

CHAPTER THREE

June 16

On 15 June 1976 Mpho returned home from school and found the garden filled with Tsietsi's friends. They were painting with black and red paint on poster boards, bed sheets, lengths of canvas. 'Away With Afrikaans', the banners proclaimed, 'Away With Bantu Education'. Tsietsi and his companions worked quietly; Mpho could feel a muted excitement and tension. He was desperate to know what they were doing. Mpho approached Tsietsi tentatively, constrained by his position as the younger sibling. 'What am I supposed to do?' he finally asked his brother.

'You must go to school tomorrow as usual,' Tsietsi replied. 'Then we'll come and close it.' Mpho was stunned. He could barely believe what he had heard.

Another boy, busily daubing a piece of cardboard, asked Mpho, 'What time do you have assembly?'

'Eight o'clock.'

'Right,' said the boy, 'before you get into the classrooms, we'll be there. You'll be the first school.'

'But you don't know our principal,' Mpho protested.

'Don't worry, you'll see.'

The boy pushed some paint and a piece of canvas over to Mpho. After considering the various slogans painted by the other youths, Mpho selected 'Afrikaans Is For Boers'. He rolled up the canvas when the paint had dried and hid it under his bed. He intended to carry it to school under his arm the next morning. Nomkhitha would think it was a class project. Two girls from next door, who had been watching over the fence, gestured to Mpho. One of them mouthed: What is going on?

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Mpho shook his head. He felt the weight of being admitted to his brother's circle. Besides, he still was not exactly certain what was about to transpire.

After a few hours – and before Nomkhitha arrived home – Tsietsi and his friends finished their work. They hurriedly cleaned up the paint, tidied the garden, collected their posters and departed. Tomorrow, Mpho thought as he headed into the house, will surely be a great adventure.

From the slogans on the banners, Mpho discerned there would be some sort of protest against the use of Afrikaans in black schools. It was an issue that had been smouldering for months. The previous year the Nationalist government decreed that, starting at the junior-high level, half of all subjects would be taught in Afrikaans. (The edict attempted to appease the right wing of the party, which feared the ascendancy of English.) This was an insult beyond tolerance to the black students. They were already crammed into wretched classrooms with too few teachers and virtually no textbooks or other supplies. When they left school they had little hope of securing a job that paid a living wage. Their parents seemed unable – or unwilling – to challenge the authorities to improve the children's lot. And now they were being forced to study in a language most did not know.

In the Mashinini family, Mpho and Dee were directly affected by the decree. At the start of the school year, Dee's teacher began teaching *wiskunde*, mathematics, in Afrikaans. It was as though a cloud descended upon Dee: he found himself trying to master the language and the concepts simultaneously. By the time he understood that *vermenigvuldiging* was multiplication, *snelheid* meant velocity, *tyd* was time and *spoed*, speed – the lesson had finished. Dee felt overcome by hopelessness; at this rate, he would never pass his exams.

Other students were similarly despondent. At Orlando West Junior Secondary, the head prefect, Seth Mazibuko, and fellow pupils sent a petition to the inspector of schools. They requested a meeting to discuss the reinstatement of English as the language of instruction. When he refused – the inspector was not about

to be summonsed by mere students – Seth and his lieutenants organized a boycott. Students showed up at school but did not attend classes.

Tsietsi visited Seth during the strike. By now, half a dozen other schools had joined Orlando West. SASM leaders seized on this as an issue that could galvanize township youths. They were eager to broaden the boycott, taking it to all the students in Soweto, even those older ones not directly affected by the government edict. Seth agreed to help.

As a kind of test, Seth addressed a meeting of students that Tsietsi organized at Morris Issacson High School. Seth explained the strike, its inception and goals. Tsietsi delivered a fiery discourse on the importance of supporting the youngsters' Afrikaans boycott. Soon enough, he warned, the senior students would be affected as well. Encouraged by the enthusiastic reception, he, Seth and another SASM activist canvassed other schools in Soweto to assess support for a township-wide boycott. About half the high schools and junior secondaries seemed to be with them; the other half appeared hostile because of fears about the security police.

The SASM leaders called a meeting to discuss the Afrikaans issue on June 13 at a community centre in Soweto. Hundreds of students packed the hall, many of them the contacts Tsietsi and Seth had made in polling the various schools. Six people thought to be police informers were asked to leave. Tsietsi proposed staging a mass demonstration to protest against the imposition of Afrikaans on June 16, the day the students were supposed to sit their exams. A ferocious debate ensued: those opposed to the idea argued that the security police would crush them. People might be arrested, hurt, perhaps even killed.

