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Opening Script

Bold RED patterns the sky as the sun rises through township SMOG.

Ha-di-da's (African laughing birds) fly through.

SHEAVES of NEWSPAPER catch an updraft and gust against the sunrise: coming together and blowing apart.

PANNING lower we find SYMMETRICAL HOUSES placed close together.

AND LOWER STILL...

To the STREET below where CHILDREN in crisp uniforms leave for school. WOMEN of all ages head off to work. MINIVANS career fast and trails of dust plume through the scene.

A POSTMAN cycles along the road. We are on:

EXT. TSAKANE TOWNSHIP/ROAD – DAY

THREE TATTY TOWNSHIP DOGS chase after the postman's bike barking.

INT. SANDRA'S HOUSE - DAY

SANDRA LAING is at the stove, cooking pap (porridge). She is a light skinned, beautiful black woman in her mid thirties.

Morning sun casts a shaft of amber light across the wall catching a shelf of FRUIT PRESERVES.

SANDRA
Come on, everyone.

TRACKING through the house we see JOHANNES, Sandra's husband, sitting on the couch polishing his shoes fast.

Onwards through a small doorway into:

A TINY ROOM

Where STEVE and ANTHONY are rousing themselves from slumber.

Anthony is a handsome boy of eleven. Steve is seven.

STEVE
But, it's holidays.

SANDRA (V/O)
Come on, come on, pap's hot.
The boys tumble out of bed groaning.

CUT TO:

PAP slapping onto plates with tomato gravy. REVEAL a tiny table in a small corner. Family chaos as everyone sits down to eat.

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SANDRA (to Anthony)

I want that report this morning, okay? I know you brought it home.

Anthony drags himself away from the table, he's going to be in trouble. Sandra picks up Steve's report and looks at it again, full of pride.

SANDRA (cont'd)

English went from B to A. Four A's.

Steve beams. Anthony returns, places his report in front of Sandra.

SANDRA (cont'd) (scrutinizing)

Five D's!

ANTHONY

Ja, but there's also a C.

SANDRA

For woodwork!

(to Johannes)

That's it! He's going into a white school.

JOHANNES

No, it's too far.

ANTHONY

I want to go to a white school!

We HEAR a BELL from the street outside as:

EXT. TOWNSHIP STREET – DAY

The postman draws up at Sandra's house. From the street it looks small, but it is neat and bordered by lawn making it a patch of bright green in this otherwise dusty landscape.

The postman wheels his bike up to the house. The neighbors

DOGS bark, straining at their chains.

INT. SANDRA'S HOUSE - DAY

Sandra stands in the doorway.

POSTMAN

Lots of bills today, Sandra!

SANDRA

Ja, and what's new?

He puts a pile in her hand. Sandra rifles through. In between the bills is a letter. Turning back into the kitchen she stares at the envelope. The hand holding the letter begins to shake. Sandra is immobilized.

JOHANNES (concerned)

What is it, Sandra?

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SANDRA (still in shock)
A letter from my mother.

Both look at each other. Sandra gives him the letter. She cannot open it. Johannes reads it, then looks up. She sees it is bad news.

JOHANNES (very gently)
Your father died.

Sandra covers her mouth with her hands. Anthony picks up the letter and reads it.

ANTHONY
'Don't try and contact us. Let the past remain with the past. Please God all is well with you.
Your Ma. Sannie.'

A dull silence in the room.

STEVE
What are you going to do, Ma?

SANDRA (suddenly determined)
I must try and find her.

JOHANNES (softly)
Sandra... listen to what it says. The past is the past...