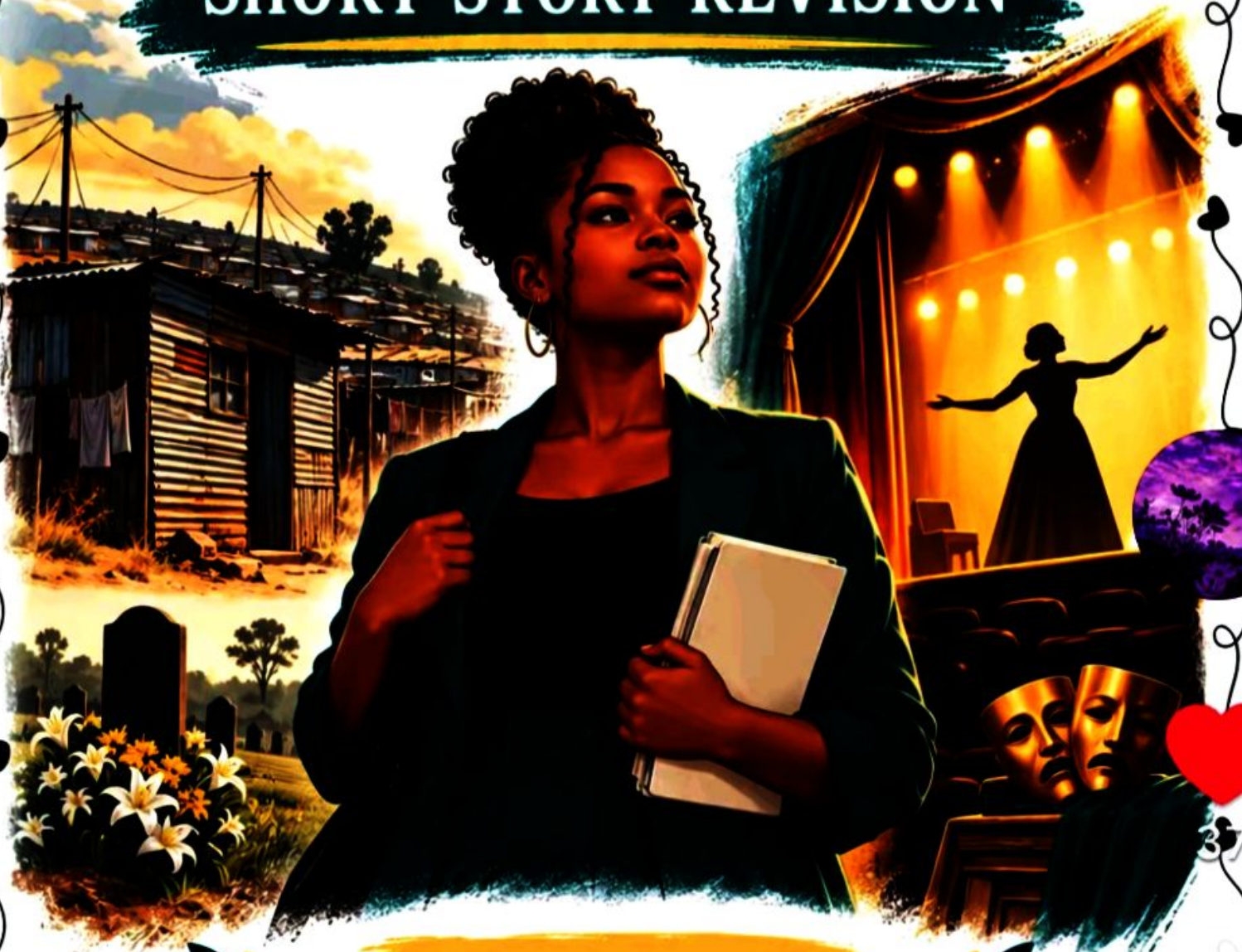


GRADE 12 ENGLISH FAL

TRIUMPH IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

by Kedibone Seku

SHORT STORY REVISION



TRIUMPH IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

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AUTHOR & STORY OVERVIEW

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

- Kedibone Seku was born in Pimville, Soweto, in 1974.
- After matriculating, she became an Adult Basic Education and Training specialist.
- This story was published after she attended a workshop associated with the Caine Prize for African Writing.



STORY OVERVIEW

At her mother's graveside, Thulisile remembers growing up in Phambili Squatter. Camp. Her unemployed father, Jabulani, becomes violent and abusive, while her mother, Thembekile, loses hope and remains trapped in the marriage. Thuli assumes responsibility for her younger siblings, Bongani and Zanele. Despite poverty, hunger, interrupted schooling and her father stealing her earnings, she starts a small sweets business and works at a fish-and-chips shop. With encouragement from helpful people, she auditions for a children's television programme and becomes a successful presenter. She eventually buys a house and takes her siblings with her. At the funeral, Thuli chooses healing, buries the painful past and looks towards a hopeful future.



