

**Finding My Root**  
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**Finding my root is a story about a young girl searching and  
finally finding her biological father.**

**“One hander”**

**Opening Sequence:**  
**Scene 1**

***Spotlight finds Nobuhle folding herself on stage. We hear a strong hymn when amber spotlight finds her twisting and turning like a baby in a mother's womb. We then see her changing positions to show a woman making love with her man.***

**Thulisa:** Baby, uZandi baby...uZandile baby...mmmhhhh

***She continues to fold herself like a baby in a mother's womb when she then changes positions to being a woman giving birth.***

**Thulisa: (screaming)** Nurse...nurse the baby is coming....she is coming nurse... please come now....NURSE!!!!

***She continues with the hymn and also with the twisting and turning. As she is about to finish, we see her lifting her right hand up when lights change. She moves to draw a circle on the stage.***

**Nobuhle:** This world feels so claustrophobic. I feel that in it I am trapped and there is escape. I want to run away from seeing people crying everyday, I want to run away from seeing the misery of the rising scale in the level of crime in Gugulethu...in fact not just here at Native Yard 12 in short NY 12, Ny 11, Ny 7; it's also there, it's everywhere.

***Nobuhle stands up when she continues.***

**Nobuhle:** Sometimes I just feel like closing my ears and eyes so hard, just so I don't get to hear or see most of the bad news in my community. Life today is so unpredictable; who would have thought that Mthuthuzeli and I would be... ***(smiles)*** well, let me tell you about Mthuthuzeli. Tall, handsome, dark in complexion, sexy in his own right. I use to call him Star. I called him star because he was my star; he shined when everything else in my life was so dark. How we fell in love will always be a mystery to me, but if you are a believer of love at first sight then maybe you might just understand our love. I suppose it was as romantic as a boy going up to a girl with a bunch of flowers and ready to propose. ***(Change character to be a young boy)*** will you...will you...will you marry me? ***(She smiles)*** Shame, we were only teens at seventeen. He held me tightly, warmly and yet so gently. ***(she starts to touch her breasts intensely, fastly)*** Oh my God, the guilt of knowing I was having sex before marriage...a sinful act-an act completely different from what I was taught at home. I sometimes ask myself though: What is the use of planning when I know that I am building my dreams

on uncertainty? But I hope for I know in this life there are no guarantees. And if I could simply illustrate:

***Nobuhle in slow motion starts running while the Jembe is being beaten in the background. She then runs in panic when the pace changes.***

***(slightly out of breath)*** It's like running up a mountain to find somebody there waiting to push me down then I would fall on the scale of death.

***She starts to move around the circle she drew on the floor.***

**Nobuhle (continues):** I really am intimidated about where this world is headed. I am scared of living my life now. I am scared of having dreams and even getting excited after each achievement. I am scared of heading into the future for the present is no longer a gift; it is filled with disappointments and grief. ***(Stops, pauses and looks behind her)*** When I look back...back to the way things use to be and how it is now, I can't help but feel intimidated to fall; fall madly in love again. ***(She sobs)***

***She starts singing and standing up to prepare to play a game.***

**Nobuhle (jumping up and down):** Inkuk' itunisile (wayek' lomaqanda)...and at that age, I understood what love meant because I remember myself as a little girl; when mama and tata were holding me by my hands and I was in the middle laughing as they threw me high into the sky. Together they made me fly. Together they made my mother.

***Nobuhle hymms. Lights fade to show end of scene.***

## **Scene 2:**

***Nobuhle is wearing a blazer and she has a backpack on her back. She enters stage when she shouts:***

**Nobuhle (in conversation)** Makhulu ndizopheka kodwa ndisene English oral yesikolo ekufuneka ndiyibhalile...***(silently)*** duhh!!!  
***(Gran I will cook but I just need to finish writing my school English oral project)***

***Nobuhle moves to lie on the floor. She takes out her journal from her backpack when she starts writing.***

**Nobuhle:** For years, I always thought that my mother, Thulisa, somehow felt that way; scared and lonely. But then again, grandma and grandpa were there for her. I guess maybe she needed his support to. I tried fitting myself in her shoes and come to think of it, maybe that was the way she was feeling...claustrophobic while pregnant with me.

## **Scene 3:**

***Sound of children playing community street games are heard. Nobuhle enters stage shouting:***

**Nobuhle:** Segi, Fesi, Segi, Fesi  
***(I'm first! I'm second! I'm first! I'm second!)***

***Nobuhle runs out of stage.***

**Nobuhle:** I'm coming back grandma.

***Nobuhle enters stage again.***

**Nobuhle (slightly depressed)** Thirty!!!  
***(Oh well, I'm third then)***

***Nobuhle starts playing when she jumps up and down in the circle drawn on the floor.***

**Nobuhle (praise singing herself):** I am Manxuba, Rhudulu, Manjuza, Washota, Ncengane, Mdengentonga, Mdakomnyama ongeva ntsila. I was born by Manxuba, Rhudulu, Manjuza, Washota, Ncengane, Mdengentonga, Mdakomnyam' ongeva ntsila.

