

Diary ka Soso

Season 1

Introduction

"I want to marry my first love because I want to be with someone who knows me very well. I want to be with someone who understands what it means when I cringe or flinch. I want someone who has memorised me. Someone I've been through everything with. Someone I love with every inch of my heart."

That's what the naive me used to say. I didn't see myself with anyone else but my first love, Alex Meje. The love I had for that guy was different. Some people might call it "pure", because I loved him wholeheartedly without knowing of heartache. I loved him purely, innocently and naively. After all, he's the one who taught me everything about love...well, up

until he showed me what heartbreak is when he chose to break my heart into a million pieces.

My name is Someleze Ndlovu but my friends call me Soso. I'm 21 years old and I'm originally from Zwide, Port Elizabeth but I'm currently based in Alice, doing my third year at the University of Fort Hare. I could have studied at NMU but I chose to come here because I was following Alex. See, I met Alex when I was still doing grade 12. It was during the March 10-day school break, I was at Spur in Summerstrand with my friends when he and his friends came to sit at a table next to ours. He was busy chatting up a storm with his uptown friends, more like f-boys, not paying any attention to us. But my eye just didn't want to leave him. Gosh he was so attractive and so handsome. He was light-skinned and clean shaven. His hair was also given a clean cut. I kept stealing glances at him even though he wasn't even paying

attention to me. Oh my God his pink lips were so appetising. Not to mention his killer smile that would make my stomach plunge every time he let it out. But the fact that I was so aware of him, of every little thing about him, was unsettling. It was definitely a new experience for me. A new experience that I didn't know how to handle. I had never met a guy who made me feel this way before. In fact, I had never allowed myself to feel anything for a guy. I had never allowed any guy to come close. I was 18, but I'd never had a boyfriend before. My friends were dating, but no, not me. Why? Well, my mom had me when she was only 17 years old and the man that had made her pregnant, I won't even call him my father, wanted her to abort me. But when she refused, he dumped her and she never saw him again after that. She was doing grade 12 but she had to quit school and take care of me. Things weren't easy but her mother (my grandmother) who was also a single parent,

working as a staff nurse, tried to provide for all of us - that's me, my mom and her brother. My mom only managed to go back to school and finish her matric when I was 5. After that she started doing odd jobs so she could help granny put food on my plate and clothes on my back. We were surviving, but when I was 10 things got more difficult because that's when my grandmother passed away. And that meant my mom now had to raise me all by herself. She had dreams but because she had to provide for me she had to put them on hold for a while. She only managed to go to university when I was 15, doing distance learning through UNISA because she couldn't quit her job as a receptionist at a certain law firm in town. I knew just how much she was trying her best to be the best mother and to provide for me, so I didn't want to repeat her mistake by having a boyfriend and end up falling pregnant as a teen thereby adding to her responsibilities. I just wanted to focus on my

books and make her proud.

But when I saw Alex I threw all that caution out the window. I just had to talk to him, I wanted him. So when they got up to leave, I also got up and intentionally bumped into him but made it look like it was an accident. Stupid I know, but I wanted him to notice me. And he did. After apologising, we talked a little and exchanged numbers. The following day he called me and came to see me in my hood, driving a red VW GTi. To cut the story short, by the end of that week we were already dating, even though we were so different. I was 18, he was 21. I was still in high school, he was already in varsity doing his third year in Computer Science at the University of Fort Hare. We were from two completely different backgrounds. I was from a poor family in the township whereas he was from a wealthy family in the burbs - in Summerstrand. I knew all about poverty, he on

the other hand was a spoiled guy born with a silver spoon in his mouth. But all that didn't mean anything to me, I loved him. The following year I followed him to Fort Hare. When I was doing my first year he was doing his Honours degree. He loved Fort Hare so much that he didn't want to go study anywhere else. After the Honours year he went ahead and did his Master's degree. And in all the years our relationship was good, great actually. Well, up until he showed me another side of him, 3 years and 3 months into our relationship. The guy treated me like trash. But you know what they say: one man's trash is another man's treasure.

Hi. My name is Soso and this is my story.

Please share and invite your friends to like the page. Please, guys help a girl out. I'm new to this writing thing.

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"I never knew love would hurt this bad. The worst pain that I ever had." - Trey Songz

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"That's it for today. And don't forget, I need your assignments in by next week Monday."

That's our new lecturer, Doctor ummmh...what did he say his name was again? Ugh! I don't remember, I wasn't really listening. In fact, I hardly heard anything he said in the entire 45-minute lecture. All that's been stuck in my mind is Alex. Alex has been distant lately. We no longer spend much time together. Even when we're together he's never there, he'd be with me physically but emotionally he'd be somewhere else. If I could say I know what's going on I'd be lying. And asking him doesn't get me answers either because every time I ask he just gets annoyed and tell me that I'm imagining things.

Today is Monday and we were supposed to spend the past weekend together but on Friday he told me that he was going away, visiting his sick uncle in Grahamstown. As the supportive girlfriend that I am I understood. But getting him on the phone the entire weekend has been a hassle, his phone would ring unanswered and even when he answered our conversations would be short and cold. That hurt me, I don't want to lie. But I believed him when he said it's because he was busy over there. Then last night, knowing that he's back I called him, wanting to see him, but he told me he couldn't see me because he wasn't feeling okay, that he had a terrible headache. I said okay and hung up but deep down I couldn't shake the feeling that he was lying. My sixth sense is telling me that he's cheating on me but I just don't want to accept it, I don't want to believe it.

I've been sending him WhatsApp messages

since morning asking how he's now feeling, but he hasn't replied to any of those messages. They've been delivered but the ticks show that he hasn't opened them yet. That's a little comfort to me because at least I feel like he's not ignoring me, maybe he's busy or still sleeping since he said he wasn't feeling okay last night.

The lecture is over so I take my bag and hurry to the exit. I really need to see Alex, I need to talk to him. I've been wanting to see him since morning but because I had two morning lectures and a Microbiology assignment to finish up and submit before the Biochemistry class, I became too busy to go see him. But now that I have just stepped out of my last lecture, I have time to go see him and find out what's going on. If I had airtime I would be calling him because calling him via WhatsApp won't do, but I have 0.00 airtime balance. So the

only way is to go straight to his room at res.

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But as I walk out the class and down the short passage, my friend, Thuso, calls me. I stop and turn to her. Honestly, I had forgotten about her. All I want is to get to Alex.

-Thuso: "Haybo, girlfriend, I've been calling your name. Why are you leaving me behind?"

Thuso has been my best friend since the first year. We're both doing the same degree, B.Sc, and we're majoring in the same courses - we're triple majors. The girl's so different from me because she's out there, she's outgoing, loud and a party freak but I love her anyway.

-Me: "Sorry, chomi, I didn't hear you. I'm in kind of a hurry, I'm on my way to see Alex."

We make our way to the elevator together.

-Her: "Alex, yah nhe. But chomi, when are you gonna open your eyes and see that this guy is cheating on you?"

-Me: "Do you have any proof that he's cheating on me?"

-Her: "I don't need proof. The signs are there but you're choosing to ignore them. Chomi, but why are you doing this to yourself?"

-Me: (pressing the elevator button) "Please not this again, Thuso. Please."

-Her: "Okay, I'm done sounding like a broken record. I won't say anything anymore...Anyway, have you noticed how hot Doctor December is? That man is flames, chomi, I tell you."

-Me: "Doctor December? Who's that?"

-Her: (rolling eyes) "Our new lecturer, duh."

-Me: "Oh, his name is December. And he's hot, you say? I'd be lying if I said I've noticed that. I

just miss our old professor."

Our old professor went to retirement just after we finished writing our June exams. And now that he's gone this new guy has come to fill the vacancy. This is the second week since the second semester began but this was our first lecture with this new guy, last week he wasn't here so we had no classes for this course. He's new but I can tell you this: I already don't like him. He hasn't done anything wrong shem, in fact I haven't even had time to listen to him or to check him out, it's just that I miss our old professor and I hate that this guy has replaced him.

-Thuso: "You miss that old man? Girl, you can't be serious. December is flames, I wish all our courses could be taught by him. I wouldn't mind listening to his sexy voice all day and everyday."

-Me: "You're crazy, you know that? And I know you, Thuso, you'll soon be throwing yourself at

him. But please don't do that. The guy's too old. You're only 21 for goodness sake."

-Her: "Old? Have you looked at that guy, S? He's not that old. And, oh my God, he's so handsome."

-Me: "Whatever...This elevator must be broken or something, it's not coming up. Let's take the stairs down."

-Her: "You take the stairs, I'm not going. I want to see Doctor December first so I'm going to his office right now."

-Me: "Have you even been listening to me? Stay away from that man. He's our lecturer for goodness sake."

-Her: (laughing) "Relax. I'm just gonna ask him to clarify some things for me regarding the assignment."

Clarify some things? Yeah right. I know Thuso, if she wants a man she makes sure that she

gets him. And it doesn't matter how old he is, as long as he's hot. It's not that she likes to be 'blessed', no, she doesn't care about the money because she's from a rich family in Mpumalanga. It's just that she can't resist good-looking men. And she doesn't have a problem jumping from one man to the next.

I just leave her there and walk away. I don't mind taking the stairs, it's the second floor anyway.

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But before making my way to Alex's room I need to go check him at his department. He works from there everyday, from morning till after hours. Yeah, he's serious like that about his Master's thesis.

So I make my way to his department but they tell me that he hasn't come in today. Oh my

poor baby, now I'm sure he's still not feeling okay. He's probably sleeping in his room by now. So I pass by the student centre and buy him some pain tablets then make my way to his room. I get there and knock but nobody answers. I peek through the keyhole and there's no key. Okay, maybe he's in the bathroom or somewhere nearby. And I'm going to wait for him inside. So I take my bag off my shoulder and look for the key inside. Yes, I have a key to his room. I stick it in the hole and turn it. The lock opens and I turn the handle and push the door open.

OH MY GOD, WHAT?!!!! What am I seeing before my eyes? Alex in bed, banging another woman. Oh my God, no! I can't believe this. Is this what he's been doing behind my back? Is this why he's been so distant lately? This is why he's been ignoring me. Was he even in Grahamstown this past weekend? Was his

uncle even sick? Jeez! I've been a fool. He's really cheating on me, he's cheating on me. Thuso was right, signs were there but I didn't want to see them. And I was also not expecting to see what I'm seeing now. What is Alex doing to me? Why?

I stand by the door, stunned, as the bag that I've been carrying slips right off my grip and falls on the floor. Hearing the door open and my bag falling, Alex stops what he's doing and turns to look at me. I can see it in his eyes that he's shocked to see me here.

-Him: "Soso? What are you doing here?"

Is he really expecting me to answer that? Really? I can't answer him even if I wanted to. I can't even shout. I'm too shocked to say anything. I just turn around and run out of there, leaving my bag behind. I run all the way down the stairs to the ground floor and out the exit. Gosh, what just happened? What did I just see in there? I'm

not feeling myself and I can't fight back the tears running down my cheeks. It hurts. It hurts so bad. I've never been this hurt in my entire life. I feel like a dagger just went through my heart. And I can't stop crying and running. Where am I even going though? I don't have a room in campus, I never got one from the very first year. I'm renting a backyard flat in town, well it's Alex who has been renting the room for me. I can't go all the way there now, not when I'm like this. So I go straight to Thuso's room, hoping that she's already there. And thank God, I find her in.

-Her: (seeing my tears) "And then? Why is the Tyhume River overflowing?"

Tyhume. That's the local river. And Thuso thinks this is funny. Fuck, she's annoying the hell out me. Can't she be serious even for a second?

-Me: (throwing myself on her bed) "This is not funny, Thuso."

-Her: "What happened? It's Alex isn't it?"

I tell her everything.

-Her: "I hate to say it, chomi, but I told you. I told you that the jerk's cheating on you and that you should walk away. If you had listened to me you wouldn't have seen what you've just seen."

Seriously? Does she have to be like this at a time like this? This ain't no time for 'I told you so'.

-Me: (angry) "Thuso, please, stop with that. Not now. Not now."

-Her: "Okay, that was insensitive of me. I'm sorry. I'm really sorry, chomam. But it's gonna be okay. You better believe that. Okay? The only fool here is Alex, not you. He's gonna regret doing this to you, mark my words. Karma's a bitch."

She hugs me. And I keep crying on her shoulder. Lord, what did I do to deserve this? Why would Alex do this to me? I loved...no I love him so

much. I love him. Was I no longer enough for him? Was I no longer good enough? Then why didn't he just tell me?

I can't stop crying. And the more I cry, the more I hurt. Thuso is not saying anything, she just keeps brushing my back, comforting me. But eventually she speaks.

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-Thuso: "Okay, chomi this is enough. You've cried enough and it's time to wipe those tears now. It's 13:45 and we have a practical session at 2. So we need to get going."

-Me: "I'm not going. I just want to sleep."

Seriously I don't feel like going anywhere or speaking to anyone. Let alone being in a lab with the other students. But Thuso isn't about to let me have this. She pushes me back and looks me straight in the eye with a serious face.

-Thuso: "Oh hell no, Soso, you're not doing this. You're not gonna feed stress by burying yourself under these covers. You're not gonna let that dog, Alex, win. You're gonna go clean your face up, put my make-up on and walk out of this room with your head held high. Do you hear me?"

I nod.

-Her: "No, say it. You're not gonna fall apart. Say it."

-Me: "I'm not gonna fall apart."

-Her: "Louder."

-Me: (laughing now) "I'm not gonna fall apart."

-Her: "There you go, girl. You never missed a class or a practical session before and you ain't about to start now. Especially not because of Alex. We came to Alice to slay, babe...academically. So we ain't gonna let no jerk fuck that up. We ain't letting no guy disrupt

our academic excellence. Okay?"

-Me: "You're right, chomi. You're right."

I get up and go to the bathroom to clean up my face. I come back and Thuso does my make up then we leave for class even though I don't have my books with me or even my lab coat.

Everything is in the bag I left on the floor of Alex's room. But it's cool, Thuso gives me a new book to write on and I'll share a text book with her when necessary. So we go. I'm still not feeling okay but I have no choice but to go to this practical session.

When we get to the lab we find the other students already there. And just after we've sat down, Dr. December walks in.

-Thuso: (whispering) "Look at him, look at him, chomi. He's hot, agree with me."

I look at him, noticing his features for the very first time. Yeah, Thuso was right, this guy's not

old. He's tall with a lean muscular frame and broad shoulders. I suppose he's attractive in a hard athletic sort of way. And I have to admit, he looks good in that short-sleeved black shirt that matches his pants. He's light-skinned and clean-shaven, although I doubt he would ever be able to erase that dark shadow on his jawline. His haircut is a little long for my liking. But he evidently ticks all the right boxes as far as Thuso is concerned.

And then he starts speaking. Mhh his voice is deep and dark. I just can't deny it's sexual appeal. He looks like a real gentleman. But I quickly swallow my words when he looks straight at me, speaking to me.

-Him: "Miss, what's your name?"

-Me: "It's Ndlovu, sir. Someleze Ndlovu."

-Him: "Miss Ndlovu, why aren't you wearing a lab coat? You can't be in my lab without a lab

coat so please go get it. Now."

-Me: "I'm sorry, sir. And I can't go get it, I'm not staying around campus, I'm staying in town."

Hell, there's no way I'm going to Alex's room to get my bag. Not today.

-Him: "Then you can't be here."

-Me: "Sir, I'm sorry, it won't happen again."

-Him: "Miss, please leave my lab this second."

Jeez! Does he really have to be this harsh? What is he even doing here? I mean the lab assistants are here for conducting the practical session, he didn't need to be here. I quickly get up and walk out, leaving Thuso behind. This man is really making me so angry right now. Does he really have to be this strict? I really don't need this, not now, not when I'm already this hurt. Immediately when I get outside I just let my floodgates open. Dammit, I'm angry! I'm so fucking mad. I'm mad at this Doctor fucking

December. I'm mad at Alex. I'm mad at everyone and everything. Can this day possibly get any more worse?

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About five minutes later I'm still standing outside the lab crying. Then I hear that deep voice behind me.

"Miss Ndlovu."

I know that it's Doctor December. I quickly wipe my tears then turn to look at him.

-Me: "Sir?"

-Him: "Have you been crying?"

No, I've been laughing. Duh, ain't it obvious? I just shake my head no.

-Him: "Come with me."

He leads the way and I follow him to his office.

We enter and he shows me a chair to sit before he goes round the desk to sit down on his chair.

-Him: "You said you're staying in town?"

-Me: "Yes, sir."

-Him: "When you left your flat this morning coming to campus you knew that you have a practical session this afternoon and that you're gonna need a lab coat, right?"

-Me: "Yes, sir, I did. I'm sorry, it's just that I..."

-Him: (cutting me off) "Please don't give me excuses. Listen, Miss Ndlovu. I like order. Order and discipline. If you ain't disciplined you're ain't gonna last long in my class. You get that?"

Hello! Where are we? High school? I know what's expected of me and I know that I'm responsible for my own education. I just said I was sorry and that it won't happen again. So what's with the lecture?

-Me: "I'm sorry, sir. It won't happen again."

-Him: "Damn right it won't. Now go back to the lab and do your experiments."

-Me: "Oh, thank you, sir."

I get up and hurry to the door before he changes his mind. But before I walk out he stops me.

-Him: "You said you're staying in town. Where exactly in town?"

-Me: "Odendaal Street, sir. Entla kwe stishi (north of the train station)."

-Him: "Uh, we're in the same area. I'm renting a house in Stock Street."

-Me: "Is it?"

-Him: "Yeah. So come to me after the practical session, I'll give you a lift home."

Okay, but ain't that a little inappropriate?

-Me: "Thanks, Doc. But I'll be fine. I'm not gonna be needing a..."

-Him: (cutting me off) "When a person offers to do something nice for you, Miss Ndlovu, don't question it, just be appreciative. You'll leave the lab at 5 o'clock and it's winter, it gets dark pretty early. You won't be safe on foot. So just do as I say."

-Me: (embarrassed now) "Thank you, sir. I'll be here after the practical."

And with that I quickly walk out of his office and back to the lab.

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"My heart is hoping you'll walk right in tonight and tell me there are things that you regret.

'Cause if I'm being honest I ain't over you yet." -

Niall Horan

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As my bestfriend, Thuso has always cared and worried for me, but never as much as she does now, and I understand why. This is my first heartbreak by a guy, she on the other hand has had her fair share of heartbreaks in the past. Which is why she now no longer gives her heart to a man, any man. She shuns love, she says it's overrated, even uses the word “romantic” as a sign of disapproval. However, she still can't resist hot men and she can't stay away from d*ck. So instead of a boyfriend she has fuck buddies.

Seeing how invested I was in my relationship with Alex, she'd always tell me to be careful, saying opening up your heart to love is always a recipe for heartbreak. But how can one ever be careful and be on guard when it comes to love? I loved Alex and I couldn't tone down my love

for him. I loved him with everything that I am, and I couldn't act as if I didn't see a future with him. Call me stupid, but the honest truth is I still love him and I still want him in my life. Which is why him not reaching out to me to apologise after I've caught him red-handed with another woman hurts me more than finding out that he's been cheating on me.

As we walked out of the lab after the practical session, which, to me, seemed like it dragged forever, Thuso had her arm around the back of my neck. Then with a warm smile she asked me to not go back to my flat in town but to spend the night in her room. I understand that she did that out of worry and she didn't want me to be alone, but the truth is, being alone is exactly what I wanted, what I needed. Plus, I had already agreed to catch a lift home with Dr. December. I told Thuso about that thinking she'd be disappointed but to my surprise she

smiled in excitement. My crazy friend was actually seeing this as an opportunity. Jovially, she asked me to use the opportunity to suss December out and get her anything and everything she could use to seduce him because apparently when she tried in his office earlier he couldn't read the signs. Yeah, Thuso is crazy like that and she knows no shame. I just laughed and walked away from her to Dr. December's office. I found his office door open and him sitting behind the desk with his chair and himself facing to the side. Standing by the door, I opened my mouth to tell him that I had come as he had asked me to, but he quickly put up a finger, stopping me. Clearly he had seen me out of the corner of his eye. He then swung his chair around to face me, and it was only then that I realised that he was actually on the phone.

-Him: (into phone) "Okay, baby, I'll see you both

on Friday...Of course, of course, you don't even need to ask."

He had this big goofy smile on his face as he spoke. Of course the guy has someone in his life, probably married, I thought to myself. My eye quickly went to his ring finger. There was no ring but a line that showed that a ring used to be there. This guy is really married, I was now assured. Thuso sure as hell doesn't stand a chance with him, he's already taken, I said to myself. I know that even though she doesn't have a problem opening her legs, she doesn't do married men.

-December: (into phone) "Okay, baby. Love you."

He hung up then looked at me.

-Him: "Oh, you're already here."

-Me: "Yes, Doc. Are you ready to go or should I wait for you?"

-Him: "Just take a sit for a minute. There's an

email I wanna send before I leave."

I sat on the chair and let my eyes wander around his office as he was busy on his computer. The office was clean and organised, unlike when it was used by our old professor. That's something admirable, I had to admit. Then my eyes landed on two photos on his desk. Both were of a cute little girl, maybe 8 or 9 years old. That must be his daughter, and it's the wife and the daughter that he's going to see on Friday, I thought to myself.

He finished sending the email then he got his bag and we walked out. Even though I was a bit reluctant at first, I now had to admit, Doc really came through for me by offering to give me this ride home. Usually, when I finish up late in campus Alex would drive me to my place or I'd spend the night in his room at res, depending on the day. But now that we're no longer on the same page I was going to have to walk to town,

but December had just saved me the walk.

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The drive in his spotless, charcoal Mercedes Benz AMG was kind of awkward at first. I mean I don't know this guy, plus he's my lecturer, so what was I to say to him? What could we possibly talk about?

But as we were driving out of the campus main gate he broke the silence by asking me to take a CD wallet out of the glove compartment then look for Beyonce's Lemonade CD and put it on. Okay, he likes Beyonce's music. Me on the other hand I like Beyonce the person. Her music? Not so much. And, I must say, I got surprised to know that there are people who still use CDs, but I guess as long as they are still in the market people will continue to buy them. Yoh, I wouldn't even know what to do with a CD, I don't

have anything that plays a disc. Anyway, I got the Beyonce CD and put it on. But I couldn't stop flipping through the CD wallet, wanting to see more of his taste in music. It was mostly Hip Hop and R&B until a pirated CD of Søren Bebe sprung up.

-Me: "Søren Bebe? You have his CD?"

-Him: "You know him?"

-Me: "The Danish guy that's one of the leading pianists and composers in the European scene of jazz and contemporary music? Of course I know of him."

-Him: (smiling) "You do. No kidding."

-Me: "Andithi since 5 years ago which is the year I started doing professional ballet, he's been releasing albums with music for ballet and contemporary dance classes. Well, that's how I got to know of him and started following his YouTube channel. Back home I was doing ballet

and we were mostly using this guy's music in our classes. Actually, it's my childhood friend, Amanda, who pushed me to sign up for the classes at this ballet school in town. And her parents started paying for the classes up until I left and came here."

I was now babbling. I guess I was finally free to talk because at least we now had something to talk about.

-Him: "Oh, you were a ballet dancer? My 9 year old daughter is also a ballerina. I actually took that CD from her. The guy's music helps me sleep and I also use it when I meditate."

Oh, that was really his daughter that I just saw in those pictures.

-Me: "Oh, you have a daughter. That's nice."

But from the look of it, he didn't want to dwell much on the subject. He quickly changed it.

-Him: "You said back home. Where's home?"

-Me: "P.E. But after high school I chose to come here."

-Him: "You just had to choose a small town. Why though? Ugh, don't answer me. I'm also here, aren't I? All the way from Jo'burg."

-Me: "You're from Jo'burg? And why did you come here? Tired of big cities?"

-Him: "A friend of mine got me this job. First job as a lecturer. And it's the only one I could get."

-Me: "First job as a lecturer? What were you doing before you came here?"

-Him: "I was a medical doctor, actually. A surgeon."

-Me: "What? From being a surgeon to being a full-time lecturer? I don't get it."

He kept quiet. I could swear I saw a wave of pain washing over his face. And when he eventually spoke I could hear that pain in his

voice too.

-Him: "I can't kill anyone as a lecturer."

-Me: "What do you mean?"

-Him: "Okay, it's time to change the subject."

Oops! What was I thinking interrogating him like that? Just because he became nice and offered me a ride home doesn't mean he's now my friend, he's still my lecturer.

-Me: "Ummh...I'm sorry, Doc. I shouldn't have overstepped my bounds."

-Him: "It's okay... I need to pass by Debonairs for some pizza. You don't mind, do you?"

He asked not even looking at me.

-Me: "No. Of course not."

I was now shrinking on my chair, feeling bad and embarrassed by mouth. Jeez!

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He pulled up at Caltex garage, where Debonairs is, then got his wallet out of the car's centre console storage.

-Him: "Don't you want to get anything?"

-Me: (with an awkward smile) "No, no, I'm fine."

-Him: "You sure? Not even at Fresh Stop?"

-Me: "Yes, it's okay, Doc. I'm good."

I really didn't want to buy anything. But even if I did, I didn't have any money. The second semester's money from my sponsor hasn't come through yet. And the one I got from my mother when I left home the weekend before last is now gone. I had to do my hair and buy some groceries. A girl's gotta look good and eat too.

Taking his debit card out of the wallet, Doc just nodded then got out of the car, leaving the

wallet on the seat. Being curious is part of being human. I just couldn't resist opening that wallet. The first thing I saw inside were two passport size photos of his daughter, the one I'd just seen in the photos in his office. Ncooh, he really loves his daughter, I said to myself. But where's her mother? I pulled the photos out and under them I found a photo of a very pretty light-skinned woman. This must be the wife, I said under my breath.

"My poor friend is going to be so disappointed."

I found myself saying that out loud. Next, I took out his ID card. And apart from seeing that his first name is actually Thando, I also saw his date of birth and realised that he's 31 years old. Yes, he's not that old but he's still way too old for Thuso. Ten years older, to be exact. But, knowing her, she was going to ignore that. The only problem is that this guy is married, or at least I think he is.

I had done enough snooping around for one day. So I quickly put everything back inside then put the wallet back on the seat. I was about to recline my chair and relax when a painful reminder crept up to my head, reminding me that this was not the car that I'm used to, that it was not Alex's car and I couldn't just do whatever I liked in it. Alex? Just thinking about him was enough to make me die a little inside. And soon I found tears trickling down my cheeks. What broke my heart more was the fact that he still hadn't called me. I thought by now he'd be bombarding my phone with calls and texts apologising. But clearly I was too hopeful. The way I love him, if he could just call or come to my flat and tell me that he regrets what he did and that he's sorry I would not think twice about forgiving him. That's all I need from him. Seeing Doc coming back, I quickly wiped my tears off and pulled myself together. He was

carrying two large pizza boxes and two 2l bottles of Coke which he put in the back seat before getting in behind the wheel.

-Him: "I got you what I got for myself. I hope you like Cram-decker."

Ncooh, he's nice, I said in my heart. Really, I wasn't expecting him to get me anything.

-Me: "Oh, that's what you got for me? It's actually my favourite. Thank you, Doc. Thank you so much."

If there's one line I hate the most has got to be "Thanks, but you didn't have to." If the person has already made an effort to do something nice for you the least you can do is give them a sincere thanks and end it there, no need to make them feel like their effort is unappreciated.

So I thanked Doc with a smile on my face even though I doubted that I'd be eating any of that pizza. I was too stressed to eat anything. That's

me, when I'm stressed I lose appetite.

He nodded with a smile then drove up to our residential area while talking about the course he's teaching. Before he went to drop me off at home though, he passed by his house, well the house he's renting, just to show it to me. And I realised that on foot it's only about 5 minutes away from where I'm staying. Very close. He didn't get out of the car or even stop, he just pointed at the house then drove past and made a turn into my street. I showed him my landlord's house and he went to drop me off at the gate. I thanked him once again then got out with the things he'd bought for me.

-Him: "You have yourself a nice evening. See you in the morning. I'm gonna give you a lift to campus."

Really? He's going to drive me to and from campus everyday now? I asked myself, but I didn't dare ask him. I just smiled awkwardly

then walked away. I must say, I find Doc mysterious. I don't even know why but as far as I'm concerned he's a jigsaw puzzle that I need to solve.

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Please don't forget to like, comment and to mention your friends.

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Someleze

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Happy and worry-free, that's how everyone around me looked. It was now Friday just after 16:00 and I was sitting outside the Chemistry building after our practical session waiting for Thuso. When we were walking out of the lab she'd asked me to go wait outside in the sun

while she went to discuss her assignment mark with our Chemistry professor. I must say, the weak July sun felt good on my skin but what didn't feel so good was watching other campus students looking all happy around me. They were going up and down, some laughing, others smiling, generally looking happy. Oh God, how I envied them. Happiness had deserted me ever since Alex dropped me like a dirty rag. As I sat there I remembered what had transpired between me and him on Tuesday when I went to get my bag from his room.

I had to go get my bag early in the morning because it had my books, iPad and my labcoat and I couldn't go to class without those. But if I'm being frank I went there largely because I wanted to see Alex himself, hoping that we'd get to talk. With that hope I made my way to his room, and by 7:45 I was knocking on his door. He came to open already dressed to go out, to

his department I assumed.

"Someleze, what are you doing in my space this early?"

He asked looking me straight in the eye. As harsh as his words sounded, not a trace of feeling grazed his face. No anger. Not even the slightest irritation. And I couldn't tell which hurt me the most: the sharpness of his words or the blankness on his face. It's like he didn't care. He wasn't the Alex I used to know, and he was treating me like he didn't know me either. It was at that moment that a sinking feeling gripped me, a realisation that there was no salvaging our relationship, that his love for me was totally gone.

-Me: "I'm here to get my bag."

My voice came out as a whisper. I was so hurt and I felt like the hope I had when I came was now being sucked out of me. Coming for my

bag was the only reason I could tell him. Seeing that he had zero interest in talking with me I couldn't tell him that the major reason I came was because I wanted us to talk.

Without saying anything more, he stepped aside allowing me to walk inside. As I stepped inside, my eyes immediately landed on this dark, natural beauty sitting at his desk eating cereal - his new woman, the one I had found him banging the day before. So whatever they're doing is serious, I whispered in my heart. The realisation of that made my stomach turn and I was suddenly tongue-tied. I just stood there like a statue, staring at the woman who had now taken my spot in Alex's heart.

"Here's your bag, you can leave us now. And I'd really appreciate it if you could never come back. Oh, and I've taken back my key."

The bastard that I had naively been thinking was my soulmate said handing me my bag. His

cold voice made my blood boil, and I couldn't keep my cool anymore.

-Me: "How dare you, Alex? How dare you treat me this way? After everything we've been through together, is this what you do to me? I've been nothing but a good woman to you, dammit. Why are you treating me as if I've done you wrong? Huh? Couldn't you at least have the decency to let me know that you now wanted to move on without me?"

I quickly turned to his girlfriend who was now up from her chair, looking at me.

-Me: "And you? Did you know that he had a girlfriend before you opened your legs for him?"

-Her: "Bitch, please. Just do yourself a favour and leave before you embarrass yourself. Is it that hard to accept that the guy doesn't want you anymore?"

Embarrass myself? I sure was embarrassing

myself, wasn't I? But with her tone this bitch was pushing me to embarrass myself even further. With anger of a maniac I charged forward, ready to slap her stupid face.

-Me: "Who are you calling a bitch, huh? Who are you calling a bitch?"

I was screaming with fury, and my hand landed so hard on her cheek. She staggered but came back with her own hot slap across my face. Oh hell no she didn't. I let my bag land on the floor as I charged forward with all my might, ready to tear the bitch apart. I had my hands around her throat when I felt Alex's rough hands grab me from behind. He roughly pulled me away from his skinny woman and threw me on the floor. I landed so hard on my butt and hit my head on his bed. That hurt, but Alex didn't care. I would never forget the look he had on his face. He was looking at me with so much anger and disgust.

