

MY BELOVED

Written by

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

INT. SOUTH AFRICA. THANDIWE'S HOME. KITCHEN. MAY 1997. DAY 1

Opening scene - THANDIWE (pronounced Thandie), kisses her FATHER at the kitchen table, while her MOTHER washes the pot of residual porridge from the breakfast they just ate as a family.

Their house is one of 12 shacks that are built off a dirt road 1.5 kilometers from town. It is of the most modest means, containing a small kitchen/family room, a bedroom with a double bed for her parents and a twin mattress that lays on the floor for Thandiwe, and a bathroom, that has a toilet, sink and spigot that they use to fill water in a basin to wash themselves. The house is spotless and sparse with decor, but is home for these three.

Thandiwe is a 15 yr old black girl, who is slender in size and stands at average height. She is very pretty, with full lips, bright greenish-hazel eyes and shoulder length hair that is pulled back into a tight bun. She speaks Afrikaans as her native language, but is learning English as her second. Thandiwe's father is also a slender man, average height for a man and also speaks Afrikaans, with a few English words he has tried to pick up from his daughter, while her mother is a curvy woman, who is petite in height and leaves any deviations from Afrikaans to her daughter.

All 3 of them are dressed in clothes they received from a charity organization associated with their church, but Thandiwe's mother has made sure that any pre-existing stains have been scrubbed out and rips or tears mended.

THANDIWE'S FATHER (IN AFRIKAANS)
Do good, Thandiwe.

Her father than switches to English to show he is trying to learn.

THANDIWE'S FATHER (CONT'D)
Make... us... proud... today...

Thandiwe's father stands tall with his shoulders pulled back to show how impressed he is with himself. Thandiwe smiles.

THANDIWE
Very good, Father.

THANDIWE (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)
And now it's Mother's turn. Mother?
What do you have to say to that?

Thandiwe's mother looks to her with hesitancy.

THANDIWE'S MOTHER (IN AFRIKAANS)
 No, no. That is yours and your
 father's thing. Just listen to your
 father and do good today.

Thandiwe's father looks to both of them to think of a way her
 mother can contribute.

THANDIWE'S FATHER (IN AFRIKAANS)
 No? Then how about one of your
 beautiful songs that you two can
 sing for me?

THANDIWE (IN AFRIKAANS)
 Yeah? A song? We can do that for
 sure. Right, Mother? What song
 would you like to sing?

Thandiwe's mother thinks of a song they can sing together.

THANDIWE'S MOTHER (IN AFRIKAANS)
 How about Bawo Ndiabonga?

THANDIWE'S FATHER (IN AFRIKAANS)
 Ah yes... Bawo Ndiabonga is a good
 one. Sing that for me.

THANDIWE (IN AFRIKAANS)
 Yeah? Okay but we'll have to sing
 the shorter version so I am not
 late for school.

Thandiwe's mother and father nod in agreement.

Thandiwe and her mother begin to sing [BAWO NDIYABONGA].

The way they harmonize the different verses, as well as the
 chorus bring a huge smile to her father's face and a tear to
 his right eye. Thandiwe and her mother finish the song.

THANDIWE'S FATHER (IN AFRIKAANS)
 So beautiful... my girls singing
 that song on this wonderful day.
 So, so grateful.

Her mother smiles at Thandiwe, and Thandiwe gives her mother
 a hug first, and then her father.

THANDIWE (IN AFRIKAANS)
 Okay then. I have to go now. Good-
 Bye to you both. See you after
 school!

Her parents say good-bye and Thandiwe heads out the front door, humming Bawo Ndiwabonga.

2a

EXT. THANDIWE'S VILLAGE/WALK TO SCHOOL. SAME DAY

2a

Film pauses on Thandiwe's face, focusing on her eyes and her humming, as Narrator Thandiwe speaks.

NARRATOR THANDIWE

Everyone will experience some type of trauma in their lifetime. It will vary in extremity, but it will inevitably happen. And when it does occur, you must always look to those who were sent in to help you.

Whether they are there temporarily, or permanently, they were sent on purpose to help you find your way.

And on rare occasions, and out of all those people, there will be the select few that become beloved to you. The ones who help you learn your strength, stand on your own and find your voice.

This is my journey of finding my voice again.

When Thandiwe shuts the door behind her, SIPHO is seen waiting for her. He is 17 years old, tall, thin, and very dark skinned, making his teeth appear to be ultra white. When he smiles his whole face lights up. He also speaks Afrikaans, with a few English words he has also tried to pick up from Thandiwe. Sipho's feelings toward Thandiwe are a little more obvious than Thandiwe's, but they are both enamored with one another.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS)

Hello Thandiwe! How are you on this fine day?

Thandiwe nods her head to indicate she is doing well and smiles brightly at him. They both begin to walk to their final destination.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)

Can we speak in English so I can practice?

THANDIWE

Yes, we can speak English, but there will be a test at the end of our walk. Are you ready for that?

SIPHO

What is a "test?" What this means?

THANDIWE (IN AFRIKAANS)

Uhm.. "Test?" It's a way to assess overall how you are doing with your English.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS)

Like a grade?

THANDIWE (IN AFRIKAANS)

Yes. Like a grade.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS)

Well, if there is going to be a test, then I will have to study first, so why don't we just talk normally today, and you can test me tomorrow. Okay?

Thandiwe smiles at him because she knows that Siphos doesn't want to look less than adequate in front of her.

THANDIWE (IN AFRIKAANS)

Okay. We can do that.

Scene ends with them continuing to walk down the main dirt covered road as Siphos entertains Thandiwe with a funny story. Thandiwe laughs since she thinks Siphos is clever in the way he tells his stories.

2b

EXT. THANDIWE'S VILLAGE/FORK IN THE ROAD. SAME DAY

2b

As they come to a fork in the road, Thandiwe will have to go to the right, where there is a little downtown area that includes her school, while Siphos will have to go left towards the factory where he works.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS)

Until tomorrow then, Thandiwe?

THANDIWE (IN AFRIKAANS)

Until then...

They both smile at one another and start to go their own way. Siphos goes down his path a little before he turns around and starts to yell gleefully towards Thandiwe.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS)
Thandiwe? I will miss you until
tomorrow. And I will never forget
you.

Will you always think of me?

Thandiwe becomes embarrassed and quickly looks around her to
make sure no one has heard Sipho's declaration. Sipho begins
to laugh at her embarrassment.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)
Who cares if anyone can hear me!

Will you always think of me?

Again, Sipho begins to laugh.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)
Thandiwe?

Thandiwe smiles, then takes a deep breath.

THANDIWE (IN AFRIKAANS)
Always, Sipho.

I will always think of you.

Sipho jumps with glee and begins to do a few steps from a
traditional African dance, while Thandiwe looks on smiling.
He then abruptly stops, stands at attention, then bows to
Thandiwe.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS)
Until tomorrow, Thandiwe!

Scene ends with Thandiwe smiling and waving good-bye to
Sipho, then turning around to continue down the path to her
school.

3 INT. SAINT FULGENTIUS CONVENT/SCHOOL. THANDIWE'S CLASSROOM. SAME DAY

3

Thandiwe sits at one of the two person desks at the front of
the room. Her friend, AMAHLE, sits next to her. Amahle is
like the rest of her classmates; slender, black, but a few
shades lighter than the rest and big, beautiful, almond
shaped brown eyes.

The class is English and is taught by CLARE, who is
originally from the United States but now resides in South
Africa to teach.

She is in her mid-twenties, and naturally pretty, with brown wavy long hair, blue eyes, very thin and has a very prominent bohemian vibe.

CLARE

Okay class, to end our time for today, does anyone want to say something new in English that they have learned?

Everyone in the class looks around to see who will be brave enough to speak, but no one seems to be up for the challenge.

CLARE (CONT'D)

Come on now. Anyone?

Thandiwe looks around at her classmates and decides to speak.

THANDIWE

We will miss you until tomorrow, Ms. Clare.

Both Clare and Thandiwe smile at one another.

CLARE

Ahh... Very good, Thandiwe! I will miss all of you until tomorrow too! And on that note, class is dismissed. Have a good rest of your day, everyone!

The students gather their pencils and notebooks and begin to make their exit from the classroom, while Clare calls out to Thandiwe, with a smile on her face.

CLARE (CONT'D)

Thandiwe, I need to speak to you please.

Thandiwe and Amahle look at one another with concern.

AMAHLE (IN AFRIKAANS)

I'll see you at the end of school.

Thandiwe nods her head to Amahle and then makes her way over to Clare.

THANDIWE

Yes, Ms. Clare?

CLARE

Thandiwe, I wanted to speak to you about a "Learning to Live Abroad" program that our school is thinking about participating in. Yes?

THANDIWE

Yes...

CLARE

Good. This is the first time the school has thought about participating in it and it is through the Catholic diocese.

Basically, they take a certain number of kids here in South Africa who have done very well with their English-speaking skills and as a "reward" they want to send them over to live with a host family in one of the countries where English is their first language. It lasts for an entire school year and the kids get to go to their schools to learn the same as the local kids. They also get to learn about their culture: their foods, politics, the different religions... You name it and they get to learn about it. Does this sound like something you would be interested in?

THANDIWE

Me?

Thandiwe puts her hand up to her chest as she asks her question, and Clare smiles big at Thandiwe apprehension.

CLARE

Yes, of course, you!
Why wouldn't you be selected as the choice from our school?
You excel in all your classes, especially English. You are an excellent student, in every possible way. And I think this program will open your world up to several opportunities that you will never get here.

Clare still sees the shock that is apparent on Thandiwe's face and smiles yet again.

CLARE (CONT'D)
 I'm still getting all the details
 together, but I would like to
 submit your name for our school.

Clare takes a breath and sees that this is finally sinking in
 for Thandiwe, as she's starting to notice a smile forming on
 Thandiwe's face.

CLARE (CONT'D)
 How old are you now? I think you
 have to be 16 years old to
 participate.

THANDIWE
 I am 15 years old. I will be 16 on
 October 2nd.

CLARE
 Ahh, well this program takes effect
 in September but maybe there's a
 way. Let me deal with that. In the
 meantime, think about it, talk to
 your parents and let me know your
 decision. Maybe by Monday? Okay?

Thandiwe nods her head.

THANDIWE
 Thank you, Ms. Clare.

CLARE
 Of course. You've earned this,
 Thandiwe. Just know that. Okay?

THANDIWE
 Okay. Thanks.

Scene ends with them smiling at one another, then Clare takes
 the seat at her desk while Thandiwe makes her exit.

4 EXT. THANDIWE'S VILLAGE. SAME DAY

4

As Thandiwe makes her way home on the dirt road, thoughts of
 what she and Ms. Clare discussed are captured via the smile
 on her face. But as she gets closer to home, she sees dark
 smoke clouding the sky over her village. She starts to run
 and sees many of the houses within her village on fire and a
 few people in despair running from house to house. She runs
 to the front of her house and finds that no fire has been set
 yet, but her front door has been jammed open and the two
 windows on either side are broken.

5 INT. THANDIWE'S HOME. KITCHEN/FAMILY ROOM. SAME DAY

5

Thandiwe slowly begins to enter through the front door and finds her father slumped over in one of the kitchen chairs. His hands are tied behind his back, he is badly bruised from the beating he has taken and has a gunshot to his heart. She then turns around to see her mother, lying on the couch in their family room, her throat slit from ear to ear, her hands are tied together in the front and lie on her lower abdomen. Her skirt is pulled up to see her underwear, which are still intact. Someone had tried to rape her but was interrupted.

Thandiwe is overcome with shock and despair. She turns to go back outside to get help and is met with TWO VERY LARGE, BLACK, REBEL MEN, so she stops abruptly. Both men are dressed in black, from head to toe, and are wearing face masks that only leave their eyes and mouths exposed.

REBEL #1 (IN AFRIKAANS)
Well, Well. Will you look at this.
A parting gift for you and me to
share.

Rebel #1 say this to Rebel #2 while they are both mesmerized by Thandiwe, who appears to be terrified for her life.

Rebel #1 speaks to Rebel #2 again.

REBEL #1 (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)
You block the door while I take her
first. Then you get your turn.

Rebel #2 closes the door and begins to stand guard, while Rebel #1 heads towards Thandiwe. Thandiwe begins kicking and punching Rebel #1.

Scene ends with Thandiwe realizing her attempts are futile against this man's size, so she attempts to scream, but is quickly silenced by the knife that is held to her throat.

6 INT. THANDIWE'S HOME. FAMILY ROOM. SAME DAY

6

Thandiwe is lying immobile for what seemed to be hours, on the floor of the family room. She is badly beaten from the rebels that invaded her village; She has cuts and bruises on her arms and legs, her right eye is swollen shut, her bottom lip has been cracked open and there are blood stains near her vaginal area due to the rape she endured from the two men.

Although the unexpected attack seemed to end as quickly as it began, the loss experienced in the brief time it took for these vigilantes of death to come and go from the community was savage.

7 INT. THANDIWE'S HOME. FAMILY ROOM. SAME DAY

7

As the camera scans her body, it lands on her face, and then FLASHBACKS occur showing what happened; Thandiwe was blocked from leaving the massacre site and is beaten and raped repeatedly by the 2 men. As one would rape her, the other would stand guard outside of the house. Thandiwe was unable to move, or scream for help, due to the shock of witnessing her dead parents, the chaos that occurred in the village and the loss of her innocence that was brutally taken from her.

When the camera flashes back, Thandiwe is still lying in a fetal position on the hard, unforgiving ground. Her eyes are still closed, while a tear is streaming down her face.

8 INT. THANDIWE'S HOME. FAMILY ROOM. SAME DAY 8

Thandiwe tries to calm herself with thoughts of her mother. The film does another FLASHBACK where her mother is seen stroking a 10 year old Thandiwe's hair as Thandiwe's is in her bed to go to sleep. Her mother begins singing a traditional South African lullaby that she always sang to Thandiwe as a child called [THULA SANA] (Sleep My Baby).

Thandiwe could not recall a night that her beautiful voice had not weaved comfort and serenity throughout her small home, with each melodious word. Nor could Thandiwe recall a time when she longed to hear her mother sing those words more. But she knew she would have to rely on the sounds lingering in her mind from this point on. So there she lie, curled up in a ball, quietly singing her version of the lullaby, while her mother's voice harmonized in her head.

9 INT. THANDIWE'S HOME. FAMILY ROOM. SAME DAY 9

The film is focused on Thandiwe's face with the front door appearing in the distance. The door abruptly opens and the silhouette of a man's second hand work boot's are seen. The camera scans up to Sipho's face, which has a look of utter disbelief and terror on it. Sipho yells out the front door.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS)
Hey! I need help in here! Hurry!
Bring a stretcher!

Sipho runs to Thandiwe's side, kneels down so she can see and hear him. The background still shows the front door behind Sipho.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)
Thandiwe? Can you hear me?

Thandiwe slowly opens her good eye and sees Sipho. But then remembers what has happened and how wonderful Sipho is to her and feels embarrassed.

She closes her eye, with a tear streaming down her face and clutches herself tighter into her fetal position.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)
 Don't worry, Thandiwe. I am here.
 You are okay now. Everything is
 going to be okay now.

Sipho strokes Thandiwe's hair and kisses the top of her head.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)
 Everything is going to be okay...

Scene ends with Sipho still kneeling at Thandiwe's side with two men entering the house with a stretcher in hand, and then the camera focuses on Thandiwe's battered face; her eyes shut.

10 NT. SAINT FULGENTIUS CONVENT/SCHOOL. AUDITORIUM TURNED 10
 INFIRMARY. DAY

The school's small auditorium is turned into a temporary infirmary to nurse those who suffered some type of consequence during the attack. Six beds total. Three on each side of the room; separated by makeshift screens for privacy. Most of the injuries are smoke inhalation, cuts, bruises or broken bones from trying to escape the village during the attack. Thandiwe's injuries are the worst.

Thandiwe lay asleep in her bed, while Clare sits in a chair by her side and Sipho paces around the area, looking at the overall state of things in the infirmary. He is visibly stressed and has not slept since he found Thandiwe.

Thandiwe slowly begins to awaken. Sipho runs to her side, while Clare calls out to the nun/nurse who is looking over a patient on the opposite side of the room.

CLARE
 Sister Ignatius! Please come. She's
 waking up!

SISTER IGNATIUS rushes over to check on Thandiwe. She is a white women in her late 50's, who is rather tall and gangly and is dressed in a modest skirt and blouse, and wears a nun's habit on her head.

SISTER IGNATIUS
 Thandiwe? Can you hear me?

Sister Ignatius grabs her right hand, since she looks down and sees that Sipho has already taken possession of her left.

SISTER IGNATIUS (CONT'D)

Thandiwe?

Thandiwe slowly begins to open her eyes and sees Sister Ignatius standing over her on her right side, with Clare at the end of her bed and Sipho is to her left.

SISTER IGNATIUS (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)

Thandiwe, I just need to check a few things to make sure you're healing well. Okay?

Thandiwe slowly nods her head and Sister Ignatius checks her vitals, as she begins to ask questions.

SISTER IGNATIUS (CONT'D)

Thandiwe, do you remember what happened? Do you remember that your village was attacked?