***Nobuhle stops hopping around the stage to wonder. In a moment of puzzlement, she thinks out loud.***

**Nobuhle:** A clan name. My clan name. It is the one thing that truly defines me. Belonging to a particular clan means that I have gained a lifetime inheritance from a certain group of people, the Manxuba's, Rhudulu's, Manjuza's Washota's who practice traditional customs that truly defines my existence. Some of these people are passed on people who will not only protect me from harms way, but will also guide me on my spiritual journey.

***Nobuhle notices a friend who disturbs her.***

**Nobuhle (impatient):** wait Funeka. My mom Thulisa once told me this is exactly how you play this game. Where was I again? ***(Continues to play)*** she who gave birth to Mamqoco, Jojo, Tiyeka, Butsolo bentonga, Zikhalimazembe, Mabombo ka Rharhabe and Gcaleka. She who gave birth to Majali, Nomlomo, Mampemvu. She who gave birth to Manxuba, Rhudulu, Manjuza, Washota, Ncengane, Mdengentonga, Mdakomnyam' ongeva ntsila. I am ***(stops and tries to think)*** Who am I?

***She stops to think, puzzled. Lights fade gently to show end of scene.***

**Scene 4:**

***Nobuhle enters stage walking as a pregnant Thullisa. She is dragging a chair in her hand. She hymms a tune. She places the chair corner stage left and***

***changes character to a bubbly Nobuhle who is miming to plat someone's hair.***

**Nobuhle:** There was this best friend of mine, Funeka. She always wanted me to plait her hair. She would come every seven o'clock every evening, knowing very well we had our supper at that time...what?...who? she really didn't care. It made it difficult for me to avoid sharing my plate of food with her; made me even wonder if she came to plait her hair or score herself a plate of my grandmother's best beef stew. I am fond of her though. She is the one friend I can really share my problems with. ***(starts whispering)*** I am not gossiping, but my friend is greedy; no wonder she is so fat. I mean, she scores a meal here at my home and will still have her supper at her home too afterwards. ***(to a seated Funeka whom she was plating)*** chomi before you eat can we at least pray...what do you mean pray for what....pray for the food that you are about to eat....really don't get how you are eating away with hair potentially falling on your food....***(Nobuhle prays)*** Just close your eyes friend....God please bless this food that we are about to eat in Jesus' name, Amen. ***(sits on chair to eat)*** Well I have my father to thank for that, oh okay my grandfather because he was the one who taught me how to pray and anyway at last week's sermon at Church the pastor highly advised us to pray for our meals so that we could be filled up. ***(to audience)*** In my case, it was very important that Funeka prays just so she could fill up quicker before finishing our food at home.

***Nobuhle eats two spoons, stands up and places her plate on the chair to continue plating Funeka when she remembers.***

**Nobuhle:** Hhe Funeka friend before I forget, I would have hoped to meet with the stranger I was often told I resemble the most. I would have hoped to meet with the one person who made me a reality. I would have hoped to meet with ***(a shouting grandmother interrupts)*** MA! MAKHULU!!! Okay gran I am coming. ***(to Funeka)*** shifter sana shifter. Can you see? It's hard for you to even stand up. You need to lose weight...***(shouts)*** Yes Gran I am coming. ***(to Funeka)*** Can you please help me wash the dishes? I will finish plaiting you when we are done...why must you always have this attitude when we have to wash the dishes? Don't be annoyed. No that's the only reason you seem to be a bit sour...oh okay, I'm sorry my friend...You are Beyonce and you are slender ke...come my friend, it'll only take a while.

***Lights fade gently. Nobuhle heads for exit mumbling as if talking to Funeka.***

### **Scene 5:**

***Nobuhle is playing a flute. She is in High School at an assembly. She sings.***

**Nobuhle (singing):** Sitshaba sa hesu...setshaba saSouth Africa. South Africa... Nkosi sikelel' iAfrica. Maluphakanyis' upondo lwayo. Yiva nemithandazo yethu. Nkosi, sikelela, thina lusapho lwayo.

