

EVERYTHING LOST IS FOUND AGAIN

Written by

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Based on the novel *Everything Lost is Found Again:  
Four Seasons in Lesotho*  
By William T. McGrath

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INT. LOW-RIDING MINIVAN - MIDDLE OF THE DAY

Driving the minivan is WILLIAM, a cherubic thirty-year-old. He is concentrating on maneuvering through a dusty and crowded street painted by a picturesque mountain range behind him. The chorus to a CHILDREN'S SING-A-LONG SONG PLAYS LOUDLY inside the minivan as he follows a pickup truck carrying two large bright-green barrels.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER

Maseru, capital of Lesotho. You know the place. Reid and I have come down from Mokhotlong on the mountainous eastern border of the country to Maseru on the slighty-less-mountainous western border to fill up these barrels with petrol.

Inside the minivan, William struggles to dislodge a CD that is stuck in the CD player.

CHILDREN'S SING-A-LONG SONG

*Ring around the rosey, pockets full  
of posey, we all fall down!*

WILLIAM VOICEOVER

I used to like children's songs.

William's CELL PHONE starts to BEEP BEEP BEEP and then - *dies*.

The low-riding minivan itself then HALTS ABRUPTLY. The anti-carjacking device, for reasons unknown, has engaged. A jeering CHORUS of HORNS temporarily eclipses *Ring-Around-The-Rosey* as William frantically gropes the interior of the car to stop the alarm. Meanwhile, the pickup truck with the bright green barrels disappears from view.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

I have undergone a rather dramatic reversal of fortune. An instant ago I was just another idiot American driving a minivan and listening to children's music, arguably one of the most common pastimes of all Americans. Now I am an idiot American alone and stranded in the capital city of a small African nation without communication, without transportation and without...

William fumbles through his wallet as traffic begins to pile up behind the alarm-activated, children's-music-paying, dead-stopped minivan. He pulls out a slip of paper that looks like a game of tic-tac-toe.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

A destination.

The piece of paper is supposed to be a map. A CONCERNED Mosotho MAN steps up the car.

CONCERNED MOSOTHO

You like this song?

WILLIAM

Not any more, no.

CONCERNED MOSOTHO

Do you have a child?

WILLIAM

No, it's not my... wait, can you understand this map?

William hands him the scrap of paper, which the man studies assiduously before laughing deeply and shaking his head.

CONCERNED MOSOTHO

I am from Mokhotlong too! They call me Ntate J. This looks like it goes to Rapitsoe's although it is very difficult to read. Let me see if I can help.

Ntate J takes the map and goes to the back of the car and begins pushing. Others see him and join the effort. Soon a half-dozen Basotho are HEAVING and THRUSTING the van back and forth with no success. The minivan starts to BUCK as it rocks back and forth. The motion, the exasperation of it all, the repetitive goofy music: it's enough to make a man go cowboy.

WILLIAM

Let's go minivan, let's go!!!

William bucks and snorts and KICKS the floorboard like spurring a horse. A piece of disguised carpet comes off revealing an anti-carjacking release button. He promptly stomps on it.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Yee haw!

The minivan STARTS BACK TO LIFE and lurches forward. The Basotho men CHEER as the minivan begins to pull away.

William looks back and sees Ntate J running up with the piece of paper and he THRUSTS it through the window.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Thanks Nta...

The van is suddenly about to HIT a wooden sign post that reads as the MOTION FREEZES:

**KENA KA KHOTSO**

SUBTITLE: Chapter 1: Enter With Peace

This is our first TITLE CARD.

EXT. MINIVAN - SAME

The sign unfreezes and the minivan veers away at the last second, narrowly missing the signpost before ZOOMING down the road.

INT. MINIVAN - LATER

William is driving listlessly through Maseru searching for the pickup truck. Loose-limbed and freewheeling schoolchildren in plaid uniforms run through shallow gullies in a way that can only mean it's Friday afternoon. Jury-rigged metal shacks line the road, some cockeyed and listing like ships at sea. Inside, men cook *boroso* on small wirework grills and women fry fat cakes and nuclear pink *polony*.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER

I am searching for Rapiitsoe, the mechanic who will fix the white pickup truck Reid is driving. The map Nthabeleng has drawn is just lines on a scrap of paper. Nthabeleng, our boss in Mokhotlong, the woman who has sent us on this mission, is a great hero in many ways but she is not a hero at drawing maps.

The CHILDREN'S SONG continue but now, used to it, William sings along as he scours the streets looking for the pickup.

WILLIAM

Ring around the rosey, pockets full  
of mosey, we all fall down, we all  
fall down!

And then there's Reid.

He is standing in a parking lot with his hand over his eyes, staring down the road. William pulls into the lot but keeps the minivan running -- just in case -- as he jumps out and greets him with a big hug. Reid speaks first.

REID  
William I found you! You realize  
Nthabeleng's map is wrong?

Reid is holding another crumpled map from Nthabeleng in his hand.

REID (CONT'D)  
I followed it all the way. It goes  
nowhere.

WILLIAM  
I know. But Nthabeleng will not  
care that she provided us with maps  
that go nowhere. Business  
unfinished will be unacceptable.

REID  
So how are we going to find  
Rapitsoe?

William shrugs. In the corner of the parking lot, A MAN with a trace of a beard sitting on an overturned oil can and talking to another Mosotho calls out:

MAN  
I am Rapitsoe.

WILLIAM  
Pardon?

MAN  
(from across lot)  
I am him.

His tone is matter-of-fact, almost apologetic. His FRIEND nods in affirmation.

FRIEND  
Yes, this one is Rapitsoe.

RAPITSOE  
I think you are the ones for M'e  
Nthabeleng? To fix the car?

REID  
Yes, we are the ones for M'e  
Nthabeleng.

RAPITSOE

I will take you to the shop.

Without further discussion Rapitsoe gets into Will's minivan. It's still running. When the children's song repeats, Rapitsoe casually reaches under the dashboard, pulls a wire, and the music STOPS.

EXT. MINIVAN - LATER

With William driving, Rapitsoe placidly riding along and Reid following in the pickup truck they drive past single-story neighborhoods with cinder block walls and then flat stretches of uninterrupted landscape with odd rock formations.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER

So it was right, of course, that Nthabeleng's map was wrong. Because Nthabeleng is never wrong. The map did not take us to Rapitsoe's shop because Rapitsoe wasn't at his shop. He was chatting with a friend in town, despite the fact that he had an appointment with us at his shop. The right map would have left us with business unfinished. The map leading us nowhere was, in the end, the only proper solution. This is what life is like in Lesotho. It is a circle, a loop, through which everyone and everything is connected.

The minivan pulls up to a sprawling mechanic's shop with a hand-painted sign: WELCOME TO RAPITSOE'S. Reed gets out of his truck and William is about to join him but Rapitsoe holds his hand.

RAPITSOE

Nthabeleng is an important woman for Mokhotlong. She must really trust you to send you to Maseru. Are you a doctor?

WILLIAM

No. I'm just here, to, ah, help. And teach.

RAPITSOE

I think you are a doctor.

WILLIAM

My wife has a doctorate degree?

Rapitsoe grabs his shoulder firmly and speaks sincerely.

RAPITSOE

Thank you doctor for coming here to help the children. We need more of you.

WILLIAM

But I can't help... I'm not... I'm really just...

Rapitsoe exits the truck but William, glum, ashamed, keeps a firm, focused grip on the steering wheel. He looks small. We hear the DISTANT SOUND OF A MOTORCYCLE.

FADE TO:

EXT. A MOTORCYCLE RIDING THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS - DAWN

Two HELMETED PEOPLE wearing fleece-lined Carhartt jackets zig-zag on dirt roads over a boulder-strewn mountain landscape. The DRIVER concentrates firmly on the road while the RIDER looks around as the motorcycle churns its way through the gorge.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER

Lesotho is the greatest country you've never heard of. It's that mustard-yellow blotch of an enclave on your sixth-grade atlas landlocked inside of South Africa, one of only three enclaves on the planet. The other two are Vatican City and San Marino but Lesotho is not a *made-up country*. It's not a district or territory of South Africa, its occasionally bullying older step-brother. Lesotho is a global anomaly, an island at the top of a mountain, a hidden pocket of two million ethnic Basotho and point-three percent other, of ten regional districts with a seventy-three percent rural population but remarkable eighty-four-point-eight percent literacy rate. Only two other countries spend more of their GDP on education.

The motorcycle climbs up through a steep gorge, the road falling away to boulders and scraggly trees. The DRIVER maneuvers with confidence.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

But the life expectancy in Lesotho is fifty-two-point-three years, the two-hundredth and twelfth worst of two-hundred twenty-three nations. The HIV adult prevalence rate is twenty-three percent, second-highest in the world. AIDS explains why I'm here - the youngest saddled by a disease given to them by adults. But Lesotho is an underdog story and I want you to love Lesotho like I love Lesotho which is irrationally and which is the only way to love anything in this world.

The motorcycle banks around a corner and pulls into a small village. The SE-TU-TU-TU SOUND draws a CROWD of CHILDREN.

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - DAY

The driver and passenger step off the motorcycle to OOHS and AAHS. When they remove their helmets the amassed local children get a look at which one is driving and it's A WOMAN, ELLEN, strong, savvy and smiling. The children start to LAUGH, slowly at first, then building gradually, coming in waves that break against them and knock them to the ground. They are roaring now, rolling on the ground in piles and pounding their fists against the dirt as they beg relief from this great joke.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER

My wife, Ellen, is a medical anthropologist. She studies how medicine is a culturally constructed ideal. Here in Lesotho, Ellen is a bad ass.

One of the BOYS, still laughing gingerly walks up to ELLEN and takes her hand and the three of them walk on. William has to tag along.

BOY

(in Sesotho)

I will be your man.

CUT TO:



## EXT. PATH ON VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Ellen with a sling of goods on her back and William carrying a bright blue children's sand pail, briskly walk through the outskirts of the village. The children watch from afar.

## WILLIAM VOICEOVER

I should start by explaining *joala*. I've had buckets of the stuff and I still don't know exactly what it is. *Joala* is Basotho-style corn-beer, or corn-liquor, or fermented-corn-something. You can identify *joala* by one of the following: you are standing in the *joala* district of Mokhotlong, which is a row of shanties where grandmothers stir steaming industrial drums of possible toxic byproduct, or you see a strap of white cloth near a rondavel indicating that homebrew is for sale. Generally speaking, though, you cannot speak generally about *joala*. Each *joala* is unique, each its own precious snowflake of intoxicant. I've had *joala* that was the pale color of dead skin and I've had *joala* that could pass for orange juice. I've sipped it from old coffee cans and I've sipped it from cereal bowls. There is no consistent *joala* experience. The best *joala* I ever had was the brew 'M'e Malereko cooked up in a rinsed-out laundry detergent bucket that sat behind a couch for two weeks keeping its own counsel in the dark. When 'M'e' Malereko finally unveiled it at Nthabeleng's birthday party it had mellowed into a lovely apricot color, sweet and winy on the tongue. Eventually, though, talking about *joala* is always talking about Retselisitsoe Mohlomi, he of oversized noggin and joyous drooling grin now returned safely to the care of Ma and Pa Mohlomi and their *joala* hut.

Ellen and William pass an outcropping and appear before a rondavel where smoke arises from the chimney and a white strap of cloth hangs from a nearby tree.

INT. MA AND PA MOHLOMI RONDAVEL - DAY

The weathered, rheumatic, bony, wizened, ancient and possibly drunk MA and PA MOHLOMI amble in opposite directions inside the smoky rondavel. Like a race between the tortoise and another tortoise, Pa Mohlomi reaches RETSELISITSOE, the bubbly, buoyant toddler while Ma Mohlomi reaches a giant barrel of *joala* stewing in the corner of the rondavel.

Pa Mohlomi picks up the young boy and brings him, screaming, over to William and Ellen who are sitting on a tree-trunk bench. William puts down the sand pail and takes up Retselisitsoe who begins to calm when he recognizes William.

ELLEN

(to Pa, in Sesotho)

He looks amazing. You've been able to keep up with the medicine routine very well. I've brought a re-supply.

As William makes goofy faces with Retselisitsoe, Ellen hands Pa a ziplock bag filled with an antiretroviral HIV regimen.

WILLIAM

He looks like a calzone!

Ma Mohlomi gives William a quizzical look: lost in translation. She stirs the barrel of *joala*. Retselisitsoe loosens up and begins to cuddle in William's familiar hands.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Big, healthy, he is growing well since he left the clinic. You have done an excellent job.

Pa Mohlomi nods with a toothy grin. Ellen picks up the sand pail.

ELLEN

Ke bo kae?

Ma Mohlomi eyeballs the bucket.

MA MOHLOMI

Two.

WILLIAM

No, no, not two. *Twenty*.

Ma Moholmi smiles.

MA MOHLOMI

Two.

Ellen hands her some money and the blue pail. Ma Mohlomi scoops and fills the bucket with the steaming hot joala, caps it and hands it back to Ellen. She then dips an extra cup and hands it to them to sample. Ellen and William take turns handling the toddler and sipping the joala.

WILLIAM

(sips)

It is excellent!

Ma Mohlomi smiles back at the strange Americans as Pa Mohlomi unpacks the medicine. William's face remains in a crooked smile as he continues to sip and Ellen plays hide-and-seek with the boy.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER

It is not excellent. I have come to realize that the sweet, winy batch 'M'e Malereko cooked up was the exception and perhaps wasn't even joala at all. Real village joala is uniformly terrible. This batch is a sour, porridge-like aberration. It has the tang of turned dairy, a cream-of-leek viscosity and the scent of old carpet. This joala is warm, not room temperature, but actually warm, something that hints at the exothermic reactions taking place down in its brackish depths. The aftertaste is distinctly that of pepperoni or cured meats, salty and fatty and clinging to the tongue.

William continues sipping the drink with caution, watching each playful motion of the cherubic, beaming Retselisitsoe.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

I have never had a drink so...  
*sublime.*

William FINISHES the cup with deep satisfaction and picks up a laughing Retselisitsoe with a giant bear hug. Ellen packs up the blue pail and dons her motorcycle jacket. William stands up and hands the giggly boy back to Pa Mohlomi.

ELLEN

We will see you again in one month.

EXT. SAFE HOUSE COMPOUND GATE - DUSK

The waning sun illuminates the figure of a NIGHT GUARD who waves to William and Ellen as they ride in and park the motorcycle.

NIGHT GUARD

Welcome back!

WILLIAM

It's good to be home, Ntate Bokang.

Ellen locks the motorcycle to a pole and they walk past a single-story cinder block doctor's quarters and a small two story building that houses offices and the safe home where the children stay. Further up the hillside are a cluster of rondavels. They follow the last rays of sun up the hill.

INT. COMMUNAL RONDAVEL - NIGHT

A sparking, malevolent space heater glows wickedly inside the communal rondavel filled with MOTOWN MUSIC from an old tape deck. William, Ellen and fellow American aid workers Reid and his bright-eyed girlfriend BRIDGET, 26, sit at a table engrossed in conversation over a finished meal and the blue bucket of *joala*.

WILLIAM

So yes, to finish my point,  
Retselisitsoe looked amazing.

ELLEN

You called him a calzone.

REID

Was he a calzone?

ELLEN

That's why I brought Will to  
Lesotho, of course, to describe in  
food terminology the effects of  
successful ARV treatment.

WILLIAM

Who doesn't love calzones?

BRIDGET

When his grandparents brought him  
to the safe home I didn't think  
there was a chance.

ELLEN

That is the miracle of Nthabeleng. She can take a skeleton of a child and turn him into a roly-poly little man.

WILLIAM

~~It's always adult men. They have unprotected sex and everyone suffers as a result. If that's what being an adult means then forget it.~~

REID

~~Agreed.~~

WILLIAM

~~And it's not just a Basotho thing, it's a worldwide phenomenon of bad behavior.~~

REID

~~Also agreed.~~

Reid takes a swig of Ma and Pa's *joala*.

REID (CONT'D)

Ooof. It's salty? *And* sweet?