But the march's opponents were no match for Tsietsi. He was at his most impressive in front of an audience: cajoling, gesticulating, pacing the room, insisting that nothing would happen if the demonstration remained non-violent. Khotso Seatlholo, who arrived at the meeting late, could feel the sentiment in the room turning in his friend's favour. Tsietsi roused the crowd with quotes from great works of literature, his favourite being Tennyson's poem, 'The Charge of the Light Brigade':

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When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wonder'd.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

The proposal was passed unanimously. The students nominated two delegates from each school to form an Action Committee, headed by Tsietsi and Seth. They adjourned the gathering with a decision to work out the actual details at a meeting on the day before the demonstration. Afterwards, Tsietsi and a few members of the Action Committee knocked on the door of Duma Ndlovu, a young journalist who worked on a black newspaper, *The World*. Duma wrote a column on school sports; his presence at a match generated much excitement among the youths, for it meant they would read about their school in the paper the next day. He knew many of the more prominent students, including Tsietsi who, in Duma's mind, stood out from his peers for his assertiveness. Tsietsi wasted little time with formalities. 'Something big is going to happen on Wednesday,' he said to Duma. 'Be sure to be in Soweto.'

'What?'

'We can't tell you, just be sure to be in Soweto.'

'Look, I can't get my editor to put me on a story if I can't tell him what it is.'

'Tell him it's going to be big. And be there.'

Over the next two days, the Action Committee delegates fanned out through the township, visiting the various high schools and junior secondaries. Their mission was to inform students of the impending march and rally support. Draw up placards in secret, Tsietsi's representatives urged the astonished pupils. Don't tell your parents. During the march, remain disciplined. Follow the instructions of your school leaders. Above all, do not be afraid.

Tsietsi convened the final planning meeting in the afternoon on June 15. He and the other Action Committee members devised a formula for the march: students from about a dozen

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schools would lead the demonstration, picking up youths from other institutions (mostly junior secondaries) along the way. Action Committee members would stay to the right of the marchers, so they could communicate with one another. Each school had a set hour of departure, designed to allow the participants to converge on the Orlando West area from various parts of Soweto at about the same time. There they would link up with students from Orlando West High School and its junior secondary, and continue on to a stadium for a mass rally. Satisfied with the scheme, Tsietsi left his co-conspirators with one last caveat: no violence.

That night Joseph and Nomkhitha prepared for bed as usual. If the house seemed quiet, it was because Tsietsi had yet to return home. Nomkhitha thought about his absence and realized she had not seen much of him lately; he was probably at the high school, 'cross-nighting' with his friends. She would speak to him about it tomorrow after work.

June 16 dawned a bitterly cold winter's day. Tsietsi was already at Morris Issacson when Murphy Morobe, another member of the Action Committee, arrived at the school. He and Tsietsi huddled in a corner of the schoolyard to review last-minute details. Assembly wouldn't start for another thirty minutes, but the undercurrent of excitement among the students was palpable. 'The main thing', Tsietsi whispered to Murphy, 'is not to provoke the police. We have to keep telling everyone to be disciplined, that we're marching to a particular place and then we'll disperse.'

At eight o'clock, as was the custom at Morris Issacson, the deputy principal called the students to order in the yard and led them in morning prayers. Usually he would have enumerated the day's activities, then dismissed the students for class. Instead, as if on cue, the youths held up posters and unfurled banners denouncing the use of Afrikaans. Tsietsi jumped up, exclaiming, 'We are marching!' Someone threw open the gates

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to the school and Tsietsi led hundreds of youths, most of the student body, out of the yard, shouting ‘*Amandla!*’ (Power!) and thrusting his fist in the air in the black power salute. ‘*Ngawethu!*’ (It is ours!) screamed the excited youngsters in response, a singing, chanting river of humanity that flowed towards Thesele Junior Secondary, about a half a mile down the road.

Mpho, meanwhile, had arrived early at Thesele to stow his banner under his desk where he usually kept his things. He had not brought his textbooks; Tsietsi and his friends said they would close Thesele before classes started. Mpho’s fellow students encircled him. They wanted to know what he had under his arm, and where were his books? Mpho, grinning with self-importance, said nothing. He hurried into his classroom, hid the banner and ran back to the schoolyard.