-Alex: "What the fuck do you think you're you doing, Someleze? What the fuck do you think you're doing?"

I was now crying, tears of anger more than those of pain.

-Him: "You say you want me to spell things out for you, right? Well, I'll do that. Right now. What you and I had is over. I'm now with Iviwe, I love her and if you ever lay your hands on her again you will regret it. You hear me? Now just get up and get the fuck out of my room with the little dignity you still have. I don't ever wanna see your face again."

He was so angry and he didn't even give a fuck about how I would get up from that floor. At that point I was going through a number of emotions at once - hurt, anger, disappointment and most of all, humiliation. I had never felt so humiliated in my life. What was I even thinking pulling a stunt like that? I should have just took

my bag and left quietly. Alex is a bastard that didn't deserve me right from the beginning. I slowly got up and picked up my bag. Without saying another word, I walked out of his room and started wiping my tears as soon as I noticed several pairs of eyes looking at me in the corridor. Other students in his corridor were now standing outside their rooms wanting to see what was going on. They had obviously heard the commotion and were now curious. I was so embarrassed as I rushed down the stairs and out the exit. If only the earth could just open up and swallow me.

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As I was now sitting outside the Chemistry building I hadn't seen Alex since that incident but the scars he left in my heart were still fresh and still hurt like hell. But I had accepted the fact that I now had to learn to live without him.

Doc on the other hand was being nice to me. Ever since he gave me a lift home on Monday he had been giving me lifts to and from campus everyday. Our drives were now no longer awkward. I was getting more and more comfortable around him and I was actually enjoying our conversations. We'd talk about a lot of things and he was always interested in knowing more about me even though he wasn't revealing much about himself.

Today I wasn't going to catch a lift with him though because he'd left early around lunch time saying he was going to East London to pick up some people from the airport. His wife and daughter, I assumed. That was okay though because I wasn't going to my flat anyway. It was a Friday and I was going out with Thuso and two other girls from her res who were our friends, Bonolo and Yonela. I'm not a person who likes clubbing too much but I'd go boozing

with Thuso and others on some weekends. Sometimes I'd go out with Alex, his friends and their girls, but now that was never going to happen again.

Here I was now, sitting in the sun waiting for Thuso so we'd go to her room to eat and freshen up before one of his fuck buddies, an accountant from King William's town, takes us to this hip and happening place in East London. I was so looking forward to that. Dancing and getting wasted was exactly what I needed to forget about my pain, even though it was only going to be temporary. If only Thuso could just hurry and come out. Why was she not coming out anyway? I checked my watch. Jeez I had been waiting for her for about 30 minutes. What could be taking her this long? I asked myself as I got up and walked back inside the building, to Prof's office. I had to go check what was taking so long. But when I got there I was surprised to

find out that Thuso hadn't even been there.

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Thuso

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Being the only child of a well-off couple had me spoiled. My father is an industrial engineer who owns his own engineering company and my mother is a lawyer. Back home in Nelspruit we live a very comfortable life and my parents always make sure that I get everything I want. I guess that's the reason why I don't, and never have, responded well to not getting what I want, including a man. I know that for years I have been afraid of love because of my past experiences but right now I think I really really like Doctor December. I don't know what's so different about him but the more I see him in class the more I long to be with him, not just for

sex but to be really with him. Which is why it pisses me off that I can't get him. I tried to work my magic, which always works with men, but it didn't work with him. All he gave me was an earful, telling me to stop embarrassing myself and respect him as my lecturer. He was so cold, with no feeling at all in his voice. Then he asked me to leave his office at once. I had never felt so humiliated in my entire life. With my knees trembling, I made my way to the door and walked out. But I wasn't about to give up. I asked Soso to help me get him but she came back saying the guy has a woman, probably married. That's bullshit, I can see now that she actually wants him for herself. The kind of relationship they have is not that of a student and a lecturer. Since Tuesday they've been coming to campus together and also leave together in the afternoon. They even have each other's cellphone numbers. What the fuck is that? That makes me sick, seriously. Soso says

there's nothing going on between the two of them but I'm not stupid, I can see the way December looks at her. I really thought Soso was my friend. She knows that I like Doc but she's now taking him away from me. How could she? How could she do that? I've been there for her, supporting her through this breakup with Alex, and now this is what she's doing to me? What kind of friend is she mara?

Today she heard me talking with one of my FBs (fuck buddies) on the phone about hitting East London tonight and without even asking she assumed that she was coming with us. Oh fuck no, there's no way in hell I'm going to let my backstabber tag along. But I couldn't tell her that because I don't want her to know what I think about her until I give her the taste of her own medicine. So I just asked her to go wait outside while I go talk to our Chemistry professor but that was a lie, I walked straight

out the back exit and went to my res. By the time she realises that I'm gone it will be too late, I would have already left the campus. If I was her though I'd brace myself because she won't like what I have in store for her.

#4

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I put you on top. I claimed you so proud and openly. And when times were rough, I made sure I held you close to me." - The Weeknd

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Alex

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Soso was right, she has been good to me. She gave me her heart even when her friends warned her against it. I couldn't blame them for

warning her though, I understood why. I was a 21-year-old fuck boy at the time, I was only catching to release not to put in my bucket. But she actually changed me into one of the good guys. She loved me past that stage and made me see what's really important. She made me her number one, practically putting me on top in her list of priorities. And when I was going through a rough patch she was there for me. She showed me love and support. The woman always had my back ever since she came into my life, something that made me fall hard for her. Because of that I also made it my priority to have her back too, to be the man she deserved. We were really good together, but there's just one department Soso's failing in, and that's the bedroom department. When I met her she was still a virgin and I practically had to teach her everything. But that's just the thing, that "everything" basically means "not much". Soso doesn't want to be experimental in bed, she's

not open-minded like that. As absurd as it sounds, to her trying new things in the bedroom means she's becoming a slut and she's not down for that. With her it's missionary all the way, and sometimes she wouldn't even want to give it to me...at all. It really gets boring and frustrating but she doesn't seem to get that. I'm a man, I love sex. And I love it wild and steamy, something I never got from her. Don't get me wrong, I loved her, I really did, which is why I've stuck it out for 3 whole damn years. But I just couldn't take it anymore. To me, sex, intimacy, is just as important as love in a relationship. If it's not there that means there's no relationship. They say in a relationship communication is key, but in ours communication never worked. I've always been straight with Soso, I'd tell her what I want but that would go through one of her ears and out the other. Three years and three months into our relationship and yet she was still doing the same whacky job in bed. She

wasn't willing to compromise to make me feel good, so I just had to move on. A guy can only take so much, seriously. Hurting her wasn't something I'd planned but I just had to put my own needs first. Knowing how she always wants things to be spelled out for her, I wanted to tell her that our relationship has run its course but I just couldn't bring myself to do it until she found out on her own. That actually made things easy for me. Now I won't have to break the news to her. And I can be with Iviwe in the open, without hiding anything.

I met Iviwe at Spar three weeks back. I wasn't even looking for anything but sex from her, I just needed to release. At first she played hard to get but a couple of days later she was naked in my bed. And I must say, she's a total opposite of Soso. Damn! The girl's got moves in bed, she knows how to make a guy feel good and lose his mind. I found myself wanting more

and more, and before I knew it I had developed feelings for her. And I now no longer had space for Soso.

Iviwe is the same age as me, she's 24. She's new in town, from Mthatha. She was studying medicine at WSU and now she's doing her community service at Victoria hospital in Alice. She's sharing a space with three more doctors at the doctors' accommodation at the hospital, which is why she has to come to me at res whenever we want to be together.

Today is Friday and she left for Mthatha early in the morning, visiting her family. So here I am now, in East London at this club called Pulse with my boys, Sivenathi and Siyamthanda. I've come to just unwind and have a good time. It's been a tough week. Master's degree is not a kid's play, I tell you. My supervisor wants me to be done with my dissertation by October if I want to graduate in May next year. So I've been

pushing hard all week and now I just want to unwind. But these two East Londoners I'm with have come here for easy p*ssy. Me? Nah, I'm not down for that, I can wait for my woman.

It's now just before midnight, my boys and I are tipsy but they don't want to leave without cheap skirts. The only thing I'm thinking about is hitting the pillow, alone, but I can't leave without these two because from here we're all going to Siya's home right here around Arcadia.

I'm standing with them, their eyes busy searching for their next preys, when someone grips my shoulder from behind. I turn to see her in a short, tight red dress and a denim jacket in this chilly night. Jeez, does this mean Soso is here too? I hope not, because the last thing I need tonight is drama.

"TK. What's up? You came alone?"

I asked already annoyed. TK is Thuso Kwena

but some people, including myself, call her TK.

-Her: "Soso is not here if that's what you're asking."

She says close to my face. The music is blarring and the crowd is rowdy so I don't really blame her. But what unsettles me is the way she keeps licking her lips and tracing her fingers down my chest with one hand while brushing my head with the other. If I didn't know better I'd say she's flirting with me but she wouldn't do that, would she? I mean she's Soso's best friend for crying out loud.

-Me: "Do you mind taking your hands off of me now?"

I yell so she could hear me through the music. But she doesn't seem to be hearing me, or she's just acting.

-Her: "What?"

Again she's close to my face, too close for my

comfort.

-Me: "I said, do you mind walking away and leaving me with my boys?"

I said raising my voice even higher so she could hear. But instead of backing off and walking away, she smashes her lips onto mine. And before I can even react she starts sucking on them.

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Someleze

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It's now Sunday and I haven't spoken to Thuso since Friday. After she just ditched me like that I sent her a WhatsApp message asking what was going on. And she replied with a pathetic excuse, saying her "man", Mr Accountant, didn't want her friends to tag along. That he just

wanted the night to be about them. Ugh! I mean theres nothing wrong with that, I would have understood if she had just told me. Why hide it and choose to ditch me instead? I really hate what she did, and it pissed me off. I haven't contacted her since Friday and she hasn't tried to contact me either. I really don't have time for her games, I've got a lot to deal with as it is. I'm stressed as fuck as I'm sitting here, I don't know where I'm going to get money for rent this month. Month-end is on Tuesday and I'm going to have to pay. With what money? Gosh, this is messed up. And my landlord is strict, she expects her money on the last day of each month, not a day later. My sponsor hasn't paid yet and I know that my mom doesn't have that kind of money right now. Hell, she doesn't even know that I'm renting a flat off-campus. I never told her that I never got a room at res from the very first year because I knew that she was going to tell me not come to Fort Hare at all if I

didn't have a place to stay. All the bursaries that I had applied for had still not responded at the time and I knew that she couldn't afford to rent me a flat on top of everything else that she was already doing for me. I couldn't even suggest that to her. So I kept quiet and Alex promised to rent the flat for me. But now that me and him are over, that agreement is over too. I'm practically on my own now.

I'm now sitting on my bed, having just finished typing my assignment that's due tomorrow - December's. No matter how stressed I am I could never abandon my studies. This is my final semester for this degree and I have to pass all my modules and graduate next year. I have to make my mother proud no matter what. She also graduated from UNISA last year and earlier this year she got a more stable job as an HR assistant. I was so proud of her and I want her to be proud of me too.

I have to admit though, I feel lonely as fuck as I'm sitting here. There's no Alex, no Thuso, just me. I decide to binge watch some series on my laptop. But as I'm still watching, around 13:00, my phone rings and I see Doc's name on the screen. What? Why is he calling me? I mean, we are not exactly friends, he only took my number so he could call me when he wants me to come catch a lift with him. So why is he calling me now? I mean it's a Sunday and I thought he was with his family, his wife and kid. I believe he's married even though he no longer wears a ring. These guys ain't loyal, they have a tendency of taking their rings off just so they would seem single. So you can never really know.

I pick up, curious.

-Me: "Hello."

-Him: "Hey, Soso. Are you busy?"

Soso? Doc has never used my first name before.

He's never called me Someleze, and now he's jumped all the way to Soso? Wow, what a jump?

-Me: "Ummh...no. I'm not busy. Why?"

-Him: "I'd like to see you. Do you mind coming outside?"

-Me: "No. I'll be there now-now."

With that I hang up. I'm really curious to know what he wants. I'm wearing grey sweat pants and a white, long-sleeved T-shirt. So I just put on my white Adidas slides and tie my weave into a messy bun. Then I treat my lips with some lipgloss before stepping out of my door.

I unlock the small gate and walk out while he's standing on the street. The gate locks itself behind me and as I'm putting my pendant back on my neck he suddenly speaks, he couldn't even wait for me to get to him.

-Him: "You just can't go out without that pendant, huh. It's always around your neck."

What, is it a lucky charm or something?"

I laugh as I come to stand before him.

-Me: "What? No. It ain't no lucky charm. I actually got this from my grandmother when I was 7, on my first day in school. She didn't want me to lose my house key so she gave this to me so I could keep the key inside. It accomodates two keys and I've been keeping my keys in it ever since. Old habits die hard, I guess."

-Him: "They do, don't they?"

He says smiling. Gosh, he's got a beautiful white set of teeth. Every time he smiles or laughs they just brighten his face. Oh, and I couldn't miss just how different he looks today. It's the first time I see him wearing a completely casual outfit. He has on blue ripped jeans, white Nike sneakers and a crispy white muscle fit T-shirt showing off a dusky tattoo of some predatory winged beast etched around his left

upper arm. And his hair cut that was a little too long for my liking is now cut short. He looks so sexy and attractive. So yummy. But I'm trying to be detached about it. Why am I feeling this way about him all of a sudden though? Jeez! This is so inappropriate.

-Me: "You said you wanted to see me?"

-Him: "We can't stand on the street like this. Mind coming with me to my house? Plus, there's someone I'd like you to meet."

Someone he wants me to meet? His wife? But why? I ask myself silently inside, but outside I say:

-Me: "Okay, we can go. Besides, my landlord doesn't want me to bring men around her house. Even my boyfriend...I mean my ex-boyfriend, would just drop me off at the gate and leave. He never went inside."

He chuckles, then:

-Him: "Well, let's go then."

Woah, what did I just do? What was I thinking telling him about my boyfriend? My mouth though.

Anyway, we make our way to his house that's just around the corner of the street.

#5

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"I see those tears in your eyes. I feel so helpless inside. Oh love, there's no need to hide. Just let me love you when your heart is tired." - Gavin James [Alan Walker]

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Someleze

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On our short walk to his house, Doc and I

couldn't talk about anything else but the assignment that is due tomorrow. He asks if I didn't experience any problems when doing it. Problems? Oh hell no. I don't mean to brag but when it comes to the brain for books I'm gifted. So instead of experiencing difficulties with the assignment I quite enjoyed working on it the entire week. It pushed me to read more on some topics that I previously had limited knowledge on. I believe that's the purpose of assignments anyway. And I also believe that I've nailed it. But I'll just have to wait and see what mark Doc gives me.

We walk through his gate and I can't help but notice how clean the yard is. I've always known this house even though I didn't know the person who was living in it before Doc came. I used to pass by it almost everyday and it was never this clean. But I'm not surprised, I've already noticed that Doc is a neat freak. I can't help but wonder

what other department is he a freak in though.

We walk into his lounge and just like the outside, it's nice and clean. He offers me a sit and I sit on the edge of the couch. I feel a little uncomfortable and anxious at the fact that I don't know who I'm here to see. But the stupid me isn't even asking, I just sit down and wait.

-Doc: "Can I get you anything to drink? Water, juice, wine, beer..."

-Me: "Water is fine, thanks."

He nods and walks out to the kitchen. A moment later he comes back with the glass of water and a coaster. I drink then put the glass on the coaster on the coffee table. But now I just have to ask...

-Me: "So, who am I here to see?"

He just smiles and go to stand in the passage before calling out...

-Him: "Lathi! Come, baby."

And bam!!! Not one but two cute little girls show up. What? I don't know how or when I got up from the couch but I was now on my feet, surprised. So the girl I saw on the two photos in his office AND in his wallet was not the same girl, they are actually a set of identical twins. And now I'm guessing when he said "I'll see you both on Friday" he meant the two daughters, not a wife and a daughter. Oh wow!

With visible love, he wraps his arms around them as they all come to stand by the coffee table.

-Him: "Girls, this is sis' Soso, daddy's friend."

Friend? Okay, we're already there now? It's good to know.

-Him: "Soso, these are my two princesses. This one here is Lathitha, Lathi for short. She's the ballerina I was telling you about and I really

wanted you to meet her before she leaves.
They're going back to Jo'burg tomorrow...
Anyway, this one over here is Lilitha, we call her
Lily. She doesn't do ballet. She thinks..."

-Lily: "Ballet is stupid."

She finishes the sentence with some attitude
that I find kind of cute. I can see that she thinks
she's older even though she's just 9. She's a
little diva. And Lathi clearly doesn't find her
attitude cute at all because she quickly
retaliates.

-Lathi: "No, you're the one who's stupid, Lily. You
just like acting like you're smarter than me. But
that's just another sign of stupidity."

-Lily: "What did you just say? Say I'm stupid one
more time, Lathi, and I'll slap you."

-Lathi: "Do that and daddy will show you
flames."

-Doc: "Okay, girls, cut it out now. We have a

guest, remember?"

-Them: (in unison) "Sorry, daddy."

Awww they are so cute. And I can't help but laugh.

-Doc: (to me) "They're like this, always at each other's throats."

-Me: "They're so cute and adorable, Doc."

Then I quickly turn to the girls.

-Me: "It's nice to meet both of you, girls. And you have cute names, I must say. They are not as cute as your faces though."

They smile and come to me for hugs. Awww my heart just melts as the three of us hug.

-Them: (in unison) "It's nice to meet you, sis' Soso."

-Me: "So, Lathi, you really like ballet, huh?"

-Lathi: "A lot. I want to be a famous ballerina

when I grow up. Daddy tells me you also do ballet."

-Me: "That's right. But it's been three years since I put on my ballet shoes. I'm sure we can teach each other some moves though."

-Lathi: "I'd love that."

Lily rolls her eyes.

-Me: "So, Lily, wena what do you like?"

-Lily: "I'm smart so I like mind-challenging board games, like chess."

-Me: "Really? I love those too. Chess is my thing... What about scrabble? Don't you like that?"

-Lily: "I love it and I'm good at it."

-Me: "Well, maybe we should play together sometime and see how good you are."

-Lily: (excited) "I'm game. Can we play now?"

-Doc: "No, no, baby, a little later. Okay? Right now daddy and sis' Soso need some space. Y'all go back to your bedroom, I'll call you out later. Alright?"

They nod and run out, back to their bedroom.

-Me: "You have adorable kids there, Doc. Seriously."

-Doc: "Thank you. But please call me Thando out of campus."

He says taking my hand and pulling me down to sit back on the couch. Am I seeing things or this guy is trying to make a move on me?

-Me: "Your girls' mother? Where's she?"

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Thando

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My name is Thando December, a 31-year-old Jo'burger, born and bred. I have a younger sister, Anathi. She's all grown up but in my eyes she'll always be my baby sister and I love her to bits, I even carry her picture in my wallet. She doesn't like the fact that I baby her though because she's 28 years old, married, and has a two year old son.

Just like her, I was also married. Well, up until 6 months ago. I met Busie, my ex wife, 11 years ago. I was doing my 4th year in Med school, she on the other hand had just graduated in Business Management and was now working as an intern in my father's construction company. I was there to see my father when I saw her. We hit it off almost instantly and a year later she was pregnant. In August of the following year, just two days before my own birthday, she gave birth to our adorable twin

girls. That's the best gift she could ever have given me. Those girls are the best thing that has ever happened to me, they are my life. Unfortunately, I can no longer say the same about Busie. After the birth of our girls our relationship became stronger but we only got married 3 years ago. Reason being I was still busy with my studies. After I was done with my community service I went back to school to specialise in Surgery. And it was after my final year that I could finally marry her. However, only a year into our marriage cracks started to show. Perhaps I was the one to blame for that because I wasn't always around for my wife and our girls. Medical life is not very flexible. I worked 12-hour shifts at the hospital, and sometimes I would have to stay longer until the work is done. I couldn't just take off in the middle of an emergency even if my 12 hours were over. That meant my family couldn't always rely on me to be home in time for dinner

or to be around for every ballet show, spelling competition or birthday party. Sometimes I'd be home during the day after working a long night shift and my wife and kids would have to adjust their routine to make sure I can get some sleep. Oftentimes I'd have to work on holidays and we'd have to celebrate the holiday as a family on a different day or they would just have to go on without me.

It was really hard to plan things. My wife would do her best to make leisure plans with me but she couldn't ever really know exactly what time I'd get home because she could never know when a surgery may run long or an emergency might happen. Even when I'm home I'd have to split my time between her and our twins. The truth is, I hardly had time for her and I guess that took a toll on her because she sought comfort in another man's arms. It was on Worker's Day last year that I found out that she

was cheating on me. She had lied to me and said she was going to Sun City with her colleagues for a team building but that was a lie. I saw her with another man at a restaurant in Bryanston, giggling like a school girl. I was so angry but I didn't say anything, I just went home and confronted her when she came back. Realising that she had been busted she couldn't deny it, she only begged for forgiveness. And because I wanted our marriage to work, and to provide a stable home for our daughters I forgave her. At least she was remorseful, I thought. After that we tried to work on our marriage, I tried to make more time for her but it all came crumbling down when her mother was brought into our hospital after a terrible car accident. We were short-staffed, there were not enough surgeons, and even those that were around were busy operating on other patients. Busie's mother needed an emergency surgery or she was going to die. I was still a surgical

registrar, I couldn't perform a major surgery without a senior surgeon present but this was my mother-in-law and for her to survive she needed the surgery pronto. So as the doctor and a concerned son-in-law I took it upon myself to try and save her life. But that didn't quite happen, something went wrong and she died on my operating table. Busie never forgave me after that, she still blamed me for her mother's death even after the hospital cleared me after a week of suspension. Even today she still says I killed her mother, that if I didn't perform that surgery myself her mother would still be alive. I heard that from her so many times that I also ended up believing it even though somehow I know that it wasn't my fault. The hospital also cleared me because they could see that it wasn't my fault, but in Busie's eyes I'm still guilty. To make matters worse, she asked for a divorce after that. But if you ask me, I think she was no longer feeling me and she

just used the whole thing as an excuse to get out of the marriage. I think she was now feeling that other guy, I don't think they even ended what they were doing even after I had caught them together.

I just felt so defeated when she asked for a divorce. I was so hurt but I didn't contest it, I just signed the damn papers and gave her what she wanted. One thing I know is that you you can never force a person to love you when they're no longer feeling you. Because the divorce was uncontested it got finalised pretty quickly. Now she's got sole custody of our kids and all I got from the agreement are holidays and weekends with them. But that's okay, at least I still get to spend time with my little girls. However, I just couldn't stay in the medical profession anymore or even in Jo'burg. I just had to leave even if it's just for a year or two. A part of me believes that it's that profession that

ruined my marriage. And now I just want to live, and work 9 hours a day like most people.

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When I saw Soso without a lab coat in my lab that day I instantly thought she was one of those rebellious, undisciplined students and I don't want that in my class. Like I told her that day, I like order. In my entire life, in everything that I do, I like order. So I wasn't going to have her disrespect me in my lab. But when I found her crying outside I felt bad. And as I was talking to her in my office, I noticed something familiar in her eyes, a pain that I know very well. A pain of being dropped by the person you loved. That's a familiar territory to me and I know that look. Just 6 months ago I was also there. It hurt so fuckin' bad. I even kept wearing

my ring even after the divorce, I just couldn't bring myself to taking it off until only a week ago when I came to Alice.

I could see the pain and the hurt in Soso's eyes and I regretted giving her a hard time. And all I wanted was to make up for that so I offered to give her a ride home. But the more I talked with her the more I enjoyed being around her. I'm sure she's 20 or 21 but what I noticed about her in our conversations is that she's quite mature, she's focused and she knows what she wants in life. She's got some serious smarts too and that to me is not just attractive but it's also an aphrodisiac. It doesn't help that she's got a pretty face and a body to die for either. Damn, the girl is hot. Every time I'm with her I feel like ripping her clothes off and invade her right there in my car, but I'd never do that. I think I really like her and most of all I respect her. If we do this, I want us to do it the right way. Considering

the fact that she's 10 years my junior and I'm her lecturer, I know that it's inappropriate. She might see it that way too and by making a move on her I might ruin the close relationship we already have. That makes me kind of anxious. But I want to love her.

She tries to hide it when she's with me, but I can still see the pain in her eyes. What she doesn't know is that she doesn't have to hide it from me. I can see it anyway and I just wish she could let me love her past it and let me take off the weight on her shoulders, because she walks around like she's carrying the weight of the whole world.

I look at her sitting next to me on the couch. There's that look of innocence in her eyes. As cute as that is though, if she ends up with me she's going to have to lose it. She shifts uncomfortably on the couch. It must be the fact that I'm holding her hand. I let it go and shift

away from her. The last thing I want is to make her feel uncomfortable like I'm some pervert. I want to slowly ease her into the idea of being with me. I want her to get to know me first.

-Me: "Their mother and I are divorced."

I answer her question looking at her. The reaction on her face is priceless, almost relieved. What, did she think I was still married?

#6

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"Ubusy uyangilandela. What do you want from me? Uyangi'charmer na? Just stop it's not working. Angifuni wena, ngifuna lomngane wakho. Suka wena..." - Karabo

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"There's eleven of you in this class but I only got 9 assignments. If the remaining two don't

submit before 2 o'clock, which is in the next 40 minutes, they'll simply get zeros. And remember this counts towards your DPs...Y'all can go now."

Doc says slightly irritated after our class with him. I can't help but look at him in a different way now that I spent a day with him yesterday. I don't know whether I'm seeing things or I'm being forward but I think he's got a thing for me. Or maybe I'm wrong, maybe he's just being nice and trying to make a friend since he's got no friends in Alice. But why would he want to be friends with me, his student? Ugh, I don't know. But what I do know is that I had a great time with him and his girls yesterday. Contrary to what I initially thought of him, he's so much fun. I got to learn that about him yesterday. We all had some crazy fun in his house. I got to act crazy and laugh like there was no tomorrow, something I haven't done in a while. It really

became a good day, I caught a break from my worries and I only got to go back to my flat after dinner, which the four of us cooked together. I really don't know how I feel about the whole experience though or what I think about him having a thing for me - if that's even true. It turns out I was wrong about him having a wife though. My initial reaction to that was that of relief, I'm not even sure why. But a huge part of me got relieved to know that he's not taken. However, when he told me everything about his ex-wife, I actually felt sorry for him. Thing is I could relate. I know how painful it is to be dropped by someone you love, I'm currently going through that myself. At least for him the pain has already subsided, for me it's still fresh and I don't see me getting over it any time soon. Even if Doc really had feelings for me I doubt I would go there. He's really attractive, I can't deny that. And I also have to admit that since the moment I saw him waiting for me on my

street yesterday seeing him makes me feel some type of way. But I'm not ready to go there yet. Putting the fact that he's my lecturer who's way older than me aside, my heart is not yet ready for another relationship or whatever it would be. Alex has hurt me so bad that I don't see myself with another man any time soon. I never knew love could hurt this much, and now I'm scared to love again. Plus, it's my friend who wanted Doc first. That considered, I need to do the right thing. I need to tell her that my initial assessment was wrong, that the guy is not married. What she does after that is up to her.

I've been trying to talk with her since morning though, but she's not giving me a chance. I don't even know why. After our first class I went to her but she said she had an important call to make and that I should go ahead to our second class without her. And I did. Then after our second class she said she couldn't talk because

she had to go finish up December's assignment and submit. Knowing how important our studies are I gave her the space and just went to the computer lab. Now that this is our last class I need to talk with her. But before we talk about Doc's marital status, I need to address the shit she did to me on Friday. She needs to know that I didn't like it.

I get up from my chair before her and walk out with the other students.

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I get outside and turn my phone on as I'm waiting for her to also come out. I don't even know why she remained behind though. Maybe she wants some time alone with Doc, I don't know. As soon as my phone is on, WhatsApp messages start pouring in. I open the app and

the first messages I go to are Thuso's. I'm curious to see what she just sent me. And it's pictures. Wait, pictures of what? I can't believe my eyes. Her and Alex cuddling in bed, half naked. What the hell? Thuso and Alex? Oh hell no! Why would she do that? When did they even do that? The bitch is supposed to be my friend. Why is she even sending me these pictures anyway? What is she trying to achieve?

I'm now fuming and I'm about to walk back into that class and ask her to come outside when I see her walking out.

"What the hell is this, Thuso?"

I ask with my phone screen up to her face so she could see what I'm talking about, not that she doesn't know it though. I only notice that I'm screaming when everyone around turns to look at me. Jeez! But I couldn't care any less, I'm boiling with anger. And what makes me even more angry is the fact that Thuso is the

picture of calm through all of this. If I wasn't on campus I swear I'd slap that smug look off her face right now.

-Her: "You know how it feels like now, huh? Yeah, that's exactly how I felt too when I found out that you want for yourself the guy I asked you to help me get. It doesn't feel so great, does it?"

-Me: "What the hell are you talking about? What man? I don't want any man for myself, you know that, Thuso, you do. You know that my heart is still hung up on Alex, and you go and do this with him? How could you? How could you?"

I'm now crying with anger and hurt. I don't even care about those who are staring - the other students and the staff members of this building.

-Her: "You better keep your voice down, people are staring. And please don't act holy and dumb with me, you know exactly what I'm talking

about. You started this even though you were supposed to be my friend."

Okay, I've had it with this girl. I thought she was a balanced adult upstairs but clearly I was wrong. I wipe my tears as I turn to walk away from her. But she just can't let me go, can she?

-Her: "One more thing, Soso."

I turn to face her.

-Her: "We both know that you've been living off of Alex and now that he's gone you're gonna need this money for rent tomorrow."

She says throwing several hundred rand notes at me. What the hell? How could she? How could she embarrass me like this? And the worst part is that Doc is now standing at the door of our class, looking at us. I might not care about what other people think about me but I sure care a great deal about what he thinks of me. I don't even know why is that, but I just do.

He stands there looking at us then turns and lock the class without saying a word. I remain where I've been standing, like I'm glued to the floor as I watch him walk away. As soon as he disappears down the corridor, I get out of that trance and turn to leave too. I hurry down the stairs, leaving Thuso's money right there on the floor. She must be crazy if she thought I was going to take that money. I still can't believe she did all this to me. What's happened to her? To her head?

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Thando

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I'm still inside the class when I hear some commotion outside. I don't know what it's about but as I walk out I find Soso being humiliated by

her so-called friend in front of several pairs of eyes. She's throwing money at her. I'm not sure what exactly this whole thing is about but I can feel my temperature rising. How could Kwena do whatever this is here? As a lecturer I know that I should stop this, they shouldn't be doing it here. But the way I'm angry I know that if I say something it won't be nice so I just keep quiet and walk away after locking the class.

I walk into my office and plop down on my chair. I swing the chair round and round, thinking about Soso. I can't help but feel worried about her after what I just saw. She must be feeling so humiliated wherever she is right now. And what's that about her needing rent money?

My train of thoughts gets derailed by a soft knock on my open door. I turn around to find Kwena standing there. I feel irked instantly as I wonder what she must be here for. She better not be here to pull the stunt she pulled last

week, seducing me in my office.

-Me: "Kwena, what can I do for you?"

She closes the door and walk towards my desk slowly and seductively.

-Her: "Please, you can call me Thuso. No need to be formal with me."

She walks around my desk to sit right in front of me, making sure that her tight and short skirt moves up to reveal her thighs. This girl doesn't give up, huh.

-Me: "What do you think you're doing?"

-Her: "Oh, please, I know you want this as much as I do. And please don't give me that you're my lecturer and I'm your student speech again. I know that you don't have a problem tapping your students' asses."

