

After The Dark Clouds...

Prologue

Neighbors are standing by their fences witnessing the drama, children stopped playing to watch, Drivers slammed on their brakes and decided to park here before continuing to their planned destinations. Who doesn't like free live drama? I know I do, I always found myself running miles away just witness those gruesome car accidents even though I knew I will suffer the trauma consequences late at night. It's always nice to narrate something you saw with your own eyes than what you read in the papers.

Just looking at them I'm reminded of what took place three years back when our home was turned into a crime scene. My step father had taking his own life by drowning himself inside the bathtub. Was it his doing though? Till today I still ask myself that question. He didn't display any suicidal signs like he

was the happiest soul on earth but don't we all do so well to act like we've got it all figured out on the outside while inside we are a total mess? But I still think if the police had gone deep into their investigation they would have discovered that there was some foul play and maybe the person that's busy giving people a live show right now at my expense would be a resident at some prison right now and I wouldn't have to be stripped naked and humiliated like this. How I so wish my step father was still alive right now, he was the only one that truly cared about me in this house well him and my little brother Freedom. I'm sure his busy begging God to give him a second chance on earth again so that he can come and rescue me. May his lovely soul continue to rest in power.

"I always knew you will remain a failure just like your nugatory alcoholic father. You're nothing but a waste of sperm but I'm not shocked you come from a useless sperm. Eight hours of labor pains just to usher out a thing like you to the world? You were not

worth it at all. I sent you to school and you come back with a big stomach carrying a breathing Degree worse you were trying to hide it from me by wearing oversized clothes and jersey's even when it's hot? You such a little conniving witch you can kill me. What have I done so wrong in life to deserve such a curse from God? O Ngwadla Madzaleneni and I want you out of my house."

I fight the edge to tell her that she didn't send me to school, I worked very hard to secure a bursary. I also fight a strong edge to tell her how was I going to share about my pregnancy with her while I have never sat down with her and watch a soapie and have a mother and daughter conversation I don't even understand the name Madzaleneni and why she named me that. it's not like she couldn't create time for that because I've seen her doing it countless times with Londeka but I will fight that edge to ask because I know when she is spitting out Vernon like this you don't dare respond back and besides I've never been that kind of a child to respond back. I had

mastered the art of most normal black children “You never respond when adults are talking. You never speak your mind or you’ll be labelled as a disrespectful child whose controlled by her hormones. I strongly believe most things would be resolved if we were given a chance to voice out our opinions. This child that I’m carrying will have the right to exercise her freedom of speech.

“You’re dead to me Madzaleni. I don’t ever want to see you in my life ever again. You take you’re degree and leave my house. As far as I’m concerned I only have two kids, Freedom and Londeka.” The declaration is accompanied with a shoe throwing. Now you see why I think there was some kind of foul play in my step father’s death? I place the hand on my face, it can land anywhere just not on my face. Don’t we all do that? Try so hard to shield the face every time to avoid bruises. How I wish it was possible to block it from hitting the heart instead.

“Aaah suster ngwana phosa dira a bolawe.”

Simply translated as you don't kill a child for making a mistake. I really appreciate him trying to intervene but there is a reason why our neighbors kept quiet ever since this drama started. Every kasi has that woman everybody loves to hate, that woman who thinks so highly of herself doesn't greet or attend any social gathering and oh she has slept with almost all the men in the neighborhood not because she loved them but she was just doing it just to spite their women. That is Nomathemba Ndlozi, my mother. I think her beauty kind of gave her a license to think she is above everybody else. How can I describe her looks? it's like her parents gave God a sample of how they want her to look like and he carried out their request exceedingly. She turned heads everywhere she went, without taking a bath she could still beat up women who spent hours with a professional makeup artist.

“Who the hell do you think you are to engage me with your cheap Corolla smelling petrol? You can take her with you if you think you can do a better job” She swings her perfectly crafted curves and bums walking back inside the house. I feel so humiliated on behalf of the poor man because she just doesn’t shock me anymore even other spectators who knows her are not shocked too. Most of them have had a tongue lashing encounter with her before. Her mouth spits fasces and not loose ones but hard ones that leaves a very bad stench.

“Do you have anywhere to go? I can drop you off.” The man says with his arm rested on my shoulder. His face displaying all kind of agony. I wag my head and continue placing the remaining clothes inside the big plastic bag, that one used to put trash inside. I should be done soon I don’t own so many clothes.

I think she was just waiting for the perfect opportunity to present itself just to get me out of her hair. I was never her child. Her kids were only Freedom and Londeka and she was never ashamed

to show more affection towards them. I know most ladies leave their mother's house wearing a white gown or because they have completed their studies and landed a great job. I won't lie and say I never dreamt of those kind of farewell but right now I'm delighted to be getting out of this house. I have nowhere to go at this point but a part of me is relieved to be out of here. I don't want my child to grow up in this environment.

I remember myself full of envy when I used to spot street kids roaming around the streets in town begging for food. You know why? Because they were brave enough to choose peace over a roof on top of their heads. I believe no child can give up the comfort of sleeping in a warm bed and their safety unless if they were pushed so hard and it's so easy for us to judge them because the most kind of abuse which is popular is men beating up woman. It's just so hard to believe that a woman can abuse a child they carried for nine months psychologically, emotionally and physically.

“Sesi please don’t go, don’t leave me. I will save my pocket money every day. I won’t buy any sweets at school. I will save the money for you and the baby just don’t go please.” It’s my little brother Freedom, He is sniveling and his arms are overspread on my legs. This sends me into a complete meltdown. I never planned to breakdown but now I just can’t help it. Kids don’t deserve to be suffer the consequences of adults bad actions but the sad thing is that they are always the ones who suffers the most well except for Londeka , she is not bothered by any of this at all. My mother has passed her hate towards her and she’s doing so well at it.

Freedom is such a good boy, I envy the lady he’s going to marry. I just pray he remains like this forever. He used to help me out when I had to do daily house chores that would have sent a needy maid away. He used to sneak in food for me when the punishment was no food which didn’t just happen occasionally it happened most of the time or he would share those nice takeaways I was not good

enough to eat. He used to open the door for me and sneak me inside when the punishment was sleeping outside in the coldness.

“Get up and look at me. Big boys don’t cry remember you always used to tell me that Queens don’t cry every time I cried?”

“Where are you going? Will they treat you right and will I ever see you again?”

What a Question. Will I be treated right where I’m going? I’ve been dreading to think of this Question. I pull him closer and squeeze him I could even feel him struggling to breath.

“All shall be well. I’ll come back for you baby.”

I carry the big plastic bag and get inside the man’s car. He’s even kind enough to open the door for me. I’m leaving a house where I first heard the word fuck

you, where I first heard the word your stupid, useless, ugly and will never amount to anything. A house where I got my physical and emotional bruises that I doubt will ever go away. I house I could relate the word depression to when I first learned about it in school. This house right here is a living hell on earth and I have no doubt the devil uses it to perform his trials.

I want to pray like a really long kind of prayer asking God to be with me and make things fall into place where I'm going but I'm struggling with any form of words. All I can say is Lord please be with me if you can't do it for me please do it for my unborn baby.

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We're back guys. Kindly mention your fellow bookish lovers to start with us. Many missed out on the previous story cos I removed the chapters and after removing there is no way they can read again cos I only share the stories as inserts via the page.

After The Dark Clouds

#1

I feel a kick the strongest kick I've ever felt ever since this child became a resident inside my tummy. Now I can really feel that indeed I'm expecting a human being very soon well I did at first but it was in the most horrible ways like vomiting every little thing that passed through my throat including water, craving for food I couldn't even afford, fatigue and other unexplainable things. You know what made them more horrible? I had no one to share and experience them with oh well except for my little brother Freedom. He would always want to feel the kicks and tried by all means to get me things I wanted I still stand by my words "I really envy the woman he's going to marry one day."

The kick was strong enough to wake me up from my deep sleep. I wonder how I even managed to

doze off I guess my mind was exhausted from all the thinking it eventually shut down. I yawn as I open my eyes and a big board written in black bold letters welcome my eyes “Baphalaborwa Municipality.” We are here, we are finally here. A deep wave of excitement washes over me until those ‘what if questions’ creeps in and steal that excitement moment.

“Sorry Ma do you directions to Phalaborwa police station? I think the street name is Park street” I look at her with hopeful eyes after reading out the street name from my diary. I hope she won’t judge me badly for only attempting to strike a conversation with her now because I need help with directions. The only thing I did when I entered this taxi was just exchange pleasantries and took a trip with my thoughts. I was not in a good mental state to communicate with anyone.

“Oh yes. I’m going at that street. My madam stays there.”

I let out a heavy sigh of relief and feel like God heard that short prayer of mine before I left Polokwane. I feel like maybe this was indeed his way of working things out. Don't we all start thinking like that when we want things to work out so badly? Desperation can lead you to see gold in all that glitters

I know our last conversation ended badly because I had refused to do an abortion but I think he was just scared and didn't mean any of those words. He will defiantly be happy to see me right now. he will see my big tummy and realize that we created something so magical that night.

I met Gareth during my first year at the University of Limpopo. He was doing his last year in Pharmacy and I was just starting out with my Bachelor of Education degree, I managed to secure a bursary from Fundza Lushaka . He was sitting on a bench with his eyes fixed on some magazine when I spotted him well he wasn't the best looking guy I

think that's why I managed to approach him I was too scared to approach the good looking ones, I felt like I was not good enough to breath the same air as they breath. Gareth was dark like really dark and that's my definition of not so good looking. I've never dated before but I know my dream guy is someone light in complexion.

I asked for directions to Block F where the registrations where taking place he took me there well it didn't just end there, he waited for me until I finished everything and walked me to my res which was called Tiro res. He helped me pack things up and took me out for a meal that same day at Gate 2. Gate 2 is like the Marabastad of the University of Limpopo. You get hair salons, People selling kotas and all kinds of foods but the most famous food there is the chicken intestines you know your mala, dikilane, menatlana and all. The place become our favorite and like they say when they try to shorten a story "The rest is history"

I discovered that he was a pastor's son which was

the reason why he was against my pregnancy and didn't want me to keep it. He said his father was going to disown him because he had to lead by example as the pastor's son. He convinced me to have an abortion but I refused well that's pretty much how things ended between us. He told me I'm on my own if I decide to keep the child.

"We are here sesi. Come let's get off." The old woman brings me back to the present

We get off and start walking. I see the big board written "Kruger National Park." I start recalling how Gareth always joked around saying he's going to take me to Kruger one day. He made me fall in love with Phalaborwa just by hearing him talk about it.

He used to say he's going to take me to Marula Jazz festival which is hosted every year at Impala stadium. it is one of the biggest music festival in the Limpopo province. It a two leg events which the first is the kwaito and hip hop followed by the jazz and

gospel the following weekend. I'm not big on kwaito, house and Hip hop. I'm a very quiet shy somebody.

Apparently they serve free Marula alcohol and he always joked around saying he was going to get me drunk for the very first time at the festival and laugh at me when I sing out loud to the likes of Lira, Zonke, Malaika and Dr Tumi on stage. I laughed out loud when he said that. He loved making me laugh I guess that was one of the reasons why I never spotted any red flags and trusted him with everything I have. He ticked all the boxes

We passing through Eden Square mall. It's just exactly how he had described it to me. Very small and nice, it's one of those malls you could meet the same person more than ten times in a day. Its small yet very beautiful and clean and oh not overcrowded. Now I really see why people prefer to settle in Phalaborwa and its regarded as one of the best tourist attraction place in Limpopo. Everything is

totally different here even the air is flavored.

I can't help but imagine Gareth and I raising our child in this place. I know I sound a bit ambitious and stupid right now because of everything that happened between us but I'm confident that we are going to make it work.

The mall is just opposite the police station and Magistrate court. I recall how he told me his house is just next to the police station

"Who are you coming to see?" The woman finally asks after a long walk of silence

"The father of my child." I say while brushing my tummy

She looks at me but doesn't say anything. She's judging me in her head I can just see. She's probably thinking I should be at school than running after men

getting pregnant.

“He works at the mines?”

I heard Phalaborwa is a place full of Mines. Gerald always told me they have so many people from all over because they come to work at the mines. There is PMC which is one of the biggest mine in South Africa, They mine Copper and then there is also Foskor mine which deals with phosphate rock. They say it's one town with the highest rate of Hiv and Aids here in Limpopo because of the big mines, The skietog soldier camp and the Kruger National park.

“He just completed his studies in Pharmacy.” I feel so proud as I answer her. My baby's father is actually a pharmacist. I'm sure he will now realize that even if his own parents disown him he will be able to take care of us. My plan is actually to bond with my baby for a year then return back to school the following year. As much as the thought of having

a nanny take care of my child freaks me out but I need to finish school. I don't have any plan of being a house wife and survive on a man like my mother.

"Do you know the Gafane's?" I ask

"The pastor?"

A heavy rain of relief washes over my face as she says this. Gerald was right they are really well known here

"Yes. That's where I'm going."

"It's that house over there." She says pointing at a very big stunning looking house

Now this is something Gerald has never shared with

me. I didn't know he comes from such a place. it looks like a mini mall right on its own. Next door is some white kids playing. The closer I ever got to a white person was my mother's old boyfriend. I remember how we had given the Seshogo neighborhood a serious speech for weeks. My mother is beautiful extremely beautiful she looks like her parents created her first and gave God a sample of how they wanted her to look like and God worked according to their instruction. She knew she was beautiful and used to that to her advantage. She always said education and work was for ugly women who wanted to make up for lack of beauty. She would say there is women then there is Nomathemba. She turned heads every where she went even young men's trousers will grow big underneath when she passed. She could get any man she wanted.

I stand outside the big wall with some shiny stones and a metal see through gate. I start shouting "Ko ko. Ko ko."

“There is an intercom. You just press that button and they will talk to you.” One of the white kids playing outside says. I get so embarrassed but find comfort in the fact that they don’t know me and our path might never cross again.

I press the button non stop

“You just press it once mam just once.” the blonde boy again. This time I smile at him as a way of hiding my humiliation.

“Madzaleni?” Gerald voice comes out accompanied by shock and fear

I look around but I can’t see him. where is he and where did he see me?

“Madzaleni what are you doing here?” His voice comes out as a whisper like he doesn’t want anyone to hear him speaking.

“G? Baby?” I need to be sure here

“Who is that?” it’s a female voice coming from the inside.

“I think its people selling stuff Ma. I’m just going to go outside and check. I’m going to buy the flour you asked for too.” He answers the female voice

“Alright papa. Hurry up okay remember we starting with our fasting and prayer service tonight.” The female voice again.

“Yes Ma.”

Within a minute I see him coming. My heart starts beating so fast as he approaches. I had vowed never to see him again after our last encounter. I was prepared to raise this child all by myself but circumstances forced me to be come here. I have nowhere to go. I can’t believe I still love him though after everything that has happened between us. I just moved on because I hate forcing myself on someone. My mother taught me better.

In a normal perfect world one would expect a happy face full of smiles approaching her then that big hug and “Oh my word is this for real? Your stomach is so big, babe we are really having a baby.” Then brushing and kissing of the belly but no in my world such things can only be a wish. He is fuming and looking at me like I just killed his mother.

“What are you doing here?” He says angrily while pulling my hand pushing me away. He wipes the sweat off his face with his hand “How the hell did you find me? You need to get out of here now.”

“G you’re hurting me. Let go of my hand.” I say trying to break free from his tight grip

A car stops right in front of us. It’s a white Mercedes Benz. I know it very well because one of my mother’s boyfriend once got it for her. A lady comes out. She is wearing pink scrubs I manage to see a stethoscope on the passenger seat before she could close the door. She stops right before us and I

manage to see Dr Mangena written on her top.

“Hello Babe.” She greets Gerald with a big smile on her face then turns to me with a smile but not a big one she had when she was greeting Gerald.

“Dumelang.” She greets me

“Babe.” He gives her a long tight hug that I so badly yearned for. “How was work?”

“Akg work was just work. Hectic as usual.” She answers him while trying to hide her attention is actually on me. “I’m here to drop this for mom. Is she in?” She asks while waving a plastic full of Tupperware’s

“Yeah she’s in. I was just going to the shops to get flour for her please wait for me. This lady was just looking for work.”

“Oh okay shame man. Don’t stress much about finding work I mean in your condition you really don’t need any stress it’s not good for the baby at all. Babe why don’t you get a car rather I mean you will save all the time for walking and she looks too tired to walk too.” She says while handing him her car keys

The word to describe how I’m feeling right now after hearing that hasn’t been discovered yet because I just can’t totally explain it at all. I’m beyond broken. How did we end up here? From you’re the woman of my dreams I have found a wife in you I really can’t wait to marry you to this lady was just looking for work? I wish I can speak up but his words are lodging in my throat and I’m struggling to utter anything out

I try to bend down to pick up my black plastic but she offers to pick it up for me instead and opens the back door for me to get inside. I guess that’s her way of saying I’m not even worthy to seat in the front. I get inside and she tells me to keep well before

closing the door. I see the ring on her finger as she closes the door. I look at her and can't help belittling myself. She is nothing like I am at all. I'm not in her league

"I still can't believe you did that." That's the first thing he says as we are driving away. He's staring at me through the review mirror. I was hoping the first thing that will come out of his mouth was an apology for what I just witnessed. I was hoping he will tell me he can explain everything and what I saw is really not what it seems like. At this point I longed for lies because I just can't come into terms with reality

"Who is she G?" I feel my tears burning my face as I ask this. I'm happy they are coming out because I'm hoping they will bring out his remorseful side.

"That's my fiancée Letago.

The words came out with so much ease. No stuttering nothing. It's like they were already on his tongue when he was born. They just came out naturally.

I want to ask more questions but I'm struggling. The pain is so deep it has overtaken everything in me including my speech. All I do is just cry and this time I'm not doing it to wake up his remorseful side. I'm crying because the pain is way too deep

"You need to get out now Madzaleni." He says with a very annoyed voice

I remove the hand from my face and see so many Taxis. We are at the Taxi rank. I didn't even feel the car stopping because the pain had taken my whole body, mind and soul. I try to speak but I struggle to get any words to escape my mouth.

“I don’t have all day Madzaleni. I have to prepare for church service.”

The pain of being called with your full name by someone who had a total amnesia about what’s your real name when you were together should be added on the most hurtful things to go through in life. It makes your name sound like an insult plus I always had issues with my name. Which God is he going to pray to at church? If this God allows this kind of behavior, then I’m good without him in my life.

“I don’t have anywhere to go.” I finally manage to speak out

He doesn’t say anything all he does is maintain that annoyed look on his face

“My mother chased me away Gerald. I have nowhere else to go.”

He let out a fat sigh before burying his head on the steering wheel. He sits like that for some time

“All of these could have been avoided if you did what I asked you to do. You shouldn’t have kept that pregnancy Madzaleni. I told you if you keep that child then I’m not getting involved, you’re on your own but no you went ahead and kept it. You wanted to trap me with pregnancy damn you Madzaleni. You have ruined your life and I’m not going to let you drag me down with you. I have a life with Letago and I’m going to start my internship next week and assume the role of a Junior pastor at church. You will not ruin it for me Madzaleni. You even lied to me saying you’re a virgin while you were not and I’m starting to really doubt if that child is really mine” He mumbles some things I cannot hear while starting the car.

“Stay right in here. I’ll be back.”

He locks the car leaving me all alone inside. I look outside and see African Lilly Lodge. Within minutes he's back. He commands me to follow him and I do as told. I have never slept with any guy ever in my life. G was my first but after we had sex he told me I was not tight like a virgin. What puzzles me is I also didn't feel any pain at all like it was my first time. I kept on expecting the pain to come but it never came up until we finished everything but I know I never slept with any man besides him but nothing felt foreign in my body it was like I had gone through this experience before. I think that's what turned him off about me because I was just not like other girls.

Under normal circumstances I would have admired the room but this is not normal circumstances. There is no time to even admire anything because everything looks dull.

"I have to rush home. you will stay here tonight but its only for tonight Madzaleni until we figure out what we are going to do with the mess you got yourself into."

I must have really slept because I didn't hear him coming inside. I don't even know how I manage to sleep with everything that I was going through.

"I don't have much time. I told them I'm taking some church members at home so I need to get back home soon." He says so while pulling a chair to face me. I'm still lying on the bed by the side of my tummy. "You need to leave Madzalen. If you had listened to me we wouldn't be in any of this mess. I had everything figured out I even gave you money to get rid of it I thought you did exactly that. I made it very clear that I'm not having any child that if you decide to keep the baby then you're on your own so you can't drag me into this mess."

"Have you ever loved me G?" That's a very wrong question to ask because his answer might just finish me off but then I need to know. I had some time to

think and all my decisions will be determined by his answer

“Honestly no. I felt sorry for you after you told me the stuff you went through at home you know your mother mistreating you, showing your other siblings more love than you. The stuff she did to you were so inhuman like no one deserves to go through that so that made me feel like it’s my duty to try and heal your scars but I did it the wrong way by leading you on. I should have brought you closer to God to do the healing than trying to play deputy Jesus myself.”

“So what you’re doing to me now doesn’t it make you inhuman? Are you and my mother not in the same league now?”

“Don’t even dare try to guilt trip me. I gave you money to get rid of it but you decided to keep it. Me and you were never going to work out at all. We are both from different worlds. Your mother is nothing

but a whore while my parents are respectable people I mean you don't even know your father Madzaleni so come on we are totally different. Letago is my type of a woman, she's a fellow Pk and very educated just the kind of an ideal daughter in law my parents wished for. You're not in my league."

I never thought he could ever use that against me. I told him in total confidence

"So what is the way forward? I don't have anywhere to go and I'm not in a position to get a job to support the baby."

"I thought about that. The only solution is to put the baby up for adoption. I will take care of you until you give birth but after that you're on your own me and we have never met before."

"I'm not giving my baby up for adoption Gerald

never.”

We start arguing. Our voices are getting so loud. I can barely hear anything he is saying all I manage to hear is “I’ll rather die than have you ruin my life.”

I open my eyes and I’m welcomed by a banging headache. When did I sleep? The only thing I recall is my argument with Gerald. The screaming, pushing and all.

I try to make my way to the bedroom because I’m feeling so pressed but that banging headache sends me straight back to the bed. What time is it anyway? I check the time on my phone and its exactly ten in the morning. My eyes fall on the date showing on the phone it’s the 10th of September when I arrived here it was the 8th of September. How come I don’t recall any events that took place yesterday? And why did I

wake up like this and the room looking so messy? Was I drugged? There is no way I can't recall what happened yesterday. My heart starts pounding so fast I feel like it's going to rip out my chest and fall on the floor. The urine that I was trying to hold earlier on threatens to come out in full force forcing me to rush inside the bathroom.

I open the door and nothing I mean absolutely nothing in the world could have ever prepared me for what is staring right in my face. I have seen this scene before in my life few years back when our home was turned into a crime scene. He is lying in the bathtub exactly the same way I found my late stepfather. What the hell is happening here?

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After The Dark Clouds

#2

My whole body has gone completely numb in a split of seconds. I feel like I just got a shot from an anesthetist. I try to move but my legs fail me. The only active part in my body is my eyes which have been staring at Gerald's body lying in the bathtub.

I want to scream for help but my voice is struggling to come out. His whole body is soaked inside the water that is now dripping on the floor. Only the head which is slightly bended to the right is not covered inside the water. His eyes and mouth are widely opened. From where I'm standing it's not difficult to see that he's not taking a nap inside the bathtub because there is no evidence of any breathing.

As I'm looking at him my mind starts playing

flashbacks. Everything is so clear

I woke up very late that Saturday morning which was so unusual of me because I normally wake up very early to start doing my chores early just to prevent my mother from having something to mourn about. I panicked when the clock on the wall informed me that it was 13:00 in the afternoon. "Oh crap my mom is going to have a fit" I said in a low voice as I jumped out of my bed rushing to the bathroom to pee and brush my teeth then get started with my day.

As I was rushing to the bathroom I could feel that I'm not feeling okay. My body was tired like I was in a fight with someone which immediately explained why I slept till so late. It must be fatigue and it has got to do with my lack of enough rest.

When I opened the bathroom door I found my step father lying inside the bathtub exactly the same way Gareth is lying. Whole body soaked inside the water

with only the head out and slightly bended to the right. Eyes and mouth widely opened. It was obvious malome Sello was not sleeping. I quickly closed the door just like any normal girl wouldn't like to witness an old man naked more especially the one playing a fatherly role in her life.

When I got inside the living room I found Freedom and Londeka watching Tv while snacking on a packet of chips. As always Freedom was the one to respond when I greeted.

“Where is mom?” I asked when I noticed she wasn't around and hasn't come to make noise on why I was still sleeping till so late.

“Mom said she has something to take care of and she will be back. She said that after taking a very long time inside our bathroom.” Freedom responded with his eyes still fixed on the Tv

“Mom was inside our bathroom? What time was that?”

“Akg we found her in there. The door was locked and she refused us to enter. She told us to go and use her bedroom” He pushed his hand back as a way of dismissing any further questions.

“Was she with malome?”

“No. We haven’t seen him today. I don’t think he’s around.”

“Jeez we watching Tv. Can you please stop disturbing us. Daah.” Londeka responded in her snobbish voice

I knew right then I have to drop this whole investigation not to annoy the princess further

because she will make up stuff to mom and I'll be in trouble. At least mom is not home so I can start with the cleaning before she gets back.

A whole lot of questions flood inside my mind as I'm busy cleaning. Why is malome using our bathroom while they have their own bathroom inside their bedroom? Why she locks the bathroom and stop the kids from getting inside? Was malome inside during the time she was inside too? If he was resting why were his eyes and mouth wide opened like that? Why didn't he call out my name when I walked in on him? or was it because I walked out too quick? I continue with my cleaning but still something just doesn't feel right.

Few hours later my mother walks back in. She gives me the eye and walks straight to the bathroom I see her taking out the key trying to open but gets stunned when the door opens before she can turn the key.

“FREEDOM, LONDEKA? Who opened this door?
Didn't I tell you not to use this bathroom?”

I approach as she's shouting at them.

“It was you wasn't it?”

“I found the door unlocked” I answer as I cover my face to block the anticipated hot clap but instead she grabs my hands roughly leading me inside the bedroom.

“You will not tell anyone about what you saw in there. Are we clear?” Her voice is very firm as she says this. “Do you understand me?” She brushes my hand soothing the bruises I got when she held me roughly. “Are we clear baby?” her hand has now moved to brushing my bald head.

I never grow hair because it's just easier like this. I grew a sense of independency at a very young age when I realized how much my mother hates it when I ask for stuff. So to stop hurting myself and avoiding her shouting I went for bald.

I look at her hand brushing my head. The feeling I'm getting is so foreign to my body. My mother has always failed dismally to show any affection towards me. I'm a bit jumpy as she's busy moving her hand on my head and instructing me not to say anything to anyone. I nod my head in agreement with her. I just want her hand to stop doing that to my head. I'm used to the hand giving me beatings not doing that.

"Not even the police ok?"

That last instruction sends me into a total fit and she notices it. Police? Why is she mentioning the police?

“Madzalení I need you to say yes.”

“Yes.” My voice is trailing as I respond

She brushes my shoulders and gives me a pat at the back. That pat is communicating a lot like “Yes you’re such a big girl.”

After some few minutes I hear her screaming. A loud scream that has the potential to contest for waking up the dead. Her scream sends the three of us running to the bathroom. We find her kneeling down on the floor. Her clothes soaked wet. She’s holding malome’s shoulders like she’s trying to pull him out, shake him or.... I just don’t know how to explain this. She’s just doing a whole lot of things at once.

“Londeka call for help. Stand at the street and shout for people to come in here. Freedom follow him too.”

I try to follow them and she pulls me by the hand.

“You stay right here.”

Like a good child I’ve always been, I obey her and stay. I’m too scared to ask what is happening but I can see malome is not breathing or moving his body. He’s just lying there still. I’m too scared to ask what is happening

In a short period of time the whole house is crowded with people. I hear some mumblings that “He’s dead.” and right at that moment my whole world comes scrambling down. Nooo not my sweet malome. He can’t be dead. all along I thought maybe he has fainted or something. Death no?

When the police arrive I see my mother handing them a letter telling them she found it lying on the floor. She’s weeping like she’s on the auditions for a crying widow for some Nigerian movie.

“I knew he had financial problems but I thought he was copying. I just....” She struggles to finish her words as she goes back to the crying widow act.

Before we could even bury malome she had already found comfort in the arms of the investigation officer of malome’s case.

The excruciating pain on my abdomen sends me straight back to the present world. I bend my lower back with my right arm wrapped around my tummy and the other arm leaning on the door frame for support.

“Uuuuuuu” I utter that out while trying to breath in and out. I stay like that for some time until I feel a bit better. I move closer to the bathtub and my worst fears are confirmed: Gareth is dead. I move back and cover my mouth in total shock.

“I’ll rather die than have you ruin my life.” Did he mean those words? Just as I’m busy thinking I see my scarf floating right inside the full bathtub.

I’m a lover of scarfs. That’s my clothing obsession and it pained me when one of my favorite scarfs got stolen right after malome’s death.

That excoriating pain comes back again and totally shutting me out from the current situation I’m dealing with. This time it’s worse. I feel like someone is cutting my intestines with razor blades. What is happening to me? I lean on the basin trying to breath. Just as soon as I feel a bit better again I look at Gareth’s body one more time and decide to check for a heartbeat but I can’t feel anything.

I need to call for help another thought tells me to run because I might be a murder suspect. I will be accused for a bitter baby mamma that couldn’t deal with rejection.

I limp back to the room to grab my black plastic. Only then as I'm picking the plastic I notice the whole room is full of cigarette smell and there is a half-finished bottle of Gordons on the table with two glasses. I inspect both glasses and yes they were both used. It's like two people were inside this room having a drink.

How did two people enter this room and almost finish the bottle without me hearing a thing? That explains why I can't recall anything. I was drugged and now I'm more than convinced that Gareth didn't kill himself. He was killed just like my stepfather was killed by my mother and she hid the evidence. I need to get out of here before I get implicated for something I didn't do.