The gates closed at eight o’clock and the students arranged themselves in the yard according to classes. A teacher intoned a prayer. Then the principal, a no-nonsense sort of man, delivered the usual admonishments about arriving late to school and not completing homework. Mpho barely noticed his words; distraught, he was straining to hear any unusual noise or disturbance. The principal seemed about to conclude his remarks and dispatch the students to their classes. Mpho would be caught with no books – a very serious offence, punishable by being sent to the principal’s office.

Suddenly, Mpho heard what sounded like faint singing in the distance. The noise became progressively louder. By now, the principal had heard it, too. He went to the gates to investigate, warning the assembled youngsters not to break ranks. Before he could reach them, the gates were thrown open and a wave of students, identifiably from Morris Issacson in their blue-and-gold jackets, surged into the schoolyard.

The orderly assembly dissolved into chaos. The Morris Issacson youths were everywhere, brandishing their placards, yelling at the Thesele students to put down their books, urging them to march to Orlando West. Mpho watched as Tsietsi and his friends followed the principal into his office; the school’s siren sounded soon after in an attempt to restore calm. Mpho suddenly found himself organizing a group of his friends to

march. After all, had he not helped to make the banners and placards the Morris Issacson students were carrying? And was he not the brother of the student who, at this very moment, was telling the principal – the principal! – that they were shutting down the school? Mpho dashed inside to his classroom and grabbed his banner; racing back to the schoolyard, he unfurled it to the admiring gasps of his friends. Cougar, who also attended Thesele, stood by his side.

Tsietsi emerged from the school and addressed the crowd from a ledge where the principal had stood during assembly. ‘Students of Soweto,’ Tsietsi shouted, ‘we’re tired of what is happening. We must take action against the white regime. We’re joining the other schools that are on strike. We’re closing down schools to show these Boers that we will not accept Afrikaans. We’re going to say: away with Afrikaans, away with Bantu education. But we need discipline. We will probably meet the police. But there’s to be no stone throwing, no provocation. Please remain disciplined.’

The youngsters roared their approval; they had never heard anything like this articulated publicly. Tsietsi led the mass of pupils out of the schoolyard towards the old Roodepoort road, a large thoroughfare that bisected much of Soweto. As they marched, the youngsters sang a haunting, dirge-like protest song from the 1950s: *Senzeni na? Senzeni na?* What have we done? Oh, what have we done? (What is our crime?) To Murphy Morobe, helping to shepherd the students along, the scene evoked the feeling of exhilaration he had experienced as a child at Christmas.

The marchers had to pass a primary school to arrive at their next destination, Itshepeng Junior Secondary. (Before the march, Tsietsi and the Action Committee members had agreed to exclude the younger children.) Ten-year-old Tshepiso was in the schoolyard, helping to pick up litter, when he heard a deafening noise. A huge group of students from Mpho’s and Tsietsi’s schools suddenly appeared on the road, singing and waving banners. Tshepiso watched them pass, open-mouthed; he had never seen so many people in his life. A teacher who was supervising them told the youngsters sharply to go inside to class. Tshepiso could not stop thinking about the mass of

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students all morning, wondering if his brothers were among them.

As the demonstration reached Itshepeng, pupils ran to the windows and rushed out of the doors, drawn by the singing. Dee was amazed at the sudden appearance of hundreds of students, jumping about and carrying signs. He was even more astonished to see Tsietsi at the head of all these youths; Dee had not been privy to the activity in his house during the previous days. He watched as Tsietsi directed the younger pupils to go home and urged the older ones to join the march. Then he saw Mpho, who was carrying a banner. Mpho explained everything to Dee. When Tsietsi ordered the students, after about half an hour, to leave the school grounds, Dee, Mpho and Cougar marched out together.

The numbers of youngsters swelled as the march progressed towards Orlando West. Each time they passed another school, Tsietsi and his lieutenants added those students to the demonstration. Dee began noticing more policemen on the streets. They were only lightly armed and seemed unsure of what to do. Emboldened, the students began to chant in Zulu in a kind of staccato rhythm: *Siyabasaba na? Siyabasaba na?* (Are we afraid of them? Are we are afraid of them?) Dee felt an incredible excitement. For the first time in his life, blacks were protesting on the streets of Soweto. Propelled by the rhythm of their songs, united in their purpose, each seemed a link in an unbreakable chain.

