

Coming to terms.

By

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**OVER BLACK**

SCREECHING TIRES. SCREAMS.

A beat.

**LOUD** Car crash.

**FADE IN**

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - EVENING

A man lies on a hospital bed, heavily bandaged to his neck. Covered in various cords connected to the heavy machinery around his bed. His name is HLOMLA, 40s.

SUPER: THREE MONTHS LATER

Looking over Hlomla is Doctor MKHIZE, 30s, a perfectionist who hates failure. And a nurse, THABILE NKOSI, 20s, calm and nurturing.

MKHIZE

How are we going to tell him?

He looks at Thabile.

MKHIZE(CONT'D)

No man should hear such news.

Thabile shakes her head.

MKHIZE(CONT'D)

How long has he been out? Three months.

THABILE

Yes. It has been three months, Doctor.

Doctor Mkhize checks Hlomla's heartbeat, pulse.

MKHIZE

He is showing signs of life as of late. When he wakes up ... let me know. Immediately. I'm not losing him too.

THABILE

Yes, Doctor.

INT. HOSPITAL - OFFICE - NIGHT

Doctor Mkhize sits on a chair, going through some files on his office desk. Next to them is a phone. It rings, he puts it to his ear.

THABILE(V.O)  
Doctor -- He's awake.

He hangs up and runs out with some of the files.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door flies open, Mkhize storms in, files in hand, goes straight for Hlomla's bed. Thabile stands on the opposite side.

Hlomla blinks, dazed and confused. Tries to move his head.

MKHIZE  
(relieved)  
Hey ... Take it easy there,  
soldier.

He gently pushes Hlomla's head against the pillow. Hlomla tries to move still. He squirms in anguish.

MKHIZE(CONT'D)  
A lot of energy you have there,  
trooper ... but you will need it.  
Why don't you rest for now?  
(to Thabile)  
Make sure he gets enough sleep.  
(pages through the files)  
I will need to run a couple tests  
on him in the morning.

THABILE  
Yes, Doctor.

Mkhize walks out while paging on.

Thabile takes an injection from a small table top next to the bed.

THABILE(CONT'D)  
I'm really sorry about this ... but  
you have to rest.

She sedates him.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - EVENING

Hlomla lies on his hospital bed, not as heavily bandaged this time. Clearly in a better physical condition.

Thabile stands next to him.

SUPER: ONE MONTH LATER

In walks Mkhize, files in hand.

MKHIZE  
(to Hlomla)  
Hey ... Look who's up.

Hlomla shows no emotion.

THABILE  
(jokingly)  
Goodluck, Doctor. He hasn't said a word in ... how long has it been? A month?  
(to Hlomla)  
Maybe he has lost his speech.

MKHIZE  
(curiously)  
Well how about that? I think you're on to something ...  
(then)  
Let's see.

He puts his files on top of the small table top next to the bed then does various medical tests on Hlomla.

A beat.

He takes his files, pages, writes. Pages, writes. Pages, ticks, pages, checks, checks, checks.

He puts the files under his arm.

MKHIZE(CONT'D)  
Nope. You are wrong, Thabile.  
There's nothing wrong with his speech, in fact ... he's getting better and better everyday.  
(to Hlomla)  
A few more weeks and he'll be ready to begin his rehab. I'm pretty sure it's a choice though.  
(to Thabile)  
The silence. He'll speak when ready.

(CONTINUED)

THABILE

Of course. What has been through --  
I'd never wish it on my worst  
enemy. Losing your entire family in  
--

MKHIZE

Don't ... Let's give him time. He  
can still hurt himself. Make sure  
he remains still.

Thabile nods

MKHIZE(CONT'D)

You need to rest. You've been  
working really hard over the past  
month. Let Zanele cover the  
nightshifts for you this weekend.  
Come back Monday. I need you  
refreshed and focused. You know  
him.

THABILE

But ... Doctor. That's exactly why  
I don't think it'd be wise for me  
to take any off-days. No one will  
be able to handle him at night. He  
--

MKHIZE

Okay, then. For the weekend only.  
Don't come to work on Monday ...  
and Tuesday. You're off. I have  
some work to do. I'll be in my  
office.

Doctor Mkhize exits the room.

A beat.

A tired Thabile sits next to Hlomla, who's now asleep. She  
takes out her phone and scrolls through it.

THABILE

Today's short story. THE PROCEDURE  
by Thabile Nkosi. I hope you'll  
like it ... It's better than last  
week's one -- I'm ... I'm a better  
writer now ... I think.

She sighs.

(CONTINUED)

THABILE(CONT'D)  
I'm taking my time with -- ANYWAY  
... Here goes nothing.  
(reads out loud)  
It's late in the evening, Ms Zondo  
is outside on her front yard,  
looking for her son, Thabiso. It's  
pitch-black dark. Thabiso's been  
gone for two hours straight.

She's slowly fading in and out of sleep.

THABILE(CONT'D)  
(reads out loud. lazily)  
The spaza-shop she sent him to is  
just around the corner ... This  
makes her more of a nervous wreck  
than she already is ...

ANGLE ON: Hlomla's body twitches as if in an episode of  
sleep paralysis.

The sound of Thabile's voice becomes ever so distant and  
faint --

THEN:

EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY - FLASHBACK

It's a bright sunny day, on a fairly quiet intersection.