William also takes a swig and blanches.

WILLIAM

It's a popular combination these days.

ELLEN

(to William)

Are you in Mokhotlong to drink *joala*?

WILLIAM

~~Absolutely. I am pretty sure that adult males are responsible for 90% of the world's problems and kids are the ones who pay the price.~~

ELLEN

~~That's rather simplistic.~~

BRIDGET

Nthabeleng is here!

REID goes to the door to welcome the jovial 40ish NTHABELENG, and her children, the girl TSELI, 12, and boy NEO, 7.

NTHABELENG

Ache! What is this joyous music?

WILLIAM

The Jackson Five.

ELLEN

Welcome Tseli, welcome Neo! What can I get you? Have you eaten?

Tseli shakes her head *yes* while Neo shakes his head *no*.

NTHABELENG

Of course they have eaten! Pigs!

Tseli and Neo clamor over to see Reid and Bridget who have started a board game. Nthabeleng stays to talk to William and Ellen. She sees the bucket of *joala* on the table.

NTHABELENG (CONT'D)

How was Retselisitsoe?

ELLEN

Ma and Pa Mohlomi are taking good care of him.

NTHABELENG

Great. How many months did you give them?

ELLEN

I had enough for only one.

NTHABELENG

This is a problem. We need to contact the program manager again. He is aware that we want to keep these children alive? Already I know we will need more for Moekete.

WILLIAM

He is aware.

Nthabeleng laughs.

NTHABELENG

Moshoshone! Did you write the program manager a letter yourself?

ELLEN

I told him.

Nthabeleng pours a half-cup of *joala*.

NTHABELENG

Feh! Let's drink to that.

William and Ellen join her at the table while Bridget and Reid play with the kids. Nthabeleng takes a long, slow sip.

NTHABELENG (CONT'D)

Oh my this is terrifically...

There is visible anticipation in William's eyes...

NTHABELENG (CONT'D)

(pauses)

What would you write about this cup of joala?

WILLIAM

I'm not sure... What do you think?

Nthabeleng carefully analyzes the *joala*. Nthabeleng looks like she is about to say something...

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Savory?

No response.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Tangy?

NTHABELENG

Why do you need an answer to everything? ~~It's joala!~~

WILLIAM

So it's sweet then?

NTHABELENG

When will you become an officer in the program and bring me more supplies!?

WILLIAM

I'm not sure I'm qualified with my Arts and Letters degree, but...

ELLEN

...true.

~~William has been preparing for this moment.~~

WILLIAM

~~But I can help out the program by turning my eight months of journal notes into a memoir. If it gets published it will bring more awareness to the program and for Lesotho itself.~~

~~Contrary to expectations this does not impress Nthabeleng.~~

NTHABELENG

~~Hah! More words!~~

ELLEN

~~If words were potatoes we would have less hunger in the world. Is your novel going to be more effective than vaccines?~~

NTHABELENG

~~William, We need more ARVs!~~

WILLIAM

~~But that's just on the surface. I think both the Basotho and the greater world in general need to change their point of view.~~

NTHABELENG

~~Oh and a new coffee grinder. Can you get one of those?~~

~~William looks CHUFFED and a bit embarrassed. Reid pipes up from the other side of the room.~~

REID

~~Nthabeleng, how was the joala!~~

~~Nthabeleng shouts back towards him.~~

NTHABELENG

~~Reid, when will you grow up and have your own children and stop commandeering mine!?~~

REID

~~Never!~~

CUT TO:



INT. WILLIAM AND ELLEN'S RONDAVEL - NIGHT

The private rondavel is cozy and practical. Pictures from the safe home children adorn the wall next to Ellen's motorcycle jacket and William's Basotho-style shepherd's crook, the *molamo*.

William is cleaning.

He pushes the bed to the center of the rondavel so that he can sweep that side of the round room. Ellen is changing into pajamas as she walks. Staying a distance apart, they circle each other.

WILLIAM

... despite the costs It's about preserving the cultural and everyone knows it. The young get it. They do take precautions, but it's more important to be invested in adulthood and I'm just not so sure I see the benefit of that over and above the terrifying drawbacks. Not just here, but home too, Canada, America, Chicago...

ELLEN

Toronto.

WILLIAM

Minneapolis?

ELLEN

It's possible. I may know soon.

WILLIAM

What do you think?

ELLEN

I think you're an adult male responsible for 90% of the world's problems.

WILLIAM

~~You know what I meant.~~

ELLEN

~~You are part of the 10%?~~

WILLIAM

According to Basotho tradition I'm not an adult yet.

ELLEN

You're 30.

WILLIAM

You don't think a book might help?

ELLEN

I don't know. You know I love your writing.

William looks disappointed as he returns the bed to its spot. From outside the rondavel we hear POP POP POP POP-POP-POP.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Someone's lighting off firecrackers over there.

They go to the window and look out. Nothing.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Maybe it's something else. Should we check?

William looks out the window apprehensively: He doesn't want to find out. Instead he gently touches Ellen's waist.

WILLIAM

I'm sure everything is fine.

Ellen sighs and leaves the embrace.

ELLEN

Ah my lovely man-child, such a knight.

EXT. SAFE HOUSE COMPOUND - DAWN

In the dim lavender light of early morning William carries a teacher's leather rucksack across the compound and past the Night Guard asleep at the gate.

EXT. MOKHOTLONG STREET - MORNING

William walks amiably on his way to class. In the distance a torrential rain moves inexorably over the mountains towards Mokhotlong. A white pickup speeds past William then stops and backs up. An arm reaches out, beckoning.

Inside are TWO MEN William recognizes with LIMPHO, a gaunt yet still pretty young woman, sitting between them. She leans over and puts her hand on the window.

LIMPHO

I am leaving. I am going to the hospital.

The two men stare straight ahead.

WILLIAM

You are sick?

LIMPHO

Yes. I wanted to say good-bye.

There is not much William can say, so:

WILLIAM

I'm sure I'll see you again soon.

Limpho smiles and does not answer. The truck revs up and speeds away leaving behind a plume of dust.

William keeps walking, head down, and almost runs into a THICK MAN densely built like an overstuffed chest of drawers wearing an unbuttoned guardsman's shirt. William knows him as PAKELA THE GUARD. Pakela is sweating and his eye-whites are red. He is carrying a large duffel bag. Behind him the rains begin to move in.

Pakela grabs William by the shoulder with his giant paw.

PAKELA

My *manly* friend, how are you? Have you saved any AIDS orphans with your good humor today?

Pakela grins widely.

PAKELA (CONT'D)

The children would never survive in our country without your support, *me-khooa*. It feels good to help, doesn't it?

William's face turns bright red.

WILLIAM

We are working for the good of everyone, Basotho especially.

PAKELA

Ah yes, but you are just here to observe how silly us Basotho are and to support the devil women who give birth to these devil children.

William wants to say something, his face gnarled in shame and anger but....

PAKELA (CONT'D)

What is a matter brave Moshoeshone?  
You want to hit me? Go ahead! Maybe  
it will make you half a man!

WILLIAM

Violence begets violence.

PAKELA

Come. Walk with me.

Pakela takes William's hand - William does not resist - and they slowly walk up the road together as if they are old friends.

As they walk the image of Pakela begins to fade away, William's hair grows shorter, his face paler and the mountainous backdrop turns from Fall to Spring. The distant RAIN IS NOW UPON William in full force. He is drenched completely but his expression slowly changes from shame and anger to... joy.

#### **TITLE CARD**

Chapter 2: Growing Up  
(Eight Months Earlier)

#### **EXT. ROAD TO SCHOOL - MORNING**

A cow bellows at William from behind a half-collapsed fence, then returns to its job of gazing mournfully through the veil of rain. William walks uphill amid impromptu streams that sluice around his ankles. The dirt road is no longer dirt but sucking bog.

From upon the hill comes a CLAMOR over the roaring static of rain. FOUR YOUNG BOYS boys between eight and ten run down the hill toward William, screaming and hollering and then suddenly STOP, look down at the ground and shake their fists at the mud, then yell at each other and race along further down the hill towards William. Their cries are wild and hilarious and without aggression. Each boy is sopping.

Finally we can see what is happening: They are racing flower petals down one of the newly-formed streamlets. The petals speed along, then snag in an eddy, sucked down for a moment, then pop back up and bob bravely onward. Each time the petals get pulled into a vortex the lead changes hands. One petal will be far out in front, the clear victor, then, *disaster* and the other three petals slip past. William, emboldened by good cheer, runs over to join them.

WILLIAM  
 Go yellow! Go blue! *O tla fihla!*  
*Tiea! Tiea! Tiea!*

The race continues and the five of them charge down the hill at the mercy of mother nature.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY - LATER

William stands at the front of a neat and tidy classroom administering a math quiz. His hair is damp and he has a mud splotch on his pants of which he looks embarrassed. Ninety-two kids with ninety-two erasers at the ends of ninety-two pencils trace ninety-two curlicues in the air. The room is humid and dense with teenagers: knobby, hormonal bodies suffusing the air with pheromones and tedious boredom. The windows are fogged over from the rain and William is uncomfortable and sweating.

WILLIAM  
 I'm going to open a window if you  
 don't mind.

Several of the students protest.

STUDENTS  
 No, sir, the rain!

William inches closer to the window.

STUDENTS (CONT'D)  
 Please sir!

The students hate the rain with unknowable violence.

WILLIAM  
 The rain will not get inside. Isn't  
 anyone hot?

The students would be hot, it would seem, in their burgundy wool uniform sweaters, button-down dress shirts and striped neckties.

STUDENTS  
 But sir! The rain!

William stops moving towards the window, sighs, and wipes sweat from his forehead.

WILLIAM  
 Yes. The rain.

The students anxiously watch William until they are assured he will not let the odious rain violate their cocoon. Ninety-two heads bow once again to their quizzes. William begins to walk up the aisles, looking over the shoulders of the quiz-takers until he comes to NKHOPOLENG with wide eyes and a sweet smile. She has finished her quiz and is silently staring ahead at the chalkboard. She is also chewing something.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

We don't eat in the classroom. What is in your mouth?

Nkhopoleng stops mid-chew and slowly looks up at William. She opens her mouth and sticks out her tongue. There is an enormous half-masticated wad of notebook paper on it. William is flummoxed and then he HEARS the sound of notebook paper tearing. He turns around and catches another student, now frozen in mid-action, with a blank sheet of notebook paper halfway into her mouth.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Why are you doing that?

The second girl is now on the verge of tears.

SECOND GIRL

Sir, I don't know.

Then she cautiously begins to chew again. WILLIAM looks back at Nkhopoleng and then around the room. Everywhere students are silently chewing on mouthfuls of notebook paper, staring at William in wonder, ninety-two pairs of eyes trying to parse his unanswerable question.

CUT TO:

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - LATER

William is engrossed in *A Guide to Sesotho* to decipher the reason behind the paper chewing. Giving up, he turns instead to a section on plural versus singular and begins reading.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER

The most devilish aspect of Sesotho is the concept of noun classes. Nouns fall into seven classes and each has a different way of showing singular and plural. English commonly pluralizes at the end of a word, adding an *s* to make *books*, for example. Sesotho takes care of this business up front.

(MORE)

## WILLIAM VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

One native of Lesotho is a *Mosotho* whereas a group of locals are *Basotho*.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - SAME

William is walking through the halls of the school still reading the grammar book.

## WILLIAM VOICEOVER

Nouns relating to humans are generally grouped together with *mo* as the singular and *ba* as the plural. Nouns describing physical objects are cordoned off accordingly with *le* and *ma*.

INT. SCHOOL LUNCHROOM - LUNCH LINE

William is waiting in line with others as his tray is filled by a lunch lady.

## WILLIAM VOICEOVER

Oddly the word for "white person," *lekhooa*, falls not into a *human* noun class but a *thing* noun class the same way as *lekoenya* and *makoenya* -- doughnuts -- the local speciality.

He finally comes to the end of the line with a full tray. The end is the desert section, filled with doughy deep-fried doughnuts. William takes one of them and begins to snack on it. The lunch lady adds a second one to his tray and smiles broadly.

INT. SCHOOL LUNCHROOM - TEACHERS TABLE - DAY

William brings his lunch the teacher's table where he is greeted by his fellow teachers already seated.

## NTATE KAO

Welcome William!

## WILLIAM

Can I ask the table a question?

William sits down with his jam-packed tray.

M'E LIKHAMA

Of course!

WILLIAM

Why are white people and doughnuts pluralized the same in Sesotho?

Ntate Kao finds this amusing.

NTATE KAO

What are you trying to say?

WILLIAM

It seems that outsiders in Lesotho are classified in the *thing* class. Makwerekewere, maChina, maKoenya.

William points to one of his colleagues, the Zimbabwean teacher NTATE W.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Ntate W and I should be granted full personhood.

NTATE KAO

Oh my friend, don't be silly, there is no malice or insult intended to you or our friend from Zimbabwe!

William and Ntate W look uncertain. Ntate W, drawn into the conversation, looks uncomfortable.

NTATE KAO (CONT'D)

The Basotho welcome everyone to our country! We are all together here.

WILLIAM

Ok. Can I ask another question? Today in class the children were chewing on pieces of paper from their notebooks. They weren't hungry and there was no writing on the paper. When I asked why they were chewing on paper none of them could answer me. Why were they doing this?

The entire row of teachers look perplexed at the question, misunderstanding.

NTATE MAPALO

Chewing?



M'E LIKHAMA

Paper?

WILLIAM

Yes.

There is no answer. In fact some of the teachers look insulted.

NTATE W

(trying to be helpful)

Maybe there were trying to gain knowledge by consuming the studies?

M'E LIKHAMA

Was it warm in the room?

WILLIAM

It was muggy.

M'e Likhama looks further confused.

M'E LIKHAMA

Oh.

The table remains awkwardly silent. It is as if this conversation it not an appropriate one. William breaks the discomfort by practicing his Sesotho very dramatically to his seated neighbor, 'M'E Likhama.

WILLIAM

*Your cookie looks very nice!*

'M'E LIKHAMA blushes while the rest of the teachers SNICKER. NTATE MAPOLA leans over to William.

NTATE MAPOLA

(whispering)

William, my brother, there are some things it is not possible to say as you have said. You cannot talk about 'M'e Likhama's cookie, but only her *cookies*, using the plural.

Another teacher, 'M'E LEPHATSI, elbows William in the shoulder and gropes his arm. The table starts to become more animated.

M'E LIKHAMA

(out loud)

Yes, because with her cookie, you are talking about something else entirely.

NTATE KAO

In the same way, Ntate William, you cannot comment upon Ntate Mapola's carrot. Only his *carrots*, or else people will become confused with your meaning.

NTATE MAPOLA looks uncomfortable. Another of the female teachers chimes in, trying to hide a grin behind the seriousness of her tone.

M'E LEPHATSI

No, no, you should never discuss Ntate Mapola's carrot, nor the length of his carrot, although it is appropriate to say that Ntate Mapola has sizable carrots growing in his garden.

M'E LIKHAMA

Yes, and in a manner relating to what 'M'e Lephatsi has said, you should not inquire about the potatoes of either Ntate Mapola or Ntate Kao.

M'E LEPHATSI

And you must certainly not ask which man has more nourishing potatoes.

NTATE MAPOLA is nervously laughing and clearly wishes to steer the discussion away from his carrot or potatoes. He collects himself.

NTATE MAPOLA

As a final warning, my brother, I should tell you about the cake of 'M'e Likhama, or even of 'M'e Lephatsi. You should never say *Ke batla kuku*, which means I must have her cake, even if the cake of 'M'e Likhama or 'M'e Lephatsi looks particularly pleasing. A comment like this may seem troublesome to those who hear it.

M'E LIKHAMA nods sagely and finishes the last bite of her cookie before she says, matter-of-factly:

M'E LIKHAMA

It was a good cookie.

NTATE MAPOLA changes the subject.

NTATE MAPOLA

So William, when are you going to  
get your Basotho name!

WILLIAM

The neighbor suggested Mpho.