***She reminisces and smiles.***

**Nobuhle:** Mthuthuzeli, a well known social activist at our school, in my community, in churches, etcetera. Singing 'Nkosi Sikelela to him was just not singing any national anthem, it was the one song that truly defined his status as the head of the SRC committee at our school Fezeka High which is situated just opposite the Ikhwezi Community Centre at Native Yard 2 in short Ny 2 here in Gugulethu. He would often lead the song and I, yes I, Nobuhle Ngenqu, would be there, standing behind him, ready to pick the song up from him. Mthuthuzeli had an angelic voice and like his name means, he had a soothing voice. His voice was so deep that he didn't have to kiss me to take me to cloud nine, if ever there is such a place. All he had to do was sing, chant, protest, debate and laugh, practically do almost anything to project his voice. As he sang, I would often fantasize about us lying on one bed as he whispers into my ear, probably proclaiming his unconditional love for me, Nobuhle Ngenqu. Oh how I wished, because I knew at that time I was dreaming, but who said anything about dreams not coming true. I was living proof that they actually do. In no time at all, Mthuthuzeli was mine. As much as I had my voice to thank for being able to wrap him around my little finger, but there was something so distinctive about the way in which he introduced himself. It truly showed that he was a true reflection of a Xhosa man; and on our first official encounter.....

***Nobuhle changes character to being Mthuthuzeli.***

**Mthuthuzeli:** I am so happy to meet you sis' Nobuhle. I am ***(starts praise singing himself)*** Bhungane, Mashwabada, Mthimkhulu, Radebe. I am Mthuthuzeli...and I am so very happy to meet you lady.

***Mthuthuzeli changes character to Nobuhle.***

**Nobuhle:** Not only was I impressed by the fact that he respected women by calling me sis' Nobuhle, but as he continued to tell me from which clan he belonged, I felt a strong spiritual connection that he was the one...the one for me and maybe even the future father of my children. Something about how he said his clan name reassured me that we were meant to be. Well, as he continuously assured me about how excited he was to have met such an amazingly talented young songbird and helping him sing to his favorite song was no issue. He would often lead the song and I, yes I Nobuhle Ngenqu would be there standing behind him ready to pick the song up from his singing.....

***Nobuhle starts to sing.***

**Nobuhle:** Setsaba saHesu. Setshaba saSouth Africa...

***She continues to sing when she notices the principal awarding her the prefect badge.***

**Nobuhle:** Yes sir! With pleasure sir. Thank you sir. I doubt that writing down names of all the naughty students would be too much of a problem sir; I will start with Funeka's name who is standing right behind me sir.

***She continues to sing looking at her badge when she positions herself to mime as if she is seated in a desk and writing. She is proofreading the English oral essay she was working on earlier in the story. As she is going over her work, the teacher calls her when she looks up to answer.***

**Nobuhle:** Miss? Yes Miss I am ready!

***She stands up to head to her educator.***

### **Scene 5.1**

***Nobuhle's voice is heard in voice over when she is miming that she is standing with a page in her hand.***

**V/O:** Apparently in grade 11, every student had to do an English oral about their family tree in front of the whole class. This was to test one's knowledge about who they were. Well, my story about knowing who I was was a bit different...it was interesting. It was different from all the stories that I had listened to as my classmates recited in an oral format.

**Nobuhle:** And with my story I thought about my mother, Thullisa. I mean; not even a mention of his name. I wondered though is this was based on spitefulness or the thought of her telling me about him didn't even cross her mind even after seventeen years. I would hear my friends at primary school....

***Nobuhle changes character to being Noluthando.***

**Noluthando:** Me and my daddy went to Spur and we had ribs. And we ate and ate and ate. I was so full afterwards. And we had ice-cream. Then we went to the park and I played on all the merry go rounds like this ...***(she demonstrates in excitement)***

***Noluthando changes character to being a shy Nobuhle who has just heard what Noluthando just said. She then feels pressured to say something about her own father who happens to be her grandfather.***

**Nobuhle (an eight year old):** So my father said to me that now that I am growing up, I should be the one going to the shop to go and buy him his paper. So on Saturday he said....

***Nobuhle changes character to being her grandfather.***

**Grandfather:** You see my child, you must go and but me The Argus from the shop. It is your new duty. So before you cross the street of Ny 7, you need to look left, right and left again. Come let me hold your hand and let's go and but the paper together for now.

***Grandfather changes back to Nobuhle.***

**Nobuhle:** Well that's all I had to say when a very outspoken friend of mine at the time; Noluthando shouted...

***Nobuhle immediately changes character to being Noluthando.***

**Noluthando (dramatically and rather confrontational)** Nobuhle you are lying. You are lying. We all know that you don't have a father. It's your grandfather that you are telling us about. Why are you lying?!

***Noluthando changes character to being a disturbed Nobuhle. As she calms herself down while still reading a page from the essay she wrote as her family tree.***

**Nobuhle:** Even if I was the one who told her about the absence of my father in my life, it was never her place to do what she did. In high school, history seemed to repeat itself, hence I felt the need to do something and eradicate being the joke amongst my friends when every time I tell a story about my grandfather, who plays the role of being my father, I am bitterly reminded by my friends that he is not.

