**Lindelwe's Song**

(c) Susan Perrow

This is a story that I wrote many years ago about the healing power of singing. I presented it as a gift to the women who were attending my training courses in Cape Town in 1997. Its metaphors, journey and resolution were inspired by the following comment once made to me by an African friend, Nomangesi Mzamo.

*‘Without our singing we would never have found our way through the thorns of apartheid’.*

It has since found its way into many Educare Centres and schools in the Cape Town Townships. A friend, Nombulelo Majesi, once described it as a *healing story* for the new South Africa.

For many years after this, whenever I would visit Africa it was asked for again and again by the children and adults I met and worked with – some of the children gave me the nickname ‘the pumpkin lady’. In Kenya, a group of teachers turned it into a story that was played out, with the children, in dance and song. There are many possibilities with stories and storytelling!

*This story can be found in Susan Perrow’s print book entitled ‘Healing Stories for Challenging Behaviour’ and also in her ebook:* A SPOONFUL OF STORIES #3: Fairy Tales for the 21st Century.

Once upon a time, in the middle of a field next to a village, a tiny pumpkin seed started to grow. It grew and it grew and it grew - until it was the biggest and most beautiful golden pumpkin that the villagers had ever seen.

But this was no ordinary pumpkin, and this was no ordinary field. Because as the pumpkin was growing, around the pumpkin patch was growing a circle hedge of thorn bushes. These bushes were so close and thick with thorns that by the time the pumpkin was ripe and ready to be picked, no-one could get through the hedge to get to it.

The villagers had a meeting to decide what could be done. At the meeting an old grandfather said: "I have a sharp axe - I will try to chop down the hedge of thorns". So he took his sharp axe and started to chop through the hedge, but every time he chopped through a branch another grew quickly in its place, and by the end of the day he had given up. This was no ordinary pumpkin, and this was no ordinary field!

Then one of the mothers of the village said: "I have a strong spade - I will try to dig under the hedge of thorns". So she took her spade and started to dig down, but the roots of the thorn bushes were so strong and close together that by the end of the day she too had given up. This was no ordinary pumpkin, and this was no ordinary field!

Then one of the young boys of the village said: "I am such a good tree climber - I will try to climb over the hedge of thorns". So he started to climb up the branches, but the thorns were as long and sharp as needles and they tore his clothes and pricked his skin, and by the end of the day he too had given up. This was no ordinary pumpkin, and this was no ordinary field!

The next day through the village walked Lindelwe, a young girl known to have the most beautiful voice in all the land. When she heard the problem she walked past the villagers, sat down on a rock next to the hedge of thorns, and started to sing:

*Ithanga elikulu, Ithanga elikulu; lishleli ebobeni, lishleli ebobeni.*

Lindelwe's singing was so beautiful that all the animals in the surrounding fields came hopping and running to be closer to her to listen. (Repeat song)

Lindelwe's singing was so beautiful that the birds in the sky flew down to sit in the trees to listen. (Repeat song)

Lindelwe's singing was so beautiful that the worms and caterpillars crawled out of the ground to sit at her feet to listen. (Repeat song)

Lindelwe's singing was so beautiful that even the clouds in the sky came down low to listen. (Repeat song)

One little cloud came so low that it landed right in front of her. Lindelwe stopped singing and smiled at the watching villagers as she stepped onto the middle of the little cloud. And the cloud lifted her up and over the hedge of thorns and right into the middle of the pumpkin patch.

And there, Lindelwe was able to pick the beautiful pumpkin and carry it back onto the little cloud. And the little cloud then lifted her up and over the hedge of thorns and all the way back to the centre of the village.

The villagers then cooked the pumpkin for an enormous feast that evening. At the feast they celebrated the day that Lindelwe, with her beautiful singing, was able to find a way over the magic hedge of thorns to pick the most wonderful, most golden pumpkin in the land.