The teachers ALL LAUGH.

M'E LEPHATSI

Oh that is a woman's name, William!  
You must find another one.

EXT. PATH OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL - AFTER SCHOOL

William is walking away from school. Ahead he sees a flock of sheep and hears the din of BLEATING and swell of tintinnabulation from the cowbells. William pulls a donut out of his shoulder bag.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER

In the end I am proud to share a  
noun class with *makoenya* because  
*makoenya* are fucking delicious.  
Would that all human beings be as  
doughy and satisfying.

William stops to observe the distant mountainside undulating strangely as if a shimmering wall of heat. He squints his eyes and realizes it's another flock of sheep.

13 - ON THE OCCASION OF BUYING SOMETHING FOR WHICH I HAVE NO  
NEED (P. 105-113)

WILLIAM walks along the [path through town]. A MAN tries to  
sell him a pig.

PIG SELLER

This pig, *kanete*, it is so nice. I  
think you can get it.

WILLIAM

Oh, sorry, I am not in the market  
for a pig.

PIG SELLER

But your other ones, I am asking,  
maybe they will like it?

William realizes he is talking about the other *makhooa* -  
Ellen and Bridget and Reid, known in town as the only four  
white people.

WILLIAM

It is my practice not to purchase livestock sight unseen. But there is something I would like to buy today. Would you know where I could find one?

William demonstrates the motion of a bell.

PIG SELLER

You are a shepherd?

WILLIAM

No, I am trying to purchase it for someone.

PIG SELLER

This person is a shepherd?

WILLIAM

No, I am just trying to purchase it.

The pig seller stares for a moment, perplexed, then points towards an area of town past the shanties where they cook *joala* and towards the vegetable warehouse where they occasionally have vegetables.

PIG SELLER

You can try there.

EXT. MAIN ROAD IN TOWN - SAME

William walks towards the warehouse. He is being followed by one, now two, now three scurrying children.

CHILDREN

(in Sesotho)

*Give me linbonbon! Give me chelte!*

William politely faces them, a smudge of donut still on his face.

WILLIAM

(in Sesotho)

*I don't have any linbonbon.*

One CHILD skids to a stop on his heels and falls on his butt LAUGHING as the others fall away and give up their quest.

Ahead a DRUNK MAN ambles down the road as William comes upon the Night Guard, Ntate Bokang, along with his WIFE, sitting on a tarp selling bananas.

NTATE BOKANG

(to William, speaking in a serious tone)

I have been telling 'M'e Nthabeleng that the night guards must have a weapon. You must tell her for us. That man, the very drunk one, he was beaten so badly the other night. Some men were waiting for him as he came home and they beat him! I shouted but I did not have a weapon to stop them.

William thinks about this closely. Mokhotlong is the least dangerous place he has ever been.

WILLIAM

I will suggest your idea to 'M'e Nthabeleng. But I think she will say no.

Ntate Bokang looks satisfied at this answer.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Ntate Bokang, can you tell me where I can buy one of these?

William charades to indicate a bell around the head of a cow. Ntate Bokang starts LAUGHING with full vigor. This is a very fine joke.

NTATE BOKANG

In America, you are a shepherd?

EXT. WALKING THROUGH TOWN - SAME

William passes the permanently burned-down bar, just rubble inside, with men working every day to rebuild it and nothing ever progressing.

He passes a man with an enormous bull's head in a wheelbarrow. Its round glassy eyes gaze into the recent past.

William walks past the metal shanty coffin shop where a sound system blasts an old hip-hop song at deafening volume. *It's getting hot in here, so take off all your clothes.* The man out front kneels in the dust and hammers together the sides of a casket.

Looking past the coffins William sees sparks flying and a man welding.

EXT. WELDING SHOP - DAY

The welders have a table and workbench set up along the road. Their tools are strewn about, but their metalwork creations are exhibited in orderly rows on the ground: small shelving units, footstools, and bells - a broad spectrum of handmade shepherd's bells, some as small as a deck of cards intended for sheep and goats, and some as large as a loaf of bread that will hang from the necks of cattle.

William gazes over the panoply of arrayed bells. Each is beautiful in a rough and unfinished way. They are crafted from scraps of metal, molded into hexagonal tubes and then fused along the seams. Their edges are jagged and the sides are a deep steel blue daubed with sienna and white whorls of rust. There are tiny nubs and metallic bubbles frozen in the surface.

William approaches a WELDER who turns off his torch and turns up his goggles.

WILLIAM

I'd like to purchase one of your bells.

WELDER

You are a shepherd?

WILLIAM

No, I'm not, but I thought of the poetry of the motion of a flock of sheep on a distant hillside and I thought it would make a good...

The welder comprehends none of this.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

(matter-of-factly)

I am not a shepherd, but if I purchase a bell I may decide to become one.

The welder find this answer satisfactory. He lays his torch on the workbench and comes to look at the bells with William.

WELDER

Try this one. Also this.

The welder encourages him to ring an assortment of bells and listen to the differences in sound quality. William gives one a good SHAKE and a massive tone leaps from the mouth of the bell. William reaches for another but the welder stops him and shakes his head.

WELDER (CONT'D)

That sound, *ache*, not so good.

As William and the welder crouch to examine and ring more bells, a small crowd develops and the bystanders begin to murmur. No one can understand why a non-shepherd would waste money on something so distinctly pastoral. But there is acceptance, eventually, and perhaps an understanding that William is touched in the head. Maybe they think he will be the one wearing the bell.

BYSTANDER 1

No, no, that one is too small!

BYSTANDER 2

Ah but not that large. It is unnecessary!

BYSTANDER 3

That one is fine in size, but the tone, it could be nicer.

Finally William leans down and picks a mid-sized bell with subtle discolorations. He gives it a LOUD SHAKE, then confirms to the welder that this is the one. People in the crowd nod in approval. He has made a good pick.

William pays the welder and turns to the gathered crowd awaiting closure. He does the only thing that feels right: He SHAKES THAT BASTARD AS HARD AS HE CAN.

The booming tone leaps out wildly against the mountains and the people LAUGH and shake their heads in bewilderment, for how can such things be?

INT. WILLIAM AND ELLEN'S RONDAVEL - NIGHT

A sequence of objects in the rondavel: the shepherd's crook. The blue children's sand pail. An old watch. A fine looking pen. The cowbell, with a small red bow on it.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER

Volumes have been written about the difference between "thing" and "art", about Western fetishization of African objects, about the importance of "authenticity" or the phoniness of "authenticity" or about whether a "thing" loses its "thingness" when divorced from its natural context. For the most part, though, that stuff is a bit dull.

(MORE)

WILLIAM VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

I just wanted to buy a cowbell for  
my wife's 30th birthday.

William presents the cowbell to Ellen. Ellen is delighted but  
also puzzled.

ELLEN

Do you need to know where I am at  
all times?

WILLIAM

No. Yes?

ELLEN

(cheerfully)  
So I'm cattle to you?

WILLIAM

I was thinking sheep.

ELLEN

Sheep?

WILLIAM

Ram? Specifically.

ELLEN

So you're the lamb.

Ellen SHAKES THE BELL loudly.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

It sounds nice!

WILLIAM

It took me a while to find the  
welder in town and then pick out  
the right bell.

ELLEN

Hard day's work, bell-choosing?

INT. SAFE HOME OFFICE - DAY

Bridget is perched on the office's only computer next to  
Nthatebeleng who is talking on a a cheap cell phone. Outside  
the window of the office we see a small clinic in full  
operation attended by NURSES and DOCTORS: the play room, a  
doctor's office, a room with small hospital beds, and a small  
ward with infants in incubators or cribs.



Standing patiently, for their are no chairs, are Ma and Pa Mohlomi. They have with them a younger, much weaker and frail Retselisitsoe bundled in a tight swaddle.

One of the nurses brings Nthabeleng paperwork and Nthabeleng ends the phone call.

NTHABELENG

Ba!

NTHABELENG (CONT'D)

(in Sesotho)

*Go ahead and bring them to M'e Nagala.*

The nurse nods and goes out of the office to escort Ma and Pa Mohlomi to the ward. Bridget begins to fill in the paperwork.

BRIDGET

Parents?

NTHABELENG

Deceased.

BRIDGET

Next of kin?

NTHABELENG

You saw them. Grandparents. Mohlomi.

Bridget fills in the information.

NTHABELENG (CONT'D)

Ache, Bridget, is your *makoneya* friend, the big child, coming in today because it's the weekend?

BRIDGET

Reid?

NTHABELENG

The other one.

BRIDGET

Probably.

Nthabeleng nods.

~~INT. CLINIC — LATER~~

~~A doctor investigates Retsli and gives a report.~~

INT. SAFE HOME PLAY ROOM - LATER

Several TODDLERS are in the play room along with another NURSE and a MALE Mosotho about William's age. He looks sad as he builds blocks with a young boy who wears a name tag that reads MOEKETE. The boy is weak and has difficulty staying upright. The man is being watched carefully by the nurse.

MOSOTHO MAN

(in Sesotho, to the boy,  
but not translated)

*I am sorry son. I will do better  
and I will always be here for you.*

He picks up the young boy and gives him a deep hug before handing him off to the nurse. He gathers his belongings and leaves, eyes cast down, not even noticing Ma and Pa Mohlomi as they drudge in with the frail Retselisitsoe.

~~INT. SAFE HOUSE OFFICE - SAME~~

~~The man walks past the office. Nthabeleng looks at Bridget.  
Bridget nods.~~

INT. SAFE HOME HALLWAY - SAME

William saunters into the safe home on his day off from teaching. His infectious joy has little effect on the Mosotho man as they pass each other in the hallway like mirror ghosts.

INT. SAFE HOME PLAY ROOM - LATER

William and the nurse are there with several toddlers, including Moekete and Retselisitsoe. William sits in the center of the room on the floor with the children surrounding him. He takes turns putting a baseball cap over a child's head and then letting it slip over his eyes, peek-a-boo. Each one clamors to be the next in line.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER

The program only takes the most dire of cases. Most of the babies at the safe home are weeks or months old and too young to process their current circumstances. They don't understand that their mother is dead, or their father by necessity works in another country.

(MORE)

WILLIAM VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

They don't realize that their uncle the drunk won't take them in, or their aunt doesn't have enough money for food or their sister is nine and doesn't know how to treat abdominal tuberculosis. All they know is that suddenly they are being fed five times a day. They are getting their meds exact to the minute. Perhaps for the first time in their lives they feel healthy, or at least the absence of pain.

A three-year old child, THATO, a new addition to the ward and still malnourished, sits apart and stares at William and the game.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

But Thato understands. He is new to the ward but cursed by knowledge.

William motions for Thato to come over but Thato looks away. William scoots a few inches closer and holds the hat out.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

(conversationally)

*Nka.* Take it.

Thato recoils. William returns to the other children to keep the game going but looks back over to Thato from time to time to draw him in. Each time Thato looks away.

It's time for the kids to get into their sleep schedule and out of the play room. Thato sees William getting up to leave and WAILS, holding his arms out, begging, sobbing. He tries to crawl but he is too malnourished to drag his frame across the floor.

William picks him up. Thato clings to his chest, grabs onto him with tiny iron fingers and buries his face in William's armpit, his body shaking.

CUT TO:

~~INT. SAFE HOME OFFICE — LATER~~

~~Numbly, William stares at Nthathebeleng and Bridget.~~

WILLIAM

~~It's tough.~~

## NTHABELENG

~~Don't get sentimental. We will get them better as best we can.~~

EXT. OUTSIDE A WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Next to a vacant hotel and semi-deserted hospital by the turn of the river a haunted and forbidding cinder block warehouse, its walls shedding plaster and windows painted over, is SHAKING. Chips of plaster fall off and float to the ground.

This is because *famo*, which sounds like a southern African step-cousin of zydeco, is playing inside. The music PULSATES while William and Reid wait in line and haggle with the DOORMAN.

WILLIAM

No no, that's definitely too much.

DOORMAN

I'm sorry but that is the charge.

REID

But we're friends with the band!

A GUARD with a machine gun steps in to the process.

REID (CONT'D)

I was lying. We aren't friends with the band.

The guard swings his gun towards Reid and GRUNTS to the doorman.

MACHINE GUN GUARD

They will pay the same price that everyone else has paid.

The doorman quickly obliges and accepts William and Reid's money before moving on down the line. William thanks the guard with a traditional Sesotho handshake.

WILLIAM

(to the guard)

*Kea leboha, ntate.*

The guard nods sternly.

INT. CINDER BLOCK WAREHOUSE DANCE FLOOR. NIGHT

Inside the defunct abattoir the *famo* band from Maseru has brought the beats.

The singer wails into a mic and flops onto the ground his lyrics distorted through a blown-out PA system. The drummer, his bass drum sliding away from his right foot despite two small boulders placed to prevent such a thing, bludgeons a ride cymbal until the stand topples over and an exuberantly drunk audience member returns it upright. The accordionist is busy not caring and the bass player is busy not caring while slathering a dirty-dirty bass line all over the blood-stained floor. The dancers, three men in matching t-shirts and wrapped in traditional woolen Basotho blankets, perform coordinated hop-skips, shoulder-dips and one-footers while swinging their wooden shepherd's crooks, *molamo*, in beer-dazed ecstasy. In short, it's a rollicking good show.

The crowd is deep country Basotho, thick with *molamo*-wielding shepherds in blankets and gumboots from the outer villages where the power lines don't reach.

But now the crowd is not enjoying the *famo* band as much. Some are beginning to STARE UNFLINCHINGLY at Reid and William, dressed in his pajamas and also carrying an intricately-carved *molamo*. William is not a shepherd.

The tension is building.

And then Reid borrows William's *molamo* and begins to DANCE to the *famo*. The hop-scoot. The one-footer. The shoulder-dip. The crowd is no longer staring at them cold-eyed but rather big-eyed. And then they are leg-slapping. And then hooting and ululating.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER

This is because we *practice*.

Reid's dancing evaporates any remaining tensions. Now everyone is doing the hop-skip and the shoulder-dip and the one-footer, hitting on the scoot-scoot and the double stomp and the clackety-hop. The locals are doing the tooth-whistle and the bird whoop too, since Basotho are by birthright the most creative and dexterous of whistlers.

Meanwhile, William has joined a pseudo-conga line and the parade takes him near the exit for the bar. He waves to Reid.

WILLIAM

Beer?

Reid nods back.

INT. BAR AT DANCE HALL. NIGHT

William is patiently waiting to pay for seven quarts of beer lined up on the bar while a MAN ON A BAR STOOL eyes him carefully.

MAN AT BAR  
Are you a promoter?

WILLIAM  
I am not. But that would be great  
as I really like this *famo* band.

The man arches his eyebrow.

MAN AT BAR  
I think you are a promoter.

William nods, picks up his seven drinks carefully and heads back to the dance floor.

INT. DANCE FLOOR AREA. SAME

William passes out beers to a group he and Reid are with from the school: the Zimbabwean teacher, M'e Ntathe, Ntathe W and others. He then realizes he has forgotten one for himself and starts to return when he is stopped by the guard with the machine gun.

MACHINE GUN MAN  
Stop.

William stops.

MACHINE GUN MAN (CONT'D)  
My name is Adam.

The guard extends a handshake, Western-style.

MACHINE GUN MAN (CONT'D)  
I am the first man.

He grins at his joke.

WILLIAM  
That's cool. I'm glad you are here.  
We want to make sure there's no  
trouble at this concert.

The guard looks pleased, proud.

ADAM THE FIRST MAN  
Thank you.

William and Adam gaze out to watch the audience together: One little shepherd boy of eight in a blanket worn like a cape, wool hat and gumboots, well past his bedtime, hop-scotches around drinking from a giant glass bottle of Coke.

Two youngish *bo-'m'e* are sitting in chairs in front of the dancers. These women have been laughing at Reid thinking it's rather surprising that he knows the dance steps and how to hold the *molamo* properly. Suddenly one runs up and grabs the *molamo* and runs off to dance with it, which is slightly transgressive, since only *bo-ntate* are supposed to dance with the *molamo*.