Thandiwe looks at the sister, then Clare and Sipho and remembers what has happened. The memory is so painful that it flashes across her face. She starts to cry so closes her eyes and pulls her hand away from Sipho's. The jerk was so instant that Sipho feels her pain and it shows on his face. Both Sister Ignatius and Clare notice what has happened between the two of them.

SISTER IGNATIUS (CONT'D)

Yes, there was a horrible attack. And word of the attack spread like wild fire to the school, the town and even the factory where Sipho works. And he was so worried that he left work and went running to the village. To you. Sipho is the one who found you.

Thandiwe is still crying with her eyes shut. Sister Ignatius feels good about her vitals and decides that Thandiwe just needs some rest. She turns to Clare and Sipho to deliver the news.

SISTER IGNATIUS (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)

She is going to be fine. She just needs a lot of rest and support. Let's leave her for now. Okay?

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS)

I'd like to stay with her for a while if that's okay?

Both, Sister Ignatius and Clare exchange a look of understanding.

SISTER IGNATIUS (IN AFRIKAANS)
That's fine, but don't stay too
long.

Sipho nods his head in agreement. Sister Ignatius and Clare both exit the area. Sipho goes to the opposite side of the bed and sits in the chair once taken by Clare. He pulls the chair in closer to Thandiwe's bed and carefully places his hand on top of Thandiwe's forearm. Thankfully she doesn't pull away. Thandiwe opens her eyes and stares at Sipho.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS)
Everything is going to be okay now.
Yeah?

She continues to stare at Sipho. He lightly squeezes her arm to show he is with her.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)
I promise.

Sipho begins to smile at her ever so slightly and Thandiwe looks at his hand on her arm, then back at him and begins to close her eyes again.

Scene ends with a close-up on Thandiwe's face while Sipho speaks quietly to her.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS) (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Rest now, Thandiwe. Rest.

11a INT. NEW JERSEY, USA. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. KITCHEN. DAY 11a

TERRY stands at the refrigerator, looking for something to cook, while her daughter, NADINE is seated at the island in the middle of the kitchen, reading the latest teen magazine.

Terry is in her mid-forties, 5'3" tall and 100% Italian. She's very attractive and resembles her daughter facially but Terry's coloring is darker, with olive skin, hazel eyes and almost black hair from her Mediterranean roots. She is average size, with fake eyelashes, a fall (aka a partial wig), and Lee press-on nails that are super glued on. She is dressed impeccably in her real estate agent attire as she has just returned home from work. Nadine, who is 17 years old, two inches taller, slightly larger in size, and favors her Irish heritage from her father, with fair skin, long, wavy dark auburn hair with green eyes and freckled skin, is undressed out of her school uniform, wearing sweatpants, an opened green flannel shirt and a Guns N' Roses t-shirt underneath.

TERRY

What do you want for dinner? We have the leftover chicken from the other night or I can make macaroni and cheese with some cooked hamburger?

Nadine flips the page in the magazine.

NADINE

Let's order a pizza!

Terry looks at Nadine, who is smiling from ear to ear.

TERRY

Pizza?! That's not on our diet.

NADINE

Well neither is that mac and cheese with hamburger...

TERRY

Nadine... we're supposed to be watching what we eat.

NADINE

Ma... and we will... tomorrow... after the pizza.

Terry looks at Nadine and Nadine closes her magazine and begins to stare back at her mom. Terry's face is visibly frustrated, while it is apparent that Nadine is holding her position. Nadine begins to pucker her lips and squints her eyes to show she won't back down. Terry takes a sigh.

TERRY

Fine...but tomorrow we begin. Okay?

NADINE

Sure...

Terry looks at Nadine to try to see if she's serious but can't tell, so she shakes her head and decides to give up for the moment. She grabs the super glue from her purse and begins to reattach one of her fake nails.

TERRY

Can you get me the phone number for Veto's Pizza off the pantry wall?

NADINE

Yep.

Nadine gets up and takes the few steps to the pantry, while Terry comes toward the phone, which is mounted on the wall next to a cabinet. As she reaches for the phone, it begins to ring.

NADINE (CONT'D)
It's Veto's Pizza. They knew we'd
be calling.

Terry smirks at Nadine.

TERRY
Very funny.

Nadine smiles while Terry answers the phone.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Hello?

Terry hears a bunch of static on the phone.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Hello?

Nadine looks at her mom and they both look confused. While she waits for the phone line to become clear, Terry takes off her Century 21 nametag and puts it on the counter.

INTERCUT

11b INT. SAINT FULGENTIUS CONVENT/SCHOOL. SISTER IGNATIUS' 11b
OFFICE. NIGHT

The camera screen splits into two sides, with Terry on one side and Clare on the other. Clare is with Sister Ignatius.

CLARE
Hello? Hello? Aunt Terry? Is that
you?

The connection finally begins to become clear and Terry can finally hear Clare.

TERRY
Clare? Is that you? Oh Honey, it's
so good to hear from you! How are
you? How is it going over there?
Wait, it's late there isn't it? Why
are you calling so late? Are you in
some kind of trouble?

Clare and Sister Ignatius give each other a slight smile.

Nadine leans into her mother so she too can hear what Clare has to say.

CLARE

No, I'm fine. No need to worry there. But there is a situation that I was wondering if you might consider helping with...

TERRY

Of course. Anything for you, Clare.

Nadine pulls away from the phone and gives her mother a stern look. Terry puts her hands up in the air because she can't please anyone in this discussion. Nadine leans back in to listen again.

CLARE

Oh good.
Have you been going to church lately?

NADINE

Ha! No, Clare, we haven't been to church lately. Actually, we haven't even attempted to go since you left. Mom feels totally defeated and shameful every time we go, because the church has 'exiled' her because of my parents divorce. Seriously, she ends up crying the whole time we go to mass and then I get mad at her for the ridiculousness of the situation. It's unreal. I still have to go to their private school though. They'll take our money for that.

TERRY

Would you be quiet!

Clare looks at Sister Ignatius apprehensively, but the sister pretends not to be bothered by this outspoken person and only looks mildly concerned.

CLARE

Nay, is that you?!

NADINE

It is!

CLARE

Oh Nay, it's so good to hear your voice!

NADINE

You too!

Nadine and her mom both lean back and smile at one another, and then lean back in to hear Clare.

CLARE

Aunt Terry, there's someone here who needs help, and I thought there's no better person to help her than you. Actually, the two of you. Just like you helped me get back on my feet after my parents died.

Terry's eyes immediately fill with tears, as Nadine rolls her eyes at her. Terry decides to find a way to get Nadine out of the equation for now.

TERRY

Clare, hold on for just one second. Okay?

CLARE

Okay.

The camera goes back to just showing Terry and Nadine in the shot. Terry puts her hand over the receiver and begins to talk to Nadine.

TERRY

Why don't you go call for the pizza from your phone line and let me finish up with Clare.

Nadine gives her mom a suspect look.

NADINE

Are you sure?

TERRY

Yes. I'll just be a few minutes.

Nadine gives her one more look of concern and then takes her exit from the kitchen. Terry takes a deep breath and then puts the phone receiver back to her face.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Okay Clare. I'm back and it's just me now. What do you need my help with?

The camera focuses just on Terry now, but you can vaguely hear Clare through the receiver.

Clare explains what had happened to the local village, to Thandiwe's parents and finally to Thandiwe. Terry is visibly upset by what she has heard as she covers her mouth in shock.

TERRY (CONT'D)
No. Oh my god. No.

Clare continues to discuss her plan and asks Terry if she'd be open to hosting Thandiwe for a year through the local church, beginning in October.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Oh Honey, that's a big ask.

Clare says more to Terry, as Terry wipes a tear from her face.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Alright. Well can I think about it and let you know? Maybe in a week or so?

Clare agrees on the other end of the phone.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Okay, well I love you, Honey and we'll talk soon, okay?

Clare responds.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Okay. Bye.

Terry hangs up the phone and looks up to find Nadine standing in the doorway of the kitchen.

NADINE
Ma? What did you do?

Terry swiftly grabs her purse and car keys from the counter and passes Nadine through the doorway.

TERRY
Nothing yet.
C'mon. We're eating the pizza at Veto's. I'll fill you in there.

Scene ends with Nadine looking to her mother, shaking her head and then proceeding out of the doorway.

12

EXT. SOUTH AFRICA. SAINT FULGENTIUS CONVENT/SCHOOL.
GARDEN - END OF JULY. DAY

12

The screen flashes TWO MONTHS LATER...

Thandiwe is found with Clare and two other sisters in the back garden tending to the fruits and vegetables that are growing in the eight different planting plots. The camera then focuses on Thandiwe, who is digging up a vegetable. Her face is very solemn and the light and love that she displayed at the beginning of the film is definitely gone, but she is alive and well, for the most part.

Clare begins to speak quietly to her.

CLARE (O.S.)

Thandiwe, Sipho is here to see you again. Do you want to see him or should I tell him to come back at another time?

Thandiwe looks up from her digging and searches around until she sees Sipho in the distance, standing under a big tree with a wooden picnic table under it. She nods to Clare and starts to make her way over to Sipho.

When Thandiwe gets closer, she sees that Sipho has brought her a few wild flowers he picked from a field. Sipho hands the flowers to Thandiwe and their fingers touch. This was intentional by Sipho, but Thandiwe's response was not what he had expected as she recoils from the touch of a man.

They both notice the reaction. Thandiwe looks at the ground.

THANDIWE (IN AFRIKAANS)

Sorry, Sipho.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS)

It's okay.

He smiles at Thandiwe, who is still looking down and avoiding eye contact.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)

Let's sit.

Thandiwe goes to one side of the table while Sipho sits on the other. They both get situated; Sipho cannot stop looking at Thandiwe, while she struggles to make eye contact.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)

How are you getting on living with the nuns and Ms. Clare? Everything going okay here?

Thandiwe looks at him and nods her head, but the momentary eye contact proves to be too much so she looks away. Sipho is aware of every movement she makes.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)
So Ms. Clare tells me about the
potential trip you guys have
planned for the United States. Are
you definitely going to go?

Thandiwe looks at him temporarily, but then looks away and nods her head in an uncertain way to let him know she's unsure.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)
Ahh. Well, I think you should go.

Thandiwe looks at him once again.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)
Yes, I do. But not for me. No, no.
Truth be told, if it were my
choice, you would stay here.
Always.

Sipho smiles at Thandiwe, who is now only looking at him.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)
I think you need to go for you.
You need to go and explore. Learn
about how they do things there.
Meet new people. Experience new
things. Find your smile again.

Thandiwe looks down at the flowers that she has placed on the table.

THANDIWE (IN AFRIKAANS)
I'm afraid.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS)
I know. But that's not you. You are
afraid of nothing. Not my Thandiwe.

Thandiwe looks up at Sipho and begins to cry. Hard fast tears stream down her face but then she tries to gain control over it and wipes the tears away.

THANDIWE (IN AFRIKAANS)
I'm so sorry, Sipho.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS)
I know but you have nothing to be
sorry for. Absolutely nothing.
(MORE)

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)
 But I think you need to go to the
 States. Go find yourself again.
 Yeah?

Thandiwe holds Sipho's stare now and nods her head. Sipho starts to get up from the table.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS) (CONT'D)
 Well, I should get going. I'll come
 see you again in a few days. Yeah?

Sipho is stopped from getting totally up because Thandiwe takes both of his hands in hers and squeezes them tight.

THANDIWE (IN AFRIKAANS)
 Thank you.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS)
 You're welcome.

Sipho then kisses Thandiwe's hands as they are intertwined with his.

SIPHO (CONT'D)
 I will always think of you.

Thandiwe smiles slightly at his attempt to speak English. They both stare at each other for an extended moment. Sipho nods his head to Thandiwe and begins to get up from the table. Sipho has his back to Thandiwe. As he begins to walk away, he has to wipe a tear from his cheek. He looks for Clare in the distance, who is now watching him. He nods to her to communicate something in their muted conversation, and Clare nods back to him.

Scene ends with Sipho walking off in the distance and Thandiwe sitting at the table, touching the flowers he brought for her.

13 INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. FOYER/FAMILY ROOM. 13
 EARLY OCTOBER/FRIDAY. DAY

Nadine, who is dressed in her catholic school uniform, gets home from school and enters the house through the front door. She walks through the foyer into the family room, to find her mom, Clare and a teenage black girl standing at attention. Nadine stares at the girl and notices how pretty, but plain, she is. She's very thin, has a tight bun and is wearing her staple charity clothes. Nadine takes her stare off of the girl and focuses on Clare.

NADINE
 Clare! It's so good to see you!

CLARE

Come here cousin and give me a hug!

Both are excited to see one another as they throw each other in their arms.

CLARE (CONT'D)

Look at you. I think you might be a bit taller than me now.

NADINE

And a little bit bigger.

TERRY

Nadine!

NADINE

Calm down, Ma. I can say stuff like that about myself. But no one else can or they'll get the bat.

Nadine and Clare both look over in the corner and see a baseball bat. Thandiwe looks too, but seems confused, so Nadine addresses the situation to her.

NADINE (CONT'D)

That's my mother's home security system. There's a bat in every room, as well as pepper spray on a table in the event we are ever under attack from horror movie villains. Or otherwise.

Nadine and Clare both smile at Thandiwe, who still looks a little perplexed, while Terry tries to change the subject so she can stop her embarrassment.

TERRY

Clare, I'll let you introduce these two while I go get us something to drink.

Terry leaves to go to the adjacent kitchen.

CLARE

Thandiwe, allow me to introduce you to Nadine, the best cousin in the whole wide world, and possibly the best human in state of New Jersey. Or elsewhere.

NADINE

Well considering New Jersey is called the 'Armpit of America,' I don't know grateful I should be for the compliment, but I'll take it!

Hello Thandiwe. It's nice to meet you. And almost everyone calls me Nay, except my mom. She hates it because she says it sounds like a horse...

Nadine then proceeds to make the sound of a horse.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Nay... Get it?

Nadine smiles at Thandiwe, who is getting a little overwhelmed from everything. Nadine senses this and decides to tone down her approach.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Anyway, it's really nice to meet you.

Nadine extends her hand for Thandiwe to accept it, which she hesitantly does.

THANDIWE

It's nice to meet you too.

Terry comes back from the kitchen with a tray that houses a pitcher of iced tea and 4 glasses with ice in them. Nadine looks confused.

NADINE

What's this? I don't think I've ever seen this pitcher before, or this tray. And what is that in there? Iced tea? I never even knew we had that.

Terry gives Nadine a look of frustration, while Clare just smiles at the two of them.

TERRY

What? I bought it at the store this morning for our guests. And I make this stuff all the time.

NADINE

You do?!

TERRY
Don't start Nadine!

Clare leans in to Thandiwe to assess the situation with her while Terry and Nadine begin to banter with each other in the background.

CLARE
I probably should have explained their mother/daughter relationship to you before we came. They argue. A lot. But that's just the way they show their love. They would be lost without each other.

My mother and my relationship was much more gentle. Much more polite. I'm sure yours was too. Yes?

Thandiwe nods at her last statement to let her know it was true.

CLARE (CONT'D)
Well theirs isn't. They constantly bicker back and forth. But then, at night time, when they're watching TV and they think no one is watching, you will see Nay lay her head in her mom's lap, while Terry strokes her hair. It's beautiful to see, actually.

Thandiwe bears a slight smile as she looks back at Terry and Nadine.

TERRY
Anyway...
I picked up Clare and Thandiwe from the airport and we went straight to the church and school to meet with Father John and Sister Lisa so we could get things sorted. School uniforms, her class schedule, extra curricula activities. Everything.

NADINE
And did you cry while you were there?

Nadine quickly looks back at Clare.

NADINE (CONT'D)

She's going through menopause you know, which means she cries on command now...

TERRY

Nadine!

Clare begins to laugh at them, but then interjects to keep the conversation going.

CLARE

Thandiwe will start school with you on Monday!

Clare gives Nadine a big smile and then extends it to Thandiwe.

TERRY

She can drive to and from school with you.

Terry looks at Nadine, who is obviously perturbed that she is going to have to play a bigger part in this overall effort. Thandiwe sees the tension exchanged between Nadine and her mom.

THANDIWE

I can walk.

Terry and Nadine dumbfoundedly respond in unison.

TERRY/NADINE

Walk?!

Thandiwe nods her head.

TERRY

Absolutely not. It's over 3 miles and you have to get on the highway. You're not walking. Nadine will take you.

All eyes are on Nadine now, who responds in a begrudged way.

NADINE

Yes. You can come with me.

Thandiwe continues to look at Nadine, who gives her a slight smile and then looks away.

TERRY

Right. What else is there? Oh
Clare, can you show Thandiwe your
old room, which will now be hers.

Terry smiles at Clare, and Clare responds.

CLARE

Of course. Come on, Thandiwe. Let's
get you sorted.

Clare and Thandiwe get up from the couch, grab their luggage,
which is duffle bag for each of them, and make their way down
the hallway to the bedroom. Terry looks at Nadine with a
disapproving look.

NADINE

What?!

Terry lowers her voice, as does Nadine so they won't be
heard.

