkosi Bhebhe (*they applaud her*). Over to you, Sihle.

Sihle: Awwww, thank you, thank you so much. I just want to say, eh thank you so much for choosing me and putting the city of kings on the map. We too are good at what we do and we have talents to show. I am so excited that I will be flying to Kenya for the finals of this competition and an Ndebele queen to represent Bulawayo and the nation of Zimbabwe, it's an honour.

Tino/announcer: Yes, yes, we look forward to you winning the finals and bringing the victory home.

Sihle sings another line of her winning song again, they laugh and then continue eating.

Sihle: It was a lovely night, wena.

Chiedza: Yes, it was, but the young gentleman who sang the George Benson song, haaa he was also good. He reminded me of the olden days. Haaa it was a tight competition that one.

Sihle: Yes, but I won and that's what matters.

Chiedza: Of course, you did, my daughter, and that's all that matters, you are right.

Sihle: Don't call me that.

Chiedza: Call you what?

Sihle: Your daughter.

Chiedza: It's okay I won't, I am sorry.

Heartbroken, chiedza stands up and takes her plate to the back of her stall and prepares to wash the dishes.

Tino: So how is the process going, when are you going to Kenya?

Chiedza: Are you done eating (Mapedza kudya here), I need to wash my plates.

Sihle: We are done!

(Chiedza takes the plates and also washes their hands using a jag and walks off stage and later gets back to selling).

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Tino: Tomatoes, onions, ginger and garlic, the freshest most juicest ones you can ever get from this market. You know kuno kumbare musika is where you get the freshest fruit and veggies.

Chiedza: Tomatoes, onions, ginger and garlic, the freshest most juicest ones you can ever get from this market. You know kuno kumbare musika is where you get the freshest fruit and veggies.

Tino: So, Sihle how did the passport application go?

Sihle: It went well.

Tino: Ah wow, so when are you collecting the green treasure, ha you know even I don't have a passport. Shamwari that document is gold.

Sihle: Well, I don't even have an ID.

Tino: What do you mean you don't have an ID?

Sihle: Exactly that.

Tino: Ahhh Sihle, come on you just said the process went well a minute ago.

Sihle: Can't a person just change their mind as they wish and just be able to express themselves Tino? I said it went well.

Tino: Its true what they say about Ndebele girls. Rude and arrogant, haahahahaha.

Sihle: Why are we talking about tribes now yet its just an issue of my passport?

Tino: Because you are being dramatic.

Sihle: FINE!! I don't have a birth certificate, an identification card, (angila sithupha) and I can't get a passport!!

She walks off.

Tino: Sihle, Sihle, hey Sihle, I'm sorry. I just wanted to know how far chete amana. Haaa the things that make girls upset are just out of this world honestly, just asking about particulars. (munhu aakutotsamwa)

Chiedza: Ko zvaita sei futi (what happened between you two)? (*laughing*) Your sweet talk didn't work ka. Guess what, Tino? I just sold most of my tomatoes kuseri uko I need more for tomorrow, thank you my ancestors.

Tino: Good for you. Next time I won't entertain people during business hours.

Chiedza: What happened Ko chii chaitika?

Tino: Ahhh, Sihle is just sensitive for nothing. How can she be mad over an ID? I don't even have one (zvisina kana basa. Munhu angatotsamwira chitupa)

Chiedza: Why don't you have one?

Tino: Ah chinebasa rei? (What use is it?)

Chiedza: You need to have one so that you have identity, sascum iwe.

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Tino: Well, it got lost sometime ago and I just haven't gone to get a replacement, plus the money for replacement, uuumh. Besides I don't need a document to prove who I am.

Chiedza: At least your case is not complicated.

Tino: What do you mean?

Chiedza: For Sihle, she doesn't even have a birth certificate.

Tino: Ha mother, the government is on a national initiative to give people these things. What is the issue (ko chiiko chirikunetsa)? You must read newspapers. See you later (tobatana time time).

Tino walks out. Chiedza remains standing and thinking deeply about the subject of Sihle's documentation and imagines how best she can help her but is down played.

Chiedza: It's not as simple as you think.

Chiedza tidies up the stall and puts her things in a box and as she is about to leave when Sihle enters.

