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### *Penalty Shoot Out*

One day, Mrs Chauke received a phone call from Sekhunyané. Her sister was ill and needed her help.

When she told Papa, he agreed that she should go to Sekhunyané to look after her sister.

When Ma was ready to leave, she called for Khanyisa but Misaveni said she wasn't home.

'Why isn't she home yet?'

Where is she?

I'm going to be away a few days and she will have to do the cooking.'

'She's still at school, Ma. She's at soccer practice.'

'Oh soccer again! She'll have to give that up while I'm away and take care of the family like a good daughter.'

'But Ma, she can't cook.'

'Nonsense. She's fifteen. She can cook.'

'No, she can't. We're going to starve.'

Just then Khanyisa came in and went straight to the refrigerator to get some juice.

'Khanyisa, you are going to have to give up your soccer for a few days,' M a began.

'Oh no, Ma, I can't do that. We are getting ready for the schools' tournament which begins on Saturday and I need all the practice I can get.'

'I'm sorry Khanyisa, but you are my eldest child and you have to take care

of the family while I am away.’

‘Ma, you can’t go away now. The tournament...’

‘Your aunt, Nyeleti, is ill and needs me. I am leaving now. I have made a menu for you so you will know what to cook everyday.’

‘But Ma ...,’ Khanyisa was upset.

‘You’re a big girl. You have responsibilities in the house. If you don’t learn now, when will you learn?’ Then Ma went outside to where Papa was waiting in the car.

When Papa came back after dropping Ma off, Khanyisa appealed to him. ‘Papa, Ma says I can’t go to soccer practice and the tournament starts on Saturday.

She says I must stay home and cook.’

Khazamula who had come into the kitchen exclaimed, ‘Cook! You cook! Oh no, Papa, please save us from that.’

Misaveni chimed in, ‘Save us! Save us!’

Papa laughed. ‘All right. Now listen to me Khanyisa, I will take care of the cooking but you must promise me that when the soccer tournament is over you will learn to cook.’

Khanyisa threw her arms around her father. ‘I promise. I promise. Thank you, Papa. Thank you.’

And Misaveni and Khazamula chimed in, ‘Thank you, Papa. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.’

Papa shook his head and laughed.

The next afternoon, Khazamula and his friends were in the empty plot kicking the ball around. Khazamula could see Khanyisa with her teammates at the other end. While the other girls were kicking and passing, Khanyisa, who kicked very well and with

**both feet, was doing high jumps over a rope held by two of her teammates.**

**She was working on gaining height.**

**As a goalkeeper, she needed to be able to jump and dive to stop balls going into the net.**

**And she trained hard.**

**When she wasn't on the field, she went off to the College gym to work with weights.**

**Khazamula admired her because she was a good goalie but he wished she would be like other girls and learn to cook instead.**

**He didn't realize that Khanyisa was as determined as he was to make soccer her career.**

On Saturday morning, Papa dropped Khazamula and Khanyisa off at Edwin Ndambe High School, the only school in Mangombe with a soccer pitch. They were both nervous and excited. Khanyisa was playing in the senior girls' division and Khazamula in the junior boys' division.

As there was only the one football field, the fixtures would take more than a week to complete.

They needed the whole of the Easter Holiday for the tournament.

They didn't play on Good Friday but the finals would be on Easter Monday.

As they got out at the gate, Khazamula asked, 'Papa, are you coming back to watch?' Papa looked at him with a mock serious expression, 'Oh no, I won't be able to.

I have to stay home and do the cooking.'

'Oh Papa.'

Khanyisa gave him a little punch on the shoulder.

Papa grinned, 'Of course, I'll be back.'

How could I miss a tournament in which the future Bafana and Banyana stars are playing? Good luck,' Papa called out as he was driving off, 'I hope you make it to the finals.'

And they did. Khanyisa's team had had no real opposition but they knew that they would face a strong team in the final. Khazamula's team had had one or two close calls, but they made it to the finals as well. The junior boys' division final would be the first of the matches to be played on Easter Monday morning.

That would be followed by the girls' final and lastly the senior boys' game. Papa was very proud of his son and daughter.

When he boasted to his friends, some of them frowned.