Adam leans over to William and whispers.

ADAM THE FIRST MAN (CONT'D)

Those *bo-'m'e*, you must limit your interactions with them.

He indicates the women.

ADAM THE FIRST MAN (CONT'D)

It is okay to talk with them, but you must limit your interactions with them.

William nods back to Adam.

WILLIAM

Perhaps we will talk with them, but we will limit our interactions with them.

Adam nods sagely, satisfied, and returns to guarding the doorway while William returns to his group.

INT. DANCE FLOOR AREA - LATER

The evening is winding down. William and Reid bid adieu to the dancing *bo'm'e*. While the band continues playing, the lead singer steps off the stage to shake hands with Reid and William. As they are leaving, William looks around for Adam.

EXT. MOKHOTLONG ROAD - NIGHT

William and Reid walk along the road back home. It is dark and cold, their breath visible in the air. Stray devil dogs scavenge at the edges, their glinting eyes and serpentine profiles slipping between houses and rondavels. Suddenly from behind them they hear a MAN RUNNING. Bursting up the hill in full stride comes a LARGE MAN.

ADAM THE FIRST MAN

Stop!

William and Reid freeze in their tracks. Adam catches up to them, huffing and puffing. He stops to catch his breath.

ADAM THE FIRST MAN (CONT'D)

I am sorry. Very sorry.

Reid looks nervous.

ADAM THE FIRST MAN (CONT'D)

But I was hoping to acquire your e-mail addresses?

CUT TO:

EXT. MOKHOTLONG ROAD - DAY

William is walking to work, carrying his academic-laden backpack. Upon approaching the school he makes his usual detour past the attached work-farm with battered chicken coops next to the careful plots of *moroho* tucked behind the volleyball nets. Further away still, but closest to the road, is the pigsty.

EXT. PIGSTY NEAR THE ROAD - DAY

Pigs tiptoe daintily through their muck-filled stone and mortar enclosures, the ends of their snouts tilting, sniffing, expanding, contracting, trying to fathom William's purpose in standing there with a look of curiosity and revulsion.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER

Anyone who professes to find pigs adorable has probably never seen a hog up close. Or perhaps they are familiar with the manicured pigs that celebrities own, ironic and calculatedly quirky pets far removed from real, rural farm swine. Pigs are foul, stinking, rather unpleasant creatures and they are not adorable.

One large hog with horseflies skittering in and out of his enormous, pale, scabbed and unpleasant flopping bat-ears nudges closer to gaze back at William.



## WILLIAM VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

It is their eyes, though, that are most remarkable: so very human, guarded by blond, decidedly human eyelashes. I understand now why Homer sang of the witch Circe who transformed Odysseus' men into swine. As the pigs watch me expectantly, I am looking into human eyes encased in animal bodies, alive with some frightened, mute intelligence.

## EXT. SCHOOL YARD. EARLY MORNING

The bright morning sun highlights an entire assembly of school children gathered in columns.

The backs of one thousand students in maroon and white with shaved heads SING a ghostly fragile song, teenage voices rising in morning stillness, male and female tones like weight and counterweight. On certain beats the assembly STOMP their feet and puffs of dust rise around their ankles. William, camouflaged and hidden beneath an overhang, notices Nkhopoleng among them, stomping her feet joyfully.

When the song ends the SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, flanked by a CHAPLAIN, step in front of the assembly to introduce a YOUNG BOY.

## SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

And now, welcome our newest member of the school assembly, N'kato!

N'kato comes out from the crowd and begins to PREACH to his gathered classmates, relaying short funny parables about how to remain unpolluted of sin. He tromps back and forth before the crowd while orating, playing grown-up, imitating the preachers he had seen on Sunday. Then he lurches to a stop, spins on his heels, marches in the opposite direction and is overcome by the Holy Ghost. He shimmies into a drunken marionette performance that is mostly parody. The students LAUGH as he pops his eyes at them and CHEER at the sermon's conclusion.

## N'KATO

So finish your homework and stay in school!

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER IN DAY

The walls are decorated with funny, colorful notes: Valentine's Day is coming up. The students are cheerful as class winds down.

WILLIAM

OK last question. What makes something a poem and what makes it prose?

This is something of a stumper. Nkhopoleng raises her hand.

NKHOPOLENG

Context?

WILLIAM

Great answer! Ok everyone enjoy the marathon this weekend. Maybe I will see some of you out there.

The students hurriedly gather their belongings.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Don't forget to see the headmaster after class for your daily chores.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

William is grading essays in the empty classroom and sneaks a glance out the window to watch the boys do their chores.

With dull hand sickles the boys bend over cutting weeds, pulling the grass up tall and sawing through. One YOUNG MAN in particular looks rather scornful as he SLASHES at the weeds. The glint in his eye reminds William of something.

A BOY'S VOICE

Black reapers with the sound of steel on stones.  
Are sharpening scythes. I see them place the hones.  
In their hip-pockets as a thing that's done,  
And start their silent swinging, one by one.

INT. CLASSROOM - SEVERAL YEARS EARLIER

A teenage black American BOY looks up towards William.

WILLIAM

So what do you think this poem from  
the Harlem renaissance is about?

BOY

Racism?

ANOTHER BOY

Slavery?

WILLIAM

Look at the language. What mood is  
Toomer going for.

DARIUS, a thin, sweet kid speaks up.

DARIUS

It's about violence coming for ya.

There is a GLINT in his eye.

BACK TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - SAME

Outside the window the young man slashes at the tall weeds  
again.

WILLIAM

One hundred and twenty thousand  
orphans...

The boys continue to cut away at the weeds. *Pull taut, slit.*  
There's a SHRIEK and William hurries over to the other  
window.

Out by the rows of *moroho* a few GIRLS are playing a riotous  
game, screaming happily as they try to build a tower of small  
flat stones, racing to balance one atop the other before  
another could topple the precarious construction. They run  
wild, drunk on joy, kicking up dirt and falling over  
themselves in laughter.

Each time the tower gets knocked down. And each time the  
girls do not seem to care.

CUT TO:

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - END OF DAY

Several teachers are decompressing in the teacher's lounge as William nonchalantly notices that there is a letter in his mailbox. More specifically, a valentine. He picks it up:

WILLIAM

(reading)

I never knew that ordinary days  
could bring such happy news until I  
somehow chose you as my valentine.  
Thank you for being a part of my  
life.

Ntate Mapola and 'M'e Lephatsi steal the note away and parse the handwriting.

NTATE MAPOLA

Hah, who could it be!

'M'e Lephatsi re-reads the last line.

M'E LEPHATSI

*Thank you for being a part of my  
life.*

(to William)

Ntate-Mpho, is there something you  
are not telling us?

'M'e Lephatsi places the back of her hand dramatically on her forehead, then begins fanning herself with the handwritten note.

M'E LEPHATSI (CONT'D)

Whatever has transpired, you must  
hide it from your wife, as she may  
become murderous!

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. WILLIAM AND ELLEN'S RONDAVEL - MORNING

Ellen's face is crinkled in a sort of curious disgust, most likely not a murderous scowl, but disruptive nonetheless.

ELLEN

So you have a valentine?

William kisses her on the cheek.

WILLIAM

Only this one.

ELLEN

Cute! But hallmark owns that clever rejoinder.

WILLIAM

Um, no, that's not...

ELLEN

Pick me up something from Thia-La-La and I'll see you at the finish line?

INT. THIA-LA-LA BUTCHERY - DAY

The Thia-La-La butchery is Mokhotlong's premier - and only - noon-hour hotspot. There is a chaotic pressing of the hungry masses toward the lunch counter in a scrum for food. Customers vie for attention and slam money on the counter while the staff responds with a whirlwind of inactivity. It is not the Basotho way to rush.

William presses forward in the middle and sees LIMPHO, full-cheeked and bright, behind the counter fastidiously attending to a plate by positioning each *makoenya* like a Dutch still life. She sees William and abandons her opus to add more chips to the deep fryer. Behind her is a gory backdrop of hocks, shanks and steaming coils of intestine which make Limpho look that much more like a librarian. William finally makes it up to the counter and greets Ntate Motlatsi.

WILLIAM

So this must be the starting line for the race?

NTATE MOTLATSI

My friend it is a good day!

Ntate Motlatsi calls out William's order and then whispers something flirtatious to Limpho. But still she skips behind the counter with a wide grin in the face of the mass of humanity. Limpho brings William a large paper bag of french fries and smiles sweetly.

LIMPHO

It is ready...

William is smitten and cannot help but admire her devout beauty.

WILLIAM

Limpho...

LIMPHO  
 (interrupting)  
 Tell me William, can I question  
 you?

WILLIAM  
 Of course. Anything.

LIMPHO  
 Are you a doctor?

WILLIAM  
 Um, no, well I do have a...

LIMPHO  
 But more important, tell me what is  
 your Sesotho name?

EXT. DOWNTOWN MOKHOTLONG STREET - DAY

Downtown Mokhotlong's typically dusty and sparse thoroughfare  
 has become a hive of activity as people start to look for  
 spots to view the marathon.

Reid, Bridget, Ellen, Nthabeleng and her sister KOKONYANA  
 wait for William. He brings the french fries in a paper bag  
 and hands the bag to Ellen. Together the group walks amid a  
 crowd that starts to gather in the main part of town.

WILLIAM  
 Nthabeleng, I think I need a new  
 name.

NTHABELENG  
 Yes you do.

WILLIAM  
 Besides Mpho.

NTHABELENG  
 Mpho? It means gift. It's a girl's  
 name. Who calls you that?

William blushes.

WILLIAM  
 No one.

NTHABELENG  
 Good. You should get a real Sesotho  
 name then.

WILLIAM  
 Something regal, something  
 befitting my stature.

NTHABELENG  
*Ache uena!* You are regal like a  
 donkey is regal!

William shrugs. Nthabeleng thinks deeply for a moment.  
 Finally:

NTHABELENG (CONT'D)  
 Okay you can be Moshoeshoe.

She tries to look at William sternly.

NTHABELENG (CONT'D)  
 And for the surname you will  
 take... Mochochonono. From now on  
 we will call you Moshoeshoe  
 Mochochonono. A real Mosotho man!

Kokonyana arches her eyebrow at this proclamation. William looks proud. The group has now found a spot near the end of the line. Suddenly the crowd begins to split in two to make room for the runners who appear on the horizon. William ends up separated from the rest of them on the other side of the road. Kokonyana calls out across the road.

KOKONYANA  
*Moshoeshoe!!* Moshoeshoe  
 mochochonono over this way!

She is barely holding back her laughter. Several in the crowd seem genuinely delighted, outright confused or simply offended when William, hearing his new Sesotho name, responds and hurries across the road to rejoin the group.

In the distance two police motorcycles with sirens blaring and lights flashing clear the course for the race leaders -- two sponsored international athletes in bright Nike gear.

The men are in a full sprint separated by an arm's length. The crowd begins to RUMBLE, living in the symbiotic moment of spectator and athlete; the crowd driving the runners onward and the runners fueling the crowd's CHEERS. The two men run stride for stride, sheens of sweat on their faces and bound at the hip by an invisible cord. The pulse of muscle, the translation of energy along the pavement, the striking ugliness of the human body straining its limits as the RUNNER in the lead by an arm's length pushes mightily and *thrusts* himself past the finish line for the win. The crowd CHEERS and CLAPS politely.

But there is a third man back.

He is alone in the distance. He is not wearing sponsored apparel. He has separated himself and will take third easily but the crowd isn't impressed.

And then, rather suddenly, the man has competition. An overfilled pickup truck swerves madly onto the road behind him. The truck is close on his heels, four people in the cab and ten in the back. They are standing and YELLING and they seem to be urging this runner on. Kokonyana begins waving her arms.

KOKONYANA (CONT'D)

This man... he is from Mokhotlong!

She DASHES INTO THE STREET and starts running ahead of the truckload of cheerleaders that now follows by his side.

KOKONYANA (CONT'D)

*Tiea! Tiea! Tiea!*

And then Nthabeleng jumps into the race course, bellowing to tell the runner he is almost there:

NTHABELENG

*O tia fihla! Fihla!*

The entire crowd is ROARING for their native son. Even the impassive shepherds are cheering. As the MAN FROM MOKHOTLONG passes, a strange and unearned wave of pride washes over William and the crowd SURGES FORWARD. William tries to hold the crowd back so as not to disrupt the race but they SHOVE and POKE and PUSH.

CROWD

*Tiea! Tiea! Tiea!*

And suddenly William is THRUST into the course. His demeanor changes to sudden joy: he is now a native Mokhotlong as well.

William RUNS behind the truckload of men. He is exuberant and the crowd continues to CHEER loudly. He is joined by more and more people who push into the street. The crowd and the race are as one raucous rushing rapids heading towards the finish line.

William runs as fast as he can now, straining, his face writhing in agony, muscles tautly responding to the harsh pavement as he struggles to keep pace with the faster Basotho who RACE past him. He is alone now on the course. The crowd begins cheering for him.



CROWD (CONT'D)  
*Tiea, Lekhooa, Tiea!*

Then:

CROWD (CONT'D)  
*Tiea Moshoeshoe! Moshoeshoe!*  
*Moshoeshoe!*

William looks up with admiration and adulation upon hearing his new Sesotho name but then the crowd changes from filial joy to laughter and pointing; *Who is this man?* They begin chanting:

CROWD (CONT'D)  
 Moshoeshoe! Mochochocho!  
 Moshoeshoe! Mochochocho!

Some turn angry.

MAN IN CROWD  
 C'mon man, get out of the race!

SECOND MAN IN CROWD  
 (laughing)  
 Child, have you lost your family?  
 You are not actually from  
 Mokhotlong!

WOMAN IN CROWD  
 I have a pig I can sell you!

William looks confused and STUMBLES, falling to a patch of gravel besides the pavement and cutting his hand. The laughter and mocking continues as William places his hurt hand down to get up but winces in pain and turns over on his back. He focuses on the clear blue sky, a relief from the torment. In that patch of sky that William has to himself, a JETLINER crosses.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. THE SKY AS SEEN FROM INSIDE A CLASSROOM LATE IN THE DAY

A jetliner is flying over Mokhotlong as William stares out the window, daydreaming. His daydream is interrupted by Nkhopoleng standing at his desk, holding back tears.

NKHOPOLENG  
 Sir.

William is surprised he did not notice her.

WILLIAM  
Yes, Nkhopoleng?

NKHOPOLENG  
Sir, I am having trouble to learn English.

WILLIAM  
But you are speaking it very well and your grades are good.

NKHOPOLENG  
Sir, I will never be a American.

WILLIAM  
Of course. You are Basotho. What could be finer than that?

Nkhopoleng is crying now in full force.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

William walks down the hall looking lost and stops at the door to:

INT. MATH & SCIENCE STAFF ROOM - AFTERNOON

William walks in and is surprised to find two high school boys lying face down in the middle of the faculty office. They appear tense. 'Me' Lephatsi sees William and hurriedly calls him over.

M'E LEPHATSI  
Can you double check this physics problem I am writing for the exam?

William looks at what she has sketched out on the back of a curriculum guide stamped with the school-issued slogan FIGHT AIDS, BE FAITHFUL, AND LIVE! It is a problem involving flexibility and mass. Just then the mild-mannered milksop of a math teacher, NTATE HLOMPHO, walks in and sheepishly senses that William's unexpected presence may be problematic. He chuckles.

NTATE HLOMPHO  
Ntate Moshoeshoe, you will have to cover your eyes.

It's then that William notices he is carrying a three-foot length of thin rubber hose.

NTATE HLOMPHO (CONT'D)

I am about to skin an elephant.

And then Ntate Hlompho begins to WHIP THE SHIT out of the boys on the floor. He whips them across their thighs and across their backs. He lustily heaves his body into the whipping, his arms in full torsion, his torso snapping efficiently and then recoiling, everything about him elastic. It is an act of stunning brutality -- and yet there is something obscenely graceful in the way his body moves, his body which is normally so artless.

NTATE HLOMPHO (CONT'D)

(in Sesotho)

You don't steal pencils in my  
classroom!

