

Culture Shock

By

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An Original short film.

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EXT. SCHOOL - DAY - ESTABLISHING

A slightly run-down high school on a grey, dreary day. Rain falls, creating puddles of water on the ground. The voice of NOTHANDO ZINDWEZE for the first time...

NOTHANDO (V.O)  
Dear grandma...

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

The classroom isn't as run-down looking as the exterior. A few posters cover the walls.

About twenty-five students sit in the classroom, all of them talking loudly amongst each other.

NOTHANDO, a dark-skinned teenage girl writes hurriedly across her refill pad. The two boys sitting next to her, BILLY and SHAUN try and have a conversation over her head.

NOTHANDO (V.O)  
I am at school now. Have been back  
for about three weeks now.

EXT. OLD HOUSE - DAY

An OLD LADY, also darker in complexion checks her mailbox-- A letter lies in the bottom. The letter is addressed "Mrs. Zindweze, 41 Dame Street, Harare, Zimbabwe."

The old lady smiles.

INT. OLD HOUSE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The Old lady sits down in her one-room house, which is decorated simply.

She opens the letter, starting to read.

NOTHANDO (V.O)  
I'm at school now. Have been back  
for about three weeks. I love the  
school system here.

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

Nothando still writes her letter in the noisy classroom.

NOTHANDO (V.O)

Everything is so in control. All  
the children are very focused on  
their work.

A paper ball hits Nothando square on the forehead. The kids  
around her laugh. She shrugs it off, continuing with her  
letter.

NOTHANDO (V.O)

My english is getting alot better.  
I can write for ages without having  
any t... tr...

She stops, not able to think of the spelling.

Billy snatches the letter from her grasp. He writes a word  
on the letter-- "trouble."

Billy flings the letter back at Nothando.

BILLY

Don't they teach you to spell in  
Zimbabwe? Education a bit hard to  
come by?

The surrounding kids laugh.

NOTHANDO (V.O)

I can write for ages without having  
any trouble. I owe it to my teacher  
who is always here to help me  
whenever I need it.

Nothando looks up at the empty teacher's desk.

The class suddenly quieten down, signalling the arrival of  
the strict, control-freak of an english tacher, MISS  
BUNDERFALL.

She stands in the doorway, lips pursed, glaring at any  
student that makes eye contact.

MISS BUNDERFALL

(Sternly)

I expected better from all of you.

Miss Bunderfall walks down the row of desks, glancing  
quickly at Nothando.

Nothando goes back to her letter.

NOTHANDO (V.O)  
Miss Bunderfall is a great teacher.

EXT. SCHOOL TENNIS COURTS - DAY

It's lunchtime at the school. Teenagers walk in groups talking loudly amongst each other. Many students play ball games with their friends. Rugby, soccer, basketball.

Nothando walks along the courts, by herself, glancing nervously around. She spots a group of girls playing netball on the far side of the tennis courts.

INT. OLD HOUSE - DAY

The Old lady reads the letter, a cup of tea in hand.

NOTHANDO (V.O)  
I love playing my favorite game,  
netball with the girls.

EXT. SCHOOL TENNIS COURTS - DAY

Nothando watches the girls playing netball from a distance. One of the girls spots Nothando watching. She turns around, deliberately shunning Nothando.

Nothando picks her backpack back up, continuing with her walk.

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

Nothando's english class sit in complete silence. They busy themselves with writing.

Miss Bunderfall sits behind her desk, keeping a watchful eye on her students.

Nothando works on her letter.

NOTHANDO (V.O)  
When I'm finished my work, the  
teacher lets me write the letter.

Miss Bunderfall suddenly shoots up from her desk, pointing an accusing finger at Nothando.

MISS BUNDERFALL  
 Nothando! Put that letter away and  
 get working on your creative  
 writing!

All heads turn on Nothando. She nods, retrieving her english book. She heads up the page "Creative writing assessment."

INT. OLD HOUSE - DAY

NOTHANDO (V.O)  
 She likes the idea of me writing to  
 you each month.

The Old lady smiles at this.

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

Miss Bunderfall continues watching Nothando. Finally she is satisfied that the girl will keep doing the work.

EXT. SCHOOL FIELD - DAY

Another lunchtime. Nothando sits alone on a fence, with her lunchbox out. She opens it-- a banana, a sandwich and a bag of chips.

NOTHANDO (V.O)  
 I am making lots of friends. The  
 children over here have been very  
 nice to me.

She is about to pick up a sandwich, when a ball knocks the food out her hand. The food lands on the ground with a splat.

A group of boys laugh at her misfortune. Nothando glances at the soccer ball which knocked the food out of her hand.

One of the laughing boys approaches Nothando, giggling and retrieves his soccer ball. He looks at her, disgusted.

BOY  
 (sarcastic)  
 Sorry.

He turns, joins his friends where they continue on, laughing amongst themselves.

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

The class is once again in silence.

Miss Bunderfall, herself is seated behind her desk, marking the creative writing tasks.

NOTHANDO (V.O)

I am doing very well at school. I am one of the top students in my class.

INSERT: MISS BUNDERFALL'S HAND WRITING "NOT ACHIEVED" ON NOTHANDO'S CREATIVE WRITING.

NOTHANDO (V.O)

The kids were all shocked to see how good my english is.

Billy taps Nothando's shoulder.

BILLY

Can you even talk?

Nothando ignores him.

BILLY

(shrugging)

Didn't think so.

Over Nothando's shoulder, Billy reads the letter.

Noticing he's reading, she looks up. Billy looks away, quickly. After she turns away, Billy continues reading.

Slowly, a confused look develops on his face.

BILLY

You're a lying bitch.

Nothando doesn't look up. She continues writing, her expression un-readable, showing no emotion.

BILLY

You're fake. You're nothing. All you do is lie to your grandmother. If you don't like the life here, why don't you just piss off home? Why do you lie?

She remains silent, but the writing has ceased. Her hand has stopped its elegant movement across the page.

Billy looks away, giving up.

NOTHANDO  
 (emotionless)  
 She's sick.

INT. OLD HOUSE - DAY

The Old lady coughs-- blood is protruded onto the letter.

EXT. SCHOOL FIELD - DAY

Nothando sits alone. She tenses herself up, trying to warm herself.

A LONER, a teenage boy, sits a few meters away from her.

Nothando shuffles over. The boy doesn't respond. She taps him on the shoulder. He looks up.

NOTHANDO (V.O)  
 I hope everything is okay with you.  
 I don't know what I would do if  
 they were not.

Nothando smiles at the loner. Slowly, he smiles back.

NOTHANDO  
 Hey.

LONER  
 Hey.

INT. OLD HOUSE - DAY

The Old lady lies on the ground, motionless. In her limp hand is the letter.

NOTHANDO (V.O)  
 Love from, your darling  
 granddaughter, Nothando.

FADE OUT:

THE END.