TERRY

Nadine, you agreed to let Thandiwe
come live with us. You know her
situation. You know that she
literally has no one left. And
because of that, we agreed we would
do whatever we can to try and help
her for as long as she is here. You
agreed. Remember?

NADINE

Yes, I remember! I just wasn't
prepared. I was home for 15 minutes
and was already told how my life
was going to change!

TERRY

Yes, but she needs this. Can't you
see how much she needs us?

Terry looks in the direction of Thandiwe's room and her eyes
begin to well up with tears, which Nadine gets frustrated by.

NADINE

For the love of God, are you
crying? Please tell me you're
seriously not crying right now.

TERRY

Be quiet!

Terry wipes her eyes and they both look down the hall to see if Clare and Thandiwe are coming back, which they aren't yet.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Promise me. Promise that you'll be nice to Thandiwe and make her feel at home. Please.

Nadine lets out a big sigh.

NADINE

I promise. I promise to be nice to her. But that doesn't change anything about the way I treat you or anyone else for that matter. Deal?

Nadine smiles sarcastically at her last statement. Terry shakes her head.

TERRY

Fine.

Terry and Nadine can hear noises from down the hall. Clare and Thandiwe start to come back towards the family room and when they're all 4 in the room together, Terry starts to speak again.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Okay! So I've made a lasagna and just need to heat it up but once it's ready, I figured we could sit and have dinner together, while we get to know each other a little better. Yes?

CLARE

That sounds great!

Nadine and Thandiwe just stand there. Nadine looking sarcastically at her mom, while Thandiwe shows a little more excitement now at the prospect of food.

TERRY

And once we're done eating, then you two can go to bed. I'm sure you're wiped out from your travels. Sound good?

CLARE

That sounds amazing. Thank you, Aunt Terry.

Clare looks to Thandiwe, who can't decide who's more intriguing to look at based on their personalities, Terry or Nadine.

THANDIWE

Yes. Thank you, Mrs. Terry.

TERRY

Please... you can call me Aunt Terry if you'd like.

Scene ends with Terry giving Thandiwe a warm smile, and Thandiwe reciprocating.

14 INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. KITCHEN. SAME DAY 14

Clare and Thandiwe sit on one side of the table, with Nadine on the other. Terry sits at the head of the table and begins to serve the lasagna to each person, starting with Thandiwe. There's also a salad, as well as homemade garlic bread. Once everyone is served a portion of everything, they begin to eat. Thandiwe takes a bite of lasagna and is overcome with the taste. Nadine is the first to notice Thandiwe's delight.

NADINE

It's good, right? My mother is the best cook.

Terry is shocked by what Nadine has just said, and Clare smiles.

NADINE (CONT'D)

What?! You are.
But now I'm over quota for saying nice things to you so be prepared for my sarcastic side to make its reappearance.

Terry smirks.

TERRY

You're so fresh! Anyway, why don't you tell Thandiwe what she has to look forward to at school on Monday.

Nadine looks at Thandiwe and smiles half-heartedly.

NADINE

What grade are they putting you in?

THANDIWE

10th?

NADINE

Ahh, a sophomore. I'm a senior,
which means it's my last year.

Thandiwe nods her heads to show she's listening.

NADINE (CONT'D)

So for 10th grade, you're going to
have Sister Innocent for science.
She's 4 foot 11 inches tall, weighs
about 80 pounds and has a direct
line to the big man upstairs so if
you do anything out of line or
questionable, she and the Lord
himself will know about it
immediately and there will be
consequences.

Terry and Clare try to hide their smiles, while Thandiwe
looks a bit frightened.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Then there is Mrs. Abrams for art.
She's amazing. Mrs. Shaw for
English. She's good too. And Sister
Baromayo for math. Now with Sister
Baromayo, you need to make sure you
can recite your Hail Mary. Do you
know It?

Thandiwe looks confused. Clare looks at her and then
addresses Nadine.

CLARE

She's probably knows it in her
native language but we never really
had the students learn prayers in
English.

NADINE

Ahh. Well you better learn it as
soon as possible because you start
every class with that prayer and if
you try to mutter your way through
it, she will know and she will stop
the entire class and make you say
it by yourself. Trust me. I know
since I didn't start catholic
school until 9th grade and didn't
know the Hail Mary and had to
recite it on my own. It was
terrifying.

Nadine shudders at reliving the thought, while Thandiwe looks at her with even more concern. Clare smiles at their exchange.

CLARE

Don't worry, Thandiwe. We'll practice it enough before I leave so you'll be able to recite it in your sleep.

Thandiwe looks a little relieved.

NADINE

When do you have to go back, Clare?

CLARE

I go back on Wednesday.

NADINE

Oh no. So soon?

CLARE

Yes, but I feel comfortable leaving, knowing that Thandiwe is in such good hands.

Clare smiles at all 3 of them, with Terry matching her smile but Nadine and Thandiwe smile a bit more cautiously.

CLARE (CONT'D)

Now, tell me about the boy situation.

Nadine almost chokes on her bite of lasagna.

NADINE

What boy situation?! For me or Thandiwe?

CLARE

For you! Thandiwe doesn't have time for that, besides she potentially has someone already at home pining for her and waiting to hear from her once she gets settled. But I want to hear about you!

Nadine and Terry look to Thandiwe, who looks a little embarrassed by everyone's attention.

NADINE

Oh but I want to hear about Thandiwe's love interest!

CLARE

Nope. We want to hear about yours.
How is Jake?

NADINE

Jake?! You mean Jake from across
the street? The guy I've known
since I was 3 and is like my
brother. That Jake?

CLARE

Is he like your brother? Because
the last time I saw him, he was
totally smitten!

NADINE

Jake? No, not Jake. He's one of my
best friends.

CLARE

Hmmm. I don't know. I think there's
something there.

Nadine begins to pucker her lips and squints her eyes at
Clare, who is grinning from ear to ear.

TERRY

What about that kid that calls you
every night. What's his name? Matt?

Nadine gets embarrassed by the mentioning of his name.

CLARE

Oooohhhh... Matt, huh?! Who is
Matt?

NADINE

Ugh. He doesn't call every night.
And he's a senior at my school, and
we're just friends. Besides, I'm
not his type anyway.

CLARE

No? What's his type?

NADINE

Skinny, cheerleader types who can't
think for themselves.

Nadine gets a little quiet which doesn't go unnoticed.

CLARE

Ewww. Well he's got awful taste.
For sure. I vote for Jake!
Thandiwe, what do you think?

Thandiwe smiles but is unsure how to answer so she raises her shoulders to show her uncertainty. Nadine laughs.

NADINE

Good answer. Stay silent and maybe
she'll change the subject.

Nadine throws a crumpled napkin at Clare from across the table.

TERRY

Girls, don't start. Nadine, why
don't you invite Jake to the
barbecue on Sunday?

NADINE

Barbecue?! What barbecue?!

TERRY

The one I just decided on...
Tomorrow, Clare, Thandiwe and I are
going to the Thrift shop and K-Mart
to get Thandiwe some necessities
and then on Sunday we're having a
small barbecue to welcome Clare
home and to introduce Thandiwe to
our friends and family!

Terry is extremely happy with her idea, as is Clare, while Nadine looks suspect.

NADINE

Ma, do you really think a barbecue
is a good idea? Anything 'small' to
you consists of no less than 30
people?!

TERRY

That sounds about right!

NADINE

But Ma, do you really think
Thandiwe is ready to meet everyone?

TERRY

Yes. Why wouldn't she be?

NADINE

Two words. Uncle. Frank.

Clare gets overly excited by what Nadine has just said.

CLARE

Uncle Frank! Oh goodie! I love
Uncle Frank!

Scene ends with Clare and Terry looking extremely happy. Thandiwe is confused but curious and Nadine is frustrated and puts her head in her hands.

15a EXT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. FRONT YARD. EARLY 15a
OCTOBER/SUNDAY. DAY

UNCLE FRANK is seated on a lawn chair at the end of one of the 3 folding tables Terry has disbursed in the front yard of their middle class row home. The best description for Uncle Frank would be to compare him to Danny DeVito. Short, Italian, funny, loud, cranky, mid 50-year-old jersey-born man with terrible grammar, who everyone loves and can't get enough of, despite his playful ornery ways.

Each of the 3 tables, as well as the surrounding area, is filled with friends and family socializing on this sunny, autumn day. Seated at Uncle Frank's table, is AUNT RITA (his wife), MARIE (Nadine's ultimate best friend), and TONI and JACK (Marie's parents). Aunt Rita is the Bette Midler to Uncle Frank's Danny DeVito. She is late 40's, attractive, stands at the same height as Uncle Frank, has red hair, a medium sized build and wears a reddish-brown lipstick that ties her entire look together. Toni is at least half a foot taller than Aunt Rita, is also very attractive, and has a very 'soft' Italian look, since she and her family migrated to the US from Italy when she was 12, while Jack, is 6' tall, attractive, light skinned, fair haired, very fit and has a very stoic presence. While Marie is Nadine's age, extremely attractive, almost reaches her dad's height and has his coloring, a slender build and thick hair with natural big curls that women would kill to have.

Uncle Frank is currently being 'annoyed' by two twin 5 year old little girls, TINA and LISA, who are demanding his attention. Nadine is standing directly to the side of Uncle Frank, watching the girls have their fun with him, as is the rest of the table.

UNCLE FRANK

What?! What do you want?! What do
you want from me?!

The two little girls continue to laugh at him as they poke at his knees.

UNCLE FRANK (CONT'D)
Now why are you poking my knees
like that? Do you want me to tickle
you? Is that why? Huh?

With that, Uncle Frank begins to tickle each of the girls under their arms and the girls begin to laugh loudly. Uncle Frank looks to Nadine and speaks under his breath to her.

UNCLE FRANK (CONT'D)
Nay, what are these two's names?

Nadine responds to him in the same way.

NADINE
Tina and Lisa.

Uncle Frank looks back at the two girls who have resumed poking him in the knees.

UNCLE FRANK
Hey, Tina and Lisa, you know what?
That's really starting to bug me
now. Cause I'm old. I'm old and my
joints and bones don't work the way
they used to.

The two girls look at each other, decide they don't care and begin to do it again. Uncle Frank's ornery side seeps through.

UNCLE FRANK (CONT'D)
Hey. Hey. You know what else?

Both girls stop what they're doing and look at him.

UNCLE FRANK (CONT'D)
If you don't stop that, you leave
me no choice but to call Santa
Claus and let him know what's going
on here.

The girls' eyes grow big with concern.

UNCLE FRANK (CONT'D)
That's right. Santa. And there's
enough time left before Christmas
that he may decide to forget to go
to your house altogether and leave
you nothin' but coal on Christmas
Eve.

Both girls look terrified.

UNCLE FRANK (CONT'D)
 Yep. Coal.

Both girls run off crying to their mother.

UNCLE FRANK (CONT'D)
 Pains in my ass.

Aunt Rita yells at Uncle Frank.

AUNT RITA
 Frank!

The two girls reach their mother, LINDA, who kneels down to console them. When the two girls tell their mother what has happened, their mother looks over towards Uncle Frank.

AUNT RITA (CONT'D)
 Sorry, Linda! You know Frank.

Aunt Rita looks back at Uncle Frank disapproving.

UNCLE FRANK
 What?! I told them to leave me
 alone.

Scene ends with everyone at the table smiling or laughing at Uncle Frank except Aunt Rita, who shakes her head.

15b INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. KITCHEN. SAME DAY 15b

Thandiwe stands at the bay window in the kitchen, looking out on to the front yard. She sees all of the people and is visibly nervous. Clare attempts to console her as she is getting ready to bring a platter of vegetables and dip outside.

CLARE
 I promise you, it's not as bad as
 it looks. You're going to fit right
 in.

Thandiwe continues to stare out the window. Clare looks back at Terry, who is picking up a platter of raw hamburgers and hotdogs when she sees Clare, and they both exchange a look of concern for Thandiwe. Terry continues to walk towards the window with the platter.

TERRY
 Come on, girls. It's time to meet
 some people.
 (MORE)

TERRY (CONT'D)

And I swear to you, if anyone does
or says anything wrong to you, then
we'll hit them with a baseball bat.

Terry smiles at Thandiwe to let her know she is kidding.
Thandiwe smiles at her, as well as Clare.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Now, Thandiwe can you grab the
bowls of chips and dip from the
kitchen table and bring it outside?

Scene ends with Thandiwe doing what she is told and all 3 of
them exit the kitchen to go outside.

15c EXT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. FRONT YARD. SAME DAY 15c

Terry stops at the grill to hand the platter of hamburgers
and hot dogs over to a man who is already grilling, while
Clare and Thandiwe make their way over to Uncle Frank's
table.

UNCLE FRANK

Clare! Get over here and give me a
hug!

CLARE

Uncle Frank!

Clare rushes to put her platter on the table and meet Uncle
Frank's request. Everyone stands and watches the two embrace
and then look at Thandiwe, who is standing a little further
back to avoid the unfamiliar scene. Aunt Rita senses
Thandiwe's apprehension and moves from her chair so she's
closer to Thandiwe to speak.

AUNT RITA

You must be Thandiwe?

Thandiwe nods her head to agree.

AUNT RITA (CONT'D)

Well I'm Rita. But everyone calls
me Aunt Rita. Uncle Frank and I
have been friends with Terry since
we were in our twenties so we've
just become like family after all
of these years.

Aunt Rita smiles at Thandiwe, who is still trying to take it
all in.

AUNT RITA (CONT'D)
And this is Toni.

Toni has also moved in closer to greet Thandiwe and stands next to Aunt Rita.

TONI
Hello. My goodness you have the prettiest eyes. Doesn't she Rita?

AUNT RITA
Yes, she does. And I hear she's extremely intelligent too. Which, to be honest, we could use a lot more of that around here, since we're stuck with Uncle Frank.

Toni laughs at what Aunt Rita has just said, which makes Thandiwe smile. Then they all look over at Uncle Frank, who is making a joke with Clare, as she is laughing with him. Uncle Frank senses their stares.

UNCLE FRANK
What?!

Aunt Rita nods her head at Uncle Frank.

AUNT RITA
And that is Uncle Frank. I'll let you form your own opinions on him because God knows I'm tainted.

Toni smiles at Thandiwe to let her know that Aunt Rita is kidding. For the most part.

AUNT RITA (CONT'D)
And this is Jack. Toni's husband and Marie's father. He's a police officer in our town.

Thandiwe looks over at Jack.

JACK
Hi Thandiwe.

THANDIWE
Hello.

Aunt Rita continues to Marie.

AUNT RITA
And this is Marie, Nadine's best friend since they're what, 1 year old?

MARIE
Six months old.

AUNT RITA
Six months?! Really?

Marie nods her head in agreement.

MARIE
Hi Thandiwe. It is so nice to meet
you! I hear you'll be joining
Nadine and me at school tomorrow?

Thandiwe responds finally to the warmth that Marie, and
everyone has shown her.

THANDIWE
Yes. I am. Hopefully it will be
okay.

MARIE
I'm sure it will be. Don't worry,
we've got your back.

Marie smiles at Thandiwe, who reciprocates.

AUNT RITA
Come on, Thandiwe. Let's sit.

Aunt Rita, Toni and Thandiwe make their way over to the seats
at the opposite end of the table from Uncle Frank. And
everyone sits down.

UNCLE FRANK
Now wait a minute, Rita. I want her
to sit next to me so I can get to
know her.

AUNT RITA
Not a chance. We want her to stay,
not raise a white flag and run back
to South Africa tomorrow.

Uncle Frank shakes his head in frustration, while everyone at
the table laughs except for Thandiwe, who looks at Uncle
Frank, who is now staring at her. Uncle Frank gives her a
slight smile to let her know that like everyone else at the
table, he is intrigued by her, and she does the same.

UNCLE FRANK
Jake!

Uncle Frank yells to JAKE, who is making his way across the
street and to Uncle Frank's table.

He is 6'2" tall, same age as Nadine, with a slender build, but some muscles from his latest workout obsession. He is Italian with brown shaggy hair, brown eyes and slight acne that is centered on his forehead and chin. Jake finally arrives at the table to greet Nadine, who is still standing next to Uncle Frank's seat.

JAKE

Hey Nay.

NADINE

Hey.

Clare and Marie both look to each other and smile as if they are saying something silently. Uncle Frank notices.

UNCLE FRANK

What?

Clare and Marie reply in unison.

CLARE/MARIE

Nothing.

Thandiwe is also noticing what has just transpired between the people at the other end of the table and smiles.

UNCLE FRANK

Jake, come sit down next to me.
Jack and I are surrounded by all of
these women and we need to balance
things out a little.

Nadine grabs an empty folding chair from the table behind them and gives it to Jake, who is staring at Nadine.

JAKE

Thank you.

His look at Nadine is a little intense and he realizes that as she takes a step back, so he stops and sits down to talk to Uncle Frank.

Nadine then looks at Clare and Marie who are both staring at her.

NADINE

What?!

Clare and Marie both laugh under their breath then bring their focus back to Uncle Frank and Jake's conversation.

UNCLE FRANK

So Jake tell me how school is. I can't talk to Nadine or Marie anymore since they're at that fancy catholic private school and they think their shit don't stink anymore.

MARIE

That's not true!

UNCLE FRANK

Well Nadine's like that anyway.