The boys are rolling in pain, rocking from side to side, turning over onto their backs to beg restraint, eyes welled with tears. Then they roll again quickly onto their stomachs because Ntate Hlompho will not stop.

The boys extend their arms beseechingly but then the WHIP raises up again and GRAPHICS of the physics of FLEXIBILITY and MASS are illustrated on the rubber hose as its' arc through the air slows and fits into a measured grid displaying the mathematics of whip crack.

3 feet long. Mass just light enough. Flexibility perfect for maximum pain.

William looks horrified as he processes the ferocity and unforgiving nature of Ntate Hlompho and the mercy-seeking children who harden with each HIT.

In slow motion, their eyes glaze over from desperation... to retribution... to loathing. They are transforming into monsters.

William can take no more and he disappears out the door.

One of the boys is now crying fiercely.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SAFE HOME PLAY ROOM. DAY

One of the children, Retselisitsoe, is crying fiercely. He has gained some weight and looks healthier. Still, he WAILS, looking down at a dinosaur puzzle piece that doesn't fit on a board.

## WILLIAM VOICEOVER

One of the great and perverse joys of working with Nthabeleng is seeing children come in ravaged with illness and knowing that they will survive, prosper, grow fat and joyous and one day throw a tantrum because a puzzle piece doesn't fit properly on the board. I have seen Nthabeleng *will* many children back to life.

William places the puzzle piece forming a triceratops. Meanwhile the little girl DAKON runs with a ball past Thato, who is still weak but with alert eyes, hiding in a corner.

## WILLIAM VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

That is how I consoled myself with Thato. I thought about how surprised he would be one day to discover himself fat and comfortable and annoyed that Dakon took away his ball. What a great luxury to have that mentality that the house never wins and that the odds can be beaten.

## INT/EXT - MAGIC - TIME SHIFT AND TIME LAPSE

We begin to drift through the rooms of the safe home as if floating in time. All around the activity of doctors and nurses preparing and administering ARV medications begins as normal but RAMPS up into a whirlwind of activity. Helpers like Reid and William and Bridget and Ellen play with children while parents and grandparents comfort their cries. Retselisitsoe and others change as if we were watching a plant grow in slow motion. Their sallow cheeks become fuller, their mouths turn upwards to smiles, bony arms become stronger. But there are two for whom time seems to have slowed instead of sped up. Mokete does not get fatter while Mokete's father walks through the surroundings in normal speed as if a ghost, mournful, eyes downcast and his body withering in tandem with his son.

Leaving the safe home offices, Mokete's father walks down the long hallway and steps outside into the blinding light of day. His tears have dried. He stops to look up and then walks directly into the burning sun, his image SLOWLY DISAPPEARING to be replaced by:

THE GHOSTLY IMAGE of William with Thato in his arms, weak and frightened, walking out towards the rondavels that rest under the pastures above. William and Thato transform into fullness.

EXT. SAFE HOME. DAY

Thato stares at the birds and the trees and distant harvested fields that look like a quilted yellow patchwork against the mountainside. A multitude of cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys, horses and mongrel dogs move slowly past like an animate freight train.

Thato raises his matchstick arm and points at the mass of animals saying something weakly in Sesotho.

THATO

*They are hungry.*

William cannot understand what he is saying, cannot translate the child's language, can never understand.

One of the MONGREL DOGS stares back at Thato. There is a smile on his mein.

MONGREL DOG

*Yes. We are hungry. But peace will come.*

Thato understands.

CUT TO:

INT. SAFE HOME DOCTOR OFFICE. DAY

NYAMATUKWA, the Zimbabwean doctor at the safe home, holds a writhing SNAKE that he attempts to wrangle into position.

Strapped to a gurney below him and screaming is Thato.

NYAMATUKWA

(gently)

Thato, you must eat. We will feed you.

Nyamatumkwa firmly places a feeding tube in Thato's nostrils. Thato fights it gallantly. He tries to pull it out, flailing, but cannot.

NYAMATUKWA (CONT'D)

Thato, please.

Thato stops squirming, resigned. Time speeds up again as doctors examine Thato, unsatisfied, and then the gurney is picked up by a group of helpers and Thato's body is moved into the back of a van serving as an ambulance. Driving the van is a DONKEY.

DONKEY

*Here we go!*

The donkey-driven van DRIVES AWAY.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM. DAY

William and Ellen step up to the waiting room portico where a NURSE waits. She is eating cheese curls and watching a soap opera.

ELLEN

We are looking for Thato.

The nurse nods indifferently towards a room.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Thato is lying in a bed. New feeding tubes have been inserted and an IV is next to him. His eyelids are swollen half-shut, but his eyes still roam and swivel in their sockets, ghost-like.

A wizened stone-silent woman from a distant village whom we come to know as Thato's GRANDMOTHER sits motionless on a plastic chair at Thato's side.

Ellen sees the IV and looks horrified. William rushes out the door and brings the nurse inside the room.

WILLIAM

(angry)

If you do not turn this valve right *here*, then the NG tube *drains* the medicine from Thato's stomach before his body can *absorb* it.

The nurse dutifully turns the knob on the valve with disinterest.

NURSE

(nods to the grandmother)

I gave the instructions to her, but she did not do it, *ache*.

The nurse leaves. The IV now generates a low HUM. Thato's grandmother stares, impassively at the wall then at William, her face etched with generations passed. When she looks back at Thato his eyes have veiled over as his body breathes up and down rhythmically with the machine. Out in the hallway there are FOOTSTEPS.

AUDIO MATCH CUT  
TO:

INT/EXT - NEED A SCENE FOR THATO'S PASSING IN HERE

[Do we go back to the reflective scene at night? Something more with animals? Something else? The nighttime thing? Maybe footseps continue. Maybe the donkey scene William has in (overdoing the animals thing). Nature/clouds/cloudking? Too trite? Maybe one of the school scenes?]

Rockfight

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - END OF DAY

**TITLE CARD**  
SCHOOL DAYS

William is walking down the hallway with another valentine in his hand. He is smiling, remembering some past action as he gazes down.

CUT TO:

INT. AMERICAN HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT - MANY YEARS AGO

Ellen, wearing sunglasses and clenching an empty pipe in her teeth, arm wrestles a guy, toying with him. She finally SLAMS his wrist to the table. Several folks are impressed, particularly a guy wearing a LUMBERJACK SHIRT who gives out a low whistle and his eyes twinkle. Next to him is William.

LUMBERJACK GUY  
Brains *and* brawn.  
(to William)  
William step in, you're always down  
to be manhandled.

Ellen smiles broadly at the Lumberjack Guy.

ELLEN  
No, you come on up, Paul Bunyan.

Just as the Lumberjack Guy is about to sit down an ENERGETIC GUY bursts through the crowd, arm ready.

ENERGETIC GUY  
Let's do this!!

William strikes on an idea and pulls out his wallet.

WILLIAM  
(calling out)  
One-and-a-half pays one on Ellen,  
who's in?

As Ellen prepares to arm wrestle a phone starts ringing.

Ellen quickly SLAMS down the hand of the energetic guy. The crowd cheers. William starts collecting money.

INT. ELLEN'S STUDENT APARTMENT. NIGHT

Ellen has a cellphone in her hand.

ELLEN  
Hello.

WILLIAM (O.S.)  
Hi. Is this Ellen?

ELLEN  
Yeah and?

WILLIAM (O.S.)  
I met you at the party a few days ago...

Ellen is interested.

ELLEN  
You were the guy in the lumberjack shirt!?

WILLIAM (O.S.)  
Mmmmm hmmm. Yep. Yessirree.

INT. HALLWAY. PRESENT DAY

William continues his walk towards the teacher's lounge with the valentine in hand. Now he grins widely, remembering the conversation.



## WILLIAM VOICEOVER

Sometimes I think about the guy in the lumberjack shirt. I wonder how his life turned out, hope that he found a way through but I'm fooling myself: the lumberjack guy's heart is a barren tundra. And one day he will come looking for me seeking vengeance. I can see him on my doorstep, his lumberjack shirt soiled and torn from the years, his sockets hollow, his nails bitten to the quick. And when he comes I will turn to Ellen and say: "Bride, my bride, please arm wrestle this man and send him away."

## INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - LUNCH HOUR

William has arrived in the teacher's lounge with the valentine's note. He is flummoxed by what he has read and hands the missive to Ntate Kao.

## NTATE KAO

(reading)

*Hi, Honey, You look sick today, did you take too much beans yesterday? I will like to take you to the Hospital. So tell me when you are free. I think you need an appetizer for tomorrow.*

The note receives a sober reception in the staff room.

## M'E LEPHATSI

Is the writer suggesting you are flatulent?

## NTATE W

This seems like an odd tactic for a secret admirer.

## M'E LIKHAMA

Let me see it.

M'E Likhama examines the note carefully.

## M'E LIKHAMA (CONT'D)

This last line is perplexing. Take you to the hospital? Is this a seduction or a threat?

WILLIAM  
Seduction... at a hospital?

William looks around at the teachers but as before his confusion only draws blank stares: *why wouldn't a hospital be a place for seduction?* The question remains unanswered.

Breaking the awkward silence Ntate Kao changes the subject.

NTATE KAO  
Who's up for spendy game?

CUT TO:

INT. NTHABELENG RONDAVEL - DAY

Seated at a table across from each other like arm wrestlers, Nthabeleng and Ellen are in a relaxed conversation. Behind and perched on a stool like an owl is an older stern-faced Basotho woman, GRAMMA BELENG.

ELLEN  
To my point, research has shown that meeting the *psychosocial* needs of children is a critical element of early childhood development and definitely important for our children in particular. So I think we should pursue that.

Gramma Beleng frowns. But Nthabeleng agrees.

NTHABELENG  
I presume the care should be differentiated by gender?

ELLEN  
Not necessarily at this stage.

NTHABELENG  
(laughing)  
So by age then? Maturity level?

BACK TO:

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - LATER

William looks at a board game on a table that looks like a knock-off game of Scrabble.

WILLIAM  
 (smirking)  
 Spendy?

Gathered around the game are MAPOLA, head of the Math & Science Department, MOTHIBELI, an English Teacher, DUMA, civics, NTHEOLA, chemistry, and computer teachers MAKHETA and MAKASHANE.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
 Is it played like... Scrabble?

DUMA  
 Of course.

MAKHETA  
 We like to compete at lunch. It is important to refresh the mind.

The men begin to select tiles.

WILLIAM  
 Oh, I don't know. Spendy can be a serious game. Maybe next time.

DUMA  
 Ah no, it is a must! It is a gentlemen's game. Please, sit.

William blushes and sits down. He's going to crush.

WILLIAM  
 Are we playing in... English?

MAPOLA  
 Please William. Be serious.

The Spendy board is held together with tape and glue and the tile racks are gone. Duma holds tiles in his cupped hand, while Makashane has them tucked into the slots of a chalkboard eraser.

Mapalo plays the first word: HILL. This is followed by HERE and STONE. It is William's turn. He plays the word TREE.

Mothibeli leans over to William.

MOTHIBELI  
 (helpfully)  
 William, you know, if you played your S to make TREES you would have hit the double-word score for *both* words.

Mothibeli proceeds to play the word SOREL and TREES for 39 points and tallies up the score.

BACK TO:

INT. NTHABELENG RONDAVEL - DAY

ELLEN

Nthabeleng, can I ask you a question. When did you decide to have children?

This elicits a startled reaction from Nthabeleng's mother.

NTHABELENG

There is no right answer for this. And sometimes, the choice is made for you.

ELLEN

I feel like I already have one child in William. If I have another I won't have time to help others.

Nthabeleng's Mother pulls her stool in to the table and scowls towards Ellen.

GRAMMA BELENG

(in sesotho)

*Why is this woman here complaining?  
Where is her husband?*

NTHABELENG

(in Sesotho)

*He is a teacher at the school.*

(in English)

She asks where your husband is and I said he was teaching.

GRAMMA BELENG

(in Sesotho)

*I know already he is not a responsible enough man. And she is a disgrace at her age, worse than you.*

This upsets Nthabeleng.

NTHABELENG

(in Sesotho)

*I did what I did for a reason!*

ELLEN  
 (in Sesotho)  
*It is my decision when to have a  
 child. Not William's.*

Gramma Beleng responds back tersely, and in English:

GRAMMA BELENG  
 You are selfish and disrespectful  
 like Nthabeleng. And your husband  
 is weak. That is what I think of  
 you and of most Westerners.

Gramma Beleng stands up and leaves.

BACK TO:

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE

Spendy game continues. On the board are words like DATUM and XYLEM. As William concentrates deeply Makashane connects on a triple-word score which elicits a chorus of heckles.

NTHEOLA  
 Will the wonders of the Lord never  
 cease!

DUMA  
 Mothibeli you have been smote!

MAKASHANE  
 Please tally up my 47 points.

Makheta records the score. Duma places four tiles on the board and spells MOUV. William perks up: an easy challenge would advance his standing. LAUGHING, Duma rearranges the tiles to spell OVUM for 36 points.

NTHEOLA  
 Clever.

Makheta looks at the tally sheet.

MAKHETA  
 Makashane, you are now in the  
 fourth position, Duma you are in  
 the lead. Ah yes and William the  
 American is next and what will you  
 play?

William carefully lays out a rather decent word with LAPSE. Makheta tallies it up.

MAKHETA (CONT'D)

Very good. You have moved up to sixth.

William looks dismayed, resigned to his humiliation. It is now Mapola's turn. He lays down the word JINK for a substantive sum but there is much mumbling and grumbling at the table as to whether this is a word or not. William looks particularly flustered.

WILLIAM

Do you mean...

He is afraid to say JINX. Mapolo, all smiles, waves his arm over the table.

MAPOLA

William, perhaps you are in a suitable position from which to issue a challenge. The others are still in contention.

Duma and the others look to William for a response.

WILLIAM VOICEOVER

~~On the one hand, I had previously decided not to challenge anyone's words. But on the other, I am the only one to truly know whether the word is legit. Is it not my moral responsibility to see a fair outcome to the game?~~

William hesitates...

DUMA

No challenge?

William shakes his head no. Mothibeli tallies up the points and Mapolo smiles broadly.

BACK TO:

EXT. NTHABELENG RONDAVEL - DAY

Ellen and Nthabeleng walk outside while the winter sun brightens cold hands and faces. Gramma Beleng is no longer here.

NTHABELENG

When I left I was 17 years old. I had given Neo to my aunt because I had to leave.

(MORE)

NTHABELENG (CONT'D)

Ellen, I tell you this, I had to know the world outside of Thabo-Tseka. It meant leaving my son behind and, in many ways, leaving behind what it means to be Basotho.

ELLEN

I didn't realize...

NTHABELENG

I traveled. I studied. I had to find out how to help Lesotho. When I returned six years later to get my son it made me sad because I missed so much of his life. But the God granted me Tseli not long after I had moved to Mokhotlong to work for the program. She was abandoned, she was sick, and then suddenly she was mine.

ELLEN

I think I can relate. I don't think I should have a child until I have my career settled.

NTHABELENG

That is not relatable?

ELLEN

Well, you know what I m...

NTHABELENG

Unfinished business is unacceptable.

ELLEN

Unfinished business?

Nthabeleng WINKS at Ellen.

NTHABELENG

But avoid the Basotho men.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

William finishes up teaching a class. Another quick interaction here with the girl and another of the students. Then Mapola pokes his head in after the bell rings and the students have left.

Mapola puts an arm around William. In his other is a dictionary.

MAPOLA

My brother, my brother, I was curious to see if anyone would challenge my word. So *curious*.

WILLIAM

You were probably thinking of jinx. I didn't want to upset the balance of the game...

Mapola flips open the dictionary.

MAPOLA

Oh but if someone did challenge me, *hei!*, they were going to get a surprise.

Mapola flips through E and then F and then H.

MAPOLA (CONT'D)

They were going to get *hit*.

Mapola is now paging through the J section.