As I'm making my way out of the room I'm met by an old woman holding a basket of laundry. She looks like one of the staff here. We pass each other but I can still feel her eyes on me.

“Excuse me sesi.”

My heart beats so fast but I try so hard to act calm. I turn and put on a smile hoping she won't see how scared I am.

“I was going to keep quite but I'm a mother and it will be wrong of me not to advise you. I couldn't help but hear a Nigerian's male voice inside this room when I was passing last night and...” She stammers a little “Never mind forget it. I'm sorry sesi.” She walks away very fast

That was weird. Very weird. The pain hits me again and I stop for a second but it doesn't go away so I'm just going to have to be brave and deal with it when I get outside this place. I stop when I spot someone at the reception. Oh nooo this can't be happening

This is Gareth's doctor girlfriend. I hid by the wall

and make sure she doesn't see me. I see her taking out money out from her purse and giving it to the receptionist lady. They have a brief talk after that she smiles and walks away.

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After The Dark Clouds

#3(Apologies for the delay. A very long one to make it up for the wait)

My back is against the wall and I'm trying so hard to suppress the pain from escaping through my mouth. I'm keeping it all inside but it's getting so hard now. I need to get out of here but I'm too scared to pass by the reception just in case the lady stops me and asks any question. I don't know what she was doing with Gareth's Girlfriend but I'm convinced it has something to do with Gareth death.

I move my head and peak through the reception. I see her scribbling down something while holding the phone. Immediately after putting the phone down she opens some door just behind her and gets inside.

This is now or never. I don't know how long she's

going to take in there but I need to move now and I'm pretty much sure Gareth's Girlfriend is out of sight too.

I gather the little strength I have in me and walk so fast. I could run but the pain I'm feeling is making it so hard for me to run

I start walking slowly once I'm outside the gate. I don't even know where I'm at or where I'm going. I don't know Phalaborwa at all. The town is not buzzing like Polokwane. In Polokwane there is always movements around town be it people walking around or so many cars in the street. I see the Eden Sque sign and I recall it from yesterday but this time I decide not to go through the mall. I just go down the street and stop just at the municipality building. I can't walk anymore I'm really struggling. I sit at the beautifully well-groomed grass and this time I can't suppress my voice anymore. I didn't mean to scream I thought my voice wouldn't come

out loud like that but I guess it was loud enough because the security guard comes running followed by another lady.

“Sesi bothata?” He’s asking while bending down with his hand on my forehead

“She’s pregnant can’t you see? She needs to get to the hospital.” She bends down and holds my hand
“Just hang in there we will get you help okay?”

She gets up and start running around with the security guy. Within some few minutes I’m being ushered to the back seat of a car and the lady is sitting right beside me holding my hand and encouraging me to hold on.

“Suster just make sure she doesn’t deliver inside my car please.” The driver of the car says with his head turned back looking at us

“Votsek. Just drive the damn car and concentrate on the road. Why are you looking at the back? Are you trying to get us killed?”

“I don’t want any blood inside my car. Make sure she doesn’t give birth in here.”

“Fuck off man. Do I look like a nurse to you?” She shouts right back at him

Her mouth stinks of alcohol and when I look at her she looks like she hardly slept. Right at that moment I miss Gerald. I haven’t had any time to think of him and the incident at the lodge because of the pain I’ve been feeling. I wish he was here to hold my hand and tell me everything will be alright. No girl dreams of going through the whole pregnancy journey alone and I’m not an exception from those girls. We all dream of having your partner from your side since day one when you discover you’re pregnant. Him jumping up and down with excitement, sending him

around to buy stuff you crave for, planning the names together, attending those Doctor visits together, the pregnancy photoshoots and finally that moment when the baby finally makes the grand entrance to the world and he's standing by your side holding your hand and encouraging you to push while holding the hand so tight? This is just not how I imagined everything and it hurts and now it hurts so bad because the father of my child is dead.

I'm busy pacing up and down inside the labor ward. When I arrived here I didn't think I was in labor. I mean I'm only seven months pregnant. I took my clothes off and started pacing all around the room, I mopped the floor with the blanket now I feel like pulling out hair that I don't even have when I finally see water dripping on my thighs. I can feel the baby coming. I lie on the bed and shout for help. The other ladies inside the ward with me call the nurses for help telling them the baby is coming I need help urgently.

“You’re calling us for that stupid girl who didn’t even attend her antenatal appointments?” I hear one of them responding

“I hope that premature baby has Aids so that she can know the importance of going to the clinic when you’re pregnant. That girl pissed me off. She has created extra work for us. Now we have to run around taking bloods and all akg sis maan. All they know is just to open their legs stupid girl and even get intoxicated while pregnant.” Another one responds

I start pushing as I feel the edge to push getting stronger. I push and push with every strength in me. I can feel the child making its way out.

“Oh my God the head is out.” One of the ladies in the ward shouts “Nurse please help.” She shouts more in total desperation

“So what? We must stop drinking our coffee? Is it the president head coming out? Hai suka votsek.”

I can't stop pushing cos the edge is just too much.
As scared as I am I push

“What the hell is going on here? How long has she been like this?” It's a male voice that I can't even see his face but I can tell he's rushing to me.

I feel voices of the other two female nurses getting closer.

“We were not called. We told her to call us when she needs help.”

I'm hoping the other ladies will defend me and tell the male gentleman how they tried to call for help but were insulted but none of them says anything. I

guess everybody is scared of nurses at a public hospital.

One last push and I hear a cry. To her and the rest of everyone in here it's a cry but to me it's some kind of joy. A joy I've never experienced before

"It's a baby girl. We need to rush her to the Nicu ward because she's a premature. I'll get back to you later. You did very well hey and I'm so proud of you." He gives me a pat on the back and by then I get a chance to have a good look at him. He's a very tall chubby guy and he's wearing navy blue pants with a white golf Tshirt with maroon epilates buttoned on it. I immediately tell he's a male nurse.

Few hours later I'm all cleaned up and just lying on the bed anxiously waiting to be taken to my daughter. The male nurse comes back again

“Hey mommy. How are you feeling?” He asks with a smile on his face

“I’m good. Can I see the baby?”

“Not so fast. Now tell me young lady.. why were you not attending your clinic appointments? You could have put your life together with the baby’s in danger do you know that?”

“I didn’t know I was supposed to go to the clinic. Nobody told me that. I just thought you wait for the day you feel pains and go straight to the hospital to give birth.”

I’m being honest. I really didn’t know I have to go to the clinic. I just thought you go to the Doctor to know the sex of the baby and then wait till you get pains and then rush to the hospital. I didn’t have any money to go to the doctor so I just told myself I’ll

know the sex of the baby when I deliver.

“Where is your mother or any older relatives?”

“I’m not close with my mother.”

“Is that why you haven’t had any visitors? I noticed nobody came to see you ever since you got here.”

I look up and blink trying to stop the tears from coming out. It hits me that I don’t have anyone and I don’t even have a set of clothes for my child. What kind of a mother will I be?

“It’s okay. Come with me.” He says as he extends his hand. I join our hands and he pulls me out of the bed and we start walking

“I have some good news for you. Your Hiv results came back negative I just got your lab results.”

I never even thought of that before like it wasn't a bother at all.

"You ready to see your little princess?"

I nod and smile despite feeling like I have already failed her as a mother. I have nothing to offer her

She is inside the incubator and is so tiny. She is covered with so many tubes I can hardly see her face. I put my hands just by the side of the incubator and look at her. I wish I could carry whatever she's going through on her behalf. She's so tiny she doesn't deserve to feel any pain

"Is she going to die?" That's the first question I ask

"Oh nooo. Please don't ever think about that. She's a little fighter and she's going to be perfectly fine.

Premature babies live and become very normal. She will be kept inside the incubator for favorable temperature and minimization of infection. She's going to be fed using the nasogastric feeding tube until such a time we are satisfied with the growth and development that guarantees the higher chances for the baby to cope with the external environment. The pediatric doctor will be monitoring the baby on daily basis with the help of specialists nurses dealing with infants to make sure nothing goes wrong."

He stops talking and looks at me trying to make sure I'm listening and if he's sounding convincing.

"Is she going to get any medication?"

"Oh yes .Antibiotics will be prescribed to eradicate any form of infection from the baby. We will also ensure that the baby gets enough fluids according to her body weight and output levels to avoid

overloading.”

“So I’m never going to hold her until she’s normal?
Am I going to get discharged?”

“No you are going to stay right here at the hospital until she is fully fit to go home. this is a public hospital and we don’t do that. Only at private hospital they discharge the mother and she comes every day to supply the baby with milk. They do that to minimize medical aids costs and obviously to keep space for other pregnant ladies.”

“Ohhh...” That’s all I manage to say. I know nothing about medical aids and private hospitals

“When the growth is satisfying we will remove the baby from the incubator and introduce kangaroo mother care. That is a process that will include skin to skin attachment care. This will benefit the infant

in a most positive way including the physiological stability for example temperature and blood pressure regulation, heart rate and respiratory stability. It will also have other benefits such as improving immune system, weight gain and better sleep. Kangaroo mother care will benefit you as the mother too because you will have greater attachment and bonding, sensitivity and responsiveness to the infant, confidence in improving care and transitioning to home and breast milk production which will help to succeed in breastfeeding and decreasing the risk of postpartum depression.”

The way he explains everything brings a smile to my face. He’s so wonderful and patient. I guess nursing was really a calling for him.

“I have a name for her. Phodiso Shabangu.”

He gives me an inquisitive look. I guess it has got to

do with the fact that my surname is Ndlozi

“Her father’s surname was Shabangu. He died before she was born.”

“Died?” He asks

“Actually killed. Killed by his girlfriend I think. Well it’s a long story I don’t want to get into.”

“I completely understand. My name is Meshack by the way. Madzaleneni I need you to know that you’re not alone. I’m here whenever you need help.”

I look at him and smile. “Thank you.” Of course I’m not alone. I am with my little Phodiso. I might not have anything but right now I feel richer than Patrice Motsepe. Phodiso is my everything. I never knew I could ever love like this before. We are going to

make it. I don't know how but we will survive. "Thank you Gerald for giving me such a beautiful treasure." I say deep inside. He might have said horrible things before he died but I don't hate him at all. He has given me something so precious.

We started with kangaroo mother care a few weeks ago. I always look forward to holding her and I know she does do. She always smiles at me. Lol do little babies even smile? Well my little Phodiso does smile. She has grown so much and I can't stop thanking the Lord for taking good care of her. She has brought me closer to God over the past few weeks. I'm always praying that he makes a way for us to survive. Did I mention how much she looks like Gerald? He would have been so proud and I know he would have loved her so much. Oh gosh she's such a little angel on earth.

I see Meshack walking over to us. We have grown so

much close over the past few weeks. He gets me toiletries and he even got Phodiso stuff. I don't know how I'll ever repay him but once everything falls back into place again Lord knows I'm going to come back here and do something big for him.

"Look at you guys. Looking lovely as always." He always says that every time he approaches us. "I have some great news for the two of you. The Doctor is really happy with Phodiso's progress and says you guys can now go home on Thursday"

Thursday? Today is Tuesday. Where will we go? I've been dreading to call my mother ever since I had Phodiso. Oh noo this can't be happening not now.

"And the long face?" He asks

"You know my story. We have nowhere to go. I told you."

“Babes I think it’s time you call your mother. I’m sure she’s worried sick about you and this might be the right connection for you guys. This baby will bring healing unto her as much as she has brought so much healing on you. Here take my phone and call her now.” He says as he hands me the phone.

My hands are trembling as I take the phone. I have no choice but to call her. Meshack is right this might be what will connect us. Phodiso will make her change her mind about everything

“Hello Ma. It’s me Madzaleni.” I say after her hello respond. She doesn’t say anything. I look at the screen and we’re still connected. “Ma. I have given birth to a beautiful baby girl. Her name is Phodiso.”

She laughs a very sarcastically laugh. “And let me guess you want me to take in yourself and your

bastard child in my house ne? Yes bastard child akere the father is dead. he takes you to some fancy hotel and wakes up dead inside the bathtub ne? I know everything about it. Now I need you to listen to me and listen carefully ne I want nothing to do with you and your bastard child. I'm done with you Madzaleni. You're dead to me do you hear me? follow your dead baby daddy."

The phone falls hard on the floor at the shock of everything she said to me. Meshack picks it up from the floor and hugs me.

"Hey it's okay. Its fine. We will figure something else."

He assumes I'm in shock because my mother doesn't want me but I'm actually in shock at how she found out about Gareth getting killed at a fancy lodge inside the bathtub.

“Look you can come stay with me at the nurse’s home until we figure out something else. I can’t let you and Phodiso stay in the street. You’re very smart Madz I know you will get something.”

“Thank you so much. I promise you it will only be for a short period of time. I heard Phalaborwa has so many lodges and restaurants. I’ll go to each one of them and look for something. I will pay you for each and every day I stayed at your place I promise you.”

“You don’t have to worry about that please. I need you to concentrate on you and Phodiso for now.”

We hug as I thank God for everything and ask for forgiveness for all the time I doubted him.

Later during the day I’m excited and talking to one of the ladies I’ve kinda grown close to cos we stayed a

bit longer together caring for our babies here at Maphutha hospital.

“I think he has a crush on you girl. All things work out for the good to them that loves the Lord you know? Maybe you losing your baby daddy was a way for God to bless you with this wonderful man.”

I laugh at her. I think it's just a brotherly love. I don't think he's into me at all.

“Speak of the devil.” She whispers as Meshack walks in with a certain lady. Oh no its Gerald doctor girlfriend. they are talking and laughing out loud as my heart starts beating so fast threatening to come out of my chest

“Are you really sure you're ready to start work?”
Meshack asks

“Yes I’m sure. Look I’m sure. Work is just what I need right now. sitting at home doing nothing stresses me more. I need to keep busy.”

“Letago I’m so sorry for your loss again Doc.”

“I still can’t believe he’s gone and worse he died when I was so mad at him. Alright where do we start?”

“I’m sorry again Doc. How’s the police investigation going?”

“I don’t want to talk much about it now. Please give me the patients history I need to get started with work.”

“Oh these two are perfectly fine. Actually Madzaleni is getting discharged tomorrow.” He says with a big

smile

Letago looks at me for a very long time like she just saw a ghost.

“I know you. Yes I know you. Yes it’s you. You’re the lady my late husband to be gave a lift to the other day oh yes it’s you.” She says while pointing at me. she turns and looks at Meshack in total shock “Is this the lady you were telling me about all the time we spoke over the phone? The one you wanted to take in if things fails with the mother?”

Meshack just looks at her stunned. I also try to act surprised

“What happened to Gerald when he dropped you off?”

“Doc I think you still need to go home and rest. I don’t think you’re ready to work as of yet please.”

“Talk to me damn you.” She says while shaking me with so much force. “Talk to me.”

“Doc please you need to leave her alone. You’re harassing the patient.”

Within a few minutes the ward is full with the hospital stuff and patients

“Doctor please leave the patient alone.” Another male doctor says while trying to remove her away from me.

A group of doctors takes her away

“Meshack I will show you that I’m not imagining things you shall see.” She’s busy shouting that on her way out

“Do you know her?” He asks

“I need to leave. Is it not possible to leave today?”
I’m shaking and scared

“Why? Because of Doctor Letago? She’s not harmful. She lost her fiancée. They were supposed to get married this month. She’s just trying to deal with the death. I’m sure they will send her home for some days. Come on you can’t be scared of her.”

I wish I could tell him why I’m scared of her. I saw this lady paying the receptionist and I found two glasses and a half finished Gin in the room. People entered the room and killed Gareth and the blood results revealed that I was highly intoxicated. So I’m

not acting up for thinking this lady was inside the room. She probably tracked the car since Gerald was using her car and found us. She killed Gerald out of rage and gave me something to knock me out I mean she's a doctor after all. She was coming back to finish me off and I survived because I woke up before she could get there but then there is my mother. I decide not to entertain the conversation we had earlier.

"Get me out of here please. I'm not safe here. I'll tell you everything later."

"Okay. Let me see what I can do."

Meshack: I spoke with the doctor. He says you can leave tomorrow morning but I'll arrange for your discharge papers tonight and I'll come and fetch you tonight. I just discovered something and we really have a lot to talk about Madzalení and I mean a lot.

That's an sms coming from Meshack. I hope she hasn't poisoned him about me.

Me: Where is Letago?

Meshack: Back home. She won't be coming to work anytime soon. See you tonight. I hope you will be honest with me when I ask you things I just discovered

Me: I'll be honest about everything.

I wait for another sms but he doesn't send anything back. I put the phone under the pillow and wait trying to get some rest but it's so hard to catch any sleep. I'm stressed very stressed.

"Madzaleneni wake up." I hear a voice calling me but it sounds so far

I turn my back to continue with my sleep until I feel

cold water been splashed all over me

“You think this is your mother’s place? who do you expect to look after your child while you’re sleeping so late?”

I look up and it’s the rude sister one of those that were here when I was giving birth.

“You think I’m your lover Meshack? I don’t have time to pamper you nna. Where is Meshack by the way? He knows we are short stuffed but he decides to come to work late? Nxa useless like his girlfriend.”

Where is Meshack? I waited for him to come and fetch me last night but he never came. His phone just rang unanswered until I fell asleep. This is so unlike him? I start panicking at the thought of Letago finding me here.

Another nurse comes running

“Sister Mavis sister Mavis. You won’t believe this but paramedics were called to rush over to Meshack’s place. They say he drowned inside the bathtub. I just got a call from one of the cleaners there they say he’s dead she heard one of the paramedics talking.”

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After The Dark Clouds

#4

I can't stop crying. The tears I've cried since I heard of Meshack's death can be used to create a man's made dam. It's hard to deal with his death. He was one of the sweetest people I've ever met. It felt like we knew each other forever. He was able to tell when I'm at my lowest before I could say anything and he always had the right words to say to cheer me up.

The way he died sends chills all over my body. I keep on saying to myself it must be some kind of a coincidence. Why does every guy close to me die? I don't really have the full details about Meshack but he was found dead inside a bathtub just like Malome Sello and Gerald. Will this keep on happening to every guy I try to get close to? I must have some kind of a dark cloud following me cos it just doesn't

make sense why every guy I get close to die.

This is now like a puzzle. Every time I think I've got this puzzle all figured out but hai. With Malome I was convinced my mother had something to do with it. Malome Sello loved me he used to get me so many things. He would help me with my school work, take me out to town for a nice meal and treated me like his own daughter. My mother hated that because she always said I'm not worthy of any kind of love. She said I was a curse. I don't know if it had to do with the fact that things never worked out between her and my father or what cos she really hated him and would constantly tell me I'm just a waste of air like my father. She would flip every time she found malome with me inside the bedroom and she would destroy everything he got for me. I think she killed him because she couldn't stand seen someone loving me better.

With Gerald I thought it was pure passion killing.

Letago found out about us and killed him in total rage but then when my mother mentioned Gerald dying I got so confused. I've never told her who is the father of my baby and where he stays. She didn't even know where I'm going but how did she find out?

Then Meshack? I only knew him for a short period of time but I can vouch and say the guy didn't have any enemies at all. He was a happy soul so that throws any suspect I don't know out of the equation. The only suspect I know is my mother and Letago but then how did my mother know about Meshack? She has never visited me at the hospital so she can't know who I've been close to. How would she even know where Meshack stays? But Letago she knows where Meshack stays and she was shouting "I'll show you Meshack" when they were pulling her out. What did she mean by that? She also mentioned something like "Is this the lady you were telling me about over the phone saying that you want to take her in if things don't work out with the mom?" what if she got mad that I managed to find another man

after Gerald cheated on her with me and decided that since she never got her happy ending she will make sure I don't get my happy ending too?

Okay I'm now more than convinced Letago is behind Gerald and Meshack's passing but Malome Sello? I didn't even know Gerald so that completely throws her out of the equation for this one. Damn will I ever figure this one out? If Letago did it why would she use the same method as my mother? Unless if Gerald once shared with her what I told him about Malome Sello but nah he was cheating on her with me so there is no way he could have discussed that with her. Will this misery ever get solved?

"Madzalení bye girl. You must give me your numbers so that we can keep in touch."

It's the lady we shared a ward together. Her mother and the boyfriend are here to fetch her. The mom is carrying the baby while the boyfriend is carrying her

bags.

I'm supposed to be out of here but I have no idea where I'm going. I so envy her she has a home to go to with her child. one thing I know I'm not going back to my mother's place. I don't want to find Phodiso drowned inside the bathtub and one thing I know I need to leave Phalaborwa. This is a very small town and if Letago is really out to get me it will be very easy for her to get me.

We break the hug and she gets ready to go.

“Leshale botse sesi together le sesinyana akere.”
The lady's mom says with a smile on her face but it's more like a forced smile

“Le sepele gabotse mma.

She hands the bags to her daughter and gets closer to me. She signals them to give us some privacy and they both get out leaving the two of us together

“Kereke leya tsena sesi?” She asks

“No I don’t go to any church.”

“There is a very dark cloud following you and you need some serious cleansing. Who is Matilda and how is she connected with you?”

I think hard very hard. I even think from my early childhood memories but I can’t remember any Matilda in fact I don’t know any Matilda.

“I don’t know any Matilda.”

“Think carefully because this lady is behind the dark cloud following you. You need help sesi and very fast

or else this dark cloud will keep on following you. Do you have any relatives in Nigeria?”

Okay this woman is really creeping me out now. If she didn't mention a dark cloud following me I would have thought her prophecies are not directed to me cos I don't know any of the people she's talking about. My mother's name is Nomathemba and her English name is Olga unless if she was called Matilda while growing up but how did I wrong her nna? The only wrong I ever made was to be her daughter that's all. relatives in Nigeria? Aretsi maybe I do. I'm named Madzaleneni after all maybe it's one of my ancestors living in Nigeria.

“Not that I know of.”

“Okay. You need some serious deliverance and very fast to stop this dark cloud from following you around. Leshale gabotse sesi.” She gets up and leaves.

Hai no what is going on here? I always find prophets confusing and I really don't like them. Okay I need to stop thinking about this whole thing too much otherwise I'll go crazy after all I have very bigger problems to deal with like figure out a place we are going to stay at when we get out of here.

I'm carrying Phodiso and on the other hand carrying a plastic with my clothes and stuff that Meshack got for her. The couple of clothes will really help a lot.

I'm dressed up but I feel so naked as I'm passing all these people sitting here. I feel like everybody can see what I'm going through. I feel like they can see I don't even have a place called home but for the sake of this girl I'm carrying I'll hold my head up high. There is no time to accept any invite for pity parties. I'm way passed that stage now. I need to be strong for my girl

As I'm passing through the reception making my

way out I bump into some woman who looks like a Christmas tree. She's very big but she's rocking a high waist jean with a crop top. Let me not get started on the heavy makeup

"I'm so sorry. I'm in a hurry and was not looking where I'm going." She says in a very apologetic voice

"No its fine really."

"Wait a minute. I know you maan." She says while inspecting my face I guess trying to recall where she knows me from. " Yes it's you. You're the that girl who was moered by labour pains at the municipality ne?"

I laugh shyly. Is it so easy for people to recognise me? Letago did the same too. This is scary.

“Yes its me.”

“Where is the baby? Oh my word is that her at the back?”

She doesn't even wait for me to respond. She has already moved to my back and peaking at Phodiso

“Ncoo she's so cute I feel like eating her all up. You take good care of this beautiful angel. See you around if we get to meet again.”

I watch her walking away but then decide she might be able to help me

“Excuse me Ma.” I shout out

She turns and looks at me.

“Do you know any place hiring? Anything I’m not choosy at all. I can even do laundry and clean yards.” I can see she looks a bit shocked. “We got discharged today and we have no place to stay. I need to find a job so that I can afford a place and our basic needs.”

I’m actually trying to raise enough money to get out of this place but of course I can’t tell her that

“Did you say anything?” She looks more interested as she asks that

“Yes anything.” Desperation is not hiding from my voice as I respond

“What about your child? She’s still very small who will look after her when you’re going to work?”

I never even thought about that.

“I might be able to help you. You said you’re willing to do anything ne?”

“Yes anything.” I respond

“you’re coming with me. my name is Ausi Molly by the way.”

“Madzaleneni.”

She makes fun of my name and we both laugh about it.

“Your name is Chantel starting from today okay? We need a very catchy name for you.”

I laugh and sit by the benches and wait for her to finish everything. She leads me towards the parking and we get inside her Toyota Fortuner.

“Tell me more about yourself. How did you end up here?”

I tell her I came here to look for the father of my child who works at the mines but he chased me away. I further go on to tell her my mother is dead and my aunt chased me away because of the pregnancy. I’m really not about to be honest I don’t want to put myself in danger. There is noway I can be associated with Gerald, Meshack and Malome until I know who killed them. while I’m busy talking the news reporter starts talking. She increases the volume and instructs me to keep quite

“I need to listen to this one. This is currently the talk of the town now.”

I just ignore her as I concentrate on breastfeeding Phodiso

“Today in the studio we are joined by detective Julia Mpai, thank you so much for joining us detective. Few months back our town was in a buzz with the death of the son of the famous pastor Gafane and few months down the line the town is in a buzz again over the death of a male nurse at Maphutha hospital. Do you think we have a serial killer on the run or this is just pure coincidence?” the reporter asks

I nearly choked on my saliva when listening to that. I can't believe this has turned into public interest. Now it makes sense how my mother found out but it still doesn't make sense how she knew Gerald was the father of my child and that I was present when he was killed.

“First I would like to say hi to you and your listeners

and extend my gratitude for having me on the show. Well investigations are still going underway and at this point I really can't say much. We have established that the killings are all same patterns. Both were drowned inside a bathtub and were strangled before dying so we defiantly believe this was not suicide but like I said investigations are still going underway and at this point we urge every male to be careful since it looks like they are targets."

"Shocking stuff detective. How were they strangled?" The news reporter asks

"We found a scarf inside the bathtub of both victims and we have established that a similar death took place at Polokwane town three years ago although no scarf was found but the victim was strangled before being drowned to death. Another incident took place at Mpumalanga about 10 years back. Unfortunately, I cannot reveal the names of the victims as investigations are still going underway."

“Do you believe the serial killer is a male or female?”

“Unfortunately I cannot comment regarding that.”

My mother and I stayed in Mpumalanga before moving to Polokwane. My body goes into an instant fit. I'm now more than convinced this is not some kind of a coincidence. I need to find out about the Mpumalanga incident and if I am connected to the person that died in any kind of way.

“Hai they must arrest this psychopath haibo we cannot live our lives in fear but it looks like the guy only targets man. Okay honey we are home.” Ausi Molly says while opening the door

I just sit still in the car trying to process everything. I try to act calm not to get her suspicious of anything and I have to say nothing could have prepared me for what I'm witnessing as we enter the house. I'm

just drowning in shock today.

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After The Dark Clouds

#5

Different lights are blinking, soft music is playing, couch set out on the corners of the big spacious room, bar chairs just next to the counter and behind is different bottles of alcohol on the stand and a big fridge with alcohol too. Soft music is playing and there is a group of ladies running up and down. Some are running up stairs. Some are half naked holding trays with alcohol

From the outside this place looked like a beautiful double storey house but now it's evident there is a whole lot of things going on here. This is a club and not just an ordinary club but one of those that you see in movies.

I turn to look at Ausi Molly, she is carrying Phodiso. She looks peacefully sleeping. I feel like grabbing her

and run . Now it all makes sense why she didn't hesitate to take me in when I told her I need a job and she kept on repeating the word "You can do anything?". Why do I always attract bad women in my life? She and my mother are cut from the same cloth. She should have been honest with me and let me make a decision. I turn to look back and there is no way you can get out of here. She entered using some password.

She signals one of the ladies to stop playing the music while settling on the couch still holding Phodiso in her arms. She realizes I'm still standing and gives me an eye that says come and sit the fuck down. I quickly rush and sit just next to her. I try to take Phodiso away from her and she gives me that eye again

"She's sleeping. I just wanted you to rest." I defend myself from that eye. This woman doesn't have to say much just one look and you're shaking. She's totally different from that jolly person I met outside

“ Where is Vanessa? I need her to take in a new girl and show her around”

Oh hell no she better be not talking about me

“She called and said she will be running a bit late. She had a meeting with a client but she’s on the way.” Some white girl answers

“Why is she taking clients while she knows I promoted her?”

They all shrug their shoulders looking down.

The tense mood is killed by an appearance of two gentleman entering through the door. The mood changes from down to up in just a second. They start screaming and running to the gentleman. You know that kind of excitement kids have when their

daddy returns home after a very long time? Don't ask me where I know it from cos I saw it from the movies.

I look carefully at this guy and I feel like I've seen him before. Is this Sthembiso Khoza? As he gets closer I realize they just look alike. Even if you don't have any expense ya mjolo there is no way you can miss the bad boy character on him. He's got a tattoo on his neck, arms and Lord knows where else. He's wearing blue jeans, white Tshirt and Black All-stars boots. The look is completed with a black leather jacket and sun glasses. He's with some dark big guy who looks like he eats food all day for a living. He takes off his leather jacket and the big guy quickly grabs it and hang it on the chair. He moves to the bar and start fixing two glasses of drinks.

"Did you guys cook anything?" The big guy asks

"We were gonna cook a storm only if we were

notified the big boss is finally making an appearance today.” Some girl completes the answer by sticking out her tongue

The ladies have now cooled down with the noise and all excitement. Sthembiso look alike starts scanning the whole room like he’s checking any kind of fault. I look at Ausi Molly and she looks scared.

“You not going to greet me?” He asks her

She slowly gets up from her seat. She smiles but even Phodiso can see that smile is fake. “Nation hi. I didn’t know you were coming back. Why didn’t you call or something?” She hugs him

The big guy comes with the drink. He gulps it down at one go and hands him the glass back.

“Ngaye another shot da Lebhazooka. Don’t measure it just fill the whole glass and just dash it up with ice.”

“Ola da Nation.” He says as he grabs the glass

“Moltah where are my girls?” He asks while focusing on his fingers .his busy pinching them like he’s trying to take out a thorn out

“Ummm...”