'How can you let your daughter play football?

She should be learning our traditions instead.'

Papa laughed, 'Well, that is our family tradition. My sister plays football with the men in her village and she introduced Khanyisa to the game. From the time she was a little girl, Khanyisa has wanted to be a goalie like her aunt.'

On

Monday morning, Khazamula and Khanyisa were up early.

Khanyisa had to drag Misaveni out of bed.

She wasn't interested in going to the grounds but Papa insisted.

She had to be there to support her brother and sister.

'It's going to be boring,' she grumbled.

'No, it won't be. I want you to take photographs of the occasion and then put them all together in an album so Mother can see what she missed.'

Misaveni sighed, 'Okay, Papa.'

At the grounds, Papa and Misaveni took their places on the open stand. Misaveni had a

store of chocolates, sweets, chips and juices to compensate for being there.

She pulled out the camera and began to look at the crowd through it.

Just as she turned towards the covered stand, she saw the junior boys' teams coming through the tunnel.

She took a picture and when Khazamula came running in, she zoomed in on him.

During the match, she kept the focus on her little brother and whenever he got possession of the ball, she jumped up and began yelling, 'Look out, Khazamula, a defender is going to tackle you.'

When he lost the ball, she collapsed on her seat, 'I warned him, Papa.

I warned him.'

Papa smiled quietly to himself.

Then suddenly Khazamula was streaking along the sideline towards the goal box.

Misaveni, with camera in hand, jumped up and kept the focus on her brother.

Defenders tried to tackle him but he dribbled around them, fooled them and entered the scoring area. The goalie came out and tried to grab the ball off his feet but Khazamula, too quick for him, smashed the ball into the back of the net. Misaveni jumped about screaming with enthusiasm.

'That's my brother!

That's my brother!'

Khazamula repeated his feat twice more and Misaveni was delirious with excitement.

Khazamula was the hero of the game.

Papa laughed, 'Calm down, girl. Save something for your sister's match.'

But Misaveni had become a raving fan and during the girls' match, she grabbed a vuvuzela and made the biggest din each time Khanyisa stopped an attempt at goal. The girls' teams were evenly matched and at the end arrived at a goalless draw.

That meant a penalty shoot out.

When Misaveni saw Khanyisa standing alone in the goal mouth facing the striker from the rival team, she screamed, 'That's not fair.'

Papa, why are they doing that?'

'It's the only way to decide the winner. Each goalkeeper has to face five goal kicks and the one who saves the most, wins the match for her team.'

Misaveni sat frozen watching Khanyisa face the first goal kick. Papa had to take the camera from her. Khanyisa stood there concentrating on the ball; she wasn't going to let the striker fool her with tricky movements.

The striker stepped back, ran forward and shot the ball towards the left corner.

Khanyisa was ready for her and as the ball flew up, she dived to her left and pushed the ball away.

Misaveni, tears running down her cheeks, grabbed somebody's vuvuzela and made a huge din.

Then the other goalkeeper stepped into the goalmouth for her first turn.

She too saved the first goal.

Then it was Khanyisa's turn again.

'Papa, I don't think I can watch this,' Misaveni cried and covered her head with her arms.

She looked up only when there was a general shout as Khanyisa caught the ball that was coming straight at her.

As the goalkeepers took their turns, Misaveni became so tense that Papa had to put his arm around her and hold her close.

When the other goalkeeper didn't save the fourth ball, Misaveni shouted, 'Yay, we win.'

'No Misaveni, each side still has one more try.'

Khanyisa took her place in the middle of the goalmouth and she watched as the opposing striker placed the ball, moved back, ran up and kicked. Khanyisa could see the ball flying high to the right. It was out of reach. It would defeat her but her eyes flashed with anger.

'You are not going to get away ball,' she shouted and threw herself with all her might at the flying missile.

Her fingers just touched it but it was enough to deflect its flight and it flew over the bar.

Misaveni fell back against Papa, 'I saved it, Papa.

I saved the goal.'

**After the games, Papa took them to a restaurant to celebrate. When Khanyisa asked Misaveni how she had enjoyed the day, she just shrugged.**

**'Soccer is so boring.'**