MAPOLA (CONT'D)

Hit so *hard!*

Sitting at the top of the page, first word in the column is JINK: *to make a quick evasive turn, to change direction abruptly.*

Mapola slams the dictionary shut and smiles.

MAPOLA (CONT'D)

See you tomorrow, William!

He nudges the dictionary towards William and leaves.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. ELLEN AND WILLIAM RONDAVEL - LATER IN DAY

Another dictionary: William, knitted brow, peruses the Sesotho-to-English version while seated at a desk. In front of him are three paper cups of joala. He takes a sip from one and looks up a word.

WILLIAM

*Borome!* Mildly acceptable but ultimately unsatisfying.



Ellen is drinking a glass of wine.

ELLEN

*Ko'lekhua.*

William scurries to look up the word; finds it.

WILLIAM

Quixotic? How is there a word for that in Sesotho?

ELLEN

It's *joala*. Good luck appraising each variety.

William takes a sip from the second paper cup.

WILLIAM

Tastes like leather. Salt-stained leather.

ELLEN

Did you send in your application?

WILLIAM

For...

ELLEN

English. Or Sesotho?

William takes a sip from the third one.

WILLIAM

Ooh this one is good.

ELLEN

Sometimes you're a lightweight.

WILLIAM

Drinking? I beg to differ.

ELLEN

No, around here. You're a tourist.

WILLIAM

Ahhh sweetie I'm sorry. I'm trying to just appreciate the time we have here.

ELLEN

We're here to help.

WILLIAM

Of course. I am helping. But also living. And writing. And exploring.

ELLEN

How's that going.

WILLIAM

It's still blog entries. But I have an idea for it how it will work as a kind of travel novel. Partly I want to capture the *joie de vivre* of the Basotho and show the quirky little things all cultures have in common. Dumb jokes, competitive Spendy game, drinking. The bond of humanity is strong.

ELLEN

Spendy game?

WILLIAM

It's like scrabble. Actually it *is* scrabble. A knock off. I got crushed at lunch today.

ELLEN

Maybe you should rethink being a writer.

WILLIAM

I'm not sure what you're upset about. Tell me?

ELLEN

I'm upset at you.

WILLIAM

You're much less fun to be around when you're important.

Ellen shoots him a dirty look. William then finishes each of the *joala* cups in a row and picks up his *mohlomo*.

EXT. AIRPORT FIELD - DUSK

Sitting forlornly in the middle of a field of overgrown vegetation is a single low-slung, square white building. The field is the only flat space in Mokhotlong and is - or was - an airport. But there are no terminals or baggage claims only a control tower that's one-and-a-half stories tall and looks shrunk by a miniaturizing ray. In the distance hangs an orange windsock, limp and humiliated.

William walks down a well-worn path to the building where faded lettering indicates it was an airport gate. Now it is something else entirely: a popular dive bar named The Whitehouse.

Standing outside the doorway like sentinels are TWO MEN carrying machine guns and dressed in fatigues with Lesotho Defense Force (LDF) insignias.

WILLIAM

Is everything alright?

The men stare at William impassively before one of them breaks down and laughs, patting William on the back. William realizes they are drunk.

LDF MAN

Go ahead *sir*, you are clear here!  
You're on our team.

He winks at William.

WILLIAM

Which team is that?

INT. WHITEHOUSE BAR. NIGHT

Inside is warm but spartan: an outpost of feeble plastic lawn chairs, an unloved couch and a ceiling fan that turns lazily overhead. In one corner a group of Basotho are gathered watching a soccer match on an old television. William sits down at the bar.

WILLIAM

I'll have a quart of Redd's.

BARTENDER

Excuse me?

WILLIAM

That's the apple one, yes?

The bartender laughs and brings over a quart.

BARTENDER

You know man, this is for women only. Men don't drink this, *kanete*, it's *weak*!

WILLIAM

I know, but I like it.

The door opens and the LDF men walk in and sit down at the bar next to William. One of them takes notice of his Redd's.

LDF MAN  
Your girlfriend is here?

WILLIAM  
Hah no, that's mine.

LDF MAN 2  
No it's not. Only women drink that.

The LDF men are offended. They stand up and one comes to the other side of William.

LDF MAN  
So where is she then?

Just as it looks like this might escalate, the group of Basotho CHEER loudly after a goal is scored. Amidst the group is REID and he notices William at the bar. He stumbles over.

REID  
Moshoeshoe! When did you get here??  
(to the bartender)  
Mokati, how about another four  
quarts of Imperial, *ache*.

Mokati the bartender nods. The LDF Men are curious.

LDF MAN 2  
*Moshoeshoe?* This is your Sesotho  
name?

WILLIAM  
(proudly)  
It is. Moshoeshoe Mochochonono.

And at this the LDF Men break out into a cataclysm of CIRCUS LAUGHTER: they can't believe it.

LDF MAN  
Moshoeshoe *Mochochonono!!* We are at  
your service!!

The men do a mock salute, their faces stern until breaking again into laughter.

LDF MAN 2  
Carry on, sir, we will keep you  
safe from over there.

After a salute, the first LDF man takes William's Redd's and they saunter off to watch the game.

WILLIAM

What was that about??

REID

Moshoeshoe is the founding father  
of Lesotho.

WILLIAM

What? How did I not know that?

REID

It's pronounced differently than it  
looks on paper. Moshoeshoe is on a  
a first-name basis here, like  
Oprah. Or Prince.

WILLIAM

Seriously?

REID

National icon. A saint. Jesus in  
gumboots.

The bartender delivers William an Imperial to replace the  
Redd's and four more for Reid.

MOKATI

Moshoeshoe, The Razor, he was a  
great man, the greatest, *kanete*.  
When the British came, Moshoeshoe  
stopped them. When the Ndebele came  
he rained boulders down upon them!  
Then he stopped the Boers and then  
he bargained with the British to  
save the Kingdom. We are all sons  
of the great man Moshoeshoe!

William looks dejected.

WILLIAM

What does Mochochonono mean?

MOKATI

I don't know man, but it sounds  
odd.

He starts laughing.

MOKATI (CONT'D)

*MO-CHO-CHO-NO-NO! MO-CHO-CHO-NO-NO!*  
Ridiculous!

William looks embarrassed and the bartender leaves to serve  
others.

REID

Sorry man, I thought you knew.

WILLIAM

So in America, my Sesotho name would be Georgewashington Humperdinck?

REID

That does sound like you... When I see you back in the States I'll call you that.

WILLIAM

States?

REID

I was supposed to go back in June when Bridget's contract was up but yesterday I got an offer for a three-month internship before law school starts. Two more weeks here and then I'm in DC.

WILLIAM

That's great.

REID

Lesotho has been amazing. I'll never forget it.

EXT. WHITEHOUSE BAR. NIGHT

With stern faces belying smirks, the LDF men MARCH out of the bar and into the night. Following behind languidly is William, King of Lesotho.

Approaching him from the direction the LDF Men just left is Mokati. He walks past William to the door.

WILLIAM

How did you get...

Mokati disappears inside and then returns with a quart of Milk Stour and locks the door behind him.

MOKATI

Moshoeshoe, you are going home? I will walk with you.

Mokati hands William the beer and the two of them head off into the inky darkness.

EXT. MOKHOTLONG STREET. NIGHT

Only a pale moon lights the way as William and Mokati walk along a rocky path and pass the quart of stout between them. It is only 8:00 PM but it feels like the midnight of some prior century, and William's eyes refuse to adjust to the deep blackness. He stays close by Mokati's side.

MOKATI

You know in Roma, not too far from here, my friend you can actually see the dinosaur footprints. They are engraved there! Walking like Basotho many thousands of years ago.

WILLIAM

Dinosaur tracks?

MOKATI

Bah, but dinosaurs are kid's stuff. The real dinosaurs are *people*. The don't change and then they die.

Just then out of the darkness William sees the ghostly image of what looks like...

WILLIAM

Limpho?

But the ghostly image fades without a word into the darkness.

MOKATI

Did you see someone?

WILLIAM

I thought so.

MOKATI

Ghosts everywhere.

keeping pace with the genial tone of his voice as he muses about reggae music and girlfriends and whether or not he believes in God. The night's depth is beyond comprehension—the darkness is blinding. As we walk, Mokati occasionally sends a friendly greeting out into the void and a disembodied voice responds, sometimes just feet away. Then a shadowy outline takes human form and Mokati stops to chat for a moment. It is not clear to me if Mokati knows these ghosts or not.

More "what it means to be a man" type of talk

William is sad to be losing Reid

William confesses some other things. AS AMMUNITION remember. There could be many different plot elements able to be woven in here.

We stand in the sightless Mokhotlong night and shake hands; the warmth of his grip once again endows me with corporeal form. I give him the remaining Milk Stout since he has further still to go, and then Mokati fades off into the night.

I stand for a while outside my destination, the massive weight of the stillness embracing me. I consider whether Ellen might be back from her business out of town. I want to tell her what I saw tonight, or didn't see. I decide it might be nice to simply wander back the way I have come-even without my Virgil-and so I do that, slowly. The ghosts are all about tonight, spirits moving close beside me, greeting me invisibly as we pass.

Eventually the clouds blow off and the stars emerge to light my way.

INT. ELLEN AND WILLIAM RONDAVEL. LATER IN THE NIGHT

Drunk, William tries to sneak into the rondavel without waking Ellen. He's not very successful. Ellen is in bed but politely ignores him. William crawls in and falls asleep.

INT. ELLEN AND WILLIAM RONDAVEL - MORNING

When William wakes up Ellen is gone. This is unexpected but not entirely. William picks up a note.

NOTE

At the clinic.

EXT. WHITEHOUSE FIELD - DAY

In the distance, An LDF officer and three other men hold quarts of beer in various stages of consumption and listen to American HIP HOP blasting from a pickup truck parked nearby with the doors open. The LDF soldier takes out a metal water pitcher from his military-issue rucksack and walks into the field.

One of the men completes the assembly of a rifle while the officer places the metal pitcher on top of a small pile of rocks and walks back to the group and takes the rifle.



There is something unique about the rifle because the soldier doesn't load bullets into it but rather small pellets. It's a BB gun.

The soldier assumes a relaxed stance thirty yards from the pitcher. He exhales and then POPS off several quick shots - TING! TING! TING! -- each one hitting the target.

As he is about to hand off the gun he quickly draws it up to face one of the men who YELPS and ducks away. The soldier laughs and clucks his tongue at his friend's sheepishness and then hands it stock-first to the next marksman.

The other three are amateurs. They giggle nervously as they shoot, mostly missing, occasionally notching a lucky hit, then strutting when they do so. The soldier steps into the rotation intermittently. He is smaller than the other men, wiry and filled with lithe confidence, his movements perhaps lubricated by his drunkenness. He does not miss.

Watching the proceedings from a plastic lawn chairs perched outside the Whitehouse is William, dutifully sporting his own ham-sized beer and listening to the BBs TWANG off into the horizon.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. WHITEHOUSE FIELD TARGET PRACTICE - DAY

After his shot one of the men hands the rifle to William. He fits the stock into his shoulder and squints his eye at the pitcher.

SHOOTER 1

You must aim it just so.

SHOOTER 2

Yes, yes, careful.

The second shooter opens the chamber and reaches into his pocket to pull out a single BB.

SHOOTER 1

Here is your bullet. Now you must  
kill the man.

William rolls the BB around in his palm. It's surface is surprisingly sharp, jagged, unfinished.

WILLIAM

Yes. I will kill that man.

William lines up the pitcher and eases his finger onto the trigger. The sun is disorienting and bright. Beaded sweat forms on his temple.

William take a breath, then pulls the trigger.

The bullet WHANGS out of the barrel and touches nothing. The LDF soldier takes the rifle out of his hands and loads in a handful of BBs.

LDF MAN

You have failed to kill the man.

He quickly pulls the gun into position and TWANG! TWANG! TINK! - three hits in three tries - then, a bird passes low overhead and the soldier pivots smoothly and automatically and picks the bird out of flight with a single sighing POP. The bird dips off in awkward wounded flight then falls out of the sky and flutters into the brush.

The three men fall silent. The soldier smiles. The wounded bird shudders in the scrub.

CUT TO:

INT. SAFE HOME PLAY ROOM - DAY

Hiding behind a set of blocks is Retselisitsoe. He BURSTS out and runs a circle around Ellen who is perched on the floor next to William, also sitting. He looks healthy, rounder, just as jovial as before.

[add in Mokete]

WILLIAM

Do you want to go to Roma today? I heard there were *dinosaur tracks*.

ELLEN

Wow. Dinosaurs.

WILLIAM

Big ones.

ELLEN

I'm going up to one of the villages to check in on Ntate Kapoko.

WILLIAM

I'll come with you.

ELLEN

That's not needed. I'll drop you  
off.

EXT. ON THE ROAD - DAY

Helmeted Ellen and Will, helmetless and riding in the back, slow down and stop on the side of a dirt road. Off in a pasture is a unique sight: a group of distinctly odd-looking birds with long legs, bright-orange curved beaks and large black wings attached to wrinkled necks with jowly faces and bald heads: they look like aged butlers.

WILLIAM

(whispering)  
*Mokhotlo.*

Ellen nods.

A pair of the ibis birds begin a mating dance with an awkward hitch-step and squawking choke-cry reminiscent of the shepherds' dance.

ELLEN

Have you ever noticed that a  
*mokhotlo* sounds exactly like a  
person trying to imitate a  
*mokhotlo*?

Ellen demonstrates by producing a sudden, throttled yell-shout from the back of her throat. The birds look up at her and bolt for the heavens.

EXT. THIA-LA-LA BUTCHERY - DAY

William stands in front of the Thia-La-La butchery, the dust and sputter of Ellen's motorcycle circling around him and falling off.

INT. THIA-LA-LA BUTCHERY - DAY

The restaurant is bustling as ever but William only notices Limpho amidst the clamor. She looks more gaunt than ever, wasted, her face drawn and exhausted. She wears several bulky wool sweaters under her blood-spattered apron but it doesn't help. She sees William from across the room and smiles but then turns her eyes downward again. Behind her coils of cow intestine and bloody hocks of ham glisten and steam under heat lamps.

EXT. MOKHOTLONG STREET. DAY

William walks slowly down the street. It's a new day. He walks past the busy coffin shop on the corner, proudly displaying a row of brand-new children's coffins. Next door is Bad G's Botique, the shoe cobbler, working on a pair of leather boots.

Ahead William sees a small but vocal crowd gathered outside of the a flimsy metal shanty that serves as the barbershop where no one seems to ever be getting a haircut. As William gets closer he sees they are circled around a large flat piece of salvaged plastic with a spiderweb design drawn by marker. It's a game.

One man is in charge of a team of pebbles placed on various parts on the web while the other marshals a battalion of bottle caps. They slam the pieces around the board TOCK! THROCK! TOCK!! TOCK! THROWK! After each move, the men standing around the table take turns yelling directives and clawing their skulls in frustration.

William whispers one the watchers.

WILLIAM

How does it work?

WATCHER 1

*Morabaraba - only for bo-ntate.*

WATCHER 2

MOH-RAH-BAH-RAH-BAH!

The first guy points to the bottle caps which his partner is maneuvering on the board.

WATCHER 1

Those ones are *likhomo*, the cows...  
(suddenly yelling to the  
player with the pebbles)  
*Butle! Butle! Butle! Butle! Butle!*

Exasperated, he turns back to William.

WATCHER 1 (CONT'D)

Only a man dumb as a goat would  
move his *likhomo* as stupidly as  
that!

The game continues, fully animated. Two men slide their pebbles or bottle caps rapidly around the web, occasionally stopping to flick the other man's pieces unceremoniously into the dirt resulting in ROARS of approval from the onlookers.

The man with the pebbles moves one of the pebbles and POW his pebble is knocked to the ground by a bottle cap from an unexpected direction and half the gathered men CHEER loudly. The victorious bottle cap commander stands up to be congratulated while other men take the seats of the former players and the fallen pieces are replaced on the board.

The man who just won notices William.

WINNER

Moshoeshoe!

The moniker raises eyebrows in the group. William has seen this man before.