“Moltah Mashile I’m talking to you and don’t you dare repeat that Ummm...” He stops playing with his fingers before she could answer “Ladies I need some privacy with Moltah. I’ll catch up with all of you later.”

“Kuzonyiwa la. If he calls your real names in full just

know that no stone is going to be left unturned.” She whispers to my ears and gasps for air

I don't know if I should stay or move with the rest of the girls but I don't know them. I came here with Ausi Molly and I'm going to remain here with her. She's still holding my child by the way

The ladies get up and move past him. He grabs two by their arms and look at them like a doctor carefully inspecting a patient.

“You have a bruise on your face?” He says to one of the girls

She puts her hand on her face and looks down avoiding eye contact with him

“Dammit Vee you know I hate it when I'm talking to

you guys and you look down. Look at me. What happened to your face? You went back to him didn't you?"

She looks up at him and I see tears flowing down on her face. He gives her a tight hug and she breaks down. That moment right there is enough for me to judge that he's not as dangerous as he sounds and looks. He reminds me of Freedom every time his heart broke for me. I could see sadness in his eyes. This look right here says a lot and kinda puts me at ease.

"It's okay. I'm back and he will never touch you again. Damn Vee why do you keep on going back to that bastard? I give you guys way more than enough to survive and avoid such shit. Surely Is his dick made out of gold? Surely there is better dicks out there."

"I'm sorry for disappointing you."

“It’s okay. I’m back and he will never touch you again. Go upstairs we shall catch up later.”

She runs upstairs and he turns to the big guy.

“Lebhazoka?”

“Sure Nation.”

“Organize the guys to get the bastard and teach him a lesson he’ll never forget. Well actually never mind I’ll do it myself.” He turns to the other girl “And Clara? What is going on? Are you on drugs?”

“No Chabs.” She’s a junkie this one. even Phodiso can see it

“Don’t you dare lie to me. Since when do we take

drugs? Moltah is this how you ran my business on my absence? You corrupted my girls?”. He then turned to the big guy “Arrange for her to be taken into rehab. Make it happen today. Go and pack up each and every shit you own you’re getting out of here and you’re going to get rid of that addiction and until you’re doing better you will not be getting any cent from me. Fuck man I thought I taught you guys better”

It’s now just the four of us well that Lebhazoka is busy on the phone booking rehabs.

“So we bringing infants into the work place now?” He asks while looking at Ausi Molly

“Hai no the thing is I met the mother and she’s desperately looking for a job. She has nowhere to go so i...”

“You what? Brought her into my place without even doing any background check on her? You entered the security password while she’s looking? What if she’s an undercover cop? Did you play games while growing up? I mean games like those kind ladies like? Bodi keto, skipping the rope and hide and sick?”

“Yes I did boss.”

“Did you play them enough?”

“Yes.”

“I don’t think so cos you wouldn’t be playing with my business.” He hits the glass on the table and it feels like the table is going to crack. “Moltah you know how hard I worked for this business. I took those girls from the streets. I will put up my balls on the scale for those girls, I would give up anything for them. You strip me naked and take anything but not

those girls. You don't fucken get to destroy my girls and do with them as you please."

"Nation I..." She tries to reason with him

"Shut the fuck up." He says while scrolling on his phone. He dials a number "Open the door and let the guys in. pin to unlock the door is Moerskont. No questions asked by the door. I authorized the entry. Make it quick."

"Your friends are here. You fucken get Nigerians involved in my business?. I'm putting an end to this business transaction of yours."

Some guys enter pushing some badly beaten up men at gun point. He gets up from his chair and follows them to some room. He doesn't have that concerned big brother look now. He looks dangerous like a snake

“Ausi Molly what is going on here? I want to go. Please let me out.”

“SHUT THE FUCK UP.” She says with her teeth grinned

“I want to go. I promise I won’t say anything about what happened here.”

“Only Nation will let you out. I don’t know how to even get out. There is a special generated code for entering here and he took all access away from me.”

She talks like a person who has given up on life and is about to die.

“Is he going to make me a prostitute? I don’t have anything but I don’t want to be a prostitute. Sis Molly please I need to get out of here.” My eyes are

swollen from all the tears now

She squeezes my hand like a person ready to die.

“Relax he’s not like that. He will never force you to do anything you don’t want to do. He’s a great person really. I just let greed get the better of me. He will let you go if you tell him you want to go and at no price at all. He doesn’t sleep with the girls from here. He protects them like a big brother. He...”

I hear that loud Bang Bang from the movies which completely paralyzes my whole body. What have I gotten myself into. I run to the door holding my baby as soon as I recover. There must be a way out of here besides the security thing

“Madzaleneni wait.” A voice says from the back

I turn to look and it's him. He's holding a glass of whiskey like he just won a big victory. He walks slowly towards me with a smile on his face. Once he

gets closer he extends his hand. I don't greet him back

“Relax man. akeje stocko. Ke Sechaba but on the street they call me Nation. Wena omang?”

He sips his drink with his eyes looking at me through the glass

I just look at him without giving any answer

“You look too scared to introduce yourself to me. Madzaleneni Ndlozi right? Mmago Phodiso? My condolences on the passing ya timer ya ncosi ya hao. It must have been a very traumatic experience. Why do you look so scared? Do you want to go? Say the word and I'll let me out.”

How the hell does this guy know me?

After The Dark Clouds

#6

To say I'm shocked it's an understatement. How does this guy know me and worse how does he know about Gerald? Does this mean he knows about what transpired that night? All these questions flooding my mind starts making me shake like a leaf on a windy night and I think he can notice it. I actually think that's right where he wanted me. He's not saying anything though. He's just stripping me naked with his eyes. I feel like he can pierce right through my soul and that's making me feel so vulnerable. I want to talk but words are just tied around my tongue failing dismally to come out.

The big guy cuts the tension with his presence when he joins us.

“I need to go. Is there anything else you’re going to need?” He asks

“No ke shap. I’ll give you a call if I need anything.” He answers the guy while his eyes are still fixed on me.

They bump shoulders and the guy leaves.

“Can I leave too?” I ask with desperation traceable in my voice and visible on my face

“You going to break her neck.” He points at Phodiso just after saying that

I look at her and I don’t see how I’m going to break her neck.

“That’s not how you carry a child.”

He comes closer and takes her from my arms carefully. I think he's trying to make sure he doesn't wake her up.

"This is how you carry a child." Her supports both her head and neck with his right tattooed arm while the other hand is neatly wrapped around her tummy. He peaks inside her pink receiving blanket and brush her cheeks with a smile covered on his face. "Wat se da My Poppe. Aaah wena retlo o tima nama. You sleep too much ne? you will miss out on all the good things. You look so much like you're father"

Disgusted is visible on his face after saying that last sentence. Like he hated her father. How does he even know Gerald and the fact that he was her father?

"Please bring her back and can I please leave?"

I say while snatching her away from him.

I feel so uneasy with him touching her. You can say I'm a bit paranoid but I feel like he will run away with her or something. Who can blame me? The guy runs a brothel and he just shot some people while I was under this roof and he knows stuff about me that I'm too scared to even face so yeah I'm not paranoid.

"Sure." He raises his hands as a way of surrendering.

I turn back to look for Ausi Molly well not that I want anything to do with her I just want to be sure she's still present. She's sitting by the bar having a smoke and a drink.

I make my way out. I'm surprised he hasn't issued any threats about what he will do to me if I talk. I was expecting it and I was ready to defend myself. I turn back to look at this place one more time and now I can see I was too stupid to think it's actually a real house cos this place doesn't have houses around expect for abounded firms.

It looks so different outside. The sun is blazing hot. You could actually take a pot and cook right on the tire road. They were right when they said Phalaborwa is extremely hot. Outside it looks totally different from the place I just came out of. For a moment I thought it was late at night inside there.

It's so hard to walk in this sun while carrying a child and carrying so many things in your mind. I'm just walking but I don't even know where I am and where I'm going. The road looks rather deserted with just one or two cars passing after a while. I see a very big building. When I look carefully I see a big board written "PMC mine" so this is the famous Phalaborwa Mining company. I don't even see any entrance from where I'm standing so I decide to just carry on walking.

I miss my mother's house as toxic as it was but I really miss it. I miss Gareth. Why did he die and leave me all alone to face this? I miss malome Sello,

I miss Meshack. This life thing is hard on my own.
I'm at a point of giving up

I've been walking for some time now. I'm feeling so tired and hungry. Do other people go through what I'm going through in life? I really feel like I'm carrying the entire world heavy load right on my shoulder and its all collapsing on me right now. I feel like I'm God's rubbish bin like he just dumps every load of bad garbage on me. Why can't I have a big break? I have a child now and no place to stay or any means to support her. How does he expect me to survive?

I've always been optimistic about life despite everything I went through but right now I'm tired. I'm tired of living, I'm tired of not having any control of everything that is happening in my life, I'm tired of not finding any solution, I'm tired of dreaming big only to hit rock bottom.

Phodiso starts crying. I open the blanket and shush her but the more I shush her is the more her cry gets so hysterical.

“Phodiso please keep quite my girl. Please I’m begging you. I look on my side and there are bushes, right in the middle I spot a tree. I go and sit under the tree and take out my breast to feed her. She sucks once and removes her mouth like she just tasted something bitter and starts crying again. “God please make her stop crying please.” I get up and shush her. I try so hard to stop my tears from coming out. I start singing for her:

Nana fomola bomme ba ile kae ba ile mashemong....

There more I sing the more her cries gets. She’s actually screaming so loud for a child. Are her lungs so matured to scream that loud?

“Phodiso ke eng?” I shout at her fighting the edge to throw her on the ground. I can’t do this I really can’t do this.

I put her on the ground and walk away. I don't even look behind to see how she's doing. I walk and walk.

As I'm walking I feel a car stopping right next to me. Its Sechaba. Our eyes lock and he doesn't say anything to me. He opens the door and goes to the ground and pick her up. She's still crying hysterically. He still doesn't say anything to me. He sits in the car and puts her right on his shoulders. His busy brushing her back and slowly she stops crying the only sound I can hear is just hiccups. He carefully places her on the passenger seat and gets out.

"No matter how things turn out you don't do that do you hear me? you don't put an innocent child through that." He walks up to me and pulls me in his arms. I'm a bit reluctant but he presses my head on his shoulders and whispers "Cry. Let it all out." I try to suppress the cry. "No no don't do that. Don't suppress that cry. It doesn't make you any weak it proves your human and you go through shit."

I start crying. It starts as a soft low cry which grows into a loud cry.

“Yes that’s what I want to hear. Let it all out”

“I didn’t mean to leave her like that.”

“Shshssh no talking.” He brushes my back softly as he says that

“I’m not a bad mother.”

“Shshshsh I believe you.” He cements my head on his chest as she says that

“I do care about her.”

“I know.” He runs his fingers through my tiny hair as he says that

I cry more. I cry for all the things I've swept away and told myself it's all alright. Why is he making me come face to face with my fears?

Once I've calmed down I get up from. "I'm sorry."

"For what?"

"Thank you."

"It's nothing. Let's go."

I get inside and hold Phodiso. We are just quite along the way until Phodiso starts crying again. He takes one look at her and goes back to concentrate on the road. "Feed her."

I'm too embarrassed to do that in front of him but I

have no choice cos she's just crying. I take out my breast and feed her. this time she sucks without any hustle

“When you're stressed kids can sense it. They have a way of sensing a bad vibe.”

I think he can read my mind that I'm asking how do you know that

“I raised my siblings.”

He doesn't say more and I'm not going to ask more. We drive in awkward silence again. I think naturally he's not a talker and I'm not a talker too if I'm not used to the person but I hate this silence

“So where do you know me from?”

“I’ve know you for quite some time. You’re linked to someone I was interested in.”

My heart starts threatening to come out of my chest with all the beating. “You must be traumatized about the death of the father of your child.” I recall those words. So he is talking about Gareth.

“Gareth?” I ask

He takes a sip from the water bottle before answering. “Yeah.”

“But how did you know me?”

“He took something very precious away from me. I was desperate to win her back so I had to dig deep just to find any dirt about him and I found out about you guys.”

“Letago? The doctor?”

He doesn't answer instead he throws the water bottle outside the window and continues driving

“Wait a minute. Did you have anything to do with Gareth death?”

He opens the second water bottle and takes a sip from it and continues driving.

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After The Dark Clouds

#7

Minutes have passed now and I'm still waiting for an answer. It's like my question fell straight into deaf ears. He's now playing music looking unbothered by what I just asked him. He doesn't look offended or guilty so It's very hard to really tell if he did it. But then again how would he kill Gerald the very same way malome and Meshack were killed? None of this makes sense. What if he's covering for his ex girlfriend? I swear my life is a roller-coaster of misery.

We reach some place and boy we are welcomed by some real vibes. I see a board written Namakgale. So this is the famous Phalaborwa kasi? There is life everywhere. Car wash there, chisa nyama going on there, taverns there, kids running around the street, cars going around hai the place is just too alive. It

feels like we have entered a complete different place. Looks like Phalaborwa is not just a tourist town only there is some real fun here well for those who like fun. I've never been the kind of girl that found fun in going out to pubs or roaming around the street. My type of fun is being at home reading a book, cooking and watching some movies. I love food and if I had money I would eat out a lot ya that going as fun ne? eating out?

He parks the car at some four roomed house. you know those old Government houses. There is a teenage girl playing alone in the yard. She looks like 10 years of age. She stops playing and runs to the car when she sees him. She adores him no question need asked here.

“Abuti Sechaba.” She shouts jumping all over him

“Baula. Howsit?” He pinches her cheeks and embrace her into a tight hug.

It's a beautiful scene to watch. Nothing I mean nothing is as cute as a man who adores children. At this point I'm not sure if she's his daughter or what but he doesn't look that old to be her father.

"Why are you playing alone?" He asks while brushing her golden hair

"They are teasing me bare ke nna
Lekgwehle(Albino)"

I can see he doesn't know what to say to her. He looks at me and looks back at her. I want to say tell her she's very beautiful and she must not pay attention to what they are saying but I don't want to look forward. I've never experienced that kind of pain but I know how it feels like to go through something and feel like you have no control over but I'm not confident enough to motivate someone and tell them its fine I mean deep down I'm going through hell and it's not fine at all. Just standing here looking

at her I realize that we all have our own load of troubles. Nobody is immune to pain. Shame poor girl and she's really beautiful. I hope the universe will present me with a chance to get closer to her. I yearn to tell her she's enough and perfect

"You not that." He says. Sounding more like he's trying to convince himself more than her

"Yes I am. Everybody calls me that even the teachers at school." She says it so casually like it's a normal thing

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"So that you can go around and make threats again or hurt them? Haaaa Abuti Sechaba." Gosh she's such a teenager

“Who is that?” She asks pointing at me. I can tell she just wants to change the topic she’s not really interested in me. Could it be that she has seen him with different girls before and I’m just one of them? I don’t know why that thought prickles my heart I mean it’s not like he’s my boyfriend.

He doesn’t answer her. Her just keeps his defeated eyes fixed on her. I see disappointment and sadness on his face

“Papa.” It’s a small boy running towards him. He’s only wearing a Tshirt and underwear

He picks him up and swings him around. The boy giggles while up in the air

“Howsit boy? Were you crying?” He asks while wiping off the remaining tears on his cheeks with his hand

“Kebo Matome. They didn’t want to play with me
because I have Aids like my mother was before.”

Jesus. My heart stands still at the mention of what

“You don’t have that. I taught you to beat everyone
who speaks like that to you. Why didn’t you beat
them?”

“Koko said I must stop getting into fights. She said if
I don’t stop she’s going to send me to jail and the
police are going to beat me up.”

He laughs and both him and the and the girl joins

“She is lying. She will never do that.”

The laughter is interrupted by a sudden open of the

front door. A very old woman with white hair is standing by the door. She looks old but still looks very strong and I must say beautiful with big grey hair all over the head. The hair looks well relaxed and she has combed it backwards. She is wearing a motoishi with no shoes. She doesn't look too pleased to see Sechaba

"Thato, Miso go inside the house now." Her voice is so firm. That voice that commands respect

"Mara koko I still want to see papa."

The teenage girl whom I've now learned is Miso takes Thato's hand and lead him inside the house. He's sulking while walking inside the house. Miso keeps on brushing his head as a way of comfort.

I open the car door trying to get back inside but she signals me to stop with her hand. I stand still leaning

by the car holding Phodiso very tight in my hands ready to run should things go south here.

“Ma Ou.” He greets while taking the beanie off his head and buries his head on the ground to avoid any form of eye contact with her

She doesn't respond the greeting but instead turns to me. “Dumela Ausi.”

“Dumelang koko.”

“O jola le Sechaba?”

“Ma Ou” He says it as a way of saying stop it

“O nyakang mo haka Sechaba? Didn't I tell you to never set your foot here?”

“I know what you said and you know I’ll never disrespect you in any way but I was missing them and they missed me too. I got them stuff and...”

He doesn’t get to finish his sentence as a hot clap interrupts him. I jump a bit feeling like it just landed on my cheek. He just stands still and continues to bury his head on the ground

“Look at me.” She commands

He looks at her and another hot clap lands on his other cheek. He doesn’t respond, touch the cheeks or anything

“You stay away from this house and everyone who stays here. I told you to turn away from all your evil doings so until you do so you’re not welcomed here. I will take care of all my grandchildren the same way I did with you. I don’t need your help with your dirty

money.”

“Can you at least take the food and medication for them?”

“Kana le bereka kae papa? Can I see your payslip?”

“Ma ou...”

“Don’t come back here again unless you’re willing to change or else I’ll call the police on you.”

She starts walking but turns back and looks at me

“Don’t let him get you involved in his evil things. What those girls don’t know is that they are just not having sex with those men. You young people are just after money but you don’t know the

consequences that comes with having sex with just random guys. There is what we call sexual ties and that's a very dangerous thing. This one will get you into trouble I'm telling you."

She turns back and goes inside the house. Sechaba looks at her until she gets inside the house with a smile on his face. As soon as she closes the door he shakes his head still smiling.

"Hai Oulady. Old age is messing with her head. Let's go."

I get inside the car confused as ever. I want to ask questions but I know he has a tendency of not answering questions actually he's not much of a talker that I've noticed.

"Is that your son?" I try to break the ice

“Sort of.”

“What do you mean sort of?”

He doesn't answer. I knew he won't go deeper. He goes quiet and we drive in complete silence. I still don't know where he's taking me. I know it's too risky but I'm not going to ask. I don't know why but I can feel that he will never harm me more especially because of Phodiso. He stops at the shops

“I'm coming back. Don't talk to anyone.”

Just next to the car there is a group of ladies. I can see them looking at him and then back at me inside the car. One of them walks quickly to the car and waves at me. She signals for me to open. I don't know her and he told me not to open for anyone so I'm not going to open. I look at her and continue looking in the front until I notice almost everyone is

staring at me in a very weird way. Some are busy pointing fingers at me and no doubt they are gossiping about me. The lady is still standing just next to the window. I open the window half way and she doesn't even give me a chance to say anything. She starts talking so fast like a person who doesn't want to get caught

“Are you new here? Every girl around here doesn't play next to that guy.”

I recall this is Phalaborwa. A very small place where everybody knows each and everyone's party

“We don't know what is happening but every girl he sleeps with ends up dead. You need to run for your life girl.”

I don't know Sechaba but I feel like she's lying and I'm going to defend him

“Why is Letago still alive?”

She looked puzzled like she didn't expect me to know this. She now looks confused and not free to talk

“Why did her kids die instead?”

She sees Sechaba coming and runs back to her group

Letago and kids? Gerald described her as some angel so what kids is she talking about? I doubt she had kids

“What was that girl saying?” He asks as he hands me food

“Nothing. She said nothing.”

“Okay.” He starts the car and we drive off

I didn't really mean nothing I wanted him to pry more but what did I expect this is Sechaba.

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After The Dark Clouds

#8

The tension in this car Jehova I swear I even the dead can feel it. I don't know if he's mad with me for talking to someone after he gave me an instruction not to talk to anyone and I completely did the opposite even worse I refused to tell him what the lady said to me. I thought he would ask again but he didn't. The least I could have done was tell him the truth I really owe him that much after everything he has done for me so far. I don't know where Phodisho would be if it wasn't for him or where I would be now.

It's now dark outside but that doesn't blind my memory. I know this place we passed here during the day. He stops and park at some corner and I recall that it's his street.

He takes out his phone and makes a call. He has connected his phone to the car so I can hear everything

“Abuti.” Some lady answers. Her voice is so full of respect

“Are you home?” No greeting he just asks her the question

“No. I’m working nightshift.”

I can hear him cursing under his breath as he shuts his eyes instantly

“Is everything okay?” She asks

“Ya everything is fine I just needed a little favor but

all is fine.”

She says her goodbyes. He doesn't respond but goes on to make another call. There is something about this guy I think he has some kind of rudeness in him or is it cockiness? But either way it suits him and I think he knows it.

“Abuti Sechaba.” A girl answers. No doubt she's not that old

“Where is Mme?”

“She's sleeping. She said she's not feeling well.”

He cuts the call and open his door. “Let's go.” He doesn't wait for me to respond. I do as I'm told and follow him. I thought the old woman made it clear he's not welcomed here. What if she wakes up and

not only attacks him but attacks me as well? All these fears are crippling me but I'm not going to ask him anything.

We pass the four roomed house and walk to the backrooms. It looks like there is three of them. He's still leading the way and I'm following.

"It's a bit dusty cos I haven't been here for quite some time." He says after pushing the door wide open and switching on the light.

I stand by the door and look around. It's a very nice room with a ceiling on the roof, white tiles neatly crafted on the floor. The room is well finished with a very big bed, there is a stand with a flat screen Tv, a two seater couch just next to it and a built in wardrobe.

"Put the child on the bed so that she can rest well."

He says after noticing I'm just standing by the door not making any plan to get inside

I could really do with some rest too. I'm very exhausted. After putting Phodiso on the bed and making sure she's settled I finally sit still on the bed but not really relaxed cos he's just standing right in front of me. He's too intimidating besides he has seen me at my most vulnerable moment so its just not easy to warm up around him.

"There is a bathroom over there if you need to use it." He says pointing at some door that I didn't even notice.

I want to open my mouth and respond but words fail to come out all I could do is just nod.

"Okay shap." He says while trying to close the door

"Wait." I shout. He stops and looks at me. Gosh why

is this guy so intimidating?

“Wont your grandmother have a problem?”

“Your safe here.”

Not an answer I was looking for but I'll settle for it. He closes the door and walks out. I don't even know how I'm going to get hold of him just in case I need something but what's there to need really? I have a roof over my head and my child is safe so I really don't think I'm going to need any more than that.

I want to go and take a bath but I'm too scared if he comes back and walks on me naked yeah stupid I know cos he gave me the keys. So I decide not to bath. Few minutes later I hear a knock on the door and I'm kind of startled. I don't know how to respond so I keep quite

“Mmago Phodiso?” The voice calls out from outside.

I take out the keys he gave me and open. Its Miso. I have I have good memory with people’s names. I’m so happy to see here. She’s holding a bucket full of water and a mop

“Hi Miso.”

She looked kind of surprised how I know her name. She moves the spectacles higher with her finger

“Abuti Sechaba said I must come and clean the room for you.”

Sechaba bathong how can he do that to the poor child? This is so unnecessary

“Oh noo you don’t have to. I’m sure you have school tomorrow. I’ll do it.” I say taking the mop away from her. I really don’t want to do any cleaning but then I can’t let the poor child do this

“No its fine. I really want to.”

“Don’t you have books to read?” I ask with a smile

“I have an accounting test tomorrow but I won’t even bother. I know I’m going to fail anyway.”

She takes the mop back from me and I take it back from her and we end up laughing at our fight over the mop

“But Accounting is really easy. You just need to know which goes where and you’re sorted.”

“Do you know Balance sheet? It’s such a nightmare.”
She pulls such a long bored face to support her
statement

“That’s the easiest. I can help you if you want. Go get
your books.”

She’s very reluctant to go. I beg her until she finally
goes. When she gets back she finds me busy
moping the room.

“I’m back mam.”

I laugh “I’ll be with you just now.”

I can see her via the mirror while I’m busy mopping.
Her whole body is on the bed trying to avoid her legs
from touching the wet floor. I can see her looking at
Phodiso

“Can I hold her?”

“Yes you can but not for long please cos she’s sleeping. I was advised not to hold her while sleeping cos she’ll get used to the hands and refuse to sleep on the bed.”

She takes her and holds her. I stop mopping just to witness this moment. She has a big smile on her face

“She’s so beautiful. Abuti Sechaba was right.”

“He said that?”

She doesn’t answer but continues to look at Phodi. This family doesn’t like answering questions. I cant help but get a little excited over what she just told me about Sechaba saying Phodiso is beautiful. I wonder what brought up that conversation. Sechaba doesn’t look like much of a talker

“So he’s your brother?”

“Yes.” She answers paying more attention on the child

“And the little boy?”

“He’s his brother too.”

Ohh so he’s not his child? But why does he call him papa? “Why does he call him papa?” I really need to know

“He thinks he’s his father.”

“Why?”

She doesn’t answer me. I knew she was going to pull

that one soon she's so like her brother. I decide to stop asking questions and continue cleaning. I don't want her to judge me badly.

"Okay I'm done cleaning. Let's start."

She's still holding Phodiso in her hands busy talking in baby language. It's so funny and cute

"Can't I just watch over her? We can do books some other time."

"No we doing them now. you have a test tomorrow."

She joins me on the couch and I start by explaining the basic accounting principles to her. I tell her to ask me anything she wants. That no question is stupid. I do some few practical exercises while she's watching and encourage her to try them on her own

while I observe and correct her. She's getting them wrong but I'm so patient with her. Now I realize why I enrolled for a teaching degree while I was still at the university of Limpopo. This is really my passion and I'm really enjoying teaching her.

My head is so tired from looking down so I lift it up and wow Sechaba is standing by the door with his hands buried inside his pockets. Is that a smile I see on his face? Miso lifts her head and spots him too

"Abuti come and see I got this right." She says jumping from the bed going to show him the exercise she just finished doing. "I can't believe how easy this really is. Mam Banda made it sound so difficult she doesn't know how to explain it well. Mmago Phodiso explained it so well and she's so patient you know she doesn't make me feel stupid."

He smiles at her and brush her hair. "I'm going to buy you that phone you've been telling me about."

“Only if she passes the test tomorrow and continues to attend lessons with me not just accounting but other subjects too. Actually she’s only getting that phone if she passes.”

“Haaah mama Phodiso that’s so unfair.” She pulls a pout while saying that. She’s really beautiful never mind the fact that she looks different than most of us but she’s really beautiful and I love her green eyes

“Yes I agree with her. You have failed last year already.”

She sticks her tongue out at both of us “Prepare the money for the phone then.” She goes to the bed and kiss Phodiso then walks out

“Thank you for doing that. I’ve never seen her so excited about school so thank you. I’ll pay you.”

“She just revived my passion for teaching I really enjoyed that. I was studying to be a teacher. You don’t have to pay me anything you have already done enough for me and for my child. I don’t know where we would be if it wasn’t for you.”

“Where is your mother?”

Yhoo Jehova this guy likes off ramping. I thought we talking about teaching and all now how does my mother fit in? Let me wet my throat with some saliva and get on the flow with him he’s sure as hell a difficult character.

“She stays at Polokwane ko Seshego. We don’t have a good relationship.”

“Why do you like wearing those things? When I first saw your picture you were wearing a red one” He asks pointing at my scarf

Another off-ramp from a serious conversation. Mxm
this guy mara

“I just like them ever since I was a little girl.”

He doesn't answer or ask another question instead
he closes the door. He's such a weirdo

I take off my jean, top and scarf and place them
neatly on the couch. Where is my red scarf by the
way? I searched for it yesterday but couldn't find it
now that he has mentioned it I'll search it for it well
tomorrow when I have time cos right now I'm really
tired all I need is to sleep.

I walk to the bathroom to pee. There is a toilet seat
and a bathtub. The sight of a bathtub sends my
heart racing that I quickly run away from the
bathroom without doing anything.

I start recalling how the bathtub has taken away every male close to me and I start wondering if Sechaba won't be the next one.

"No Madz wet your throat with some saliva and come down girl." My inner voice says to me and I do as she tell me. I really need to remain calm now though it's so hard

I soft knock gives me an escape from my thoughts. I don't answer but just listen attentively

"Open its me." That's Sechaba's voice

I just go quite and don't answer. I'm scared to be in the same room with him at night more especially a room that has a bathtub. What if whoever that does all this things is watching? The knock goes down and I finally relax.

Pheew he's gone.

Phodiso cries and I start breastfeeding her and in no time she's back to sleep akg maan such an angel this one. Now I can finally sleep. It's so hot in here so I lie on the bed without covering myself with the blanket. Just when I finally catch my sleep I hear that soft knock on the door again. I ignore it but it grows into loud bangs. Why would Sechaba risk waking his mother or whatever she is to him up?

“Sechaba open I know youre in here. I saw your car outside. Open this door now.” It's a female voice and she's banging the door so damn hard now. She's going to wake Phodiso and everyone up at the rate she's going. This must be his girlfriend and maybe she was told they saw him with a lady and a child. This is Phalaborwa by the way such a small town where everybody knows your business. Where does she gets the guards to challenge a guy like Sechaba like this? She shares a liver with Jesus this one.

I hear the door opening. It sounds like the door from next door

“What the fuck are you doing here?” I can already picture his face as she says that

“I came to talk to you.”

“How the fuck did you find me?”

“Sechaba please...”

“Get the fuck out of here.”

“I will scream and wake your grandmother up if you not willing to talk.”

“What the fuck do you want Letago?”

My heart starts racing again as I move closer to the door to listen well to this conversation.

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After the dark clouds

#9

I can't hear anything anymore. Hell no they better not do this to me. Ok I hear her talking now I guess it was some commercial break.

"You owe me an explanation and you know it."

Wow what a comeback by the lovely doctor

"I don't owe you anything. Eintlek who the hell do you think you are coming to my grandmother's house at night? Who the hell told you I'm here? Shap shap wena you think this world revolves around you. You told me to stay away from you I did exactly that so what do you want from me?"