Sihle: They said they wanted my parents' particulars if they were to give me the ID, then the passport.

Chiedza: And why didn't you tell me?

Sihle: Why would I tell you? You are nothing close to even knowing who I am. What were you going to do Mother Theresa? Besides I don't like you.

Chiedza moves closer to Sihle in a bid to connect.

Chiedza: Good evening Sihle (in Shona language) Waswera sei Sihle.

Sihle: Evening (Ndebele language) Sitshonile.

Chiedza: Where did you go after eating, we were looking for you, you know there is a very rich lady who came and bought a lot of the produce, we had nhasi.

Sihle: Ah good for you. Tell me Chiedzwa, why did you adopt me and Tino? I mean from the children's home there were so many of us without parents and to be picked by a Shona woman whose people killed my father boggles the mind, don't you think? Why did you pick me and Tino and not others (abanye)?

Chiedza: Because I am your mother, and mothers who love their children keep them.

Sihle: You think we don't have parents, so you want to compensate for what your people did by feeling sorry for us and taking us? I was better off there than selling tomatoes here with you, nxaa.

Chiedza: Well people in life have choice, and I just wanted you and Tino to have someone you called mother.

Sihle: You are not my mother.

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Chiedza: Okay. What is the matter (*Walks to her and embraces her in a bid to console her*).

Sihle: You know when I went to that competition it was your idea.

Chiedza: Yes

Sihle: Why?

Chiedza: Because I knew you could do it, you are a very good singer, but that boy was tough competition (*she laughs*).

Sihle: Did you want that Shona boy to be the one who won?

Chiedza: No Sihle, but why?

Sihle: Yes, you did, because each time we talk about the competition you always bring him up, why?

Chiedza: But ...

Sihle: So why do you keep bringing it up?

Chiedza: Because I want to remind you that you beat him to it, you made it mabhebhe.

Sihle: Yes, but I still can't go to Kenya because I don't have any particulars, no identity, nothing and no one.

Spotlight on Sihle.

Sihle: My name is Sihle. Sihle Bhebhe. I don't know who my mother is.

I know I just told you who I am but what if I'm not who I think I say I am? What if that isn't who I really am? Well, Growing up, all I knew was that present would one day be past, buried and forgotten like the lives that were drowned in an antelope mine shaft, the memory of what it would have been like to have a father, mother, sister or brother drowned for no one to ever know, burnt down huts with the living in them, the smell of burning flesh and the sound of painful screams to accompany it all like an orchestra, made to sing, dance and clap as it plays on, the irony, that sweet scent of the beginning of the summer rain. Uuumh I could taste it, as each drop, hit the ground, life. I dreamt of that place, a place we could erase history by humanity ubuntu that ability to know you are who you are because of the positivity in the next person, hunhu but never return to it. Thuli ethulini, Ivu kuvu (dust to dust).

As a child, I enjoyed so much.

I had a red bishop collar dress, with little strings that were hanging on the side that shook when I moved. I enjoyed playing in the dusty roads of Luveve with my friends and going to the village and seeing my friends and enjoying play time. Hopscotch, peek-a-boo 8, 9, 10, ready or not here I come!!, hide and seek and my all-time favourite (*breaks into singing*)

(*Insert game*)

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Tomato so *6

Tomato so *6

Eliza ge ah ah ge ah ah gegegege

Eliza ge ah ah ge aha hagegegege

Abala 1 2 3 4 5 6

Abala 1 2 3 4 5 6

Ubiza ba mina mina I don't want futsek (*she laughs*)

It was games all the way....

Game - (Aaah mina, anima kadeya, simoreya amina juuu jeksen!!!)

Then we all fall down.

We knew our values, love, peace, respect, unity and ubuntu. But did we really.

Mother: (*offstage*) "It's time to bathe girls".

Sihle: Ahhh, now bathing was a proper task that required strategy, especially after playing all day and knowing that the dish of water would be at the back of the house, full, well half full really because back then we had the precious liquid, so we would bathe in freezing cold water.

Mother: *bvisai hembe mupinde mumvura, Shona/Ndebele*) Take off your clothes and get into the water"....