WILLIAM

Oh...I didn't recognize you.

NTATE J

I must take the taxi up the mountain for a group of shepherds. Would you like to come along?

CUT TO:

INT. JEEP - DAY

With Ntate J behind the wheel the jeep climbs higher in elevation and into an area near Sani Pass that becomes increasingly icy. Ntate J carefully maneuvers through switchbacks, churning and shimmying down sludgy tracks that run alongside the gorge to avoid ice. With each incline the road deteriorates and the weather conditions worsen.

The jeep rounds a bend and comes across a group of four shepherds trudging through the snow, all wrapped in woolen Basotho blankets and gumboots. They are masked in balaclava with darting eyes visible through slits as they pick their way through the snow with sturdy wooden *molamos*. Ntate J stops the jeep, rolls down the window and calls out.

NTATE J

(in Sesotho)

Everything all right?

The four shepherds keep trudging forward. Ntate J puts on his coat and steps out. William decides to follow.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - DAY

The group has gathered around a rock outcropping with the jeep in the distance.

The shepherds have removed their balaclavas. They have their hair cut in traditional close-cropped shepherd-style, one with a single blunted rhino horn of hair at the front; the others with two small wicked devil horns. They are jovial and laughing with Ntate J.

NTATE J

So where are you going then?

RHINO HORN

(in Sesotho)

We are going over the ridge to find the shepherd who stays on that side.

NTATE J

(in Sesotho)

Why?

The friendly nature diminishes and turns serious.

DEVIL HORN

When we find this man, we will beat him very badly.

NTATE J

What has he done?

RHINO HORN

(in Sesotho)

He has eaten meat.

DEVIL HORN

We have found the oils on the rocks, we know he is the guilty one who has stolen a sheep. He is the flock's caretaker, yes, but he is not the flock's owner so he does not have the right to eat the sheep's meat.

RHINO HORN

(in Sesotho)

We must beat him decisively. He is a thief.

Ntate J nods in understanding. William looks on, vexed.

WILLIAM

What if he was starving? The storm has been in the mountains for a week now.

## DEVIL HORN

When someone is the thief, it means he does not want you to live. If the thief steals from you, it means he does not care if you can live. *Kanete*, he is threatening your livelihood. And if he does not want you to live, then you must kill this man.

## RHINO HORN

(in English)

If that man would kill *you*, I think you would kill that man.

One of the shepherds does a demonstration by pretending to BEAT his friend with the sturdy *molamo*. He gets in a few good whacks and everyone is laughing. He then takes one very solid SWING that is deftly deflected by the other shepherd, sending the *molamo* flying into the snow near William.

The air is tense.

William picks up the *molomo*. He is about to hand it back when he decides -- to DANCE.

He does the TWO-STEP and the CHICKEN STOMP and the shepherds are LAUGHING joyously.

## DEVIL HORN

Where did you learn how to dance like us? You are very good!

## RHINO HORN

I think it's good.

William looks on proudly and holds up the *moloma*.

## WILLIAM

That's because I prac...

THAWAK! One of the shepherds crushes William in the face with his *molomo*. There is blood. William is in shock.

## DEVIL HORN

You are good but you don't take another man's *molamo*. *Molamo* is only for...

THWAWK! Another HIT, this one from Devil Horn and William goes DARK.

## DEVIL HORN (CONT'D)

*Bo-ntate!*

CUT TO:

EXT. CANYON ROAD - DAY

The familiar SE-TU-TU-TU of a motorcycle reverberates off the scree-filled canyon side before it tut-tuts into view, the familiar helmeted driver and passenger on board. The motorcycle groans as it takes an incline, winding its way up the pass and disappearing.

EXT. VILLAGE ROADSIDE - DAY

Two cheerful GRANDMOTHERS hobble halfway down a slope with great big smiles. One of them calls out:

GRANDMOTHER 1

We saw you arrive on your horse!

They continue down from the watching point to the main road of the village where Ellen and Bridget, helmets in hand, stand aside the motorcycle.

ELLEN

(in Sesotho)

Good morning!

GRANDMOTHER 2

You are here to see the boys, yes?  
Follow us.

The Grandmothers proceed to pick their way back up the hill. Ellen and Bridget stash their helmets on the motorcycle, gather a small duffel bag with supplies and follow.

EXT. VILLAGE RONDAVEL - DAY

The Grandmothers point out a rondavel. Outside is another GRANDMOTHER, this one older than the rest, older than anyone.

GRANDMOTHER 1

That is Ntate Kapoko's mother.

NKHONO KAPOKO, blind, inches towards the rondavel using a wire that has been strung as a guideline.



INT. RONDAVEL - DAY

The small space is immaculately ordered. Enamel crockery is laid out on a bench along the wall with cups, plates, and bowls leaning against each other in a precise and repeating pattern. Mats are folded beside the crockery, storage buckets nested in a tower and the floor perfectly swept.

The familiar cache of ARV supplies has been unloaded from the backpack and rests on a bench between Ellen and Bridget. Facing them and perched on a stool is Nkhono Kapoko. Ellen looks at the orderliness of the rondavel and then at Nkhono Kapoko in disbelief.

NKHONO KAPOKO

(in Sesotho)

Yes, he is taking very good care of his grandsons. You can see. He is cooking, he wakes up early to fetch the water, he washes them.

Bridget translates for Ellen.

BRIDGET

She says that her son keeps this place neat and clean and that he dutifully takes care of his grandsons.

NKHONO KAPOKO

(in Sesotho)

Kanete, he is like a woman in the household!

She is beaming with pride.

ELLEN

I can see that.

NKHONO KAPOKO

(in Sesotho)

When his daughter returned to the village two years ago, her stomach was swollen, so swollen, and she refused to take the pills. And the boy Jesi was sick, too. He took care of her but she died. She died in his arms.

BRIDGET

(translating)

His daughter, she was sick and came back here with her two sons, Ntate Kapoko's grandsons.

(MORE)

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

He took care of her but she died in his arms. But one of the boys, Jesi, was sick too.

(to Ellen)

Ntate Kapoko brought Jesi to us. He stabilized and now he's back here.

NKHONO KAPOKO

(in Sesotho)

Kanete, he is doing so well! Jesi is a man now. And always talking, talking - jooooooooo! - he was not like that before!

The rondavel door opens and NTATE KAPOKO, mid-60s with a thoughtful brow but intense eyes, arrives in with his young grandson JESI hanging tightly to a pant leg. He nods and smiles at his guests.

NTATE KAPOKO

Ah, welcome to [name of village?]

ELLEN

We brought a packet for Jesi.

Ellen unpacks the duffel bag. Jesi shies away behind his grandfather's pant leg, aware that the strangers are talking about him and then RUNS back out the door to play.

NTATE KAPOKO

He thinks of me as mother. He doesn't know his mother, he only knows that his mother is me.

EXT. VILLAGE RONDAVEL - DAY

Ellen and Ntate Kapoko stand at the doorway of the rondavel watching Jesi play in the yard with a tree swing. Ntate Kapoko leans forward toward Ellen and his eyes light up. There's an edge in his voice.

NTATE KAPOKO

When Jesi was healthy the other family came to take these boys, as is their right. The father's relatives. They came to take them, do you hear? And I stopped them in the road.

Ntate starts walking towards Jesi now.

NTATE KAPOKO (CONT'D)

I told them that my daughter had come to me very sick. I told them her marriage was not good. And after the husband was gone she was not living well there =- they had not been caring for her in that village.

Ntate Kapoko finally reaches Jesi and Jesi runs into his arms to be picked up.

NTATE KAPOKO (CONT'D)

I was the one who cared for her when she was dying. And after she was dead I contacted the other family, but they would not come to see her buried. All these things I did by myself. And now you come after some months, when these boys are healthy, after I have been caring for them and you say you are coming to take these children? And I say to you - the children of *whom?*

Ntate Kapoko sits back after a moment, stirs from his memory. He looks down at Jesi.

NTATE KAPOKO (CONT'D)

So they went away without anything. There was nothing they could do.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE PATH - DAY

Ellen and Bridget are following the path back to the motorcycle.

ELLEN

[Ntate Kapoko has his shit together.]

BRIDGET

[It's amazing.]

Ellen straps on her helmet but Bridget hesitates.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

Did I tell you that Reid and I leaving soon?

(MORE)

BRIDGET (CONT'D)  
Reid got a good job in DC. He's  
heading back next week and then I  
will follow.

ELLEN  
(muffled)  
Oh.

BRIDGET  
[something]

Something or else. They get on the motorcycle and putter off.

EXT. GUARD GATE - DAY

The motorcycle puts down the dusty stretch of road and pulls in slowly to the gate area when Nthabeleng, visibly upset, walks quickly out to greet them. Ellen and Bridget take off their helmets to listen over the idle of the engine. There is concern on their faces. They nod and put their helmets back on and drive off again.

CUT TO:

INT. MINI TAXI BUS - NIGHT

A rowdy scene has overtaken the back of the taxi-bus. Blasting *famo* music provides the sound track to a lively group of travelers drinking quarts of stout and bantering jovially in various stages of undress. Several of the revelers are already in disrepair and slumped over in their seats.

One of the slumped bodies is William, dried blood around his face and his right eye darkened. Despite the stifling warmth of the bus William is entombed in a thick layer of jackets.

He opens one bleary eye and then the other but it's painful. He winces and looks around, disoriented. Where and how...?

The bus rumbles along with the party in full swing as the sun rises in the mountainous distance.

EXT. MINI TAXI BUS STOP MOKHOTLONG - DAWN

Passengers wishing to disembark wait for the driver in the hold to dig out their luggage. William painfully steps off the bus and squints at the coral-pink morning light.

The DRIVER then pops out from underneath with a giant bull's head wrapped in cling wrap and hands it off to a traveling BUTCHER. We realize the bus driver is Ntate J when he sees William.

NTATE J

William my friend! Oh, those b'o'me gave you a good whack, I'm afraid. This bus needed me to drive so I left the truck with the shepherds and put you on the bus with me. Glad you made it!

Ntate J genially slaps William on the shoulder.

NTATE J (CONT'D)

Next time, *kanete*, don't pick up the *molomo*!

Ntate J hops back on the bus and waves goodbye as the bus leaves William behind.

INT. WILLIAM AND ELLEN'S RONDAVEL - DAY

Looking worse for the wear, a haggard William wearily takes off his coat. He looks relieved to be home and trudges slowly to the wash basin.

Ellen is there. She has been crying. But now she looks upset.

ELLEN

What the FUCK.

WILLIAM

Oh Ellen it was a long night and I got whacked...

Ellen SHOVES him forcefully and William, surprised by the attack and unprepared, falls down. He looks small and beaten under Ellen who towers above in anger.

ELLEN

You're a waste of space. You're a tourist, a voyeur, a total *suck*!

WILLIAM

What..

ELLEN

Retselitisoe isn't going to need any more ARVs so I guess you wont have any more fucking *joala* to taste-test.

Ellen grabs her jacket and briskly exits.

ANIMAL ATTACK SCENE OR DEAD DONKEY

This scene could be an homage to Bunuel.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - MORNING

There is an energy in the air: The school year is coming to a close. The students arrive jauntily, with grins and rambunctiousness ready to unloose. Before the doors open they gather in the courtyard in anticipation.

William is watching from the wings as they gather. He is wearing pink sunglasses to cover up his black eye. Duma spots him and comes over.

DUMA

Hey man, looking groovy. You're ready for vacation already!

The students begin to jostle each other into two distinct groups while JEERING loudly.

STUDENTS

(in Sesotho)

Form A! Form A! Show yourselves!  
Don't be shy Form A, we know who you are!

Slowly a smaller group, Form A, the Freshmen, have grouped together while the rest continue to liberally insult them. William leans over to Duma.

WILLIAM

What is going on?

DUMA

It's the last week of school so they are mocking the first-year students. You were not aware of this?

WILLIAM

No.

The older students begin to gather up small rocks and clods of dirt.

DUMA

And now... they will beat them.

William turns abruptly at hearing this phrase and then suddenly a granite hail pours from the heavens falling upon Form A students, flung by the gathered upperclassmen, and then in retaliation, a return volley from Form A. The air is alive with projectiles, chunk after chunk thudding: rock, pebble, stone, knot, brick, clod, clot. Children are running, screaming with HILARITY and FEAR, looking for cover, looking for ammo. It's a mad dash every which way.

And then Nkhopoleng staggers away from Form A, swaying woozily, her wide eyes glazed, her eyelids beginning to droop, her head streaming blood in bright red rivulets from a delta-shape cut on her forehead. She then slumps over like heavy wet snow falling off an angled roof. As she is carted away by NTATE HLOMPHO, the grown-ups begin yelling.

TEACHERS

Stop the rock fight! For shame! For shame! How did this happen?  
Everyone back to your classes,  
disburse please, please disburse!  
*For shame!*

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - END OF DAY

The classroom is filled with the air of boredom. It's the end of the school year after all. William stands at the front of the room, his sunglasses off and his black eye a visible mark.

This hour is algebra but and we recognize many of the students including Nkhopoleng in the front row, her head bandaged but otherwise fine. The two of them would make fine zombies.

WILLIAM

We are going to play a game today.  
I will write a fraction on the board. You will race to see who can put the fraction into its lowest terms. Do you understand?

The students answer as a chorus.

STUDENTS

*Yes sir!*

WILLIAM

I will call on whomever I see raising a hand first.

STUDENTS

*Yes sir!*

WILLIAM

Any questions?

STUDENTS

*No, sir.*

WILLIAM

So I will write a fraction on the board and -

STUDENTS

*Lowest terms, sir!*

William nods. He turns around with chalk in one hand and his notebook in the other, shielding the fraction he is writing from view. For whatever reason, this must strike the class as hilarious because they ROAR with laughter. William finishes writing  $40/320$  but keeps it covered and turns around to face the class again.

The students burst from their seats, hands raised, snapping fingers and nearly toppling over for attention. Ninety-two baby bird voices calling out in desperate unison:

STUDENTS (CONT'D)

*Sir! Sir! Sir! Sir! Sir! Sir! Sir!  
Sir! Sir! Sir! Sir! Sir! Sir! Sir!  
Sir! Sir!*

WILLIAM

*Tholang, bo-abuti le bo-ausi!*

The students become quiet.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

You are raising your hands because you think you know the answer?

STUDENTS

*Yes, sir.*

WILLIAM

But you haven't seen the fraction yet.

STUDENTS

*No, sir.*

WILLIAM

So how could you know the answer if you haven't seen the fraction yet?



William almost lets slip a smile.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Let's try this again. When I take my notebook away, you look at the fraction, and then try to put it in lowest terms. Is everyone ready?

STUDENTS

*Yes, sir!*

William shifts his notebook EVER SO SLIGHTLY but the fraction remains completely hidden from view. The students BURST forth, hands raised, fingers snapping, straining out of their seats. Ninety-two central nervous systems in synaptic meltdown. William twirls around and points randomly to the other side of the room to... Nkhopoleng.

WILLIAM

Nkhopoleng, yes, what is the answer?

The classroom falls into an intergalactic silence. Nkhopoleng has now suddenly and horrifyingly transformed from frothy anxiousness to a radiating terror as she attempts to process the enormity of her situation. Her body settles into glacial stillness, hoping that Sir William might look *past* her.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Nkhopoleng, do you have the answer?

More silence.

William looks ever-so-slightly *exasperated*. Finally a tiny voice, tinier than the tiniest grain of sand, more miniscule than the pinhead upon which the angels dance, responds.

NKHOPOLENG

Eight, sir?

WILLIAM

Eight? You think the fraction, in lowest terms, that is still hidden behind this notebook, that you have not yet seen, is the number eight?

NKHOPOLENG

Yes, sir?

William pulls down the notebook to reveal a complicated fraction. He does a quick couple of slashes and sprawls out more numbers in chalk until... William SQUINTS with his good eye and writes the solution on the board.

Eight.

William is astonished. The classroom erupts in CHEERS. Several students **rush** over to Nkhopoleng and pull her out of the chair to dance as Nkhopoleng blushes deeply.