KEY IDEA: Thuli refuses to remain a victim and transforms hardship into strength and opportunity.

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PLOT SUMMARY

- 1** At her mother's graveside, Thulisile remembers the painful past. She cries because she pities her mother's empty life and mourns the waste of it. The main story unfolds as a flashback.



- 2** Thembekile gives up her studies and dream of becoming an actress after marrying Jabulani. Conflict with MaDlamini forces the couple to move to Phambili Squatter Camp, where Jabulani loses his job.



- 3** Jabulani becomes violent and abusive. Thembekile loses hope and remains silent. Poverty and hunger force Thuli to care for her younger siblings, Bongani and Zanele, while her schoolwork suffers.



- 4** Mr Nkwane tells Thuli not to let her home situation control her. Mme Sadike later comforts her and suggests seeking help. Although Thembekile refuses, Thuli becomes determined to change their lives.



- 5** Thuli borrows thirty rand from her maternal grandmother and starts selling sweets at school. The business succeeds, but her father steals her money.



- 6** At fifteen, Thuli works as a cleaner at Mr Rathebe's fish-and-chips shop and restarts her business. Mr Nkwane helps her open a bank account, but Jabulani later takes part of her wages dishonestly.



- 7** Nthabiseng encourages Thuli to audition as a presenter for a children's television programme. Thuli gets the job and moves from poverty into the successful world of television.



- 8** When she is old enough, Thuli buys a house and takes Bongani and Zanele with her. Her mother refuses to leave Jabulani and dies soon after him. At the grave, Thuli chooses to heal, bury the past and face a hopeful future.



TURNING POINT: Thuli's successful television audition transforms her life and creates new opportunities.

Add 1st

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CHARACTERS & CHARACTERISATION

THULISILE (THULI)

The narrator and protagonist. She is resilient, responsible, resourceful and ambitious. She protects her siblings, starts businesses, continues working and uses opportunities to escape poverty. At the funeral, she chooses healing over bitterness.



THEMBEKILE

Thuli's mother. She is submissive, fearful and emotionally defeated after years of control and abuse. She abandons her education and acting dream, remains with Jabulani and refuses help. Thuli later recognises her as a victim too.



JABULANI

Thuli's father. After losing his job, he becomes violent, controlling, dishonest and irresponsible. He abuses the family, steals Thuli's money and wages and tries to block her plans for a better home.



MADLAMINI

Jabulani's traditional and demanding mother. She rejects Thembekile as an unsuitable wife, forces strict duties upon her and helps destroy her hopes of studying and becoming an actress.



BONGANI & ZANELE

Thuli's younger brother and sister. They depend on her for food, protection and care. Her love and responsibility towards them motivate her to work, persevere and eventually take them to a safer home.



THULI'S SUPPORTERS

Mr Nkwane challenges and assists her; Mme Sadike offers comfort and advice; her maternal grandmother provides business money; Mr Rathebe gives her work; and Nthabiseng encourages the life-changing audition.



TIP: Thuli succeeds through personal determination AND support from people who believe in her.

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MAJOR THEMES

1. RESILIENCE & DETERMINATION

Thuli refuses to let hardship define her future. Each setback pushes her to make another plan, work harder and continue pursuing a safer, more successful life.



2. DOMESTIC ABUSE & CONTROL

Jabulani uses violence, fear and financial control against his family. Thembekile's silence and hopelessness show how abuse can destroy confidence, dreams and family relationships.



3. POVERTY & INEQUALITY

Life in Phambili Squatter Camp exposes the family to hunger, unsafe housing, poor sanitation and limited opportunities. Poverty affects Thuli's education and forces her to work while still young.



4. FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY

Thuli becomes a caregiver to Bongani and Zanele because their parents fail to protect them. Her love for her siblings motivates her businesses, employment and determination to buy a safe home.



5. EDUCATION, SUPPORT & OPPORTUNITY

Mr Nkwane, Mme Sadike, Thuli's grandmother, Mr Rathebe and Nthabiseng each provide guidance or assistance. Their support combines with Thuli's effort and helps her recognise new possibilities.



6. HEALING & HOPE

At the funeral, Thuli understands that her mother was also a victim. She chooses to bury the painful past, release bitterness and open the door to a future filled with possibilities.



MESSAGE: Adversity can wound a person, but courage, support and perseverance can create a new future.