Tsietsi led the marchers through the Dube section of Soweto. The Action Committee members walked along the right-hand side of the road, keeping the students to the left. Although the organizers had mapped out the general direction of the trek from Morris Issacson, Tsietsi determined the exact route as it advanced. He rode up and down the line of demonstrators in a car driven by a journalist. Indicating to his lieutenants the course they must take, he tried to keep to side streets to avoid traffic and the greatest concentration of police. The latter had been taken by surprise and made only feeble attempts to stop the march.

As the demonstrators neared a vocational training centre, they encountered car driven by a white woman. Not knowing of the march, she had tried, as usual, to go to her government

job in the township. The terrified woman suddenly found herself engulfed by chanting, singing, jostling youngsters. Tsietsi exhorted them to make way for her. The sea of students parted – and the car sped away to safety.

Tsietsi occasionally stopped alongside the marchers to deliver reports of police movements. As they drew closer to Orlando West, he halted more frequently to address the youths and plead for calm. ‘Please be disciplined,’ Tsietsi urged them. ‘Do not provoke the police. Do not throw stones. If the police confront you, show them the peace sign.’ At other times, though, Tsietsi seemed as caught up in the moment as the most excited of the youngsters. Duma Ndlovu, the journalist, came upon him leading a chant. ‘Who do you see when you see Tsietsi?’ he yelled at the crowd.

‘We see a hero when we see Tsietsi!’ the students roared.

‘Who do you see when you see [Prime Minister John] Vorster?’

‘We see a dog when we see Vorster!’

By the time the marchers reached Orlando West Junior Secondary later in the morning, they numbered in the thousands. Seth Mazibuko, the school’s head prefect and vice-chairman of the Action Committee, awaited them in the schoolyard on a hill above the road. He and his fellow students had gathered at assembly earlier in the morning; instead of the usual programme, they had sung ‘*Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika*’ (God Bless Africa), the lovely, lilting hymn that was a national anthem throughout the continent. Then they shut the school gates. Seth walked down the hill to confer with Tsietsi on the next move. The Orlando West students were supposed to leave the school to join the demonstration; Tsietsi would then make a speech, pledging solidarity with the students in their boycott and calling on the government to scrap the Afrikaans requirement.

Suddenly, police vans and cars appeared. Having failed in their earlier attempts to quell the march, the security officials now meant to finish with it completely. About fifty policemen, some armed with guns, others with tear gas canisters, faced the students. Many of the men held the leads of German shepherd dogs. The youths continued to sing, wave their placards, flash peace signs at the policemen. The tension was palpable. ‘My

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God, the police are going to do a Sharpeville on us,' gasped a friend standing next to Murphy Morobe. Tsietsi, Seth and another activist tried to approach the security officers to speak with them. At that moment, the officers let loose one of the snarling Alsatians. The dog tore into the crowd. Terrified, the youngsters picked up stones and threw them at the animal. The police fired tear gas canisters; now the students turned their stones on the security men.

Then the police began shooting.

Screaming youngsters fled in every direction. Some stopped to throw stones at the police who answered with seemingly indiscriminate volleys aimed into the crowd. Murphy heard bullets whizzing by his head. Out of the pandemonium, a youth emerged carrying the lifeless body of twelve-year-old Zolile Hector Pieteron. Zolile's sister ran beside him, her face etched in grief, her hands upraised in horror. Samuel Nzima, a black photographer, captured the tableau on film. The picture would be seen around the world and come to symbolize the brutality of the South African regime.

Fearing that the march was turning into a massacre, Tsietsi clambered on top of an old bulldozer on the roadside and tried to get the youngsters to disperse. People have been shot, he shouted hoarsely. Let us not give the government any more victims. The best thing to do is go home and regroup. The struggle has only just begun.

The youths, outraged by the police actions, responded to Tsietsi's exhortations by exploding in a rampage as they retreated. Using stolen petrol and paraffin, they began setting fire to anything in their path that smacked of government authority. The administrative offices of the West Rand Administration Board (WRAB), post offices, government-owned beer halls and bottle stores – all were attacked. The furious students overturned vehicles from the hated WRAB and set them on fire. Two WRAB employees – a white official and a black policeman – were assaulted and killed.

