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The main character of the novel, Samuel, is a 12-year-old African boy, whose life is dedicated, as his time's law dictates, to work in a factory, operating machines for the production of shoes. Very pretty shoes, in fact, but Samuel has been taught bad things happen when you take things that don't belong to you. One day, however, Samuel and his friend Lamas dared to try on a pair each. Unfortunately, they were caught. In order to avoid punishment, the boys ran for their lives towards one of the few boats that regularly leave from the ports to deliver goods across the sea, towards the home of the more fortunate. Planes are faster and cheaper, so in this time period naval commerce has almost completely disappeared, but Samuel and Lamas were lucky. After sneaking off the ship, the boys faint from exhaustion. Set a few centuries from modern time.

"Guys, come here, quick! There's something on the sand!" hears Samuel. It's a young man's voice. Low, but it doesn't seem aggressive or mean. Strangely.

Complete darkness. Then, a small beam of light. Then blue, as far as Samuel can see. The boy's eyes, only used to artificial light and skies clouded by pollution, start itching, as if on fire. The pain quickly stops, and is replaced by a tickle feeling. It's a boy with fair skin - "What kind of animal is this? Its skin is making my eyes hurt.", Samuel thinks.

There are fluffy white spots on the blue scenery. They seem funny and take all sorts of shapes.

"Is this some kind of animal? It's black as coal!" says another voice, now feminine. A girl appears. Her eyes are the same color as the sky, with brown hair and small little dots all over her face. She looks kind, but her lips are a bright red. The color of blood. Samuel quickly crawls away, like a scared animal, only to find less sand and a large body of turquoise water laid out before him. "Can this truly be the same sea the boat sails across?" thinks the young boy while recalling the unhealthy mix of brown, purple and bright yellow he called sea water back at home.

Strangely enough, the girl puts one hand close to the unconscious Lamas' face. Something about that image triggers Samuel, forcing him up and running towards his friend. What if she has a knife? Or a gun? Or a rifle? "Not good" Lamas thinks, worried and frozen by fear "No hiding spots. What to do, what to do..."

"Stay away from Lamas!" Samuel yells, with all the strength his small and frail body can muster. For the first time, the boy realizes how weak his voice feels. Back at home, the older guys, between a grunt from one of their wounds and a spit of blood, always said that "fewer problems come from fewer words". He's not used to speaking, but Samuel sure hopes he could have learned how to sound a little more threatening beforehand. Samuel soon sees two more young people approaching: a shorter man with darker skin - albeit not as dark as Samuel's and Lamas' - and a smiling girl with long, red hair. All of them wear beautiful, clean clothes, a far cry from the boy's rags. So many colors, and textures, and materials! Truly a sight to behold.

Three of the four have a weird item sitting on their noses, made of glass and metal, with a round shape for the two girls and square for the shorter guy. Back at his sector, Kibera, people were not meant to own accessories - a friend of Lamas' had gotten beaten until she was still and with swollen cheeks for owning two earrings - but Samuel has never seen anything like those. They look fancy, and expensive. Maybe the governors of Kibera had those, actually. But then again, Samuel didn't even know what they looked like, and if he did, it would have been against the law to look at them for more than an instant. They were superior, after all.

The boy can't help but think of trying those weird things on, but he shudders thinking that a pair of shoes is what has gotten him and his friend in that mess. Speaking of the shoes, they are all wet and dirty with sand, but Samuel can still make out a word: Converse. "What does that mean?" he wonders.

"Listen, I won't harm you. What's your name?" asks the red-haired girl. Her smile is very calming. Samuel almost feels like hugging her, due to a mixture of exasperation and gratitude.

"Celeste, what are you saying? You're t-talking to that thing?" stutters the first boy Samuel saw, his face both shocked and scared.

"Gas, don't be mean! Gabriele, Paola! These are children! Human children!"