“I want the truth. Why did you tell me to go African Lilly lodge that morning and the very same day Gerald was found dead?”

Yes yes yes now this is what I want to hear too.

“Get the fuck out of here.”

“You gave me a room number to go to and told me I’m going to find Gerald with his pregnant girlfriend and guess what? I didn’t even go any further I just stood by the door and saw two glasses and a bottle of Gordons and the whole room was smelling of cigarette’s the entire room was a total mess like a party was going on and there was no one inside so I turned back. I went to reception when I got there the lady was not around. I waited for some time for her to get back and when she did I gave her some money just thank her for letting me in. Do you know what the strange part is? Gerald was found at the exact room you sent me to.”

My vision gets blurry at hearing this confession. What? So if her version of the story is the truth it means she was there just the time I was in the bathroom shocked at Gerald's body. Had she decided to get inside she would have found me with him. It makes sense to turn back from the way she's explaining though but women we just born with some FBI skills inside of us. You just can't turn back so easily you would go inside and search for some sort of a link but aretsi she trusted her man I once trusted him too so yeah guess it makes sense then.

"Okay." He responds sounding so calm

"Okay? Okay really Sechaba? Is that all you're going to say?"

"What do you want me to say? Do I look like I'm interested to discuss a useless dead man?. He's

useless and has always been useless even in the grave he's still useless I bet he can't even be a hunting ghost."

"Go to hell."

"I've already been there and its written your name all over it."

Wow just wow Sechaba. I'm stealing that line broer lol.

"I know you killed him."

"Killed him for what? For you? You not worth it but thanks for thinking so high of me. I'll take the compliment now please leave and pass by the police station on your way home to report me."

“You killed Meshack too cos you’ve always been jealous of our friendship. You probably thought that now that you got rid of Gerald maybe he’s the possible replacement. You wanted to get rid of every male close to me so that you can have me back.”

I hear him laughing. “Can you please leave and never set your foot here again unless if you’re coming with the police. Come to think of it you could have done it yourself and now you’re out here trying to convince yourself and trying to clear your conscience. It wouldn’t be the first time wouldn’t it? Or maybe he killed himself. It suits him.”

Whooo whaaat? What does he mean it wouldn’t be the first time? I’m still stuck on that line

“No wonder why your mother left you. You’re nothing but a useless bastard.”

I don't hear him responding to that

“Sis useless just like your whore of a mother with kids all over and has Aids.”

I still don't hear any response

“No wonder your big brother, sister and father left you too cos o useless even your grandmother chased you here cos she she's tired of your useless ass. Soon that albino sister and brother of yours with Aids will disown you too cos they will finally see you for who you are. Useless piece of shit”

What did both Sechaba and Gerald see in this girl? Is this the same girl Gerald dumped me for? Cos wow right now I feel like walking to his grave and laugh at his choice. To even think I felt so small and worthless the first time I laid my eyes on her? I might not be having a flat stomach like her and have that

spotless face, have a degree and drive but I'm really better than her in so many things.

He still doesn't respond. Now this is what they mean when they say silence is golden.

I don't hear any voices anymore I guess she must have left when she felt he's not paying any attention to her.

I move back to bed confused as ever but I've just learned something about Sechaba. He had a very rough childhood and just like me he doesn't know the love of a mother. I feel myself connecting to him in a very strong way. Pain has a way of connecting people. I wonder where is his mother and by the look of things I don't even think the little boy knows her. I look at Phodiso and struggle to understand how you can hate your own child.

I'm struggling to fall asleep now so it's not so difficult to hear the knock on the door

"It's me please open." He says in a very low voice

I go to open and he just stands outside looking at me

"Why are you women so cruel?"

I don't know if he's referring to his mother or Letago. So I don't respond I just pull him closer to me and hug him. he doesn't hug me back but I don't let go. His smelling of dagga so he was smoking. He probably smoked after she left. I hug him more tightly and then one hand wraps me another one follows and before I know it he's hugging me so tightly

“Let it all out. Cry.” Yes I learned it from him

He’s a bit hesitant

“Being a man doesn’t make you immune from feeling any pain and crying about it doesn’t make you weak either. It’s okay to cry for those almost had moments because it’s still a loss too. Cry for that long hug you wished you got from her, cry for that love you never got from her. it doesn’t make you weak it’s a loss and its worth crying over for. Cry”

I hear the sniffing’s and I start brushing his back

“Don’t hold it back. Let it all out.”

He’s trying to hold it back but failing dismally. He cries yes a real cry while holding me so tight

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After the dark clouds

#10

I'm turning and tossing on the bed because wow Phodiso is acting up. She's determined to deprive me of some sleep. Just when I close my eyes she cries and I have to get up and breastfeed her. She's such a little monster. She slept throughout the day and now that she can't sleep at night I have to be up and entertain her. Now I really understand why mother's move in with their daughter's after giving birth cos wow it's really hard to do this on your own.

She cries again and I just shove my breast inside her mouth.

"Aowa hle Phodiso ngwanaka robala hle. I'm so tired." I say to her as if she can hear me lol

I swear this song was written for Phodiso:

Tsodio tsodio boshego ngwano a robale okare o
tshwenya ke sepoko....

I find myself laughing at my thoughts about the song

“Open the door.” It’s a whisper coming from the
window.

Huh? Why do I sing about ghosts and now I hear a
whisper on the window?

A soft knock and the whispering again “It’s me
please open the door.”

I jump from the bed with Phodiso still sucking my
breast and go to open the door for him.

“What took you so long?” He says as he closes the door

Jeez such drama? He speaks as if I kept him waiting outside for more than an hour worse like he was getting cold and lapho it's so hot outside hai suka he got some fresh air

He snatches Phodiso away from me and sits on the couch holding her.

“ you've been up almost the whole night you need to rest. Sleep” He commands

I look at him puzzled but he's not even looking at me. He's looking down at Phodiso trying to rock her back to sleep. She's not even crying mxm such a traitor.

“Why are you not sleeping? Wa loya ne? haaaa yes o moloi nyana wena ne? yes you’re the one causing all this heat ne?” He says while touching her smooth cheeks.

It’s a beautiful sight to watch. I’ll repeat this again nothing is as cute as a man that adores his child and in this case it’s even more cuter cos it’s not even his child.

“Huh ke eng? O tshwenya ke sepoko? Huh tell me.”

I burst out laughing and he looks at me like I have totally lost my mind

“You know I’m laughing cos I thought of that song ya Tsodio tsodio boshego ngwano a robale ekare o tshwenya ke sepoko and now you just said the exact same thing.”

He just looks at me and goes back to give Phodiso the attention. Jeez Sechaba that was just a joke and it was a part where you were supposed to laugh. I guess he's back to mr serious so let me just lie on the bed and get my much deserved rest.

I look at him holding her one more time before I decide to close my eyes. He loves kids no doubt about it. I think he raised his siblings hence the little boy calls him papa. I try to open my eyes but they get heavier and heavier by the second and I just can't keep them open anymore so I drift off to sleep. I'm telling you sleep feels like luxury right now. It's like I haven't slept in years.

My wonderful sleep is cut off by someone pulling me and dragging me off from the bed. I open my eyes cursing under my breath whoooo its Sechaba's grandmother. All the little sleep I had in me disappears instantly

“Omang? What do you want in my house?”

“Ma Ou I told you I can explain this.” Sechaba tries to talk

“Wena shut up.” She says pointing at him with her finger

I look on the bed for Phodiso and she’s not there

“Sechaba where is my child?” I ask with my voice trembling

“She’s safe.” He says with a very assuring voice

Just after saying that a lady I have never seen in my entire 19 years of existence on this earth walks in carrying Phodiso. She looks peacefully sleeping. I

look at Sechaba and he gives me that reassuring look.

“Sechaba who is this lady and what is she doing in my house?” The grandmother asks

“Mme akere I told you...” The lady carrying Phodiso tries to talk. I think this whole conversation started way before just that I was asleep and couldn't hear anything

“Yey Nthabiseng shut up your mouth if you're going to play me for a fool. Do you guys think I'm a fool? Huh? Is it written fool here?” She says while literally spelling the word fool on her forehead. If it wasn't such a tense situation I was going to laugh.

“I'm not lying to you Mme. She is a lady I met from work and she had no place to stay with her child and I just couldn't let her go hawu bathong hle mme she

is carrying an innocent child.”

“Hai maan tlohela ho ntheetsa. Wa yaka mang.”

Okay she’s not Pedi? Cos that’s Tshwana

“I know this lady. She came here with this one during the day.” She says pointing at Sechaba. “You just got back. I saw you getting inside and you walked in all alone.” She shakes her head and turns to Sechaba “Wena didn’t I tell you never to set your foot in my house? So you decided you will disrespect me by coming here and not just alone but with girls from your brothels? You bringing demons in my house Sechaba? You want to turn my house in a brothel? I want this lady gone right now do you hear me? Kore Sechaba o batla ho mpolaya ka pelo? Haven't you put me through so much already? The whole town is talking about us and you not even bothered.”

“Ouh lady she’s not one of my girls. She’s just a lady I met who needed help. You can confirm this with Mangwane Moltah well I actually met her through her. Hakeke kao theetsa mme. If she was one of my girls why would I bring her in your house? I could have booked a house for her. you know I’ll never disrespect you like that and how can I go recruiting a nursing mother? You always taught us to help out people and this is exactly what I did. I did exactly what you taught us and I told you to stop entertaining stupid rumors I didn’t do all those things they are saying.”

“Yes this is true mme.” The lady holding Phodiso says

The old woman gives her an eye and she goes quite while suppressing a laugh. She looks like she doesn’t like taking things too seriously this one and I think I like her. I wonder who she is. Could she be Sechaba’s sister? But Letago said something about

the sister walking out on him. one of the girls working for him? No she doesn't like that type. She looks like a simple rural girl and she's still in a uniform. I know this uniform . it's the cleaners uniform at Maphutha hospital

“What would have happened of us if you were not around when she just dumped you with us? You took us in and raised us. Can't we do the same for her? I'm not saying let it be forever but just until she gets back on her feet.” He says

“You took me in too mme with my two kids when Thapelo up and left and we both know a new mother needs all the help. She can't do it on her own” The lady

“that is totally different and you know I Nthabiseng. Where is your mother?” She asks looking straight inside my eyes

“She chased me away.”

“I’ll need to confirm this. Go back to sleep all of you and wena Sechaba I still want you out of my house.”

They both laugh at her as she walks out. Pheeew that was close

“I’ll sleep in here with you.” The lady says

“O shap ne.” Sechaba says while looking at me.

its more than that goodbye shap its actually that kind of all is fixed, I’ve got your back kinda shap.

He leaves and I close the door. I find the lady sitting on the bed with her arms folded , eyes wide opened and mouth pouted

“What?” I ask laughing

“What is going on between the two of you?”

“Nothing. I’ve just met him within a day.”

“Mmmm... Are you going to be one of his girls?”

“Me? No oh no.”

“Oooohhh so he’s just helping you for free nje even going to the extent of begging me to leave work just to come and cover up for him with lies.”

Ok I don’t know what to say now hai. Wa phapha mang

“How did you meet?”

I narrate the whole story to her at how exactly we met

“He never talks about his mother ever. I’m shocked

he mentioned her today you know.”

“Maybe he found some closure. He kind of cried about the loss with me.”

“Whaaat? You lie.”

I tell her everything. Eish now I’m the phaphing one. I was not supposed to share that ne? I blame this lady she’s just so easy to talk to. I swear she’s my long lost friend.

“That’s so unlike him hey. He’s my brother in law but I’m scared of him in a way and worse he’s younger than my man.”

“Brother in law?”

She laughs “Well I met Thapelo while we were both still at high school. They had just moved in here at Phalaborwa from Lephalale where their grandmother lost her job as a maid. She came to try things out here because there are mines, Kruger national park and yes of course you know all the lodges around

here. So basically when they came here they had nothing. It was just Thapelo, Sello, Glory, Miso and Thabo was just a baby. They literally had nothing. I met Thapelo when he came to ask me for apology and not to report Sechaba to my parents after he stole stuff from our spaza shop.” She laughs and I join her laughing

“Sechaba stole?”

“Yes. Hai he has always been notorious that one. He came inside with a knife and threatened to kill me if I shout. He commanded me to close the shop. I was so scared mxm imagine getting scared cos of such a young boy. He took so many things and when I went to report him to his grandmother they were so shocked cos he had lied to them are he got them from church. Church just imagine.”

We laugh again before she continues with the story

“Anyways I was so angry and told them I’m going to tell my parents and we going to get him reported so

the brother came to me and apologized. I knew him from school he was very intelligent and nna aww shame ne kele domkop ya Modimo. He offered to help me with my school work every day in exchange to save his little brother. Well we got very close from then like very close.”

I can see her body is here with me but her mind is so far away as she starts talking about the brother. Her face is painted with nothing but love

“I started stealing stuff from home to give him and the kids. I was good with doing hair so I would do hair and buy stuff for him and the kids. Mme disapproved of our relationship but I was the bread winner so she had no choice but to love me.”

She laughs and I join in the laughter. She’s such a good story teller. I’m really vibing with her like we are seriously gelling

“Mme found a job in town as a maid for this white couple. Thapelo went there with her one day and happened to assist their son with maths and they liked him from that day and took him to a private schools in town. I was already pregnant with our first born that time. My parents forced me to abort saying I can't have a child with a poor boy but I refused and they chased me away so that's how I ended up here. Mme took me in and helped me raise the child. I tried to go back to school but I just kept on failing. I fell pregnant again when Thapelo was doing his matric. Neo was just three then. We had a daughter Reagile. after matric he went to study ko Cape town. Ke eng this famous university?”

“UCT. O dom monethu.” I say laughing and she joins in. She loves calling me monethu so I also got the hang of it

“Mxm a dom that just saved your arse. You would be at the street now”

We high five and laugh at what just happened with

the grandmother

“So ever since he went there he stopped coming back home and that was it. He’s married now with some lady on his level. He’s those guys that builds the bridges and towns. Mxm building them but failing to build his relationship with me just imagine?” She shakes her head

Hai this lady is funny. I laugh at building the bridges. I think she’s just too scared to pronounce the word engineer

“I researched where he stays and yey caused some serious vonyoko hey I was crazy that time like I just couldn’t accept that he left me for someone else. I found him with no underwear and roll on watseba mara I would steal money just to buy them for him. Mxm you know what he did?”

“What?” I ask

“Called the police on me. I got arrested monethu and ka phariwa ka protection order”

“ Monethu hawu.”

“I violated it nna and I was saved by Sechaba. I just couldn’t accept that it was over yerrr” She laughs

Wow she has been through so much but she tells the story in such humor. This makes me realize exactly what I said before, We are all not immune to pain. I guess this is the brother Letago was talking about.

“But you know what I’m not giving up on him. I’ll seat here and wait for him. when he’s tired of eating ice cream with toothpick he will find me here and I’ll cook him pap with mashonje that are so full here in Phalaborwa. Mxm anyway that mamogota pudi that eats cucumbers and lemon water has bewitched him. soon he will see the light and come to me.”

“Bathong you actually still waiting for him? so you’ve

never dated ever?”

“No. I’m waiting for my man he needs to find it all tight and juicy.”

“Bathong monethu. Whoever has bewitched you is no longer alive.”

She waves her hand and laughs. She’s such a whole vibe and I totally love her.

“So mme got very sick after Thapelo left the family and started acting like we not good enough for him. it really affected her so bad we nearly lost her. Sechaba had to man up and take care of us. It was myself and my two kids, his older sister with her own two kids then Miso and Thato.”

This must be the older sister that loud mouth was talking about

“Where is the sister?”

“She just up and left with some Somalian man. I don’t blame her the poverty was too much.”

“Sechaba’s mother?”

“What about her?” She asks looking rather uninterested

“What happened to her?”

“I don’t know her. apparently she only came back to dump the kids and left. Other kids their father took them nna I don’t know them I just heard from Thapelo when we were still honeymooning. They have never seen her ever since she dropped off Thato. She is a heavy drinker and just wonders around with men. It’s so sad cos she’s mme’s only child you know till this day she still prays every night for her safe return. She tried to get Sechaba to look for her but he’s not hearing it. He wants nothing to do with her like he just doesn’t care if she’s still alive or dead and you can’t really blame him. He hates her the same way he hates my man hahaha. They are both dead to him.”

I think she has always wanted to talk about this with someone. I can really tell she wanted to. Well she has found a very interested listener and I'm not letting anything go into waste

"So Letago?"

"Mxm now you're ruining the night. What about her? where do you know her from?"

"She came here this evening."

"Came where? Here? Sis the nerve. I hope he beat the crap out of her. whuuu she just gets on my nerves mxm going around looking like a corpse."

"Haaa monethu." I'm trying to act like she sounds rude but deep down I'm enjoying this lol. Whuu she just gets on my nerves

"What? She looks like a dead person inside a coffin. I think she's using the same makeup they are using at the mortuary."

I laugh and I can see her anger suppressing a bit as

she joins me laughing. Letago just loves too much makeup. I'm not too sure if she's light skinned or its too much makeup but yes she's those girls that never leaves the house without makeup and wigs. I wonder how she was mourning for Gerald cos I doubt she would let anyone see her without makeup aretsi I guess that time the pain was way too deep and looks were not important. Body wise lets me just say she looks like she really works hard to keep that shape I doubt she touches any junk.

“What happened to them?”

“She used to work for him.”

“Whaaat?” I change my sitting position just to hear this one well

“Yes. Sechaba picked up all these girls from the street and got them to work for him. He got this other street wise aunt of theirs who is a shebeen queen to transform them. She gave them a complete makeover and turned them around. Hehehe you should see her. She left Botswana before them and

came this side.”

I laugh. I know this is ausi Molly. You can just see she’s street wise and her dressing style but I won’t mention her name cos the story will now drag cos she’ll want to discuss her so I keep quiet and listen. And ooh they are originally from Botswana? Now that Setswana explains everything

“He felt men pay more for a smart looking lady than ladies who stand at the street but between you and me I just think it was more about ensuring they are safe and getting enough for having sex for money not just pure pleasure or building any relationship. He has that protective big brother side in him which is why I’m not shocked to see you in here. That is the Sechaba I know.”

I’m looking at her smiling. I saw how the girls at that house were so happy to see him and how furious he was with that one getting abused by the boyfriend

and the other one on drugs. Where was he anyways?
Okay I'll ask later I don't want to interrupt this story

"So yes he transformed Ausi Molly's joint into a nice drinking spot and put his girls there so ya that's how the whole movement thing started. But they do more than sleeping with men they steal for him. He uses them to target these rich foreign nationals who visit the Kruger. They act like they're on the clock but drugs them and steal a lot from them. He left ko Ausi Molly I don't know where he operates now though."

I know and I'm not going to tell her this one

"So that corpse failed at school and her bursary cut her off. She was too scared to tell the parents cos I think too much was expected from her so she started working for Nation to make money to pay for her fees so yes that's how they met and fell in love. Of course she stopped doing clocks and he took

care of her himself. Paid for her fees and gave her everything she wanted. When she finished school and started working she left him for some famous pastor's boy. The boy is dead now though Sechaba denies it but I think he really had something to do with his death. I hope he kills her too you know cos his life has just never been the same ever since he broke up with her."

"How so?"

"He just become very obsessed with her like he just didn't want to accept the breakup which is why I think he killed that boy."

"So people knew Letago as miss holy holy while she was not?"

"Yep. I hope he won't go back to her I pray he moves on and finds a girl he will truly love cos Sechaba can really love when he loves he loves hard and there is nothing he won't do for his woman I mean absolutely nothing."

"Why did koko chase him away?"

She laughs first "Mme is just being dramatic well

she's a staunch Christian. She doesn't take nonsense so some rumors started going around that every lady Sechaba hooks up with dies so I think that was the last straw for her she banned him from coming here but she loves him way too much she was just being a strict mother that's all."

"But do they really die?"

"it's just stupid rumors. You know black people they just associate witchcraft to anything. They die because it was their time to die not because he had anything to do with it and it was never proven that he was with them and well he was still with that corpse when the whole rumors started and one thing I can tell you is that Sechaba doesn't cheat. So wena monethu tell me about yourself. What brings you here and why are you without a home?"

I start telling her about who I am and the challenges I faced in my life.

Six months later....

After The Dark Clouds

#11

I'm sitting at the mirror admiring this lady I'm looking at yes this lady is myself. I can't help it but smile at myself as I reflect back where I come from and where I'm at now. If someone had told me I'll be at my happiest six months back trust me I would have sent them straight to a psychiatric hospital for some mental evaluation.

Like Mme always says to us "All things work out for the good to them that loves the Lord." She would look at me every day straight in my eyes and say "Masechaba all things work out for the good. Not some but ALL. Not good things not bad things but ALL." It didn't make much sense when she used to say it during the first few weeks of staying here but right now it totally makes sense. It took rejection by my own mother to gain a new love by complete

strangers whom I regard as my family.

Rejection by Gerald oh may his soul continue to rest in power, to meet a wonderful guy in Sechaba. Mme has shown me so much love you would swear she gave birth to me.

Nthabiseng is more like a sister to me. Mme calls us her God given daughters. Sechaba we are like a cat and mouse whuuu he just gets on my nerves at times but I totally adore him well actually more than that though I hate admitting it. The kids aaah man let me just say Phodiso has big brothers and sisters.

I'm at total peace right now and what gives me peace is that it's been a whole six months and nothing has happened to Sechaba. Out of all the men that dies in my life he's the one I'm more close to but nothing has happened to him so I'm starting to think maybe it was just their time to die and my presence in their lives had nothing to do with their

death. I'm experiencing Manna from heaven and I don't want to ruin anything by overthinking anymore. The whole serial killer thing has died now and people moved to the next topic.

"I knew it you little witch." She says standing by the door frame sticking her tongue out at me.

when did she even get here? I didn't hear her coming in. This family and knocking is big enemies I have also joined the drill

"What?" I shout trying to sound a bit irritated which I fail dismally and end up laughing

"You busy sorting yourself out cos you don't want him to see you looking like an ugly rural girl that you are."

I laugh out. "I'm way better than you that's why they left you for a beautiful city girl."

"He's coming back soon wena just watch and see."
She says with her hand on her hip

"No he's not." Mme answers

When did she get in here? There is just no privacy in this place. I'm telling you they will even open the bathroom door when you're busy doing number two and start a conversation only to complain that its smelling so bad and leave. Yes that's my family bond.

"Nthabiseng when are you going to see ntate Molefe?
Do you want to grow old alone?"

I suppress my laugh. Mme has been trying to hook

up Nthabiseng with some old widower from her church. The man is a retired principal and the wife was a nurse. His kids are all grown and moved out of the house so mme says the old man is lonely and looking for a wife.

“Hai Mme don’t start with me.” She says trying to look angry

“You will love him hle ngwanake. He’s God fearing and will surely treat you right kana my heart will be at ease if you are taken by him than this useless youngsters who just want sex and don’t believe in commitment.”

“Mme ke mosadi wa Thapelo nna.”

“When last did you see him?” I ask still suppressing my laugh. She’s so going to kill me for not siding with her

“Yes ask her wena Masechaba. Nthabi I just don’t want you to waste your life waiting for something that might never happen. Ke neng ngwanake o emetsi Thapelo? He has moved on with his life you need to do the same.”

She calls me Masechaba. Her reasons are my name is so long and doesn’t make any sense. As if Masechaba is not long lol but I love it I actually love it more than Madzaleneni.

“With an old man wa mafere? Shuuu.” She claps her hands

“Hai Nthabi ke Manna from heaven.” Mme says

“Monethu is refusing Manna from heaven next thing she will complain that God never answers her.”

“Yes tell her.” Mme backs me up

This is our favorite word in the house whenever we describe something good. "Manna from heaven"

"Mme kganthe why are you ganging up on me? What about her and Sechaba?"

"We still sorting you the big sister hakere you must lead by example." She says

"Fine I'll go and see him today. I'm not working ke off."

We jump up and down in excitement

"I'll help you choose an outfit." I swear I live to annoy her

"And wena le Sechaba what is going on?" Mme asks

Ok the spotlight is on me now and it's so not nice

"He's my brother hai leave me alone." I shrug my shoulders trying to walk out

Nthabi pulls my hand back inside just as I'm making my way out

"Leave me alone." I shout

"Phodiso is old now. when is she getting a sibling?"
Mme

Mme bathong. Few months back she was busy telling me how she doesn't want to see Sechaba sleeping inside my room how she will chase us both away saying she needs a white wedding first but now she's asking me this? Mxm old age never loved her

“Are you ready to go?” Sechaba says from the outside.

Why is he asking me that? Last time I checked we were not talking.

“Yes she’s ready.” Mme and Nthabi both respond at the same time

I give them an ugly face and walk out

“Why is he angry?” Nthabi whispers inside my ear as I make my way out

“He’s sulking cos some guy walked me back home when I went to the kid’s school meeting yesterday. Imagine?”

“Ncaaaa sweet maan.”

I pull a face and push her hard

“Please don’t forget to make soft porridge for mme. I forgot to put the milk inside the fridge yesterday. I packed it in the cardboard with the rest of the stuff I got.”

Mme only takes goat milk. Soft porridge with goat milk helps prevent her stomach cramps in the morning after that we give her morning medication. I’m the one who normally makes that for her while making the kids lunch boxes to school. Even when Nthabiseng is off or working nightshift I still prefer to do everything.

I strap Phodiso on her car seat and make my way to the front seat. We are going for the six months immunization today at the hospital. It’s still very early cos I wanted to arrive there in time cos its gets

so packed. Yesterday I had asked Sechaba to take me there and he said I should tell my boyfriend to take me. he got mad when he met me at the street with some guy I met on my way home from the kids school meeting. He instructed me to get inside the car and told the guy he will run him off with the car. So he's all mad with me ever since that incident I'm actually surprised he's here to take me to the hospital.

Just as he starts the car Phodiso starts crying. I know she wants him to carry her. She has this little crush on him that's getting so annoying now. it used to be cute at first but right now it's really annoying cos girl just cries for his attention all the time.

"Bring her here." He instructs me

"But you're going to drive. Just let her be she will eventually keep quite. You can't drive while holding her."

He gives that look. That look that only he can give. I call it the Sechaba look. It's an all in one kind of look. It's scary, its poisonous, it's addictive, its hypnotizing and such a manna from heaven.

"I'm not bringing her in the front Sechaba and its final." I say looking at him before turning my eyes to the road

One thing I have learned with Sechaba over the past few months is that you need to stand you're ground with him. He's a control freak and he knows he has this intimidating side by nature so I had to learn to put him in his place. Trust me it was hard at first but now I make it clear I'm not asking him anything I'm actually informing him. Like the fact that I'm going to start working at the daycare center now that Phodiso is old enough. They actually offered me the job when they saw a huge improvement on Thato. He was five but still struggling with so many things. What I like about the job is that I'll be taking Phodiso

with me. Sechaba is not happy and refuses to even discuss it

I hear the sound of the engine roaring and yes I've won. I won't be bullied by Phodiso and Sechaba nna. Aah man I've grown so much over the past six months shame

If it wasn't for Phodiso I know he would be driving so wild and I kind of like the sound of his car when it goes fast. He drives a silver Jeep wrangler trimmed with black lines underneath boy the car can move and it turns heads. He has personalized it "I KNOW". This one time when he was drunk I asked him why that and his answer was "I know that so many people admire the car so I'm actually making a statement when I pass and they go like oh my word this car is beautiful, this car is fast I just make them read "I KNOW." Yes I once told you he's got this cockiness

We standing by the stop sign when a group of drunk boys pass. I hear them whistling “Aaah die kar diantsha. Aah This car man just look at it.”

He drives slowly and yes I’m sure now they are reading that “I KNOW”

We arrive at the hospital without saying a word to each other.

“Mother of the Nation.” He says just as I’m about to open the door

I don’t turn to look at him cos I’m trying to hide the smile that has formed on my face. Only he can call me that and I feel like the real mother of the Nation. He makes me feel like I’m the first lady and I own this Nation.

“Don’t go around talking to guys more especially these doctors here.”

I’m still not looking at him cos right now I feel like my face is going to crack from all this smiling and blushing. He started acting like this about three months back and I used to think he was just acting like a big brother until Mme and Nthabi started planting these ideas in my head that he has something for me and I blame them really cos I’m starting to feel something for him too.

I don’t answer him. I go ahead and open the door then go straight to get Phodisho and grabher baby bag . When I’m done I walk over to his door and he opens the window. Yes he’s not the romantic type of opening the door for you, walking hands in hands and all that stuff you see in movies but he will make you feel like you can ditch all those things and settle for the compound guy he is. He has ways of making up for that

“I’ll catch a taxi back home.” I say. Deep down I don’t want to catch a taxi I want him to wait for me but he hates waiting with a passion. He sulks when we go shopping and get so undecided and waste time. Such a typical man

“Call me when you’re about to finish and if I’m around I’ll come. If not take this to get home.”

He takes out a roll of money and put it inside my hand. He gives out money like it’s going out on fashion. I used to be shy at first but now I take it. I love money and I’m done acting like I don’t care about money. I wonder where those girls who get angry because a guy gave them money come from. This is what I call Manna from heaven. Do people actually expect to see bread flowing from heaven? No this is actually the miracles of God yes I’m telling you God is still in the business of performing miracles. Have you ever seen a local taxi fare for

more than 5k? even uber doesn't cost more than that baby.

I put the money inside the bag and he touches Phodiso's hand and we make our way to the hospital.

While I'm sitting on the que I decide to text him

Me: Thank you for taking me to the hospital. You such a Manna from heaven

He calls immediately after the text. He never responds to texts. You will be pouring all your emotions out on a text and he will call you immediately.

"Are you in yet?" That's the first thing he says.

He likes saying the opposite of what you texted only to mention it in his drunken state when you have totally forgotten. He will go like “What did you say on the sms that day?”

“Not yet. Guess what?”

“What?”

“I see your girlfriend Letago.”

“You didn’t have toys while growing up ne?”

I laugh “Ke eng?”