Sihle: It was a battle and what I can just say is that back in the day I did make sure that I played a lot on the frontline which was and now is the most important one after all, thank God for Facebook, hahahaha, social media. After washing my face, I decided to forget about what was behind and did justice to my legs and feet so that I could "keep walking". As I continued with this life, I outgrew some of the games, the way of life stole my innocents. it was as though a dark cloud was slowly hovering over my township, my village, and my people. I felt it but maybe it was just me thinking.

We are one yet two different individuals yet very similar and intertwined by blood history and identity. Who we are is human yet what we have become, bitter monsters crying and screaming inside for a warm embrace and that still voice that says it's okay but....

Enter Chiedza, spotlight.

Chiedza: I was raised in the mountains of Makasasa between two valleys. The river there was always flowing from its rear. There we caught fish, did some swimming and if you were lucky, caught a glimpse of the njuzu, the water spirit. Mermaid, you call it. I fetched drinking water for the family, took the goats for a drink and took my bath ipo parwizi apo. As a child I would try to

follow the river curious to see where it really came from and ended but to no avail. No secrets, pain or struggle we were living our lives normally. One beautiful day, I had just finished bathing at the river when suddenly a troop of baboons crossed. I knew immediately that something was not right. I picked up my chirongo, clay pot, and rushed home. Our village was surrounded by trees. Murambwi Magwizi. Murambwi was tall, very tall, dark as dawn with very white teeth, his teeth were so white I believe they were like goat's milk. He had eyes that pierced my soul when he looked at me. Brown gem-like eyes. His arms were strong, feet grounded and when he walked, well you would look on to continue to see the wonder of God's creation. He was majestic. He was my friend. We met at that very river every now and then just to chat while I waited for my brother to return home with the cattle. We believe in musengabere eloping and we had a way of doing things. But it never did happen eventually. The gods had their own plans.

Sihle: That day the radio was playing very good music, I had just come from Egangeni just near our neighbourhood... the bush, to fetch firewood. The 5th Brigade, one division of the army had infiltrated our area to weed out problematic people who were a threat to the government Gukurahundi, at least that's what they told us. The worst was about to happen. Dissidents. Until now I really don't understand what classified one to be one, a dissident, because we were all one. A beautiful Zimbabwe just after independence, who are you, who am I? An image of subconscious denial of the identity once known yet now so dangerous and obsolete maybe. The danger of self to self. Am I dreaming. Gunshots, noise, loud noise, oh goddamn the noise was unbearable.

Chiedza: Murambwi akaita musikadzwa, he was naughty that evening. He asked me if we could, you know, do it. Ahhhhhh, his touch was electric and each stroke brought chills to my spin and goose pimples to my skin. He caressed my small, pointed breasts, gently licking them with his warm tongue, it was nice. I was embarrassed and asked him to stop. Then he pulled me to the rock seri kwekuchakata which was just around the corner next to the river and slowly enveloped my hourglass torso in a marvellous rhythmic manner.

Sihle: Kneel down and put your heads in the air with your identity card. As we were still in the confusion of what was happening my father was hit with a log on his shoulder. Kwenzakalini, what is happening, please?

Chiedza: I knelt, and he stroked my thighs so gently I, I couldn't breathe in pleasure. Iwe kani...

Sihle: Please don't do this, please. One by one the people were made to identify themselves. "Where are you going?" I watched my father being hit with a long thick, black pole, and a stick, and a shambok, a cattle whip. They used everything they had. It was five of them all taking turns beating my pillar, my superhero, my father who walked me to the nearby bush to pick up

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twigs when he was at home, and we had no power. One who chased me back home and said you should be strong and courageous, a strong woman because I am strong. He was my everything. "Where is your strength, Baba?" He knelt there helplessly right in front of us. He had fought in the struggle. I watched him as I remembered our conversation on the Independence Day.

Baba: Yazi Si we sang our national anthem with pride.

Sings national anthem

Nkosi sikeleli Africa

Maluphakanyisu dumo lwayo

Izwa imithandazo yethu, nkosi sikhelela...