What is this one talking about? Does she think I'm sleeping with Soso? Yah well, I'd gladly

choose her friend over her crazy ass at any day. If, I mean when, I cross the line and sleep with a student it would never be with her, it would be with someone I really like, and that's Soso.

I get up from my chair and go stand at a distance when I find her hands all over me.

-Me: "Kwena, you better get the hell out of my office now if you don't want the faculty dean to know about this harassment."

-Her: "Harassment? Well go to the dean but you better make sure that I don't get there first to report you for sexual misconduct. You're the one sleeping with the student. You're the one who's sleeping with Soso. And I'm sure that you're gonna give her an A in that assignment and that she's gonna pass this course with a distinction because you're fucking her."

#7

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"I hope you can't sleep and you dream about it. And when you dream, I hope you can't sleep and you scream about it. I hope your conscience eats at you and you can't breathe..." - Eminem

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Thando

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"Are you okay?"

I ask after taking a glance at her. She looks so vulnerable and so fragile on the passenger seat. I wish I can take the pain away from her. It's been at least 5 minutes into our drive home and she's hardly said a word since she got in the car. I'm worried about her and I can't hide it.

-Her: "Yeah, I'm fine."

Her voice cracks. I can see that she wants to cry but she covers that by turning away from

me, to look out the window.

-Me: "You're a lot of things right now, Soso, but fine ain't one of them. Look, I don't mean to pry but it's obvious that you're not okay. Wanna talk about it?"

-Her: "No."

Her answer is that short. But I've asked knowing very well that she won't open up easily. One of the things I've learned about her is that she's an introvert. But I'm not going to let her drown in her pain alone. I'm going to ease her into opening up.

-Me: "My little sister always tells me that I'm a good listener. You can also try me, you know. A problem shared is a problem half-solved, I believe that's what they say."

-Me: "Maybe that was true five decades ago. But not anymore. Nowadays, a problem shared is a problem multiplied."

I compress my lips trying to suppress my laughter at the sound of that.

-Me: "It depends on who you're sharing your problem with."

-Her: "Exactly. I'm not sharing my problems with my lecturer."

She says looking at me as if to make sure that I notice her lack of interest in talking with me.

-Me: "I'd like to think I'm more than just your lecturer, Soso. I'd like to think I'm your friend. You can tell me anything."

She turns to look out the window again. I know that's an indication that she's not going to talk. So maybe in order for her to open up I should also do the same.

-Me: "I know that this is about what happened earlier between you and Kwena. I'm not exactly sure what that was about but I know this: the girl wants me and I think she sees you as a

threat because she thinks you and I are sleeping together."

She quickly turns to look at me. The reaction on her face says she didn't know that I know.

-Her: "She says I'm taking you away from her. I mean, how absurd is that? I honestly don't know what's wrong with her, but she retaliated by sleeping with my boyfriend...umh I mean my ex-boyfriend. I just broke up with him and she went and slept with him because of something that's only happening in her head."

She's talking fast and by the time she finishes she's already crying. And I can tell that it's tears of pain mixed with anger. She feels betrayed and she has every reason to feel that way. I can't stand to watch her cry like this, the first thing I want to do is to pull over on the side of the road and pull her into an embrace. To comfort her. But I quickly decide against it. I know she'll be uncomfortable and I don't want

that. Like I said, I want to take baby steps, to ease her into the idea of being with me slowly with no rush.

So I just hold her hand and focus on the road.

-Me: "I'm sorry. I really am...But if they could do something like that to you maybe you're better off without them. They both didn't deserve you from the very beginning. Your ex-boyfriend didn't deserve your love and Kwena certainly didn't deserve your friendship. The problem here is not you, it's them. They don't have hearts, and maybe they deserve each other."

She takes a moment then nod.

-Her: "Yah, maybe they do. I just can't believe that I've lost both my boyfriend and best friend in just a space of 7 days. But who needs nutcases like them anyway?"

I see a subtle smile on her face as she pulls her hand out of mine. I can't help but let a smile too.

She gets a tissue out of her bag to wipe her tears.

"How did you know that Thuso wants you though?"

She asks after wiping her tears away.

-Me: "She didn't exactly hide it on the very first day of meeting me. She went to my office after the class and practically threw herself at me. When I told her off I thought she'd never do it again, but boy was I wrong. She did it again today after causing that scene with you in front of the class. And this time she upped her antic. Even said she'd go report me that I'm sleeping with you and I'm doing you favours academically if I don't want to be with her."

-Her: "What? That's crazy."

-Me: "Tell me about it. She was dirty dancing on top of my desk when the two students who didn't submit their assignments came to submit."

I was standing by the door trying to get her to stop what she was doing when those girls knocked. They knocked once and I just pulled the door open, allowing them to come in before Kwena could stop what she was doing or even pull her skirt down."

-Her: "What? You did that?"

-Me: "That psychologically disturbed girl needed to be stopped, Soso. And I needed witnesses when I tell the department about her harassment. As it turns out I'm not the first lecturer to get that from her. When I went to tell the HOD he told me that last year he also received a similar complaint about her from another lecturer. However, they didn't follow up on it because there was no proof. But this second complaint now means it's true and he said they're gonna call us in tomorrow. I don't know what they're gonna do though and I honestly don't care as long as the girl is gonna

stop her nonsense and refrain from tainting my name."

-Her: "Yoh... I didn't even know that she did something like this last year. She's been my best friend for 2 years and 7 months now but clearly I didn't know her at all."

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I'm now pulling up in front of her gate. But I'm not about to let her get out of this car before I ask about the rent money issue I heard earlier.

-Me: "I heard Kwena saying you're in need of rent money for tomorrow. Is that true?"

She looks down, and she can't hide embarrassed she is. What she doesn't know is that she doesn't need to feel that way with me.

-Me: "Come on, you can tell me."

She just nods, still looking down.

-Me: "How much is it?"

-Her: "It's only R800 but my mom doesn't have it. And I couldn't take Thuso's."

-Me: "I do have it. And I can give it to you right now."

She looks up, probably to tell me that she's fine and that she'll make a plan. I know how women are. But I can't let her do that. I know that she needs this money, and I can't let her compromise herself to get it. I open the centre console storage and take out my wallet. I take out five 200 hundred rand notes and hand them to her. But she hesitates.

-Me: "Please just take it. It's a loan and you can pay me back when you can. Okay?"

She slowly stretches her two hands and accepts it.

-Her: "Thank you. And I promise I'll pay you back next month."

Honestly, I don't need the money back but saying it's a loan was the only thing I could say to make sure that she doesn't feel like a charity case. I heard Kwena saying she's been living off of Alex, and I assume Alex is the ex-boyfriend, and now that he's gone she's got nothing. Well, she has me. I'm willing to help her until she gets her life in order.

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Doc gives me the money. I feel so embarrassed by the whole situation but I accept the money because I really need it. Tomorrow's month-end

and I'm going to have to pay. I thank him for the second time and he just smiles and lean over to open the door for me.

-Him: "See you in the morning."

I nod then step out of the car. I'm really thankful to him, he just saved my ass. Knowing my landlord, she was going to kick me out if I didn't pay.

Doc drives off and I'm walking to my gate when I see Kevin walking out of our neighbour's gate. Kevin is a guy that's in the same group as me. He lives in a neighbouring township called Hillcrest. The township has a high population of Coloureds and he's one of them. I can't say he's my friend, I just know him. He's dating my neighbour's daughter and every time we see each other we exchange greetings and talk about weather and stuff like that, nothing serious. But now that I'm seeing him, I need to have some kind of a serious talk with him. He

works at a nearby Engen filling station and I need to find out if they don't need any extra pair of hands over there. Yes, Doc has come through for me this month but I don't expect him to do the same thing for the next 5 months. Not forgetting that I still need to pay him back. And even if I tell my mom about the rent, I know that she can't be able to add R800 to the money she's already giving me every month. She's just bought herself a mini car and she's renovating our four-roomed house back home and adding two more rooms. So I really need to toughen up and get myself some kind of a job, anything to pay the bills.

"Hey, Kev."

I greet first as he approaches.

-Him: "Soso. How's it going?"

-Me: "It's not going at all, man."

I walk over to him and go straight to the point.

-Me: "You don't happen to know of any open vacancies at your place of work, do you? I'm in serious need of a job, buddy. I'm drowning."

-Him: "Money's tight?"

-Me: "That's what I'm trying to tell you."

-Him: "You must be lucky, hey, because one of my fellow petrol attendants quit yesterday so they need a replacement."

-Me: "For real? Then I need to go talk to them, don't I?"

-Him: "You sure you're ready for that kind of job though? Not to mention the fact that you still have classes to attend."

-Me: "Right now I'm down for anything, Kev. As long as it pays the bills, man. Besides, this won't be my first time working as a petrol attendant, I worked as one during my matric year back home, to make ends meet. As for my classes, well, I'll make a plan."

-Him: "Well, in that case I'm gonna pass by on my way to work in the morning to get you. Okay? I'm gonna talk to them on your behalf first but you're still gonna have to bring your CV."

-Me: "Of course. Thanks, Kev. See you in the morning then."

-Him: "7 o'clock."

-Me: "Sure. Thanks again."

He nods then walks away.

I'm so excited right now. God and the Ndlovu ancestors must be with me. I walk to my gate smiling. I open and go in.

As for both Alex and Thuso? Well, I hope what they did to me eats away at them everyday and they can't forgive themselves. How could they do something like that? They are both trash maan.

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In the morning my alarm wakes me up for my morning jog. I switch it off then say a short prayer for the day ahead before climbing down the bed. I make it then put on my jogging clothes. When I'm done I hit the road. There's nothing more refreshing than a morning jog. It's a good "pick-me-up".

Thirty minutes later I'm back in my flat to get ready. I go take a shower then I put on navy chino pants, white shirt, a navy blazer and navy flat Ginger Mary shoes with laces. I know that it's just a vacancy for a petrol attendant but I should put a little effort in my appearance. I tie up my hair in a neat bun and my make sure that my make-up is on point. In a hurry, I then eat my cereal and drink some cheap juice I just mixed. As I finish the glass, my phone rings. It's Doc. Oh boy, I forgot to tell him that I'm not catching

a lift with him this morning. He's probably going to give me hell for not telling him before he drove up to get me.

I grab my bag and rush out. I find his car parking in front of the gate as usual. I walk over but as I'm about to hop inside, I see Kevin approaching in foot. I signal for him to wait for me then I get inside Doc's car.

"Morning, Doc."

I greet as I pull the door closed.

-Him: "Morning. But I thought I asked you to call me Thando off campus."

-Me: "That's gonna take some getting used to. Trust me."

-Him: "You look...umh, different. I've never seen you going to campus looking like this."

He says evidently dodging my statement.

-Me: "That's because I'm not going to campus

right now. I have some kind of an interview or I'm still going to look for a job, I'm not sure which one is it. But I'm going with that guy standing over there."

I say pointing to Kevin who's waiting for me not far from the car.

-Him: "A job? Where?"

I tell him.

-Him: "You sure you wanna do that? Soso, I believe this is your last semester, you do not wanna find yourself distracted."

-Me: "I know, but I'll manage. I don't have a choice, I need the money. And it's honest living."

-Him: "Oh, okay then. I can only wish you the best. I hope you get it."

I can see that he doesn't like this and honestly, I don't even know why. Too bad he doesn't have a say in it.

-Me: "Thanks, Doc...I mean, Thando."

He just smiles lazily.

-Him: "I better get going. See you later?"

-Me: "Later."

I open the door and get out of the car. God, I hope I get this job.

#8

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"Right now, I'm in a state of mind I wanna be in like all the time. Ain't got no tears left to cry. So I'm pickin' it up, pickin' it up." - Ariana Grande

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8 days later

"So you're asking me to do your shift?"

Kevin asks after wiping the fatcakes oil off his hands. It's Wednesday evening and we're sitting

outside the food shop at this Engen service station eating fatcakes, the only food we can afford. I'm sitting opposite him at one of those outside wooden tables with two attached benches. Yeah, I got the job and this is my 7th day in it. I started last week Tuesday, the very same day I came to ask for the job. I work 12 hour shifts from 18:00 to 6:00 in the morning, 4 days a week. It's tough having to work through the night then go to school during the day, but I'm making it work. Hell, I made it work during my matric year, I was working but I still managed to get 5 distinctions. So, I'm making it work even now, as draining as it is. And the fact that I don't have a boyfriend that demands my time helps too. But Doc doesn't like that I have this job, he says I'm overworking myself and that my studies are going to suffer. It's really nice to know that he's worried about my school work but he really doesn't need to. I know myself, I know my capabilities. Attending 3

classes a day and 3 practical sessions a week is not a lot of work. I can make it work, in fact I'm already making it work. I go attend my classes and take a nap on Doc's couch in his office in between them, then come to work in the evening. And I no longer wait to catch a ride home with him in the afternoon if I don't have an afternoon practical session. I just take the 25-minute walk from campus to my flat immediately after my last class so I could get some rest before my shift starts.

I'm writing two tests next week but I'm not worried, I know that I will pass. I know how to manage my time and I don't wait until the work piles up before I study. I study everyday, I even bring my books with me to work and make sure that I do some studying in between my fuel pump times. Growing up poor toughens you up, and it makes you hungry and determined to turn your life around - but only if you know what you

really want in life, and I do.

-Me: "Please, Kev. I will owe you one if you do this for me."

I say, begging. Kevin and I are becoming better friends now that we work together. And right now I'm asking him to stand in for me tomorrow since he'll be off. Tomorrow is the 9th of August, I'm not going to school but I can't come to work either because Doc has invited me to his birthday party that's going to be hosted in East London, in his friend's house. The same friend that helped him get the lecturing job. He's also a lecturer at Fort Hare, but at the East London campus. I really can't disappoint Doc by not going, not after he asked me so nicely. The theme of the party is black and white. It's going to be a very sophisticated, classy and formal birthday party, and all the invited guests are asked to bring their plus ones. But the birthday boy doesn't know anybody in Eastern Cape

except for the friend who's hosting, so he's asked me to be his plus one. The purpose of the party, in his part, is not only to celebrate 31 years on this planet but also to meet new people and make some friends in the province. All the invited guests are people that are known by his friend, Bhongo, and not by him. But him being the birthday boy means all eyes are going to be on him, so he can't just show up alone.

But it doesn't look like Kevin is going to do this for me. He hears me begging but he doesn't answer. He just takes our 2l of Coke on the table and pours some in his Styrofoam cup then drink thirstily.

-Me: "Buddy, please. I've even bought the gift already, I can't miss the party."

I've noticed just how much Doc is obsessed with time and prides himself with his elaborate watch collection. So I've ordered him this stunning personalised watch box online, and

asked them to personalise it with just his initials in a monogram. I really liked the box when I saw it. It can hold up to 12 watches and it will let Doc display his collection. It cost me R820, which is almost all the money I earned for last week's work. We get paid weekly here and Monday I got my last week's pay which was just R1,126. It's a ridiculous pay for all the long hours we work but at least it's something. After getting it I went to pay Doc that R800 he loaned me but he refused to take it back, so I just decided to buy him something with it. It's going to be delivered tomorrow, that's what they said and I hope they stick to their word because I'd hate to go to the party empty handed.

-Kevin: "Fine, I'll take your shift but on one condition. That you take most of my cars tonight and let me take a nap."

-Me: "Sure. You got it."

-Him: "Good. And you can start right now. With

that GTi that's just arrived."

I turn and look at the red GTi. Oh damn! I know it. It's Alex's. He's come back to filling up here now? The last I checked he was a Caltex petrol with Techron kind of guy, ever since a Caltex service station opened in Alice. Jeez! I can feel my stomach turn at the thought of seeing his face.

-Me: "No, Kev, that's one car I can't take. I know the owner, it's the ex I was telling you about. Please, just go pump for it."

-Him: "Then I'm not doing your shift tomorrow."

-Me: "Okay, fine, I'm going."

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I walk over to Alex's car feeling uneasy but I make sure to pull myself together. I can't be

bringing my drama to work, I need to treat him like any other customer.

"Evening, sir. Which medicine does your car take?"

I ask as civil as possible as I look at him through the rolled down window. His reaction when he sees me is that of shock. He was definitely not expecting to see me working here.

-Him: "Soso? You work here now?"

The shock on his face quickly gives way to pity. Fuck him, I don't need his pity. Hell, I ain't pitying myself either. And I'm not at all embarrassed by the fact that I work here. It's honest living, I earn my own money, I ain't dependant on my rich folks to fill up my pockets like him.

-Me: "Yes, I do. Now back to the petrol. Which one do you need?"

I say as calmly as I can.

-Him: "You know the petrol I use, Soso. And I've been calling your phone for days now."

-Me: "I know."

That's true. He first sent me a WhatsApp message Tuesday last week, saying "Can we talk?" I didn't reply I just blocked him. Since then he's been calling me everyday but I never pick up. I honestly don't know why he keeps calling me and quite frankly, I don't care to know. He's the one who left me and not the other way round. I don't have anything to say to him, our time to talk expired the moment he decided to treat me badly in front of his new woman.

-Him: "You know. Then why don't you pick up my calls?"

-Me: "I don't pick up because I have nothing to say to you, Alex. Now the petrol. How much?"

I say grabbing the pump.

-Him: "Five."

-Me: "Is that litres or hundreds?"

He rolls his eyes. This guy can be really dramatic, yoh. And right now he's annoying the hell out of me but I still manage to keep my cool.

-Him: "As if I would buy 5 litres. That's hundred."

He says with this annoying tone. This guy can be so full of himself nhe. I don't answer, I just pull the pump to his car's petrol tank and pump the petrol. When I'm done he hands me six 100 rand notes.

-Me: "There's an extra hundred rand here."

-Him: "It's your tip, take it."

Ey hayi iyandiqhela le ndoda. [This man is fucking with me]. Who said I'm his charity case?

-Me: "No, thank you, Mister. I'm good."

I throw the R100 on the passenger seat and walk away to the cashier with the R500. I see him drive off as I'm standing at the cashier

window. Nx! I'm only letting my anger show now as I cuss under my breath. Tshini bawo uve kuthini na lo? And whatever he's got to say to me he better keep it to himself. I cried for him and right now I'm over that, I'm picking up my life and things are looking good for me. I really don't need his drama.

I walk back to the bench but before I could even reach it my phone rings. It's Yonela, one of the girls that was friends with us, from Thuso's res. I answer knowing very well that she's going to talk about Thuso.

-Me: "Yonela. What's up?"

-Her: "Hey. Been calling you. Why ain't you taking my calls?"

-Me: "Been busy. What's up?"

Seriously, what does she want from me? She wasn't exactly my friend, she was Thuso's. I only got to know her and Bonolo through Thuso.

And now that Thuso and I had a falling out, I never expected them to side with me but their friend, Thuso. So I just made things easy for them by staying away.

-Her: "It's about Thuso. She really wants to talk to you, Soso. She's realised her folly and she wants to make peace with you. Would you consider meeting up with her tomorrow and talk things through?"

Talk things through? They both must be on crack.

-Me: "No, I ain't gonna do that. And I gotta go, I'm busy."

This girl better get her boujee ass off my phone.

-Her: "Busy with what? Soso, please."

-Me: "I'm at work, Yonela. Some of us need to work to make a living, you know."

I hang up and hurry to attend to another car.

Seriously, I don't have time for anything that's got anything to do with Thuso. I'm done with her. Every time I see her in class I just ignore her and do my thing. And she's never tried to come to me and apologise, so why now? She can go to hell for all I care, Alex too.

She must just be glad she never got into serious trouble for seducing a lecturer and trying to taint his reputation. The HOD just told her to stay away from Doc outside of the lecture room. And that if she ever need to see him for academic purposes in his office she should go with another student. That was all.

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"Tell me, when's that guy going to tell you that he likes you?"

I hear Kevin's voice behind me as I finish

pumping the petrol into this second car.

-Me: "Are you talking to me, Kev?"

-Him: "Of course I'm talking to you."

He says as I collect the money from the car's driver.

-Me: "And what guy might you be talking about?"

I ask as I walk over to the cashier. Kevin walks behind me still talking.

-Him: "Thando, your lecturer. That's who I'm talking about."

Kevin knows Doc because sometimes he comes to see me at work.

-Me: "Thando? Kevin, are you high or something?"

-Him: "Don't tell me you haven't noticed that the guy has a thing for you."

I talk to the cashier then turn to Kevin.

-Me: "You're seeing things, that's all I'm gonna tell you."

We then both walk away from the cashier window to the bench.

-Him: "I'm a guy, Soso. I know what I'm talking about. I can see the way the guy looks at you."

He says sitting down on top of the table.

-Me: "No, maan, Kevin, there's no such thing. Doc would never have a thing for a student. Besides, if he really liked me he would have said something by now."

-Him: "Maybe it's because he knows that you just came out of a relationship and he wants you to get over that first. But one thing I know is that he wants to tap that ass."

-Me: "Yuck! Kevin, you're disgusting... Let me go attend to that car."

It's going to be a long night, I tell you. I walk away, leaving Kevin laughing. I know that Doc is my lecturer and that I'm not yet ready to date, but if I'm being honest a part of me wishes what Kevin just said could be true. A part of me is hoping that I haven't been misreading the signals I've been getting from Doc. That he really likes me. But from the way he dealt with the whole Thuso thing I doubt he'd go for a student.

#9 [Extra long]

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"Know you're wonderin' why I been calling. Like I got ulterior motives. Know we didn't end this so good, but you know we had something so good. So I'm wonderin, can we still be friends?" -

Justin Bieber

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The next day I'm woken up by the ringing of my cellphone. I grab it from the bedside pedestal and answer it without even opening my eyes. As it turns out it's the courier guys, delivering my package. I jump out of the bed immediately after hanging up and put on a robe over my PJs. Then I put on my morning shoes before walking out the door to sign for the package at the gate. Upon getting it I return to the flat excited. But jeez! I wonder what those courier guys must be saying about me wearing PJs around 13:30. If only they knew the kind of life I'm living though they would understand. I had a very long night at work last night and the minute I came home this morning I just threw myself on the bed and slept like a corpse. But now it's time to get ready for the party. I quickly make my bed and sweep the floor. When I'm done I go brush my teeth then make myself some eggs to eat with the bread I bought yesterday. In a hurry, I eat then wash the plate and the pan. It's now 14:00

and I only have an hour to get ready for the party. It only starts at 18:00 but there's still that drive to East London so Doc said he'll be here to fetch me at 15:00. We need to get there before any of the guests arrive so we can get to welcome them. And Doc being the perfectionist that he is, he says he also wants to make sure that everything at the venue is the way he wants it to be before the guests arrive.

I quickly get his gift out of the plastic it's packaged in and it's exactly what I ordered. Satisfied, I put it in a black and white polka dot gift box that I bought on Tuesday. Inside the box I also put in the card that I had already written. Then I go take a shower. Because the water is cold and I'm also running late, I don't take much time in there. I shower quickly then step out. After lotioning I put on a white half sleeve maxi sheath evening gown that's got a long slit that runs up to my thigh on the left.

Then to accentuate my curves and to add a little bit of colour on the dress, I put on a gold metal belt that cinches my narrow waist. Then I slip on matching white flat sandals onto my cute feet, I'm just not down for wearing heels all night in a party no matter how formal it is. Besides my dress is floor length so not everyone will get to see my feet. After making sure that my make-up is on point and that my hair is tightly tied into a neat bun I finish the look off with a white elbow length sleeve faux fur bolero jacket. In the invite it has been specified that men should wear all black and women should wear all white. So I got to stick to the theme too. Luckily, I had brand new white clothing items in the flat's built-in closet. I bought them last semester using my bursary money because I was invited to an all white formal party in Nelspruit by Thuso. But she changed the theme at the last minute so I never got to wear these clothes before today.

I put on my perfume that I always save for special occasions and then I'm good to go. Doc calls saying he's waiting for me at the gate. I get my silver clutch back and the gift box then I'm out the door. When I get outside at precisely 15:00 I find Doc waiting by his immaculate car. Mmmmh, this sight. I know that he always looks handsome but today he looks even more handsome and sexier. Instead of a black suit he's wearing a navy blue one with a white button down shirt and black leather derby shoes, no tie. He's the birthday boy after all, he couldn't wear like the rest of the male guests. Damn, he looks like some kind of a model with one of his hands tucked in his pocket and him leaning against the driver's side door of the car. Gosh, I have to admit I've never known such a disturbing man or one who wears his sexuality so easily. Latey, I'm always aware of it, always aware of him, even though I never want to admit

it.

"Wow! You look amazing."

He remarks smiling so brightly. I swear I've never seen such a big smile on his face before, and it sends a shiver up my spine.

-Me: "Thank you. You look great too."

I say as I come to stand before him.

-Him: "Is this mine?"

He asks referring to the gift box in my hand.

-Me: "Yep. It's nothing fancy, as you know I don't have much green. But I hope you'll like it."

-Him: "Hey, it's the thought that counts. Thank you for getting me something. I can't wait to see what it is."

-Me: "But you can only open it with the other gifts at the party. Not now."

-Him: "Fair enough."

He says with a smile. Then he reaches for my free hand and walks me gently to the passenger side of the car. Oh my, his cologne, is intoxicating. It's not the one he usually wears, this one is new and it's mesmerising. I just want to bury myself in his chest and take it all in, but I wouldn't dare do that. The man's my lecturer. He gets my door and helps me inside then walks round to get in the driver's side. He starts the car and as he puts the gear to 1 his hand bushes against my arm and my body ridiculously responds to that slight sensation. My mouth goes dry, I just can't help it. I don't know but I want to touch him. Every nerve in my body is on high alert, responding to his sensual appeal. The goosebumps that are running down my arms and legs are a silent acknowledgement of the effect he has upon me. I have to admit, I've never experienced such an awareness of my own body, this shameless desire to give myself to a man, not even with

Alex. Or Doc himself before today. "Come on, Soso, pull yourself together, girl." Inside, I repeatedly say to myself.

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On the way I am so tense I can hardly hear anything Doc's saying. My mind is fighting these weird feelings that I'm feeling for him right now.

I get a hold of myself when his phone rings. It's in the cup holder of the centre console and I can see the name of the caller on the screen - Anathi. When he sees it too he just ignores it.

-Me: "Aren't you gonna answer that?"

I ask curiously.

-Him: "No. That's my little sister. And I know what she wants and she's not getting it."

I knew that he has a little sister but I didn't know what her name was until now.

-Him: "She wants to take my other car that's in our parents' garage and use it now that she's still waiting for her insurance claim after smashing her own car into a lamp post. I've already told her not to take the car, but she just can't stop begging."

-Me: "But why don't you want her to use it."

-Him: "Anathi's a bad driver. Who's to say she won't wreck that one too? I love her, I really do, but I can't help her on this."

-Me: "You sure do love her. Your face always lights up when you're talking about her."

-Him: "She's the only sibling I have, that's why."

-Me: "I'd love to see her someday."

-Him: "I have her pictures on my phone. I can show you how she looks."

He takes his phone which has now stopped ringing and thumbs it. Then he shows me Anathi's picture and tells me to swipe through to see more.

I know this woman, I say to myself as I look at the pictures. It's the same woman in the photo I saw in his wallet, the one I thought was the mother of his kids. I smile to myself because this means he's not still hung up on his ex-wife. Him keeping what I thought was the picture of his ex-wife was kind of unsettling to me, if I'm being honest.

Speaking of his ex-wife, his phone in my hand rings again as I'm still checking out Anathi's pictures. It says Busisiwe on the screen and I know that that's his ex-wife, he'd told me her name.

I quickly give it to him, wondering what they could be talking about when they call each other. When he sees who's calling, he quickly

grabs the phone out of my hand and answers.

-Him: "Busie. Please tell me you haven't changed your mind... What? You can't do that...Busisiwe, you're really testing me right now. You better make sure that my kids are on that plane to East London tomorrow if you don't want to see me react badly."

I can see that he's pissed but he's really trying to control his temper with each word he speaks.

-Him: "I couldn't be with them on their birthday two days ago, so this long weekend is my chance to be with them. Don't fuck with me."

The he hangs up, pissed as fuck. I won't dare ask him anything, this is personal. I just look out the window and start a conversation about the Middledrift small town that we're now driving past. Surprisingly, he replies. And then we converse about a lot of different things until we get to East London.

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By 16:55 we're in front of this beautiful house in the neighbourhood of Beacon Bay. After speaking through the intercom the gate opens and Doc drives in and up the driveway.

"Is this your friend's house? And what did you say his name was again? Bhongo?"

I ask open-mouthed at how magnificent the house is.

-Him: "Yes, it's Bhongo. And no, the house is not his. He lives in an apartment close to his workplace. The house is his parents' but they live in Jo'burg and only come here once or maybe twice a year. His father is my father's business partner."

He says as he pulls up in front of the double

garage. Then he gets out and goes round to get my door. I feel like a princess right about now. He gets my hand and helps me out and we walk to the front door hand in hand. But before we get to the door his friend comes out to welcome us, with a woman I assume is his girlfriend by his side. They are already dressed up in their bests and they look great.

"The birthday boy is in the house. How's it going, bro?"

This guy says exchanging a hand shake with Doc, before they hug in a brotherly manner.

-Doc: "And he's here with a beautiful arm candy. Her name's Soso. Soso, this is my friend Bhongo and his fiancée, Zizo."

-Me: "It's nice to meet you guys. And you both look great."

I say extending my hand to Bhongo. But he doesn't accept it, he comes for a hug instead.

-Bhongo: "It's nice to meet you too, Soso. And welcome to our humble abode."

Humble? This house is anything but humble, I say to myself. Zizo then comes for a hug too.

-Zizo: "You look good, girl."

She says with a smile. I'm not a very good judge of character but in my eyes right now Zizo seems nice.

-Me: "You're too kind. Thank you."

We all get inside the house and woow the decor in the huge elegant main room, where the party is obviously going to be at, is amazing. It's black and white, according to the theme, and it's clear that it got done by professionals.

Everything is done to the tee. Doc would be crazy if he would want to change anything here, I say to myself. This is what I call class. There is long table and proper seating arrangements are made for each guest. As I count the seats I

realise that 26 guests are expected. I hope they are all nice, I pray inside. The last thing I need is to be in a party with spicy women who specialise in throwing shades.

Doc gives everything a green light and I put the gift box I came with on the gift table in the corner. The waitresses serve us champagne before we proceed to the patio at the back of the house where the party is going to start at. We sit there around a lit fireplace, chatting and listening to music while making this very big 31st birthday "candle". We're making it by gluing long matchsticks onto a piece of wood to form the number 31. It's huge but by the time the first guests arrive we're already done with it. Soon more guests come through, everyone with their plus ones. We welcome them and they all seem nice, I haven't gotten any bad vibes yet. The waiters serve champagne and finger foods. But there's still 6 more guests yet to arrive. And

when they do, God I lose my mind when I see who they are. It's Alex and that girlfriend of his, I can't even remember her name but I think he said it's Iviwe. Then his two friends, Sivenathi and Siyamthanda and their plus ones. What the hell? Bhongo knows these people? Doc and I are standing amidst the guests in the patio but I can feel the knots forming in my stomach as I look at them walking in following Bhongo and Zizo who had gone to welcome them at the front of the house. I wasn't expecting to see Alex's face here, especially not with this woman. Yes, I no longer want him but he was my first love and I just broke up with him a little over two weeks ago so feeling hurt and angry when I see him with another woman is expected. I'm very much aware, yes, that he's now with this Iviwe chick but I just don't want to see them together holding hands and acting all lovey dovey in front of me.

"Oh Lord, no, not Alex."

I find myself saying that out loud as they walk in.

"Is one of them your ex?"

Doc whispers close to my ear when he hears what I'm saying. Gosh, the feeling of his warm minty breath on my skin doesn't only calms me down but it also makes me feel all tingly. My breath gets suspended for a moment before I manage to pull myself together and answer.