He just hung up and I continue laughing. She stops walking when she spots me. She tried to talk to me over the past few months but I told her straight I

have nothing to say to her. I told Sechaba she is harassing me and ever since she just throws me nasty looks whenever we meet. I don't want anything that will set me back. I have grown so much over the past six months and not even Letago can make me relapse.

She pass but decides to walk back to me. sigh

"Hello." She say

"Hi." I say while busy typing on my phone "Monethu I have some gossip." The text is sent

"I have a patient in here that I think you might be interested to see." She says with a file buried on her chest.

"Me?" I ask

"Yes you." She responds

After The Dark Clouds

#12(Long but not edited. Was feeling very tired so please excuse any errors)

I'm trying to think who she can be referring to but my mind is just blank. There is no one of interest in here for me. If I was at Polokwane yes I would think maybe she's referring to someone I know but this is Phalaborwa and I don't know anyone except for my God given family and last time I checked they were all perfectly well when I left home so I think this one is just playing some mind games with me. I fold my arms and give her that look that says you better do more than that. You need to explain girl and she returns my look with that look that says Bitch are you coming or what?

Ok she's not going to talk I see so I guess I must be the first one to ask. "Who are you talking about?" The cheeky attitude is so traceable in my voice and I

did it deliberately. Whuuu she just gets on my nerves

“Are you going to come with me or what?” She returns the cheeky attitude. Yes you can see we really shared a Dick once in a lifetime. We just have this hate vibe going on. Does she really expect me to come with her with that attitude? But then curiosity is just refusing to loosen its grip on me so I think she’s going to win this round. I need to see who she’s referring to.

“Doctor we have a patient in ward 3.” Some nurse informs her and right then my phone rings as she’s busy asking the nurse about the patient

“Moroka.” I say as I answer his call. I know he’s smiling right where he is. He loves it when I address him using the surname. Typical Tswana man

“I was just checking up on you. How is My Poppe?”

“She’s sleeping but I know the injection will wake her up.”

“I wish I can take it on her behalf.”

He hates to hear her crying or see her in pain. He can do anything to stop her from crying I think he can even put his balls on the scale. I always tell him he’s creating this little monster in her and we are going to fail to discipline her but he’s not changing.

“Are you coming to fetch us?”

“No I have somewhere to go I can’t make it.”

“Ohhh okay. Letago was...”

“Can you please stop mentioning that name? This is

getting so damn annoying now. I called to check up on you guys and you just have to ruin it by mentioning that name?”

He hates her shame but this time I wasn't doing it deliberately. “No please just listen. I wanted to tell you that she wants me to see some patient. She says its someone I might be interested to see.”

“Don't fucken go there do you hear me? don't follow her.”

“Why?”

“Do you have to question everything I ask you? I said don't go you just listen to me. actually I'm coming there now.”

He hung up the phone after saying that. I thought he

has somewhere to go what does he mean he's coming here? And why is he so mad about this whole thing? He's hiding something I can feel it. I check for Letago and she has moved from the spot she was standing at. She must have gone to attend the patient

"Next." The nurse shouts inside the room. I didn't even notice it was my turn to walk in. I grab my bag very fast and make my way inside. Public hospital nurses can be so rude I swear they are cut from the same cloth.

When done with everything I go back to the bench and sit down waiting for Letago. The way Sechaba panicked kind of got me more curious. I wait for a good thirty minutes and she's still nowhere in sight. This place kind of creeps me out. I always think of Meshack every time I come here so you can really imagine how I'm feeling right now but I need to find out what is going on so I'll just endure the wait. As

I'm waiting my phone rings and its Sechaba.

"Come outside." He says just after I swiped yes on the phone. He didn't even wait for me to say anything

"I'm still busy inside."

"I said come outside." That commanding voice of his that I have learned to stand up to over the past few months

"No." I answer and hung up the phone not giving him any chance to respond.

I wait and wait and still there is no sign of Letago. I get up and ask one of the nurses for her. I wait for some few minutes then see her coming. She looks very annoyed. She stands in front of me with her

arms folded. I press Phodiso's face on my chest. I'm just so paranoid with her around whenever I'm holding Phodiso. I don't know maybe it's because she looks like Gerald so much and I feel like she will put one and two together and figure things out.

"We can go and see the patient."

She shakes her head three times while still maintaining that annoyed look and turns back.

"Letago." I shout at her

She stops walking and turns back. "There is no patient."

"You lied to me?"

“No. Sechaba happened. You will figure it out.” She continues walking

I go outside confused. I call him to check where he has parked but he doesn't answer. I run around checking for “I KNOW” all over the parking lot but can't spot it. By the time I give up I'm so tired of all this up and down, I'm tired of carrying a huge baby looking for a grown up man whose acting like a child now, I'm hungry, I'm angry at him, I'm angry at this burning sun akg man I'm just totally angry and hungry at the same time.

I go straight to my room and put Phodiso down when I arrive home. I try his phone and it still rings unanswered.

“You back?”

Eish Mme when did she get here? Were these people

born at caves where there are no doors? They never knock

“Is she sleeping?” She asks looking at Phodiso lying on the bed. No Mme she’s shopping for the stars on the sky Grrrr

“Are you okay?” She asks after I haven’t said anything to her

“Yes I’m fine. Have you eaten?”

“Yes I have. Ke eng?” She asks again with a very concerned look

I start feeling terrible. Now I just made Mme worry all because of Sechaba. I swear I hate him so much right now.

“it’s nothing Mme. I’m just tired of all the waiting at the hospital.”

“Come and rest inside the house. it’s very cool”

“I’m coming.”

I wait for her to go and dial Sechaba again. he still doesn’t answer. Okay that’s it I give up. I don’t know if I’m mad because of the stunt he pulled just a few hours back or the fact that he’s not taking my calls and maybe he might be with some girl. The thought of him touching some girls gives me migraines. Sechaba always answers his phone or gets back to me immediately so it could only be some girl entertaining him. Oh noo I feel like I’m going to cry.

“Where is Nthabi?” I ask as I join Mme on the couch holding a plate of my food. She is watching Reya Tsothella. She loves it so much together with all this Moja Love Tv shows like Mamazala and them. She

will watch them and narrate each and every episode to us and next thing you will be so curious and catch the repeat lol hai Mme.

She is right its very cool in here. The aircon is switched on and to think she didn't even want it saying Sechaba is using evil money lol.

"She went to see ntate Molefe." She says with an excitement on her face. I swear in her mind she has already invited Our Perfect wedding crew

I laugh and we pass time discussing their date.

"You know I thank you Masechaba. You're presence in this house has brought a whole lot of changes. The kids are so united and doing very well at school and Sechaba is spending time at home now. waitsi at times we really think we are disciplining our kids only to push them away and I think I was doing that

ka Sechaba when I banned him from coming here.”

She has that pain in her eyes. She only has it when she remembers her daughter. I think only a mother can understand how deep this pain is. I cannot imagine how I would cope if Phodiso had to turn away like Sechaba’s mother and roam around the streets. No parent deserves to go through that.

“Mme I always tell you never to thank me for that. You did so much for me lenna I don’t know where I would be now and as for Sechaba he should be banned here again.”

She laughs. Oh man her laughter heals me. I live to make her laugh

“What did he do?”

“Nothing Mme.” I’m not in the mood to discuss this more especially with her

“He loves you can’t you see? I see the way he looks at you and acts when you’re around. I raised that boy so I know him so very well. I haven’t seen him look at a lady the way he looks at you I mean even with ngwana ola waha Letsoalo it wasn’t like that.” She is referring to Letago by ngwana waha Letsoalo. Her confession makes my heart swell with joy.

“Hai Mme he just sees me as a little sister nothing much.” I’m trying to make her dish out those confessions kadi style by acting all ignorant

“Hai wao batla Sechaba.”

I just love it when she speaks Tswana more especially when speaking it with Sechaba they will take you straight from Gaborone back to South

Africa in a flight of love.

“Yes wao batla.” Nthabi says carrying some plastics. When did she enter? I swear they don’t shock me anymore

“You’re back?” Mme asks with a big grin on her face

“Isn’t too early to be back? I actually thought you’re sleeping over and why did you pass the kitchen with those plastics? You want to show us gore bago bechile?” I ask while laughing

“Let me help you.” Mme says already up from her seat. What happened to her painful legs by the way?

We help her pack some grocery which consists of some braai packs, mealie meal, packs of danone and snacks. She explains Ntate Molefe got them for

her on their way back home and goes on to explain she had a great time with him and will be spending more time with him again. Hehehe Manna from heaven raining already.

The smile on Mme's face has it qualifies to be recorded as the biggest longest smile ever on earth.

"So how was the date like really how was it?" I ask her when we finally get a moment together inside her room just the two of us only.

She looks at me and frowns then goes under the bed and take out her box of Forth street. She loves her fourth street yena and she always has the box under the bed

"That bad?" I ask. Shame she just didn't want to disappoint Mme

“Don’t ask please. I couldn’t wait to get out of there. I felt so out of place.” She says while gulping her drink

“Hai monethu I’m sure you’re just exaggerating. He even got you stuff and gave you some money”

“I’m not hai. Can you believe he wanted to sleep with me?”

“Whooo whaaat? I thought he was some church man.”

“Well honestly I wanted to sleep with him lol. I don’t know man I just felt like doing some hit and run on him but then yhoo his pipi had some weird look.”

“What weird look?” I’m already dead before she could even explain.

“It looked like it was about to sing some struggle songs”

Ok can somebody lower my coffin right now cos I’m so ready to die. I just can’t stop laughing and she’s out there downing her drink. All the struggle songs come in my mind and I just imagine Ntate Molefe’s pipi singing Iyhoo ihelele mama um helele iyhoo ihelele mama. I go back to laughing again. now I really want to meet this old man

“A colleague of mine is having a birthday braai she invited me and after such a day I had I really feel like going. Let’s go.”

“What about the kids?”

“Mme will babysit. You need to go out a bit I also need the outing really I haven’t been out in ages.”

Lovely idea. I really feel like joining the youth and just unwind so I'm really excited about the idea. We ask Mme and she is so fine with it but gives us a lecture to be safe and call Sechaba to bring us back home if Nthabi's friends can't bring us back home.

I kiss Phodiso and get ready to leave. I love my baby so much but tonight I'm so happy to go out and get some breather.

We are at a place called "Ga Mma Dipatla." It's a very hip and happening joint at some township called Ga Mashishimale. The place was suggested by Nthabi's colleagues after we finished the braai they suggested we come here for the after party. The vibe is so cool and I'm really enjoying myself. This is my first outing at a drinking place and I must say I'm really enjoying myself. I just love to see all these people drinking, dancing and having a great time. Gosh I feel like I haven't lived. Phalaborwa is small heaven I'm telling you.

“Come on just try drinking this.” It’s some guy offering me Brutal fruit ruby apple. He’s been offering me the drink ever since we were at the braai and I refused. I think he’s on some mission to get me drunk and ohh did I mention that he’s hitting on me too? Lapho he looks like Bohang wako Scandal mxm he makes me feel like I’m cursed. Nthabi Is out there dancing and so damn drunk. I thought I was taking a break from the kids tonight but it looks like I’ll be babysitting her. This is one of the reasons why I can’t even take a sip from all these drinks Bohang has been offering me cos I need to babysit Nthabi.

“I’m a nursing mother I told you that I can’t drink alcohol.” I say while dancing to some old house school jam. It reminds me of home while I was growing up. my mother loved throwing just random events where she will play loud music drinking with her men.

“Come on it won’t do any harm.” Eish Bohang.

He's not about to give up I see so I grab the drink so that he can just stop asking me. then this jam comes on and I totally go crazy and lose my morals. I feel like getting on top of the table and just dance. I guess this is what happens when you discover having fun at your old age. You just behave like a new kid tasting candy for the very first time

Your love is like a rainbow

You turning grey into the bright light

Your kiss comes like a summer rain makes it me feel alright....

If you don't know this song trust me you haven't lived your life yet. This is Summer rain by Bojo Mujo. Mr Brutal here has lived his life cos his singing his lungs out with me and dancing. We holding each other going totally crazy

As I'm turning I see them yes I see the shoes. Only

Sechaba wears these kind of shoes. He's wearing the red one's tonight. I didn't know anything about this shoes until I saw him wearing them and learned they are called Drip and totally fell in love with them more especially the story behind the founder of the shoes who is from right here in Limpopo. He went from having no shoes to starting a big shoe brand. He's wearing the Red one's tonight.

He's standing just behind me with a cigarette in his right hand and Windhoek Lager on his left. He's got that look that only look that he's capable of dishing out. That dangerous murderous look. He grabs my hand and gives the guy just one stare and that's enough to send him off running. He pulls me away outside to a more quitter place. I see "I KNOW" parked and right then I know the confrontation is about to get real

Why am I feeling so scared like I just got caught cheating?

He leans by the car. One leg slightly blended up on the wheel while the other one remains buried on the ground. His red Drip sneaker doing some wonders in the dark. He puffs the cigarette smoke in and out slowly while his eyes are buried on me. I just stand there watching him. He finish the smoke and drop the butt on the ground and toss it around with his red Drip shoe while still keeping his eyes buried on me.

He slides his hand inside the pockets and comes back with another cigarette. He lit it and starts smoking it. He takes a sip of his Windhoek lager and gives me a dead stare

“Why are you out there behaving like a whore?”

I just look at him not knowing what to say. All the anger I felt during the day comes back

“Haaa I’m talking to you. So we drinking alcohol now?” He asks looking at my Brutal fruit. I didn’t even drink it

“You don’t get to come around here and boss me around more especially after ignoring my calls the whole day.” I finally say. I’m angry

“Okay.” He says so calmly

“Okay? Like really okay? You don’t get to do that. Where were you? Why did you ignore my calls?” I’m shouting now. I know that I’m shouting cos I can hear my voice through this loud music

“Was taking care of some business.”

“You don’t get to do that to me are you hearing me?” I’m shouting and pointing my fingers at him. I’m so

angry and I'm on the verge of throwing him with this bottle cos he's just looking at me so calmly like he's not taking me serious. He's making me feel so stupid and like I'm overreacting over nothing.

"I know that you must have been busy with your girls but the least you could have done was to return my calls. You could have..."

Haaa I don't get to finish that last sentence cos his tongue is busy doing some magic on my tongue making sure I can't talk. I feel a sudden heat rush all over my body. I feel whatever that transports the blood in the body moving so fast supplying all the organs in my body with blood. I thought nothing can ever make me forget Phodiso coming out of my private part but what I'm feeling down there right now makes me forget it instantly. If this feeling I'm feeling right now leads right back to the labor ward again then I'm so ready for it. I didn't know kissing can bring out such pleasure I never knew existed.

“You were saying?” He asks with his arms still wrapped around my waist

What was I saying? I can't remember what I was saying. I've suddenly developed a temporary amnesia. I just look at him trying to catch my breath

He opens the front door for me and leads me inside. Wow this is a first I guess he enjoyed my kiss too. Once I'm seated he starts kissing me again. his lips are so smooth like they've been massaged with baby oils and bum creams all his life. He plays with his tongue like a guitarist. You know the way they hit those strings so carefully and bring out such a beautiful melody well that's exactly what he is doing. My whole body is in melody a melody which I can't explain. His hands are moving all over my body and I feel like we are in a private place and it's just the two of us only. I don't want him to stop I just want to have this moment for life.

“I’m coming.”

He let go of me and locks the door. He takes some few steps away and then walks back. He unlocks the door looks at me straight in my eyes. I’m already getting ready to close them and welcome his lips back on mine again

“I love you.” He says then locks the car and walks away

Lord I just started living my life today I swear all along I was not living cos what just happened right now is life. Bjo ke bophelo banesu. This is Manna from heaven.

Few minutes later he comes back holding Nthabi. She’s so drunk and struggling to walk. He puts her at the back seat.

He comes to the driver's seat. Looks at me and holds me so tight and we start kissing again. We stop when Nthabi's cries get loud

"You know I loved him there is nothing I wouldn't have done for him. mara why is Thapelo doing this to me?" She's drunk

"Sleep." Sechaba instructs her

"Haaa? Ke robale?" She asks him lol it's so funny

"Yes sleep."

"Okay keya robala." She responds

She puts her legs on the seats and sleep. All the crying gone now. I look at her and laugh so hard

“I’ll live my life proving to you that there are other guys way better than Thapelo in this earth. I’m not going to try to prove to you but I’m going to prove it to you.”

I look at him not knowing what to say

He starts the car and we drive off. I take his hand and lock it with my hand with my head rested on his thighs. I’m feeling like God’s most favorite child right now like he just put all the girls prayer items on hold and attended to mine making sure I get nothing but the best. This moment right here erases all the questions and doubts I’ve ever had in my life before.

Ndihambile ndibonile ndimfumene

Ndiyamthanda

Ubani lo endithetha ngaye

Ao nguwe sthwandwa sami

Soze ndikuphoxe o dali wami

Soze ndikushiye ndiyak'thanda

Bani lo endithetha ngaye

Ao nguwe sthandwa Sami.....

The song is playing softly. I couldn't have chosen a better song for this evening. I trust him with everything I have I'm ready for my heart to win or loose.

"Open your legs wider." He says while busy brushing my thighs and trying to get his hands inside there yes you know where

"Sechaba retlo thula." I say giggling like a child and stopping the hand from reaching there. Gosh it's such a bush down in here like the whole Kruger National park animals can come and camp here. should I have known I'm going to be his girl tonight I would have shaved.

“We dropping Nthabi off and going to continue with this.”

I’m not going to answer to that

He gets out and opens the car while I’m still sitting still in the front. Mme comes out running

“Sechaba ke neng keho founela.” She’s hysterical
“We need to rush to the hospital now. bare Dimpho is very critical. Come let’s go now.”

He just stands still looking at her. Dimpho is his mother. So Letago was referring to his mother and trust me Sechaba knew all along that his mother was lying sick at the hospital and said nothing to any of us including Mme. Gosh does he hate his mother that much?

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After the dark clouds

#13

“Sechaba” Mme shouts at him trying to get a response and obviously trying to get him moving

He gulps down his Windhoek lager as if his trying to clear off words that are lodging on his throat. He burps and looks at her straight in her eyes.

“I’m not going there.” He says unshaken

“Huh? Wareng Sechaba?” Her face is full of horror as she asks

“Kare I’m not going there. Life has to stop and we have to jump around cos the whore is bedridden? She can die for all that I care but I’m not going there.” He says as he gulps down his drink again

“Sechaba?” I say it in a reprimanding way

“What?” He snaps at me

“Fine Sechaba ho lokile kare ho lokile. She is my child not your child so I’ll make a plan. Kare fine ho lokile.” She says waving her hands in surrender and tears streaming down on her face. It’s a very painful scene to witness. She walks back inside the house busy screaming “Ho lokile Sechaba I’ll make a plan she is my child even if she is a whore but she is my child kare my child and I love her. Dimpho ke ngwana wame. My only child.”

Sechaba is not moved at all. He’s just standing there looking at her. I thought maybe he will run after her and apologize. I know he will move mountains for her but I guess this mountain is too hard and too big for him to move. He hates seen her in pain and disappointing her but this time he’s willing to live with that pain. His hate for his mother is strong

enough I guess. I know my mother wronged me but I'll still do my best to help her if she needed my help. Well I think I would

“Sechaba? Baby? Please do something” My tears are threatening to come out too. I hate it when she is sad and just like Sechaba I'll move mountains for her and since he can't move this one for her I'll do it. I'm raising up to the challenge

He's still not moved at all. He's leaning by the car having his drink

“Let's go. I'll book us at a nice place and we will be back tomorrow morning” He says trying to wrap his arms around my waist

Is he really serious now? His mother is lying sick at the hospital and his grandmother needs to see her but he's not moved by any of that instead he's

thinking of having sex with me? He's got to be kidding me. I remove his hands forcefully from my waist

"What?" He asks looking all confused

"You're so unbelievable Sechaba. Are you seriously not going to help Mme? She is your mother Sechaba your mother."

"Don't ever I mean ever refer her as that. That whore is not my mother I bet she doesn't even recall how I look like. I hate her damn I hate her and I love hating her."

"You such a monster. You're so heartless" I scream at him.

"Are you coming with me or not?"

“I’m not going anywhere with you. I’m staying right here with Mme. She needs me.”

“Ok shap.” He walks to the car and help Nthabiseng out. I had totally forgotten she was inside that car. He carries her to her room. She has totally blacked out. How I so wish she was sober and fully awake right now.

He gets back from putting her to sleep and gets inside his car. He drives off without saying anything to me. Are we having our first fight straight after our fight night as a couple? We should be in our new love phase. Struggling to get over each other but here we are fighting. What did he expect me to do? Choose a night of fun with him and leave Mme to sort out all this mess alone? A part of me feels like I kind of betrayed him with my choice but Mme needs someone right now. Another part of me kind of resents his mother for causing all this chaos but I quickly reprimand myself. I can’t be feeling this way

about my mother in law.

After calming my tits down I walk inside the house. I find Mme sitting on the couch. She quickly wipes the tears away with her hand when she sees me walking inside.

“Mme.” I say as I sit next to her taking her hand inside my hand. “What can I do to help?”

“I want to go to Maphutha but I have no one to take me there. I can’t call bo Mme bako kerekeng so late in the night and ask for help. I don’t want to bother them.”

It’s not that she doesn’t want to bother them she’s just trying to protect her daughter’s dignity. She knows they will want to sit around and walk inside that ward room with her. Deep down she knows it’s bad and is trying to prevent the gossip from going

around. That is exactly what a true loving mother does she protects you against such things she takes your deepest flaws and locks them right inside of her and throws the keys away.

“I don’t know anyone around here who can help us Mme. Let me try to wake Nthabi up.” I wish I had taken Bohang’s numbers maybe I could have called him right now and we were going to get help.

“No leave her.”

“Anyways its very late. It’s just after 11 so they won’t let us in cos visitation hours has long passed. We will go early tomorrow morning.”

“I didn’t even think of that.” She responds

“How did you find out about her?”

“I got a call from someone at the hospital. I don’t know ke mang but she said she’s looking very bad and I need to see her before it’s too late.” The words choke her as she speaks

I’m feeling very tired and just want to sleep but I don’t want to leave her all alone. So I go to her room and fix the bed

“Come and sleep Mme. I’ll sleep here with you.”

Her bed is big enough for her, me and Phodiso but I prepare the blankets on the floor for Phodiso and I. She asks me to pray with her. I kneel down to join her but pass out while she’s still busy praying.

Phodiso’s cries wake me up just after three and I find her kneeling down still praying. I pick Phodiso up and sit on the chair breastfeeding her while looking at her praying. She’s deep in prayer I even doubt she heard Phodiso crying or can feel that we are up. it’s a very heart breaking scene to watch. I look at Phodiso and ask God to make her a good

child. After putting her down I join her in prayer until I pass out again.

Its 10 o'clock in the morning. The time for visitation hour and we are making our way to the ward. We arrived here just after 7 in the morning and camped outside waiting for the security guards to open for us. Nthabi is left at home with the kids. She looked terribly sick which is why she remained at home with the kids. I didn't get to go into the full details when I was narrating the story to her. I only mentioned Sechaba's mother is sick at the hospital and I'm taking Mme to go and see her. I will tell her about Sechaba's behavior when we get back and the fact that I'm officiously mother of the Nation.

You know when you enter a kitchen and you feel the smell of good food and start salivating? Well this ward that we just entered smells of nothing like that. It smells of death. There are people on the bed but there is no sign of life in them. You literally feel like

you just entered the world of the dead. You feel like checking yourself up in the mirror just to be sure if you still look normal.

I feel like I'm not brave enough to continue this walk with her. I want to turn and run and forget this trauma I'm witnessing now. Was Letago going to take me to this ward that day?

Mme stands right by her bedside and looks at her. She nods to the doctor that indeed it's her daughter. She touches her tiny hand that looks like it was baked in the oven and burned and lost its shape and color. You know when you trying to roast meat in the oven and you totally forget about it? It loses its shape and form. It becomes so tiny, very dark and stiff. That's exactly how she looks like. At this point it's very hard to tell if she was every beautiful before she reached this stage.

She has no cheeks visible, Her face looks like rotten

biltong. It's like a big pit was built around her neck, you could actually throw in coins just around her neck and they will sit and not shift even an inch. Her body is so thin that even Phodiso can manage to carry her and still feel no weight. Her hair looks like it was shaved off by some hood rats. She looks very scary.

"Dimpho." Mme says still holding on to her tiny hand. She blinks trying to stop the tears from coming out but they come out in full force. I stand behind her and hold her so tight trying to stop her from falling down. "DI-M-PhO" She says it in slow motion cutting it off. "Oh Jehova keo tshenyeditseng keho etseng Jehova." Gut-wrenching screams

Mme Dimpho is not responding to any of her cries. I think she can't even move any of her body parts

"Mme please sit down." I say trying to pull her down on the bench near the bed. The lady lying on the bed

next to Dimpho her eyes are wide opened and you can see she is gone.

“You’re the family?” The Doctor asks trying to be sure again

“Yes. She’s her mother and I’m the daughter in law.” That daughter in law escaped involuntary.

“Right. Miss Moroka here is in what we call stage three of the Hiv virus basically she has full blown AIDS now and we just recently diagnosed her with what we call Kaposi sarcoma cancer.”

My skin cringes at the mention of that name. the doctor looks too lazy to explain what that is and I’m too scared to ask what it is. I don’t think my mind is capable enough to take in anymore bad stuff really.

“Her immune system has deteriorated so bad that her body is struggling to respond to any antibiotics

which is why she is getting new infections. She has been living with AIDs for two full years now and they normally live for about three years so ya..." He curves his mouth lazily as he stops talking more like leaving me to do all the thinking. He's not even concentrating on Mme. He's directing everything at me.

"So basically there is nothing you can do for her?"

He takes a deep breath more like leaving all the thinking to me again. Mme has stopped crying. Her head is bowed and she's still holding her hand. She looks like she is praying for her. She moves her head and looks at the doctor

"I want her home. I want to take my daughter home with me today."

He looks more relieved to authorize that for her.

papers are signed and we are given lessons well more like I'm given lessons on how to take care of her at home. This is going to be very hard but I'm more determined to do assist Mme at all costs and I'm sure Nthabi will do the same too.

I go outside to call Sechaba to arrange for transportation to take us home

"Mother of the nation." I know that voice. He sounds like that after smoking weed and he only smokes weed when he's stressed or extremely angry

"Sechaba we are at the hospital."

"Manje ngigenaphi mina?" Wow he's speaking Zulu now? at Limpopo nogal? Mxcim

"Sechaba we need a car to take your mother back home."

“Yey yey yey don’t even dare say that ever in your life don’t. My mother is well and not sick and dying. My mother is Motheo and she is well. That is the only woman I will jump up and down for not some whore who only remembers home just because death is knocking at her door. I hate her I fucken hate her.”
He is referring to Mme. Her name is Motheo Omontle. A true meaning to her name she is.

“Sechaba please do it for Mme then I understand you hate your mother but..”

“I told you she’s not my mother.” He snaps

“Okay sorry. I understand you hate Dimpho but please do this for Mme.”

“I’m doing this for her. That whore keeps on coming back and acting like she has changed and once she feels better she runs off to go and open her legs to

another man leaving her heart broken all over again and who is there to pick up the pieces? I'm there to make sure she heals again. Dimpho is a selfish piece of shit who can only think when a dick is right inside of her. She is damn selfish and now we have to stop living and run around for her? Where was she when we needed her? She must die her vip section in hell is long overdue for her arrival now."

"Sechaba..." It comes out as a plea

"No. I'm not coming there. Do you know that Thato has to live on pills all his life because that whore failed to protect him? She just popped him out of her and ditched him with us not even caring or informing us what is wrong with him. now I have to care about her? Why am I the bad guy here now? What about her? If I'm coming there I'm only coming to fetch you and my real mother not that whore."

"Shap Sechaba then let me make a plan for another

transport then.”

“Go shap. I love you ne?”

I’m not going to respond to that. I can’t go back to Mme only to disappoint her. I run outside to look for transport. I see this empty taxi parking and I run to the driver and offer him 2k for special. His face is beaming with excitement. I get inside and we park just in front of the ward when he sees Mme coming with the nurse pushing Dimpho on a wheelchair he tells me I can take my R2000 and shove it where the sun doesn’t shine he further adds that even if I had offered him 10k he wouldn’t allow such a dead thing inside his taxi. What pains me the most is that Mme can hear him saying all of that.

“Ausi this wheelchair is needed back in the ward. I’m not going to stand here while you still looking around for transport. I don’t get paid for this. take your person and remain here with her.” The nurse rudely

says

Mme doesn't wait for her to say anything more. She lifts her daughter from the wheelchair and sit down on the ground carrying her like a mother carrying an infant. People are passing and look traumatized by the scene. I feel like I have failed her. I call Sechaba again

"Mother of the nation." He still sounds high

"Sechaba if you don't come here its over between us."

I can't believe I've stood so low but I'm desperate here.

He laughs. "You choosing the whore over me? Ok shap." He hangs up the phone just like that

“I saw Ntate moruti when we walked in here maybe we can try him. I think he might still be around.”

Mme says with her eyes buried on her daughter brushing her head. I know they say Jesus can count the number of hair on our head and I believe that only he can do that but trust me with Dimpho I can also do that. I can count the number of hair on her head in a split of second. Mme is busy rocking her just the same way I do to Phodiso when I’m trying to comfort her or trying to get her to sleep or give her that assurance that says “It’s okay baby mommy is here.”

I take his number from her phone and dial him.

I tell him Mme needs his help fortunate enough he’s still around. I direct him where we are and he comes. His struggling to hide the horror on his face when he looks at mme Dimpho.

“We need a lift with taking her home.” I Humbly ask

“I’m going to a very urgent meeting and I’m already late but I’ll try to come home and pray for her.” He says while opening his car door not waiting for us to respond.