The celebrations, the joy and happiness that filled the air on the day as the Union Jack was lowered. Everyone was so excited, the dancing the singing, food drinks, haaaa wena, we celebrated for days, we had won the liberation struggle, men women boys girls Ndebele, Shona, Kalanga, Zambia, Mozambique and all the help we got from neighbouring countries; but above all, the spirit of Zimbabwe that led the war. Kuchauya usina mabvi, Nehanda nyakasikana, vapambepfumi Chamika wailed. It had happened. Even Bob Marley came all the way from America to celebrate with us.

Sihle: It was Jamaica Baba, ha ha ha

Baba: I know I just wanted to pull your leg hahahaha.

Sihle: Then what happened, Baba....

Baba: Then the fire is dying down Sihle, and the firewood is over there, and we need to eat kwezela.

Sihle: But Baba, you had already started telling the story.

Baba: Yes, because I was hungry and motivating you to cook phela mntanami.

Sihle: Oh so now you are not ...

Baba: ... no now I am ready to eat

Sihle: Ahhh

Baba: ... besides who tells story before we have all eaten supper. Simukai mubike apo tafa nenzara. (sh/nd)

Sihle: So, when did you meet umama? After war or during these celebrations?

Baba: That doesn't matter.

Sihle: Why?

Baba: Because I said so, can you finish cooking and dish the food Sihle?

Sihle: I hope to meet her one day even in the afterlife.

He never wanted to talk about her.

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I remembered our talks, as they continued to torture him. The memory of his voice singing the anthem was my shot, my high. For some funny reason I felt numb to the reality of brutality. This is Zimbabwe, I am a dissident.

Song.

Nkosi sihawukele

Nkosi,nkosi sihawukele,

Nkosi sihawukele

Nkosi nkosi

Sihawukele

Sihawukele

Christu christu... (*song fades*)

Wounded minds are difficult to heal than wounded bodies or was it both? He was a former comrade. They continuously hit him with that stick, engraving fear in them to never ever think they could be, in this nation. Who said they thought of being even, amazing how thoughts can be threats.

Chiedza: It was hard and straight, I felt it. Taking a journey into my forbidden land with lips and bindings, destroying each barrier with such strength... yet smooth gentle precision that the pain of the bonds was indeed felt and accompanied with a flow of the famous milk and honey. Evidence of that promised land of joy promised to the faithful. Ecstasy!

Sihle: ... and when they were done, they took him away in their trucks kunomupedzisa, to finish him off God knows where. It was unbearable the pain pierced right through me like a jagger.

All the brutal things that happen to anyone start with a thought an idea of just one individual to humiliate another. Gogo, what really happened?

Chiedza: I see it every night. I hear their chants. (*Chants ...*) the shouts, the women and children screaming, grown men groaning in pain, our epitome of protection stripped in plain sight. That very bright fire of huts set alight, I see it. The smell of burning flesh and the rotting starch of blood and fly infested decaying bodies, right in my eyes.

Khaki camouflage clothes green, brown, black paint on their faces. Guns, sticks, pangas. I saw them chop the heads of humans like they were killing chickens (*chants* -seziya premengende huuuuuu, ahhh hahahahaha yeeeeeeh) vanhu vairohwa. I ran to the forest at night, the dense vegetation like rainforest would be my shield, but during the day I'd hide in the pit latrine, my haven. Waste, urine, you name it. The smell of faeces was terrible at first but became a refugee and safety net for me because no one would have thought anyone would dare dive in waste and share intimate moments with rotting waste and maggots moving all over... the flies, mosquitoes, my home,

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I was safe. I had escaped from the horrors of forced rape by hundreds of men. History repeating itself.

One night a woman and her baby were hiding just like I was, in the forest under a full moon, there, silently. Just a few meters away from me, mother, and child. The baby was irritable and making noise, so she sat down slowly in a bid not to make any sound to alert the mob.

Tino: Night after night – I lay in the dark, dark praying to be heard, but no one came for me. I lived on my own until I was old enough to walk. Whenever I visit my village, well the village they say I come from today, I feel nothing but despair, hate, anger. I lost my childhood. I lost me. I have so much of me that I would have known and gained from being the son of one of the militia, but how do we lose things we never had. Why do I mourn a family that was never mine? I know you don't have the answers for me, but I still have questions. I sell fruits and vegetables at the marketplace to make a living, yet I am dead. I have nothing and I have no one. All I have is a voice to shout, mabanana, ma apple, nyimo dziripano amai tokupai here, yet my spirit drifts away with the wind. I wonder...