"Yes. The one with a tinted fade."

-Him: "Look, I'm gonna need you to remain calm and act as normal as possible. Don't let him get under your skin. Tonight is not about him, it's about having fun, okay?"

-Me: "Okay."

-Him: "That's my girl. Now let's go greet them."

He takes my hand and we go over to them. I must say, I'm feeling quite bold with him by my

side.

Alex flushes when he sees me, probably because I have another man next to me. A real man at that. I stick to what Doc said, I force myself to remain calm and greet them with a smile.

-Alex: "Soso? I wasn't expecting to see you here."

His voice is whispery, almost inaudible. I can see that he's not feeling himself.

-Me: "Likewise...Iviwe, you look good."

I say without losing my smile.

-Iviwe: "Thanks."

She says with an attitude. She can go to hell, but I don't say that out loud. Doc and I just move along to greet Sive and Siya as well as their partners. Leaving Alex standing there like a statue.

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Now that the guests are all here the party officially begins. And the match candle we've created has to serve as the party starter. Doc takes my hand and asks me to help him light the multiple matches on the "candle". I smile shyly then follow his lead. I must admit, I've never heard of a match birthday candle before today, it was Zizo's idea. She said it's a fun way to give credence to the milestone birthday being celebrated, first birthday Doc celebrates after the divorce. And I must say, it became incredibly exciting to see the matches all light up together. There's also some cheering among the guests as they all light up. Everyone is cheering but Alex. Seeing me with Doc is killing him and frankly I like it.

Now it's time to move the party inside to the main room. Upon stepping inside the warm airconditioned room, as the ladies we all lose our jackets and coats. My deep v-neck dress is showing off my cleavage and I can't help but notice that Doc can't take his eyes off of it. And that makes me blush.

We all go sit at the long table. And I realise that Doc and I will be sitting across from Alex and Iviwe. I feel almost immediately but there's no changing the sitting arrangement. Doc notices how tense I am as I sit down after he pulled the chair out for me and that pushes him to whisper close to my ear once again after he's seated.

-Him: "Remember to remain calm and collected, okay? If you do, I'll buy you glass shoes. Cinderella's."

He whispers with a teasing tone. This one is funny. What? Cinderella shoes? I can't help but giggle at the sound of that. Doc whispering so

close to my ear and me giggling sends Alex straight to the world of the crazy. I can see him shifting uncomfortably in his chair, his teeth clenched. This is killing him and that makes my heart smile. I got him.

The proceedings go on. More champagne is served and we all make a toast to the birthday boy before digging in to the delicious fancy food served by the waiters. Everybody at the table is having a conversation with the others, but not Alex. His girlfriend keeps trying to get him to talk but I can see that he's not in the mood. Me on the other hand I'm having myself some fun and that's destroying him.

A little later, I feel the need to pee and I ask for a bathroom from Zizo who's sitting on my right. She tells me that it's upstairs, third door on the right. I get up and go. I do my thing then wash my hands. But as I'm about to walking out, I meet Alex in the passage. He's followed me.

What the hell does he want? I try to get past him but he blocks my way.

"What are you doing, Alex? What do you want?"

-Him: "You're sleeping with that guy now, Soso?"

-Me: "Who I sleep or don't sleep with isn't any of your business, Alex. Just move out of my way."

I answer as calm as I can manage it.

-Him: "I'm sure you're wondering why I've been calling you in the past few days. I don't want us to get back together, Soso. I don't have any ulterior motives. I just hate how I ended things with you after such a long time together. I'd like us to be civil with each other, to be friends. For old times sake."

Friends? Is he listening to himself?

-Me: "Alex, I don't need a friend like you in my life. Or one like Thuso for that matter. I know that you two slept together."

-Him: "About that. Soso, I was at a club, drunk and Thuso came onto me. It was a once off mistake, I swear. She knows that too."

-Me: "Alex, I'm not asking. I don't care who you sleep with. You shouldn't care who I sleep with either. If you wish to continue sleeping with Thuso you should because I'm done with her as a friend."

-Him: "Soso, you know that I won't do that. Listen..."

But he doesn't finish because Doc is now here, talking behind him.

-Doc: (to me) "Hey, baby. Is everything okay?"

Baby? Okay, I get it, he's saying that just to spite Alex. Right?

-Me: "Yeah, yeah, everything is fine."

I say as he comes to stand very close to me. Gosh, any moisture there's been in my mouth

dries at the predatory gleam in his eyes as he pulls me close to his chest. The feel of him, the smell of him, the raw male power of his nearness, is enveloping me in an unfamiliar haze of longing. And then his lips brush my neck and I feel as if my body is burning up. His hands move to my waist and he pulls me even closer to him. I'm not exactly sure what's going on but damn, every nerve in my body tingles in anticipation of his kiss. And like I've anticipated he presses his lips on mine. I find myself parting my lips for his tongue to move in to my mouth. And it does. I swear wetness is now exploding between my legs as his tongue caresses mine. It's as if he's possessing me, and I don't want him to stop. I've even forgotten about Alex who I'm sure is still standing exactly where he was, watching us. When Doc pulls back, I feel almost dizzy with longing. I'm not even sure if my legs would carry me if he lets go of me so I hold onto him some more. He

puts his finger on my chin, lifting my face so my eyes could meet his.

-Him: "I've been missing you downstairs. Let's go join the party."

He says with his deep, sexy voice.

-Me: "Sure."

I say after swallowing some of my saliva, still longing for his kiss. He takes my hand and we walk down the passage and down the stairs. Leaving Alex pulling statue of liberty right there in the passage. As we walk down the stairs I can hear the music downstairs blaring. I want to talk to Doc about what has just happened but he's not giving me a chance to because he can't stop talking about what could be going on downstairs. When we get there we find everybody off the table, most of them now gathered on the dance floor dancing to "Ntombi" by NaakMusiQ ft Bucie, while the

remaining few are just watching and clapping. The way they're dancing it's like the piece is choreographed and I like it.

-Doc: "Let's join them."

Oh hell yeah, I looove this song so I'm up for the dance. My heart is still excited about that kiss and that excitement is now going down to my feet as I dance. The party is now on. Yeah, this night is about having fun and I intend to enjoy every minute of it, but I'm not going to get drunk. Alex can go to hell.

#10

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"Go on, go on, come on leave breathless. Tempt me, tease me, until I can't deny this loving feeling. Make me long for your kiss." - The Corrs

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5 weeks later

It's Sunday afternoon. Doc and I are in East London having just dropped the twins off at the airport. This was their first visit after they visited during that long weekend 5 weeks ago. I guess after hearing how pissed Doc was on the phone that day, their mother decided to let them visit. Awww, how I love them. We really click. And they've been asking if I'm going to be their second mommy. Yoh, imagine being a mom to two 9 year olds at my age. No, that's never going to happen. Especially because their dad and I are not even together, we're just friends. Yes, that's what he said after that kiss at the party, that he was only helping a friend get back at her ex - and that's me getting back at Alex. Really? That's all there was to it? You can imagine how disappointed I was, but I sucked it up like the big girl that I am. Doc would never go for someone like me anyway, I was crazy to

even think that he's interested in me, I kept saying to myself.

Did he really help me with Alex that night though? Absolutely. He drove my entitled ex totally insane. I'm telling you, the open bar at the party came in handy for Alex that night. He made sure to swim in the booze before dragging his flamingo - Iviwe, out the door. Leaving the party early around 22:00. He clearly couldn't stand seeing me with another man and looking all happy. But that was his problem, not mine. I won't lie though, seeing him making a fool of himself before he scurried to the door made me smile with satisfaction. I felt like I had gotten my revenge. Doc really made that night comfortable and a lot fun for me but how I wish we could have something more. What is absolutely amazing about this guy, except for his looks, is that he has this incredible ability to reel you in. He's different. He has his own ideas,

his own way of looking at things. He knows what to say and how to say it. He makes you feel like there's absolutely nothing you can ever say to him that would offend him, hurt him, or make you any less than what he already thinks of you. I have a certain level of trust with him. Maybe too much. He never goes back on his word, and I have to admit, I sometimes do. And I've also noticed that he has the ability to see right through me. But why can't he see that I want to be with him? Or maybe he does see it, but he's not pursuing me because he's simply not into me. Well, I kind of accepted that weeks back. I swallowed the bitter pill and moved on. It's probably for the best anyway because this guy is still my lecturer, I keep convincing myself. As for Alex? Well, I haven't seen him since the party. And I can tell you this much, I'm so over his ass. My life is going well right now. I'm doing good at work, and my work is not interfering with my studies. I'm doing just as

good, in fact great, in my studies. I'm passing all my tests and assignments.

On Friday we're closing for the September break, and I want to leave for home early on Friday then come back on Monday. I work from Monday to Thursday so I will use the weekend to go see my queen - my incredible mom. I really miss her, I can't lie.

But for now here I am, chatting about general stuff with Doc as we drive from the airport.

-Him: "It's a hot Spring day. When was the last time you went to the beach?"

He asks looking at me as we are waiting for the red light to turn green at the robots.

-Me: "Yoh, a while back. Around March, I think. Why asking?"

-Him: "We're in East London and it's a hot day so let's drive to the beach."

It's really hot, so feeling that cooling sea breeze on my skin sounds like a great idea right about now.

-Me: "I'm game. Let's go."

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He drives us to Gulu Beach. I swear I thought I knew all the East London beaches but boy was I wrong. I've never seen this one before today. But Doc on the other hand clearly has been here before, probably with Bhongo. We get out of the car and walk down to the water. I must say, I find this beach peaceful. It is quiet, I only see a few people around, I guess it also helps that it's off-season. We're guaranteed many uninterrupted hours of chilling here, I say to myself.

"The water is inviting, let's go in."

Doc says as we are standing on the shore, with our slide sandals off.

-Me: "Go in? With our clothes on? We didn't bring any swimwear, remember?"

-Him: "We can always go skinny-dipping."

He says chuckling.

-Me: "As if that's possible."

-Him: "I don't mind getting WET and so do my leather car seats. I'm going in."

He says with a sly smile and putting emphasis on the word "wet". What, did he do that on purpose? I wonder. He doesn't wait for me to say anything, he quickly takes his T-shirt off and drops it on the sand. I find myself gawking as I'm taking in his bare muscular upper body.

Gosh, shivers glide down my spine at the sight of those sexy abs. He's so fuckin' sexy and I can't help but notice how smooth and unblemished his skin is as my eyes go all the

way down his chest to his waist. All I want is to touch him, to feel his naked skin against mine. Oh Lord no, I'm not supposed to be feeling this way about my lecturer, I harshly remind myself. His hands move to the button of his shorts. No, no, no, is he going to unbutton it and take the shorts off? No, he better not do that. The last thing I need is to see him in his boxers. He'd be practically naked and I can't take that. But thank God, he doesn't take his shorts off, he just pulls them up a little. Then he lifts his eyes only to find mine staring at him.

-He: "And why are you looking at me like that?"

I only realise that my breath has been suspended all this time when I have to draw a gulp of air into my labouring lungs before answering.

-Me: "I...ummmh...I'm sorry, I was just admiring your tattoo. What is it? A pelican?"

I say, lying. Referring to his tattoo that is now fully exposed, wrapped darkly around his upper arm. I have to lie because I'm now embarrassed by the fact that he's caught me staring.

-Him: "No, this is a nighthawk. I had it done while I was still in high school. My father didn't approve, but it was too late then to do anything about it."

He answers without paying much attention to my eyes. Then he quickly turns away from me and runs eagerly into the water. Leaving me standing there. I watch as he submerges his shoulders to dip his head below the surface of the water. Then he comes up and turns to look at me.

-Him: "Come on in. The water is not that cold."

He says shouting at me as he moves deeper into this body of water. Is he serious? I can't get in that water with my clothes on. Unlike him, I

mind getting wet. Besides, there's no way I'm going to be in the water with him half-naked. No!!! But hey, it's not his fault that I'm reacting to him. This guy is naturally unconventional, naturally uninhibited, the kind of man I have never had dealings with before.

He keeps calling me in and I finally give in. I get into the water but when it reaches my waist I stop and call him to come to me instead. I just can't go any further. When I see him approaching, I walk back but he soon catches up to me before I can even reach the shore.

-Him: "You're such a baby. You're scared of water?"

He says as he comes to stand in front of me.

-Me: "I'm not scared of water, I just don't want to be wet all the way up."

I say in my defense. The water is now below my knees. But I quickly feel uncomfortable when

Doc's eyes go down on me to look below my waist. Naturally, I, too, take my eyes down there. And when I see what he's seeing I grow even more uncomfortable. The white short jumpsuit I'm wearing is now wet and its delicate fabric is now clinging onto my flesh, exposing my thighs and my V area. Embarrassed, I desperately try to peel the fabric off my skin but when I look back up, Doc cups my face and smashes his lips onto mine. I want to ask what he's doing but my body betrays me. It reacts to this kiss and I don't want him to stop. I respond by kissing him back and wrapping my arms around his neck. Damn, this guy is such a good kisser. I've never been kissed like this by another man before in my life. But then again he's the second man to ever kiss me. His lips work their magic on mine and his tongue is doing unfamiliar things on mine. And when his hands move down my waist to grab my wet ass I feel hot liquid coming out of me down there. Oh my.

This kiss is heated. And for a moment there I think we're going to have sex right there in the water. But he pulls back, leaving me breathless, then he tells me that we have to go. What? I'm wet and frustrated right now. But I understand, we can't do that here. We walk out of the water. He grabs his T-shirt and puts it on, then we both grab our footwear and walk back to the car. But what frustrates me the most now is that on our way back to Alice Doc doesn't at all talk about what has just happened between us. He's talking about everything else but that, or even us. What is this guy doing mara? Does he enjoy tempting and teasing me then leave me all wet and frustrated? Does he want me to be the one to say something or run after him as I long for his intoxicating kisses AND MORE? Yoh, he's irritating the hell out of me, but I don't dare say anything. I just spend the two hour drive in a state of raw confusion.

#11 [18S]

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Warning: This episode contains EXTREME sexual content. Please don't read it if you're gonna want to report it.

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"I'm seeing the pain, seeing the pleasure.
Nobody but you, 'body but me, 'body but us,
bodies together. I love to hold you close, tonight
and always. I love to wake up next to you." -
Zayn

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We get to Alice around 18:00. And instead of driving past his house to drop me off at my place, he opens his gate with a remote and drives in. He parks in front of the garage and

looks at me.

-Me: "Please don't tell me you're expecting me to walk home in this damp jumpsuit."

-Him: "I won't tell you that."

He gets out of the car and comes to get my door. I climb down, confused. He wraps his arm around my neck and leads me to the front door without saying anything. It's only when we get inside that he shows me why I'm here. He suddenly crashes his mouth onto mine, crushing me in his embrace. Again, I don't ask, I just respond hungrily, leaning into the kiss. This guy knows that I can't resist him, that's probably why he's doing this to me, toying with my feelings, I say in my mind. But still, I don't stop. I hope he doesn't stop either. Soon he scoops me up, carries me through to the bedroom and dumps me unceremoniously on the bed. There is a sparkle in his eyes and his smile is like sunshine as he gets on top of me. He starts by

kissing my lips softly but soon he deepens the kiss. I am totally unprepared by the sheer scale of my physical response to this. I am afire. We're finally doing this. In my head, skies are blue, the sun is bright and birds are singing. He's sucking and nibbling at my bottom lip and my heart pounds faster as I heat within. And soon I feel a familiar moistness between my legs. This guy manages to make me come just by kissing me, this is so new to me. He trails kisses down my neck and then, struggling with the buttons of my jumpsuit he literally rips it off. Then he gets up and climbs down the bed. As I'm still wondering what's going on he scoops me up and lands me on my feet on the floor. He slips my jumpsuit off my shoulders then down, he pulls it all the way down together with my panties to drop them around my feet. I quickly pull my feet out, discarding the items on the floor. Then he unclips my bra, leaving me completely naked. I should be self-conscious

right about now but for some reason I'm not. For a moment he stands back, just looking at me, then he comes to unclip my weave and pulls it tumbling down over my shoulders. I try to help him take his T-shirt off but he takes over by roughly pulling it up over his head before discarding it onto the floor. I lie down on the bed waiting for him to finish undressing himself, because clearly he likes doing it himself. He shucks off his damp shorts together with his boxers, leaving himself completely naked too. Oh my, I gasp as I see how big he is. Gosh, can I take that d*ck in? But nonetheless I still want him. Lying on my back, he climbs on top of me. Damn, I want his naked skin and the smell of his maleness over me. He starts kissing me again, slowly. His lean muscled naked body smells so delicious even though he had dipped in salty water. I have always loved this scent of his and now that it's this close to my naked body it feels like my personal property. I

automatically arch my stomach and hips up to him as he plants kisses between my breasts, down my belly and beyond my body. He cups one of my breasts and starts sucking and nipping at my puckering nipple. His other hand slips between my legs, pausing briefly to ply my thighs apart, his fingers stroking the delicate inner skin. He finds me already wet as he uses his fingers to part my labia, exploring my swelling nub. A couple of fingers inside my wet p**sy for a moment gives him more juice to lubricate me, making my clit more slippery and easier to work. And I can feel it growing harder and harder under his fingers. He is gentle and tender, working to arouse me even more, and he's succeeding. I curve and strain to meet him, my ardour becoming hard to control. Gosh, I am so ready for him to enter me now. But no, not yet. He slides down, now his eyes directly above my open legs, my p**sy open for his inspection. Knowing myself I should be shy right now, but

no, I'm not. I just want him to do me. He goes down with his mouth, perusing my p**sy lips like a gourmet, tasting and licking, flicking at my clit with his tongue, working circles around it and gently nibbling with his teeth. I swear I've never felt so much pleasure in my life, and my loud moans are an indication. I am dripping wet now, my breath ragged and broken. My juices trickle and he licks them away. He tongues my entrance, probing first lightly and then more deeply. His face presses close to me, drinking my depths as I judder and squirm, fighting the impulse to buck my hips. My face flushing, sweat trickles down between my breasts. I scream, losing my mind. Through my growing euphoria he stops and raises his head away from my p**sy, still on his knees below me. I watch his erect long cock quivering and I can't wait for it to enter me. He leans forward and pulls a drawer of the bedside pedestal, coming out with a pack of condoms. He puts one on.

Then lowering himself, he lies full length atop me, the tip of his cock brushing my p**sy. He holds there, not entering, but teasing and arousing, knowing very well that I want him to plunge inside me. Pressing lightly in, he then withdraws, instead kissing me, open mouthed, one hand kneading a breast and tweaking the nipple. No, this man is killing me, I can't take it anymore.

-Me: "Please just get inside me already. I want you inside me. Please."

I say, begging for it, with my voice trembling. This is new to me, I've never begged for a d*ck before. But then again this entire experience is new to me. I've never felt anything like this with Alex.

-Him: "All in good time."

He whispers in my ear. And he continues his plying and rolling of first one nipple, then the

other. I am wild with desire. Every time his cock leans in towards my entrance, I rock my hips towards him, trying to swallow him into my depths, but always he withdraws, leaving me shaking with anticipation. I am yearning to have him fill me, aching to have his entire length fill me. My juices are flowing freely and the bed covers are damp below me. Sweat glistens on my chest and my skin is now slick. Finally, when I think he's going in. He stops and whispers in my ear.

-Him: "We can't do this. It's wrong."

What the hell? This man can't be doing this to me again. Jeez, I feel like I might actually pass out right now.

-Me: "But how can it be wrong if we both want it?"

-Him: "You sure you want it?"

-Me: "Of course."

I really don't care what happens tomorrow, I want him now.

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He gets off me, climbs down the bed then pulls me by my hand.

-Him: "I want you on your hands and knees on the bed."

He says gently. What? He wants to take it from behind? I've never done that before. Alex tried so many times to have us do it but I'd always refuse. But funny enough, now I obey. I don't know why, but I want to experience this with him. Maybe it's because he's already given me so much pleasure that I didn't know before and I now want more. I quickly kneel down on the bed and rest on my elbows, head well down so that my big butt can be presented for him as he

stands on his feet on the floor behind me. But clearly I have not done it well enough because he comes and helps me arch my back then his hand gently presses my head down on the bed. My legs are splayed, but he still forces my knees a little further apart then opens my pussy wider with his fingers. Oh no, I tremble. And I quiver in anticipation of his d*ck inside me. But instead he uses his hands to caress my butt. As I'm still enjoying that, a hard smack across one of my butt cheeks comes. I jump in pain but he doesn't stop. With every slap he makes, the next one becomes harder but honestly I don't want him to stop. I can feel the pain but at the same time I'm feeling the pleasure. I don't know but this excites me, it turns me on some more, and my screams and moans are an acknowledgement of that. A tingling sensation spreads all over my body with each smack. I'm screaming and moaning in pain and pleasure. I swear if these house stands weren't so big our

neighbours would hear my screams. My juices are flowing and I'm screaming and cursing, using words that I didn't even know I knew. I'm becoming a slut now aren't I? But I don't care. He's rotating between my butt cheeks with hard slaps then occasionally reward me with gentle caresses over the sensitive areas. Then he directs his member into my awaiting wet p**sy entrance. I quiver. First the head goes in, then he continues to thrust forward, slowly. I let a little moan of pain. This guy is big, it's difficult for him to go all in even though I'm this wet. He continues to push himself in gently, bit by bit, occasionally stopping to let me adjust. Then finally, the walls of my hole expand wide enough to take him all in. He starts off with slow, gentle thrusts.

"Damn, baby. You're so fuckin' tight. Hot too."

He says in between his moans. He's moaning loudly than I would expect from a guy. But you

know what, that turns me on. I gasp and grunt as his groin slaps loudly against my ass, with him moving faster inside me. And my juices quickly build up inside.

"Go faster, baby. Faster."

I'm telling him exactly what he wanted to do because before I can even finish speaking he's already picking up the pace, going in and out harder and faster. His fuck tool hitting spots that have never been touched by any man before. My moans of pleasure are now rising to a crescendo. I don't even know what I'm saying with my mouth. And soon I explode in a crazy orgasm that I've never felt before. He keeps moving inside me, prolonging my climax as I shudder and scream.

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Barely does my orgasm subside than he pulls out and turns me around so I can lie on my back. Then he instructs me to go all the way on the bed to lean against the pillows with my back. I do as he says.

"Spread your legs."

He instructs a little harsh now but I easily obey. But clearly I'm not doing what he wants. He climbs on the bed and lifts both my legs by the knees, pushing my feet all the way back to hit the bottom of my butt. Soon I find both my legs being spread and parted at the knees, lifting me from the hip and displaying my p**sy that's wet with my own cum. He steps back allowing his eyes to feast on my splayed wet vagina. Being me I should be embarrassed, but I'm not. The whole thing just makes me hot for him all over again. I have barely come down from the waves of the last orgasm but already I feel my body's response to him as he sticks two fingers inside

me while kneeling by my open legs. He grabs a small pillow and pushes it under my hips to support me. He adjusts the pillow under my hips, forcing my back to arch and pushing my hips higher, my dripping hole even more exposed.

"That's more like it."

He says before going down on me with his fingers again. His fingers part my p**sy lips, stretching them wide. His face is now so close to my private, I can feel his warm breath over my swollen and pulsating labia. Then his tongue curls around them, over and around, continuing on to my entrance where he pushes in, licking me inside. The pressure of his face against me tells me he is licking as deep as he is able, probing with the tip of his tongue, tasting my juices. His whole mouth fastens around me, and he starts chewing at my me, tongue working me all the time as I moan and scream

to the exquisite pleasure-pain of it all. He keeps at it and this time the part-moan-part-howl that comes from me is loud and long. Mercilessly he wraps his mouth around my clit, sucking hard on it. I struggle trying to escape the sensation overload, but at the same time glorying in it. His mouth clamped over me, tormenting-pleasuring me is irresistible. From within, orgasm swells and rises, then when I'm about to explode in his mouth, he stops and withdraws, leaving me shaking and shuddering. Why the hell did he stop? I was about to cum. My p**sy is hot, drenched, engorged and I am desperate to have him inside me. I look up at him, my eyes full of lust.

-Him: "Do you have anything to say?"

Heeh, this one likes to hear me beg, huh. And if it's begging he wants, he's gonna get it because I really want him in.

-Me: "Inside me. I want you inside me. Please."

-Him: "What do you want inside you?"

He asks stroking his d*ck.

-Me: "I want your d*ck inside me now. Please."

-Him: "And then? What do you want it to do to you?"

I am half-crazy with lust. I can barely think straight.

-Me: "I want you to fuck me. Please just fuck me."

My goodness what am I saying with my mouth? What am I turning into? But hey, I really want him in. Frantic with arousal, crazy with lust, I just want him to plunge his cock inside me and pound away at my core. As if to say your wish is my command, he sets the tip of his rigid penis at my p**sy entrance. As he touches me, my inner muscles convulse at the thought of this thick shaft penetrating me.

-Him: "Watch me, baby. Watch me."

Obediently, I look up into his face.

-Him: "No. There."

And he eye-points south, to where his massive cock is brushing my entrance.

-Him: "You said you want me to fuck you. Now watch me fucking you."

He orders. I drop my gaze and he leans in, pushing slowly inside me. An inch. Two inches. Four inches. His thick shaft, wide against my hole, stretching me open. He penetrates me slowly and I tremble. He breathes heavily as he goes deeper inside me. Oh my, he feels so good inside me. I shut my eyes in pleasure.

-Him: "No, no, keep your eyes open and look down there, remember?"

I do as he says. His own hips quiver, and then with a gasp, he plunges the rest of the way

inside me and starts moving faster, his balls banging against me. I am slick and slippery. There is no resistance as he pumps into me, hard, meeting my inner walls. Almost instantly my climax starts to gather again and I moan, then yell as he pounds inside me to a slow rhythm now. Deliberately he times each stroke, and I watch as he thrusts his cock deep into my core, my p**sy welcoming him as he bangs hard into me. Again and again, I watch as he sheaths himself in me, thrusting in deep, as far as he can go against my inner walls. I gasp and scream. I fling my head back and scream to the ceiling, but he grabs the back of my head and pulls me forward.

-Him: "Watch I said!"

He says fiercely. I watch as his cock fucks my slick hole. Then, my orgasm rises quickly, engulfing me in spasm after spasm of pleasure. I don't care anymore, I scream to the ceiling as I

explode. And soon after me, with a gasp, his eyes shut tight and he shudders into orgasm, groaning as his hips buck, his cock pressing deep inside me. His chest heaving, he collapses onto me and simply lies there as I run my fingers on his sweaty back. For a moment we lie there, unmoving, my mind full of glory. Then he rises and pulls his now flaccid member out of me and pulls the condom out. He climbs down the bed and makes his way to the bathroom, coming back with a wet towel that he uses to clean us both. Climbing on the bed again, he pulls me to lie on his chest as he lies on his back. But I just have to interrupt this moment and ask something.

-Me: " Thando?"

-Him: "Yes, baby."

-Me: "What just happened? What's happening between us?"

He gently rolls me off of him. Then, with a serious face, he takes my chin in his hand and looks deep into my eyes.

-Him: "Okay, I'm gonna talk about me, about my own feelings...Soso, I love you. I know that I probably shouldn't, but I do. I've tried to fight it and I also tried to wait until you're completely healed and also out of varsity, but I just couldn't do it anymore. I'm falling in love with you everyday, Someleze. All I want is to be with you. I want you close to me like this every night. And I want your face to be the first thing I see every morning. I love you."

God knows I've waited for weeks to hear him say something like this. But now that he's saying it, I wonder if he means it. It sounds somewhat corny, almost unbelievable. And I don't even know how to respond to him. All I do is kiss his lips.

#12

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"I just wanna dive in the water with you. Baby, we can't see the bottom. It's so easy to fall for each other, I'm just hoping we catch one another." - Cheat Codes

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Hours later I wake up in Doc's arms, with the bedroom lights still on. I look at him and smile to myself. Damn, this man does things to me. I'm looking at his handsome face but he can't even feel my stare, he's deep asleep and with good reason. After the first round we took a little rest then went for round two. The second round was more intense and it lasted longer, leaving both of us drained. After it, we cuddled on the bed wanting to catch our breaths before we could go take a shower then go to the kitchen to get something to eat. But then I saw

Doc pulling the covers up and soon exhaustion must have tugged us into oblivion. I don't even know how long we have been out for, all I know is that I can't spend the night here. I have to sleep in my own bed so I can wake up and get ready to go to campus for my classes in the morning. So, I slowly remove Doc's arms around me. Then I climb down the bed, slowly, careful not to wake him. Furtively, I move around the bed to pick up my clothes from the floor. But can I really walk back home now? What time is it anyway? I don't know because my phone is not with me, I left it in Doc's car when we came in, his is there too. So I move to the dresser to see if I can't find a wristwatch to check the time. And instead of finding a watch I find watches. Twelve of his wristwatch collection displayed in the watch box that I gifted him on his birthday. A smile finds its way to my face at the sight of this. Yes he told me that he really liked the gift but I wasn't sure if he

really meant it, I thought he was just being polite. But now that I'm seeing it put into use I believe what he said, and it makes me smile. Today was my first time entering his bedroom, which is why I never got to see this before. And earlier I was too horny and in the zone to notice anything in this room.

All these watches are functioning and I can see that the time is 22:55. It's not very late, I can still walk home. Besides, home is only 5 minutes away. So I tiptoe out of the open bedroom door, with my clothes in my hands. I only put them on once I get to the lounge. My jumpsuit is torn at the front where there used to be buttons, but it's at night anyway and this is a quiet neighbourhood so chances are I won't meet anyone on the street. I clutch the torn fabric together on my chest with my hand and I go grab my slide sandals that had come off and dropped on the lounge floor when Doc scooped

me up and took me to the bedroom earlier. I put them on then quickly walk out, making sure to open and close the front door slowly. I leave without my phone, but thank God my keys are always around my neck. I could take Doc's car keys and go get my phone from his car but the sound of the car door would most likely wake him up because his bedroom is next to the front of the garage where the car is parked, and I don't want to wake him. So I just go jump over the brick wall and head home without the phone.

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I get to my flat and the first thing I do is to hit the shower. My entire body is sticky with all that sweat that's already dried up on my skin and I smell of sex. I let the shower water cascade down on me. Feeling it sluicing all that sweat

from my skin feels good, I must say. I feel tired and a little sore down there but otherwise wonderfully happy. I had the most amazing sex with Doc and honestly I can't wait to be with him again. Before him I naively thought I knew all I needed to know about sex but he made me see that I was wrong. He gave me pleasure that I never knew I could ever feel. He did unfamiliar things to me and also had me do things I didn't even think I would ever do. To me, going crazy in the bedroom was the definition of the word "slut" and I didn't want to go there. I was all about simple, conventional sex, nothing more. But Doc made me lose all that. He made me see what I was missing out on. Having sex with him was very different. He made it so easy for me to lose myself to him. The whole thing seemed so natural. In the second round he made me do even more things that the old me would never do, but I effortlessly obeyed. Some of the things I did he didn't even ask, I just did

them instinctively. I've changed with just one sexual encounter, haven't I? But what can I say? The guy inspires creativity in me. And he made it easy for me to let him have his way with me. I wanted him to have me any way he wanted and take the greatest pleasure in me. Oh my, just thinking about it makes me feel all hot right now. It sends electric waves throughout my entire body. Soon I find myself sitting down on the shower floor with my legs wide open. I'm playing with myself, thinking of Doc. The images of his cock sliding in and out of my wet vagina are circling in my head and I'm moaning like a little bitch, my fingers deep inside me. I'm wet, juices are running out of my pussy and soon I cum uncontrollably over my hand. I don't remember the last time I got myself off, but it was definitely before I had a boyfriend. Ever since I met Alex I never saw the need to self-service. Even when alone and thinking of him, nothing would propel me to play with myself.