NADINE

Shut up, Old Man.

UNCLE FRANK

You see?! No respect.

Everyone starts to laugh.

A new 1997 BMW convertible pulls up outside of the house and the driver, MATT, waves to Nadine to get her attention. Matt is about 2 inches shorter than Jake, but is still considered very tall, is muscular with blonde buzz cut hair, blue eyes and extremely good looks that scream 'popular asshole.'

NADINE

I'll be right back.

Nadine grabs a set of papers on a side table and makes her way to the car.

UNCLE FRANK

Who is that?

Everyone looks over to take in the scene.

MARIE

Ugh. That's Matt. We go to school with him.

JAKE

She still talks to him?

UNCLE FRANK

What do you mean 'talks?' She's not dating him, is she?

MARIE

No. She says they're just friends but I think she wanted to be more at some point.

(MORE)

MARIE (CONT'D)

He's runs with the popular crowd. Correction - he leads the popular crowd. Dates all the popular cheerleader types. Actually runs through them pretty quickly. But some time last year he and Nadine started to become friends, and now she is his token 'best friend.' Makes me sick really. I think she really liked him at some point but now she's starting to see through him. And if that was homework she just gave him, I'm going to kill her.

JACK

Is that Matt Bowen?

MARIE

Yes.

JACK

Oh man. His family is bad news. His dad owns the Bowen BMW car dealership in town and is the most arrogant guy I've ever met. The police had two calls to their house last year for domestic abuse. The whole family is just bad news.

UNCLE FRANK

Hmmm. Interesting.

Everyone stares back at Nadine, who is chatting with Matt, who is staring back at Uncle Frank's table, in particular, at Thandiwe. Thandiwe notices and becomes visibly uncomfortable. And Uncle Frank notices.

Nadine finishes her chat with Matt and heads back up to the table.

MARIE

Please tell me that wasn't homework you just gave him.

NADINE

Be quiet, Marie.

UNCLE FRANK

Who was that guy?

NADINE

He's just a friend.

UNCLE FRANK
Just a friend?

NADINE
Yes. Just a friend.

UNCLE FRANK
Well, I don't like your friend. Get
rid of him.

Nadine is totally flabbergasted, and a little embarrassed
since everyone at the table is looking at her.

NADINE
Get rid of him?

UNCLE FRANK
Yeah.

NADINE
You don't even know him, Old Man.

UNCLE FRANK
I know everything I need to know. I
saw him and I can tell he's an
asshole. And I think everyone here
at the table will agree with me
when I say get rid of him.

Nadine looks at everyone and they are all in silent agreement
except for Toni.

TONI
Frank, I'm sure he's a nice guy.
You just have to get to know him.

JACK
No, Toni. You don't. Frank's right.

UNCLE FRANK
Toni, be serious. You think
everyone deserves a second chance.
For Christ's sake, you even think
O.J. Simpson is innocent!

Toni opens her mouth to argue for O.J. but Uncle Frank cuts
her off. He looks back at Nadine.

UNCLE FRANK (CONT'D)
Listen to me. He's bad news. Get
rid of him.

Nadine looks back at Uncle Frank and gives him a slight nod
of agreement.

NADINE

Okay. Okay. Can we please change
the subject now?

UNCLE FRANK

Yes, we can. So Jake tell me how
public school is...

Scene ends with Jake trying to change the subject and
beginning to respond to Uncle Frank, while Nadine looks at
Marie, who stares at her with a smile that says she agrees
with Uncle Frank but will show her support to her regardless.

16a INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. FOYER. DAY

16a

Clare, Terry and Thandiwe stand in the foyer. Thandiwe is
dressed in her school uniform and has the books that she got
from the sister on Friday.

CLARE

Are you ready for your first day?
Do you have your class schedule?
Your books?

THANDIWE

Yes, Ms Clare.

CLARE

It's Clare now. Remember that.

Clare smiles brightly at Thandiwe.

THANDIWE

Okay, Clare.

All 3 smile at each other.

TERRY

You're going to do great. I just
know it.
What is taking her so long?

Terry looks behind her and doesn't see Nadine so she yells
for her.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Nadine! Any day now!

Terry looks a bit uncomfortable since they're all waiting on
her daughter.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Nadine!

Nadine appears on cue from the hallway.

NADINE

Jesus, Ma. You're going to blow out
my ear drum with all that yelling.

Terry looks frustrated, but then looks at Thandiwe and
smiles.

TERRY

You're going to do great.

NADINE

Come on, Thandiwe. Let's get out of
here before they start crying and
singing Kumbaya.

Clare laughs quietly.

TERRY

Nadine!

NADINE

Good-bye, Ma!
Bye, Clare. We'll see you after
school.

Scene ends with Nadine walking out the front door and
Thandiwe following after she looks at both Clare and Terry
and gives them an apprehensive smile.

16b EXT. SAINT MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL. STUDENT PARKING LOT/FRONT 16b
ENTRANCE. SAME DAY

Nadine and Thandiwe both get out of her used white Chevy
Cavalier and begin to walk to the front entrance of the
school. Many kids are out loitering and take notice of
Thandiwe instantly. Thandiwe notices and becomes extremely
self-conscious.

NADINE

Hey. It's going to be fine. Yeah?

Thandiwe nods her head self-consciously at Nadine.

MARIE

Yeah it is! It's going to be
totally fine.

Marie came up from behind them and heard their exchange. Both
Nadine and Thandiwe smile with relief that they've just
increased their entourage to three.

NADINE
Come on. Let's go.

The three of them walk together to show solidarity, with Thandiwe in the middle. As they get closer to the entrance they are greeted by SNEHA, a sophomore. She's is of Indian descent, based on her appearance and accent. She's petite in size and her hair is a little greasy, parted down the middle and braided into two braids. She wears glasses, has braces and gives new meaning to the word 'nerd.'

She looks to Nadine and Marie as she speaks.

SNEHA
Hi.

NADINE
Hello.

MARIE
Hey.

Sneha looks extremely nervous but continues on.

SNEHA
Sister Lisa asked that I meet
Thandiwe outside so I could get her
settled inside for school.

Nadine replies while she looks at Thandiwe.

NADINE
Okay...

SNEHA
It's part of the new buddy program
we are trying out at the school. So
we'll be the Guinea pigs. It's
where a new student, you, Thandiwe,
gets matched up with an existing
student, that would be me, Sneha,
and I show and tell you everything
you will need to know to be
successful in school. I'm your
buddy for as long as you need me to
be, which will hopefully be for the
rest of our lives. They've had this
program in our rival high school
for quite some time now and they've
been successful so...

Sneha looks like she has said all that she could say in this uncomfortable situation with these two seniors in attendance, but will continue if she is forced. Nadine and Marie exchange an amused smirk.

NADINE

So is this the part where we turn
Thandiwe over to you?

SNEHA

Yes, please.

Sneha takes a big breath to relieve some of her stress.

NADINE

Okay then.

Nadine turns her attention back to Thandiwe.

NADINE (CONT'D)

You got this. Yeah?

THANDIWE

Yeah.

Nadine nods her head at her.

MARIE

We'll see you later!

Nadine and Marie begin to walk off together, heading for the front doors. There are two picnic tables crowded with kids about 30 feet from the front entrance, and Matt is seen at the tables and yells to Nadine.

MATT

Hey Nay! Come here!

Nadine looks over in his direction and yells back.

NADINE

I can't! I have to help Marie with
something. I'll talk to you later!

Matt watches Nadine and Marie continue through the front doors and looks annoyed.

SNEHA

I can't believe you get to live
with Nadine. That is so cool.

Thandiwe has been watching the entire scene that just transpired between Matt and Nadine.

THANDIWE

What? What do you mean?

SNEHA

Nadine and Marie are the coolest people on the planet. They're popular but not like the 'real' popular people. They pretty much keep to themselves but are still sociable enough that people revere them. And they're nice to everyone but if one finds out that you messed with the other... well let's just say things won't fare well for you at all. They're legends.

So, so radical.

THANDIWE

Radical? What is that?

SNEHA

Radical? In this case, I'm using it in a slang form, and it means excellent, or wonderful, or cool.

Thandiwe looks at Sneha a bit confused at first but then it registers across her face that she gets it.

SNEHA (CONT'D)

Yes?

THANDIWE

Yes!

SNEHA

Let's get you inside and sorted.

Scene ends with the two girls heading into the high school.

16c

INT. SAINT MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL. SISTER BAROMAYO'S
CLASSROOM. SAME DAY

16c

Thandiwe and Sneha are seated in the back of the classroom, with all seats filled by sophomore boys and girls, while SISTER BAROMAYO stands at the head of the class. She is rather plain in her appearance, which is also typical for the nuns at the school. And her attire is typical for a nun: plain black skirt, white/muted blue striped v-neck top so her cross necklace is always seen, gray orthopedic looking shoes and a habit on her head.

SISTER BAROMAYO
Good morning, Class.

Everyone replies in unison, with Thandiwe looking at them so she can follow.

CLASS
Good morning, Sister.

Sister Baromayo nods her head.

SISTER BAROMAYO
Let us stand and say the Hail Mary.

Everyone gets up and begins the prayer.

CLASS
Hail Mary full of Grace. The Lord
is with thee. Blessed are thou
amongst women and blessed is the
fruit of thy womb Jesus. Holy Mary,
Mother of God, pray for us sinners
now and at the hour of our death.
Amen.

Thandiwe says it with them, but is very quiet because she is nervous from what Nadine has told her. Sister Baromayo sees this and watches her to make sure she is saying the words properly, which she is. Once Thandiwe is finished, Sister Baromayo nods to her. Thandiwe gives a relieved grin.

SISTER BAROMAYO
Thank you. Now take your seats and
let's turn to chapter 7 for today.

Scene ends with Thandiwe taking out her book and searching for chapter 7 and then looking at Sneha and giving her a smile that she got through the prayer.

16d EXT. SAINT MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL. STUDENT PARKING LOT. 16d
SAME DAY

Thandiwe is waiting by Nadine's car for her. Matt comes up from behind her and speaks.

MATT
Hello.

Thandiwe jumps at his voice. Matt now walks to the front of her and leaves about 3 feet between the two of them. Thandiwe looks at him once, but then looks away.

MATT (CONT'D)
You must be Thandiwe. It's nice to
meet you.

Matt extends his hand out for a hand shake but Thandiwe does not reciprocate, so he withdraws his hand. Matt senses her apprehension and takes a minute to look her up and down. Thandiwe senses this and pulls her books in tighter to her chest.

MATT (CONT'D)
Hey, relax. I'm just trying to get
to know you. After all, Nay is my
best friend so I'm sure our paths
will cross on occasion.

Matt continues to stare at Thandiwe's body, but then she speaks.

THANDIWE
I thought Marie is her best friend.

Matt looks up at Thandiwe's face.

MATT
And she speaks.

Matt smiles at Thandiwe, who still looks off in the distance. Nadine and Marie walk up on the interaction.

NADINE
Hey. What's going on here? Is there
a problem?

Thandiwe makes quick eye contact with Nadine, but then looks away.

MATT
I was just introducing myself to
Thandiwe here.

NADINE
Were you?

MATT
Yes. I was.

NADINE
Well Thandiwe and I have to get
going so maybe I'll talk to you
later?

MATT

Sure. I'll call you later. It was nice meeting you, Thandiwe.

Matt smiles. Thandiwe shakes her head, but doesn't say anything and Nadine and Marie look at each other confused.

MATT (CONT'D)

See ya.

NADINE

Yeah, see ya.

Matt makes his exit.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Hey? Are you all right?

THANDIWE

I don't like him. He doesn't feel right. You should listen to Uncle Frank and get rid of him.

Nadine and Marie look at each other shocked.

NADINE

You're here for how many days and that's the first time you have said more than a 3 word sentence! Way to go! I can't believe.

All 3 smile slightly at Nadine's jest.

THANDIWE

I'm serious.

NADINE

I know you are. And don't worry yourself about it. It's almost done. Okay?

Thandiwe nods her head in agreement.

NADINE (CONT'D)

I mean geez, I was thinking we were going to have to take you to the doctors to see if we could get specialized throat lozenges or something to get more talking out of you.

Nadine then puts her arm around Thandiwe and squeezes her tight and Thandiwe grins.

NADINE (CONT'D)
 Marie, are you meeting your
 boyfriend at the EMT center?

MARIE
 Sure am!

NADINE
 When do I get to meet him? Or
 better yet, when do your parents
 get to meet him?

MARIE
 Give it time. We haven't even made
 it to the 6 month mark yet.

They both smile at each other.

NADINE
 Okay, then we'll see you later.

Marie makes her exit while Nadine goes over to the drivers
 side.

NADINE (CONT'D)
 Come on, Motormouth. Let's go.

THANDIWE
 What is a Motormouth?

Scene ends with Nadine looking at Thandiwe and them both
 smiling at one another and then getting into the car.

17 INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. FAMILY ROOM. EARLY 17
 OCTOBER. NIGHT

Terry and Nadine are sitting on a 3 person couch. Nadine has
 her legs draped over Terry's lap while Terry's hands hold
 Nadine's socked feet. Thandiwe and Clare sit on the love
 seat. An episode of the Golden Girls plays and Nadine and
 Terry laugh on cue. Thandiwe stares at them. Clare notices
 and then speaks quietly to Thandiwe.

CLARE
 See? They're something to behold,
 aren't they?

Thandiwe stops her staring and then looks at Clare with a
 solemn expression.

CLARE (CONT'D)
 You miss your mom & dad?

Thandiwe wipes a tear from her face and then nods her head.

CLARE (CONT'D)

I know you do. I miss mine too. But the reality is we can't do anything about it. You know? All we can do is love the people that have been put in our lives to guide or help us, try to make a difference and to excel everyday at making our parents proud. Yes?

Thandiwe nods her head.

THANDIWE

Yes.

Clare smiles and then continues to speak quietly.

CLARE

So Aunt Terry takes me to the airport in the morning after you go to school. Do you feel like you're ready to take on this next chapter?

THANDIWE

Yes. I think so.

CLARE

Has Nadine been helpful to you when you need it? With school and in general?

Thandiwe looks at Nadine and Terry again, and both are laughing at something one of the TV characters has said.

THANDIWE

Yes. She's actually much nicer than first thought.

CLARE

She is! I told you, she's the best. So is Aunt Terry.

THANDIWE

Oh yes. There is no question there. She keeps asking me privately if I'm okay. If I need anything. She's very loving.

Clare smiles and looks over at both of them.

CLARE

That she is.

Both of their attention is drawn back to the TV for a few seconds, then Clare speaks again.

CLARE (CONT'D)
So I can let Sipho know how you're
getting on here then?

Thandiwe is a little stunned when she hears his name.

THANDIWE
Yes. You can.

Clare nods her head.

CLARE
You know you can write him, if you
want? Me too! Although I'll
probably call once a month, or Aunt
Terry will try to contact me. But
letters are always nice to get. And
if you write Sipho, then he can
write you back and I'll mail the
letter for him. Actually, you can
just send your letters to him to me
at the school and I'll make sure he
gets them too. Sound good?

Thandiwe nods her head and smiles.

THANDIWE
Yes. I will write him.

Clare smiles.

THANDIWE (CONT'D)
I do miss him.

CLARE
I know you do. And it will be nice
for you to have him as your tie to
home. Yes? And me too.

THANDIWE
Yes.

Thandiwe smiles and then looks down at her lap. Clare senses
a longing there so she decides to change the subject.

CLARE
So do you have any last minute
questions for me before I leave?
Anything from your English class?
Or maybe math?

Thandiwe pauses for a minute and then responds.

THANDIWE

Yes. What does Butthead mean?

Clare is dumbfounded, while Nadine laughs out loud at them. Clare directs her response back to Thandiwe.

CLARE

What?!

NADINE

Did you just say Butthead?

THANDIWE

Yes?

Nadine adds sarcastically.

NADINE

Clare... please tell us...what does Butthead mean?

Clare does not know how to respond. Nadine pauses a minute and responds.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Thandiwe, Butthead is a character from a TV program called Beavis and Butthead. Why? Was someone talking about the show in front of you?

THANDIWE

No. Someone in one of my classes called another kid a Butthead.

NADINE

Ahh. Well that has an entirely different meaning...

Scene ends with Nadine explaining that meaning, Thandiwe looking confused at first and then getting it, and Clare and Terry laughing at the exchange between Nadine and Thandiwe.

18a INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. THANDIWE'S ROOM. 18a
EARLY OCTOBER. NIGHT

Thandiwe lies in one of the twin beds in her room looking apprehensive. Her bedroom door is ajar and the hallway light shines a dim light across her ceiling. She is trying to go to sleep but can't.

There is a knock on the door.

THANDIWE

Yes?

Terry cracks the door open and speaks quietly.

TERRY

Hey Sweetheart. Since Clare's not here anymore, I just wanted to check on you and make sure you're okay. Do you need anything?

THANDIWE

No. I'm okay.

TERRY

Are you sure?

THANDIWE

Yes.

TERRY

Okay. Well I'm right down the hallway if you need anything. Okay? Just come down and knock. Yes?

THANDIWE

Yes. I'm okay.

TERRY

Okay. Good night then.