A Mercedes Benz comes to a stop at a red light.

INT. CAR - SAME

Hloma sits in the driver's seat, next to him is NOMUSA, 30s,  
his wife. In the backseat sits PHILANI, VUSI, SINDI, 8, 10,  
13, their sons and daughter.

They are engaged in a game of CHARADES. Vusi, who's in the  
middle, holds the phone to his forehead. Sindi would rather  
be anywhere else but here.

The word on the phone's screen right now is CHRISTOPHER  
COLUMBUS.

VUSI  
Dad -- Dad ... What does it say  
now?

(CONTINUED)

HLOMLA

Buddy. It's not fair. I'm driving.  
Ask your brother and sister.

PHILANI

We don't know this one dad. Tell  
him or he'll start --

VUSI

Mom. Time ... Come on.

Nomusa looks back. Then forward.

NOMUSA

(annoyed)

He discovered America!

Vusi confidently replies. Immediately.

VUSI

Americo Vespucci?!

SINDI

No. You're wrong! It's AMERIGO!  
That's not even the answer.

HLOMLA

Think buddy. The second guy.

There's a ticking sound. Vusi has a couple of seconds left  
to answer.

NOMUSA

He died of congestive heart  
failure.

VUSI

Christopher Columbus!

PHILANI

Yes. Up!

Vusi tilts his head up but he's already out of time, the  
screen flashes RED ... he loses that point ...

He lets out a disappointed sigh.

PHILANI

No, don't worry. The next one will  
be easy, Vusi.

The screen flashes Green. The word on the green-lit screen  
right now is NELSON MANDELA.

(CONTINUED)

PHILANI  
(smiles)  
See. I told you.

The traffic lights in front of Hlomla turn green as well. he drives.

NOMUSA  
(re: Philani)  
Well? Are you going to tell him  
what it says?

**THEN**

SCREECHING TIRES.

The entire family looks right, in sheer horror. It's a  
MASSIVE CARGO TRUCK ... SCREAMS.

A beat.

**Loud** Car crash.

INTER-CUT

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hlomla shakes in his sleep, faster, frantically.

Thabile is fast asleep. As if knocked out, cold.

EXT. INTERSECTION - CONTINUOUS

Bodies scattered arround. Paramedics arrive on the scene,  
fire fighters, traffic officers.

Motorists from each side of the intersection come to a halt.  
Civilians, commuters ... look on.

The police put a yellow tape arround the perimeter.

A man approaches the scene, crosses the yellow tape and  
sprints to the bodies. A traffic officer spots him and yells  
...

TRAFFIC OFFICER  
Hey! No civilians. Get away!

The traffic officer chases after him.

(CONTINUED)



VOICE(O.S)  
I'm a docter! I live around here.

He points at the ambulance as he runs past it.

MKHIZE  
These guys are from the hospital I  
work for.

Upon hearing this, the traffic officer stops.

Mkhize finally reaches one of the bodies. It's that of Nomusa. There's a number 1 written next to her body. The paramedics have gotten to her already.

Post a quick examination, it's clear to Doctor Mkhize that she was dead on impact.

His eyes search for where the paremedics are, he spots them ... there's two of them. Kneeled next to a body with a stretcher. They run to the next one. Mkhize knows what this means. He screams.

MKHIZE  
No! Lord!

He runs to the body. It's Philani's. Blood all over him.

Mkhize scans the scene again. He spots the paramedics at another body ... which they soon leave lying there also.

He screams.

MKHIZE(CONT'D)  
No!

He runs to the body. It's Sindy's. Dead. Torn apart from limb to limb. He quickly runs to the next body. He gets there just in time to hear the paramedics say this:

PARAMEDIC #1  
We're losing him.

PARAMEDIC #2  
Breathe little buddy! Come on!

They carefully place Vusi on the stretcher.

Doctor Mkhize runs to the last body, a few feet away. It's Hlomla's. Next to what used to be his beautiful car, now destroyed beyond repair.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hlomla shakes in his bed, intensely. Shaking the whole bed from side to side.

Thabile sleeps, her neck extended against the wall.

EXT. INTERSECTION - CONTINUOUS

POV: HLOMLA

**Blurry vision. Faint Sounds.**

He sees a man running towards him. He skims the scene ... He sees a body from afar. He looks to his other side ... another body ... then another.

Blinks.

Slowly.

He looks around. He sees paramedics loading a person in the ambulance with a stretcher.

He sees the man getting closer and closer ... until finally ...

He fades in and out of consciousness. Everything is in slow motion now. His vision is even blurrier. His hearing ... the sound. Incomprehensible faint.

**OVER BLACK**

A faint voice.

VOICE

Don't give up on me, Man! Come on!  
Breathe! Breathe! Come on!

CHEST PUMPS. GROANS. GRUNTS.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hlomla is about to fall off the bed. Thabile sleeps, deeply.

The door opens. Enters Doctor Mkhize, eyes peeled on his files.

MKHIZE

I have great news.

(CONTINUED)

He puts down his files, sees a sleeping Thabile by the bed,  
Hlomla seconds away from tumbling down. Screams in terror  
...

MKHIZE  
Thabile! Look out!

THE END.