My grandmother reached back and grabbed me; she pulled me into the middle of the circle, she looked me in the eyes and said: “Trevor, Pray!”

The South-African society is based on patriarchal hierarchy, in which men traditionally play a dominant role by subdueing their women. The citation “If you don’t hit your women, you don’t love her” reflects the norms of this society (Ref-JHD73K). In this twisted patriarchal perception world perception, men take care of their women and control them. If a man is not actively subdueing his wife, then he is not paying her attention. Consequently, domestic violence is perversely perceived as an expression of what passes for love in this culture.

However, this hierarchy did not always work, because the 20th-century women did not want to be subdued, controlled, or beaten. Trevor’s aunt also had not enough patience with her husband to sustain the damage of domestic violence. When her patience ended, “she’d snap and smack him down and put him back in his place“ (Ref-AB12CD). This example indicates that the South-African men underestimate the feminist tendencies that change dynamics in their families.

The book shows the drastic measures used in fight of the genders for dominance in a mining South-African town of Soweto. Some women resorted to thermal injuries, when their husbands have reached the limits of their patients. Noah specifies: “Water was if the women wanted to teach her man a lesson, oil meant she wanted to end it” (Ref-A1B2C3). These wives used distinct liquids because they produce different stages of burns. The burns from water are lighter and easier healed, but the sticky oil substance remains on the skin for longer and, therefore, causes more damage. Women resorted to boiling water to show their men their proper place. However, if they wanted to end the relationship, they used hot oil that left permanent scars. Their perpetual nature marked a man to convey a proof that he failed to satisfy the needs of his woman and is, thus, no longer together with her.

The family house is a small open-plan dwelling situated in a poor community. The building had no bathroom or toilet, which were outdoor facilities shared by several houses. The amenities include the coal stove that served for “cooking, heating the house, heating water for baths“ (Ref-A1B2C3). Situated in the kitchen, this stove also was used as the heart of the house. The family gathered around it to chat and do their home chores. Noah describes his family as “a world run by women” (Ref-D4E5F6). He lived with his mother, her mother, and her grandmother on her mother’s side. Thus, the entire maternal line of three generations lived under one roof. Trevor’s great-grandmother was too old and frail to work and spent her whole time at the hearth. His mother and grandmother, however, were active and powerful women with sharp minds. Trevor’s grandmother knew the entire “family history, going back to the 1930s“ (Ref-G7H8I9). Her explanations of the past served as history lessons as much as entertainment. Trevor’s mother worked to provide fort he family and raised her son.

When Trevor was alone at home at the age of 5, he was scared to go to the outside facility and defecated in the kitchen. When his mother and grandmother returned, the blind great-grandmother reported the foul smells and sounds. The women found the excrements in the garbage, where Trevor put them, but for some inexplicable reason they did not suspected the child. They decided instead that there “is a demon in the house” (Ref-D4E5F6). The women gathered the entire community to help them thwart the demon and prayed in the yard as they burned their kid’s shit.

The women in the Soweto community help each other survive with advice, empathy and prayer. They gather every week at someone’s house, alternating the hosts. At these gatherings, they pray and talk, they share their misfortunes and good luck. When the women came to Trevor’s house, his grandmother asked him to pray. He did this willingly, because she convinced the child that his prayers will be answered (Ref-DJ7H2K). Trevor was happy to think that he helped other members of his community with his words. Such gatherings may not have had the effect he hoped for, but the women felt better through the moral support of their friends.