Terry closes the door so that it's still slightly ajar.

Thandiwe lays there for a few more seconds and realizes she'll never fall asleep alone.

Scene ends with Thandiwe tossing the blankets from her body and starting to leave her bed.

18b INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. NADINE'S ROOM. 18b
SAME NIGHT.

Nadine is on her phone, sitting on her chair at her desk. She has her head in her hands and is speaking quietly. There is a knock at her door. Nadine looks confused.

NADINE

Yeah?

Thandiwe speaks quietly from the other side of the door.

THANDIWE (O.S.)

It's Thandiwe. Can I come in?

NADINE

Okay...

Thandiwe opens the door and Nadine can tell she is very nervous.

NADINE (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

Thandiwe looks down at her feet as she attempts to work up the courage to speak. Nadine talks to the person on the phone.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Hey. I have to go. I'll talk to you tomorrow at school. Okay?

It's a male voice on the phone. He complies and Nadine hangs up the phone. Nadine directs her attention back to Thandiwe.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Hey. What's wrong?

Thandiwe looks back up at Nadine.

THANDIWE

I have never slept alone.

NADINE

Like ever?

THANDIWE

No.

NADINE

And you want to sleep in here?

Thandiwe nods her head emphatically. Nadine sighs. In her mind she hears her mom speak.

TERRY (O.S.)

You promised!

Nadine tries to hide her aggravation from this situation, as well as her mother's annoying voice.

THANDIWE

I can sleep on the floor!

Nadine hesitantly grins.

NADINE

No need. There's a bed under my bed, so we just have to pull that out.

Nadine and Thandiwe begin to pull out the bed and leave it level to the floor. It is already made with sheets and blankets. Nadine gets a pillow from the top shelf of her closet and tosses it to Thandiwe. Then she closes her bedroom door so there's a crack in it to let the hallway light in. Thandiwe gets into the bed, and Nadine climbs over the mattress to get into her bed.

THANDIWE

Thank you, Nay.

Nadine smiles at the use of her nickname.

NADINE

No problem.

THANDIWE

So was that Jake you were on the phone with? Or that Butthead, Matt?

Nadine smiles.

NADINE

So have you ever heard of the word Busy-body?

THANDIWE

No. What does it mean?

NADINE

Go to bed now and I'll tell you in the morning.

Thandiwe smiles and decides to do just that. Scene ends with Nadine lying awake in her bed for a little while longer.

18c INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. HALLWAY.
SAME NIGHT.

18c

Hearing a commotion from down the hall, Terry is tying her robe and walks toward Thandiwe's room. When she gets there, she sees Thandiwe is not there. She looks concerned so she walks further down the hall to Nadine's room. The door is slightly ajar and she sees the two of them and their sleeping arrangement. Terry is quite surprised at first, but then is overcome by how sweet the picture is. She can feel a tear move down her cheek. Then she hears Nadine whisper from her bed.

NADINE

Ma, if you are crying, I swear to
God, I'm checking you in to the
psyche ward tomorrow!

Terry laughs quietly and whispers back.

TERRY

Be quiet and go to sleep.

Nadine turns on her other side so her back is facing Terry.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I love you, Nadine.

Nadine waits a second then responds.

NADINE

I love you too, Ma.

Scene ends with Terry heading back to her bedroom, smiling.

19 INT. SAINT MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL. HALLWAY. EARLY NOVEMBER. 19
DAY

Thandiwe stands in front of a bulletin board in the hallway
of the school. There are many flyers posted that have caught
her attention, but one in particular: Saint Mary's Winter
Musical Concert. It happens on Friday, January 30th at 7pm.
Sneha walks up on Thandiwe and sees what she is looking at.

SNEHA

Ahh. The Winter Musical Concert.
It's a pretty big deal. Do you play
an instrument?

THANDIWE

No.

Sneha looks a little confused.

SNEHA

Do you sing?

Thandiwe looks down in attempt to hide her slight smile.

SNEHA (CONT'D)

You do sing!
What can you sing?

THANDIWE

I would just sing with my mother.
We used to sing all the time.

SNEHA
In front of people?

THANDIWE
Just my father. My mother was too embarrassed to sing in front of others, but her voice was so beautiful.

SNEHA
And did he like it?

Thandiwe smiles as she does her best to hold back her tears.

THANDIWE
He loved it.

SNEHA
Well then, I'll introduce you to the school's choir director, Mrs. Posey, so you can sing at the concert.

Sneha starts to depart towards the choir director's office, but Thandiwe stops her.

THANDIWE
Wait! I'm not sure if I can do it.
I have to think about it.

SNEHA
Why? If you think too hard about it, you won't do it. You have to at least try, right?

Thandiwe looks at Sneha and then past her to the end of the hallway to see Nadine and Marie making their way into a classroom. Nadine sees Thandiwe and speaks silently to her.

NADINE
You good?

Thandiwe nods her head and then Nadine smiles and heads into the classroom.

Sneha sees the exchange between Thandiwe and Nadine and speaks.

SNEHA
You have to think to yourself "What would Nadine do?" Would she join the choir or would she wait until the opportunity passed her by?

Thandiwe sighs.

THANDIWE

Fine.

SNEHA

Yeah?! You'll join? That is
amazing! Let's go meet Mrs. Posey!

Scene ends with Sneha excitedly dragging Thandiwe by the arm down the hallway.

20

INT. SAINT MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL. FRONT ENTRANCE PICNIC
TABLES. SAME DAY

20

Nadine is seated at one of the picnic tables. Her back is towards the main entrance. She is wearing a zip up sweatshirt over her school uniform and tights so her legs stay warm in the slightly cooler November temperature. It's after school so most of the kids have scattered. Just a few remain.

Matt comes out of the main entrance in his football uniform, accompanied by 5 of his team members. He sees Nadine and decides to go to her.

MATT

I'll see you guys later.

The boys all say good-bye.

Matt comes to the other side of the picnic table. Nadine looks up and sees that it's him.

MATT (CONT'D)

Are you waiting for me?

Matt flashes one of his smiles at her. Nadine looks unfazed.

NADINE

No. I'm waiting for Thandiwe. She's
at choir practice.

MATT

She can sing?

NADINE

Apparently. Although I haven't
heard it yet.

Nadine is looking down at her book, trying to pretend she's reading. Matt looks at her and then takes a seat across from her. He takes one of her hands into his, and attempts to charm her when he speaks.

MATT

Are you avoiding me, Nay?

She looks down at their hands and is puzzled by his action so she pulls her hand away.

NADINE

No. Why would I be avoiding you?

MATT

I don't know. You tell me. Things have been strange between us for the last week or so and I can't take it anymore. I want my best friend back.

Nadine stares at him for a while and then speaks.

NADINE

Your best friend, huh...

MATT

Yes. My best friend.

NADINE

And why would you say I'm your best friend?

MATT

What?

NADINE

What makes me your best friend?

Matt looks a little nervous now but tries to answer her question with his regular charm.

MATT

Oh I don't know, Nay... Because you just are. Because I have opened up to you. More than I have to anyone. Because I know that I can tell you anything, and I know you will always support me.

He pauses to see if his words are resonating.

MATT (CONT'D)

And because you're different from any other girl at this school and I like it. I love that you walk around here like you don't give a shit about what people think or say. And that makes you cool.

(MORE)

MATT (CONT'D)

You don't give in to the pressure
of what kind of car you have, or
what kinds of clothes you wear.
You're you, just the way you are,
and that is awesome.

Nadine looks at him, and she smiles.

NADINE

Awesome, huh?

MATT

Yeah!

NADINE

Then date me.

Matt did not expect that response.

MATT

What?

NADINE

Date me.

Matt is flustered.

MATT

I can't date you. That would mess
everything up.

NADINE

No, you can't date me because I
don't fit the mold. I'm not one of
your skinny girls who look like
they're going to pass out at any
moment because they need
carbohydrates.

MATT

Nay? Come on...

NADINE

No, you come on. I am sick of being
the girl that will give you what
you need emotionally, while you go
and screw the entire cheerleading
squad! Fuck that.

They both stare at one another. Matt is hurt and confused.
Nadine is pissed.

Thandiwe comes up to the side of the table and looks concerned. Nadine sees her and starts to get up from the table. Matt stops her by grabbing her hand. She looks at him.

MATT

Please.

Nadine snatches her hand back from him.

NADINE

No. We're done.

Nadine leaves the picnic table and starts to walk away with Thandiwe. They get far enough away from Matt, and Thandiwe speaks.

THANDIWE

Are you okay?

NADINE

I will be.

Nadine looks at Thandiwe and smiles slightly.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Let's go to Carvel for some iced cream.

Scene ends with Thandiwe linking her arm with Nadine's as they walk off to Nadine's car.

21 INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. FAMILY ROOM/BAR AREA. MID-NOVEMBER. EARLY EVENING 21

Nadine and Thandiwe are both seated at the bar.

NADINE

So are you ready for the football game tonight?

THANDIWE

I guess. I've never seen an American football game yet.

NADINE

Oh right. Your football is our soccer.

THANDIWE

Yes.

NADINE

We'll have fun. I promise.

Terry is heard off in the distance, greeting someone at the front door. Nadine leans in to Thandiwe.

NADINE (CONT'D)
This should be fun.

Thandiwe looks at her confused.

Terry brings in a middle-aged "Guido" man, named JERRY, who stands slightly behind her. He has dark slicked back hair, a partially opened shirt that shows off his chest hair and a thick gold chain. He's wearing tailored pants and shoes and resembles Sylvester Stallone and knows it.

TERRY
What should be fun?

Nadine scrambles to think of something so Terry doesn't know she was talking about the current situation.

NADINE
Jake and I are taking Thandiwe to her first football game at Saint Mary's.

TERRY
Jake, huh?

Terry grins at Nadine.

NADINE
Ma... Stop. We're just friends. And he didn't have anything to do tonight since his school is playing their game away. He's going to drive us.

THANDIWE
Can Sneha come?

NADINE
Sneha?!

Terry looks confused.

TERRY
Sure. I'm sure Jake and Nadine wouldn't mind if Sneha comes with you.

NADINE
We wouldn't?

TERRY
No. You wouldn't.

NADINE
Ma... Sneha is... different.

TERRY
How? How is she different? And
besides, don't you like
'different?'

Nadine puckers her lips and squints her eyes at Terry, who does the same to her. Nadine then speaks to Thandiwe.

NADINE
Fine. But go call her now and tell
her we'll pick her up in 30 minutes
sharp, and if she's not outside
waiting for us, then we're leaving.
Find out where she lives too.

Thandiwe nods her head and excitedly gets off of her bar stool and runs into the other room to make the call.

Nadine returns her stare to Terry and Jerry, who is arrogant beyond belief and has not stopped looking at Terry like she's a piece of meat. Nadine notices it and gets annoyed.

TERRY
Oh, I forgot to introduce you two.
Jerry, this is my daughter, Nadine.

Nadine, this is Jerry. Oh and that
is Thandiwe in the kitchen. She's
our exchange student from South
Africa.

Terry smiles widely at what she just said, but watches Nadine because she is quiet, and that can't be good.

JERRY
Hey. How you doin?

Jerry puts his hand out to shake Nadine's hand. She looks at his hand and it takes her a second to shake his hand. Once they are done, she gives him a wide smile, which again makes Terry nervous.

TERRY
You know what. I forgot to get ice
for our drinks. I'll go grab some.

Terry heads off into the kitchen, with Jerry watching her ass the whole time. Nadine notices him and makes a slight cough to bring his attention back to her.

JERRY

Anyway, so your mom tells me your a senior. How is that these days? To be a senior?

NADINE

Jerry, let's cut the small talk, shall we. I don't like you. And you won't be back. Got it?

Jerry is totally flabbergasted. Nadine smiles a huge smile at him and then gets up from her bar stool and heads towards the exit. Terry is returning from kitchen with two glasses filled with ice. Thandiwe is behind Terry.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Bye, Ma.

Nadine kisses her mom on the cheek, and then speaks to Thandiwe.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Ready?

Thandiwe nods her head.

THANDIWE

Good-bye, Aunt Terry.

Terry looks to both of the girls as they approach the front door.

TERRY

Bye, girls. Have fun!

Terry turns back to Jerry and speaks.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Aren't they great?!

Scene ends with Jerry still in the state of shock at what was just said to him.

Sneha is standing at the front door of her home with her parents, MR. & MRS. VENKATARAMANA. She lives in an affluent part of the town. Her house is a large, two story house with a half circle driveway.

Her parents are dressed in traditional Indian apparel, and as much as Sneha tries to separate herself from them, they protectively pull her back. Sneha is wearing jeans that look to be a size too big and a St. Mary's sweatshirt. Her hair is down and straight and looks relatively clean, which is unusual.

Jake, Nadine and Thandiwe drive into the driveway and pull around so they are parallel with the front door.

Jake drives a used Toyota 4Runner Utility truck with a front and back seat. Jake and Nadine are in the front. Thandiwe is in the back. Nadine speaks to Thandiwe under her breath.

NADINE

Quick, what's Sneha's last name?

THANDIWE

Venkataramana.

NADINE

Venkat-a-what?

THANDIWE

Venkataramana.

Nadine looks to Thandiwe, shakes her head, and rolls down her window to speak.

NADINE

Hello. We're here to pick up your daughter and take her to the football game. Yes?

Sneha looks up at her parents and nods her head. Her father says something quietly to Sneha and she agrees.

Nadine and Jake exchange a smirk.

Mr. Venkataramana yells over to the car.

MR. VENKATARAMANA

You'll bring her home after the game?

NADINE

Yes. We will. As soon as it's done.

Nadine exchanges a smile with both of Sneha's parents and then they release their grip from her person. Sneha then walks hurriedly to the truck. Thandiwe opens the door and then scoots over to the other side so Sneha can sit. Sneha puts on her seat belt and places her hands in her lap. She takes a deep breath and then starts her rambling.

SNEHA

Thank you so much for inviting me.

Nadine starts to interject but is cut off as Sneha is not finished with her nervous chatter.

SNEHA (CONT'D)

I've always wanted to go to a football game but never had anyone to go with so I never went. I wonder what it's like. You know? With all of the people in the stands. And the football players. And the cheerleaders. Oh yeah, the cheerleaders. I wonder if they'll do any new cheers this game.

Nadine and Jake look back at Sneha, as does Thandiwe. And just when they all thought she was finished, they learn she is not and she starts rambling on and on so Nadine and Jake turn back to look out the front of the truck. Jake is smiling at Nadine, who is now looking out her side window trying not to laugh.

Scene ends with a view on Jake's truck, driving down a residential street with Sneha O.S. rambling on.

23a EXT. SAINT MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL. FOOTBALL FIELD. NIGHT 23a

All 4 of them are seated up in the stands. Nadine and Jake sit one row above Thandiwe and Sneha, with Thandiwe sitting directly in front of Nadine and Sneha is in front of Jake. The stands are fairly crowded since this is a home game.

NADINE

Marie! Over here!

Marie is seen on the ground level looking in the stands for Nadine. Once Nadine yells and flashes her arms, Marie starts to make her way up to where they sit. She passes several people until she can get to the open spot next to Nadine.

MARIE

Hey Thandiwe!

Thandiwe looks back at her and smiles.

THANDIWE

Hello Marie!

MARIE

And Sneha?... Hello?

SNEHA
Hi! It's nice to see you again!

MARIE
You too.

Marie looks to Nadine confused. Nadine speaks to her under her breath.

NADINE
Don't ask...

MARIE
Oh but I will... later...

They both smile and bring their attention back to the game.

NADINE
So your boyfriend didn't want to
slum it with a bunch of high school
kids?

MARIE
No. He had to work. I'm meeting him
at the EMT center after the game.

NADINE
Ahh.

Nadine looks at Thandiwe, who looks extremely confused.

NADINE (CONT'D)
Thandiwe, you have a question?

THANDIWE
Which team is ours? And what are
they trying to do except throw the
ball around?

Nadine looks at Jake, who smiles at her.

Scene ends with Jake leaning over to explain how American football works to Thandiwe and Sneha.

23b EXT. SAINT MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL. FOOTBALL FIELD. NIGHT 23b

Matt is in a huddle with his team members on the football field. He yells out the next play, everyone yells in agreement and then runs off to get in their positions. Matt is about to do the same but sees Nadine in the stands, with Jake, and is shocked at first but then gets visibly upset. His COACH can tell.

COACH (O.S.)
Come on, Matt! Get in there!

Matt hears the coach and makes his way over to his position. They start the play and when someone throws the ball to Matt he totally misses it and the other team gets the ball.

Scene ends with everyone in the stands upset.

23c EXT. SAINT MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL. FOOTBALL FIELD. NIGHT 23c

Everyone in the stands is upset. Nadine and Marie look at one another. JORDAN, who is friends with Matt, sits in the row behind Nadine and leans in to talk to her and Marie.

JORDAN
Nay, do you know why Matt has been acting so strangely lately?

NADINE
What do you mean?

JORDAN
Haven't you noticed? Man, he has been in such a foul mood for days now. He's been drinking and smoking pot 10 times more than usual. And if you ask him what's wrong, he just yells at you. For no reason at all. It's pretty bad.

Nadine and Marie look at each other.

