



# Ntatemoholo's Star Blanket

Michelle Sephofane



Naledi and Ntatemoholo sit snugly wrapped in colorful Basotho blankets. The last light of day paints the Maloti Mountains in deep purples and oranges behind them, while the first twinkling stars begin to dot the enormous sky above their family land. Naledi, her eyes wide with wonder, looks up at the emerging Milky Way, a shimmering river of light.



Ntatemoholo, with a joyful twinkle in his eye, gestures grandly towards the night sky. He explains that long ago, their ancestors used the stars as a map and calendar, working with them instead of just looking at them. Naledi leans forward, her curiosity sparking like a tiny star.



Ntatemoholo points with a gentle hand to four bright stars forming a clear cross in the sky. He tells Naledi these are Dithutlwa, the Giraffes, used by travelers to find their way South, ensuring no one ever got lost on their journeys between villages. Naledi imagines tiny giraffes guiding people across the land.



Next, Ntatemoholo guides Naledi's gaze to a beautiful cluster of stars, explaining they are Selemela, the Pleiades. He describes how their ancestors knew that when Selemela appeared at dawn, it was time to plant the seeds for a bountiful harvest. Naledi pictures the earth waking up, ready for new life.



Ntatemoholo points to another small, clustered group of stars. These, he explains, are Likhokoso, the Grinding Stones, signaling that the maize is ready for harvest. Naledi can almost hear the rhythmic sound of grinding stones, imagining the busy preparation of food.



He then shows Naledi Moshawana, the Little Herd, a bright star surrounded by smaller ones. Ntatemoholo shares how herders would watch this star, knowing its low position in the sky meant rain was coming and it was time to bring their cattle closer to home. Naledi sees little star-cattle following their celestial guide.



Ntatemoholo's voice fills with pride as he explains that this star wisdom wasn't magic, but clever science. Their ancestors carefully observed, measured, and remembered the stars' movements, passing down this incredible knowledge through generations. Naledi listens intently, her face full of admiration for her clever ancestors.



Naledi's understanding of the sky has completely changed; it's no longer just pretty, but a wise and ancient guide. She looks up at the twinkling expanse with new eyes, realizing it's a living map, a detailed calendar, and a giant textbook. "So... our people were scientists of the stars?" she asks, amazed.



Ntatemoholo smiles warmly, pulling his big blanket tighter around Naledi, making her feel safe and loved. He nods, confirming her brilliant realization, and tells her that the same genius and wisdom continues to live on through her and their people. The stars above seem to twinkle even brighter in agreement.



Later that night, Naledi lies snugly in her bed, clutching a small, smoothly carved wooden star Ntatemoholo gave her. Through her window, the familiar constellations—Dithutlwa, Selemela, Likhokoso—shine like friendly faces in the dark sky. She smiles, feeling the ancient star wisdom warm in her heart, a precious gift from the sky and her family.