

LO: Comprehension - Journey to Jo'burg Chapter 12

As the car now jerked its way back to the town over the rough roads, Mma cradled Dineo in her arms, whispering soft words to her. Naledi held Dineo's little hand, stroking and playing gently with her fingers. But the little girl made no response. Each minute on the way to the hospital now seemed important. What if they got there just a minute too late? That couldn't happen... could it?

At last they were travelling through the town, and then out into the open again, until there at last was a cluster of low white buildings with a few trees and bushes scattered between them. Some people were waiting by the roadside outside the hospital, and as soon as Mma and Naledi climbed out of the car, an old man came hobbling over to the driver. He was followed by others and almost immediately the car, packed tight with people, was rumbling off back to the town.

Naledi stayed close to Mma as she made her way past people sitting or lying down on the ground in front of the buildings. A lady with a thin blanket wrapped over her shoulders pointed the way.

Around the corner they found the queue of patients. It led up to a verandah where a woman in white sat at a desk.

"Is that the doctor for Dineo?" Naledi whispered.

Mma shook her head. "No. We must get a card first. The doctor is inside."

The queue moved very slowly as people shuffled forward after every few minutes. Some patients, who were too weak to stand, lay wedged against the wall and had to be helped along. Just in front of Mma and Naledi was a young woman with a small baby tied in a blanket to her back. Naledi wondered if the woman or the baby was the patient.



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The sun shone down on the queue. Mma tried to screen Dineo from the glare, but the heat seemed to soak in everywhere and Dineo began to whimper. Mma tried rocking her gently, while Naledi tried singing her little songs which had always made her laugh. However, now Dineo didn't even seem to hear them...

When finally it was Mma's turn at the desk, Naledi relaxed a little. Now Dineo could go inside and be given medicine. But when Mma led the way down a corridor and into a room filled with far more people than had been outside, Naledi felt panic grip her.

"Are all these people before Dineo, Mma?" she cried, softly.

"They are also very sick, Naledi. We must be patient."

They were lucky to find space on a bench next to the young woman with the baby. She didn't look much older than Grace, thought Naledi.

It was the young woman who spoke first.

"It's always long to wait. I was here before with my baby and now he's sick again."

"What's the problem?" Mma asked.

"Last time the doctor said he must have more milk,

but I've no money to buy it."

Mma sighed. "I think it's the same sickness with my child."

Retrieval

- 1) What did the lady who pointed the way have wrapped round her ?
- 2) What use to make Dineo laugh ?

Words in context

- 3) Find and copy a word which means 'a roofed area attached to the outside of a house'.
- 4) Find and copy a word which means 'fix in position'.

Inference

- 5) Why did every minute on the way to the hospital seem important ?
- 6) Why did Naledi relax and then almost immediately begin to panic again ?
- 7) Why does Mma sigh when she says 'I think it's the same sickness with my child' ?

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