

Poster by

Phineas Munedzimwe

Lenticus Jambawo

Nigel Madzikatire

Esther Nduru

Muchineripi Nyabadza

Judith Masvina

Beauty Mubariri

Kudzai Tahwa

Kudakwashe Jena

Class 5 Gold

Tapfuma Primary School

Zambia



Essay Competition Runner Up

Lungisa Fortune Mngadi

17 years old

Winklespruit, South Africa

A Story

Sipho clutched his stomach, he instinctively knew what it was... it was hunger. The six-year-old boy remembered the last time he had a meal. It was last night and things began to look bad, as it was slowly becoming noon. He immediately fixed his eyes towards an empty bowl inside the corner of the small shack; it just made him hungrier. Sipho had now been living alone for three years. His mother, Grace had died of starvation and every time Sipho asked someone about his father they would just ignore little Sipho. Because Sipho slept on the floor, things got very bad. It was better during summer but it was worse in the winter season. Cold, freezing draughts blew across the floor all night long. Sometimes his neighbor, aunt Thandi went

without her own share of food just so that Sipho could have enough to eat but it still wasn't nearly enough for a growing boy.

Little Sipho got out of the little wooden shack, and as he stood outside, the sharp, piercing sun's rays banged into his eyes. He gazed at the long queue of wooden and some mud houses in the squatter camp. Aunt Thandi was sitting outside her small shack when Sipho arrived. Aunt Thandi pointed to a space right beside her. Sipho greeted the old woman by shaking hands, then sat down cross-legged. "You know my son, in my days no one starved in this village. Your mother, Oh! She was a good woman. She worked for an old woman in the city and everyday she would return from work with a lot of plastic bags containing food, she would give me half of that food."

"Gogo Thandi, then who was my father?"

Tears began to run down Aunt Thandi's face, "Oh! He was no good, you don't want to know more about him!" The tone of her voice was extremely sharp and full of anger. "James, that was his name," Aunt Thandi took two deep breaths, "James left you and Grace when you were about a year old. He married a township woman in the city after he left; your mother died of starvation."

Sipho was so consumed by Aunt Thandi's story that he didn't notice that she was finished. Then suddenly Sipho burst into tears, Aunt Thandi tried to comfort him but Sipho cried all day long. He also ended up spending the night at Aunt Thandi's house. In the middle of the night, Sipho woke up and went to aunt Thandi. He gently shook her body. When she woke up Sipho whispered into her ears, "Gogo, I swear that by this time next year no one in this village will starve." With that Sipho went back to sleep, but Aunt Thandi was still amazed on how Sipho managed to wake up from his sleep, it was as if someone from a dream told him what to say.

That morning Auntie Thandi cooked some pumpkin, which Sipho and Auntie ate for breakfast. When Sipho finished breakfast he took a little journey up to a huge tree just at the edge of the village. At the tree he found an old man wearing blue dirty overalls sleeping facing upwards. Simpho simply sat there and waited. Eventually when the old man woke up, he jumped up and was so dumb stricken to see Sipho sitting next to him. The old man stood up and his tall thin body seemed to look like it was going to topple over. "When did you get here Sipho?" The old man asked. Sipho looked amazed, he didn't know this man knew he was Sipho. "I got here a long while ago, and how did you know my name?"

"That's a long story, my son," the old man replied grumpily but then he managed to sit down again. "You know, I was a popular man in your village. You see, I was a farmer, I farmed for the villagers for a long time,

the children loved to call me Malume (which meant uncle). You see those shacks over there?" Malume pointed to a large number of shacks in the village. "We used to plant old vegetables over there, the village people were never hungry. But people from the city came here, and told me that they were fired from their jobs. Then carelessly I gave each of them sites until there was no more land to farm on." Malume took two deep breaths and then continued. "The people of the village began to hate me, including my wife Thandi" – before Malume could finish his sentence Sipho interrupted him. "You mean Auntie Thandi, Malume?" "Yes," came a small reply from Malume.