But it's now different with Doc. Just thinking of him makes me wet and I can't help but finger-fuck myself.

After I reach the climax, I sit there panting. Then I get up and finish taking my shower. Soon I'm climbing onto my bed with my PJs on and I immediately drift off to slumberland with my heart smiling.

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In the morning I hear a knock at my door as I finish getting ready to go to campus. I go open wondering who it could be because only three people are living in this yard; and that's me, my landlord and another guy tenant that's now away with work. My landlord also leaves for work early in the morning, around 6:00, and now it's just before 7:00. So who could it possibly be?

It can't be Doc either because all the gates are locked. I open the door and I find my landlord standing there. Oh, it's her. Why is she still around? And what does she want from me so early? Oh God, I hope she's not here to give me a lecture about coming home late last night. She probably heard me when I opened the gate so late at night, and knowing her she would want to lecture me because she always acts like my mother. But I never complain because I know that she does that because she cares.

-Her: "Morning, Soso."

-Me: "Morning, Ma."

-Her: "Are you ready? Come I'm gonna give you a lift and drop you off at the campus gate. I'm on my way to King William's Town."

-Me: "Oh, really? Thanks. Let me go get my bag."

I say with a fake smile. Jesus knows I don't want to catch a ride with her, I want to go with

Doc, but I can't tell her that. She's the kind of woman you don't say "no" to. Plus, in her mind the poor woman thinks she's helping me, so there's no need to make her feel otherwise. She never sees me catching a ride with Doc because she leaves for work very early and only comes back home after 18:00. So she still thinks I walk to campus and now she's trying to save me that walk.

I go grab my bag and walk out to join her in her car. But now I'm worried about Doc. He's going to come here to fetch me and I'd be gone.

What's worse is that he won't even be able to call me because my phone is with him. I can't tell my landlord any of this though, so I just get in her car and we drive off. Indeed, she drops me off at the campus small gate then drives off without having had given me any lecture along the way. Thank God, she obviously didn't hear me come in last night. But now I'm worried

about what Doc is going to say.

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My first lecture is at 8:00 and I still have time to kill, so I go sit on the benches by the library, absorbing the early morning sun while I study. By 8 I go attend my class, and the next one. The second one ends at 9:40 and after it I make my way straight to the library to study as I wait for the third and last one at 12:35. I probably should be going to Doc's office to see him and explain everything but hey, I'm writing a Microbiology test on Wednesday so I have to focus on what comes first - my books.

By 12:30 I'm rushing out of the library going to my class. The building is only a short distance away from the library so I know I'm going to make it there before the class starts. This is

Doc's class and I must admit, I'm feeling a little anxious about seeing him again after what happened between us last night.

When I get there I find all the other students, including Thuso, already standing in front of the lecture room, waiting for Doc to come and open for us. They always make sure to be early for Doc's class because they know that he don't play, he likes punctuality. In fact he likes order in general, and he made that clear to all of us.

Just a moment after I've arrived, at exactly 12:35, Doc arrives and greets us. He steals a glance at me as he opens the classroom, and my heart skips a beat. Gosh, am I going to hear anything this guy says in this class?

We all step inside and I go sit on my chair. Doc starts teaching but, just as I thought, I ain't hearing a thing he's saying. I see his lips moving but I don't hear a word he's saying, all I'm thinking about is how those lips taste, how he

used that mouth down on me yesterday. I can't stop thinking about how he sucked my p**sy, how his tongue worked my clit before letting it go deep inside me, fucking me with it. He's now using his hands, explaining what he's teaching. But all I see is those fingers inside my pussy, rubbing hard against my inner walls. I'm thinking about how he made me scream as he f*cked me senseless. Gosh, all these thoughts are making me wet down there. I keep shifting uncomfortably on my chair, squeezing my thighs together.

He occasionally looks at my direction, with a serious professional look. But yours truly is not returning the same courtesy. I keep blushing like a school girl with a crush every time he looks at me.

Then I see the other students getting up from their chairs and I realise that the lecture is over. Is it already over? I ask myself a rhetorical

question. Honestly, to me, that 45 minutes felt like it was just 10 minutes. I still wanted my eyes to feast on him. Damn, I could watch him all day and still want more. Jesus, I think I'm in love.

Seeing the other students ready to leave, I also get off my chair and follow them to the exit.

"Ndlovu, please remain behind."

Doc says with a stern voice that he always uses with his students. And he's calling me with my surname. He sure knows how to do this "acting professional" thing.

"Okay, sir."

I say, trying to be serious too. Then I walk over to him as the other students leave.

-Him: "What was that?"

-Me: "What was what?"

-Him: "Baby, listen. You can't be doing that in

class. Okay? You can't be blushing and acting like a moonstruck schoolgirl. This is a professional space and we got to be professional in it. Okay? In here, you are nothing but my student, and I'm also nothing but your lecturer. Okay?"

He says with a calm voice, but I can hear the seriousness in it.

-Me: "I'm sorry, it won't happen again."

I say embarrassed now. He's right though I need to get hold of myself, I can't be acting like this in class. Plus, I can't be thinking about other things during a lecture. I need to focus, I need to pass.

-Him: "It really shouldn't happen again. And now let's talk about why you chose to sneak out of my house last night."

-Me: "I'm sorry but I couldn't sleep over. Not when I had to get ready for my classes this

morning."

-Him: "I understand that but you should have said something to me."

-Her: "I thought you wouldn't want me to go. But I now realise that I just acted stupid."

-Him: "Soso, I respect you so please respect me too. Okay? Talk to me about these things."

This is better, I thought he'd be mad.

-Him: "And your phone's with me. Come and get it from my office."

He says collecting his stuff. Then we both walk out to his office. I walk in first then stand by the door, then he also walks in and close the door - but not locking it. Moving over to his desk, he retrieves my phone on top of it then walks back to me. He comes to stand so close to me, the phone still in his hand.

-Him: "Now, tell me, why didn't you come catch

a ride with me this morning? Do you know that I waited 10 minutes outside your gate? And I couldn't even call you because you decided to sneak out of my house last night, leaving your phone behind."

He's speaking so close to me, I can feel the hotness of his breath on my skin. That, combined with his scent and the raw male power of his nearness, envelop me in a haze of longing. All I want is to just grab him and kiss him.

-Me: "Thando,...umhh I mean Doc, I'm sorry. Thing is my landlord offered to give me a ride and I couldn't turn her down. I'm sorry."

I say with a trembling voice, after exhaling.

-Him: "And what's wrong with your voice?"

Heeh this man? He knows exactly what's happening to me, he just wants to hear me say it. Well, I won't, I'll just show him. I quickly wrap

my arms around his neck and kiss him. For a short moment there he responds. But then he pulls back and take a step back.

-Him: "Baby, remember what I said in that lecture room."

-Me: "Professionalism. Yeah, I heard you."

But seriously what did he think would happen with him standing that close to me?

-Him: "Yeah, that. We'll continue with this after hours. Okay?"

I nod then he kisses my hand before handing me my phone. I take it then walk out of his office.

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But as I walk out I find Thuso standing outside. I'm wondering how long has she been standing

there, or how much she's heard, but I don't say anything. I just walk past her and down the corridor, picking up the pace.

"Someleze Ndlovu."

She says behind me and that's when I realise that she's following me. I don't answer her, I just keep walking. Soon I feel her hand grabbing my arm roughly from behind.

-Her: "Someleze Ndlovu, I'm talking to you."

I stop and turn to her angry. Yanking my arm off of her grip, I feel like slapping her but I won't do that.

-Me: "Thuso Kwena, what do you want from me? We don't speak to or with each other, remember?"

-Her: "So you really are sleeping with December, aren't you?"

-Me: "You're delusional."

I say in my defense. But I know that it's true and she knows it.

-Her: "We both know that's bullshit. I've been watching you in class today, blushing like a lovestruck teenager. I saw your look, and I know that he's slept with you."

-Me: "Don't you have anything better to do than watching and following me, Thuso?"

-Her: "See? You're not even denying it. You and December are both hypocrites. You know that? You, Soso, were busy telling me to stay away from December because he's my lecturer but here you are now, sleeping with him. Is he not your lecturer? He, too, was busy saying he would never sleep with a student. Even went to report me to the HOD saying I was harassing him. What is he doing with you? Aren't you his student? You can both deny it all you like but I know that I was right all along. You two are sleeping together. Now tell me, who's a fuckin'

slut, Soso? Huh? You're fucking your lecturer, mzalwanekazi."

There's a crazy leer in her eyes and she's not speaking, she's shouting. But at least we have no audience to hear this, the corridor is clear. One thing I'm getting from all that she's saying though is that she didn't hear anything Doc and I were saying in his office just minutes ago. If she did she would be telling me about it right now.

-Me: "I'm not denying nor confirming any of what you're saying, Thuso. You know why? Because I don't owe you anything."

-Her: "You know what? We shall see what will happen next."

-Me: "And what's that suppose to mean?"

I can't help but feel like that's a threat. What is she going to do? Just weeks ago she was saying she wanted to make peace but now here

she is, threatening me.

-Her: "What's that suppose to mean? Nothing, nana, nothing."

She says with this annoying smirk on her face. Then she saunters off. I stand there for a moment wondering what could be going on in her mind. But then I brush that off and walk away, to the library again. I have 25 minutes to study before I go for a practical session at 14:00, so I rush off. Every minute counts, hey.

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I walk out of the lab after the practical session at exactly 5 o'clock and I make my way to Doc's office for a ride home. I find him already waiting for me and we leave. On the way he's still in the lecturer mode and all we talk about is academic stuff. I'm not complaining though because I

enjoy having serious talks with him. This guy is an intellectual and he feeds my mind. I always absorb a lot from him, I even call him my walking encyclopedia - but he doesn't know it.

We get to my place and he pulls up at the gate. Then he looks at me as if to say "now we can talk about us."

-Him: "I thought you decided to sneak out last night because you were regretting what happened between us."

-Me: "What? No."

-Him: "So no regrets? You're sure this is the right thing for you? You and me, I mean?"

-Me: "Of course, I'm sure."

I say with decisiveness, as much for myself as for him.

-Him: "But you didn't reply to what I said to you yesterday. I told you that I'm falling in love with

you and you said nothing. What, you don't feel the same way? Or am I coming too strong? Am I overwhelming you? Trust me, I didn't mean to..."

-Me: "Baby, no. Stop."

I say, interrupting him.

-Me: "I know that I didn't say anything yesterday but it wasn't because I don't feel the same way you do. Thando, I think you already know that I'm falling in love with you too. It's just that I'm scared, scared to have my heart broken again."

-Him: "You think I'm gonna break your heart?"

-Her: "Baby, listen. I know what I want, and that's you. I know that our relationship is not exactly ideal, whatever that means, but I wanna do this with you. I wanna dive in the water with you even though I don't know what's waiting for us down there. You have fallen for me and I'm also falling for you, so why not? We're both falling for each other, but I just hope we'll catch

one another. I don't want to get hurt, Thando. I don't think I can take another heartbreak right now."

-Him: "Do you think I might hurt you?"

-Me: "I can't know that now, Thando, can I?"

-Him: "Sthandwa sam bona, I don't plan to hurt you. When I say I love you, I mean it. Trust me, I don't just use that word lightly. I don't plan to just have fun with you and then move on, Soso. I don't."

-Me: "That's good because I don't want to hold back with you, Thando. And if I give everything, then, well, I'll be very vulnerable. And I..."

He doesn't let me finish, he takes my hand and put it over his heart in mock sincerity.

-Him: "It would take a very stony hearted man to hurt you, baby. And I don't think I'm that kind of man. Well, I know I'm not. And anyway, I'm sure you can feel my heart beating, so it can't be all

stone."

He's laughing. And I can't help but laugh too as I punch him playfully.

-Me: "Hey, I'm being serious here, don't be playing now."

Now his facial expression changes to being serious.

-Him: "I mean it though. I won't hurt you, Soso. I hope you know that I'm not your ex. Just like I also know that you aren't my ex. Just because your ex hurt you doesn't mean I'm gonna hurt you too."

I just lean over, pull him to me then kiss him senseless.

-Me: "I love you."

I whisper close to his mouth after pulling out from the kiss. God, I love him. I really do.

-Him: "So, am I gonna see you tonight?"

He says in a sexy bedroom voice, as we're still in that position. Yoh, tonight? I draw back and sit up straight on my seat.

-Me: "I'd love to, baby. But you know that I can't. I'm working tonight, babe. You know that I have just over 30 minutes to eat and freshen up then go to work."

He blows out a breath then turns away from me to look out the window. I can see that this is frustrating him.

-Me: "I can see that you don't like this. Trust me, I don't like it either but I don't have a choice. A job is a job."

-Him: "It's okay, you can go."

He's still looking out the window.

-Me: "Baby, come on. Don't be like that."

He turns to look at me.

-Him: "Like what? I said it's fine, baby. It really is."

You can go."

He tries to smile but I can see that he's forcing it. He's not fine with this and it's evident. I don't like seeing him like this but I don't have a choice, I really have to go. I peck his lips then get out of the car. But as I walk towards my gate I can't stop wondering: how is this really going to work if I work nightshifts 4 days in a week?

#13

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"You told me not to worry 'bout those guys, those guys. You told me that you left it all behind, behind. It's a lie, a lie." - The Weeknd

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Someleze

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4 days later

"C'mon, you know that I love you too. You're my ride or die, you know that and so does everybody else...Okay, see you soon."

I end the call, smiling.

"Was that the good doctor?"

I hear Kevin's voice behind me as I put the phone back in my pocket.

-Me: "The good doctor?"

I'm too exhausted to laugh but I still manage to let out a lazy chuckle.

-Me: "Don't be crazy wena. That was my mom. I'm gonna be with her this afternoon. And I can't wait."

It's knock off time and I grab my bag ready to go home. Yes, I haven't stopped working and Doc just has to accept it. Kevin who seems too energetic for someone who's just pulled a night shift gets his bag too, then we walk out of the

locker room.

-Him: "Oh, nice. I thought you were talking to your boyfriend."

-Me: "My boyfriend? Who said Doc is my boyfriend, Kev?"

I haven't yet told him that Doc and I are now seeing each other. In fact, I haven't told anyone. Not that I have many people to tell though, considering the fact that I'm in shortage of close friends. Thuso was my only close friend in Alice and now that she's turned psycho on me Kevin is the only person I now consider a friend in this small town. But anyway, who needs a handful of friends when only one can turn on you and make you regret the day you decided to let them into your life and call them your friend? I really thought Thuso was a true friend, someone who'll always have my back, someone I could always count on. She was the last person I thought would turn on me, but she did.

Even now I can't help but suspect that she's up to something. The girl has turned into something I can't even describe, and I can tell that she's hell-bent on making my life miserable. On Tuesday I told Doc about the threat she made but unbelievably enough, when Doc called her in and asked her about it she unshamefully denied that those words even escaped her mouth. Freaking unbelievable. So right now, her next move is still a mystery to me as is to Doc. But Wednesday afternoon I saw her hopping onto the City to City bus at the campus main gate and I'm sure she was heading home. We're only closing today so I don't know why she left for home early. But whatever her reason, I was just glad I won't have to bump into her even if it's just for a few days. One thing's for sure though, whatever she does she won't get anything she can use from me and Doc because we're now always extra careful on campus, in fact we don't do anything until we're

out of those gates. I don't want anyone to know that there's something going on between Doc and I, I'm even feeling uneasy about telling Kevin even though he's not even a UFH student.

-Kevin: "Who said he's your boyfriend? Well, I don't need anyone to tell me that, Soso. I have my own eyes. They could see that the guy is into you, remember? And even now they can see that he's hit that base camp."

When he says the last part he throws a glance at my behind.

-Him: "I saw how you were around each other yesterday when he was here."

-Me: "You're very observant, I must say. But don't you be looking at my butt, okay?"

I'm now pushing him forward as we leave the service station.

-Him: "Chill. Asanda's butt is enough for me."

Asanda is his girlfriend. My neighbour's daughter.

-Him: "Besides, I wouldn't want to get on the good doctor's bad books, hey. I wouldn't dare mess with his woman."

He adds as we cross the main road about to take the foot path that crosses the railway line and enter my quiet neighbourhood. It's a shortcut that we always take in the morning when we are together. But when he's not on my shift Doc always comes to fetch me, even though my flat is less than 15 minutes away.

-Me: "Doc's woman huh."

I smile as I repeat what he's just said. I don't know but the sound of that makes my heart skip a beat. I'm really smitten, aren't I? But I don't want to dwell on that.

-Me: "Let me give you a little piece of advice, Kev."

He looks at me obviously thinking I'm going to say something serious.

-Me: "You better focus on your relationship with Asanda and forget about mine, alright? And still on that, you two should stop disrespecting her parents' house, hey. Sleeping with her in her parents' house ain't cool. Don't you think?"

I laugh at how disappointed he is. This isn't what he was expecting. Opening his mouth, I know he's going to throw dagger words at me but he doesn't get the chance, my phone rings and I put up a finger to stop him. I take the phone out of my pocket to answer it. The number I see on the screen is unfamiliar to me but I answer anyway. Curious to know who's calling me this early.

-Me: "Hello."

-Caller: "Can I speak to Someleze?"

-Me: "Yes, this is she. Who am I talking to?"

-Caller: "This is Busisiwe. The mother of Thando's kids."

What? Why is she calling me? Where did she even get my number? What does she want? But whatever she's going to say it's not going to be pleasant. I can already tell by the tone of her voice.

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Alex

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I'm putting my laptop in my bag ready to leave for my department when the ringing of Iviwe's phone suddenly stops me. She's in the res kitchen opposite my room, washing the bowls we just used for breakfast, and she's left the phone on the desk. More often than not, when

we're together she gets these phone calls that she never takes. When I asked her about them she said it's an ex that is refusing to get the message, and a few guys that she used to casually hook up with. She went on to tell me not to worry about those guys because whatever she was doing with them is now over. She made me believe that she's left all of that behind, and that she's now serious about our relationship. But here we are, 9 weeks into our relationship and the calls still haven't stopped. In her defense she always says the same thing that they are simply refusing to get the message. I know of guys like that, so at first I never thought much of it. Thing is I've grown to trust Iviwe and believing what she says is never difficult for me. When not at work the woman is always with me, so I have no reason to not trust her. But now that her phone is ringing and she's not here I can't help but be curious as to who the caller is. I quickly grab the phone and check

the screen. It's an unsaved number, and that makes me even more curious. I know that it's wrong to answer another person's phone but curiosity is taking the better of me right now. I take a deep breath then answer.

-Me: "Iviwe's phone, hello."

-Caller: "Who's this?"

-Me: "Alex. And who are you?"

-Caller: "Alex, just give my woman her phone. Get Iviwe on the phone now."

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I know that it's short but I'm extremely tired, I had a very long day at work. I apologise.

#14

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"Been sitting eyes wide open behind these four

walls hoping you'd call. It's just a cruel existence like there's no point hoping at all. Baby, baby, I feel crazy, up all night, all night." - Zayn

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Someleze

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Doc flashes his smile as he opens his front door for me. I always find his smile beautiful and intoxicating but not today. Right now all I want is for him to confirm or deny what Busisiwe has just told me. He needs to tell me who he really is.

-Him: "Morning, babe. I really didn't think you were gonna come here straight from work."

Having just gotten out of bed, he's wearing only PJ pants, no top. In a normal day his exposed

sleek and toned sexy upper body would turn me on, I would find it irresistible, but no, not today. Today the sky is cloudy and I can feel a storm brewing on the horizon.

He gives me a hug as I step inside. And in my mind I'm sure he would appreciate a hug back but I honestly don't have the strength to return the gesture. I just keep my arms down and that causes him to draw back in some alarm. He gazes at me with anxious eyes.

-Him: "Baby, what's going on?"

-Me: "We need to talk."

I say going deeper into the lounge, leaving him standing by the door. He then follows me and comes to stand in front of me as I stand by the coffee table with my arms folded.

-Him: "Please don't tell me they've fired you. They can't fire a pretty face like yours."

He says jokingly, obviously trying to suppress

the sense of trepidation he now must be feeling inside. I mean, men tend to think when a woman says "we need to talk" that means it's about to hit the fan. Well, in this case, that's probably exactly what's about to happen.

-Me: "Is there something you're hiding from me, Thando?"

My voice is controlled despite what I'm feeling inside.

-Him: "What do you mean?"

-Me: "Is there something you think I should know about you? Like the rape charge that was lodged against you."

He sits down rather abruptly on the arm of the nearest couch. Evidently, discovering that I know about this is a shock to him.

-Him: "Who told you about that?"

He's prevaricating and that's making me angry,

but I still manage to keep it together.

-Me: "Thando, please. I just came out of a 12-hour night shift. I'm exhausted, I'm sleepy and I'm irritated. So please don't play games with me."

The look in his eyes says he still wants to prevaricate but one look at my grim face warns him not to lie to me, but to tell me the truth as it is.

-Him: "Okay, I'm gonna tell you everything but first I want to know who told you about this."

-Me: "Your ex-wife did. She just called me on my way from work."

-Him: "But how did she get your phone number? I'm 100% certain that she didn't get it from my girls. They don't have it and I specifically asked them not to say anything about you to her."

-Me: "I don't know where she got it from, Thando. All I know is that she has it and she

just called me warning me about you. She said, and I quote, 'Don't think you're the first young girl to have him inside you. He's not going to just screw you in bed, he's going to screw your life too. He's gonna hurt you.' That's what she said. What did she mean by that, Thando? What did she mean?"

-Him: "Please sit down and we'll talk."

-Me: "I don't wanna sit down, Thando. Just please tell me what I want to know."

-Him: "Someleze, just sit down."

This time it sounds like an order.

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Then he adds.

-Him: "I have no intention of discussing anything with you hovering over there like

Marley's ghost, Soso. Sit down."

There's a pulse beating at his temple. I can tell that he's angry. And for a moment I wonder if he's going to force me to obey him. But I should have known better because, instead, he just gets off the arm of the couch and sits on the couch itself before patting next to him as an invitation for me to come and sit. Squaring my shoulders, I go sit next to him.

-Him: "Thank you. Now listen. I..."

-Me: "Are you angry at me?"

I just have to ask before he can even finish what he's about to say. I mean, if there's anyone who should be angry here it's me, not him.

-Him: "Of course not. I'm angry, yes. But not at you, I'm angry at Busisiwe...Now as I was saying. First of, Busie had no business telling you about me, unless she has her own agenda. I hope you can see that. Second, what she said is not true.

I love you, I care about you and I would never hurt you. Lastly, the rape charge against me was dropped because it was a lie right from the beginning."

He's speaking with a calm and collected voice.

-Me: "Did you or did you not force yourself on a young girl when she didn't want to sleep with you? Did you or did you not screw up her life?"

-Him: "I did not. A - Tasha was not a young girl, she was 25. B - I didn't screw up her life. If anything, she's the one who tried to screw up mine."

-Me: "Please elaborate, and fast."

-Him: "Tasha was a nurse at the hospital I was working at. She always had a thing for me but from day one I made it clear that she needed to stop because I was a married man. But then this other night last year something happened. I was going through a rough time. It was just

after I'd discovered that Busisiwe was cheating on me. Things weren't okay at home and yah, something happened between me and Tasha, but it was consensual. I know that this is gonna sound cliché, but, baby, it's true. It was a moment of weakness on my part and it never happened again. But that's exactly what drove Tasha over the edge. She wanted us to have an affair, I didn't, she got mad and decided to file a sexual harassment suit against me at the hospital. Everyone at the hospital knew that it was bullshit though, but they had to comply. The management tried to diffuse the situation by asking me to take a short leave from work - it wasn't a suspension, it was a leave. Then they transferred Tasha out. After that I thought the whole thing would blow over. But then she started coming up to the hospital; threatening me, saying that she was going to ruin me. And she tried. She went to open a rape case against me, but it didn't stick. You know why?"

-Me: "Because you bought your freedom. That's what your ex-wife told me."

-Him: "Don't tell me about Busisiwe. Listen to what I'm telling you. It didn't stick because I hadn't done it. I didn't rape that woman, Soso. I didn't do it."

-Me: "So why the hell didn't you tell me any of this?"

-Him: "I wanted to. I really did, but every moment seemed like the wrong time."

-Me: "Are you kidding me right now? I consider this serious, Thando. You don't keep something like this from me. And you had all the time in the world to tell me when this whole Thuso thing started happening. You could have told me that something similar to it had happened in the past but you chose to keep quiet. Why? Only you knows. Or may it's because you really did it. Maybe you did force yourself on that woman."

-Him: "What? Soso, you can't be serious right now. Please take that back."

I just stare at him not saying anything.

-Him: "I'm telling you what happened, and you don't believe me? Soso, I would never do something like that. I would never force myself on a woman. Any woman. You know that, don't you?"

-Me: "Actually, no. I don't."

With that, I get up and make for the door. But as I'm about to open it, I feel his hand grip my waist then he turns me around, pinning my back against the door.

-Him: "Soso, please don't walk out on me. Not like this, sthandwa sam, not like this."

He beseeches as he closes the gap between our bodies. He presses his naked body against me then bends and puts his lips close to my ear. I suck in a breath, not sure what he's planning to

do. But he only speaks softly close to my ear.

-Him: "Can't you see that this is stupid, babe? Can't you see that this is exactly what Busisiwe wanted? She and I are no longer together, but she doesn't want to see me happy. That's the only reason why she did this. And right now you're playing right into her hand."

Even though I'm trying to resist him my uneven breathing gives me away. Gosh, I hate that he has this effect on me even though I'm mad at him.

-Me: "Thando, please let me go. I can't do this right now. I need some space to think."

It takes all the strength in my body to be able to push him off of me. Then I open the door and walk out. I really need some time to digest all of this before I can talk to him again. And I need to be objective.

It's Friday, the last day of the third quarter in the

varsity calendar and we were both supposed to be on campus. But we'd agreed that we won't go. We'd planned to spend some time together before he drives me home to P.E this afternoon. We really needed that since we never got to spend some quality time together since that blissful night that I cut short on Sunday. Reason being the school and my night shifts. But right now, with the way things are, those plans are ruined.

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Thuso

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Growing up I had anything and everything I needed, except for one thing - attention from my parents. They were always busy with work and barely had time for me. The only attention I

got and cherished was from boys and the other kids at school. I was very popular and everybody wanted to be friends with me. That really felt good, but things changed when I had to move to this new school during my grade 11 year. Nobody cared about me there because there were girls who were way better than me. Ain't nobody cared about giving me that attention that I used to feed so much on. So to feel important again, I decided to befriend girls who were way below me. They valued and worshipped me, making me feel that sense of importance once again. I would also find a way to seduce my way to any boy I liked but things wouldn't last and I would end up getting hurt. That's when I first realised just how much love can hurt. And I can safely say the whole thing accounts for my current "promiscuous" ways. As for friendships, I still continued befriendng folks a status below me, just like Soso. Feeling

important and superior has always been my drug and Soso fed my addiction. However, I hated the fact that she's better than me academically. To be on her level I have to work twice as hard. But I have to admit, that also came with its advantages. It pushed me to work extra hard than I would normally do - it still does, and as a result I've been passing all my modules with flying colours.

I found a way to measure up to Soso in the only area that she beats me in - academics. What I can't take now is the fact that she managed to get the man I wanted, a man I happen to really like. Nobody does that to Thuso, and definitely not someone like Soso. I had to do something about it. But the last thing I want is to get December into trouble, I really care for him, I just want her and Soso apart. If I can't have him, little poor Soso can't have him either.

I started stalking his Facebook page, trying to

find anything I can use to get Soso to leave him. I found old photos of him with a woman that I concluded, from the pictures themselves and the comments, that it's his wife. I checked her out but because of her privacy settings the only thing I found is where she works. I didn't know if she still worked there though, I just hoped she did because I really wanted to talk to her.

When I go home I always take a bus to Jo'burg then my father would send a driver to fetch me from park station. This time around I thought I should stick around Jo'burg a little longer. I wanted to take a chance and visit this Busisiwe's workplace to tell her about her husband's disgusting behaviour in Eastern Cape. But to both my surprise and frustration, I discovered that they are no longer married. I can never understand why some women still retain their ex's surname after divorce. What is that? How the fuck was I supposed to know

that they're now divorced when she's still using the stupid "December" last name? I was so fuckin' disappointed. Especially because it was after I'd already made my case that she told me that they're actually divorced. What I found weird, however, is that she still went ahead and asked for Soso's contact numbers. Honestly, right now I'm confused. I don't know what she's going to do or what she's already done with that number, she didn't share that information with me even though I asked. I'm now home but I hope she will finish my mission for me.

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Thando

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Like a 16-year old who's just fallen in love, I keep checking my phone hoping to get a call

from Soso or even just a message. She left for home on Friday without even telling me that she was now leaving. She'd asked for some space and I tried giving it to her. I didn't contact her on Friday but on Saturday I just couldn't hold back. I called her three times but she didn't pick up. On Sunday I sent her two WhatsApp messages but she just read them and never replied. Today it's Tuesday, she was supposed to come back yesterday for work but she didn't. I went to check her at the filling station but they told me that she'd called in sick. I was not just disappointed, I was hurt. I know that our relationship is still relatively new but I feel like I've known her all my life, and her being away from me is killing me, especially because we didn't part on good terms. It's crazy and I don't know what's happening to me, but ever since she left all I seem to think about is her. I even stay up at night with one thing stuck in my mind - her, thinking about her and hoping that she'd

call. But she never does. Yesterday I kept hoping that she'd call and say she's at my gate and that I should open up, but that call never came. I don't know which one hurts me the most; the fact that she thinks I'm a rapist or the fact that the damn lie is possibly killing her wherever she is. I want to keep calling her phone until she picks up or until she comes back home so we could talk, but at the same time I don't want to seem like a desperate, pathetic fool. So what do I do? This whole thing is a torture to my soul, I can't just sit here and wait for her to come back home next week. By home I mean here, with me. I need to see her and I need to see her today. I can't go on like this anymore. And there's no point hoping that she'll call because it doesn't seem like she will. The only thing left to do now is to go to her. How will I get to her though? I don't even know where she lives, I only know the name of her township, and I've never even been to P.E

before. So where will I start? But Kevin might know something, he's her friend.

I quickly get up, grab my car keys and leave my lonely house. Getting inside my car, I drive out straight to Soso's workplace hoping to find Kevin there. But if he's not there I'll ask them for his phone number and hope to God that they give it to me. However, chances are he doesn't even know Soso's home address in P.E. It's clear as day in my head that this is a long shot but I just have to try. I can't wait till next week. I can't live like this anymore, this whole thing is driving me crazy. I'm tired of sleepless nights. I need to talk to Soso and make things right today. This whole thing has just made me realise just how much I love her, how much I want her next to me and how much I don't want to lose her. I've got it bad, Bhongo said yesterday when I was telling him, and he was right. Then again, that's the kind of man I am.

When I love, I love really hard. What's ridiculous is how people tend to think it's only women who are capable of that kind of love. It's really absurd. Men can and do love just as hard as women.

I pull up at the filling station and I immediately spot Kevin talking with one of the petrol attendants. Thank God, he's here. When I see him walking away from the guy he was talking with, I hop out of the car and make my way to him.

-Me: "Kevin."

He turns to me and I greet him already offering my hand for a handshake. He quickly accepts it with this silly smile on his face. This guy is weird.

-Him: "Damn, you look like hell."

-Me: "Hell is where you'll go if you keep greeting people with that line."

He laughs.

-Him: "Sorry, bro. Can I help you with something?"

-Me: "As a matter of fact, yeah. You don't happen to know where Soso stays in P.E, do you?"

-Him: "Ummmh...I don't know the house number but I know that she said it's in Zwide 4, Ngwekazi Street. I only know that because I was telling her that I used to visit some friends in Qeqe Street, and that's when she told me that she's also in the same area. Why are you asking? You're going there? I heard she called in sick yesterday. How's she doing now? I tried calling her but she's not taking my calls."