NADINE
Hmm. I don't know what's wrong with him. Hopefully he'll sort himself out.

JORDAN
Yeah. Hopefully, because he's going to hit a wall soon if he doesn't.

Jordan leans back to his seat, as Nadine and Marie exchange another look. Nadine looks off in the distance at Matt, while Jake stares at her.

Scene ends with Nadine realizing Jake is staring at her, so she smiles awkwardly and then looks ahead at the game.

24 INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. KITCHEN. NEXT DAY. 24
MORNING.

Thandiwe is sitting at the kitchen island, while Terry makes her pancakes. Both are still dressed in their pajamas.

TERRY
Here you go, Sweetheart.

Terry puts 3 pancakes on Thandiwe's plate, and Thandiwe gets ready to eat them immediately.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Hold on! Let me get you some butter
and syrup!

Thandiwe stops and waits while Terry gathers the butter and syrup from the refrigerator. Thandiwe then lathers her pancakes with lots of butter and a ton of syrup and then digs in. Terry makes a disgusted look.

Nadine enters the room, also in her pajamas with her hair a mess, and sits on the stool next to Thandiwe.

TERRY (CONT'D)
You. I've got a bone to pick with
you, Missy.

Terry is standing on the other side of the island wielding the spatula like a spear aiming for Nadine's head.

NADINE
Ohhh... pancakes. Where are mine?

TERRY
No. You don't get any pancakes
until you tell me what happened
last night.

Thandiwe looks concerned between the two of them but continues to eat her pancakes anyway.

NADINE
Happened with what?

TERRY
Don't bullshit me, Nadine. You've
been bullshitting me since
kindergarten and I'm not going to
take it anymore.

NADINE
Ma... Such language in front of our
guest...

THANDIWE
What is bull...

Nadine leans over to Thandiwe.

NADINE
I'll tell you later.

They both smile at each other.

TERRY
Nadine. I am serious. What did you
say to Jerry last night?

NADINE
Jerry? Jerry who?

Terry sighs out her frustration.

TERRY
Did you or did you not say to Jerry
that you 'don't like him' and that
he 'won't be back?'

Thandiwe's eyes get big with shock.

NADINE
Oh that. Yes, I may have said that.

TERRY
Why? Why would you think it was
okay to say that to him?

NADINE
Because he was a slimy, greasy
Guido guy, who could barely take
his eyes off of your backside to
ask me a question. So, yeah, I did
not like him.

Terry looks at Nadine a little shocked.

NADINE (CONT'D)
Yeah. And when you guys were out
and you were getting to know him
better, was there any part of you
that liked him? Was there a part of
you that said 'we should do this
again sometime?'

Terry looks down because Nadine is right.

NADINE (CONT'D)
What's that? You didn't like him
either? Whoa. Shocker.

TERRY
That's enough, Nadine.

NADINE
Can I have pancakes now...
please...

Nadine flashes Terry a huge smile and tilts her head to the side.

Terry gets 3 more pancakes from her pan and puts them on Nadine's plate.

TERRY
You're still on my shit list.

Thandiwe looks up confused.

NADINE
Now that's two curse words that I'm
going to have to explain to
Thandiwe.

Scene ends with Terry playfully smacking Nadine with her spatula, Nadine yelping and Thandiwe smiling at the both of them.

25 INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. NADINE'S ROOM. TWO 25
WEEKS BEFORE THANKSGIVING. NIGHT.

Thandiwe and Nadine have just gotten in their beds for the night. Nadine's phone begins to ring but Nadine doesn't answer it.

NADINE
It will stop soon.

THANDIWE
Is that Matt?

NADINE
Who knows. But I know for sure it's
not Marie or Jake and they're all I
care about. Well, outside of this
house anyway.

Thandiwe smiles and the phone finally stops ringing.

THANDIWE

Do you think you'll be able to come
to the Winter Music Concert?

NADINE

I wouldn't miss it! My mom will
come too. Maybe even Aunt Rita and
Uncle Frank.

Again Thandiwe smiles.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Will you sing something for me?

THANDIWE

Now?

NADINE

Why not? You can practice on me.
And you can pretend I'm not here
since it's pretty dark.

Thandiwe looks very nervous. Nadine rolls over to look at
Thandiwe.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Come on. Pretty please.

THANDIWE

Okay. But I'm going to sing a song
that I used to sing with my mother.
So you won't understand the words.

NADINE

Even better!

Thandiwe stands up in the relatively dark room and begins to
sing [THULA SANA].

Nadine is still lying down, but is motivated to sit up. She
is stunned by how beautiful Thandiwe's voice is and tears
start to well up. When Thandiwe is finished, she quickly
returns to her bed and pulls the blankets over her head.
Nadine sees and reacts.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Oh no, no, no. You don't get to
sing like that and then hide under
your blankets afterward!

The bedroom door then swings open and Terry is standing
there.

TERRY

Oh my God. Was that you, Thandiwe?

Thandiwe peeks her head out from the blankets and shakes her head.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Sweetheart, that was so beautiful!

Terry goes down to Thandiwe, who sits up so she and Terry can hug. Terry then speaks to Nadine.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Wasn't that beautiful?

NADINE

Yes. It was insanely good. You should sing that at the concert. Bring a little taste of your home to the States.

TERRY

Yes! You should!

THANDIWE

I don't think Mrs. Posey will allow it. It's not like anything you have here.

NADINE

And that's why you should do it.

TERRY

What was your choir director's name again? Mrs. Posey? And what was the name of the song?

THANDIWE

Yes. Thula Sana. But I really don't think...

NADINE

Too late. The seed has been planted.

Nadine and Terry both look at each other. Terry is smiling an 'all-knowing smile' that Nadine totally understands.

TERRY

Well I hope you don't mind, but I'm going to ask you to sing that song to me all the time now!

Terry gets up and heads towards the door. Thandiwe looks to Nadine.

NADINE
She's not joking. All. The. Time.

TERRY
Good night my sweet girls.
Well Thandiwe is anyway.

Nadine and Thandiwe both smile as they lay down.

THANDIWE
Good night, Aunt Terry.

NADINE
Good night, Ma.

TERRY
Just beautiful I tell ya.
Beautiful!

Terry exits and shuts the door three quarters of the way.

NADINE
That truly was amazing.

THANDIWE
Thank you.

NADINE
You used to sing that with your
mom?

THANDIWE
Yes.

NADINE
You miss them?

THANDIWE
(hesitantly)
Yes. Very much. I miss both my
mother and my father.

NADINE
Well if you ever want to talk about
them, you know you can to me,
right?

THANDIWE
Yes, I do. Thank you.

NADINE

Or to my mother. But I warn you, there will be a lot of tears. On her part. Like buckets full of them.

Thandiwe smiles.

THANDIWE

I know. We spoke of them briefly the other day and we were both in tears.

What is your father like?

NADINE

My father? He was great until my parents got divorced. Now it's like he doesn't have time for me. So he pays his child support and feels like... well I don't know what he feels like because he's never around.

THANDIWE

Do you miss him?

NADINE

For the most part I'm getting used to the fact that he's not around anymore. You can't miss what you no longer have, right?

They both look contemplative.

THANDIWE

I will always miss my parents.

Nadine rolls over in bed so she can look down at Thandiwe. Thandiwe looks up to Nadine, who is now nodding her head so she decides to change the subject.

NADINE

And how is Sipho? I saw he wrote you back although I couldn't understand his writing because it's in a different language.

THANDIWE

When? When did you see my letter?

NADINE

I may have peeked over your shoulder as you were reading it.

Thandiwe smiles at her.

THANDIWE
Thief like!

NADINE
I think you mean 'sneaky' but
anyway, how is he?

THANDIWE
Sipho is good. He misses me, as I
do him.

NADINE
What's he like?

THANDIWE
Handsome. Tall. Sweet. Kind. Funny.
He's very funny. Likes to entertain
me with his funny stories.

Nadine smiles now and then rolls onto her back.

NADINE
My mom always says you've got to
find yourself a man who can see you
at your worst and will love you
anyway.

Thandiwe thinks about what Nadine has just said and looks
distressed.

THANDIWE
Yes. Sipho has seen me at my worst.

Nadine senses Thandiwe's mood and changes the subject.

NADINE
Well I hope I get to meet Sipho
some day.

THANDIWE
Me too. Sipho reminds me of your
Jake.

NADINE
What? What do you mean 'my Jake?'
Has my mother been talking to you?
Or Marie? Or Clare?

THANDIWE
They don't need to tell me. I see
it. You should do something about
it.

NADINE

What? No.

THANDIWE

Why not?

NADINE

Why do I have to be the one to do it? He's the man.

THANDIWE

Yes, but when has that ever stopped you? So what if he's the man. Maybe he just needs a little push.

NADINE

Okay, we're done with this conversation. I don't know how we ended up here, but we did and now we're done.

Thandiwe starts to chuckle.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Are you laughing? This isn't funny.

Nadine can't help the smile that is plastered on her face. Neither can Thandiwe.

THANDIWE

Yes. It's funny.

NADINE

Go to bed.

Thandiwe contains her laughter.

THANDIWE

Good night, Nay.

Nadine smiles.

NADINE

Good night, Thandiwe.

Scene ends with both girls going to sleep.

26

INT. SAINT MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL. MRS. POSEY'S CLASSROOM.
ONE WEEK BEFORE THANKSGIVING. DAY

26

Thandiwe stands in a semi-circle with the rest of her choir mates as they sing "Because You Loved Me" by Celine Dion in a cappella harmony.

MRS. POSEY stands at the front of the room and directs them. She is her mid 40's, short, a little overweight, and has dark curly shoulder length hair, dark eyes that are covered by thick rimmed black glasses, deep red lipstick and is dressed in her standard all black attire; black dress, black tights, black Mary Jane shoes.

Everyone knows their singing part, with one of the senior girls taking the lead. Thandiwe is a little self-conscious with singing in front of people, and is hesitant to sing at her fullest but she still makes do.

Once they finish their song, Mrs. Posey speaks.

MRS. POSEY
Very good! You complement each other quite well. Darren - Make sure you go lower on the second verse, while Shannon, I need you a little higher. Yes?

Both Darren and Shannon agree. Mrs. Posey smiles.

MRS. POSEY (CONT'D)
Otherwise, I think we're off to a great start, and this will be one of our show stoppers for the concert. Well done!

She smiles, as does the rest of the class.

MRS. POSEY (CONT'D)
Okay, let's call it a day and I'll see you at the next practice.

Everyone says good-bye and starts to leave the classroom, including Thandiwe. Mrs. Posey call for her.

MRS. POSEY (CONT'D)
Thandiwe, can I see you for a moment?

Thandiwe looks at her through the students leaving the room, and begins to walk over to her.

THANDIWE
Yes, Mrs. Posey?

MRS. POSEY
Thandiwe, I want you to listen to something and tell me if it sounds familiar.

Thandiwe nods her head. Mrs. Posey brings out a tape recorder and presses play. Thula Sana begins to play on the recorder.

This acapella version has multiple singers singing in all different ranges, with one person taking the lead. Thandiwe is shocked and it is apparent.

THANDIWE
That's Thula Sana!

MRS. POSEY
(smiling)
Yes, it is. It's a beautiful song.

Thandiwe is still in disbelief, so she just nods her head.

MRS. POSEY (CONT'D)
My brother owns a record store downtown and knows everything about music, so when I asked him about this song it took him just a few days to come up with this. I've got the sheet music and words for it too. Although I think we'll sing it acapella for the concert.

Again, Thandiwe is shocked.

THANDIWE
You're going to make us sing it at the concert?

MRS. POSEY
Yes. Don't you think we should? It's so beautiful.

Thandiwe is overwhelmed. Mrs. Posey smiles.

MRS. POSEY (CONT'D)
And I thought you could sing the lead.

THANDIWE
Me?

MRS. POSEY
Yes, you. I hear you sing it beautifully.

They both look at each other. Thandiwe didn't realize until now that this was Terry's doing. She shyly smiles at the realization. Mrs. Posey smiles too.

MRS. POSEY (CONT'D)
 Now, I'll need your help with this.
 We'll have to get the class up to
 speed, which will be a lot more
 intense than one of our regular
 songs, since it's in a different
 language and of a different
 culture, but I think they can do
 it! Are you up for it?

Thandiwe looks hesitant.

MRS. POSEY (CONT'D)
 Thandiwe?

THANDIWE
 Yes, I can do it.

MRS. POSEY
 Excellent. That's what I was hoping
 you would say. We'll get started on
 it during our next practice.
 Now what should we do about your
 host-mother. Should we tell her it
 will be in the concert or keep it a
 surprise?

Thandiwe likes that Mrs. Posey called Terry her 'host-mother.'

THANDIWE
 Keep it a surprise.

MRS. POSEY
 Okay, then... We will keep it a
 surprise.

THANDIWE
 Thank you, Mrs. Posey.

MRS. POSEY
 My pleasure.

Scene ends with Thandiwe saying farewell and leaving the classroom.

27a

EXT. SAINT MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL. FRONT ENTRANCE PICNIC
 TABLES. SAME DAY

27a

Thandiwe sits atop one of the picnic tables, dressed in her school uniform, a winter coat and thick socks that are pulled up to her knees to capture warmth.

She is waiting for Terry to pick her up and has an elated expression on her face since she just came from Mrs. Posey's class.

The front entrance doors open and Matt and two of his friends walk through. Matt looks worn and not like he regularly does. Matt and Thandiwe exchange a look, and Thandiwe quickly looks away. Matt tells his friends he'll meet them by his car then makes his way over to Thandiwe. Thandiwe continues not to look at him. Matt walks up and speaks regardless.

MATT

Hey Thandiwe. It's Thandiwe, right?

Thandiwe looks at him briefly and then looks away.

THANDIWE

Yes.

Matt continues.

MATT

So Thandiwe, how is Nay? Is she doing okay?

THANDIWE

Yes.

MATT

Yes. Well that's good. I really do miss her. I try calling her on occasion , well let's be honest, regularly. I regularly call Nay but she never answers. Do you know why that is?

Thandiwe looks at him and can see the pain lingering in his eyes.

THANDIWE

No.

MATT

No? No, you do not. Well can you do me a favor, Thandiwe? Will you tell her I was asking for her and that I miss her? Can you do that for me, Thandiwe?

Thandiwe looks at him again recognizing the use of her name several times in the conversation.

THANDIWE

Yes. I can do that.

Terry arrives and pulls her new 4-door Mitsubishi sedan up in front of the school. Thandiwe gets off of the picnic table and walks past Matt.

MATT

Thank you.

Scene ends with Thandiwe getting to Terry's car, while Matt is seen off in the distance, watching her.

27b EXT. SAINT MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL. INSIDE TERRY'S CAR. SAME 27b
DAY

Thandiwe gets into Terry's car, then buckles her seat belt. Terry is staring at Matt the entire time.

TERRY

What did he want?

THANDIWE

He wants me to tell Nadine that he misses her and he has tried to call her but she does not answer.

TERRY

Is that true?

THANDIWE

Yes.

Terry nods her head with approval.

TERRY

Good.
Tell her when we get home.

THANDIWE

Yes.
Uncle Frank was right about him.

Terry smiles at her response.

TERRY

Yes. Uncle Frank is usually right about things. No matter how brutally he delivers the message.

Terry breaks her stare from Matt and looks at Thandiwe to smile.

THANDIWE

Nadine kind of gets that from him.

TERRY

Oh my god, she does!

Both of them chuckle.

TERRY (CONT'D)

And how was school today? Good?

THANDIWE

It was good. Very good, actually.

TERRY

Yes? How so?

THANDIWE

Oh for lots of reasons.

Terry looks at Thandiwe and decides not to press her.

TERRY

Well, I'm glad it went so well for you. Now let's get home for dinner. Yeah?

Thandiwe nods her head.

Scene ends showing Thandiwe's face, looking out the window with a huge grin on her face while Terry drives the car away.

28a INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. FOYER.
THANKSGIVING. DAY

28a

The front door opens and in comes Aunt Rita and Uncle Frank, who are both dressed up for the holiday, and each are carrying a tinfoil covered dish. Thandiwe and Nadine, who are also dressed nice for the occasion, stand in the foyer to greet them.

AUNT RITA

Hello, my special little princesses! Happy Thanksgiving!

NADINE

Happy Thanksgiving, Aunt Rita!

Aunt Rita gives Nadine a kiss, and then gives Thandiwe one as well.

AUNT RITA

Thandiwe, what's your big holiday like Thanksgiving back in South Africa?

THANDIWE

Hmmm. Day of the Vow. But that takes place in December.

AUNT RITA

Day of the Vow. I like the sound of that. You'll have to tell me more about that later. Okay?

THANDIWE

Okay.

AUNT RITA

Come on, Frank. Bring the sweet potatoes into the kitchen to Terry.

Aunt Rita passes Nadine and Thandiwe. They wait to say hello to Uncle Frank, who appears to be as crotchety as ever.

UNCLE FRANK

Rita, I know where to bring the sweet potatoes. Don't tell me where I have to bring them.

Both Nadine and Thandiwe smile at him.

UNCLE FRANK (CONT'D)

What? What are you two looking at?

NADINE

We're waiting to give you a kiss hello, Old Man.