## **Scene 5.2**

***Nobuhle is still reading her oral English essay to her class.***

**Nobuhle:** And now it's time to tell my story about my journey to finding out who I am. As much as it is painful to see the way things are now, having sis'Vuyiswa, a very close friend of my mother's from way back, in our home, as a constant visitor was in a strange way a God sent. Because of the assignment I got given at school, she was an immediate person to interview on what she knew about my father.

***Nobuhle moves around the stage making school bells sounds and miming to be ringing the bell. She stands as she starts to see people coming into the school gate. She greets them as they are rushing for assembly.***

**Nobuhle:** Hello...run you are going to be late...

***She continues to energetically ring the bell.***

**Nobuhle:** Hello...run...be careful you don't fall....

***She continues to energetically ring the bell. She starts dropping her pace when she mimes to be watching something from a distance....a slightly far away distance.***

**Nobuhle (deep in thought):** I remember the days when I would be on duty at school as I would watch other children being dropped off by their two loving parents and I would fantasize it happening to me.



***Nobuhle, in slow motion follows with her eyes the child that just entered the school premises.***

**Nobuhle:** Hello...run...you are late...

### **Scene 6:**

***Thulisa is seated with her two friends and she is chatting with them.***

**Thulisa:** Nomsa and Vuyiswa; that was Zandi...the famous Zandile who is dating Thando...pretty? What do you mean she is pretty? Yes, you can say she is neat but not pretty...why must you girls always feel intimidated by model C girls who seem to be better?...

***Thulisa looks to her left where the chair is placed. She uses the chair to be the character Vuyiswa.***

**Vuyiswa:** She is not that great actually.

***Vuyiswa changes character to being Thuliswa.***

**Thuliswa:** You are quite right Vuyiswa. She is not that great for real besides the fact that her parents went to exile and started a taxi business in the township upon their return. ***(pushes Nomsa aside)*** wait let me tell you about that girl... Thando says that even though she may be standing in what seems to be a mansion, she is actually imprisoned. Thando says that her parents make her watch the news on TV and read more of it in the newspapers. Thando says she is constantly reading books from the library...I mean where do you think she gets her big vocabulary from? Listen guys, Thando says she is boring, with a capital B because half the time when Thando ask her to go out with him to Yellow Door in Gugulethu by the Eyona Supermarket in Ny 1, she always makes excuses; she doesn't make means to go like I do. And anyway, Thando said he has always wanted a girlfriend who could sing like me....Nomso just shut, don't you dare come and irritate me here...did I call Thando or he came to me?...oh give me a break Nomsa; what do you want to be her friend?...in fact come to think of it, why don't we bring her closer as your friend and obviously our enemy....Zandile has another thing coming, she better know that Thulisa is the name and I am the only original.

***Lights change to create a different mood and scene.***

### **Scene 6.1**

***Thulisa seem to be in Thando's room when she notices Zandile entering the gate.***

**Thulisa(panicking):** Thando please wake up ***(watching through the window)*** Zandi is entering the gate...Thando I've finished dressing up, please wake up... Thando why are you so cool about this, do want Zandi to beat me?...Thando she is

going to beat me, please wake up. Thando...what must I do...I have already taken the key out of the door...please just wake up!

***Thulisa changes character to being Zandi who is knocking on the door. She is soft spoken.***

**Zandile (Knocking on the door)** Thando it is me Zandile. Baby can you please open the door? Thando please baby it's quite chilled out her...open up. Thando are you there? Thando?...Thando?

***Zandile changes character to a panicking Thulisa. Just when Zandile is about to open the door, Thulisa goes back into the time when she was with her friends Nomsa and Vuyiswa.***

**Thulisa (shocked still in the moment when Zandile was about to open the door at Thando's place):** Sipho watch where you are going. Where do you think this is? Can't you see we are standing here? You are such an irritant boy. Fuck you..come girls lets all go to our classes.

**Vuyiswa:** Thuli you are so vulgar, one would doubt that you are a church girl.

**Thulisa:** Whatever Vuyiswa and anyway this is not me at church, I am at school. Nomsa stop dragging your feet, start walking and hurry up.

***Lights fade to show end of scene.***

### **Scene 7:**

***Nobuhle is in her classroom still reading her English oral presentation of her family tree.***

**Nobuhle:** Well that was partly what sisVuyiswa, my mother's friend from way back, told me about my mother's conduct at school, the very same school that I am attending. Apart from having a stunning voice, an inheritance I received from her as an infant, she has a striking personality too. It was striking so much so she managed to wrap my father around her not so little finger. **(She smiles)** I am grateful to have her as my mother though, I mean, there are a lot of similarities that she and I share, I think. Maybe that's why Mthuthuzeli saw me striking because I had her features...damn my mother looked hot back in the day. **(she holds up her hands as if looking at a picture)**

***Lights change for scene change when Nobuhle is with Mthuthuzeli.***