Mme’s eyes are shut. She’s busy praying she doesn’t even mind the people passing. I feel so defeated I don’t know what to do to help her. I pray that when all this is over my relationship with Sechaba will still survive cos Lord knows I love him and I never meant that breakup. I’ve run out of ideas now I don’t know who to call. I don’t know anyone here in Phalaborwa. I walk over to where Mme is sitting and join her. Nurses pass us like nothing is happening. I feel like I’m failing her. I take out my phone scrolling down at names as if I’ll come across a number that can save me and by the miracle of God I think I just did. Why didn’t I think of this person before?

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After the dark clouds

#14(My eyes failed me towards the end. Please excuse any errors. I struggled to edit. Please don't forget to like the page on our latest challenge)

I look at the number saved as "Corpse" and contemplate if I should dial it or what. I saved it when she tried to call me this other time. I don't know how she will assist but she knows people and I think her profession can play an impact maybe she will have empathy besides she has a history with this family. She might not get along with Sechaba but I think she will help Mme and I get a feeling she's the one who made sure Mme knows her daughter is at the hospital. She might not have made the call but she sure as hell had a hand in it.

"Mme I'm going to try and call Letago to help us." I say patting her back trying to get some kind of assurance.

She only manages a nod as her eyes remains shut. I know she doesn't like Letago but beggars can't be choosers right?

I unblock the number and dial her while trying so hard to fight this urge that keeps on whispering in my mind that what I'm doing is wrong.

"Dr Letsoalo" Such savage. Does she need to let each and every caller know that she's a Doctor? Aretsi I guess she earned it. Six years of studying is not a walk in the park but does she really have to answer like that? Mxmcin

I keep quite not knowing what to say

"Dr Letsoalo hello?" It comes out as a brag and right then I know she must still be having my number saved in her phone.

“Hi its Madzaleni.”

Silence...

“What do you want?” She finally speaks after a long silence.

“I’m at the hospital with Mme umm Sechaba’s grandmother. We came to fetch his mother and we are stranded we don’t have any transport to get home.”

“Which side are you at?”

“Just outside ward 8.”

She doesn’t say anything after that and the phone goes dead. I’m confused if she’s going to do

something about this or what. I dial Nthabi and she doesn't answer the phone I guess the hangover grip is still tight around her. She works here as a cleaner so maybe she might know someone who can assist. Gosh why didn't I think of calling her before Letago? I can't stop beating myself up over this. I regret calling Letago. Just as I'm busy thinking an ambulance stops right in front us

Two guys get out with a stretcher and approach us

"The Moroka's?"

"Yes." I respond with so much enthusiasm

They wear their gloves and take mme Dimpho from Mme and wheel her at the back of the ambulance. We jump in and we ready to go. I just can't believe what just happened. We got saved by Letago out of all people.

“Mme Letago came through for us.”

“You need to call her and thank her please thank her on my behalf too” Her voice sounds so far

My phone rings and it's her.

“Hi Letago.”

“Did the ambulance guys come?”

“Yes. Thank you so much.”

She doesn't respond back and the phone goes dead. I type text and send her

Me: Thank you so much for your help. We really appreciate it so much.”

Sent and no response from her.

We are sitting by the sitting room watching Tv not that we are really watching. The Tv is just loud but our minds are just not there. I have moved inside the main house now with Phodiso just to be close to Mme's room. We are taking turns to take care of Mme Dimpho cos she just can't do anything. She is literally a child. She is on diapers. Mme refused when we offered to assist her to change them . We make soft porridge for her since she got here yesterday but she's struggling to eat she even vomits water.

Nthabi had to request leave from work just to assist us. I had to tell them at the daycare that I won't be able to start work because I have a very series situation at home to deal with. I don't know if the job offer will still be available when everything goes back to normal but will they ever go back to normal?

The kids can't stop asking questions about Mme Dimpho. Who is she and why does she look like that. Thato doesn't even know her. He keeps on asking what happened to that woman in the room and is she going to die. Miso knows and she hasn't been well. She's more like her big brother Sechaba she resents her mother. She is sitting inside my room outside all alone starring into space when I enter. I sit just by the edge of the bed and hold a pillow. She doesn't acknowledge my presence or anything.

"Miso how are you feeling about mom?" I ask her

"I feel nothing for her. why should I feel anything? She never felt anything for me. I used to call her asking her to come back home she kept on telling me she will come but she never did. I needed her so much when I was teased about my albinism but she was never there. All I wanted was for her to hold me and tell me that I'm enough and beautiful but not even once has she ever told me that. Not even once

has she ever hugged me. when I started my periods I had to tell Abuti Sechaba cos mmago Neo was at work and koko was not feeling well. She is a stranger to me.” She sobs in my arms and I hold her tight brushing her back

“It’s okay it’s okay baby.”

“I’m sorry for disappointing you but I can’t love her.” She continues to sob inside my arms

“I understand trust me I do but wouldn’t you like to forget about the past and start making new memories with her? I’m not forcing you to do anything you don’t want but please just think about it. She is your mother baby and that will never change. I’m sure she feels bad about everything and your forgiveness will mean a lot to her and not just her only but you and Mme too. Sometimes you forgive to free yourself to wash off all the toxins eating you inside. Just think about it okay?” I say while brushing

her back

She fixes her spectacles and wag her head

“I’m going to cook your favorite food simply because you’re my favorite girl in the whole wide world.”

Her face beams with excitement

“Lasagna?”

“Yes baby.”

She jumps up from the bed and hugs me.

I love this girl so much. She gave me that platform to play that big sis role in her life. Something I always wished for Londeka and I. She will be fine I know she is a big strong girl. Now let me get up and make the kids favorite food. Konje I once mentioned that I love

cooking and I'm a great cook ne?

"Monethu." She takes a carrot I was about to chop and sits on top of the deep freezer

"Hey. O shap?"

"I'm exhausted."

Shame we are all exhausted both physically and mentally. I give her that look that says I understand

"I've been thinking about my own mother you know. I think I need to visit her."

"I've been thinking about mine too a lot lately ever since this whole thing started. I wouldn't want her to die dilo dise shap between us. She's not remorseful

for anything but I just want her to know that I'm not mad."

"Mine tried reaching out but I was just never interested."

"I'm too scared to call mine hai I'll just see."

"anything on Sechaba?"

"Nothing. I tried calling him he didn't answer."

"Ska wara he will show up soon we all know he can be mad at all of us but not his precious My Poppe. He will show up just to see her."

"I hope so Monethu cos I really miss him."

Just after saying I hope so I hear a car driving in.

only the Jeep roars like that. Sechaba is here.

“Monethu he is here.” Why is my heart beating so fast?

We wait for his grand entrance and he sure as hell does make one.

“Where is she? Where the fuck is that whore?” He asks standing by the door holding his Windhoek lager in the hand. He’s drunk, he’s high and looks mad as hell.

He pushes his way in when we don’t give him any answer. We both run after him after realizing what just happened

“Sechaba no..” I shout running after him trying to pick up his pace but it’s too late he’s already at the

door. He opens and finds Mme trying to give mme Dimpho water with a straw

We all look at him stunned. He walks inside slowly and looks at his mother

“Why did you come here? Couldn’t you just die far from us?”

“Sechaba?” I scream at him

“Dimpho I want you to die knowing that you failed as a mother and I hate you. Do you know what your absence has done into my life? I would have loved to be a somebody in life not some criminal but because of you I had to stop going to school and be a criminal. You chased Thapelo away because he didn’t want to be associated with a whore like you. Lebone had to be fucked by different men just to survive and at the end she had to live with a Somalian guy cos you failed her as a mother. You’re

nothing but a piece of shit and I don't feel sorry for you deserve everything."

"That's it Sechaba get out of my house and never ever return here. Ntswele ka motse. I don't ever want to see you in here again and this time I mean it Sechaba." Mme is up from the bed and throwing him with everything she comes across

"Sechaba please leave bona you're scaring the kids. Just look at the kids. Is this how you want them to see you? Please don't put them through this we're already dealing with a lot here please go."

He turns and looks at the kids. I see a wave of shame resting on his face. He looks at us and walks out.

Whuu Lord please intervene here.

It's the following day and I just finished putting the kids to sleep. I take my bath and wear my Pjamas waiting for Sechaba. He finally agreed to meet up with me. I'm sitting on the couch passing time by watching some Tv while browsing through my phone when he calls.

"I'm at the corner." He says

"I'll be there in just a second."

I tiptoe my way outside making sure Mme doesn't see me. Nthabi knows I'll be meeting up with him

I open his door and lead him out. He's puzzled but he follows my lead. I open the backseat door and lead him inside once he's seated I take my seat and close the door.

“Moroka.” I greet while running my hand through his face. He’s sober thank goodness and he’s still handsome as hell. He makes me feel like God’s favorite girl this one.

“Why didn’t you come with my poppe?”

“She was sleeping.”

“She doesn’t sleep this time. Are you trying to keep me away from her Madzaleni? Do you hate me that much now?”

Madzaleni? Okay...

“You know I’ll never do that.”

“How’s everyone?” He ask

“Surviving despite everything that’s happening. We miss you.”

Silence...

I take his hand and touch his face again. he’s looking down. “Hey. Look at me.”

He doesn’t look at me so I lift his face up and start kissing him. “I love you.” I say as I break the kiss

He’s got that Sechaba look now. lol men can be kids at times lol says someone who has just been with two men in her life. I’m doing good at this mjolo thing I guess

I start telling him about how I grew up and how things were like between my mother and I.

“I’m not trying to compare our mothers but we both

have mother issues. Baby I have learned that it's not what the other person does to you that's the big deal. The big deal is how you as a person responds to it. Call me stupid, call me naïve but I'll rather be all those things than to walk all around carrying hate and relaying on karma to solve things while I can solve things for myself by allowing peace to flow inside of me."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Free yourself from this bondage and the only way to do that is to forgive her. Baby we all decide how we want our lives to be. Yes she might have had an impact on how you turned out but it was purely your decision. She's not perfect, I'm not perfect, you not perfect. They say love is when two imperfect people learn to love each other in a perfect way and trust me it's doable you are capable of loving. Sechaba you're a good man yes most might

misunderstand you but I know you're a good man. Forgive her do it for you. I love you and I'm here for you always." I hug him tightly and give him a kiss then walk out of the door praying that he did listen.

Its early in the morning. I have just finished preparing soft porridge. I'm taking the bowl to the room to give Mme to feed Mme Dimpho.

"I'll take that."

I stand still like a child that just got caught stealing meat inside the pot. Sechaba is here.

I turn just to be sure and yes he is here.

"Are you sure?" I ask

He only shakes his head. We meet each other halfway and I give him a tray. I pat him on the back and smile. He can read my face which says "I'm so proud of you." Sometimes some moments don't need words to be said.

I lead the way and he follows

"Where is the soft porridge?" Mme asks

I open the way and Sechaba enters holding the tray. He takes off his bucket hat and bows down a bit "Ma ou.."

Silence...

"Mme come with me I'll make you food in the kitchen."

She's hesitant I think she doesn't trust Sechaba around her daughter which is totally understandable after the scene he caused yesterday.

"Its fine she doesn't have to go." He says as he sits on the bed next to his mother. He takes a spoon and tries feeding her his hands are shaking like it will drop on the floor any minute. Mme Dimpho opens her mouth a little and he feeds her. "Yes that's it. Let's try another one." He takes another handful of spoon and feed her. "Yes that it. I know you're stronger than this you need to fight this so that we can create new memories." That's a way of a black child saying I forgive you we just don't directly say the words not just us only even our parents. Mara why? May we be a generation that brings changes with our kids. The word please forgive me I was wrong is important and needs to be normalized.

Cries fill the room. I can't stand this anymore so I walk out and Nthabi follows me together with Mme.

we don't say anything to each other when we get inside the kitchen. I could warm up yesterday left over food but Sechaba doesn't like "English food" as he calls them so I need to start cooking pap and some meat for him. He eats pap for breakfast and never touches bread. Let me go and ask him what to make for him.

"You need to get well and spend time with your makoti and grandchild, her name is Phodiso. You never took care of me so you owe me that much to take care of Phodiso and her siblings while I go and screw her mother without kids disturbing us. I love her you know? I'm going to marry and the biggest gift you can ever give me is for you to be present at the wedding."

That's the conversation I walk into. My heart swells with more love and joy. Does he really love me that much? I tiptoe back to the kitchen when I get a feeling he felt my presence.

We taking the pots and moving around when he walks in.

“You don’t have to do any of that today. I want you guys to go out for the whole day and just unwind. You have done so much and you deserve some rest.”

We both look at him puzzled

“Vanessa is outside to take you guys to wherever ladies go to relax. She will bring you back in the afternoon. I don’t want you guys to worry about anything today we will take care of her with Ou lady right?”

“Right.” Mme answers with a smile. “Get out you two.” She laughs. Shame she’s happy for us

He has that look and I know we not allowed to protest. We change and go outside to find this Vanessa lady waiting outside. She gets out of the car and hugs him lapho she's half naked like she's wearing a panty and a crop top with heels nogal

In my mind I have already murdered her, buried her and resurrected her only to kill her all over again. I don't like her

"Relax and stop looking like you're about to sing some struggle song she's like a little sister to him. He never looks at them that way." Nthabi whispers in my ear laughing

"But he slept with Letago though."

"Iyhoo phola uphile ntombazana." She laughs and goes inside the car. I can't believe this is a joke to her. she's supposed to be hating her with me

“Call me if you need anything okay?” Bitch he’s got me he doesn’t need you. I say that inside my mind. We going have to address this Vanessa issue soon once things goes back to normal.

“Sure.” Why is he saying sure though? Okay this matter needs to be addressed urgently

We get to Sefepane lodge and this bitch looks like she’s a regular here. They know her. She waves around and leads us to the spa. I’ve never been to the spa before on a normal day I would be happy to be here but no this is not a normal day some bitch was busy undressing my man with her eyes and now acts like she’s our tour guide to the good life. Next board meeting at the brothel I’m there with him they need to know me.

“Hey darling. They will be here for the whole day okay? Full day pampering. Put it on Nation’s tab okay?”

She puts on her ugly sunglasses and waves us goodbye “Chao chao.” Mxcim she sounds like a cat saying meoooww.

The massage thing is so painful kganthe why do people love it? She is hurting me as she presses hard I shouldn't have chosen hard pressure. The lady says it's because I've been so stressed and blood flows what what.. She tells me to relax.

We go out for breakfast just by the pool side of the spa. We are served real food and its really nice. We both realize how much we needed this outing. We go back inside and get some pampering on the face I'm talking cumbers on the eyes, some things massaged on our face and I start feeling like I'm Bonang Matheba I swear even my accent is changing I just feel like adding darling whenever I finish a sentence now I see why celebrities behave this way it's because they attend things like this. This tour just made me realize that I love nice things

and I do deserve them. spa pampering should be added on the obituary that she also attended spa pampering for the whole day at Sefepane lodge. People must know these things

Next thing is the manicure and pedicure thing. It's my first time doing them.

"Which color?" The lady asks

"Pink darling." I say waving my glass of juice

We giggle with Nthabi about how we are going to make this our usual thing when we go out to be served with lunch by the pool.

By the time the bitch comes to fetch us we are tired and feeling so ready to go home and ooh did I mention that I finally started enjoying the massage? I even fell asleep

it's around five in the afternoon when we leave and to be quite honest I don't hate Vanessa like I did when we came here lol hate is a strong word well I don't dislike her ge. I just realized that Madzaleneni you just didn't know the finer things in life and you disliked the poor girl cos she knew them. I was jealous of her but that touchy thing with Sechaba still needs to be addressed though.

When we get home we are met by Sechaba and the boys busy with braai stands and carrying meat. Miso is sitting with them busy chopping stuff

We are told to relax and get ready to be served by them. I just fall in love with this family over and over again.

We join Mme and Mme Dimpho in the room. She tries to smile when we walk inside

“How was your day?”

We explain how much fun the spa was

Mme says she’s going to check up on the braai and Nthabi goes out to answer her phone. I remain with Mme Dimpho.

She looks at me and smile. She tries to reach for my hand but struggles. I move closer to her and reach for her hand

“Keya leboha for everything. Sechaba is blessed to have you and I just have just one favor.”

I just look at her not saying anything

“Please take care of him. I failed him as a mother

but you can show him a woman is capable of loving. I'm giving all the love I have for him to you so I need you to love him double. He can be very impossible but don't leave him."

I just look at her I don't know what to say really.

"There is a letter I need you to read to them only when I'm gone. It will explain everything they've ever asked themselves."

"Hai Mme I..."

"Please."

"Okay."

"The braai just started hai it's happening outside."
Mme says walking inside

“Take me outside I want to see everything.”

“Are you sure Dimpho?”

“I’m sure Mama. Please call my kids I want them to wheel me outside.”

We all go outside and call Sechaba. He comes out pushing her on the wheelchair followed by Miso and Thato. It’s a beautiful scene to witness. Beautiful yet emotional

The music is buzzing, they are playing via Orlando by Monwa. Apparently it was Mme Dimpho’s favorite song back in the days. The song is on repeat throughout the night. The vibe is so cool we even forget the kids have to go to school tomorrow. Mme Dimpho mentions she’s tired and wants to lie down and that’s when we all break the chillas and prepare to sleep.

“You enjoyed yourself?” He asks with his arms wrapped all over me once everybody has left. It’s just the two of us outside

“A lot. You have just raised the bar high and I hope you can maintain that standard.”

“For you I’ll do anything. I can take you there every day. Thank you for everything. You know I just love you more right now after everything you have done for this family. I know how badly you wanted to start work but you choose taking care of my mother over that. Madzeleni I’m not good with words and you know that but baby I’ll live the rest of my life showing you how much I appreciate you and grateful to have you in my life. You were meant for me baby. Our lady likes saying that it is not good for a man to be alone now I truly understand what she meant then. I would be miserable without you.”

“We healed each other Sechaba. I don’t know where I

would be if it wasn't for you."

We start kissing and kissing and kissing until we can't take it anymore. I go back inside the house and he jokes around saying I must sneak out and come and fix what I started. He says pointing at the bulge on his pants. Mxcim horny thing

Unlike other nights' sleeps comes so easily. I guess it has got to do with the massage. I haven't slept like this in ages. Our sleep with Nthabi is interrupted by Mme waking us up

"Tsohang banaka. Dimpho has left us."

Huh? What? How?

We get up. She has already bathed her and changed her and switched on the fan.

Sechaba comes inside just after we have closed the bedroom door. He walks straight to the room and we give him the space

I can't believe we are having a funeral and then the letter thing hits me.

After the dark clouds

#15

The house is buzzing with people and there is just no time to sit down and rest. It has been like this since Tuesday morning the day after Mme Dimpho passed away. Today is Wednesday. We only manage to sleep just after twelve midnight and have to be up just around four to prepare breakfast and bathing water for the elders that are camping in the house and the visitors that keep on flocking to offer their condolences. Mme is loved by people and they are showing her with all the love during this difficult time.

“Masechaba please bring tea our visitors just arrived.” A neighbor calls out. We are expecting the relatives from Moshupa at Botswana. Mme did announce they will be arriving today. I quickly prepare tea and scones with the help of Nthabi and we go inside the house to serve them.

Mme is sitting on the mattress. Everything was removed inside her room and only the mattress remained. She has been sitting there ever since Monday and visitors go inside there one by one to offer their condolences. Mostly come with cash and Nthabi is the one who records it inside the book. She has also taken up the task of going around with Sechaba to collect the money from Burial societies. Mme said she doesn't want any of her dodgy relatives touching the book and recording any condolences money more especially Ausi Molly. So far she has only come once I think she's trying to avoid Sechaba at all costs. She ignored me and acted like she doesn't know me. if only she knew how much I love her. it's all thanks to her I scored the most amazing man ever.

As we walk inside the house carrying the food we see more people walking in. women in their long dresses with doeks wrapped around their head, scarfs wrapped around their waist and shoulders.

men wearing their jackets coming to offer their condolences.

“I’m with my friends over there please bring us food.” Its Sechaba stopping me just before I enter inside the house. He’s been very busy running around. If he’s not at the cemetery supervising the guys who are digging the grave he’s in town buying food that we need to cook, organizing things at Two Mountains mortuary, getting chairs, tables, buying alcohol for the people and all and all. The tent was done today. They did it at the street because there is no enough space inside.

We hardly spend time together. The little time we spend together is when I’m driving with him to town to buy food and we are never alone like I said during the day he’s extremely busy and at night he chills with his friends and they drink till the morning. Funerals just have a way of bringing people together. You get so many chillers spots around the house.

cousins catching up, people from around sharing the latest gossip around the hood while preparing food for people.

“Are you not coming inside to greet? They say your relatives from Botswana just arrived.”

“Ohh did they come in that car?” he says pointing at the white fortuner parked outside. “Let me direct those guys they came to deliver the mobile fridges and toilets. I’ll be there just now. The owner of that car is trouble please don’t take her seriously.” He laughs after saying that and walks away

We walk inside passing a group of people sitting inside the empty sitting room waiting for their turn to see Mme. The room is packed. All the chairs are packed and some are even sitting on the floor. We kneel down and place the tea and scones. We going to have to go back cos this is not going to be enough. It’s some church people and four women with an old

man I don't know. And ohh some two girls sitting on the floor They must be the relatives from Botswana

"Tea? Ausi you didn't get sbiyankho nyana? I can't come all the way from Botswana to come and drink tea. This place is hot and you offer me tea? I want a cold black label. Motogolo okae?" it's some old man with a face that looks like it has seen it all let me not get started on the puzza face. Lol I like him already this one.

"Bo Ausi these are my girls." Mme says cutting and ignoring my favorite uncle. "Ona ke mosadi wa Sechaba and that one kewa Thapelo."

"Thapelo? Mos she doesn't look like the one we saw on the pictures tsa lenyalo? Meme kana ke eng dilo tsela tsa lona tsamo phoning? We had to see his wedding on the phone cos he failed to invite us. Mxcim it will never last" She asks some girl sitting on the floor. "And you need to lose that mkhaba or

else Sechaba will run or are you pregnant?" The rude aunt

"Hai Ausi stop talking like that." The aunt that looks like a staunch mozolwane

"Ke Facebook mama and yes this is not her. That one on the wedding pictures was very beautiful and slim this is defiantly not her." The teenager responds

I feel Nthabi shifting uncomfortably.

"Elegore yena okae Thapelo wa teng and Lebone?" Some woman asks. She looks like the rich aunt of the family this one

"Yes where is he? I want him here I heard he's very rich and is close with ministers and all these important people. Aaah ebile I'm no longer drinking

Black label. Motogolo otlo nshapa ka di hartes.”

“Thapelo will only be arriving late today or tomorrow he said something about his wife only getting leave from tomorrow and one of his kid had an interview at some school they are trying to get him into next year. Lebone she is arriving today her child was sick” It’s the aunt from Lephale. She arrived with her daughter Tshimologo on Monday

“ I really can’t wait to finally meet the rich uncle of the family.” The girl on the floor

“Useless rich uncle. When was the last time he came home? look at this house it needs some serious work. Kganthe is Sechaba not making enough from being a criminal not to upgrade this place for you Ausi?” The rich aunt says looking all judgmental

“I’m going outside.” Nthabi whispers in my ear. I hold

her arm tight trying to stop her. She has tears full in her eyes. hearing that your ex is taking his child to a school that pays above 5k a month yet fails to even send R20 for your own kids back home and the fact that he's coming with the wife? I don't know how this is going to work out worse Mme is confined inside the room and can't be there for Nthabi so I'll have to step up and be there for her.

He takes off his bucket hat and bows his head as he enters.

"Bagolo." He greets

"Aaah my boy boy aah look at you all grown up and still looking handsome as ever." The loud aunt says standing up to hug him

"Ya wena. Are you still a criminal?" Rich aunt asks opening her arms wide to hug him

“My boy. Are you going to church now?” Staunch
mozolwane aunt

“Motogolo great you’re here nna I just want a cold
one before we can greet each other.” My favorite
uncle

He laughs with the uncle and tells him to go join his
friends outside. He goes on to greet the cousins
sitting on the floor the loud one whom I’ve learned is
Meme asks him to hook him up with his hot friend
with money. She’s no longer going back to Botswana
she’s remaining here. The mother fuels the whole
conversation.

Right then a guy walks in with a lady and two kids
busy on their tablets. The little one is even carrying
a small dog.

“Aaah the prodigal son just entered. Bathong

Thapelo.” The loud aunt

I squeeze Nthabi’s hand as an assurance that I’m here for you. This is going to be hard very hard.

.....

After the dark clouds

(Not edited at all. I'm not feeling well)

#16

Thapelo walks inside like the rich uncle he is proclaimed to be. He walks like a guy with an erection trying to hide it from people to see. You know their walk mos? I don't know if it has do with the embarrassment of being away for such a long time and only coming back because your mother Is dead or its just swag. His smell takes over the whole room I don't know how much that perfume costs but it can kill any bed smell in an instant even bad breath . He's wearing a white shirt with a visible Polo sign on top of it. Beige long pants and some velvet black loafers spotting the Versace sign.

You can't miss that him and Sechaba came from the same womb but he's the sophisticated version of

Sechaba. Sechaba is very Ghetto while with this one you can see his body is used to formal wear, his body is used to the Gym and eating fancy English food like Sechaba calls them. He's taller than him

He gets in and tries to greet Sechaba by extending his hand towards but Sechaba keeps his hands buried inside his pockets looking at him like he's some piece of shit lying in a public toilet. You know how irritating that is? I slightly feel embarrassed on his behalf after that stunt Sechaba pulled but then I remember that he's nothing but spaza shop version of men and right then my heart wears a jumpsuit. He moves over to the elders and extend his hand for a handshake. They all greet him asking where has he been, he looks good and all. Mme Is all emotional looking at him and they are trying to comfort her. Sechaba gives him one more annoyed look and shakes and walks out. I ask Nthabi if she wants to go she says no. She's too strong. I would have ran.

He goes down to kneel next to Mme and throws her inside his big broad shoulders. She cries and he comforts her. I don't know if she's crying cos Mme

Dimphe is gone or crying for the prodigal son's return or maybe a mixture of both.

This gives me a chance to turn and look at the wife and yerrr I don't know where to begin really. Girl is looking like she's on a vacation at the Maldives. She's wearing jean bum shorts that are just the size of my boy leg panties, she's rocking them with a tight top that gives you a sneak peak of her flat tummy and down she's rocking some Gucci flip flops lapho She's still covering her eyes with some huge sun glasses. Sunglasses inside the house really? Letla re boledisha kudu. I can't say she's really beautiful all I can say is she knows how to bath or let me rather comment on her looks when she's wearing something decent. I don't want to lie but I'm so happy she's looking like some flozzie in front of the family. I can see the aunties giving her nasty looks and I bet they are just waiting for that moment

"Thapelo are you well my son?" Mme finally asks him after her crying has subsided

"I'm well Mama. What happened?" He asks with a

concerned face

The Botswana family listens attentively. They've stopped asking him any questions. they never got a chance to really hear what happened to mme Dimpho cos they were still greeting and throwing shades, acting all holy and uncle wanting some booze lol.

"They called us at the hospital to inform us she's there sick. We went to fetch her and brought her home. She spent her last days happy."

"What was wrong with her?" He asks like he genuinely cared

Mme clears her throat as if she's trying to think of a suitable cause of death to mention

"Cancer. Masechaba kana bare ke eng that cancer?" She asks directing her eyes at me and everybody shifts their focus on me including Thapelo. His eyes lands at Nthabi who's sitting right next to me and I see his body going into a total shock but he decomposes himself quickly trying not to make anybody aware. I look at Nthabi just before

answering I just want to see her reaction. She's looking at him. Wow she's brave. I finally mention that she died from Kaposi sarcoma after realizing that I kept everybody waiting like Proverbs about to announce the Idols winner.

"That is related to Aids mos." Rich aunt says it with no shame

"Dimpho didn't have Aids. She just died from cancer." Mme throws her defense mode

Right then I realize that the stigma still related to Hiv and Aids is still high. It's better to say she died from cancer than Hiv and Aids. I totally don't understand why in this generation we still take Hiv like it's some taboo. Discriminating them like they are not normal people. we still have a long way to go but she's old and they don't really have much knowledge like us the youngsters.

"Where is Makoti? You didn't come with her." The staunch Christian aunt asks

Thapelo turns to look behind him scanning the entire room looking for their makoti. His eyes finally catch

her leaning by the wall with a phone on her hand while her little rascals are busy on their phones too. The youngest of them all is playing on the phone while the other hand is brushing the dog. They look like they are shooting a reality Tv show you know some keeping up with the Kardashian's vibe.

"There she is. Zibu please come and greet my family." He says pointing at her first then waiting for her to come

"I'm still responding to a very urgent email from work." It comes more like a snap

"Is that her?" All the aunts ask at the same time. He only manages to nod

Apparently they only know her from Facebook cos none of them were invited to the wedding. They just saw pictures on Facebook. This one is not on some kotiza vibes I'm telling you.

"Thapelo?" The loud aunt calls his name in shock with her hand wrapped around her mouth

"Done." Makoti says while shoving the phone inside her bag and a packet of cigarettes drops on the floor.

“Ooops I would have died if I didn’t spot them.” She says laughing while picking them up.

Thapelo laughs with her. they are the only two laughing while the rest of us are shocked. I look at Nthabi and she doesn’t look too bad, I’m sure deep down she’s on some “Dude you left me for this thing?” Aretsi bare mapelo oja serathi but I’m loving this makoti shame.

“Hello.” She says to the rich aunt

“You’re thee Mrs Moroka?” Loud aunt

“I actually prefer my maiden surname which is Mthiyane. I didn’t change to Moroka after we got married so its Zibuyile. Zibuyile Mthiyane.”

Aaah chesa wena maan girl! Ba rocke makoti!

“Yhoo mehlolo.” Rude aunt claps her hands

She goes on to greet everybody expect for me and Nthabi. Staunch Christian aunt is welcoming and Mme greets her with a smile asking her why she never visited and bring her grandkids. She complains that she doesn’t like Limpopo cos it’s too hot and

rural for her. Her work at the university is very demanding.

Limpopo too rural? Maybe she's talking about a certain Limpopo she used to visit with her grandmother at night not the Northern Limpopo.