UNCLE FRANK

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Nadine gives Uncle Frank a kiss on the cheek.

UNCLE FRANK (CONT'D)

Here, can you bring these sweet potatoes to your mother before Aunt Rita bugs me about them again?

NADINE

Sure. I can do that.

Nadine takes the plate and makes her exit. Uncle Frank is left alone with Thandiwe.

UNCLE FRANK

And how are you doing? Everything good?

THANDIWE

Yes.

UNCLE FRANK

Are you sure? Because I know how these girls can be so if you ever have any problems, you let Uncle Frank know. Okay?

Thandiwe has been around Uncle Frank enough to know he means what he says although it is in jest since he loves Terry and Nadine a lot.

THANDIWE

Okay!

Uncle Frank makes a disgruntled sounding voice under his breath and then speaks.

UNCLE FRANK

Good. Now give me a kiss so we can get on with this crazy day.

Thandiwe does as she's told and kisses Uncle Frank on the cheek. Uncle Frank makes another disgruntled noise.

Scene ends with the two of them leaving the foyer.

28b INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. KITCHEN. SAME DAY 28b

Nadine walks into the kitchen with the platter and places it on the counter. Thandiwe comes in shortly after. Terry, Aunt Rita, Toni and Marie are also in the kitchen, all preparing a different dish and all dressed in their holiday attire.

TERRY

Is everyone here?

Terry looks around to count the heads.

TERRY (CONT'D)

And Frank and Jack are in the family room watching TV. Who else?

Jake. We're missing Jake. Have you called him yet, Nadine?

NADINE

He knows what time we're eating, Ma. He'll be here.

AUNT RITA

Jake is coming?

Aunt Rita looks to Marie and Thandiwe and smiles at them.

NADINE
Shut up. I saw that.

AUNT RITA
What?

Aunt Rita looks at Marie and Thandiwe and smiles again. They both smile to her as well.

TERRY
Do you know that Jake's parents went to Las Vegas for Thanksgiving?! Las Vegas of all places! Left him at home with his older brother, who is spending Thanksgiving with his girlfriend. He was going to spend the holiday at home, by himself.

TONI
No! Seriously?!

TERRY
Unreal. Anyway.
Would you call him already?!

Nadine gets up to use the phone.

Uncle Frank can be heard yelling from the other room.

UNCLE FRANK (O.S.)
Jake! How the hell are ya?

Nadine stops her hand on the phone and looks up at Terry.

NADINE
Jake's here.

Terry looks up at Nadine and smirks.

Scene ends with the rest of the women smiling and making themselves busy with the preparations.

28c INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. DINING ROOM.
SAME DAY

28c

Everyone is seated for dinner. Terry and Jack are seated at each end of the table. Uncle Frank, Jake, Nadine and Thandiwe are one side. Aunt Rita, Marie and Toni are on the other. Terry starts to pass a plate to Thandiwe when Uncle Frank starts to speak.

UNCLE FRANK

Hold up. Hold up. Terry, aren't you supposed to give thanks or something. I didn't dress up for nothing, you know. I want to hear something...

AUNT RITA

Frank.

Terry looks at Uncle Frank and everyone else at the table.

TERRY

You want me to say something?

UNCLE FRANK

Yeah. It's your house. But make it quick before the food gets cold.

AUNT RITA

Frank!

UNCLE FRANK

What Rita?!

TERRY

Okay. Okay. I'll say something.

Everyone stops what they're doing and looks to Terry, who is now standing with a wine glass in her right hand.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Thanksgiving is about giving thanks for all of our blessings, especially family. And although for one reason or another, we could not be with our entire biological families this year, we are with our logical family. Our chosen family. The ones we laugh with. The ones we cry with. And the ones we'd be lost without.

AUNT RITA

My god, Terry. Your gonna make me cry.

TONI

I know!

UNCLE FRANK

All right. Hurry up so I can eat this turkey leg.

TERRY

So let us give thanks to everyone
at this table. Especially Thandiwe.
Although you've been here for such
a short time, you are a wonderful
addition to our family and we're so
thankful for you. To Thandiwe!

Everyone except Thandiwe raises their drink filled glass in
the air.

EVERYONE

To Thandiwe!

Thandiwe is embarrassed, so Nadine pokes her in the side and
speaks quietly to her.

NADINE

You're stuck with us now.

They both smile at one another.

TERRY

Oh and one last thing...

Terry holds up her two hands that show only eight Lee press-
on nails.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I had ten nails when I started
preparing the food for today, and
now I'm down two. So proceed with
caution.

NADINE

C'mon Ma!

Scene ends with everyone giving an uncertain expression on
their face but passing plates around to get their food and
then zooms in on Thandiwe, who looks very content.

28d

INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. DINING ROOM.
SAME DAY

28d

Dinner is complete and the women are clearing the plates to
bring them in the kitchen. Uncle Frank, Jack and Jake remain
seated. Uncle Frank has two of the Lee press-on nails sitting
on the table in front of him.

TERRY

I'll go put some coffee on and
bring the desserts out.

UNCLE FRANK
Desserts? I can barely breath!

JACK
Yeah, Terry. Don't worry about
dessert.

AUNT RITA
Be quiet. We're going to eat
dessert and if you don't want to
have some then there will be more
for us ladies.

Uncle Frank makes a 'tsk' noise with his mouth.

AUNT RITA (CONT'D)
Shut up, Frank.

Jake smiles at their exchange. Nadine reaches around him to
grab a plate and he put his hand on her arm. Both of them can
feel the electric between them.

JAKE
Hey. I'm going to head out.

NADINE
So soon?

Jake shakes his head and starts to get up from the table.

UNCLE FRANK
Jake, are you leaving? You can't
leave Jack and me with all of these
women!

JAKE
Sorry, Uncle Frank but I've got to
be going.

UNCLE FRANK
Are you sure?

JAKE
Yes. Sorry though.

UNCLE FRANK
All right. All right. Take care.

JAKE
Yeah, you too.
Bye Jack.

JACK
Bye Jake.

Jake looks to all of the women and says good-bye and they return the sentiment.

NADINE

Let me get my coat and I'll walk you out.

JAKE

Okay.

Scene ends with the remaining women resuming their clean up duties, Uncle Frank and Jack chatting and Jake and Nadine leaving the dining room.

28e

EXT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. OUTSIDE FRONT
WALK. SAME DAY. NIGHT

28e

Nadine shuts the front door and goes to meet Jake, who is just a few steps in front of her. It's dark out, but the outdoor lights keep it illuminated enough so that they can see one another. When Nadine reaches Jake, he puts his arm around her shoulders, which is new. Nadine notices, but doesn't say anything. They continue down the path until it ends to meet the driveway. Jake turns to her, leaving just 2 feet between them.

JAKE

I had a great time tonight. Uncle Frank was a hoot as always.

NADINE

As always indeed.

They stop and stare into each others' eyes.

JAKE

Thank you for including me.

NADINE

Of course. You're always included. You know that.

Nadine playfully hit Jake in the stomach and he smiles. There is another long stare between them.

JAKE

Well, I should get going. Bye.

NADINE

Bye.

Jake turns to make his exit but Nadine decides she's not done yet.

NADINE (CONT'D)
Wait. Jake?

JAKE
Yeah?

NADINE
Do you like me?

Jake take the few steps back to Nadine and kisses her. Their first kiss was so sweet, longing and lasted about 7 seconds. When they're through they stand with their foreheads touching.

NADINE (CONT'D)
Whoa.

JAKE
Yeah. And yes, I do like you. More than anyone and I've liked you since the 5th grade.

NADINE
5th grade?

JAKE
Yeah.

Jake decides to take another kiss, but this one is more intense and lasts for much longer.

Scene ends with them kissing.

28f INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. KITCHEN. SAME DAY. 28f NIGHT

The ladies are all in the kitchen cleaning up the Thanksgiving dinner. Marie walks over to the bay window to put something on the table and sees Nadine and Jake kissing. She lets out a big gasp.

MARIE
They're kissing! Thandiwe, come here and see! Nay and Jake are kissing!

Thandiwe runs over to the window, as well as Terry, Aunt Rita and Tony. All 5 of them are staring at the spectacle outside.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Turn off the light so they can't see us.

Toni makes her way over to the light switch, turns it off and then makes it back to her spot at the window. They are now in darkness watching.

AUNT RITA
Look at them go. You get it girl.

The 4 other women all laugh quietly.

Uncle Frank yells from the other room.

UNCLE FRANK (O.S.)
Rita, what's going on in there? Why are the lights off?

AUNT RITA
Nothing, Frank. Be quiet!

Scene ends with all 5 women staring out of the window.

28g EXT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. OUTSIDE FRONT 28g
WALK. SAME DAY. NIGHT

The kiss Nadine and Jake share comes to an end, and the two of them stand face to face with their hands intertwined.

NADINE
Good lord, Jake. You kiss good.

JAKE
As do you.

They both smile while they maintain eye contact.

NADINE
Shall we meet tomorrow and do this again?

JAKE
Most definitely.

Jake leans in to give Nadine a quick kiss.

NADINE
Well, I'm gonna go inside now.

JAKE
Okay. I'll wait until you get in.

Nadine starts to walk away but turns around to give him one more quick kiss.

NADINE

Bye Jake.

JAKE

Bye Nay.

Nadine turns around and starts to walk up the pathway. She notices the kitchen light is off.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Hey Nay?

Nadine turns around to face Jake.

NADINE

Yeah?

JAKE

I'm going to call you my girlfriend now. Okay?

NADINE

Well considering we just shared the best kisses in the world, I'd say yeah, I'm okay with that.

JAKE

Okay, good.

Nadine turns back towards the house and notices the kitchen light is back on and the women are cleaning up from dinner. Nadine continues to walk up the path. Jake speaks loudly to her.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Good night, Girlfriend.

She turns back around to see him standing on the driveway.

NADINE

Good night, Boyfriend.

Scene ends with Nadine opening the front door.

28h INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. KITCHEN. SAME DAY. 28h NIGHT

The women hear the front door open and freeze in their spots. Nadine yells from the hallway.

NADINE (O.S.)

Shut up.

Terry speaks.

TERRY
Huh? What do you mean?

The women try to hide their laughter.

NADINE (O.S.)
I saw you guys watching when you
turned the kitchen lights off.

AUNT RITA
The lights were off?

NADINE (O.S.)
Uh-ha.
I have to go to the bathroom.

MARIE
Wait! Not until Thandiwe and I hear
all the details!
Come on, Thandiwe. Let's go!

Scene ends with Marie grabbing Thandiwe by the arm and the
two of them running out of the kitchen.

29a INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. FAMILY ROOM. 29a
ONE WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS. DAY

Thandiwe sits on the 3 person couch in the family room and is
mesmerized by the amount of Christmas decorations Terry and
Nadine, along with her helping, have put on display. She
looks at the end table next to her and picks up the Santa
figurine and smiles. As she puts it down, she sees the
Christmas frame on the table with a picture of Terry,
Thandiwe and Nadine from Thanksgiving. Next to that is pepper
spray. She smiles again and chuckles to herself. She then
picks up her school text book to starts reading.

The phone rings on the same end table. It's Terry and she is
calling from work.

THANDIWE
Hello?

INTERCUT

29b INT. NEW JERSEY. CENTURY 21 REAL ESTATE OFFICE. 29b
TERRY'S DESK. SAME DAY.

TERRY
Hey Sweetheart. How's it going?

THANDIWE

Good, Aunt Terry! I'm just reading for my extra credit work for school.

TERRY

Thandiwe, you guys just got off of school for Winter break. Why don't you do something fun instead? Get Nadine to do something with you.

THANDIWE

She's not here. She's over at Jake's.

TERRY

She left you alone?

THANDIWE

It's okay. She's just across the street.

TERRY

Hmm. Well I don't like that. I have about 5 minutes here at work and then I'll be home. Okay?

THANDIWE

Really, it's fine.

TERRY

I know, but still. Maybe I'll order pizza when I get home. I'm sure Nadine and Jake will need to eat dinner too. And maybe I'll see if Aunt Rita and Uncle Frank want to come over too. Sound good?

THANDIWE

Yes. That sounds good.

TERRY

Okay. I'll see you in 10 minutes.

THANDIWE

Okay. Bye!

Thandiwe hangs up the phone and resumes reading. She gets half way through her page and the doorbell rings.

Scene ends with Thandiwe looking confused but then getting off of the couch.

29c INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. FRONT DOOR.
SAME DAY.

29c

The film shows the back of Matt's torso and head, and focuses on the front door. Thandiwe opens the door, and the look of uncomfortable dislike immediately flashes across her face. She waits for a moment before speaking.

THANDIWE

Hello.

Matt is seen now. He is sloppy drunk and struggles to keep his balance.

MATT

Hey Thandiwe. Is Nay here?

Thandiwe looks at Matt and then behind him to Jake's house. Matt notices and makes a disgusted face.

THANDIWE

She's not at home. She's with her mom.

Matt knows she's lying.

MATT

Her mom, huh.

THANDIWE

Yes.

MATT

Well maybe I'll just come in and wait for her to get home.

THANDIWE

No. She's not going to be home for a while.

Matt looks at her in a more aggressive way.

MATT

I'll wait.

THANDIWE

No.

Thandiwe attempts to close the door on him, but he blocks the door with his foot.

Scene ends with Thandiwe running towards the family room and Matt barging into the house to run after her.

29d EXT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. INSIDE TERRY'S CAR. SAME DAY 29d

Terry slowly pulls into her driveway and notices Matt's car on the street. Terry continues up the driveway.

TERRY
What does he want?

Scene ends with Terry putting her car in park.

29e INT. NEW JERSEY. JAKE'S HOME. JAKE'S BEDROOM. SAME DAY 29e

Jake and Nadine are seated on Jake's bed. Nadine sits in Indian style, with her sneakers still on. Jake is seated next to her. They are both holding video game consoles, as they are playing Doom on his TV, which is on a table that is parallel to his bed.

JAKE
How come you're so much better at this game than Wipeout?

NADINE
Because Wipeout is car racing, and I don't like that as much. With this game I get to shoot people, and that makes me happy.

Jake looks at her and smiles.

JAKE
So you like shooting people?

NADINE
In games, yes.

JAKE
Would you ever shoot me?

Nadine stops and looks at Jake.

NADINE
You?

Jake looks at her in return.

JAKE
Yeah, me.

NADINE
No. I'd rather kiss you. And do other kinds of stuff.

Jake smiles at her.

JAKE

Oh really? What kinds of other stuff?

Jake takes Nadine's console and tosses it on the ground with his, and then pushes her onto her back so he can get on top of her. They start kissing and giggling, and then hear a loud female scream outside. They both immediately sit up.

NADINE

What was that?!

They both run to his bedroom window and look out to the front of his house. They see Matt's car, Thandiwe screaming, running out the front door to Terry who is getting out of her car to look at Thandiwe.

NADINE (CONT'D)

No. No... No!

Scene ends with Nadine running from Jake's room, with Jake following.

29f

EXT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. DRIVEWAY.
SAME DAY

29f

Nadine and Jake are seen running out of his front door. The front door of Terry's car is open. Terry kneels down to Thandiwe, who is now seated sideways in the driver's seat. Thandiwe has Terry's coat draped around her. Her shirt is ripped down the front. Her perfect bun is now in disarray and she is quietly crying. She clutches pepper spray in her hand.

Terry is quietly heard talking to someone on her cell phone as she gently strokes Thandiwe. Nadine is halfway up the driveway, when she is heard yelling.

NADINE

What happened?!

Ma! What happened?!

Nadine finally reaches the scene, along with Jake. Terry stands up to meet her, finishes her phone conversation and then hangs up the phone.

NADINE (CONT'D)

What happened?!

TERRY

Matt.
He's inside. Thandiwe kneed him in
the groin and sprayed him really
good with pepper spray.

Nadine looks at Thandiwe, sees the state of her, including
her ripped shirt and becomes enraged with anger. She leaves
Terry and starts to run for the house.

TERRY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Nadine! Don't! I just called Jack.
He and another cop are on their
way!

Nadine doesn't hear her. She is on a mission.

TERRY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Nadine!

Jake follows behind Nadine.

JAKE

Nay? What are you going to do?

Nadine gets to the front door and opens it.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Nay?!

Scene ends as Nadine continues through the front door.

29g INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. FOYER/FAMILY ROOM. 29g
SAME DAY

Nadine is seen entering the foyer, with Jake behind her.

NADINE

Leave me alone, Jake!

Nadine gets to the end of the foyer, before the family room
and grabs a baseball bat. Jake is heard directly behind her.

JAKE

Nay. No.

Nadine proceeds into the family room. She sees Matt curled up
in a fetal position on the couch, quietly moaning, his eyes
swollen shut from the pepper spray.

Nadine begins to swing the bat at Matt, but is stopped when
Jake takes the bat from her.

JAKE (CONT'D)
No. He's not worth it.

Jake is now standing between her and Matt. She pushes Jake, but he doesn't budge. Nadine is still enraged.

NADINE
Let me go!

Nadine tries to move past Jake but he looks at her and gives her a soft pleading look.

JAKE
I said no, Nay. Leave it be.