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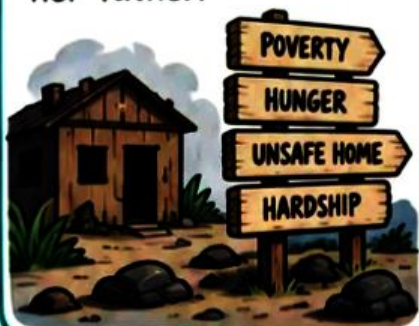
THE MEANING OF THE TITLE

TRIUMPH — a great victory or achievement

ADVERSITY — serious difficulty, hardship or misfortune

1. THE ADVERSITY

Thuli faces poverty, hunger, an unsafe home, domestic abuse, interrupted schooling, adult responsibilities and repeated theft by her father.



2. REFUSING TO BE A VICTIM

Although she sometimes feels defeated, Thuli repeatedly makes a new plan. She seeks advice, starts businesses, finds work and protects her siblings.



3. PRACTICAL SUCCESS

The television audition changes Thuli's life. She becomes a successful presenter, earns independence, buys a proper house and creates safety for Bongani and Zanele.



4. EMOTIONAL TRIUMPH

At her mother's funeral, Thuli understands that Thembekile was also a victim. Choosing to release anger and heal is another important victory.



5. NOT ALONE

Thuli's determination is central, but her triumph is strengthened by people who guide, comfort, employ and encourage her. Success grows through effort and support.



TITLE IN A NUTSHELL: Thuli confronts severe hardship, survives it and emerges stronger, successful and hopeful.



Add 1st

TRIUMPH IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

SYMBOLS & LITERARY DEVICES

1. FRAME NARRATIVE & FLASHBACK

The story begins and ends at Thembekile's graveside. Thuli's memories form one long flashback, connecting her present decision to heal with the hardships of her past.



2. SYMBOLISM — THE GRAVE & SOIL

As Thuli pours soil into the grave, she decides to bury the painful past. The burial therefore symbolises emotional release, closure and the beginning of healing.



3. METAPHOR — THE DARK CLOUD

The 'dark cloud of uncertainty' represents fear, poverty and hopelessness. Its disappearance suggests that Thuli now sees hope and possibility ahead.



4. METAPHOR — THE OPEN DOOR

Thuli decides to 'open a door to the future'. The door represents new opportunities, freedom and her decision not to remain trapped by the past.



5. IRONY

Thembekile is forced to abandon her dream of becoming an actress, yet her daughter later enters the world of television and achieves the public success her mother lost.



6. CONTRAST

Thembekile responds to suffering with silence and surrender, while Thuli responds with plans, work and determination. This contrast highlights Thuli's resilience.



EXAM TIP: Always explain how the technique strengthens the story's message of survival and hope.

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TONE, MOOD & FEELINGS

TONE

The narrator's tone is initially sorrowful, angry and critical as Thuli remembers abuse, poverty and her mother's wasted life. It later becomes determined, reflective and forgiving. The final tone is hopeful, confident and triumphant.

MOOD

The memories create a grim, tense and distressing mood. Readers feel sympathy for the children and frustration at the adults' choices. Thuli's perseverance and success gradually create an inspiring, relieved and optimistic mood.

THULI'S EMOTIONAL JOURNEY

1. SORROWFUL



At the graveside, she mourns the emptiness of her mother's life.

2. ANGRY & HELPLESS



Abuse, hunger and her mother's silence make her feel trapped.

3. DETERMINED



Advice from Mr Nkwane and Mme Sadike pushes her to make a plan.

4. BETRAYED



Her father steals her business money and later takes part of her wages.

5. HOPEFUL & PROUD



The television job gives her success, independence and a safer home.

6. FORGIVING & HEALED



At the funeral, she releases bitterness and chooses a hopeful future.

CHANGE: Thuli moves from feeling like a victim to recognising herself as a survivor.

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VOCABULARY & EXPRESSIONS



1. ADVERSITY

serious hardship or misfortune

2. GRIM

unpleasant, worrying or depressing



3. ABRUPT

sudden and unexpected

4. FLAMMABLE

able to catch fire easily



5. NURTURED

cared for and encouraged to grow



6. TORMENTED

caused severe emotional or physical suffering



7. GRACIOUS

kind, polite and welcoming



8. ADMONISHED

warned or scolded firmly



9. RELENTED

became less strict and finally agreed



10. RELUCTANT

unwilling or hesitant



11. DESPERATION

a state of having very little hope



12. FRAGILE

weak, delicate or easily harmed



EXPRESSIONS FROM THE STORY

- 'Fell on deaf ears' — was ignored or not listened to.
- 'Drove me up the wall' — made me extremely annoyed.
- 'Rise above the odds' — succeed despite serious difficulties.
- 'The path ahead seemed bleak' — the future appeared hopeless.



TIP: Connect each word to the difficulty or turning point where it appears.

Add 1st