"Come and greet your grandmother and aunts boys." Thapelo calls them

"Noooo. I'm playing a game." The small boy responds in a real private school English. He sounds like he just got off the plane from the Uk

"I only have granny and aunts from Kzn not here that's what mommy told us" The older boy

Makoti giggles like they just solved the Gbv pandemic. She sees nothing wrong with them at all. I'm not saying I'm a perfect mother but Phodiso will never behave like that shame

"They are just tired from the long drive." Thapelo to the rescue

"Babe can we go? You promised we not staying for too long we just coming to greet only. I have emails

to respond to.”

“Oh yes.” Thapelo says as he gets up from the mattress. “I’ll see you tomorrow mama. The kids are tired and she has some work to finish up. She’s a professor at Wits University.”

Silence....

No one is impressed with her about anything I bet even if she had the power to wake MMe Dimho up no one would still be impressed with her hai suka.

“Where are you guys going?” Staunch Christian aunt

“We’ve checked in at Hans Meresky. We going to be there until after the funeral.”

Nobody answers they all suppress their shock. When they pass next to us I don’t see his handsomeness anymore. I see a piece of shit. Nthabi doesn’t look at them

“He is bewitched. There is a famous nyanga in Zimbabwe at Luveve we need to take him there.” The loud aunt

Eish they better not entertain that much cos Nthabi

will still believe them and hold on to him. She needs to let go of that arrogant jerk

When we go outside Thapelo is busy greeting some people. Makoti is nowhere in sight so I don't know if she's waiting for him in the car or if she has left him here. Nthabi holds on to my hand and we walk straight to the kitchen.

"Do you want us to sit in the room for a while?" I ask her

"Yes please. My whole body is trembling."

"It's okay lets go or we can take a long walk rather cos we're going to get disturbed in the room anyways most of the work here is done. Only the afternoon cooking left bo Miso and the other ladies can assist with serving guests that arrive."

Just as we are getting ready to get out of the kitchen. Thapelo walks in. We stand in shock. He looks at us and runs his hand through his bald head

"Ummm can we talk?" He says looking at Nthabi. No

greetings no nothing

She looks at me and then back at him. The looking around gets him impatient I can just see it in his eyes.

“Uhhh fine then if you want to do this right in front of her. I...”

“No we can go to the bedroom and...” She says

He cuts her short. “No that won’t be necessary. Look Zibu is not comfortable with you around here and its totally understandable after the way you used to harass us in the past. She’s threatening to leave and I can’t have that. She is family and you’re not family.”

The nerve! I wish this was his funeral. I Swear this guy dines with the devil

“Ekse votsek. If there is anybody leaving here it’s you not her. Otlwaela marete son don’t come here with your Santhini tendencies. Areye votsek and go make rules in your own house not here.” Its Sechaba. Gosh where did he come from? Santhini is Sandton I guess

“Don’t talk to me like I’m your mate Sechaba. I’m not your type.”

“I’ll talk to you anyhow I want and there is nothing you can do. Ere hachi? Hee ere hachii.” He says putting the plate on the kitchen counter and pushing him. “Get the fuck out of here with your fake life. We don’t need you here. You walked out on this family so you don’t get to have a say and make any demands. She is staying if your whore is not comfortable get the fuck out of here with her.” The words are backed up with some pushing

“Abuti its fine I’ll go.” Nthabi

“I will never harass you. That was a long time ago.” Her words are ushered by tears

The kids come running. Neo is in the front

“Mama who is this man pushing daddy?” Neo asks

Oh my word. His kids know Sechaba as their father cos he practically raised them. They don’t know the man pushing daddy is actually daddy and Sechaba is uncle.

Nthabi doesn't answer him. She runs into the room crying. The aunts come out. I don't stand to listen to any of this. they will solve it. I run after Nthabi. I don't support violence but I hope Sechaba beats the crap of his Santhini out of him

"You're way better than her in so many ways. I really don't know what he saw in her but you're way better." That's the first thing I say when I walk in. What do you say to someone in a situation like this?

She's throwing clothes inside a plastic bag

"Then why is he not with me then?" She stops packing and looks at me. When I can't I provide an answer she goes back to throwing things inside her plastic.

"Nthabi please don't go. Mme needs you right now. We are family you can't let him destroy us please"

She doesn't listen she just continues throwing stuff inside the plastic until she eventually loses all the power and energy. She sits down slowly and cries

"Ohhh Nthabi." I hold her very tightly.

“Why me?” She shouts out

“This too shall pass. He’s not worth your tears Nthabi.”

Right then Miso walks inside with the little whore cousin from Moshupa. She’s carrying a briefcase in her hand and a letter. Oh flip that’s the briefcase Mme Dimpho told me about. She drops everything down when she sees Nthabi crying

“Why is Mmago Neo crying?” She doesn’t wait for my answer but runs to her

I pick the letter and briefcase. The envelope is opened. My eyes fall on something and then I know this family is about to be destroyed. How did she expect me to share this with them? Now it’s not the time to think about this. I fold it and shove it inside my apron pockets. I look at Miso comforting Nthabi. She looks very normal and there is no way she would have looked this way if she had read the letter. I hug Nthabi. I will deal with this letter thing issue later.

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After the dark clouds

#17

I sit down on the floor holding Nthabi after asking Miso and the little whore cousin to leave and give us some privacy.

“Nthabi please don’t go please.” I beg her

“I’m leaving I’m really done with this family. You know it’s not just about what Thapelo did. also the way Mme behaved right in front of me. how can she entertain that lady right in my face? She looked very happy to finally meet her and even asked why she never calls and all that. Not even once did she think how I felt. I was there for her I never left her side but she just arrives and I get tossed outside? I feel betrayed.”

Wow just wow. I don’t have a comeback for this one.

I honestly didn't even see things that way.

"Mme is naturally a great person Nthabi that's just in her nature. I'm sure she didn't mean to hurt you in any kind of way."

"No she shouldn't have acted that way in front of me and how can she be happy to see Thapelo after everything he did? He walked out on her, me, his kids and siblings yet she acted so happy to reunite with him. why couldn't she chase him away like she always did with Sechaba when he does bad things? For me what Thapelo did is the worst ebile Sechaba turned out that way cos he had to look after them. I feel so betrayed by her I never thought she could ever treat me like that. She's a snake."

I really think she's directing her anger at the wrong person really or she just wants everybody to hate Thapelo for doing her wrong.

“What is happening? Are you guys okay?” Its Sechaba I didn’t even see him walking in

“Nthabi says she’s leaving.” I say

“Why?” He asks

I don’t know if I should mention what she said about Mme but I think that would be inappropriate but hey I really hope I will be able to keep it inside during pillow talks. Nobody gossips like a couple madly in love. You can even say “Baby you know me and my grandmother used to travel to Cape town at night using a broom.”

Silence...

“He’s gone you don’t have to worry about meeting him. He went back to Santhini together with his little family”

“I still want to go I don’t care if he’s gone or what Abuti.” Nthabi responds

“Mama can we talk outside?” He asks me.

I get up and follow him outside. His arm is wrapped around my waist as we’re walking outside. I spot an old white man I have never seen before ever since the start of the funeral. He’s sitting outside with Leago on his lap. She’s got sweets in her hand and he’s busy brushing her back.

“Sechaba who is that man?” I don’t know why but my heart is beating against my chest

“That’s Andre de Villiers. The first man my mother worked for when she arrived in Sa.”

“Did you just say Andre de Villiers?” I ask in total

panic. I don't even wait for his answer. I run to the man and grab Leago away from him we nearly fall on the ground. He looks at me shocked so does everybody sitting next to him witnessing the scene.

“Wa pheka na wena ngwanyana wa Sechaba?” Uncle asks looking annoyed like I just took out bread out of his mouth (Are you crazy Sechaba's girl?) “Yerrrrr Maaan why do you guys choose them bad? First it was motogolo Thapelo with that whore of a wife and now is this one acting all crazy grabbing a child away without greeting Baas? What is wrong with you?” He shouts

“Leago go back inside the room now.” I shout at her

“No uncle lekgowa told me to come and sit with him. he gave me sweets look?” She points inside her hand full of sweets. “And he said he will give me more. I'm not leaving.”

What is wrong with kids? They will get excited from getting sweets from strangers while we have the same sweets right inside the house. they have a tendency of embarrassing you as if you're not capable of affording them things. Leago better not get on my nerves now cos I'm not in the mood to negotiate with her as for this drunk old man I don't even want to engage him at all.

"Madala howsit?" Sechaba says as he shakes hands with the man obviously happy to see him. He looks at me with that come and say him look but I don't. I'm just holding on tight to Leago who is trying to escape from my tight grip

"What is wrong with her? She nearly hurt the poor child." The white man says looking annoyed but trying to hide it. I can see he's annoyed he can't fool me

Sechaba makes some small talks with them before

turning to me asking for us to go and talk in private. I follow him to the car still dragging crying Leago

“Why are you bringing her with you? It’s obvious she still wants to chill with mlungu and uncle. I want to discuss private stuff with you Madzaleni you can’t come with the child.”

Madzaleni? *Sign* I know he’s mad with me when he resorts to the full name calling or rather real name

“Leago its either you are coming with me or you’re going inside the room to sit with your mother.” I say to her not paying attention to what Sechaba just said. He even called me Madzaleni so I’m kind of mad with him.

“Why would she do that while other kids are busy playing outside? What is wrong with you?” He snaps

at me. He pulls me away and Leago runs away.

I push him all mad while he opens the door dragging me inside. We just gave people some free drama as everybody is now watching us. He gets inside the car and starts it. I bang the windows before jumping on him pulling his Tshirt

“What the fuck is wrong with you? Are you fucken mad?” He screams at me

“Open this door I want to leave.” I scream

His friends and a couple of ladies I recognize from the brothel come and surround the car. one knocks by the windows and begs him to open. He rolls the window just a little

“Nation ntja yami dintshang bra?” He asks looking all

concerned

“It’s nothing. You guys need to go back you’re drawing unnecessary attention here.”

“Okay just open the door and let her out.”

“Get the fuck out of my car.” He screams without even looking at me

I open the door and get out. He can be all mad I really don’t care. I come across Nthabi holding some of her stuff

“I’ll come back and get the rest of the stuff after the funeral.”

“Can you please leave with Leago at least?”

She gives me a bitchy look before placing her hand on her hips dramatically. “Wow so you can’t look after my kids now Monethu? I was coming back to get both her and Neo after I’ve settled down but if you don’t want to look after them then its fine I’ll take them.”

“Nthabi it’s not like that.”

She raises her hand to stop me from talking and looks around for her kids while shouting their names they come running and she starts dragging them. They are crying and don’t want to leave but she tells them she will give them a hiding and they finally go with her crying. I hate Thapelo if I get to marry in this family I will pretend like I’m serving him food and take hot water to wash his hands and drop the dish deliberately to burn his balls.

On a brighter note I'm glad Leago is out of sight

I'm ready for this funeral to end now cos if it doesn't end they are going to bury me with Mme Dimpho. At least tomorrow it's a Friday just one day left and it's all over.

"Bring us some meat here." The uncle says to me as I'm making my way back inside the house. I just pretend like I heard nothing and continue walking

"Where do they get these useless girls? That one wa Thapelo at least she's beautiful this one o maswe kamo with a big tummy like she's pregnant. Nonsonso."

Gosh I feel like killing him and burying him right now after that resurrect him just to kill him again but I'll keep my cool. I continue walking like I heard nothing

It's so hard to sleep without Nthabi. I miss her so terribly. I try calling her but she doesn't answer so I decide to send a text

Me: I love you so much Monethu. I'll be waiting for you when you're ready to talk again." sent.

Now let me try to sleep. Sleep comes so easily surprisingly I think it's because of all the up and downs. When I was leaving the house at around pass 10 Sechaba's sister was just walking in with her Pakistan husband driving a 1400 bakie. Holding some cute toddlers. First thing she asked for was a birth certificate for her claims she wasn't even interested when they were introducing us all she's interested in is a birth certificate so I just excused myself cos the aunts were insulting her on some she came very late to the funeral bla bla and all she cares about is making extra cash so o etsa lehu la hao leya mphedisa lapho it's her own mother. I'll catchup with her after she got her certificate cos I

know Mme will give her. She asked where is Nthabi by the way and I told her she's feeling a bit under the weather so she's resting. I can't be adding more stress on her.

I feel cold hands touching me and I don't jump cos I know this hands. when did he come in? I thought he was mad with me. We've been ignoring each other ever since that incident we had during the day. He feels me moving

"Are you sleeping?" He whispers.

"Yes I was sleeping."

He starts kissing my neck. He throws some light bites and blows some air then suck and lick uuuhhh the feeling is amazing. His right hand is squeezing my bums the other one squeezing my breasts. The breathing gets heavier and heavier

“Sechaba no. you need to stop it.”

“Why? I need you.”

“We have kids in this room.”

Miso, the little whore, Thato, and some girl are sleeping on the floor while Phodiso is on the bed with me.

“They are sleeping they won’t hear anything. I won’t take long I promise please.” He says as he tries to part my legs

“Sechaba no.”

“Okay I won’t do anything. I just want to put it inside only, I won’t thrust. Keno kgumisha fela I promise

nka se rote please I just want to feel you.”

“Sechaba stop it you’re going to wake the kids up.”

“Let’s go and book somewhere. You can bring my poppe along I’ll bring you guys early in the morning before everybody else wakes up I promise you.”

“No Sechaba.”

“I love you mother of the Nation.”

“Sechabaaaaa.....”

“Are you mad about what happened? I’m sorry for talking to you like that. Now let’s go please.”

Sechaba is apologizing? He’s so bad with getting

those words out of his mouth instead he will show you with actions. He must be so damn horny because wow huh-uh!. Indeed men will do anything just to get it inside

“Let’s go outside and talk. Go and wait for me inside the car.”

I find him ready when I come out. The engine is already running

“Where is my poppe? I thought we were leaving with her.”

“That man Andre de Villiers he forced himself on your mother when she was young.” I had to say it first before we talk about anything else I also felt like trying to justify my actions you know that stunt I pulled during the day

“What? Are you fucken kidding me?”

“Yes she gave me a letter that’s the reason why she behaved the way she did. It was her way of dealing with the pain. I’m sorry Sechaba and your uncle knew. He...”

“Give me the damn letter.”

I hand him the letter. He scans it and bangs the starrng wheel like he’s directing all his anger towards it. “Go back inside the house.”

“Sechaba you know I really get why she behaved that way. I once read that some rape victims turn into sex addicts to deal with the pain. She also resented everybody for praising him and seen her as a little spoilt brat seeking unnecessary attention”

“Leave Madzaleni. Get out now”

I don't protest anymore. I get out of the car and leave

I hear the engine roaring like a lion out to get its prey. Only I Know can make that sound. Only tonight its getting me scary cos I'm not inside with him.

“I said it these boys chose bad. Who sleeps until 12 during the day when there is funeral and people need all the help?”

It's a voice I hear from deep in my sleep until somebody shakes me. I open my eyes from my deep sleep. Miso is sitting next to me. the aunts and uncle are surrounding me. it was that uncle who said those words

“Who do you expect to look after your child while you

sleep till so late? Worse we have a funeral today its Friday.” Rude aunt

I’m still drowsy and all.

“Hawu she must have been very tired. They worked so hard please give her a break, I don’t get why you even had to wake her up.” Staunch Christian aunt

“She knows everything around here that’s why akere Thapelo got that other one angry and she left? Only to go back to Santhini with that Zibu of his akg sis maan.” Rude aunt

Right then Lebone comes in running

“Guys just got the news that Mr de Villers woke up dead in his hotel room. He was found dead inside the bathtub.”

“Who is that?” They ask her puzzled. Only uncle is not puzzled

“The white man Mme worked for when she first arrived here. I’m happy he’s dead the world will now be a better place.”

“Don’t speak ill of the dead Lebone.” Uncle

“Ausi must not be told about this okay. She must not find out until after the funeral.” Rich aunt

I get out of the bed and walk out. They don’t even see me cos they are busy discussing this mysterious death. I need to see Sechaba today he will talk I need answers and I need them right now otherwise we are burying him too tomorrow.

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After the dark clouds

#18

I dial his number after I didn't find him in his room. He tells me he's outside. When I get there I find him with a group of guys busy looking at his car. The bumper has fallen off and there are some scratches just around the driver's door.

"Hey. You good?" He asks in a very tiring voice. As much as it sounds tiring but it's still sexy as hell. His arm is wrapped around my waist

"What happened to the car?"

"I don't know. I woke up and found it exactly like this. Someone took my car last night and went out with it."

Does this guy think I'm such a fool? This is evidence enough

"Can we talk in private?" I ask him trying so hard to keep calm under the circumstances.

We walk away from the people and find a quite spot.

“Who took your car?” I ask as I remove his hands off me

“I don’t know it must have been one of the drunk guys.”

How does one take your car and you don’t even notice anything? I know I don’t own any car and don’t even know how to get a car moving but no one can take something precious like a car and you never notice it. Where was he when it was taken? I know he’s crazy in love with that car so he’s really crazy to think I’ll believe such lies.

“Really Sechaba? Somebody takes your car and you have no idea who it is? How is that possible?”

“What’s wrong with you?” He asks with a frown on his face

“I know you killed him. you went to Hans Merensky last night and killed him. look Sechaba I’m not going to be with someone who resolve to killings as a way of solving things. I won’t. I will not put myself and my child under such danger.”

“What the fuck are you talking about?”

“Andere de Devilliers? I know you killed him.”

He acts shocked like he’s hearing about his death for the first time and that pisses me off more. It’s one thing to know about something but it’s another thing to act like a fool and pretend like you know nothing about it. He’s making me so mad right now

“What the fuck are you on about?”

That’s it I’m leaving before I say something I’m going to regret. I’m not going to be played for a fool. I turn trying to walk away and he grabs my hand

“Don’t ever do that. Don’t walk away while I’m talking to you.” His tone is full of anger. Why is he even mad? I should be the one angry here

“Or else what Sechaba? What? you will kill me too? I feel like a made a mistake with you.”

““No one is perfect the problem is high expectations. Truth is all men have shit you just need to choose your shit, mold it and learn to live with it but if you want to go it’s okay you can go.”

I'm more angry now because he's telling me that I can go. You know women can just start a fight just for attention fela. It's nice to be begged to stay but here he is telling me I can go. For what? For telling him the truth? I'm done with him.

"So you admit that you killed him? the same way you killed everyone?"

"I don't have time to entertain this. I didn't kill anyone but if you want to give me that title ill gladly accept it."

He walks away and goes back to join the guys surrounding his car. I watch him walking away and realize how much it will kill me if that walk had to be permanent. I love him despite the fact that he's a killer and everything bad. I can't switch off this feelings I have for him. I love him so much but then is it not too risky to stay with someone like him?

Leha lefu le bohale

Le kgaola tshiu tsaka

Ke santse ke leka hore ho lokile ho lokile

Fela ha kena le wena bohlokong le dihlorisong hohle
ntate kentse kere holokile holokile....

The lady is singing the song in a very emotional way. The Coffin is making its way out of the car and I keep on asking myself holokile ka nnete na? People are crying as the coffin makes its way out and we are walking behind it so slowly. I look at Sechaba he's one of the men holding the coffin that is making its way inside the house. right at that moment I forget all the anger I felt inside. Tomorrow is not guaranteed and I don't want him to die while I'm still angry with him. right then at that moment I chose to let go of everything and love him more and more and more. I imagine if it was him inside that coffin and that thought shatters me. I don't want to lose him to death or anything. He loves me that one I know and like he said all men have their shit you just need to pick one and mold it. He had a reason for doing what he did and it has nothing to do with me.

I look at all these people crying and I release that there is something about death that makes people relate. You don't need to know the deceased to experience all the emotions. This moment here has a way of triggering all the pain that you have tried so hard to bury inside it just resurrects them. I'm sure that some of these people crying here they remember the day that coffin made its way back home. You know during the week you don't really get to feel it so much cos there are always people moving around, guests arriving, food to prepare, friends coming over, that chillas with cousins and friends you even forget what is really going on but then when the coffin comes back home reality hits hard you now realize that your worst nightmare is going to haunt you forever that indeed your loved one is gone that it wasn't just a family gathering but it was indeed their final farewell on earth.

Mme's cries are hysterical. They pierce right through the heart I think it's finally sinking in that indeed her daughter is gone. You know this moment right here will make you forget that there are people around, it

will make you You will feast on your tears.

Ke santse ke leka hore ho lokile ho lokile....

Ho lokile na? is it fine to lose your loved one like this?
is it okay to forget and accept?

They open the coffin and we all gather around to go and view her body. Mme falls down and struggle to walk again. they carry her but still fail to lift her up. her sisters fall on the floor with her and they all cry.

I see Sechaba trying so hard to stop the tears from coming out. He's trying to be a man he's trying to live by the saying "Monna ke nku o llela ka teng" but this moment right here it doesn't chose if you're a man or a woman. Death is painful. I move from the back and go straight in the front and pull him inside my arms and he lets it all out. He cries for his mother, he cries for all the plans he still had for the both of them. What do you say to someone in a moment like this? that holokile? I take a chair and help him sit down while I take mine and sit right next to him. his head is bowed down. I patiently sit with him until he can't cry no more.

It's a late Saturday afternoon chillers. We doing the after tears the kasi way. Sechaba and I just can't keep our hands off each other.

I didn't even see Nthabi when she left. I'll have to call her and hopefully we can have a proper chat now that everything is over.

"We sleeping out tonight ne?" He asks while kissing my neck

"Yes we are."

"I can't wait to fuck you." Gosh he's such a compound. I hit his hand and act all mad, what kind of a guy says that? I feel so insulted yet turned on at the same time. "You're going to stop acting all childish once I fuck you. You will never threaten to leave me." Why does that turn me on?

A police car stops. Who is trying to ruin our fun now? two police officers get out and walk towards us

"Sechaba Moroka."

"Yeah?" He answers as he takes a sip of his drink

"You need to come to the station with us to answer

some question.”

“What questions?”

“it’s in connection with the murder of Andere de Villiers. We need your statement.”

He kiss me on the cheek. “I’ll be back soon please don’t panic and not a word about this to the family more especially Ou lady .” He kisses me again this time passionately on my lips. “I love you and we’re still going to fuck tonight okay.”

“Are vayeng. I’ll follow right behind you.” He says to the two police officials

I know he told me not to panic but I kept help it. I start panicking as I watch him getting away with them.

“He’ll be back soon you need to trust him. Come sit down and have fun.” Vanessa

I only take a sit because I’m feeling dizzy.

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After the dark clouds

#19

I'm surprised I managed to catch any sleep under the stress all this stress. I check the time and it's just after 6 in the morning. I try his number again and it's still off. Why is it still off? He promised me that he will make it back home, he told me not to worry, he acted all fine like everything is in control and I believed him. I can't stop wondering if he's doing okay and when will I see him again. Did they find some kind of evidence? Why is he not yet back? Its Monday now and he's still not yet back. Is he safe? I've heard gruesome things that takes place in the holding cells what if he was stabbed to death?

I decide to get up and start the day before I run myself into a psychiatric hospital. At least cleaning will keep my mind off things. I brush my teeth and just when I'm about to rinse my face I hear a voice.

The only voice that's capable of doing all things to me. It gets my body hot, it gets my panty wet, it makes me smile, it brings me healing akg maan it does everything but right at this moment it sends my body into a total fit. Is it because I was not expecting to hear it?

"Yeah man I just need a great rest. Partyng for two nights in a row without any sleep." He laughs after saying that.

Two days in a row partyng? What is he on about? I close off the tap. I need to hear this conversation well without any disturbance.

"I have to go now before Vrou kicks me out. What time are you fetching your car from the panel beaters?" I know this voice. That's his friend's voice

" I don't know man. I don't even feel the car anymore.

Let me just bid my goodbye to the aunts. They are leaving for Bots today. Between you and me I really don't want to be here. "

"Nation you do know that you can't ignore her forever right?"

He doesn't answer. I guess he has made his move inside the house. I quickly rinse off my face and open the door. I meet him getting out of the house with the aunts carrying their bags. I'm relieved they are leaving really well not because I didn't like them but I just didn't know how to behave amongst them. In-laws can really judge. you go quite they think you're boring, you talk they say you talk a lot, you eat they say you're finishing their son's money, you clean they say you're trying too hard to impress. So ya at least I can be free now.

"We are leaving rona makoti." The staunch Christian aunt. She's always in a joyful mood and sees the

good in everything. Even when a mosquito makes noise she sees the good to her it's just hungry and trying to feed on our blood. This one I'm going to miss her

"You take care of our sister." The loud aunt

Rich aunt is just standing there holding her bag tight like she's scared someone is going to snatch it. Her nose is stretched like she's trying to inhale different air from the rest of us. She's judging all of us I can just see. I think she doesn't like me

"Okae Obakeng? We need to leave now."

Obakeng is the uncle. That one I don't even want to see

I look at Sechaba and he's avoid any kind of eye

contact with me. We are not fine we are so not fine. Can they live already so that I can find out what is the problem?

I help carry the bags and all the left over goodies to the car. Both aunts hug me and tell me it was lovely meeting me and they hope next time they'll be coming back for our wedding.

“You must pray for him. He cheats you pray, he insults you, you pray, he comes back home drunk you pray. Are you hearing me my child?” the staunch Christian aunt.

The way I love this guy I might just take her advice. I'm going to pray for God to solve whatever tension we are having right now.

They get inside the car and we wave them goodbye. The car leaves and we are left standing. He tries to turn. Is he really serious now?

“Sechaba?” I shout

He stops but doesn't turn to look at me. I can feel him taking a deep breath

“When did you get back from the police?”

“The very same day.” He answers after some time

I'm defeated. I don't know what to say next so he continues walking and leave me just standing there. The way he's acting right now is like he was told someone is bewitching him and that someone is me. Why is Sechaba doing this to me? Worse why am I standing here feeling all guilty and heartbroken like I did something wrong?

I make my way back inside the house and find him saying goodbye to Mme.

“We have to return stuff to their owners. I see there are still pots tsabo mme ba society and a whole lot of stuff.” Mme says to him

“Ya I’ll get everything organized later during the day. I’ll see you a bit later go and get some rest.” He brushes her back and goes out.

I follow him

“Moroka.” I know he loves it when I address him that way yerr but looks like today he doesn’t even it. It’s like I just insulted him

He does exactly what he did outside. Stops but doesn’t turn to look at me

“Must I fix you something to eat?”

“Nxa” He responds and walks away

“Are you not going to see Phodiso? You haven’t seen her in two days.”

Great Madzalení now you have resorted to using the child to fight your battles. How low

“I’ll see her later.”

That comes out more as shut the fuck up

“I got a call from the owner of the crèche she wants to see me.”

He doesn’t respond but shrugs his shoulders

“You heard me?”

“What do you want me to do?”

“I think she wants to discuss the job offer and...”

“Do whatever that you want Madzaleni. Just do whatever you want and don’t get me involved in any of your shit. It’s your life right?” He turns to face me
“You live it anyhow you want right? Why the fuck are you telling me stuff now?”

He is walking towards me angry and shouting. I don’t know why but I’m scared and I start moving backwards

“Sechaba ke eng? What wrong did I do? I’m sorry for everything I did please forgive me for whatever I did.” I plead while walking backwards

“Sorry? You’re sorry? What are you sorry for?”

“I don’t know Sechaba I don’t know but I’m sorry.”

He laughs sarcastically while shaking his head still walking towards me

“What is going on here? What is all this noise? Sechaba?” Mme says coming out of the house almost bumping into me. “Masechaba ke eng? Why are you crying? SECHABA?”

We both don’t answer her. Sechaba is just standing there all angry and I’m crying more now that I see her. there is just something about the questions “What is going on? Are you okay?” they have a way of making you cry more.

“Leya hlola ne? I just buried my daughter I don’t have the strength to deal with this. What is going on?”

“Ke Sechaba Mme. He just started shouting at me and...”

“I don’t have time for this.” He walks away to his friend’s car

“Sechaba yewena Sechaba get back in here.”

Mme shouts but her shouting falls into deaf ears

She leads me inside the house very annoyed. I start feeling so bad for all this unnecessary drama we just caused her. She doesn’t have to deal with this not after what she went through. She tells me that whatever it is we need to fix it. Her tone tells me this is not open for any negotiations. How do I fix something I don’t know I did? I’m desperate to fix things though cos truth is I love him and can’t imagine my life without him.

I get the kids ready for school. I’m tempted to go and

visit Nthabi at the hospital but I can't leave Mme alone and she promised me that she will come over after work. She is back to her normal self and said I need to give him sex that's why he's causing unnecessary fights.

I don't get to think much during the evening cos I spent it with Nthabi. She still doesn't want to come back and I won't push her and at least she's sleeping over tonight. I'm happy we still get to maintain the sisterhood. She's determined to move on with her life and not even once did she mention Thapelo. She's staying at her mother's house which makes me kind of miss my mother. I wonder where I'll go if Sechaba ends things with me yes I know Mme wont kick me out but things will be very awkward. I need to pull my life together I need to have something to fall back on and that means starting with finding a job. The meeting with the crèche owner was not what I had hoped for. She wanted me to come and tutor her kids while cleaning the house I told her I'll

think about it but right now I'm going to take the job and maybe study part time and complete my degree. The salary is not bad at all. I also have so much money saved from the money Sechaba used to give me cos I didn't have anything to do with it. Speaking of Sechaba let me try his number again before I sleep. voicemail like I thought so I decide to go for a text message.

Me: I miss you and love you so much. You'll find me waiting here for you

Sent. Now let me sleep.

My sleep is disturbed by a burning urine. Eish that's why I hate drinking liquids late at night. I drank too much Coke while Nthabi was busy with her fourth street. Let me get up before I wet this bed. I get up with my eyes still half closed and whooo is that? I blink and rub my eyes and yes Sechaba is sitting on the one seater couch with a glass in his hand, it

looks like whiskey inside. His moving his hand around the glass a gun lying on the coffee table

“Sechaba?”

“Finally you’re up. I was just about to wake you up. I’ve been sitting here for hours.” He puts the glass down and takes the gun. “Come and take a seat.” He says with the gun in his hand. Eyes fixed on me.