Amid the chaos, Seth ran to the house of Winnie Mandela, the wife of the jailed ANC leader, Nelson Mandela. She was pulling out of her driveway in her Volkswagen and stopped to

open the door for Seth. As they drove off, he looked around for Tsietsi, but in vain. Murphy also lost Tsietsi in the maelstrom. He had tried, unsuccessfully, to get to Baragwanath Hospital in a journalist's car to attend the wounded. Navigating his way back to Orlando West, Murphy saw no sign of his friend – only a township engulfed in flames.

Mpho, further down the line of demonstrators, attempted to run in the direction of home at the first sound of gunfire: jumping fences, dodging the police cars that suddenly were on every corner, ducking at the sound of their bullets. He sought refuge for a while in a house that was crammed with frightened students. The owner kept watch through a crack in a window curtain. When the street seemed clear of danger, Mpho dashed out and resumed hurdling fences through back-yards. He wanted to avoid the main roads, which the police were now patrolling in great numbers.

In Dube, Mpho jogged past an overturned dairy truck lying in the middle of the street; there was milk, cheese and fruit juice all over the road. He stopped long enough to heave a stone through the vehicle's windscreen. Rarely in his sixteen years had Mpho experienced anything so satisfying: the truck clearly came from a white-owned establishment in Johannesburg. This was his chance, finally, to strike back at white power.

Dee, meanwhile, had become immobilized when he heard the shots. In the middle of the stampede he stayed rooted to the ground. Everywhere Dee looked, children were screaming, running, falling down, bleeding. He watched as one boy with a shattered leg tried to flee. Holding his injured limb, the youngster hobbled a few steps, collapsed in the dirt, pulled himself upright, staggered a bit, toppled again. Dee saw all this through a kind of slow-motion haze.

The tear gas pulled him out of his trance. Dee began to run, along with the other panic-stricken children, desperate to escape the choking chemicals. He found himself squeezing into a latrine in someone's back-yard. Six other youngsters were already hiding in the tiny, corrugated-iron hut. Dee crouched in the darkness, listening to the gunfire; he could not get the picture of bleeding bodies being loaded into cars out of his head. His

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fellow fugitives tried to remain silent as the police swarmed about the area. But the tear gas made them cough; one youth vomited. After about ten minutes, unable to withstand the fear and the stench, the youths burst out of the enclosure.

Two women in a nearby house motioned them indoors. They brought the children a bucket of water to wash the gas from their eyes. And they gave them glasses of milk to clear their throats and settle their stomachs. The students cowered in the house. Dee was terrified; he had no idea what to do. His only thought was to try to get back to his home. He felt he would be safer in his own neighbourhood, on his own turf.

He left the women's house after about an hour and set off towards the Jabavu section of Soweto and home. Like Mpho, he took a long, circuitous route to avoid the police: running and hiding in backyards, avoiding open fields, crossing to areas with large concentrations of houses so he could disappear among them. Dee traversed the township in a state of disbelief. Everywhere he saw municipal offices on fire; shops owned by Chinese merchants – much hated by the blacks – burning; children, giddy with their new-found power, demanding bread, drinks, water from scared storeowners. To Dee's mind, the world had turned upside-down.

Back at Molaetsa Primary, Tshepiso began hearing helicopters hovering overhead. The teacher tried to keep him and his classmates in their seats, but to no avail; the curious children bolted outside. There, in the distance, they saw the burning buildings and vehicles. Tshepiso decided something was terribly wrong. He set off to find his younger brothers, China (as Sechaba was called) and Dichaba, both of whom attended Molaetsa. Dismayed at discovering their rooms empty, Tshepiso raced from class to class; by the time he found them, the helicopters had begun dropping canisters of tear gas nearby. Teachers were screaming, children crying; the yard was in chaos. Tshepiso grabbed his brothers' hands and fled the school.

At first he took the usual route home, but large numbers of youths passed him going in the opposite direction. They were clearly being pursued; Tshepiso could see the fear on their faces. He decided to turn around and follow them. Now Tshepiso was

running away from his house, China on one side, Dichaba on the other. He gripped his brothers' hands so tightly he virtually dragged them along the street. The walk to their house usually took about twenty minutes, but on that day they wouldn't arrive for three hours. Each route Tshepiso chose seemed to lead him into crowds of people trying to go the other way, away from the police and guns and tear gas. He kept having to double back, retrace his steps. All Tshepiso wanted was to go home; he and his brothers would be safe there.