Song (lullaby)

Thula thuthula
mntwana thula sana,
umama uzobuya ekubona ekuseni

Chiedza: She began to feed the baby.... That precious connection of mother and child, pure and priceless. The link of umbilical cord, the placenta, the foetus in its mother's womb, the safe haven until birth.

Song (lullaby): Thula thula mntwana thula sana

Thulumama uzobuya ekuseni
Thula thula...

Chiedza: The baby looked into its mother's eyes as she sang to it. Love uncorrupted. In a split second, Before I could enjoy the serenity of that moment her head was on the ground. Yet the baby was still suckling milk and blood. Milkshake, strawberry flavour I presumed. In its mother's hand, tightly held, God what do I do? Gushing blood all over. I froze. Yeshua amashiya hold me. The baby fell to the ground eventually. Soaked in the warm pool of its mother's blood.

(Sexual sounds) Ahhhhhh ahhhhhhhh uuuuumh ah!!

One by one they quenched their thirst, taking turns raping the corpse, or was it having sex? It couldn't have been rape; she was a headless corpse with her baby on the side. Ejaculation, sweat, smoke, urine. Who in their right mind does that? Despicable!

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Sihle: Did you take it?

Chiedzas: What?

Sihle: The baby, did you take it?

Chiedzas: I, I...

Sihle: Did you take the goddamn child, woman?

Chiedzas: I headed back to... to my haven.

Sihle: You left a helpless baby in the forest to God knows what?

Chiedza: How was I...

Sihle: How were you what?

Chiedza: I ...

Sihle: If you really wanted to save that baby you would have....

Chiedza: You don't have any idea what it was like.

Tino: We attack, capture, torture and kill.

Chiedza: You don't know how it's like to hold on to your last breath as you watch your whole family being butchered, pangas chopping, people burnt alive screaming, babies smashed on the wall, a beautiful work of art, a painting of crimson red with a touch of white slithered brain courtesy of baby Chipso or Sofie or whatever name its mother gave it.

Sihle: You could have...

Chiedza: Don't stand here and patronise me about being selfish. For days, I would GAZE through the gaping hole of the pit latrine. I looked up to see the moon shining as if everything was normal... the humour of the gods... dreaming that this nightmare would end and that I would go to the market maybe, the broken shade, asbestos perhaps. It had nine panels. Black mothy finish. The soft helpless cry of the baby in the forest that night. Don't you think it bothered me, that maybe it was eaten by wild animals, or maybe shot or beheaded like its mother, don't you think it hurt me. Well maybe not, I too needed to live as it too.

Sihle: And that justifies you sleeping at night unbothered. How do you?

Chiedza: I fiddled trying hard not to make a sound as two stray buttocks blocked the moon and showered me with shit. Do you know the taste of shit? Well, it tastes like its name. Fucking shit.

Sihle: Hypocrite

Chiedza: Watch your mouth young lady, your tone is provocative...

Sihle: Or what? You will kill me like your people did mine? You let a child die because you wanted to save yourself? You want to act self-righteous and like a Christian, yet you wrote history in such a horrific manner.

Chiedza: You don't know what you are talking about.

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Sihle: I know exactly what I am talking about, and you should be ashamed of yourself, you old hog.

Chiedza: Well, I will never be ashamed.

Sihle: Why not, you left an innocent child to die yet it was in your power to save it, why wouldn't you be ashamed?

Chiedza: Because it was you! You are that baby, Sihle.

Song: Nkosi sihatwukele – Lord have mercy on us.

Tino: No one wanted to be associated with me because my father was part of the 5th brigade. The military is trained to fight under instruction. All he was doing was following orders. Now I live in the memory.

Sihle: You wish.