I feel my thighs and legs wet and realize my feet are swimming in a pool of urine. I’ve wetted myself. I’m shaking like a leaf on a strong windy night

“Take a seat.” He says again with so much authority

I look at the Phodiso sleeping on the bed and look at the door calculating the distance.

“The door is locked. You want to get out? Come and take the keys.” He takes out the keys and waves them. The keys are on his left hand while the gun is on his right “Come and take the keys and we shall see if you will make it to that door.”

I stand still and the remaining drops of urine comes out without any warming. I feel my thighs getting more wet

“Take a seat.”

I walk slowly and sit on the edge of the bed

“No. Come and sit here.” He says pointing at his lap

“I’m wet.” My voice comes out trailing.

“Come and sit here.” He says again hitting his lap with the gun

I move slowly and sit on his lap. If he’s going to shoot me he will find me dead already. I can feel my heart threatening to stop beating.

He moves the gun around my face slowly and slowly making some drawings

“Why are you crying?”

“Mmmmm” Is all I manage to say as I suppress my cries

“Why did you wet yourself?”

“Mmmmmm”

“Did you get your panty wet last week?

Thursday to be specific?”

“Mmmmm”

“Hai maan start talking I’m being nice here and you’re going to start pissing me off now.”

“No.”

“Are you fucken cheating on me Madz?”

“No.”

“Are you sure? Is anybody fucking this?” He asks as he pulls my panty to the sides and starts moving the gun all over vagina. “Huh? Is there somebody fucking you?”

I move uncomfortably and he tightens the grip over my waist with his other hand.

“Sechaba please don’t kill me please just let me go. Please do it for the sake of Phodiso. Please let me go please.”

“Why? You want to go whoring in peace?”

“Sechaba I never cheated on you I promise. I love you.”

He pulls the gun out of my panty and I hear that click sound.

“I’m going to ask you this again Madz and don’t lie to me I hate liars. Are you fucking cheating on me?”

“No. Sechaba no. I love you.”

“What were you doing at the Hans Merensky on Thursday night with my car?”

“Me? I don’t even know that place and I can’t even drive. You know this Sechaba.”

“I hate being played for a fool you know.”

“I’m not playing you.”

His phone rings he looks at it once and puts it away. It rings again and he puts it on loud speaker

“This better be good.” First thing he says

“He’s still working on the footage. Nation I tried man

but it's not easy he said we must give it like a week. But the lady wako reception gave me a name. Matilda is the lady that checked in that room and our lady that was drinking at the bar. Apparently she drinks like a fish and you said Madz can't even finish a bottle of Brutal. She was wearing some skimpy clothes like a real prostitute with some heavy makeup and all. I think we got the wrong info Nation hade cos this Matilda chills around with Nigerians cos a Nigerian male voice was heard in the room. So we thinking she went da on call and those guys came in to finish ngamla yela."

"Get the damn footage and get this Matilda girl. I need her found as in like now."

He throws the phone on the bed and I feel his grip loosening. Phodiso cries and I look at him

"Go and get her."

I walk towards Phodiso anticipating to fall down from a bullet. I take her in my arms and start breastfeeding her. he gets up from the chair and looks at her smiling like he was not holding a gun few minutes back.

She sleeps and I put her down.

“Let’s sleep.” He says as he takes off his Tshirt

The gun is on the table now. I look at it and he can see I’m scared. He takes it unlocks the door and walks out. I quickly lock the door and push the table and any movable thing on the door

He tries to open but he can’t get in. he knocks and I just go quite. My mind is refusing to believe what just happened here. I went through the worst in life but this?

“Mother of the Nation open the door for me.”

“Go away Sechaba go away or else I’m calling Mme.”

“Please Mama.” He begs

I take my phone and call Nthabi. She answers on the fourth attempt

“Sechaba is trying to kill me please help. Please call Mme too.” Just saying those words breaks me. I can’t even finish talking. I go down with the phone still in my hand and cry.

“Mother of the Nation? Mama please open the door.”

His voice gets me crying more and more. Right then I know that it’s over. I’m done with him. tomorrow I’m packing my bags and leaving this place for good.

After the dark clouds

#20

It's a full week now and I'm still nowhere close to recovery. Some will call me dramatic and all but I had a gun pointed straight to my face and my private parts worse with my child sleeping in the very same room. I keep on thinking what would have happened if that phone call didn't come in maybe my child would be an orphan now. I'll never ever forgive him for what he did and worse I don't even know what I really did to him. He accused me of cheating on him but didn't even have any evidence to back up those accusations and now I'm supposed to forgive and forget like that? Never. He tried calling but I block each and every number he uses to contact me but what is killing me is that I still hope he will continue calling me. what is killing me more is that I love him despite everything and it will kill me if he had to give up and move on though I still don't want to be with

him now.

If it was up to me I would be out of here but Mme told me I'm not going anywhere I'm her child and not even Sechaba is going to change that. She kicked him out of the house that night and told him never to set his foot here again.

"I just lost a child Sechaba and now you want to kill my other child? You using a gun in my own house? Votsek. Get out of here and never ever set your foot here again I swear if you come anywhere near her or this house I will kill you with my own bare hands." Those were the words she said that night after they found him trying to break the door to get to me while I was lying on the floor powerless crying. I had to explain why I was crying.

"It was a mistake." He said trying to justify his action. A mistake to point a gun on my private part? That was not a mistake but cruelty.

“Mistake my foot. Get out of my house Sechaba I’m so done with you.” Mme shouted back.

“Abuti you really need to go now.” Nthabi said while sitting on the floor holding me tight inside her arms.

He left after so much protesting and Mme throwing stuff at him. He got inside some car and drove off and it’s been a full week now he hasn’t set his foot here.

That evening I realized that I might mean nothing to him but to Mme and Nthabi I mean so much. They are my family and nothing can ever change that. They showed me loyalty but I keep on wondering how long will it last? Truth is Sechaba is her flesh and blood, he will always have a special place in her heart. She did what she did cos it was just the right thing to do at that time. She owes him loyalty than she owes me. I’m just a total stranger they picked up on the street. I can tell she misses him. She makes

calls behind my back to his friends asking how he is doing and all that. I don't blame her. Sechaba is her boy and of course she is concerned about him. that night it was just anger but now that things have cooled off she misses her boy and I have no doubt she would choose him all over me anytime of the day.

This whole thing just makes me miss my own mother, it makes me wish I had a place called home. That place to run back to when all fails and you're welcomed with love. I miss my mother

Sechaba didn't leave any physical scars in my body that night but he left some scars in my heart that will never go away. See the thing about physical scars is that you can apply stuff like Bio-oil and all this tissue oils and they can be faded away and if you have enough money you can even go to the expensive doctors and they remove them and no one can ever tell if you have ever had them before but scars in the heart

they never go away they always remain there and nobody can even see them I mean to bo Mme what Sechaba did is just something of the past now and they are over it but with me no it will haunt me forever. I can't even go to that room cos I get flashbacks I see myself sitting on that couch on his lap with a gun pointed at me.

I don't know how abused ladies keep on going back and worse even get intimate with the same guy who did all those things to you. I don't see myself allowing the hand that pointed a gun at me touch me and get me wet never but then again I don't judge them cos I still love him with all that I have.

"Hey. Are you not going to work today?" Nthabi interrupts me from my thoughts. She moved in back again after the whole drama saying she wants to make sure I'm fully okay and besides Mme is dealing with her own issues so she just couldn't let her go through everything alone.

I don't answer and she comes and sits next to me. She puts her arm around my shoulders and inhales deeply

"Maybe you should speak to someone professional. Its obvious you're not dealing with this well. At the hospital there are people to speak to." She says with a very concerned look

"No. I'll be fine."

Her phone rings. She looks at it and then looks back at me again. I know it him calling using her number. He has resorted to that now. She tried to beg me to talk to him but she knows I won't.

"Abuti I'll call you back."

"She's still refusing?" Her phone is very loud so I can

hear him

“I have to go Abuti.”

She hangs up and looks at me.

“You know you once told me that he once told you that all men have their shit you just need to pick your shit, mold it and live with it. Well that’s his shit Monethu, he just overreacts and you know in their world this is the only way to solve things. I’m sure he has seen what he did was wrong and he will change. He loves you I’m not saying fix things but maybe you could just hear him out?”

I can’t believe this. so I get up and take my bag. I’m leaving I’m not going to listen to this. I live her sitting right where she is.

“Masechaba?” Mme calls out from her room

The name used to sound so fine but now? it just reminds me of him and I hate it. I make a u-turn and go to her room. She takes out R10 note and gives me.

“Please bring me those Scones you always come back with.”

So there is this lady who sells scones just outside Eden Squire mall. I got them this one time and Mme is such a fan so every day she asks me to come back with them. She doesn't have to remind me though cos she knows I always remember and I never take her money I use my own money to buy for her so this is just her way of opening up a very uncomfortable topic that I'm already dreading.

“I'll get them for you. I have some money so I'll buy for you.”

“Okay. Ngwanake I need to see Sechaba. I wanted to invite him for dinner. We need to discuss some stuff concerning Dimpho and the things she left behind.”

I feel betrayed but like I said I understand that her loyalty lies more with him.

“When?” I ask

“Tomorrow.”

“Okay. Bye Mme. I’m going to be late for work.”

I don’t give her the chance to discuss this issue further. Work ne? I’m dreading that place but honestly it’s the only place that keeps me sane at the moment. As much as the boss lady is so impossible and very toxic but it’s better than staying here and just having my own pity party besides I only

have to deal with her for like some few minutes in the morning and few minutes in the afternoon and the money is good.

I stop the taxi and get off at town. It's a bit of a walking distance to get to the house but I enjoy the walk. When I arrive I find everything as a mess as always dishes everywhere, toys all over the place, clothes on the floor including the boss lady's panties which I have to wash by the way. If I was into witchcraft and staff it was so gonna be easy to do a series number on her.

"Dumelang." I greet papa Ray with my head bowed down. There is just something about him that demands respect. He's this tall well build old man who just smell of money, power, integrity and everything classy. He's working at Phalaborwa mining company famously knowns as PMC. He's got a very high position there while the wife is a teacher at Frans du Touit Hoerskool. He's very nice and

welcoming but the wife is another story. Money ruined her I must say.

“Hey Madzi. How are you smart girl?”

He likes calling me smart girl, beautiful and this other time he called me sweetheart. It makes me feel uncomfortable really.

“I’m good.”

I try to walk past him quickly and he grabs my hand

“Did you fix that cv I asked you? I did speak to the Hr guy at work and he does have an opening for you.”

“Not yet sir.” I say looking down

“Come on. Why not? You’re a smart girl and you don’t deserve to be here. You deserve to be up there.” He says throwing his hand up there

“Why are you still standing here? The kids need to be bathed and eat before the school transport comes to fetch them. Do I pay you to come and have a chat? Akg gosh this girl is so clumsy. Go go go.” She says clapping her hands

I rush to the kid’s room and bath them. Ray is just 7 and in grade 2 while Sara is 3 and in daycare. They go to those expensive schools that’s amount to someone’s pension.

It’s been a week but I adore both of them and probably one of the reasons why I’m still sticking around here besides needing the money and trying not to drown from depression.

Money ne? He still sends it to me I think he's using it to apologize. Thing about him is that he struggles so bad with words so he will throw money in your face to apologize.

Once they leave for school I start cleaning from their bedroom. The bed is not made as always, the bathtub is dirty, clothes are all over the place and when I leave the room is spotless. By the time I'm done I'm tired which is why I like it cos when I get home I'm so drained and just want to sleep.

Before I live I make sure that dinner is cooked, the kids homework's are done and all that.

When I get home I see an unfamiliar car parked outside. It's an orange legend 50 with no number plates. It must be one of the people still visiting Mme to offer their condolences. I always get home just after 6 everyday

I walk straight to the four roomed house. I know I'll find everybody sitting here. I always look forward to

this moment. You know the kids sitting around and of course holding Phodiso. She completes my day.

Just when I enter the living room I see him sitting with everybody. He's holding Phodiso and she's giggling and flirting with him. I feel so betrayed by her. I'm her mother and she's supposed to hate every little thing that messes with her mommy's peace but no not Phodiso, she has this big crush on him and I have a feeling she can choose him over me.

The kids all greet and jump to me they know I always come back with goodies. Boss lady likes giving me stuff but it doesn't come from a good heart. I'm just her charity case nje.

Mme, Nthabi and Miso just remain seated looking all kind of awkward. Miso does understand everything that is happening. She's not a little girl. She begged me not to let her brother come between

us. She says I'm like a mother she never had. I love her

After greeting the kids I go straight to my room and close the door. I find myself missing my mother all over again, I've been feeling like this ever since the whole ordeal with him. I take out my phone hoping I'll have the courage to call her this time but I see I have an sms

Papa Ray: The food was lovely as always. I always look forward to coming back home to eat your food. Goodnight and don't forget to fix that cv.

I delete the sms and throw my phone away. He's too nice and I don't like it. I wish he could just treat me like a normal employee than offering me extra money on the corner and acting all dodgy.

After some few minutes I hear a knock. I don't

respond and the door opens. Its him standing by the door holding Phodiso. He comes in and close the door. I feel like telling him to go away yet at the same time I feel like throwing myself inside his arms. I miss him, I love him and I hate him if that is possible. It is Ne? I'm not crazy?

"Hi."

I turn and face the other direction. Tears involuntarily roll down my cheeks.

"I came to give you the child and this."

I still don't respond. He's holding flowers and a box of chocolate. Since when is he that type? I'm impressed though I won't show it. Girls we can be so stupid at times really.

“Can I please talk to you? I just need five minutes of your time I promise you I’ll never bother you again after tonight please. Five minutes please.”

I need a lifetime not just five minutes.

I get up and he looks shocked. I’m shocked too. I go out and he follows me. The looks we are getting
wow

I try to take Phodiso when we get outside and she cries and clings unto him. okay she really missed him I guess.

“I’m sorry for everything. Can we please fix things? I promise you I’ll never hurt you again. if I try that shit again then you can dump me. Madzaleneni I love you and I feel so incomplete without you.”

He's deep. I love this version of him. The Sechaba I know would have never acted this way.

"Will I even have a chance to dump you? Wont I be dead by then?" I ask

"I'll never kill you. You're my life if you die I stop living so I'll never kill you. I was never going to kill you that night I just wanted you to talk. I couldn't even raise my hand at you."

"Really Sechaba? So that is supposed to make everything okay?"

"No. I love you."

Then I get defeated and then I stop judging all the women who always go back.

“You promise never to do that again?”

“Never I swear on my mother’s grave. I’ll never hurt you again.”

I move closer and throw my hands all over him. He throws his hands all over me too. Phodiso is in between us. This is the shit I have to deal with and I’m going to mold him. I love him

He asks me to take a drive with him just the two of us without Phodiso and I agree. It’s raining. The first rain I’ve ever experienced ever since I arrived at Phalaborwa. Maybe this is a sign for us. We are starting afresh after all. The rain is here to wash everything bad

“You got a new car?” I ask after getting inside

“Yeah.”

“Why? You loved that Jeep.”

“Not anymore. I love you.”

I smile. Funny how I thought I hated him for the past week but now it's like my love for him has tripled. Oh man I respect the sangoma he's using Lol.

“Where are we going? I need to be back and sleep early for work tomorrow.”

“I don't like your job. Do you really have to go work there?”

I give him that look and I see his face changing to I'm sorry. I'm not some good progress here. I'm molding him.

The rain is getting worse now. He stops the car and asks me to come out. We are at the road that leads to the Kruger National Park. It's quite and all but then this is Phalaborwa one of the safest places ever.

"No. Are you crazy?"

What? He's by my door pulling me out. I shouldn't have forgiven him nxa he's getting ahead of himself now. I pull my legs hitting him and all but he's still pulling me out.

"I'll kick your balls Sechaba."

"That will be great cos you will have to suck them up and take the pain away."

I can't fight anymore so I go out. He has made me weak with that response and I can't fight

“Dance with me”

What? Is he crazy? And since when is he the romantic type? Aaah Halleluyah Ngishayeleni Izandla. I'm doing so well with this guy

The music is playing out loud matching the sound of the rain. Those are the only sounds I can hear

For I saw us dancing through sunshine and rain
I saw us laughing through joy and through pain
And I saw us passing but we did not change
And I still saw us together at the end of everyday
I choose you I choose you I choose you....

Who wouldn't dance to this song?

We dance well not your ideal kind of dance with

matching steps and all. No he spins me around, he steps on my toes with his Blue Drip shoes, I step on his toes with my bare feet, He pulls my hand and throws me back to his chest. I laugh, frown and dance to the rhythm again with my hands wrapped up around his neck. He pulls my wet braids from my face and then finally we start kissing right in the rain. Our clothes are soaking wet from the rain. His kiss starts sending some hot tingling sensations all over my body. He stops kissing me and looks deep inside my eyes

“I want you. I want so badly.”

He doesn't give me a chance to respond. He starts kissing me again and leads me to the backseat of the car.

“Baby not here.” My voice comes out as a whisper

“Don’t resist me please.” He says as he takes off my dress

“Not here.”

He kisses me then hold me carries me to the front seat and...(To be continued)

.....

After the dark clouds

#21

I'm so anxious. I keep on dialing the number and hung up before she could answer. I get up from the couch and pace around the living room. I can see Nthabi and Mme are getting agitated now.

"Just make the call will you?" Nthabi says

"You might find here she has always wanted to make contact but scared that maybe you don't want to talk to her. She's your mother and she loves you. I know you guys never had the best relationship but she's your mother and waho rata. Make that call."

Mme

They both get up and leave me alone. I don't know maybe to give me some privacy? Sechaba asked me to make this call about three months back. He's reminding me every day but I keep on telling him I'll do it and I can tell he's getting pissed now and

starting to have some funny ideas that maybe I don't want to take this next big step with him but Lord knows I do it's just that my mother is... I don't know. I wish we didn't have to involve her in everything but Sechaba says her blessing is important and he's not going to walk into court and marry me before our ancestors get introduced and pave a way for us. I don't agree but for the sake of peace I need to.

You see that night when we started kissing at the rain we ended up at a lodge and made love. He made me feel things I never knew existed. Three months later we still at it making love every day I really don't know who is the addict between me or him. He asked me to marry him the following morning.

"Let's get married." He said after midnight when I just felt him thrusting deep inside of me and I joined in. I didn't answer cos I thought it was just the love making driving him crazy. Yes I call it love making cos we do is not fucking or anything like that. Our

souls connect, I become one thing with him, I can feel the passion and after that my love for him grows deeper and deeper.

“I said let’s get married.” He said again when we got up in the morning after a long passionate love making. We were still trying to catch our breath. His arms resting on my breast

“I think it’s too early.”

“Madz a man knows from day one if they want to marry you or not that is why a man can be with you for ten years only to marry a lady he has dated for only three months and dump you. I love you and I know it. In six month’s time or a year I’ll still feel this way and I’ll still ask you the same question. Marry me Madz.”

I never gave him an answer that day but he kept on

asking every day until I finally accepted last week. He wants to send his people to go and pay lobola at home which is why I need to speak with my mother. I take a deep breath and finally call and wait until she answers. She doesn't say anything. A habit she has developed since forever

"Mama. It's me Madzaleni."

Silence..

"Mama?"

"Madzi." She finally says

"Mama I need to see you."

"When?"

“I can come tomorrow if possible.”

“I’m not home. I’m not well Madzi I’ve been in the hospital for close to three weeks now.”

The first thing that reacts in my body is my heart. It beats fast and pain overtakes me and right then I knew she is my mother and despite everything that has happened she will always have a special place in my heart. I can’t bring myself to respond though

“Why do you want to see me Madzi?” She asks like it’s not the right thing to do.

“Mama I’m getting married and he wants to send his family. What is wrong with you? What are you suffering from?”

She doesn’t answer but starts crying. I start getting

emotional too

“You’re getting married? I always knew you will never end up like me. Is he really treating you well? I never thought he will take things this serious.”

Why is she talking like she knows him?

“I know everything that has been happening in your life Madzi. I’m your mother and I do care about you. I always checked up on you from far just to be sure you’re doing fine. I’m happy you’re getting married, you just gave me a reason to fight.”

She coughs and after that the phone goes dead. I try calling and it just rings without any answer. Without thinking twice I run to the room and pack a small bag with clothes to last me for close to a week. I pack for Phodiso too.

When I go out I find Sechaba having a chat with Nthabi and Mme. He's standing while they are sitting on a mat. They all look shocked to see me walking out with a bag and sleeping Phodiso on my back

"It's my mother. I called her and she's not well. The phone went dead before she could tell me what's wrong she said she's at the hospital. I think something is really wrong cos she coughed and now she's not answering the phone so I'm rushing back home." I explain before they could ask anything. I hope I'm making any sense cos I'm overcome by so many emotions. My worst fear is what if she is dead

"Aowa hle Monethu. Let me come with you." Nthabi says getting up from the mat

"Yes please go with her she can't leave alone." Mme

Sechaba is just standing there looking at me

quizzically. His hands buried deep inside his pockets

“No please. I’ll be fine you really don’t have to come with me. I’ll keep you guys updated as soon as I get there.”

“Are you sure?” Nthabi

“Leave Phodiso here. We will look after her I’m sure you going to be doing a whole lot of up and downs there.”

I take her off from my back and hand her to Nthabi. Sechaba comes and takes my bag and leads me to the car

“We will be praying here. Nothing bad shall happen to her and please call us as soon as you get home ngwanake please.” Mme

I get inside the car and we drive off in total silence. He takes my hand and squeezes it. I know what he means. He's telling me he's got my back

"What if she's dead?" I finally say

"Stop thinking the worst."

"I should have called her the time you asked me to. I should have..."

"Stop doing that to yourself please. You're going to relax until we get there if the worst has happened we shall deal with it together. You're not alone." He squeezes my hand again and I feel myself relaxing

"Sechaba I really want to go alone. Can you please drop me off at the rank?"

“Why?”

My phone rings and I look around for it. Where is my phone? Its ringing behind his seat. I guess it fell when he was hugging me when I got inside the car. He glances at it once and throws it up on my lap. He’s angry. I look at the caller ID and it says Papa Ray. I don’t answer until it stops ringing

“Why is that motherfucker still calling you? He says with his eyes fixed on the road but anger flashed all over his face

“I don’t know.”

“What do you mean you don’t know?” He asks as he stops the car by the side of the road.

“What the fuck do you mean when you say you don’t

know? Who is supposed to know then?" the car is parked by the side of the road and he's looking straight in my face.

"Sechaba you promised me that you will never ever raise your voice at me. What is this?" I hit back

"Fuck you." He says looking straight in my face

"You know what fuck you too." I strike back.

"You don't give a damn about me Sechaba. I'm stressed but you have no shame acting like a puppy wet in the rain right now. have I ever given you any reason to doubt me? Have I? That's why I was so reluctant to accept your marriage proposal."

"Cos wa feba akere. Why is he calling you? Didn't I tell you to tell him to stop calling you before I deal

with him?”

He pushes me and takes the phone from my lap and dials. The phone is on loudspeaker

“Baby girl. Were you busy?” Papa Ray answers

“Msunu. I’m going to...”

The phone goes dead before he can finish talking. He takes my phone and throws it across the side of my window and it lands on my thighs.

“Baby girl huh? Baby girl?”

I don’t answer. I open the door and flag a taxi coming luckily it stops

“Where are you going? Get the fuck back in here.”
He’s pulling me by my arm. He doesn’t care that people are watching.

The taxi driver comes out in anger

“Get in the taxi.” He says pointing me to the taxi.
“Wena Nja come and fight me. stop fighting a powerless woman. Come fight me.” He throws a punch at him. he doesn’t return it but walks straight to his car. I know he’s going for his gun or a more powerful weapon. He’s going to kill both of us

“He’s got a gun.” I scream. We both run inside the taxi and he drives off in full speed.

I quit my job two months back cos he was angry with papa Ray sending me messages and calling. I couldn’t take the abuse from mama Ray too it was getting too much. Honestly I did tell papa Ray to

stop calling me and he did so I don't know why today he's calling. I'm the topic in this taxi people are busy asking me stuff and I know most just want gossip it's not like they truly care. "Why did he start beating you? What did you do to make him angry sesi cos a man just doesn't react that way? You must go and do a protection order he will kill you that guy Nation is a total nutcase. That is why that poor doctor left him for a pastor's kid." Everybody is just saying something

My mother always said a man will give you all red flags but we just ignore them. Sechaba did when he pointed me with a gun the first time but I ignored it but after today no I'm done. I'm just going to look after my mother and settle at home again. I'm only coming back to this place to get my daughter and the rest of my stuff.

My phone rings and its papa Ray. His name just triggers more tears

“Hello?”

“Baby girl. I’m so glad you answered. Did he hurt you?”

I don’t answer but just cry

“Where are you?”

“I’m inside the taxi.”

“Which side? Give the driver the phone so that I can give him instructions where to drop you. I’ll pay him all the money he wants. That man of yours is not stable I’m sure he’s following the taxi now and he’s going to shoot all of you.”

I hand the driver the phone so that they can talk.

I try to get up but my whole body feels heavy. I feel like puking, I feel totally insane. What's this smell in here? A hot slap brings me back to my senses and I fully get up now. just as I'm trying to make sense of everything. I see him going to take a seat. He's sitting exactly the same way he was sited that night when he pointed me with a gun and yes the gun is lying on the coffee table only difference is that this room looks more luxurious. This is not his place this looks like a hotel. When did he get me? Where is papa Ray? The last thing I remember is us stopping at the Ranch hotel to have lunch before he could drive me back home. When did Sechaba get here?

"You can really sleep hey? He fucked you into some deep sleep? How was it Madz? Tell me how was it?"

"Sechaba?" I ask frightened

"Come and take a seat. We have so much to talk about." He says pointing at his lap

I recall that accident and I run to the door forgetting his got a gun. I try to open the door but its locked. I turn back to face him crying

“Sechaba you need to let me go.”

“Votsek Sfebe. I thought you were different but you’re just like the rest of them. You’re nothing but a cheap whore. All this time you were lying pretending like you love me cos you just wanted me to make you an expensive whore. Now that you have attracted some moron you’re leaving me. tell me Madz? Was your mother ever sick? Or was that your stunt to leave so that you can go out and spend time with your moron?” He’s walking towards me. slow steps but he will surely reach me. I have nowhere to run so I’m just leaning by the door praying it can break and I run

“Is that why you didn’t want any of us to go home with you cos you had it all planned? You’re a whore Madz a fucken cheap whore.”

He’s closer so I scream and bang on the door but then he grabs my neck and strangle me. he puts the gun on my head

“You try that again I’ll shoot you I promise you I’ll do it. I have nothing to lose. You took everything I mean everything I had in me. Was my love never enough?”

He loosens the grip on my neck and I start coughing massaging my neck.

“Come.” He says as he leads me to the couch and makes me sit on his lap

“Why did you cheat on me with him? I just need to

know. How was the sex? Was he rough was he soft.”

“Sechaba I’ve never cheated on you and I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

A slap a very hard slap lands across my face and sends me straight to the floor. I see complete darkness with all the stars shining bright. He gets up and put his drip shoe over my neck and press and press and press until I feel like the air is leaving my body. He jumps up and down on my chest like Zion Christian men dancing the Mokhokho dance. I feel my ribs cracking and wish I could die cos the pain is unbearable but a picture of Phodiso flashes right in front of me and I hold on.

“Phodiso please think of her.” I manage to say

He gets down and sits on my broken chest. He takes out a phone and plays a video

“Where you thinking of her when you did this shit?”

The video is suddenly enough to bring me back to life. It’s like a major operation was performed on me cos I don’t feel any pain as I gasp

looking at the video. No this is not me

“Why did you play with my feelings?”

“I don’t know what game whoever sent you that video is playing but that is not me. I could never dress that way and I don’t even wear any makeup worse I don’t drink and smoke. When was this taken? This looks to be very late at night and I was never with papa Ray that time. I only saw him during the day when we had lunch.”

He plays another video and this time is inside my room at his place. its inside the wardrobe. Some skimpy outfits, makeup, cigarettes, Gordons,

stashed at some corner,

What kind of madness is this? I opened that wardrobe every day. I'm a neat freak and I've never seen those stuff so what the hell is that? They are not mine that I know for sure.

"Who the fuck are you?"

"I don't know who planted this stuff you could have as well. You need to let me go Sechaba I'm sure papa Ray has realized that I'm missing and he called the cops."

"Fuck you. Get up now."

I struggle to get and he tells me one wrong move he won't hesitate to shoot me. We get out through the sliding door and I limp my way up to the car.

Only then I realize we are at The Ranch hotel. I thought we were at Phalaborwa. Where is papa Ray? I last saw him here. we don't say anything to each other. We stop at Magoebaskloof mountains right there at the curves full of trees and all. The place always gave me creeps even when we were passing through the day. That road is right up on the hill that kind of the road that requires you to wear a seatbelt cos if not you can hit stuff inside the car. if you have travel sickness then that's not the road for you. For some they lose hearing up until the drive on that deadly road is over. I call it deadly cos it has taken so many lives. During winter it gets so misty that you will struggle to see the road ahead. There is a parking space just by the side of the road and some people stop for pics but nna I'll never cos it gives me some creeps. I feel like something will grab me and push me right inside those long trees.

He opens the door and pushes me out

“I’m going to ask you this one more time. Why did you cheat on me with him? Why did you fuck him?”

“I didn’t cheat...”

He doesn’t wait for me to finish. He throws the phone on my face

“When you’re ready to talk call me and oh your lover can’t save you cos he is dead pity he died right after fucking you.”

He gets inside the car and drives off. I scream his name and try to move but the pain sends me straight to the ground again. it’s dark very dark. The phone has no signal. The only thing useful I can see is the time. Its 12:30 am and the day is Friday the 13th. When I left Phalaborwa it was the 12th.

I hear some sounds and start praying. Promising God that if I make it out of here alive and unharmed I'll take Phodiso and we live the rest of our lives as Nuns. We will praise him day in and day out.

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*****THE END*****

See you soon!