CUT TO:

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

The teachers are gathered around sipping cocktails and chatting amiably. There's an occasional hug goodbye.

WILLIAM

I have an announcement. We are going to host a party. And there will be *meat*.

DUMA

This is very profound. What kind of meat?

WILLIAM

We will slaughter a pig!

M'E LEPHATSI

A pig? Ah no, I don't eat that one. The *fariki* I think is too dirty.

NTATE MAPOLA

No, this is not accurate. The *fariki* is a fine animal and the flesh is very rich in flavor. It is excellent for consumption -- but perhaps only for men.

M'e Lephatsi shudders and sticks out her tongue.

M'E LEPHATSI

I can attend the party but maybe I will take just the *papa* and *moroho* to eat.

DUMA

More meat for us!

CUT TO:

INT. SENQU HOTEL DINING ROOM - DAY

Nestled in at a corner table inside a cavernous dining room are William, Ellen, Nthabeleng, Reid and Bridget.

A single lone patron in the far end of the room eats with his back to them. [**turn William's VO below into action** -- the expat and Congolese doctors are there then leave; add more conversation as needed, a time lapse sequence that ends with William still **nursing the head wound and Ellen still mad at him**)

WILLIAM VOICEOVER

On Friday nights we host a salon at the Senqu Hotel. We are regularly joined by Kokonyana, an array of American doctors on rotation at the rural clinics; the Congolese and Zim physicians who ambitiously flirt with Nthabeleng; a French-Canadian volunteer pre-school teacher; and a cornucopia of drifting expats. Once we welcomed a vagabond Australian whose life goal was to visit every country on the planet. Lesotho put him at 98. But today it is just us.

In the distance a WAITRESS heads to the far table before being interrupted by several texts on her phone.

PHONE TEXT

*How r u?  
Luv u baby!*

INT. SENQU HOTEL FAR TABLE -

The waitress serves a plate of meat, french fries and a quart of beer to the patron, a thickly build man halfway drunk whom we recognize: PAKELA. He grunts angrily and the waitress puts on a fake smile before walking back towards the party of five table.

BACK AT THE TABLE -

The jovial conversation continues.

REID

Pulani! Did you get our texts?!  
When will our dinners be ready!

BRIDGET

What he means to say is who is the elephant in the room over there?

Pulani says nothing, but displays a tight grin belying concern.

PULANI

Let me check on your plates!

She quickly steps away to the kitchen.

ELLEN

That was odd.

Then on the far side of the room, Pakela rises and steadies himself like a lumbering hippo after a long rest. He picks up his tray of food and brings it towards the table.

PAKELA

May I join in your company?

WILLIAM

Of course, sit!

The joviality of the table continues until the sheer gravity of Pakela's serious presence weighs down the smiles. Nthabeleng, in particular, looks irked at his presence. But Pakela takes no notice and introduces himself.

PAKELA

My name is Pakela. I am a guard at the jail.

WILLIAM

A guard. That must be interesting.

Pakela sends a HIGH WHISTLE through his teeth, seals it off with a snort, and looks over his shoulder to an imagined audience. This is his only response and he resumes eating, hunched over his food, his arms protectively encircling his plate while his eyes dart from person to person and his jaws methodically masticate.

A silence overtakes the table, fearful of disrupting this heavy man. Pakela stops eating and warily regards William's black eye before launching into a prepared speech.

PAKELA

Look at what we have here. Women, men, foreigners and Basotho, sharing a table! How wonderful is that! See, here in Lesotho we are friendly. Even to you, white girls.

Pakela points with his silverware to Ellen and Bridget.

PAKELA (CONT'D)

In your country, probably no finer a sight! Pretty women, eating a nice meal. Your presence is a gift.

(MORE)

PAKELA (CONT'D)

It allows us men a moment to enjoy our meal and appreciate what we work so hard for - to provide for the *bo-'m'e* for they cannot provide for themselves, of course. So we will do it. And keep you safe! Outside of the household, the world --- whew---- it's complicated! Far too much for women of thin minds. Best to leave that to *bo-ntate*!

Eventually he stops to swallow. The outline of a thick bolus of food makes its way down his throat, the muscles contracting in peristalsis like an anaconda. Pakela punches William's shoulder.

PAKELA (CONT'D)

Eh, *lekhoonaa*?

William politely tries to steer the conversation in another direction.

WILLIAM

Ntate Pakela, how many people reside in Mokhotlong jail? Is it very busy?

Pakela scoffs.

PAKELA

I can't tell you that. Classified. It's...

Nthabeleng interrupts.

NTHABELENG

There are almost four hundred prisoners at the jail.

Pakela's jaw muscles gather themselves into tiny knots.

NTHABELENG (CONT'D)

(continuing)

It is a matter of public record.

WILLIAM

Yes, thank you, *mookameli*.

Pakela's eyes narrow sharply as he speaks:

PAKELA

It is **impossible** for a man to address a woman in that way.

Nthabeleng offers a rapprochement.

NTHABELENG

You must forgive Ntate Moshoeshoe.  
He is not intelligent in the ways  
of Basotho people.

William lowers his eyes penitently.

WILLIAM

Yes, what the *mookameli* says is  
true.

Pakela detects the sarcasm and is about to rise from his chair... when Pulani arrives with the orders. She begins distributing the food and Pakela directs his anger her way.

PAKELA

These fries are unacceptable!!  
Bring me fresh ones!

Pulani penitently accepts his fries and nods in accordance. Bridget attempts to change the subject.

BRIDGET

William, did Ellen tell you about  
seeing Jesi and Ntate Kapoko? Such  
a good st..

Pakela interjects, staring at William and Reid:

PAKELA

Is it not wonderful - **wonderful!** -  
to be a **man**?

He THWACKS the table with the his oversized palm. It's now evident that he is quite drunk.

PAKELA (CONT'D)

Is that not how things **must be**, to  
have *bo-'m'e* care for our needs? Is  
this not the job of the **woman** -- to  
attend to the wishes of the **man**?

Pakela turns his attention away from the guys and towards Ellen and Bridget, daring them to speak out of turn.

Ellen and Bridget look at each other, amused, then at Nthabeleng, then at Reid and William. They are suppressing the urge to laugh in the face of the man who has overplayed his hand in such buffoonish fashion. They resist these natural impulses and remain nobly silent.

Pakela looks around the table, apparently awaiting an answer to his non-rhetorical question. Nthabeleng lets out a politic LAUGH, shrugs, and gives no further reply -- a gesture that to Pakela means: *'What could these makhooa possibly know about the respect that a woman must show to a man?'*

Then with a smile towards William, Nthabeleng acknowledges *'Check out this asshole.'*

WILLIAM

It is a great gift, truly a gift  
from God that we have these *bo-'m'e*  
to heed our commands!

Pakela straightens up in his seat.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Just today, I chastised my wife for attempting to do the washing. Does she not understand that washing and cooking are tasks that only men can do properly??

Reid nods sagely.

REID

And you must not forget the rearing of children, which is also the responsibility of men.

WILLIAM

Can these *bo-'m'e* not comprehend that a woman's role is to earn a living outside the household!?

Pakela stares deeply, intently at William. For the first in a long time Pakela looks wounded and he isn't sure what happened to him.

CUT TO:

**AN OUTHOUSE WITH LABELS BO'NTATE / B'O'ME**

SUBTITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

William emerges from the door labeled B'o'me. Sheepishly. He then walks past the pigsty and jogs to catch up with Ellen and Nthabeleng.

EXT. PITSO GROUNDS - DAY

It's a bright, hot and cloudless day under the Lesotho sun. The soccer field near the grain warehouse doubles as the *pitso* ground - the gathering place for official tribal business in Mokhotlong. This afternoon a tent provides shade for a small group of local dignitaries sitting on chairs politely nodding along to a POLITICIAN who stands at a microphone DRONING in Sesotho.

Nthabeleng leads Tseli and Neo, both well-dressed, towards the gathering. William, still wearing shades, and Ellen, weary and unresponsive towards his attentiveness, follow.

Nthabeleng stops on a grassy embankment and sends the children down below to meet Nthabeleng's Grandmother who has found a spot near the front alongside Reid and Bridget. Reid gathers Tseli and Neo and waves up to the Nthabeleng. Nthabeleng SHOUTS back.

NTHABELENG

Make sure they *listen!*

And then turns her attention to William and Ellen and speaks a little too loudly.

NTHABELENG (CONT'D)

The town officials will ramble on forever! It's awful. On and on about what they have done for Mokhotlong while conveniently forgetting that this is a ceremony for five-year-olds graduating from kindergarten. And look, a tent, how thoughtful, but nothing for the elderly *bo-nkhono* and *bo-ntate moholo* here to see their grandchildren!

The politician finishes his speech and sits down to sparse CLAPPING. As another potentate gets up to speak, more young people and their grandparents congregate below. Nthabeleng's Grandmother escorts Tseli to join a line of little people wearing cap and gowns. Tseli looks nervous, scared.

NTHABELENG (CONT'D)

William, I know it's the first word you learn in Lesotho, *tseli*, consolation. The children you teach, they have part of this name to honor their brothers and sisters that have died in infancy but bah!

(MORE)



NTHABELENG (CONT'D)  
 My Tseli is just Tseli and my  
 consolation is for her, she  
 survived when she had no one.

Just then Nthabeleng spots an old friend of hers...

NTHABELENG (CONT'D)  
 (in Sesotho)  
 How are you my dearest friend, tell  
 me about your son!

... and walks off leaving Will and Ellen alone. Will takes  
 off his sunglasses and looks...

ELLEN  
 I'm heading down with the others.

Ellen promptly departs down the hill. William spots, of all  
 people, Nkhopoleng still wearing a bandage and incongruously  
 taller than the tots surrounding her.

WILLIAM  
 Nkhopoleng? What are you doing  
 here?

NKHOPOLENG  
 Sir! My sister, sir, she is  
 graduating.

WILLIAM  
 You have a sister?

Nkhopoleng points down the hill... to Tseli.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
 Tseli? Nthabeleng's daughter? How  
 is she your sister?

Nkhopoleng looks embarrassed. Nthabeleng reappears.

NTHABELENG  
 Nkhopoleng! Come here little one,  
 what are you doing here!

Nthabeleng wraps her arms around Nkhopoleng.

NTHABELENG (CONT'D)  
 You look great, except for the  
 bandage! Is Moshoeshoe mochochonono  
 your teacher?

Nkhopoleng looks perplexed by the name. Nthabeleng LAUGHS  
 loudly and walks Nkhopoleng down the hill.

NTHABELENG (CONT'D)

My dear, William is one of the *greatest* teachers we have. He makes those around him better, and this is the finest of all achievements. You are very lucky. *Our Moshoeshoe* is king of the school...

Her voice trails off as they progress down the hill. William listens and gazes through sunglasses down towards the ceremony.

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE HILL

Everyone is here. The latest speaker DRONES on.

POLITCICIAN

And thanks to our latest policies and wonderful changes in the so and so, we have made the so and so thing happen all the much better. Children today, they sometimes do...

Ellen and Bridget have a conversation with Tseli and Neo

ELLEN

Tseli, what a fantastic day! You are graduating from kindergarten!

Tseli blushes nervously.

BRIDGET

You must be happy. What will you have for celebration?

NEO

We will go swimming!

Tseli nods. Nthabeleng comes over to give a big hug.

NTHABELENG

Tseli, we are so proud of you.

And then, weeping, Nthabeleng gathers her arms around Gramma beleng's waist.

NTHABELENG (CONT'D)

(in Sesotho)

Mother, all praise and respect to you, I am so happy you have always been there for *me*.

## POTENTATE

Will the next class please come up  
to receive their diplomas in line,  
thank you.

Tseli in her too-big robe awkwardly walks over, as do the other students and they gather in a crooked line. As the potentate reads off the names, the little children in the line shuffle up to receive a small diploma the sound of scattered polite applause.

## POTENTATE (CONT'D)

Lin'zang. Kopang. Lionel.

## VIEW FROM UP ON THE HILL

William watches stoically as Tseli's name is called.

## POTENTATE (CONT'D)

Tseli Moeletsi, please come accept  
your diploma.

Like the children before her Tseli haltingly approaches the stage trying not to trip over her gown. She looks back with some measure of trepidation.

## VIEW FROM BELOW

And then -- Nthabeleng, seconds ago awash in tears of gratitude for her mother, springs up and DARTS to Tseli's side, escorting her to the diploma with a joyous thump-de-domp dance, ululating and then shaking her skirt rhythmically making the backside leap up in the air like a peacock's fan. Tseli seems unsure what to make of her gyrating mother but that doesn't stop Nthabeleng. She struts. She mugs for the audience. The crowd of gathered families is laughing and egging her on before various folks join in on the dance and begin *liliet*sa-ing along with her. It's madness.

And then William appears, shades off, and he grabs Ellen by the hand and TWIRLS her around in an ecstatic dance of delight before spinning her off and running over to Nkphpolong where he PICKS HER UP with a big bear hug.

## REID

Moshoeshoe! You've gone crazy!

William runs over and picks up Reid with a bear hug.

## REID (CONT'D)

Tseli graduates and I begin!

William puts Reid down.

BRIDGET

Reid got accepted to Carleton. We  
leave in two weeks.

Behind them, the dancing gets more raucous.

POTENTATE

Kapaolo, please accept your  
kindergarten diploma.

The conga line follows Kapaola and stretches into the near  
distance. William squints his eyes and sees a reanimated  
THATO leading the line, joyously but still spindly, legs and  
arms akimbo in movement.

William can't believe his eyes.

The celebration continues but becomes MUTED and a VOICE ASKS  
WILLIAM a question.

VOICE

(in Sesotho-accented  
English)

*Yes, some of them stay and some of  
them go.*

CUT TO:

EXT. THE FACE OF A GIANT PIG

Inside a fenced enclosure. The pig stares vacantly as it  
chews. Its mouth moves along with the voice:

VOICE

*Soon, death will come for me.*

The pig blinks and turns its giant head and saunters away.  
Behind him remains a FARMER. The voice is his. He LAUGHS.

FARMER

Kanete, if pigs could talk, they  
might say something like that, no!  
This one is a good one. You can  
purchase him for your celebration  
if you would like. But you must  
catch him first.

William, Reid, Ellen and Matello consider this development.  
William tentatively makes a step forward to the pig and the  
pig scampers off and then stops. Reid then RUNS at it and the  
pig BOLTS away: the chase is on.

The ceremony happens here (William rejoins midway through and connects, in a way, with Ellen)

Ellen and Ntathe gramma have a scene. Also reid and bridget.

Reid and William talk after William walks down to join them

William stays up at the top of the hill for some time -- alone -- and that's when he sees Retselitsoe/ Thato and the animal

Then Reid motions him to come down and that's when Reid asks him about the pig roast: CUT TO PIG (with a voice talking from the Pig Seller)(see Thato mongrel dog reference on page 53)

7 - THE GIRL BEHIND THE COUNTER (P. 57-63)

CHAPTER 3 PRELUDE GROWING UP (PART 2) (PAGES 154-155)

AUTHOR DOES SOMETHING VIOLENT

14 - KILLING A PIG (P. 114-124)

17 - IN THE REALM OF VANISHED BEASTS (P. 150)

PRELUDE: (WINTER)

REID COMPLETES HIS PLOT LINE

16 - GOOD & BAD JOALA (P. 136) PART IV

25 - GHOSTS IN SNOW & ROCK (P. 218-219) HILL CLIMB

THE GIRL BEHIND THE COUNTER PART VI -

PAKELA HAND HOLD

WHITE HOUSE/AIRPORT BAR DREAM

REVEAL ELLEN PREGNANT

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18 - THINGS BOYS DO (P. 158) AKA VUVUZUELA

9 - PORTRAIT OF A PATH THROUGH TOWN (P. 75-79)

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15 - A PARTIAL DICTIONARY OF FOOD & DRINK (P. 125)

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AMERICA/THE WEST BEFORE LESOTHO

9 - PORTRAIT OF A PATH THROUGH TOWN (P. 72-73)