

District Six to Bo-Kaap

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One, two, three, four.

One, two, three, four.

Riedwaan was in his backyard practicing the dance.

One, two, three, four.

One, two, three, four.

He was dressed in his minstrel's outfit.

One, two, three, four.

One, two, three, four.

Riedwaan marched rhythmically.

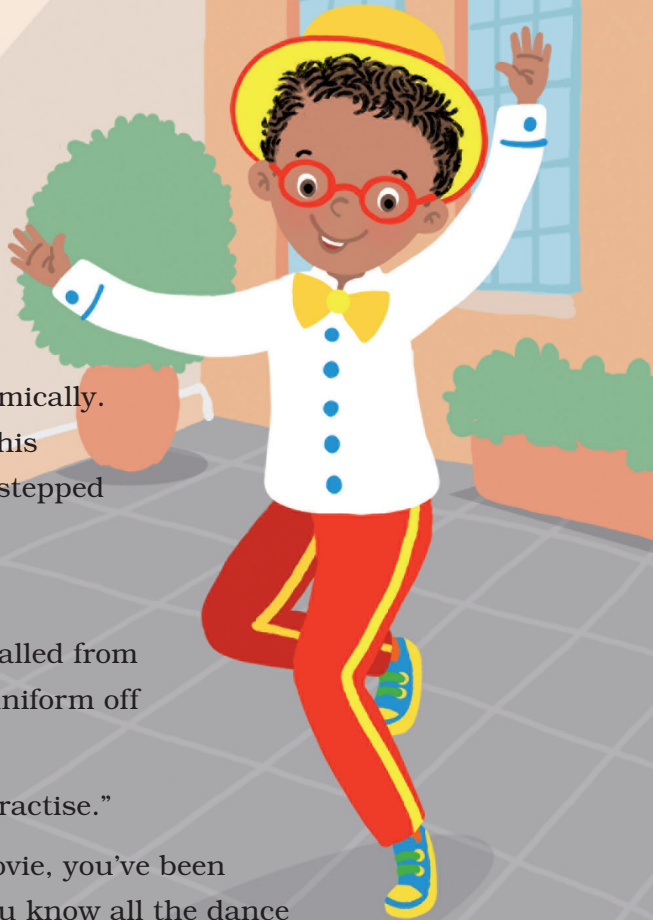
He stepped forward with his right foot, then back. He stepped to the left, then back.

One, two, three, four.

“Riedwaan,” his mother called from the kitchen. “Take your uniform off before you mess on it.”

“But Mummy. I need to practise.”

His mother smiled. “My lovie, you’ve been practicing for months. You know all the dance steps. Now come in and change.”





It was New Year's Eve, the last day of the year. Everybody would be staying up late to count down to the new year at midnight. That night, the Cupido household was abuzz with excitement and activities. Riedwaan stood in his backyard and watched his aunts and uncles, and cousins and friends laughing and dancing with each other. His father stood at the braai and turned over the most delicious meat Riedwaan had ever smelled. Smoke swirled into the starry night sky.

"Why are you standing there?" Riedwaan's mother asked.

"Why aren't you playing with your friends?"

"I'm going now, Mummy. I'm just thinking about the parade."

She hugged him tight. "Don't be worried. You've been practising for so long, I don't think anyone knows the dances better than you."

"Even Oupa Issie?"

"Even Oupa Issie, and he's the troupe leader. You can ask him tomorrow when he comes. Now, go play."

And that's exactly what Riedwaan ran off to do. It was brilliant. Their games only stopped twice – first to eat and then as the clocks approached midnight and the countdown began.

People blew whistles and ran into the streets banging pots and pans together. Others broke out into traditional songs and even a few Christmas carols.

The next morning, Riedwaan's mother called from the doorway. She held out her phone. "It's Oupa Issie. He wants to talk to you."

"Oupa?" Riedwaan ran up to his mother and put the phone to his ear. "Hello, Oupa Issie."

"Hey, my boy. Happy New Year."

"Happy New Year, Oupa. Where are you?"

"Ey, you know, Oupa is getting clumsy in his old age. I had a little fall."

Riedwaan was concerned. "Oh no."

"Don't worry. I'm okay. Just sprained my ankle. And Ouma Mina made me some tasty malva pudding to make me feel better."

"Your ankle?"



"I'm sorry, my boy, but I won't be in the parade this year."

"But ... this is my first parade. And we were supposed to do it together."

"I know, my boy. I'm sorry. I'll make it up to you. I promise."

A dejected Riedwaan trudged back to the bedroom. Mummy and Daddy did everything they could to lift his spirits, but nothing was working. For the first time, he wasn't looking forward to participating in the parade. The day went by fast, as did the night. And before he knew it, it was ... Tweede Nuwejaar!

It was a hot, hot, hot day. Riedwaan was woken by his father calling up to him.

“Riedwaan! There’s a present for you.”

Riedwaan hurried into the kitchen and found his mother and father there with huge smiles on their faces. His father handed him a long box. Riedwaan unwrapped the gift and opened the box. He reached in and pulled out a brightly decorated baton, with tassels and tufts, and bobbles and bells.

“This ... this is Oupa Issie’s baton.”

He looked at his father with confusion.

“And Ouma Mina made you this.” His mother handed him a jacket. It was striped with every colour of the rainbow.

“That’s like Oupa’s jacket. The troupe leader’s jacket.”



“Yip. That’s because Oupa Issie wants you to lead the troupe today,” Mummy said.

“Lead? I can’t lead!”

“Oupa has led ever since he was your age. You’re thirteen, right?”

Riedwaan laughed. “No, Mummy. You know I’m only seven!”

“So? You know all the steps, better than anyone else, I’d say,” his father chipped in.

This was true, Riedwaan thought.

“Now, go get ready,” Mummy said. “The troupe leader can’t be late.”

Riedwaan could barely contain his excitement as he sprinted up the stairs to change.



Riedwaan and his troupe stood in District Six, where the parade would begin. There were thousands of minstrels, hundreds of troupes, all dressed in brightly coloured jackets and hats. Some had large crowns of feathers like peacocks, and others had their faces painted. And the noise! Oh, the wonderful noise. The singing, the trumpets, the whistles, the drums, the tambourines. It was so beautiful, but at the same time, it made Riedwaan very nervous.

His father could see just how nervous he was. He wrapped his arm around Riedwaan's shoulders and made him face Table Mountain behind them.



“You know that mountain, son?” he asked.

“Of course I do, Daddy,” Riedwaan responded. “It’s Table Mountain.”

“Exactly, and all of us – thousands of us are around the table because we’re family. And you’re not nervous in front of your family, are you?”

Riedwaan smiled. He never thought of it like that.

“Of course not.”

“Good.” His father pulled out his cell phone and there, on a video call, were his grandparents. They were dressed in their own minstrel’s outfits. Oupa was sitting on his favourite chair with his bandaged foot raised and Ouma was standing next to him.

Ouma began marching around Oupa and his chair, blowing on a whistle.

Oupa smiled. “We’re parading with you, my boy.”

His father smiled and slipped the phone into his top pocket. “All the way from District Six to Bo-Kaap.”

And suddenly, Riedwaan wasn’t nervous anymore.



They marched past City Hall and across the Grand Parade, up into Darling, Adderley and Wale Streets and then to the Bo-Kaap where the parade ended. The colourful houses reminded Riedwaan of toy building blocks. And the entire time, he could hear Ouma Mina's whistle in his pocket.