Oh, my calls are not the only ones being ignored. That probably should be a relief, but it's totally not. I'm now extremely worried about her.

-Him: "Don't you want to come with me and find

out for yourself? She's your friend, right?"

I'm now taking advantage of this situation. He's going to be my GPS. The last thing I need is to get lost in a township I don't even know, it's not safe out there. Besides, he's not in uniform, meaning he's not on duty.

-Him: "Ummmhh...okay, cool. I'm not on duty so we can go. But I better be here in the morning. I have a shift."

-Him: "Of course, you'll be here. Let's go."

He follows me to my car and we drive off. God, I hope we find Soso home. As for Busisiwe, I won't even call her and ask about the mess she's caused. I won't waste my breath. And I can't be telling her that she's succeeded in causing me pain.

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"Where else can I go? Chasing you, chasing you. Memories turn to dust, please don't bury us. I got you, I got you." - Beyonce [Naughty Boy]

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Thando

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Three and a half hours after we left Alice, Kevin and I find ourselves standing on the doorstep of this humble house that's under renovation in Zwile. Bringing Kevin along has been advantageous because he knows this neighbourhood. He gave me directions up until we got to Soso's street, then we started asking around for Soso. As expected, in a neighbourhood like this, where everybody knows everybody, people knew exactly who we were looking for. In fact, it's the first person we asked that pointed us to this house. The second

person was just for confirmation. So here we are now, standing on the doorstep, hesitating to knock. Despite my own determination to come here, I have to admit to a feeling of apprehension because I have no idea what Soso might be thinking at this moment.

So this is where Soso lives, I muse, trying to suppress the sense of trepidation I feel at invading her space without an invitation. And what if she really doesn't want to speak to me again? Considering the fact that she's been ignoring me for days, thinking like this isn't exactly a stretch. Still, I haven't driven all this way just to turn back. I have to see her; I need to see her. She has to know, she has to believe that I didn't do what Busisiwe told her I did. Dear God, does she really think I'm a rapist? Thinking about this again is enough to make my stomach turn.

-Kevin: "Dude, you better knock."

He says after we've been standing here for a moment too long. He's right, I have to knock. I take a deep breath then I do what's necessary, but no one answers. I knock again. Still nothing. There's an eyehole in this door, and I wonder if Soso is staring at me through it right now, trying to decide whether she wants to speak to me or not. And then the fact that she doesn't live alone but with her mother comes to my mind. Yes, I know that it's around 15:00 on a Tuesday and her mother is supposed to be at work still, but what if she's home? What would I say to her? When I hear a key turning in the lock I feel a wave of perspiration break out on the back of my neck. I've never been this nervous in a long time, I now realise. The things we do for love though. Soso has really messed with my mind.

The door opens a few inches and I glimpse a woman who looks just like Soso, only a little older, hovering just beyond the threshold. Oh

gosh, this sure is her mother. And I can tell from her face and the robe and sleepers she's wearing that she's been sleeping. Now I understand why she took too long to answer the door and I feel bad that we've woken her up. My goodness, what am I even going to say to her? I haven't exactly thought of that.

-Her: "Hello. Can I help you?"

I'm nervous but I won't let her see that.

-Me: "Hello. My name's Thando and this is Kevin. We're Soso's friends from Alice. Is she...?"

But she doesn't let me finish.

-Her: "Soso's friends. Oh, come on in."

She sounds exactly how she looks, tired and kind of ill. She opens the door wider then steps to one side to allow us through the doorway. Kevin and I step inside this small living/dining room. This space is cramped, way smaller than my lounge in my rental house in Alice, but

what's great about it is that it's spotless, very neat. My eyes are wandering around the room as this woman leads us to the couches. Then they land on this big, framed photo on the back wall. It's of Soso in a school uniform. Awww, she looks so cute.

"That's Soso when she was in matric."

I hear her mother's voice and I realise that I've been standing still, almost hypnotised, as I'm staring at the photo.

-Me: "Ummmh...it's hard to tell that it was taken only three years ago."

I say after clearing my throat. I don't even know what I'm saying, I just said the first thing that came to my mind, not wanting her to know what I'm thinking about her daughter. I doubt she would ever approve of me. Her daughter dating a man ten years older than her, I really don't think she would like that. Especially considering

that she herself is 38 years old, only 7 years older than me. Yeah, I just did the math in my head from what Soso told me, that her mother had her when she was only 17. But I must say, she doesn't look 38 at all, she looks a lot younger than that even though her face is this weary.

-Her: "You can both take a sit. And tell me what you'd like to have to drink."

-Me: "Just water will be fine. Thanks."

I say as I sit down.

-Kevin: "I don't suppose Soso's sister keeps beer in the fridge, so I'll just have water too."

He knows very well that Soso doesn't have a sister, he knows that this is her mother but he's trying for humour. Soso's mother tries to laugh but it doesn't quite come out, I can see that she's really not feeling well. Which explains why she's not at work.

-Me: "Actually, I'm her mother... Let me go get your water."

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Once she disappears into the kitchen I quickly think of what I'm going to say. Then, with my voice down, I tell Kevin to keep quiet and let me do all the talking. The last thing I want is for him to slip up and talk about things Soso doesn't want her mother to know. Things like her having a job, or her living off-campus. Where's Soso anyway? I thought her mother would have called her to come out by now.

Her mother comes back with our water. Kevin and I drink.

-Her: "Thando and Kevin. Both your names come up more often in my conversations with Soso lately. Nothing much though, just the

mentioning of your names in passing... But I must say, I expected to see someone a bit younger, Thando."

She says the last part looking straight into my eyes, with her sitting on an opposite couch. Her eyes are unreadable. However, I can't help but think she suspects that I'm seeing her daughter. I feel like she can tell. But still, I'm not going to give myself away.

-Me: "I'm a postgraduate student, doing my doctorate in Biochemistry. I know Soso because I frequently help her with her studies, the Biochemistry course in particular. I help her with assignments, studying for tests, stuff like that. Even now I'm here because she told me that she wants to do her honours in Biochemistry next year, and there's this scholarship that I asked her to apply for. I thought the deadline was next week but it turns out it's this coming Friday, so I just had to come

to make sure that she finishes filling out the forms."

-Her: "I see. But why did you come here? Soso is in Alice."

-Me: "Alice? No, we haven't seen her on campus since Friday when she left saying she's coming home. And she's not answering her phone."

-Her: "Yes, she did come home on Friday but she left the very next day. She said she had a lot of studying to do before the last quarter begins."

Evidently, Soso lied to her mother. I know for a fact that she's not in Alice. When I went to her workplace after 18:00 yesterday they told me that she called in sick, so from there I drove straight to her place. I rang the intercom at their small gate, which funny enough is the only intercom they have, and her landlord answered. I asked if Soso was in and she told me she

hasn't come back from home yet. So if she's not in Alice or here, where could she be? I can feel my anxiety rising now. A lot of things are going through my mind and I'm no longer feeling myself. But I soon calm down when her mother, who also looks just as worried, offers to call her and ask her whereabouts. She dials her number and puts the phone on speaker for all of us to hear. On the third ring, the call gets answered.

"Queen of my heart."

It's Soso on the other end of the phone and I can tell by her jolly voice that she's fine wherever she is. Then where the hell is she?

-Her mother: "Baby, where are you?"

-Soso: "In my room. Are you okay? You don't sound so good."

-Her mother: "In your room at res in Alice?"

-Soso: "Of course, mama. Where else?"

-Her mother: "Your friends, Kevin and Thando are here. They say they couldn't find you in your room."

-Soso: "What? Thando is there with you right now?"

I can hear the shock in her voice.

-Her mother: "That's what I just said. They came all the way here to look for you. Soso, is everything okay? Why couldn't they find you in Alice?"

-Soso: "Ummmh...yes, everything's fine, mama. Just tell them that they'll find me in Alice. But sorry, I gotta go now. I have a lot of books to study."

-Her mother: "But make sure to call me later, baby. Okay? I love you."

-Soso: "I love you too, Ndlovukazi."

They hang up. I can't believe I came all this way

for nothing. I also can't believe that I was worried for nothing. I don't know where Soso is and I don't know why she's lying to her mother, but what I do know is that I don't like this one bit.

-Her mother: "Well, you've heard for yourselves. She's in Alice."

-Me: "Yeah. It seems like we came all this way for nothing. But it's okay. Thanks for letting us in. We'll be on our way now."

Kevin and I get up to leave.

-Her: "I'm sorry you wasted your time. And thanks for caring about my daughter. Drive safe."

She says looking at the car key in my hand. She's got this tiny smile on her face that's reminding me so much of Soso. I can now see where Soso gets her beauty from, from her mother.

That smile quickly fades though, this woman is in pain, I can tell.

-Me: "Thank you. But I don't think we can just walk out of here and leave you alone even though we can see that you're not well. Tell me, is there anything we can do? I can even take you to the doctor."

-Her: "That's nice of you but no, I'll be fine. It's just headache... Hell, who am I fooling? It's not just any headache. It's the mother of all headaches. It's so severe that I couldn't even go to work today."

-Me: "Wait. I think I have painkillers in my car. They are very good, I'm sure they'll help you. But do me a favour, don't take too much, they are very strong. Just one is enough, then another after 6 hours."

-Her: "I'd very much appreciate them. Thank you."

I walk out to my car that's parked on the side of the street, just in front of this gateless yard. I get the painkillers then come to give them to her. I smile at how appreciative she is, she really reminds me of Soso. We wish her well then Kevin and I leave. When we get inside my car I can see that Kevin wants to ask a lot of questions. I mean, the guy came here thinking Soso was sick, only to find out that's not true. That she's not even here, and I as her boyfriend don't know anything about it. I know that his first questions would be around that but I really don't have the energy for him. When he opens his mouth, I just put up my hand as a sign to say "not now". And we drive off in silence.

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After I end the call with my mother I find myself pacing up and down this flat. I really didn't think Doc would go all the way to my mom's house.

-Me: "My mom just called. She says Thando is there, like there in her house. Can you believe that?"

I tell my friend, Amanda, as she walks through the front door carrying the takeaways she went out to collect from a restaurant down the road.

-Her: "Your mother's house as in in P.E?"

She asks as she puts the takeaways on the coffee table before plopping down somewhat ungracefully on the only couch this flat has. Amanda is my childhood friend from P.E. She's the one whose parents were paying for my ballet classes. We both wanted to get out of P.E after matric, so when I chose to go to Fort Hare she came to study at the University of

Johannesburg. She stays in a two-bedroom flat in Melville, sharing it with another girl who's also a student at her campus. It's a nice flat, and I've also been it's occupant since Sunday. Saturday morning I called Amanda and asked her to please accommodate me because she's the only person I know in Jo'burg. And fortunately for me she easily said yes when she heard my reason for the visit, and the fact that her flatmate is home for the September break also helped. So when I left home on Saturday I didn't go to Alice but I took a bus to Jo'burg, determined to find the truth about Thando myself. Like I said I wanted to be objective about the matter. I couldn't just simply believe Busisiwe but at the same time I couldn't just dismiss what she told me. With the same breath, I couldn't just take Doc's side of the story simply because he's my boyfriend, but I couldn't just dismiss it either. I had to be in the middle until I find the truth for myself.

When Busisiwe talked to me she said she was warning me against the sexual abuser Thando is. Coming from her, that was questionable but I just had to listen. Her tone wasn't of someone who cared about me either, and I knew very well that the whole thing wasn't about me but it was about Doc - her differences with him. With that in mind, however, I couldn't just dismiss what she was telling me. Reason being I didn't understand why she would want to feed me lies when she knew very well that I'd ask Doc about it. This is a woman who knew very well that I had no reason to believe her, so I didn't understand why she would want to waste her time calling me just to tell me lies. From the word go, it was clear to me that her motives for "warning" me weren't pure. I knew that she was probably trying to break Doc and I up, for her own reasons, but that certainly didn't mean that what she was telling me wasn't true. My response to her was a simple, "I really don't

know why you decided to tell me this, but you know what? None of it matters to me", then I ended the call. That was a lie though, all of it mattered to me, quite a bit actually. I found the whole thing very disturbing, and in my head I knew that the story couldn't entirely be a fabrication. As I made my way to Doc's house I was already not feeling myself. And what made me angry even after he had given me his side of the story was the fact that he only gave it to me after I had heard about the whole thing from someone else and not from him. I mean, the guy knows exactly how I feel about the rape issue. Even if it was just an accusation against him he should have told me about it, just like I also told him about my own experience regarding the subject. It didn't exactly happen, it almost did, but I still shared that with him.

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My grandmother had two children - my mother and her brother who's two years older than her. But you'd never hear me talking about my uncle, and that's because we're estranged. He's no longer in my life or that of my mother because the bastard tried to rape me. I was 11 when it happened. My grandmother was already deceased and my mother was working so I'd be home alone with my uncle after school until my mother comes back from work. This other day my uncle came into my bedroom and started touching me inappropriately. He didn't take it all the way that day but I still told my mother about it. Did she believe me? Not at all. In not so many words she accused me of being a bad child, telling me that her brother would never do something like that to her child. She made me feel bad for speaking up so much that I even told myself that if it happens again I won't

speak up, that I won't tell anyone. It didn't get to that point, however, because she got to believe me, almost too late though, the whole thing had already escalated. She got to believe me only when she came back early from work and found me struggling to get off of my uncle's predatory grip. He had already ripped my panties off, ready to force himself on me. If she didn't come home early that day I would have easily become another statistic. So, I know how it feels like to not be believed when you make your case as far as the rape subject is concerned. I know how it feels like to see a man who violated you roam the streets freely. My uncle didn't get to penetrate me but he still violated me, and it drove me crazy that he never did time for what he did to me. Him not doing time doesn't mean the incident didn't happen, it just means the case got dismissed due to "lack of evidence". I shared this story with Doc, I opened up to him, and I believe that's when he should have

opened up to me too. The fact that he didn't is exactly what made me angry and made me say things I didn't mean to say. His lack of disclosure made me think things I didn't want to think about him. I thought, if he was really innocent of the crime then he would have easily told me about it. But I wasn't going to fully jump to conclusions until I could get all the facts regarding the matter. Considering the fact that Busisiwe is not a reliable source, I wasn't about to be 100% sure of what she told me. But at the same time I wasn't going to blindly take Doc's side of the story just because I love him. I let love blind me once and I wasn't about to let that happen again. People warned me about Alex's fuckboy ways but because I was so head over heels in love with him I never heed any of their warnings, and as a result I got burned. This time around I've told myself that I'm going to do things differently. This is a very serious subject to me and I wasn't going to just let it go. I

wasn't going to continue sleeping with a man who's possibly a rapist. What I needed was some time away from him, some time to digest the whole thing in peace without being influenced by him. And when I did, I knew exactly what to do next. I knew that I had to come to Jo'burg to get the answers for myself without him even knowing, and I knew exactly where to start - at the hospital where he used to work. He's mentioned its name to me on more than one occasion before, so I just Googled it and found its address. And now here I am, in Jo'burg, and I can safely say, with Amanda's help who showed me my way around, I've gotten all the answers that I needed. I can't even say how much of a relief it is to know that Doc really didn't do what Busisiwe said he did.

-Amanda: "How did he even know your home address?"

-Me: "I'm sure he got it from Kevin. That's why I

was ignoring his calls too. I knew that whatever I tell him he'll tell it to Thando if he asks. I don't know but it's like he idolises the guy."

-Her: "And I can see why. Thando seems like a great guy, chomi. And he really loves you. I mean for him to try to track you down and drive all the way to P.E when you were ignoring his calls tells it all. No man has ever done something like that for me...I think you should call him, you know. And put the poor guy out of his misery."

-Me: "Out of anger I said something I shouldn't have said to him, Amanda. I made him feel like I didn't believe him. I hurt him. I don't even know what to say to him over the phone, I just want to get on that bus home this evening and talk to him face to face tomorrow."

-Her: "Way I see it, what you said doesn't even matter to the guy anymore. He just wants you to talk to him."

Just then my phone rings. And it's him.

-Amanda: "If that's him you better take the call, babe. Now you know that he was telling you the truth, that he didn't do that disgusting act, so talk to him."

I take a deep breath then answer.

-Me: "Hello."

-Doc: "Soso, where are you?"

-Me: "I'm coming home to you tomorrow and we'll talk then."

-Him: "Where are you now?"

-Me: "Baby, we'll talk tomorrow. I love you."

And like that I hang up, then I turn to Amanda who's looking at me with raised eyebrows.

-Her: "Don't look at me like that. Just eat then take me to Busisiwe like you promised. I need to see that bitch before I leave this city."

#16

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"I'll let you look inside me, through the stains and through the cracks. And in the darkness of this moment, you see the good and bad. But try not to judge me, 'cause we've walked down different paths." - Thompson Square

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"You sure you don't wanna skip that part? Do you really wanna meet up with that bitter snake?"

Amanda asks as she feasts hungrily on the fried chicken she just came in with.

-Me: "Busisiwe doesn't live in Alice, Amanda. She didn't know anything about me and Thando, and she certainly didn't know my phone number. Somebody obviously fed her that information.

Someone who doesn't want to see me and Thando together. Even though I already have an idea who it is, I want Busisiwe to confirm it. Then I'll take it from there."

-Her: "I hear you. Now sit your butt down and eat. We still have time."

-Me: "I don't have appetite, you know."

I exhale then plop down on the couch next to her. She stops eating then looks at me.

-Her: "Worried about what Thando will say when you tell him that you looked into a portion of his past?"

-Me: "I'd be lying if I said I'm not."

-Her: "You don't need to be worried, babe. If Thando is as mature as you say he is then he'll understand why you had to do this. Babe, you couldn't just take his word, just like you couldn't just take his ex-wife's. You had to get the facts and make a decision based on that and that

only - not on what Busisiwe told you or what Thando himself told you. If you ask me, you did a right thing. Most women stay in bad relationships because they believe everything their men tell them, they let the love they have for these men keep them from seeing the truth. And you know what happens in the end? They always get burned. Love is a beautiful thing, it really is, but when you let it blind you then it's no longer love but stupidity. I'm sure Thando will understand. I mean, you didn't take the allegations and use them to break up with him. No, you didn't overreact like that. You only asked for some time out and you used that time to find the truth. And that to me is maturity at best."

-Me: "You think?"

-Her: "No, I know. Soso, you don't know this guy, you just met him, so to check him out when allegations like this popped up is very much

justifiable. Those allegations were too serious to be ignored. You couldn't stay with a man who's possibly a rapist all in the name of love. If you did, I was gonna know that common sense has definitely deserted you. That you're no longer thinking but you're letting Thando's demands on your senses, and on your heart, reduce your brain to a quivering lump of mush."

At this point I just can't help but smile. I really needed to hear this.

-Me: "Thanks, chomi. I really needed to hear that coming from someone else's mouth. Really."

-Her: "I believe that's what friends are for, to always keep us on the right track. To guide us back when we're stepping off of it, and to applaud us when we're keeping not only our feet on it but our minds too. We've been friends since childhood, Soso, and there's a reason for that. I love you, babe, and I want to see you making right choices in life. But I must say, I'm

still a little mad that you didn't tell me about Thando right from the beginning."

-Me: "I know, I know. And once again, I'm sorry. The truth is: you're always a voice of reason in my ear, Amanda, and I thought if I told you about Thando you'd only want to lecture me on how wrong it is to sleep with a lecturer. I thought you weren't gonna approve."

-Her: "But, babe, you know me when it comes to love. I love love. The only three questions I was gonna ask you are the same questions I asked when you finally told me on Saturday: do you think he's the right guy for you? Is he treating you well? Are you happy? That's all. Babe, there are no rules when it comes to love. Love is what it is, pure and simple. The only problem is when we let it blind us."

-Me: "Believe me, I now know that I was wrong for keeping the whole thing from you. Will you stop being mad if I hug you?"

I ask giving her puppy dog eyes. As usual, she melts and opens her arms for a hug. We hug, giggling. I really love this one. I just hate that she now lives miles and miles away from me. And I had to end up with people like Thuso.

-Her: "Now you better eat."

She says as she pulls back from the hug. After this talk I sure have my appetite back. We eat. Then I go freshen up and pack my bag. I'm meeting up with Busisiwe in a hour then at 19:00 I'm catching a bus back to Alice. Earlier I called Busisiwe on the same number she called me with the other day, I told her that I'm in town and then I requested a meeting which she easily agreed to. I really don't know what she thinks the purpose of this meeting is or maybe she's hoping to use it as an opportunity to feed me more lies about Doc, I don't know. All I know is that she's going to be disappointed. She said to meet her at this certain restaurant in

Braamfontein after work, so that's where Amanda and I will be heading.

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By 17:00 I find myself walking through this not-so-glamorous restaurant in Braamfontein. I don't know Busisiwe but I don't take her as someone who'd be a regular at a joint like this. Perhaps she chose it because it's close to her place of work. In any case, I'm here now. And I find myself chuckling at how stupid I probably look as I walk in alone with my eyes darting around. I'm walking in alone because I asked Amanda to remain outside in her car. Yes, she's got wheels, a VW Polo TSI. Her parents are well off, they all left my township years ago and moved to the suburbs but Amanda and I still remained friends. She didn't change and

become a nasty bitch just because her parents' financial luck had changed. She's a sweet soul, and so are her parents. When she and I were still living in P.E full-time, her parents would tell me to also get myself something I like every time they give Amanda a card to go shopping. They are also the ones who paid for my driving lessons and made sure that I get my driver's licence when I was 18.

My eyes wander around the restaurant looking for this Busisiwe that I don't even have a picture of. There aren't a lot of people in here though, so I quickly see a lady sitting alone at a table in the corner. I keep my eyes on her wanting to see if she would respond. And she does. She gestures for me to come. And I walk over to her.

-Me: "Busisiwe?"

-Her: "You must be Someleze."

Target acquired. I take a seat opposite her.

She's beautiful, that's no lie, too bad I can't say the same about her heart though.

-Her: "So, why did you want to meet with me?"

-Me: "Straight to the point, huh. I like that. Especially because I don't intend to waist my time or yours either. I wanted us to meet for the same reason you called me the other day - Thando. The common denominator."

A waiter comes to get our orders. I just order some orange juice, and Busisiwe asks for a refill of the cocktail she was having. I wait for the waiter to walk away then I turn back to Busisiwe.

-Me: "But first things first. Who gave you my phone number?"

-Her: "I'm not giving you the name."

-Me: "See, I already know that it was Thuso. So why don't we just cut the crap? We both don't want to waist time, right?"

-Her: "If you already knew then why are you asking me? That Thuso girl did me a favour."

I just got my answer. Thuso, that bitch really doesn't know when to stop, does she?

-Me: "I was only asking because I thought you were gonna give me misinformation. Like you did on the phone the morning you decided to call me."

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The waiter arrives with our drinks then walks away.

-Me: "As I was saying, I know that you told me those lies knowing very well that they were lies. Yes, they were based on something that actually happened, but they were still lies. They were lies right from the very beginning, from

when the whole thing happened last year."

She shifts on her chair. I on the other hand it's like I'm glued onto this chair, I'm sitting up straight, not moving, watching any and every reaction from this woman.

-Her: "It's Thando who told you that and you believed him?"

-Me: "Actually, no. I heard this from the horse's mouth, a reliable source, Tasha herself. And that made me wonder, what exactly is it that you were hoping to achieve when you told me those lies? What, don't you want Thando to be happy? You're the one who divorced him for goodness sake and you moved on with your life. So why don't you want him to do the same? Do you still want him, perhaps? Do you regret divorcing him? Are you gonna be a persistent problem for us?"

Nobody is fighting or shouting here, we're just

talking woman to woman. For a long moment, she regards me in silence. I don't know what she's thinking, or maybe she's picking the next words to come out of her mouth very carefully in her head.

-Her: "I don't want Thando. And this wasn't about him, it was about you."

She says eventually.

-Me: "I don't follow. What do you mean about me? You didn't even know me."

-Her: "That's right, I didn't know you but I knew of you even before Thuso showed up at my workplace."

-Me: "Knew of me how?"

-Her: "My girls. From their very first visit to Alice they couldn't stop talking about you when they came back. It got worse when they visited the second and the third time. All they came back talking about was you - aunt Soso, 'daddy's

friend'. They still can't stop raving about how cool you are. How much they love spending time with you, and how much you show interest in their lives. Something they say I don't. They are even calling you their second mommy, can believe that? And they say next year they want to go live with their father so they could get to spend time with you. And they mean it. I've been fighting with them over this for a while now and they now see me as a monster mom. Do you know how that makes me feel? Being resented by my own kids because of some little girl that just came out of nowhere? Those are my kids, not yours. Stop playing mommy to them. That's why I don't even like it when they visit their father. You're the problem."

Oh wow. I'm speechless right now. I didn't know that this is what this whole thing was about. But didn't Doc say he specifically asked the twins to not talk about me to their mother? I'm sure he

did. But hey, kids are kids, nothing is a secret to them.

-Me: "So, you thought if I'm no longer in Thando's life your kids would want to stay with you? You thought they'd start seeing you as a better mother? I doubt it. The problem here is not me, sisi, it's you. The girls like Alice, they like spending time with me because I give them something you don't - love and time. Maybe if you can stop being too obsessed with your job and your man and start focusing on the kids you claim to love then their trust in you and their love for you would be restored. Stop fighting me because I haven't done anything wrong. If anything, you should be happy I love your kids. Not all women show interest in their men's children. In fact, they even go as far as mistreating them. But I don't. Busisiwe, I'll tell you this: I love your kids and I also love Thando. There is nothing you can do to change that. The

only thing that needs to change here is you. Change the way you do things and your kids will stick with you."

I'm done talking. I take the first and the last sip of my juice then a R50 out of my purse and put it on the table. Without saying anything more I get up and walk out of the restaurant. My mission in Jo'burg is done.

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By 18:15 I'm standing in a queue at the City to City offices at Park Station to have my ticket printed out since I booked online. After I get it I say my goodbyes to Amanda. We hug and kiss then I go stand in line to board the bus. I'm very grateful to Amanda, without her help I wouldn't have been able to pull any of this off.

By 06:00 in the morning I'm already in Alice. I

get off the bus and, walking like a zombie, I make my way to my flat with my weekend bag slung over my shoulder. I don't want to waste time, I want to talk to Doc as soon as possible but I'm too tired and sleepy to push any sense out of my mouth right now. So I go straight home and throw myself on the bed after changing into my PJs.

The alarm I'd set wakes me up around 11:00 and I go take a long relaxing shower. I stand there and let the water cascade down on me. It's a very relaxing feeling, and I feel like it's washing away every bad thing I've experienced in the past two months. And by that I'm specifically referring to my heartbreak by Alex. I don't know, but as I step out on the mat that's sitting on the slippery porcelain tiles of this bathroom I feel like a brand new person. More than I've ever been before, I'm so sure about my relationship with Thando. There's not a single

shred of doubt in my mind that I want to be with him. I just hope he still wants to be with me too.

After drying and lotioning my body, I put on blue denim bum shorts, a white vest and a pair of flat strappy sandals. It's too hot outside to wear much. I leave my weave untied and my only concession to make-up is a subtle lip gloss to give my lips a smooth finish.

Then taking a deep breath, I leave my flat going to Doc's house. Along the way, I just can't deny the feeling of apprehension that keeps growing inside me with each step I take. What if Doc gets mad? Being the kind of man that he is, I'm scared to see him mad, I have to admit.

A few minutes later, I'm standing in front of his gate. There's no intercom here so I call his phone so he could open the gate. Without saying much he hangs up then opens the gate. I make my way to his front door, my growing anxiety levels going higher as I get closer.

Before I can even knock the door opens, and I take a look at the man who's come to mean so much to me in just a short period of time, as he stands there with a grim expression on his face. He's wearing light blue jeans, a crispy white button up shirt, and black shoes. Oh my God, he's on his way out, I say to myself nervously.

-Me: "Hi."

-Him: "Hey."

I can't even ask how he's hanging because it's evident that he's hanging very low. He's so down you can pick him up from the floor, and that makes me nervous.

-Me: "Can I please come in?"

He steps to one side allowing me to step inside.

-Me: "Can we talk? Or you're on your way out?"

-Him: "No. I just came in. It's Wednesday and I have a job, Soso. Just because our students are

on a break doesn't mean we are too."

-Me: "Oh yah, I forgot. That means I almost didn't find you in."

-Him: "Yah."

-Me: "Why did you come back early?"

-Him: "I wasn't feeling okay. Just like I wasn't yesterday when I drove all the way to P.E to look for you...Come take a seat."

He leads the way to the couch, and we take a seat next to each other. I can feel moisture leaving my mouth as I'm looking at him just staring at me. He's not saying anything and his stare is turning me into a nervous wreck. Gosh, where do I even begin?

-Me: "I'm sorry I made you feel like I didn't believe you when..."

But he cuts me off drily.

-Him: "Where were you, Soso? You weren't

home and you weren't here either."

He's actually making things easier for me right now, now I can go straight to the point.

-Me: "I was in Jo'burg. I wanted to find out what really happened between you and Tasha so I went there looking for answers. I'm sorry, baby, but the fact that you kept such a thing from me made me doubtful. You know how I feel about that subject but you still didn't share your story with me even when you had every chance to. You kept it from me until I had to hear it from someone else. How do you think that made me feel? It made me angry and doubtful. But I didn't want to just crucify you based on that, I had to get all the facts first. I wasn't just going to take what Busie said or what YOU said either. I needed to find the truth for myself so I could make an informed decision."

He keeps quiet, just staring at me. His eyes are unreadable. I don't know what's going on in that

smart brain of his and I'm dying to hear his thoughts coming out of his mouth.

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-Him: "So, in search of the truth you went to Jo'burg to dig into my past?"

He says, eventually.

-Me: "I had to."

-Him: "And what did you find?"

-Me: "That your version of the story was true. I spoke to your ex-colleague, Benni. I even spoke to Tasha herself, she's back at the hospital, I'm sure you didn't know that. She told me the whole story and how bad she now feels about the whole thing. How ashamed she is...I now know that you were telling the truth. And I'm sorry I couldn't just believe you at first, but I'm

sure you can understand why. I couldn't believe Busie, and I couldn't believe you either. I just had to find the truth myself. I know that you're probably mad that I invaded your privacy by digging into your past but, baby, I had to. I did it because I love you. I did it because I wanted our relationship to have a better shot. I swear if I didn't our relationship was going to crumble, right from the base. I could have just dismissed what Busie told me and choose to take your side of the story. But believe me the whole thing wasn't gonna leave my mind. I was gonna keep wondering if you really told me the truth. I was gonna keep wondering if you really didn't do it. You would be sleeping next to me and I would be awake, staring at you with question marks in my head. It was never going to go away. Every time we make love I was gonna wonder. I was gonna wonder if you didn't use that same dick to inflict pain on another woman. From there, I'm telling you, our relationship would go

downhill. Cracks would start showing and in no time it would come crashing down. Because of something that's not even true. That's why I needed to get to the bottom of this whole thing. That's why I needed to get answers from a different party. I was trying to save us, our relationship. Because I love you, Thando. I do. And I didn't want to lose you over something I'm not even sure of. I had to do this. For my own peace of mind and for our relationship. I really hope I'm not gonna lose you because of it though."

Tears are now trickling down my cheeks and I can't fight them. Doc is looking at me this whole time. His eyes now shadowed with emotions I can't even begin to fathom.

-Me: "Please say something."

He just pulls me to him and kisses my lips softly. I don't have time to think I just respond. The kiss is slow and passionate. Our tongues dance

to a single rhythm as they caress each other.
Soon I'm losing myself to him but he pulls back.
He wipes away my tears with his hand then look
deep into my eyes

-Him: "I love you. And, baby, I'm not mad."

-Me: "You're not?"

