



African Literature 4 Africa

Film Plot Summary

TSOTSI (2005)

The novel and film version of Tsotsi are totally different from each other. The film is set in post-apartheid South Africa and the novel is set during the apartheid era. There are also major plot differences. The DVD offers three endings to the film, and in doing so, Gavin Hood is allowing his audience to determine David's fate.

Since his mother is dying of a terminal disease, David (Benny Moshe) runs away from an abusive father and lives with other homeless children in concrete construction pipes. A few years later, David, who now goes by the name of Tsotsi (Presley Chweneyagae), is the leader of a gang, which includes Butcher (Zenzo Ngqobe), Aap (Kenneth Nkosi) and Boston (Mothusi Magano).

After getting involved in a murder, Tsotsi and Boston get into a fight which leaves Boston badly injured. Tsotsi then unintentionally kidnaps a baby, seated in a car he hijacks, belonging to a wealthy, middle-class black family. While stealing the car, Tsotsi shoots Pumla (Nambitha Mpumlwana), the baby's mother. Tsotsi takes the baby to his shack. Pumla survives the attack and works with a police artist to create a composite sketch of Tsotsi's face, which is then run in the newspapers.

Realizing that he cannot properly care for the baby, Tsotsi finds Miriam (Terry Pheto), a young mother. He forces her at gunpoint to feed the child. When Tsotsi takes the child to Miriam a second time, he agrees to leave the boy with her so that she can care for him.

Tsotsi, feeling a sense of guilt, decides to take care of the injured Boston. Boston, who is called Teacher Boy by his friends, explains that he never took the teachers' examination. Tsotsi tells him that the gang will raise the money so that Boston can take the exam.

Tsotsi, Aap and Butcher then go to Pumla's house. When Pumla's husband John (Rapulana Seiphemo) returns, they follow him into the house and tie him up. While they are ransacking the house, John activates the alarm. In a panic, Butcher attempts to kill John, but Tsotsi shoots and kills Butcher. They then escape in John's car.

When Tsotsi returns to Miriam's house she reveals that she knows where he got the baby from, and begs him to return the child. Tsotsi sets off to return the baby. He reaches John's house, and tells John over the intercom that he will leave the child outside the gate. Meanwhile, an officer stationed at the house alerts Captain Smit (Ian Roberts), who rushes to the scene.

The police train their guns on Tsotsi, ordering him to return the baby. However, John urges them to lower their weapons so that he can retrieve the baby himself. Tsotsi emotionally hands the baby to John, then puts up his hands and turns himself in.

Adapted from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsotsi>
<https://www.developmenteducationreview.com/issue/issue-5/tsotsi>