Chiedza: Sihle

Sihle: Night after night I hid in the dark, scared, praying Auntie would come back, praying to be heard, but no one came. I lived on my own until I was old enough to live. Whenever I visited Luveve, I feel nothing but pain. I lost my childhood that day. I lost me. I know I lost so much but how do you lose something you never had? Why do I mourn for a life I never had, that was never mine. Children walking with their parents, playing, singing. No, it can't be, never! All I have is God. You have no one to love or anyone who ever did and now you want to own me? Not you, not Shona blood, never. If you thought you would coax me then you got the wrong one old lady.

Chiedza: Hey, I'm not the one stuck in the past holding on to the things that happened in history. it hurts, we all hurt. He ordered the killings, your people were killed, beaten, raped or whatever it is they went through, but staying there will never heal your wound. Rise above this and free yourself from this mental torture. He is dead, Sihle, Robert (Mugabe) is dead.

Sihle: And the Buffoons (those) in power now, the soldiers, the fools walking around as if nothing happened, huh?

Tino: He was a man under command from the highest office in the land. What did you expect him to do? A fugitive too who ran just to save his own life later. He himself was a lamb to the slaughter.

Chiedza: Sihle mwanangu.

Sihle: You speak as one of purity indeed. You are an egocentric, manipulative, brain washed bitch who slept with my father and only thinks about themselves.

Chiedza: That bastard you call your father raped me, he raped me, Sihle, because of who I was, I am. Your father was a spy who sold out our comrades during the struggle.

Sihle: So what, you reported him?

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Chiedza: Sell-outs had to be punished.

Sihle: And...

Chiedza: I did what was right, then he and his friends caught me, held me, and tied me, laughed at me. It was at night, and I could feel the cold breeze on my tiny helpless body. It was a full moon. I could smell the sweat and fermented African seven days in his mouth as his friends took turns holding me down as he became a man by taking the most prized part of my body, the only gift I swore to my boyfriend I would keep only for him until he returned from the war. But your father dived into me like he owned me. Do you know how that feels, Sihle, do you? He said he was a bull and could go all the way.

Do you see this scar here, look at it, goddamit. He burnt me with a piece of charcoal because it was getting cold, and he wanted to heat things up a bit. Before he raped me again. Who in his right minds does that huh? Blood dripping on my thighs, flesh torn and my scream.

Your father hurt me, and I can never reclaim it.

When they were done, they left me there, weak. The stars were beautiful shining so bright too. I managed to run away to Botswana. Guess what? I was pregnant, with you. I never wanted you, so I took you to his family, his sisters. I hated you, yet I loved you, but never knew how to embrace you. Your father hated the Shona people just like his forefathers did. They raided my people years ago, killing 250 000 of my people, taking cattle, goats, women, and children. My Shona blood flows through your veins. There is no such thing as a pure Ndebele. Nothing, because we were all in one bag under our great king Mzilikazi, then Lobengula. So, you think I have no blood in my veins and don't feel pain? You want to stand here trying to justify your anger and take it out on me because of 20,000 people? Because you can't deal with it? Because your father was among them? What about me? What about the Hutus and Tutsis, the Jews that were tortured in camps? What about the slaves that were thrown into the oceans, Sihle, what about them? We can't drown in our own tears but must rise above this.

Sihle: People have no identity, children are running away from Zimbabwe the first chance they can get, they....

Chiedza: And whose fault is that? You want to blame the government for that? You want to blame the government for failing to deal with your own hurt and pain? Sihle, I have had my own fair shares of all the pain torture and atrocities of this life but for me to freeze in time is a death sentence.

Sihle: I don't have an ID. I don't have a job, I am not recognized or seen as human. When you treat a dog wrong, it will bite you. Fathers were buried alive while mother and children watched. "Tambai paguva" they danced as they sang (*Zimbabwe ndeye ropa Baba Zimbabwe ndeye ropa remadzibaba.*) Houses burned

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down, no food, clothes, shelter, nothing. Dissident! So, you don't care? You don't care that I watched the father of your child, being tortured, taken away and killed?

Chiedza: You don't know that.

Sihle: So where is he? Why can't the government apologise, or at least acknowledge what was done?

Chiedza: What is there to acknowledge?

Sihle: It is to admit that the 5th Brigade killed and terrorized the people of Matabeleland.

Chiedza: The whole world knows that. Was Robert's statement of the moment of madness not acknowledgement enough?