-Him: "Not even close. In fact, what you did just
made me respect you even more. You're willing
to love but not blindly. I find that admirable. It's
a trait that most of us don't have."

Really? He's not mad?

-Him: "I totally understand why you did what you
did. I'm the one who pushed you into doing it. If
I'd told you about the whole thing sooner you
wouldn't have found a reason to doubt me. I
shouldn't have waited until you could hear it
from someone else. And for that I'm sorry. To
tell you the truth I was embarrassed by the
whole thing and I thought if I told you you'd

think less of me."

-Me: "What? No, that wasn't going to happen. Baby, I know that you aren't perfect just like I ain't either. We both did things we're not proud of in the past. Those things are in our past but if you see that they can affect our future together then I need to hear them. I need to hear them from you first, no one else. Hearing them from someone else is what will make me doubt you even when you're telling me the truth. Thando, I know that before we met we walked down different paths, we did different things with different people. I would try not to judge you for those but if they are important for me to hear then I need to hear them from you. Let me in, let me see what's inside you, flaws and all, the good and the bad. And I promise to also do the same."

-Him: "You got it. I promise."

#17 [18S]

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Warning: This episode contains EXTREME sexual content. Don't read if you're quick to click the "Report" button.

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"Sweet baby, our sex has meaning. Know this time you'll stay till the morning. Duvet days and vanilla ice cream. More than just one night together exclusively." - Zayn

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Thando

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"I'm really happy you came back home."

I say as I hug my baby from behind. She's standing by the sink, drinking water from a glass. I guess the serious talk we just had has left her dry-mouthed.

-Her: "Did you think I wasn't gonna come back to you? Baby, in your heart I'm home."

Even though hearing her say that makes my heart smile, I don't reply. I just plant soft kisses down her neck. With the strap of her vest slipped lower, my breath moistens her bare shoulder, and I let my teeth graze her skin. I nibble at her neck, pulling a pearl of soft skin into my mouth and suckling greedily. Soft moans keep escaping her mouth making my member grow hard. Soon, I can tell that she can feel my hard on rubbing against her butt. Her grip around the glass tightens as her body also tightens in response to my sensual seduction. She puts the glass in the sink then turns around to face me. Her innocent, loving eyes gaze into mine and I can feel my heart beating faster. It's safe to say I'm madly in love. Not in my wildest orgasms, though, did I think I'd move on so quickly after my divorce, not to mention with a

woman who's a decade younger than I am. But meeting Soso has made me realise, once again, that love can hit anyone and at any time. Her level of maturity and her wisdom are what attracted me to her the most, and today she has just made me realise that they are also what will keep my heart glued to hers for years to come or up until life happens.

I can see that she turned around to say something but right now I don't want to talk. I just pull her fully into my arms. My mouth finds hers almost of its own volition. With one hand behind her head, and the other pressing her close against my aroused body, I take possession of her lips with heated urgency that betrays my hungry need. She winds her arms around my neck and let me deepen the kiss. Wedging one leg between hers, I let her feel my erection, drawing one of her hands off my neck and down to me so she could shape my

pulsating length.

"Baby, I need this."

I mutter, my breathing laboured.

"I need it too but first we need to talk."

She whispers. Dammit, can't it wait? But maybe it's my erection that needs to wait. It's painful but it will subside. Besides, we have the whole day together. I stop and pull back.

-Me: "What is it?"

-Her: "I know that we mean a lot to each other. Hell, we even travelled to cities we both had never been to before just to fight for our love. But there are two people who aren't so happy about our union."

-Me: "Who? Your ex-friend and your mother?"

-Her: "My mother? What? No."

-Me: "No? Oh, that's a relief. You know, even though I didn't find you home yesterday, I'm still

glad I drove to P.E. I got to meet your mother who happens to look just like you. And I think she has your heart too or you have hers, something like that. What I'd like to know though is what she thinks of me. I don't know but I think she knows that there's something going on between me and you."

She chuckles.

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-Her: "My mom is not stupid, of course she knows. She saw right through your lies. Apparently you cooked up some story about you being my friend who's a postgrad student in my faculty. You should have heard us laughing at that story last night when I was on the bus. She didn't sound so good when she called earlier so when I was on the bus I called her

wanting to know if she was okay. And you know what she said? She said, 'I wasn't okay but I am now. Your boyfriend, Thando, gave me these really good painkillers and they did me good.' Apparently, you gave yourself away by the way you looked at my picture on the wall of our lounge."

-Me: "I did, didn't I?"

-Her: "You can imagine how shocked I was that she knew, I was nervous too. I thought she was gonna give me an earful about dating an older guy, but no, she didn't. Instead, she started making jokes about the story you told. She actually likes you. You managed to win her over with your good heart."

-Me: "For real?"

-Her: "Yeah. So you don't need to worry about my mom. The person we should be worried about is your ex-wife. I asked to meet up with

her yesterday before I left Jo'burg."

-Me: "You did what?"

I don't think I like the sound of this.

-Her: "It's not what you think, and I'm sorry I did it but I felt like I had to. I asked to meet up with her because I wanted to talk to her woman to woman. I wanted to know who gave her my number and what she was hoping to achieve by feeding me lies."

-Me: "And? What did she say?"

-Her: "Thuso tracked her down and gave her my number because she obviously wanted her to be the one to do the scut work of breaking us up. And Busie was up for the challenge. Not because she wants to hurt you but because she thinks I'm not only taking her former spot in your life but I'm also taking her current spot in the lives of her kids."

-Me: "What? What kind of insanity is that?"

-Her: "I don't think it's insanity. I actually felt sorry for her, you know. When I looked at her I saw a woman who's scared of losing her children, Thando. She says they no longer want to live with her, that they want to come live with you so they can get to spend time with me. Apparently, in the three visits they already prefer me over her. Because, according to them, unlike their mother I show interest in their lives. They now even consider me their second mother, a second mother that's way cooler than their actual mother. Now, I don't have a child but I'd like to think no mother wants to hear her children say that. That's why Busie has been giving you problems every time you want the girls to visit. Thando, I honestly get where she's coming from even though I don't agree with how she went about dealing with the problem. Instead of fixing her relationship with the girls she tried to remove me from the equation. She thought if I'm no longer in your life then the girls

won't have a reason to want to come stay with you. That's where she went wrong. I believe if she becomes a better mother, the girls won't want to leave her. What, didn't she discuss this with you?"

-Me: "No. She never said anything to me, neither did the girls. This is stupid, I mean what she did. There's no doubt that I love my girls but I'm still not ready to live alone with them. That's why I never fought Busie when she wanted full custody. Even now, there's no way I was gonna take them. There's no way I'm gonna take them from her even if they want me to."

-Her: "See? This is why communication is important. She went low, to unbelievable lengths trying to prevent a disaster that's not even coming. Kanti if she had just simply picked up the phone and talked to you about the whole thing she wouldn't have acted so stupid, as you put it."

I really can't understand how Busisiwe's brain works sometimes.

-Me: "I'll talk to her."

-Her: "You do that and I'll handle Thuso."

With that she walks away. I watch her walk out of the kitchen and I smile to myself. Damn, where has she been all my life? I really love how she uses her thinking organ.

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Doc really needs to talk to his ex-wife. The last thing I need is for her to pull another stunt again. The next one may not be cheap, it may really destroy my relationship with Doc and I don't want that. As for Thuso, I'll see what to do with

her.

I leave Doc standing in the kitchen and I walk back to the lounge. I take off my sandals and lazily throw myself on the couch, I doubt I'm even still in the mood for sex. But Doc is obviously not planning to let it go. He walks in and finds me sitting on the couch thumbing my phone. Taking it off my hand, he puts it next to his on the coffee table then he sits next to me and starts kissing me. I already know myself by now, I simply can't resist Doc's long and drugging kisses. In a moment I'm back in the mood. But he slows down and pulls back.

"I missed you."

He whispers close to my mouth.

-Me: "I missed you too."

-Him: "How much? Tell me."

-Me: "So much that I'd sort myself out every time I think about you. Especially when I got

back to my flat the night you gave me you."

Then I blush, realising what I have just blurted out. A rainbow of expressions crosses his face; surprise, shock and then a sunrise of sensual pleasure. He tilts his head, and then, taking my hand, he presses it against his groin, moving it over his member, showing me what is required of me. Through his jeans, I can feel his cock stirring into life. He leans closer into me, his voice low and breathy by my ear.

-Him: "So, you missed me and you fucked yourself instead?"

I'm a bit shy now. I don't let words come out of my mouth, I just nod. He presses my hand down against his growing erection.

-Him: "I want you to say it."

-Me: "Yes. I fucked myself, thinking about you."

-Him: "And?"

This is weird to me but at the same time it's exciting, so I go ahead and tell him.

-Me: "I wanted you there, inside me. But you weren't there, so instead, I sat naked on the floor of my shower and got myself off."

-Him: "How? What did you do? Tell me in detail. I want to know."

I am unused to this, and I'm not quite sure what to say, so I hesitate.

-Him: "Baby, I want to hear it. I want you to tell me, detail by detail, how you fucked yourself."

Hehe, am I really doing this?

-Me: "I spread my legs, and I played with my clit."

As I say this, his cock jumps under my hand. I feel it straining for escape. As well as I can through his jeans, I work him with my fingers. Just then, his phone on the coffee table rings. I

stop, thinking he'd want to take it, but no, he ignores it and presses my hand again, hard down on his cock. Seeking permission in his eyes, I unzip his jeans and release his now throbbing erection.

-Him "I'd have you hard down on that, sucking me off, but I still want to hear your story."

-Me: "I played with my clit. I rubbed myself, and tweaked and flicked. And all the time I was thinking of you, with your mouth around me, lapping at me and making me wet."

With the tips of my fingers, I work the head of his penis, licking my fingers to make it as good as I can for him. I have to admit, I've never done anything like this before but now it's starting to come naturally.

-Me: "I made myself really wet. I was ready for you, and I wanted you. I wanted you to lick me out and then fuck me brainless."

I feel that my fingers are not slippery enough on him. My man's dick deserves better than this, so for a moment I bend over, taking him in my mouth, licking and moistening the tender skin, at the same time, continuing to slide my fingers up and down his length. Down there, I can feel my own panties moistening. I stop and look at him, continuing with the story.

-Me: "I used my hand and I finger fucked myself. I was ready to be fucked properly I wanted to feel you deep inside me, but you weren't there. So I used my fingers instead."

He pulls me closer so he can kiss me, tasting himself in my mouth, as I continue to hand fuck him. His dick is now slippery, and I am becoming uncomfortable in my now soaking panties.

His phone rings again. I see his eyes roll skywards.

"Fuck! I gotta take it, babe."

Hell, not just like that. I lean over him and lick his dick clean and dry, enjoying the taste of him and letting him see me lick my own lips clean. Then with a little difficulty, I tuck his dick away, so he could answer the phone. When I'm done, I leave him there and move to the kitchen. I really need some water, plus I need to give him space to talk on the phone.

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Some moments later, he walks into the kitchen and finds me leaning on the kitchen island. He comes to stand before me.

-Him: "Now baby, you were explaining to me how you handle yourself alone."

We are still at that? He takes my hands, pulls

me to him then whirls me around to pin me on the wall that was behind him. One hand grabs me by the wrists, gathering them and raising my arms above my head, pinning me to the wall. The other hand heads south, and he unbuttons my shorts. Then, not too gently, he pulls them down together with my panties to pool around my ankles. I quickly step out of the shorts and my noticeable damp panties, before kicking them to one side. Doc's hand then quest right up my now bare thighs and end up between my legs. His finger slowly makes its way into my awaiting wet p**sy. Automatically, I spread my legs to give him easy access. He reaches in and up, straight inside me. I hear his grunt of satisfaction to find me already dripping for him.

"Now, if you please, continue with your tale."

He says his face close to mine. His warm breath on my skin turns me on even more.

-Me: "I screwed myself with my fingers, hard."

Two of his fingers plunge into me and I yelp.

-Him: "Like this?"

-Me: "Yes, oh God yes."

He stabs into me again, spreading his fingers as he goes, thumb outside, pressed on my clit and I start to whimper in arousal.

-Him: "You like that?"

I am breathless and gasping.

-Me: "Yes.... Yes."

He continues to work me, his thumb rubbing my clit and I need to cum.

-Him: "You want more?"

-Me: "Yes. Please, yes. Please let me cum."

He leans even closer, whispering into my ear. His fingers still working me, but slowly.

-Him: "I forgave you that one time. But in future, never ever leave my bed without letting me

know. If you didn't leave, you weren't gonna need to self-service. You get that?"

-Me: "Yes, yes."

His fingers freeze. I am on the edge of orgasm, brinking the precipice and shaking with anticipation. I need to cum.

-Me: "Please don't stop. Let me cum, let me cum."

-Him: "Promise me that you won't leave me again."

-Me: "I promise, I promise."

His fingers working my g-spot, he drops to his knees, splays my p**sy lips with the other hand and wraps his tongue around my clit, flicking and tasting me. Instantly I orgasm, pleasure pulsing electrically through me as I moan ecstatically, gushing hot over his fingers.

"Spread your ankles further apart."

He commands and through a euphoric haze, I obey, trembling uncontrollably as he licks my clit and p**sy clean. My hips bucking, I want to give at the knees, let my weight slide down to the floor, but he still has several fingers inside me. I can't take no more.

-Me: "Oh God! Stop, please stop. Please stop."

He stops then sit back on his haunches, looking pleased with himself.

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Then he gets up and walk on reverse to go lean on the kitchen island.

-Him: Come here."

I probably look stupid with just my vest on. But who cares? I walk over to him then stand obediently before him as he tilts up my chin to

kiss me on the mouth. Then gradually he turns me around to be the one against the counter.

-Him: "Take your top and bra off."

I don't know but simply hearing him say the words excites me and I feel that inner warmth rising again. I pull my vest over my head and drop it on the floor. Then I unclip my bra then discard it to the floor too. He takes a moment to look at me naked.

-Him: "Undress me too."

With pleasure darling. I slip each shirt button slowly free, and then his cuffs, kissing the flat muscles of his abdomen as I do so. Soon his shirt falls to the floor. Unbuckling his belt and unzipping his jeans I am growing steadily wetter as I feel his already bulging erection. As I slide down his jeans together with his boxers, his hands push me down from the shoulders into a kneeling position. Then, gripping my head from

the back, he pushes my face towards him as his other hand guides his penis into my mouth. I don't need more encouragement, I lick off the twinkling droplet from the tip, loving in the salty-sweet taste of his pre-cum. As my tongue and lips wrap around the head, his shaft twitches under me and I revel in the odd feeling of power it gives me to obey this man, to do his bidding in everything. My mouth filled, I glance upwards to see him standing straight, head up and back, hands clasped behind his head.

-Him: "Baby, pay attention to what you are doing."

He says, and compliantly, I suck and lick his cock, feeling it pulse as I trail the tip of my tongue around the rim of the head, first flicking quickly, then making long sweeping strokes of my tongue, from the base of his shaft, full length to the crown, savouring his trickling juices as his lust rises.

I hear him take a gasp above me.

-Him: "You're so good at that, baby. So good."

Really? But it must be true because I can feel his moans and groans of pleasure. To be honest, I wasn't even sure of what I was doing. I never gave any man a blowjob before, Alex's dick doesn't know my mouth.

-Him: "Continue. But in a minute you are going to stand and I'm going to fuck you senseless."

At his words I flood and gasp, feeling wet heat dribble down inside my thighs. He chuckles as he hears me gasp. And suddenly he gently pushes me off of him. Then he bends, grasps me by the waist and lifts me up, depositing my naked ass on the lower side of his kitchen island.

-Him: "Spread them."

He says, forcing my knees apart, and making me lean backwards to support myself.

-Him: "Lie down."

He says, gently pushing me flat, back down onto the marble surface. Then he kicks his shoes off and chucks his boxers and jeans completely to the side. After that, he pulls me at the hips until his cock kisses into the entrance of my p**sy. He thrusts in for a moment, then stops.

-Him: "Not wet enough."

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I am not sure what he means by this, as it seems to me that I am already swollen and slippery for him, but he drops down and plants his mouth squarely over my p**sy, thrusting in with his tongue, twisting and probing, drinking my juices. Involuntarily I heave and gulp, arching my back to raise my hips to him,

locking my ankles behind his head to open myself fully to him. I don't want to make a lot of noise but as his lips purse over my clit, I cannot help myself. I groan and writhe at the exquisite fire stabbing up through my core. His teeth nibble gently at my bud, then his tongue circles it, flicking and manipulating it until my p**sy juices gush out onto his mouth. He doesn't stop. He licks deep, over my p**sy lips, trailing through my cunt and lingering deliciously as he drinks from me.

-Him: "Wet enough now I think."

And he rises to his feet. Standing, his erection is huge, he probes with the tip at my entrance, once, twice, thrice as my p**sy twitches and jumps in response. Then he thrusts headlong, deep inside me, hard, stopping only as he strikes my inner walls. I scream in response, my cunt throbbing to his rhythm as I try to tighten p**sy and belly muscles around him. I can

barely think as he plunges inside me, again and again, but I know that I want him there and that I want him to take the greatest pleasure in me. He pounds away inside me, gentle at first, then he increases the pace. Lying flat-backed on the stone surface there is little I can do beyond my screaming, rising unbidden from my depths; a deep, primal response to the earthquake of the flesh I am experiencing at his bidding. My hips try to gyrate in time to his thrusting, but with no give to the stone surface I cannot really move at all, only quiver below him as he plunges inside me, again and again, harder and harder.

I feel the stone slab slick under me, and I begin to slide over the slippery surface. But he seizes me at the hips, holding me steady as he continues his pounding inside me, ball deep, and then out completely, to his full length in and then out again. Breathing is difficult as I pant uncontrollably between screams, my heart

pounding and my pulse racing. I feel the rise of orgasm within me, the tension building and my belly muscles clenching as it builds. Convulsed in a paroxysm of ecstatic joy, I try to lean up, to embrace the sensation, but his hand flat between my breasts, he pushes me down again on my back, holding me pinned as climax takes me. I am unconscious of anything but the release as my pulsating cunt sends violent waves of pleasure through my stomach and thighs. I do not know if I scream or gasp or cry, only that I lie helplessly writhing, speared by Doc. He doesn't stop moving, I can feel the growing throb and cadence of his rising climax. His own hips start to quiver, and then, as I feel he is about to spurt inside me, he pulls out and shoots onto my tummy in a creamy cascade. He finishes his climax over my stomach, his stream surging over to my belly button. Finally, with a heave, he takes a step back from me and stands there breathing deeply, arms akimbo.

Sated and exhausted, I lie there, my panting subsiding. After a moment he comes over to me and looks at me in the eye.

-Him: "Baby, you feel good. Really good."

And he leans over, kissing me deeply on the mouth and then the breasts.

-Him: "Come on, let me help you down."

And he picks me up from the marble and places me carefully on my own two feet. I wobble a little, a bit unsteady after the internal pounding he just gave my still swollen p**sy and clit.

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Seeing that I'm wobbling, he picks me up and carries me to his bedroom, then to the en-suite bathroom and into the shower. He turns the water on, feeling the temperature. When it's fine

we start taking the shower together. In fact, he washes me up, my back, front, down there, all the way to my feet. It feels good being treated like this, I must say. Then turning the water off, he carries me out of the shower. He only puts me down on my feet when we are out, in front of the mirror. He leaves me there going to grab a towel. I examine myself in the mirror. I have really changed, haven't I? It's not a physical thing that I can see in the mirror, but psychologically I know that I'm a different person. The things I do aren't things my old self would do.

On my shoulder, I can see the bite mark Doc left on me earlier. I run my finger over it and I feel a tingling sensation right down to my toes. Doc comes behind me with two towels. He hands one to me so I can dry myself as he dries himself with the other.

Then we walk out of the bathroom and into the

bedroom. He pulls fresh boxers out of a drawer in the closet, and puts them on as I sit on the bed, naked. He pulls out two T-shirts, he puts one on and gives the other to me. I put it on as big as it is on me. He then climbs onto the bed and pulls me to him so I can sleep on his chest as he lies down on his back.

-Him: "I want to spend the rest of the day with you. And I'd like you to spend the night. I want you to sleep here, next to me, till the morning this time around. No sneaking out at night as if you were my one night stand. Our sex has meaning, babe. We're together. We're in love. I need to feel that. I need to wake up next to you in the morning."

-Me: "I am gonna spend the night, babe. I want that too. It's Wednesday today and I'm not going to work for the rest of the week. I'm only going back on Monday. So I'll be all yours till then."

-Him: "What if you don't go back at all?"

-Me: "What, you want me to quit my job?"

-Him: "Yeah. Soso, I'm your man. Let me take care of you. Anything you need I'll provide. You don't need to work."

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Data is a problem. Yesterday it ran out when I was still typing. Vodacom chows data like Doc chows p**sy.

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"If you really wanna know, ask how many nights I've been thinking of you, zero, zero. I gave a hundred percent but all I got from you, zero, zero." - Chris Brown

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Thando

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5 days later - Monday

After our hot steamy session with my baby last night not a word was muttered, our arms wrapped around each other as we drifted into a deep, relaxing satisfied sleep. I'm only waking up now, and, checking the time, I realise that it's 5:05. I never set an alarm, my body is accustomed to waking up around this time. I roll over to look at the woman sleeping next to me and I smile to myself. Lord, how did I become so lucky? I ask myself that question everyday. Soso is perfect in her imperfections and I consider myself lucky to have her. Having her next to me all night, every night, and waking up next to her every morning in the past 5 days has been nothing but bliss to me. And the sex? Out of this world. We share the most sensational sex, the kind I haven't had in a very

very long time. I know that we go wild with the f*cking, and that's exactly how I like it, but it always feels more than just f*cking. It's the closest thing to a spiritual experience I've ever known. I'm 31 but I doubt I've ever felt like this before. The first time I went inside her, I knew that I've never felt that instantaneous recognition of something stronger than myself. Damn, just thinking about it is enough to make my body stir. She gave it all to me last night but I still want her. Gosh, I have the uneasy feeling I'm never going to have enough of her. I asked her to quit her job last week but she didn't give me a straight answer. She's supposed to go back to work tonight and I don't know if she will, but I'd prefer it if she didn't. The way I'm so attached to her is nowhere near being funny. I don't think I can ever be able to sleep without her next to me. And I don't like that she's exhausting herself working at that filling station. She doesn't need to do that anymore, I'm here

and I'll take care of her, I want to. All she needs to do is focus on her studies, mostly, then on me.

As I'm still lying here figuring a way to convince her to quit her job, I hear her moaning in her sleep and I can feel my erection stirring up. She's on her side, her back to me, completely naked, in fact we're both naked. I turn my physical attention to her, kissing and nuzzling the back of her neck. She acknowledges me by moaning and by stretching her hand behind her to stroke my mounting erection, only to release it and press her ass into my cock. Damn, what is this girl doing to me? I just want to feel myself inside her right now, but she rolls over to face me. I love how she opens her eyes in the morning, slowly and sexily. Looking into my eyes, she smiles. Whenever I see her smile like this everything seems alright, the world becomes a better place. Her smile always

manages to shoot past my eyes and straight to my heart. It warms me up inside and I can't help but smile too.

-Me: "Morning, sleepy head."

-Her: "Morning, sthandwa sam. Sleep well?"

-Me: "The sleep that really good sex gives you."

She laughs. I mean it though. She comes closer and kisses my lips. I kiss her back, long and hard, with our hands feeling each other's bodies. Neither of us minds the morning breath of the other, and that's what happens when you really love someone. Soon, I feel her hand gently sliding up my thigh and her warm, soft fingers start caressing my balls. I reach over with my hand between her own thighs and straight up to her p**sy. I let out a groan of satisfaction when I find her already wet and my fingers easily slip between the lips of her p**sy as I push two of my fingers up inside her. We start gently

masturbating each other and soon I can feel that we're both losing ourselves in heightened arousal at each other's touch.

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I roll over on top of her, kissing her on the lips before moving down to her breasts. The moans she's letting out are sending me over the edge. Soon, I'm kneeling between her knees and I gently lower myself onto her. She's so wet that my cock easily slides inside her without any effort. I lie on top of her with my arms hooked under her shoulders and slowly push deep inside her while we kiss passionately, exploring each other's mouths with our tongues. Ever so slowly, I pull out again until the head of my cock is just inside her and very slowly push back in again. Each time I push in, she moans softly

and push her hips up to meet mine. We keep this up for several minutes before I have to pull out and take a break, delaying my climax. I'm all for soft love-making in the morning, and I like to take my time. I sit astride her for a while, caressing her breasts with my hands until the urge to cum subsides a bit. Then very carefully, I enter her again and start slowly pushing in and out of her while I support myself with my hands. With my back arched, I push deeper into her and each time I'm deep inside her, I move from side to side slightly. This seems to get her really excited and she puts her hands around my buttocks to pull me in even further. After a few more minutes of this, I have to pull out again and wait until the desire to cum subsides before easing myself back inside her yet again.

We manage to keep this up for 25 or 30 minutes before our passion starts to become too strong. My thrusting begins to quicken in

pace and my baby starts moaning more loudly. I can feel the tension starting to build in my cock and I start moaning as well. My thrusting becomes faster and stronger and each time I push deep inside her our pubic bones grind together. Finally, I reach orgasm and call out as I pump semen into her. At the same time my baby is screaming to the ceiling.

"Yes, yes, yes, ooooh, that's it, I'm cumming, I'm cumming!"

And she archs her back as she reaches orgasm. I lie back down on top of her for a moment, catching my breath. Then I pull out and we both roll over, still facing each other. We lie like that in each other's arms for some time, kissing each other softly.

-Her: "I love you, Thando."

She says with her eyes shadowed with so much emotion. I know, this woman really loves me.

And I love her too, maybe more than she even knows. I kiss her again, pouring my entire soul into the kiss. Going deeper, I let my mouth communicate my true feelings without uttering a single word.

-Me: "I love you too, sthandwa sam."

I say, finally.

-Me: "So much. It's only been a couple of weeks but you already have a permanent place in my heart, and that's because you mean a lot to me. My...my worst fear is losing you, Someleze. I know that I have a baggage - my kids, my ex-wife. But please, I want you to know that I'm really working on making sure that none of that comes between us."

-Her: "I know. I know. And I promise you, I'm not going anywhere. Boy, you're stuck with me."

She says brushing my cheek. Then she pecks my lips. The love she has for me is undeniable.

I just hope the mother of my children won't pull another stunt to ruin us. I talked to her and put her in her place. She seemed to understand as we discussed a way forward, and I'm really hoping that things will remain that way.

Speaking of children, I really don't think I want another child in my life. I don't think Someleze is ready for that either. After what happened on Wednesday, me hitting it raw, I saw how worried she was as we cuddled on the bed. I thought she wasn't on any contraceptive and that maybe she was worried that she might fall pregnant even though I'd pulled out but no, she's got the Nexplanon implant so that meant she was worried about something else. I, too, don't know what I was thinking. Yes, I know my HIV status but I didn't know hers. She was worried about the same thing too, infections, I figured. So the next morning I talked to her about it and we decided to go for testing

together at my GP's office. We're both clean and that's a comfort to the both of us. But we've been using condoms even after we got those results, well up until now. And I must say, I enjoyed coming inside her. I wish we could do it again or just lie like this forever but duty calls. I pull away from her and climb down the bed. We are running late, we have to get up and get ready to go to campus. I have to go to work and she has classes too, the September break is now over. Picking her up from the bed, I carry her to the bathroom and we take a shower together, something I really enjoy. It's no secret that we both want to make love again under these jets of water but we can't, we'll be late. We step out and quickly get ready. Yesterday Soso came with a bag of fresh clothes to change into this morning, so we both start getting dressed. Soon, we are dressed and we make the bed together before going to the kitchen to have breakfast - just muesli and fruit

salad.

Then we get our bags and leave the house to the car. I get her door and help her inside before going round to get inside next to her.

-Her: "Baby, the door is not properly closed."

I pull it closed then turn to her with a smile.

-Me: "We both know that we're sleeping together. Hell, we just did it 2 hours ago. But, sthandwa sam, make sure that other people on campus don't read that from your body language. Okay? Remember, from this moment until we come back home I'm not 'baby' or 'Thando', I'm 'Doc' or 'sir', alright?"

She just bursts out, laughing. I find myself laughing too.

-Me: "Ndlovu, I mean it."

-Her: "Yes, sir. I know."

Then we kiss, still laughing. Before driving off. I

just love how crazy she can be sometimes.

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Someleze

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My spiritual and emotional connection with Doc has strengthened dramatically in the past few days. We connected on the deepest human level. Right now, I can say with no hesitation in my voice that I am totally happy. I feel like Doc has been sent to heal and mend my broken heart. And he's been doing a great job at that, in fact I think he completed his mission a while ago. What he's doing now is a bonus. I've never been this happy in my entire life, even when I'd just fallen in love for the very first time I wasn't like this. Yes, I was happy, very happy, but not this much. Doc is everything a woman could

possibly want, or at least I think so. I'm not sure what other women want, I'm only sure about myself, and I know that Doc is everything I want in a man. I really love him, but if he thinks I'll quit my job because he wants me to, he's Big-Mac'ing in his dreams. I don't want to depend on a man financially ever again. I've been there before and it didn't end so well. So nah, he's just going to have to forgive me, this is one request I cannot honour. I enjoy working and earning my own money, there's no way I'm going to drop that. Knowing the kind of person he is, he's not going to be happy about my decision but he's just going to have to accept it.

It has been a long day, and concentrating in his class has been a mission for me, I have to admit. I kept thinking about the things he does to me when we are alone, and the fact that he was buried deep inside me this very morning didn't make things easier either. But I really tried

to focus until it was over.

Now it's the afternoon and I make my way to his office so we can drive home together. I find him sitting behind his desk, talking on his cellphone with who I think is Busie. They've been talking a lot lately, since last Wednesday when she called as I was busy hand-fucking her ex-husband. I never get jealous of the calls because I know that they are discussing their children, their co-parenting duties. As for Thuso, I don't know what she's up to wherever she is. I thought I was going to see her in class today but she wasn't there. Maybe she's still not back from home but as soon as she gets her behind back here we'll face each other.

I sit down on the chair and wait for Doc to finish his conversation. And when he does, he gathers his stuff and we walk out to his car. We drive home talking about nothing else but Biochemistry. This guy is really feeling this

course and yours truly is absorbing as much information from him as she can - all of this will come in handy come test or exam.

As usual, he only starts a conversation about us when he parks in front of my gate.

-Him: "Baby, please tell me you're not going to work tonight."

Dear God, this is the conversation I've been dreading.

-Me: "Sthandwa sam, I know that you want me to quit because you think I'm overworking myself and because you also want me to have more time for you. That's nice, it's really nice but I can't do it, babe. I can't quit my job. Hayi kabi, baby, but I don't want to be financially dependent on a man. It's not you, it's me. I just wanna do my things when I want to and not wait for you to give me money when you feel like it."

-Him: "You won't wait. I will give you money and if you still need more when it runs out, you'll just have to ask and I'll give it to you. Baby, I just want you to focus on your studies. I don't want you to be distracted. And I'm not gonna lie, I do need to spend more time with you but I won't be able to if you keep working these night shifts. Please, babe, just do this one thing for me."

I hear him, but really, there's no way I'm doing this. Yes, I know that he's not Alex. What Alex did he probably won't do. But I don't want to find out. Alex didn't notify me when he was about to do it either, he just did it. I just can't repeat the same mistake twice. Being cautious never hurts anyone. To keep my relationship with Doc green, I think umntu nomntu makatye kweyakhe ipokotho.

-Me: "I'm sorry, baby, I can't. I need to do this for myself. Please understand. Just this once."

-Him: "Fine. Go."

He says with a voice laced with irritation.

-Me: "Thando, come on, don't do that. This is one area we need to compromise on. We'll still see each other on weekends - from Friday to Sunday. That should be enough."