Sipho's mouth went dry; he couldn't believe what he had just heard. But at that same moment, Sipho got the most brilliant idea. It all made sense. If Malume started to farm again, maybe the hunger was going to be beaten. "I'm too old for that now, it's impossible," Malume shook his head with dismay, "and besides, the farm needs old vegetables and seeds." "Malume," Sipho said, "tomorrow we can go to the city and ask people to donate old vegetables to our village." Malume made a nod of approval, he knew that it was a good idea, a really good idea.

Now it was dark and Aunt Thandi was beginning to get worried. She had been leading a group of women in search of Sipho. "Let's go home and sleep women." As the women turned to go they were called back by a small voice and saw two familiar figures approaching them, but when they saw Malume, they all protested. Little Sipho tried to calm them down but there was not much Sipho could do but watch as Malume was sent away. Sipho spent the night at his home, he was really angry at the women, but however he tried to sleep, he would twist and turn all night. This happened until he could no longer take it. He woke up and went straight to aunt Thandi's home. He knocked on the door and Aunt Thandi finally showed up. Sipho told Auntie how he met Malume and



how they came up with the plan to farm.

When Siphon was finished, Aunt Thandi's eyes lightened up at the idea and then through all the night they planned and came up with different strategies. They were the first people to wake up in the village the following morning. The old women and Siphon had spread the news swiftly throughout the village. Aunt Thandi had other ideas: she just wanted to meet Malume so they could discuss the plan. Malume was nowhere to be seen.

"Where could he be Gogo?" Siphon asked Aunt Thandi. "I think I've got a good idea where he went off to," answered Aunt Thandi. The village spent the rest of the day waiting for Malume. Aunt Thandi told the village people that Malume had gone to the city to collect some old vegetables and seeds. Now, because there was no electricity in the village, it was dark in the night. So the village people went to go to sleep but before anyone stood up to leave, Malume emerged from the street coming from the city pushing in front of him a three-wheeled trolley. Suddenly a man from the crowd raised up his shovel and shouted: "Bring back the old days, Malume!"

The whole village cheered along and thanked Malume for his work. When the village people were gone, Aunt Thandi approached Malume. "The children miss you in the village and I still miss you." With that she gently grabbed his hand and they all walked hand in hand laughing and joking all the way. The following day every member of the community got down to work, they formed a large piece of land and then started planting a variety of vegetables. When they finished planting the vegetables, they gave a loud cheer, which was going to be their symbol of ending poverty and hunger.

Four months passed by and things got really worse. There had been freezing gales that had blown for days. "He's a brave young man," said Malume to Aunt

Thandi, "he deserves better." The skin on Siphon's face became drawn over the cheeks so that you could see the shape of the bones.

One freezing morning Siphon's stomach began to ache so much he felt he could no longer go on. Very calmly he got up from his blankets and out of the house. He sneaked his way until he reached the farm. Then he started digging and digging until a large sweet potato emerged. Siphon could not believe his luck, the more he dug, the more sweet potatoes he found. And without hesitation Siphon filled a whole bag full of sweet potatoes.

That morning the whole village was woken up by Siphon's screaming and shouting "Sekumilile! Sekumilile!" which means, "It has grown, it has grown." The whole village was now over the moon with joy. Siphon ran until he was stopped by one of his neighbors. "You know something," said the lady, "your village is awfully proud and grateful to you." "Thank you," Siphon said, and off he went again. He flew past every shack, waved at everyone and sang out, "No more hunger, no more hunger." Finally he reached Aunt Thandi's home and burst into the house shouting "Gogo! Gogo!" Aunt Thandi was in the backyard with Malume. "Gogo, Malume! The vegetables have grown." There was a long silence; no one spoke for about 10 seconds. Then very calmly with wide grins spreading across their faces, they yelled "Hoooooray!" and Malume's tall body rose up and made one unbelievable jump of victory.

Life changed drastically for the village people. This idea was also spread all over the world. People started to plant old vegetable seeds, and then poverty and hunger began to fade and disappear until there was virtually nothing that reminded people of hunger. ■

This is a shortened and edited version of the submitted story. The editing was minor, preserving tone and meaning.



Poster by

Christine Riolo

10 years old

West Nyack Elementary School

West Nyack, New York, USA