Sihle: We want justice, compensation, life.

Chiedza: You need to heal. You need closure. You need to let go and move on.

Sihle: I need justice.

Chiedza: What does that even mean? And if that justice does not happen, you wallow in depression?

Sihle: You don't care, right?

Chiedza: Will that bring back father? What is justice? Do you even know what you mean?

Sihle: Justice is seeing the perpetrators brought to book. How do I live settled while the remains of our loved ones are laying in ruin, watching as the same people walk free?

Chiedza: We will never justify brutality and murder at any level. We can never arrest a whole army because they were given an order. Get me right, what happened was wrong and must never be repeated, but to allow outsiders to dictate when, where and how we handle our own issues is a No. We have never interfered with any issues in Europe or let alone fund programmes to destabilize their nations in the pretext of "peace and reconciliation". Let them not pay people to divide us because of the wrongs we have done to each other. We have our ways of handling dispute amongst ourselves, kuripa Ngozi, matare and kuchenura. Ceremonies like umbuyiso all these are who we are. Even the Ndebele are still in talks with the Shona kuripa Chaminuka. Let us Gather together. Have your own rituals to rebury your loved ones. Appease their spirits and bring them home. Pray for healing from within, Then and only then can you have peace. We can't keep transferring hurt and anger from the past to our younger generations.

Sihle: These bastards murdered us, and you want me to.... to what?

Chiedza: Who do you want to do it for you? These are your bones, your blood.

Sizwe... Nyika... Nation!

Sihle: When pressure mounted on your government a few years ago from the war veterans, they were each given 50k. Why?

Chiedza: I don't know.

Sihle: Because they died for this country. We died for this country! Murambatswina they gave land. Gukurahundi? What about the Gukurahundi? And the war of Umfecane in 1830, how do you propose that be dealt with?

Chiedza: Oh, so now we can choose and select which part of history is relevant and worth taking action on than the other?

Sihle: Gukurahundi!

Chiedza: What about it?

Sihle: When are we going to openly talk about it, relive it and get over it, like you did? You think it's easy to just sit around and act as if all is fine. People were killed. What started out as a government suppression of dissents in the region following a rift between Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African Patriotic Union (ZAPU) ended up costing the lives of about 20,000 people. My family included. And you want me to just let go? I dream of the day that we will have functional schools, and industrial estates that actually work. I dream of walking into the registration office and get identification without being reminded of who I am and how that same government is the reason for that challenge. I don't have particulars to prove who I am. I dream of a day I will sit around the bonfire and tell the story of who we are and what we have gone through, for historic sake. Inganekwane for my grandchildren. A time where I can walk to a gravesite and say this is where he or she was buried because the spirit of ubuntu would have been embraced and be allowed to rebury cleanse and bring home the wondering spirits of our people. A time where every affected person will have closure and be able to get to a place of self if ever. What happened should never be forgotten but always talked about without fear so that we remind ourselves that being human is more to life than race, tribe, colour, or anything else. What is done cannot be undone. The greatest pain of a victim is seeing death all around and no sign of life. Life in happiness, growth, progress, and all we seek is just that, life. As for forgiveness, well it is a virtue. Someone must take responsibility. If genocide is not dealt with, history will keep repeating itself. Africa is a peaceful continent. Let's have justice. Someone must take responsibility.

Chiedza: What does it mean to take responsibility?

Sihle: Those who are unburied wonder in the spirit without rest. We are spiritual; let us seek God. You too haven't moved on from the pain and trauma that ubaba caused you, that's why you too sold him out. You too can't let go. Look yourself in the still waters, you will see how deep your soul runs.

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Chiedza: You don't know what you are talking about.

Sihle: All I want is closure, Mama.

Ceremonial mbira strings fade in the lights to give a ritual feel. Chiedza and her daughter walk towards each other. Chiedza holding in her palm some of the meal powder that she was grinding. They both walk forward, and she blows the powder in the air forming a mist in the air, heightened by the lighting. Sihle, kneeling by her side, is then rubbed with the powdered hands. Chiedza then sits facing left and Sihle right, back-to-back, looking at the distant. Then, they both turn to face the audience before gradually lowering their faces.

LIGHTS FADE

The end.