As people passed them, some shouted at the three boys to discard their school uniforms. The police were shooting at anyone who even vaguely resembled a student. The afternoon had warmed slightly, so Tshepiso made China and Dichaba stop briefly to shed their jerseys and white shirts and stuff them into their school bags. Then they resumed their race homeward.

When the three youngsters reached their neighbourhood, near Morris Issacson High School, it resembled a war zone. Police cars careened through the streets, shooting at youngsters. Military helicopters were dropping canisters of tear gas. Tshepiso mistook them for explosives; he thought the army was bombing the township. Terrified, he huddled with his brothers behind some boulders on the 'mountain', the sloping field opposite their house. 'Now when I tell you to go,' Tshepiso whispered to them, 'you must make a dash for it.' He waited until the area seemed clear of police, then leaped up and ran across the road, China and Dichaba in tow. Black smoke curled upwards from Morris Issacson.

Dee returned soon after Tshepiso. He felt safer inside the house, but was too excited to remain for long. Dee told Tshepiso he was going to the 'mountain'; from the top, he had a sweeping view down to the end of the road. And the boulders afforded him protection. Dee found several other children already there, sheltering behind the massive rocks. They took turns popping out from behind the boulders, shaking their fists at the policemen on the street, then jumping back to safety. Not everyone was fast enough: Dee helped three boys to extract birdshot from their limbs with a knife and paraffin.

As night fell, Dee grew cold on the 'mountain'. He and his

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friends regrouped on a tarred road that ran behind his house. From there, outlined against the sky in the waning half-light, Dee could see the smouldering remains of the Chinese shops. He knew he should return home, but was reluctant to part with the day. He wanted the excitement and the extraordinary feeling of power to continue indefinitely. Dee watched convoys of police vans snaking towards other parts of the township. Finally, shivering and hungry, he bade his fellow combatants farewell and headed for his house.

Nomkhitha was at work in Johannesburg when she heard about the rioting on the radio. She dismissed it as ordinary, criminal-type violence, the kind that plagued the townships. Then suddenly her boss sent the workers home early: Soweto is burning, she said. Nomkhitha hurried to her train. As it pulled into Soweto's Mzimhlope Station, Nomkhitha and the other passengers exclaimed in amazement at the smoking hulks of cars, burned-out bottle stores, scenes of looting. They had never seen anything like it. Nomkhitha rushed home, worried about the children.

Joseph arrived just after Nomkhitha, deeply shaken by the destruction he had seen. Mpho had also returned, and the family gathered in the living room to talk. The children excitedly told their parents of the demonstration, of the police attack, of their response, of Tsietsi's role in the day's events. Nomkhitha and Joseph were astounded. How could youngsters have marched so great a distance? How could they have had the courage to fight the police? How did Tsietsi come to be so involved? 'Why Tsietsi?' Joseph kept murmuring. 'Why Tsietsi?' The march seemed the height of folly to Joseph; surely the family would now feel the full wrath of the authorities.

Nomkhitha too was distressed. She interrogated Dee and Mpho about their involvement, convinced they had deceived her. The two boys insisted they had merely got swept up in the moment; Tsietsi was the leader and organizer. That fact only caused Nomkhitha more anguish. She could not understand why Tsietsi, her favourite, had not confided in her. Nomkhitha wondered what would become of him now. How would he eat and where would he sleep?

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The children talked among themselves late into the night, long after their bemused parents had retired to their bedroom. At one point they heard a deep rumble of heavy machinery on the tarred road. The government was deploying ‘hippos’, armoured personnel carriers which had been designed to withstand the blasts of land mines in war zones such as Namibia and Rhodesia. The noise terrified Tshepiso, who lay motionless among his brothers. He could not stop worrying about Tsietsi. You must not come home, Tshepiso whispered to the darkness. Run away and hide, or you will be caught.

Tsietsi was not coming home; he would not spend another night in his parents’ house. Sometime around midnight, he and a fellow student knocked on the door of Drake Koka’s home in Soweto’s Dube section. Drake, a small, pixie-like man with a round face and goatee, was a major figure in the Black Consciousness movement and a union activist. ‘We need your help,’ said Tsietsi, who had been on the run since the morning’s shootings. ‘You have to teach us. You’ll be our Godfather, like in the movie.’

By now, the police had killed at least twenty-five children and injured 200 others. Large swathes of Soweto lay in ruins. South Africa, and the Mashinini family, would never be the same.