Nadine looks at him puzzled and confused for a second, and then starts to cry, pulling herself in close to Jake, who in turn hugs her tight, with the baseball bat in one hand. Nadine cries for a few seconds, and then starts to wipe her face.

NADINE
I'm okay now.

Jake looks at her suspiciously. She pleads with him.

NADINE (CONT'D)
I am!

Jake moves to Nadine's side so she can address Matt.

NADINE (CONT'D)
Why? Why, Matt would you do something like this?

Matt doesn't respond fast enough for Nadine.

NADINE (CONT'D)
MATT?!

Matt attempts to open his eyes a little so he can see Nadine.

MATT
I wanted to hurt you like you hurt me.

Nadine is shocked by his answer and starts to feel her rage coming to the surface again. She begins to move forward, but Jake stops her by putting his hand on her arm. She immediately calms down.

NADINE

And you thought this was the way to
do that? By hurting Thandiwe?!

Nadine looks at Matt to see if any of this is registering.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Do you have any idea what she has
gone through? Before coming here?
This could have destroyed her!

Nadine starts to cry again, and Matt is still lying there.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Look at me, Matt.

Matt does not respond.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Matt?! Look at me!

Matt turns and starts to sit up. He slowly opens his eyes as
much as he can.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Mission accomplished.
And now, I hate you.

Nadine raises an eyebrow.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Yeah?

Matt looks at her and slowly nods his head.

Jack comes into the room in his police uniform with HIS
PARTNER. He stands at the entrance, behind Nadine and Jake.

JACK

We can take it from here, Nay.

Nadine looks to Jack and nods her head.

Scene ends with Nadine and Jake exiting the room, while Jack
and his partner move in towards Matt.

29h EXT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. DRIVEWAY. SAME DAY 29h

Nadine is seen exiting the front door, with Jake following
behind her. Nadine walks to her mother's car. Terry is
kneeling down to Thandiwe, but stands for Nadine.

TERRY

Are you okay, Honey?

Nadine nods her head to her mother. She sees Thandiwe and kneels down to her. Thandiwe looks at Nadine.

NADINE

Thandiwe, I am so sorry.

Nadine looks at Thandiwe and they are both on the verge of crying.

NADINE (CONT'D)

So, so sorry.

Nadine begins to cry and puts her head in Thandiwe's lap. Thandiwe looks at her and puts her hand on Nadine's hair.

THANDIWE.

I know, Nay.

Nadine looks up at Thandiwe. Thandiwe looks at Nadine.

Scene ends with both of them giving each other a slight smile through their tears.

30

INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. FAMILY ROOM.
SAME DAY

30

It's later that same day. Terry, Nadine, Thandiwe, Aunt Rita, Uncle Frank and Jake are all in the family room. Terry is sitting on the 3 person couch and Thandiwe is lying on the couch, with her head in Terry's lap. Nadine is sitting three-quarter's down on the floor in front of the couch, with her knees pulled up towards her. Jake is sitting on the floor, next to Nadine with his legs stretched out. He has his arm wrapped around one of Nadine's legs. Aunt Rita and Uncle Frank are seated on the love seat. Everyone is unsuccessful at pretending to watch an episode of Friends and both, Thandiwe and Nadine, look like they were recently crying.

Two empty pizza boxes loiter the coffee table, as do empty paper plates and plastic cups.

Aunt Rita gets up and starts to gather everything on the coffee table to bring it into the kitchen.

AUNT RITA

How does tea sound to everyone?

Terry and Nadine nod their heads.

TERRY

Tea sounds great. Thanks, Rita.

Aunt Rita nods her head and continues into the kitchen.
Everyone continues to stare at the TV.

The phone on the end table begins to ring, and Terry picks it up.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Hello?

A muffled sounding Jack is on the other end of the phone and he starts to convey what had happened at the police station.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Uh-huh.

Jack continues for a while longer.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Right.

Jack briefly continues.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Okay, well thanks for letting me know, Jack. And I totally appreciate everything you did today. Thanks again.

Jack responds to Terry.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Okay. Bye.

Terry hangs up the phone. Aunt Rita stands at the entrance of the room and everyone stares at Terry.

TERRY (CONT'D)

That was Jack. Matt's parents have decided he's not going to go back to school. He's going to go to a rehab facility in Connecticut, and then after that he'll go into the military, like his dad did.

Nadine takes a sigh of relief and closes her eyes. She feels a hand on her shoulder. It's Thandiwe. They both stare at each other for a moment.

TERRY (CONT'D)

You don't have to worry about him anymore, girls.

Uncle Frank is looking at the TV again, but hasn't missed a thing.

UNCLE FRANK

Good.
Piece of shit.

Aunt Rita is still standing at the room's entrance.

AUNT RITA

Yeah he is.

Aunt Rita turns to leave the room and go back towards the kitchen.

Scene ends with Nadine and Thandiwe smiling at each other once again.

31a INT. NEW JERSEY. TERRY/NADINE'S HOME. FAMILY ROOM. 31a
CHRISTMAS DAY. MORNING

Uncle Frank is seated on the loveseat. His arm is leaning on the arm of the couch, with his chin perched in his hand. He is extremely hung over from the night before.

Terry and Aunt Rita are cleaning up the glasses and plates from last night's party, while Nadine and Thandiwe are cleaning up the wrapping paper and gifts from that morning.

The phone rings and Terry picks up the cordless phone that is lying on the coffee table.

TERRY

Hello?

INTERCUT

31b INT. SAINT FULGENTIUS CONVENT/SCHOOL. SISTER IGNATIUS' 31b
OFFICE. DAY.

The film splits into two screens, to show Clare is on the other end in the sister's office, which is sparsely decorated for the holiday.

CLARE

Merry Christmas, Aunt Terry!

TERRY

Clare! Merry Christmas!

Aunt Rita and Nadine yell in unison.

AUNT RITA/NADINE
Merry Christmas, Clare!

Their yelling proves to be too much for Uncle Frank.

UNCLE FRANK
Uhhh. Would you two stop yelling?!

Nadine and Thandiwe smile. Aunt Rita starts to yell at Uncle Frank.

AUNT RITA
Why Frank? Why can't we yell? Is it
because you had too much to drink
last night?

Uncle Frank makes one of his 'tsk' noises and puts his head back in his hand.

UNCLE FRANK
Nay, can you go get me some
aspirin? And a pot of black coffee?

NADINE
Sure, Old Man. I can do that for
you.

Nadine and Aunt Rita both make their way into the kitchen, while Thandiwe is still cleaning up the wrapping paper from the floor.

Clare brings Terry back to their conversation.

CLARE
Did Uncle Frank dress up as Santa
last night for the kids?

TERRY
He sure did. And when he was
through, he decided to drink a
whole bottle of whiskey with two of
my neighbors. He was so drunk that
he and Rita had to stay here last
night.

CLARE
Too funny.
Did you guys open your gifts yet?

TERRY
Just did!

CLARE

Excellent.
How's Thandiwe doing after what
happened?

Terry exits the family room and enters the kitchen so
Thandiwe can't hear her anymore.

TERRY

She seems to be okay. I'm keeping a
close eye on her though. As is
everyone.

CLARE

Good. And how is Nay?

TERRY

Nadine is fine. She has decided to
major in political science next
year at Rutgers. With a focus on
women's rights. You know her...
she's going to change the world
whether we like it or not.

Clare smiles on the phone. Nadine looks at Terry and gives
her a playful smirk.

CLARE

And there's no doubt in my mind
that she will.

Terry decides to change the subject.

TERRY

Hey, Clare, what options do we have
to keep Thandiwe here with us after
her program ends?

Clare is pleasantly surprised. Aunt Rita and Nadine stop what
they're doing so they can listen.

CLARE

You want to keep her, Aunt Terry?

TERRY

Just until she gets on her feet.
And if that takes until she's 30
then so be it.
Is there any way to take over her
guardianship? Adoption doesn't feel
right. I don't know why but it
would feel disrespectful to her
parents, who sound wonderful from
what we've been told by Thandiwe.

(MORE)

TERRY (CONT'D)
But she needs a guardian. And she
needs a home.

Clare begins to quietly cry.

CLARE
Oh Aunt Terry, I was hoping you
would want that. Let me look into
it on this end and then I'll get
back to you.

TERRY
Okay. That sounds great.
Want to talk to Thandiwe now?

CLARE
Yes, please.

TERRY
Okay. Love you, Honey!

CLARE
Love you too!

Terry puts her hand over the receiver, and speaks quietly to
Nadine and Aunt Rita.

TERRY
She's going to let us know.

Nadine and Aunt Rita both smile at Terry.

Scene ends with Terry yelling to Thandiwe to come to the
phone and talk with Clare.

32 INT. SAINT MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL. AUDITORIUM. JANUARY 30TH. 32
NIGHT

Jake, Nadine, Terry, Aunt Rita and Uncle Frank fill a row of
seats in the packed high school auditorium. Marie and Toni
sit in the row directly behind them. Nadine is leaning back
to hear something Marie is saying. Sneha walks up to them.

SNEHA
Hi Nadine!

NADINE
Hey.

SNEHA
Hey Marie!

MARIE

Hi Sneha.

Sneha looks thankful for their acknowledgment.

SNEHA

I'm so excited for Thandiwe's performance. She has been working on this for forever. She's going to be amazing. I kept telling her that, although I don't know if she believed me. Ya know?

Nadine opens her mouth to respond, but Sneha continues.

SNEHA (CONT'D)

Is this your mom?

Nadine opens her mouth to respond, but Sneha continues again. Sneha now has the attention of Aunt Rita and Uncle Frank.

SNEHA (CONT'D)

Hello, Mrs. Keaton. I'm Sneha. I'm Thandiwe's buddy at school. She's great. And she thinks the world of you. Always talking about how lovely you are, how caring, and how pretty you are, although you don't really have that good of luck with men, from what she tells me.

Terry and Aunt Rita are visibly shocked by her comment, while Nadine and Uncle Frank start to laugh.

TERRY

I'm sorry, what did you say your name is? Sneha?

SNEHA

Yes. Sneha Venkataramana.

TERRY

Well, Sneha, it was very nice meeting you.

Sneha becomes uncertain if she has said something wrong but she takes her cue that it's time to leave.

SNEHA

Bye. It was nice to meet you too.

NADINE

Bye, Sneha.

Sneha awkwardly smiles at Nadine and takes her exit.

TERRY
Sneha, huh?

NADINE
Yep.

TERRY
Okay. Now I get it.

Nadine smiles at her. Terry begins to look at her program before the show starts and realizes 'Thula Sana' is listed. She gasps and grabs Nadine's arm.

TERRY (CONT'D)
You knew?

NADINE
Maybe?

A tear runs down Terry's face and she leans over to show Aunt Rita. The lights dim, as the show is about to start. Mrs. Posey begins by welcoming everyone, explaining how the show works and welcoming the first act. Several acts perform, when they finally get to [THULA SANA]. Mrs. Posey starts her intro for the act.

MRS. POSEY
Our next act is very special to us,
and is courtesy of a young student
we got to enjoy this year, named
Thandiwe. Thandiwe made the brave
decision to travel abroad from
South Africa to our school, to
learn about our culture and our way
of life... But no matter how far
one may move away from home, we are
always bound to a memory, or a
dance or music that reminds of that
special place we come from. So
tonight, we get to share a piece of
her culture through a song. This is
called Thula Sana.

The curtain opens to the choir standing on two level risers, with Thandiwe standing in front of everyone, on the stage floor.

Thandiwe begins singing the solo and then the rest of the choir joins in. Everyone in the audience is captivated. Terry, Aunt Rita and Toni all begin to cry. Uncle Frank can't take his eyes off of Thandiwe, neither can the rest of them.

When they are finally finished. The entire auditorium is on their feet, clapping and cheering.

Scene ends with Thandiwe standing on stage staring at Terry and Nadine, who are on their feet, and all 3 smiling gleefully at one another.

33

INT. JERSEY DINER. DINING ROOM. SAME NIGHT

33

Terry, Thandiwe, Nadine, Jake, Uncle Frank, Aunt Rita, Marie and Toni are all seated at a round table at the middle of the diner. Every person has a plate of food that either has been partially or fully eaten, including Thandiwe who had a banana split. Conversation flows amongst them, until Uncle Frank decides to bring the groups discussion together.

UNCLE FRANK

Thandiwe... Who knew? Who knew you could sing like that! Like a little bird singing in the wind.

Aunt Rita looks at him.

AUNT RITA

Really, Frank? A bird singing in the wind?

UNCLE FRANK

What? I'm trying to say something nice here!

AUNT RITA

Try harder.

Again, Uncle Frank makes that 'tsk' noise.

UNCLE FRANK

Whatever, Rita.
Seriously though, that was beautiful.

Everyone looks at Thandiwe and gives her a compliment of the same kind. Thandiwe is extremely uncomfortable from all of the attention.

UNCLE FRANK (CONT'D)

Now what else can you sing, because that South African mumbo jumbo was nice and all, but let's try something else next time.

AUNT RITA

Frank!

UNCLE FRANK

What?!

Everyone laughs at Uncle Frank, except Aunt Rita, who puts her head in her hand. Aunt Rita pleads to Nadine.

AUNT RITA

Please help me...

NADINE

Uncle Frank, who would you like her to sing?

UNCLE FRANK

Come on, now.. You know who I'd want.

Nadine smirks and addresses Thandiwe.

NADINE

Thandiwe, do you know who Frank Sinatra is?

Thandiwe shakes her head, indicating she does not know Frank Sinatra.

UNCLE FRANK

What?! No... say it isn't so! You don't know who Sinatra is?

Thandiwe continues to smile at him.

UNCLE FRANK (CONT'D)

I can't believe it...

AUNT RITA

Leave her alone, Frank.

UNCLE FRANK

What?! Rita, why are you always busting my chops?

They continue to bicker and everyone laughs, while Terry brings Thandiwe and Nadine into a private conversation.

TERRY

Thandiwe, how would you like to stay with us indefinitely?

Thandiwe looks at her confused. Nadine looks at Terry and nods her head so Terry knows to continue.

TERRY (CONT'D)

It's not an adoption, but I've talked to Clare and I would be able to take over your guardianship permanently, which means you could stay here and finish your high school education. Maybe even think of going to college somewhere in the U.S.

NADINE

And I'm going to college at Rutgers University next year with Jake and since we'll both be living at home, you won't be able to get rid of me that easily.

Thandiwe smiles.

THANDIWE

Would I be able to get back to South Africa if I wanted to, after high school or college? So I could teach like Clare?

TERRY

Absolutely.
We just want you to know you have a permanent home.

NADINE

And a permanent family.

Terry and Nadine smile at Thandiwe, who looks overwhelmed. She speaks softly to them.

THANDIWE

I think I would like that. Very much.

Thandiwe smiles. Terry gives her a huge hug, which is followed by one from Nadine too.

UNCLE FRANK

Hey, what's going on over there?

TERRY

Nothing, Frank!

AUNT RITA

You see, Terry. I'm going to kill him.

Everyone laughs at Aunt Rita's comment.

Uncle Frank addresses his next question to Nadine.

UNCLE FRANK

I thought I heard you talking about Rutgers over there, since you and my boy, Jake, here are two smart geniuses who got in.

NADINE

That's right, Old Man. We are geniuses, so watch out or we'll figure out a way to off you and no one will know what happened.

Everyone laughs, except Uncle Frank who makes that 'tsk' noise.

AUNT RITA

So have you decided what you want to do to celebrate getting into Rutgers?

Nadine looks around since she has never said this before to anyone.

NADINE

I want to go to South Africa to meet Sipho!

UNCLE FRANK

What?
What's a Sipho?

Scene ends with everyone laughing, except Uncle Frank who is totally confused.

34

EXT. SOUTH AFRICA. SAINT FULGENTIUS SCHOOL. GARDEN -
BEGINNING OF JULY 1998. DAY

34

Closing scene - film begins to end by showing the credits, while in the background, Clare pulls up in front of the school's garden in her Mitsubishi Pajero. In the truck, she has Thandiwe, Nadine and Terry. Once they start to get out of the car, they are surrounded by welcoming nuns. Thandiwe begins to look around and sees the big tree with the picnic table off in the distance. Sipho is standing under the tree, with wild flowers in his hand. Thandiwe begins to call out his name and run towards him. When she gets to him, he grabs hold of her and swings her around. When they stop swinging, they stand with their foreheads touching.

SIPHO (IN AFRIKAANS)

Oh how I've missed you, Thandiwe.

THANDIWE (IN AFRIKAANS)
I've missed you too, Sipho.

Clare, Terry and Nadine walk up on the scene.

Sipho jumps and stands at Thandiwe's side.

NADINE
So you're Sipho! Boy, have I been
dying to meet you.

Nadine puts out her hand for him to shake it. Sipho takes her hand and holds it with concern. Thandiwe starts to translate but Sipho interrupts her.

SIPHO
No, Thandiwe, Ms. Clare has been
helping me to learn. But why has
she been dying. Is she okay?

All of the women begin to laugh. But Sipho asks again.

SIPHO (CONT'D)
Yes? She is Fine?

THANDIWE
Yes, Sipho! She is fine!

The 5 of them begin to have an inaudible conversations as the film ends.

THE END.