-Him: "I can't continue talking about this now, Soso. Please, just open the door and get out."

Yoh! I open the door and get out, just as Alex's car pulls up behind Doc's.

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What the hell does he want? Can't he see that I'm over his black ass? He gets out and comes to me as I walk towards my gate. I'm already irritated as it is and he's about to make things worse.

-Him: "Soso, can we talk?"

Not wanting drama and avoiding to cause a scene, I stop and turn to him.

-Me: "Alex. What do you want?"

-Him: "I want us to talk. Please."

I look over at Doc who now starts his car and drive off. I take a moment just watching his car until it disappears around the corner. Then I turn to Alex.

-Me: "Alex, talk. I don't have the luxury of time. I have to be at work in less than an hour.

-Him: "Then I'll take just a few minutes of your time. Can we please go talk in my car?"

-Me: "Fine. But you better make it snappy."

I walk with him over to his car and we get in. I'm only agreeing to this because I'm curious to hear what he has to say. Plus, I can't be standing in front of my gate with a man, my landlord doesn't like that, so the only way was

to come talk with him in the car.

"So?"

I say after we've both settled on our seats.

-Him: "Firstly, I wanna say I'm sorry. I'm sorry about the way I treated you. You didn't deserve that, MaNdlovu, you didn't."

-Me: "Oh, you do know that now, huh. What made you see it?"

-Him: "Life."

-Me: "Life?"

-Him: "Yeah. I made a mistake by letting you go, Someleze. A terrible mistake. I thought I was doing the right thing for myself but now I'm regretting the decision I made. Iviwe is not the woman I thought she was. She..."

-Me: "Woah! Yibambe apho ke bhuti. Andinamdla wokwazi ngawe nolviwe wakho. Wakhetha yena kunam mos so... [Hold it right

there. I'm not interested in knowing about you and your Iviwe. You chose her over me so...]"

-Him: "I made a terrible mistake by dropping you for her, Soso."

He turns and looks straight into my eyes.

-Him: "I miss you. I really do. Lemme go straight to the point. Would you please consider giving us another chance? Please. I still love you, Soso. And I'm sorry."

Hehehe, karma takes no time, huh. Iviwe must have showed him flames, and now he's thinking of me. He must think I'm stupid, hey. As much as I'm enjoying this, though, I don't have time to entertain him.

-Me: "The answer to your question is no. Alex, if you really want to know, I don't miss you at all. I don't think about you at any time of the day...or night. You are a closed chapter in my life. A chapter that would never ever get to see the

light of day again. I thought we were solid, you know. I thought what we had was important to you as much as it was to me. But boy was I wrong. You turned around and walked away with your love without even telling me that you were doing it, or even why you were doing it. I cried, thinking and praying that you'd come back to me but you didn't. You just humiliated me in front of your woman instead. I was left dealing with that kind of pain when you were busy enjoying life. And now you have the nerve to come here and tell me this? Are you alright upstairs? The woman that you left me for has probably done to you what you did to me, and now you're coming back to me? What do you think I am? A consolation prize. I gave you my all, Alex, but you chose to hurt me in return. So, no, just because you miss what we had doesn't mean I do too. I thought you were the one then, before you hurt me, but not anymore. As I'm sure you already know, I moved on with my life,

Alex. And right now, I don't need you anywhere near me. Go to the woman you thought was better than me and stay away from me."

With that I get out of his car and walk away, leaving him with his face buried in his hands. Tshini nkosiyam singaphela. He thought I was still thinking about his ass? Oh hell no. I got over him, and quicker than I even thought I would. He still loves me? Well, he can take his stupid love and shove it.

I need to go get ready for my shift.

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Hehehe, I really don't know if I should be offended or what by those who think I'm a teenager. What are you guys trying to say about me? Those who think I'm 30 and above, I'm taking that as a compliment. Well, I'm actually a 28 year old, married and childless woman, who

was once the 21 year old Soso. Let's just say, as the first time writer that I am, I thought I should start writing with what I know - it's easier that way. Now let's just leave it at that.

#19

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"And now I'm missin' your love, I'ma roll up. I'm faded once again, I don't know where I am. But I just know I'm driftin' far from you. I'm tryna keep my head strong, but my heart won't just let me grow away from you." - Chris Brown [G-Eazy]

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Someleze

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With my head down and hands tucked in the pockets of my uniform pants, I drag my feet outside after clocking in at work. I haven't even

started putting in the hours yet but I'm already tired. I had a long day on campus, and the fact that Doc and I only slept after 00:00 last night doesn't help either. He was right though, I'm exhausting myself by working here. But I'd rather be drained than be financially dependent on him. I don't want to be "blessed".

"Finally, she's back."

Even though I only see his feet standing in front of me under my work baseball cap that I've pulled down to just above my eyes, I know that it's Kevin, I know his voice. Raising my head, I look at him and smile.

-Me: "Hey, buddy."

Even though we chat via Whatsapp, the last time I saw Kevin was that morning before I went home to P.E. After I came back from Jo'burg on Wednesday last week I didn't see him because I didn't come to work at all last

week. I took the entire week off because I was "sick". I even have a doctor's certificate. Doc had his GP write it for me when we went there for HIV testing on Thursday - at a cost of course.

-Kevin: "Glad you're back, buddy. This place wasn't the same without you."

-Me: "What would you do if I were to not come back at all?"

-Him: "What, you're thinking of quitting?"

-Me: "My man wants me to."

-Him: "You're now admitting that the good doctor's your man?"

-Me: "Because he's the one who admitted it to you first when you two drove to P.E together."

-Him: "He's a great guy. But why does he want you to quit?"

-Me: "Says I'm overworking my body. And he also wants to spend more time with me."

I say, leaning on the wall behind me. And Kevin follows suit.

-Him: "Isn't he right though? Aren't you exhausting yourself? School, work, boyfriend. Ain't that too much?"

-Me: "It probably is...God, please tell me why did I choose to be a triple major at varsity."

I groan as I cover my face with both my hands.

-Him: "Triple major?"

As I remove my hands from my face I remember that Kevin's never been a varsity student, so he wouldn't just understand.

-Me: "Majoring in three courses. To complete my degree I was required to have just two majors and drop the elective course at second year level. But I chose to take it to third year level for my own benefit. I like all three courses; Microbiology, Biochemistry and Chemistry. I didn't want to drop any of them, so here I am

now, drowning in a load of school work. And then there's this job and a man on the side."

-Him: "It really sounds like a lot. But if you quit will Thando give you the money you're earning here?"

-Me: "That's what he says. Says whatever I need he'll provide. But I don't want that, I don't want to be financially dependent on a man, Kev. I want to continue making my own money. But Thando's not having any of that. He's sulking as we speak because I've chosen to come here, because I'm refusing to quit... Tell me, Kev. Am I doing a wrong thing? If you were me what would you do? Would you quit?"

-Him: "You don't know how much I would love to have a girlfriend like you. Someone who doesn't want to clean my wallet. Someone independent. Thando should be happy you're not after his money. He should appreciate the fact that you want to be independent and respect you for it.

But I also understand where he's coming from. So, with that said, I can't answer your question. This is something you and your man should sit down and talk about, find a common ground. It's imperative that..."

But he doesn't finish. We both get distracted by the sight of an immaculate red Ferrari driving into our station and to our pumps. This is Alice, a small town, it's not everyday that you get to see such luxury cars here. So when one appears it draws all the attention.

-Kevin: "Nice wheels. Go attend to it. I'm sure the owner will give you a fat tip."

-Me: "I'll go. Not for the tip though, but because it's my job."

As I'm making my approach I see Bonolo getting out of the passenger side of this glittering Italian sports machine. Bonolo, one of Thuso's friends. She's probably with her blesser,

I say to myself as she runs towards the shop, ignoring me.

I look through the rolled down window of the car to talk to the driver, and my heart almost jumps out of my chest due to shock when I see who the driver is - Thuso herself.

-Me: "Thuso?"

-Her: "Soso?"

I can see that she's also shocked to see me working here. I've been working here for two months now but Thuso never knew that. It wasn't her business to know.

-Me: "Nice toy."

-Her: "Thanks. You're pumping fuel now?"

Her "thanks" is as dry her brain.

-Me: "It's called honest living... I thought I'd see you in our classes today but you weren't there. Why?"

-Her: "I didn't know that I have a monitor to monitor my presence or absence. I only came back this afternoon, if you must know."

What did I just say about her brain? Dry indeed. She can't even see that I'm asking questions tailored to a response that I've already anticipated.

-Me: "Your father got you these wheels?"

-Her: "What does it matter who got me the car? Fact is; I'm driving it, you don't."

-Me: "True. But I'm not jealous. I understand that as people we can't all be on the same level. We can't all have the same things."

I state, boring my eyes into hers in a way that demands her attention.

-Me: "When you see the next person with something nice, something you don't have, the least you can do is be happy for them, not be bitchy about it. Thuso, I have December, you

don't. Why can't you just accept that and back the hell off if you can't be happy for me? I know what you did the week before last. I know that you tracked Busisiwe down because you wanted her to break me and December up. But guess what, you failed. And whatever you try to do next, you're gonna fail again."

I say, unapologetically.

-Her: "Oh, so you're finally admitting to sleeping with a lecturer?"

-Me: "I am. Question is, what are you gonna do about it? Go report the affair, no one's gonna believe a loose bitch like you. You already killed your reputation, and you already made the allegations about Doc and I in front of the HOD. Nobody believed you then, and nobody will ever believe you. Whatever you decide to do next I say bring it on. I'm tired of your shit, Thuso. Keep this up and you're gonna see another side of me that you've never seen before. And I

promise you, you're not gonna like it."

I pause for a moment, allowing my message to be absorbed.

-Me: "Now...the petrol. How much?"

My voice has been calm all this time but clearly my words have been so disconcerting that Thuso has to take a few moments to find her voice.

-Her: "Six...six hundred."

She's not saying anything about what I just said, but I know that it's not over. She hands me the R600 and I pump her petrol. As I close the petrol cap Bonolo gets to the car with two plastic bags full of whatever she's just bought from the shop. Again, she doesn't greet me, she just gives me a bitchy look then gets in the car. Does she honestly think I care? If anything, my thoughts about her good heart and her brains have just dissipated like the morning fog over

the Tyhume River - our local river. Clearly she doesn't have any of those. I walk away to the cashier window and they also drive off.

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As I'm still standing here, leaning on the wall by the cashier's window, thinking about the war that Thuso is about to declare against me, my phone rings. I take it out of my pocket and glance at the screen. It's Busisiwe, I saved her number. What does she want? I wonder. Taking a deep breath, I swipe through the screen to answer.

-Me: "Hello."

I answer, trying to sound more alive than I actually am.

-Her: "Someleze, hey. How are you?"

-Me: "I'm okay. Are you?"

I answer as I sit down on the outside bench.

-Her: "I'm fine. Listen, the twins are coming down to visit their father this coming Friday and I'd really appreciate it if you could be nice to them as always."

Okay, what is this woman trying to say?

-Me: "Oh?"

-Her: "Yeah. Can I just say something?"

-Me: "Sure."

-Her: "What you said to me last week had me thinking, it pushed me to do some introspection. That's why I couldn't even say anything before you walked out of that restaurant. You left me open-mouthed. I was in awe by just how mature you are for your age. And I realised that I'd judged you harshly without knowing anything about you. You're not a typical 21 year old. Hell,

I'm even ashamed to accept that I've been given a wise advice by a girl that's way younger than me. But you were right, the problem here was me, not you. And I've already started to pull my shit together, for my girls' sake. In a calm manner, you made me see that your intentions are pure. That your love for them and their father is genuine. And for that I respect you. Thando and I have been talking about this, he told me how serious you are about each other, and I'm glad he has someone like you in his corner. Even though I had some misgivings at first, if I'm being honest, I'm happy he's introduced the twins to someone like you. When they are over there, I'm gonna rest assured that they are in good hands."

Okay, I didn't see this coming.

-Me: "Thanks for saying this, Busie. And yeah, you don't have to worry, I love the twins and they are gonna be taken care of when here."

-Her: "I'm sorry for what I did, and I'm so ashamed, you know. I'm sure you saw me as a walking cliché. An ex-wife that's fighting the current girlfriend. So stupid."

-Me: "Not really. And Busie... I'm glad you called. And don't worry about what happened, it's water under the bridge."

-Her: "Thanks for listening. Bye for now."

-Me: "Bye."

We both hang up. And I'm left looking at the screen of my phone. What was that? Was that real? Oh, wow.

"Baby."

I look up, to this familiar voice. A word doesn't exist for the feeling of unexpected delight I'm experiencing right now at the sight of Doc. He's now standing in front of me, smiling, and I quickly get up from the bench. But I thought he was home sulking. I'm happy to see him here

though, but I immediately throttle back my emotions so my pleasure isn't completely obvious. But he has no such inhibition. He hugs me then kisses my cheek, lingering near my ear.

-Him: "I have a weakness for women in uniform. Especially if the name is Someleze Ndlovu."

He says so seductively near my ear. My cheeks unconsciously lift with happiness.

-Me: "But I thought you were mad at me. What are you doing here?"

He pulls back, smiling wickedly as he takes my hand into his.

-Me: "I can never stay mad at you, babe. It's impossible. Working here is what you want and I'm willing to let you do it...for now."

Yeesss!!! A slow smile of victory raises my lips.

-Me: "You mean that?"

-Him: "Of course...But you look tired even

though it's still early. You could use some good coffee, and I've brought you some. Imported beans, not this dish water that's sold here."

I laugh happily as he walks me over to his car. When we reach it, he pauses. Then he turns me around and pins my back against its door. Stepping forward, to get very close to me, he moves his hand to touch my hip. With my short-sleeved shirt, I feel a fingertip from his second hand touching the inside of my palm, moving up my skin on the inside of my forearm, then crossing my elbow, to the back of my bicep. It causes shivers to run along my back. I unconsciously lean into him, humming against his cheek. The fact that I'm at work or that this is actually my lecturer and that some students or other staff members from his department could possibly see us isn't even hitting my mind, and evidently he's not thinking about it either.

-Him: "Damn, I love you."

He whispers close to my ear, his lips never touching the surface of my skin.

-Him: "I want to bottle you up and drink you down. I don't know if I'm gonna be able to sleep without you next to me tonight."

Haha. What? I savour the image. Then I picture his arms wrapped around me in his bed as we drift off into a deep sleep. I want to feel that tonight, but it can't happen. I let out a subtle smile and brush his shoulder as he pulls his face away from my ear.

-Me: "You'll be fine."

-Him: "I'll try."

His breath hits me before his lips do, because he's now close to my mouth. I suck in a breath, then he tilts his head and kisses me, right here in public. I don't ask, I kiss him back. A slow, passionate kiss. He finally pulls back and looks at me.

-Him: "I just had to come and see you before I climb on that empty bed. But you can go back to work now."

-Me: "Thanks for coming. Can I get my coffee now?"

I say, smiling. He opens the passenger door and comes out with a flask which he then hands to me. He knows that I have many new styrofoam cups in my locker, so I'm set. But he also takes out a lunch box.

-Him: "Food put together in an hour, but it's way better than that junk that's sold in that fast food shop."

He says handing me the lunch box. One of the things I love about Doc is that he's not only good in the bedroom but also in the kitchen. He's a better cook than I am.

-Me: "Awww, baby, thanks. You're a darling, you know that? See you in the morning. I love you."

-Him: "Love you more."

We kiss one more time then he gets in his car. But before he drives off he has something else in his mind.

-Him: "What did your ex want earlier?"

I knew he was going to ask.

-Me: "Love back. Don't mind. He's high on something."

-Him: "He better watch where he puts his foot. Bye, babe."

I don't know what he means by that and I don't even get a chance to ask because he rolls up his window and drives off. Okay, let me go back to work.

"You and the good doctor need to slow down, hey. What's with the PDA? Have you forgotten that you're at work? Did you even see the cars that needed to be attended to? I had to do it.

And the other guys are complaining."

That's Kevin. He says as he comes to me. I just wave him off dismissively, like a designer to a tailor, even though I know that he's right. I make my way to the locker room and leave everything Doc gave me inside my locker, I'll eat later. Then I get my earphones out and plug them into my phone. I turn on the music then walk back outside to rock and roll. The guys that were complaining can sit their butts down and let me work alone if they wish. The pumping beats in my ears match the adrenaline running through my veins now that Doc has come around, energising me more than caffeine ever can. Nothing is as bad as I thought.

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4 days later - Friday

Alex

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Over time, pain turns into grief, grief turns into silence, and silence turns into lonesomeness, as vast and bottomless as the dark oceans.

When I lost my twin sister, with whom I was very very close, in a horrific car accident 3 years ago I retreated into a solitude that grew in weight day by day. I pushed everyone away but there's only one person who pushed back and hard, and that's Soso. She pushed her way in with no intention to walk out. I was going through a rough time and she was there for me. She helped me out of a broken place, she gave me comfort, she made sure that she held me close to her. She didn't even need to say much, her being there was enough. But I still remember what she said this one day when she found me home, sitting on the floor of my bathroom, about to overdose on sleeping pills.

She said something like, "Baby, things are going to be okay. I know that right now you feel like the light of your soul has been put out and that you will stay in the dark forever. But that's not true. After grief comes another season, another life, another you. I felt like this too when I lost my grandmother who was more like a mother to me. She is gone, she is no more, but then I started seeing her everywhere and in everything I do. Deep in the slow whirling of sorrow and longing, I am with my grandmother every day, every minute. She lives inside me. All this to say, you haven't lost your twin sister completely too, she continues to live inside you. You just need to be calm and listen to her voice that's within you. What would she say to you right now? Would she want you to take your own life?" After that she didn't wait for my answer, she just took the pills and walked out. What she'd just said didn't make much sense to me at the time but the last part really got me thinking.

What would my twin sister say? She would definitely scream at me and tell me to stop being stupid, that much I knew. That's when I pulled myself together and got up from that floor determined to continue living my life. Soso came back a moment later and ran me a bath. After that long soothing bath, she tucked me into bed and held me all night without saying a single word. Having her next to me, knowing that I wasn't alone, made all the difference. In the morning I thought she would tell my parents about what I'd tried to do but she didn't. She knew how my parents would react and she didn't want that. Instead, she convinced me to go for counselling and I did. Counselling changed my life. Hell, SHE saved and changed my life. That's the kind of woman Soso was to me. Young but strong for me. She loved me and it showed. But I still dropped her anyway. For what? Just wild sex? How could I? Soso was my main chick but I just had to fuck up what we

had. Thinking about it now, I see how stupid I was. I shouldn't have done what I did to her. She couldn't satisfy me in bed yes, but she loved me. She loved me past the fuck-boy stage and tried to make a better man out me. But I just had to disappoint her. After my wild sexual encounters with Iviwe I could feel myself drifting far from Soso. I blamed it on her whack sex game, but I couldn't even bring myself to tell her that. I just kept dodging her and ignoring her calls while I was busy acting wild, until she found out for herself. I hurt her. I hurt her so bad. I know that I don't have a right to but right now I'm missing her love, I'm missing what we had. Without her, I can feel myself fading. I don't know where or who I am. What was I thinking really? Was I even thinking though? I doubt it. Or at least not with the organ above my neck. I know that she's made it perfectly clear that she doesn't want me back and I'm trying to keep my head strong and accept that but my heart just won't let me

give up on her. I want her back, I need her even though I can see that she's now drifted away from me. It took me being manhandled by another man to realise that Soso was a diamond. A diamond that I chose to discard and replace with an ordinary rock. I made a mistake, a colossal mistake. Iviwe was not for me, but I was too blinded by the good sex to notice. When a man called her phone referring to her as his woman 2 weeks ago, she walked in through the door and her eyes went wild when she realised that I had answered her phone. I gave it to her so she could talk to the man but she just cut the call and looked at me nervously. Naturally, I asked what was going on and her answer was the same old answer: "That's my delusional ex who just doesn't want to take the message." Even though I had many questions, I chose to let it go. I was in no mood to fight that morning and I didn't even have time to, I just wanted to get to my department and work on

my dissertation. But then the next day I went to her commune at the hospital and I got the answers to my questions in a not-so-pleasant way. I had just got there and I was still trying to talk to Iviwe when this tough-looking guy walked in also wanting to see Iviwe. I guessed he was in his mid to late thirties as I took in his face that looked like it was chiseled out of a stone. As he spoke, I recognised his voice as that of the man who'd called Iviwe's phone the day before. I asked what was going on, who he was to my girlfriend, and that got me more than I had bargained for. I found myself pinned against the wall with this guy's arms wedged under my throat. As it turns out he's also from Mthatha just like Iviwe, and Iviwe is his fiancée. You can imagine how I felt when that bomb got dropped on my lap. The first emotion I went through was anger. Angry at myself for being so stupid, then at Iviwe for lying to me. She tried to explain but I wasn't interested, I had heard

enough. I walked out of there with my blood feeling like liquid fire in my veins, I was boiling. How could she not tell me something like that? In fact, how could she lie to me like that? The first person I thought of when I got to my room was Soso. I felt so stupid for letting her go. I let her go for what? Another man's wife? It was clear to me that she's moved on but I just had to talk to her and find out if she's really closed our chapter together. It took me a week to muster the courage to go talk to her though. And even when I did, nothing came of it. She told me off. Now I'm sitting here, on my bed, drinking to escape my pain, my mistake. I messed up big time. But how could I have known that I was making a mistake?

All I know right now is that I can't stop thinking about Soso, it's like she's running a marathon in my mind and I can't shut her out. I hear a knock at my door as I'm still drowning my sorrows.

Who the hell is that? And what do they want?

"Come in."

I answer, already annoyed. My friends, Sive and Siya walk in.

-Sive: "Hey, man, why are you drinking in your room? It's Friday night and we're hitting the streets. Come on, get up from that bed and let's go."

-Me: "I'm not going anywhere with you guys. I just wanna drown my sorrows right here."

-Siya: "See why I don't do monogamous relationships? They always end like this."

-Sive: "No, this guy needs to get a grip. He's been like this for two weeks now and no woman is worth that...Alex, get the fuck up, clean your balls and let's go hunting. There are a lot of women out there."

-Siya: "You'd swear it's Soso who dumped him

and not the other way round...Just get your ass up, bro, and let's go have some real fun."

They keep going on and on, annoying the hell out of me. Dammit! I can't take it anymore.

-Me: "I said I'm not going anywhere with you. Which part of that is unclear to you? Huh? Just get the fuck out of my room NOW. Both of you."

I'm screaming and they quickly walk out because they can tell that I'm really not in the mood, that I'm pissed. But soon after they have left I hear another knock at the door. These fools are back? Lord, kill me now.

"I've told you two to go away."

I say screaming, irritated. But the door opens and it's not the boys, it's TK.

-Me: "TK? What are you doing here?"

-Her: "Damn! You look like the sky is falling in."

-Me: "That's because it is."

-Her: "I heard. News travels fast around here. Listen, I may have a solution for you. You want Soso back and I want December, the man he's dating. So to get what we both want, let's work together."

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Let's please increase them likes, darlings. See you on Saturday.

#20 [unedited]

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"Been waiting for a lifetime for you. Been breaking for a lifetime for you. Wasn't looking for love 'til I found you." - Rita Ora [Liam Payne]

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"You stood by my side. Night after night, night after night. You loved me back to life, from the coma. The wait is over." - Celine Dion

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"Baby, I gotta go with Prof to Rhodes. Lincoln is apparently not feeling well, so Prof has asked me to fill in for him."

Doc says after waking me up with breakfast in bed. He's already bathed and got dressed. What's funny is that I didn't even hear his movements around the room, I must have been really out. But who can blame me after the wild night he and I had. It's no secret that nights with Doc are always wild but last night was the wildest of them all. He sent me high up to the dwarf planet Pluto but at the same time I felt like I was down to Mercury, the closest planet to the sun, because it was extremely hot. The best part was that I could scream as loudly as I wanted because we were alone, the twins didn't arrive yesterday, they are only coming today. Both Doc and I were looking forward to spending a fun Saturday indoors with them

today, but now he has to leave for the whole day. Biochemistry honours students have an academic trip to Rhodes University in Grahamstown, and Prof - the HOD - and Lincoln, a postdoctoral fellow in the department, were the ones who were going to take them there, but now Prof wants Doc to go. Ugh! I don't like this but I don't have a say in it. And it's not like Doc has a choice either.

-Me: "When did Prof ask you?"

-Him: "He called around 6 this morning and I couldn't exactly say no. But there's this problem with the twins. Who's gonna go fetch them from the airport?"

-Me: "You don't have to worry about that. I'll do it."

-Him: "Really?"

-Me: "Of course, babe. You don't even need to ask. I'll take a taxi and go get them."

He smiles then pecks my lips.

-Him: "And you wonder why I love you this much. Thanks, babe. But I won't let you take 3 taxis to get there and 3 to come back. You can take my car. I'm not gonna use it today, we'll ride with the 5 students in our department's SUV."

-Me: "You want me to take your car? You trust me with it?"

-Him: "I trust you with everything that's mine, babe. Plus, you do have a driver's licence. So why not?"

-Me: "Baby, you don't trust even your own sister with your wheels. Why would you trust me? What if I wreck it? I haven't sat behind the wheel in 2 years, Thando."

-Him: "You're not my sister, you're my woman, Soso. What's mine is yours. And even though I don't know anything about your driving skills, I trust you. But if it happens that you hit a wall, a

pole, a pavement or something, it's okay we'll have the car fixed. I just know that it won't roll onto its side. And I also know that I can't let you take a half dozen taxis, it's exhausting."

-Me: "Well, in that case, thanks. I'll take the car."

-Him: "Good. The keys are in their box in the kitchen. I'm sure you'll know what else to do."

-Me: "Yeah, chill. The girls and I are gonna be just fine. It's gonna be a great bonding session without any high levels of testosterone around."

He laughs.

-Him: "Okay then, enjoy. I have to go wait for Prof down by the main road. That's where he's gonna pick me up. I didn't want him to know my address."

-Me: "I see. Have a great day, babe"

-Him: "Ditto. Love you."

He pecks my lips again then hurries to the door.

-Me: "Thanks for the breakfast."

-Him: "You're welcome."

He's already out the door when he replies. And I'm left smiling to myself. Being in love is the best feeling ever, I tell you. After my smile subsides, I climb down the bed to go brush my teeth and wash my hands before I dig into this appetising full English breakfast.

After eating I move quickly around the house, cleaning it. Then I take a shower and get ready to hit the road. Nervously, I get inside Doc's car and drive out. God, please don't let me hit anything, I say out loud as I drive down the street. And fortunately, I get to the airport without any hassles. As I'm standing there waiting for the twins, my phone rings and it's my mother. With a smile, I answer.

-Me: "Mommy dearest."

My mom - Mandisa - and I have a very good

relationship. But it wasn't always like this. When my grandmother was still alive my mom and I never had a mother-daughter kind of relationship. It was my grandmother who was more like a mother to me and my mother was like a distant sister. Things only changed after my grandmother passed away and my uncle tried to rape me. I think the whole thing forced my mom to learn to listen to me, to pay attention to me, to trust me and most importantly, to show me the love any child needs from their mother.

-Her: "Hey, baby. How are you?"

-Me: "All is well. Everything okay at your end?"

-Her: "Yeah. Listen, baby. I need you to come home next weekend. It's important."

-Me: "Important? What do you mean?"

-Her: "Just make sure you get on that taxi and come home on Friday. You'll hear everything

when you get here."

-Me: "Mom, please, don't do that. Just tell me what's going on now. Is everything alright? Are you alright?"

-Her: "I'm alright. Just do as I say, Someleze, and stop asking questions."

She says a little harshly now, sucking words out of me. Not knowing what to say, I just keep quiet.

-Her: "I'm sorry for talking like that, baby. But please, just make sure you come home on Friday. Okay? I love you."

And with that she hangs up. I'm left staring at the screen of my phone. Perplexed. What could be going on? Is my mother okay? But if she wasn't or if it was an emergency she would have asked me to come home today, not on Friday. So what could be going on? Why does she want me home? What is so important that

she couldn't tell me over the phone? My thoughts get interrupted by the voices of the twins as they scream my name. I raise my head to see them running towards me, pulling their small suitcases. Aww, the smiles on their faces just warm my heart. I quickly put my phone in my pocket and open my arms wide to hug them. They are so excited to see me. And guess what? I'm delighted to see them too and that manifests in the lingering hug I give them. Finally, we pull back then walk out of the airport to the car, with them talking non-stop. They get in the back seat of the car, and I'm putting their luggage in the boot when I experience this uneasy feeling like someone is watching me. I turn around to see Buhle, one of my classmates, staring at me from behind. When she sees me looking at her she lifts her hand and waves at me. Despite the sinking feeling at the pit of my stomach, I manage to let out a smile and wave back. Then I turn and get in the car. Jeez, she's

seen me driving Doc's car and I can't stop wondering what she's made of that.

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Thando

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After a very long day I finally get home. It's 18:10 when I walk through my front door and find my three favourite girls sitting on the mat in the lounge. They are busy, Soso is playing chess with Lily while Lathi watches.

"Daddy's home. How are my favourite girls doing?"

I say, greeting as I come to stand by them.

-Soso: "Hey, honey. We're good."

-The twins: "Hey, dad."

Okay, this is not the welcome I expected. I thought they were going to be thrilled to see me, especially the twins. I thought they would jump on me but right now they are all too focused on the chessboard to pay me much attention. They don't even look up to acknowledge me, that's how much in the zone they are. I release a heavy sigh and let my eye assess the board. Soso moves her queen in order to force Lily's king to shift position. With a quick and brave decision, Lily moves her rook. Soso never just lets Lily win when they play. She always brings her A game as if playing with an adult, forcing Lily to think strategically and make the right moves or experience the bitter feeling of losing. In that way, when Lily wins, she always knows that she deserved the win and that she worked for it. And right now I think she's going to win this game. I begin to suspect Soso's going to lose when she lifts her head and come eye to eye with me for the first time since I walked in.

Leaving the board, she gets up and comes closer to me.

-Her: "Welcome home, hon."

She gives me a hug and a soft peck on the lips. But the hug is brief. She draws back in some alarm and gazes at me with questioning eyes, and I know why.

-Me: "I know, babe, I know. And we'll talk about it when we're alone. Okay?"

She nods. The twins also get up to come and hug me. Not even good sex beats the feeling of having their tiny arms wrapped around me, I tell you. That's how much I love my girls. And the fact that Soso also loves them earned her extra points from me.

-Lathi: "We missed you, daddy."

-Me: "I missed you too, babies. How was your flight?"

-Lily: "Short and uneventful. Could you please let sis' Soso and I finish the game now?"

This one is 9 going on 19, I tell you.

-Me: "That's okay. Go ahead. I'll just sit here and watch."

I sit on the mat with them and let the two finish their game. Soso moves her king on the board and Lily's eyes fly open as she detects the fatal position. I want to say, "C'mon, babe, that was a fatal move." But instead I keep quiet and just watch. Taking her eyes off the chessboard, she looks at me.

-Soso: "How did it go at Rhodes? Meet any interesting people?"

I know exactly what she's asking. But I've already told her that we'll talk about it when we're alone.

-Me: "No one interesting at all. I just couldn't wait to come home to you and my girls."

She doesn't say anything, she just turns to Lily who is patiently waiting for her to return to the game. When she has her full attention, an impish smile creeps along Lily's mouth.

-Lily: "Watch out, sisi. Checkmate!"

She says, her voice triumphant. Soso just smiles.

-Lathi: "But sis' Soso, why did you make such a bad move? I'm no chess prodigy but I could see how bad that move was."

-Soso: "Baby, in chess, just as in life, there are moves that you make for the sake of winning and there are moves you make because they are the right thing to do."

-Lily: "Meaning you let me win?"

-Soso: "Meaning exactly what I just said: my move may have been a bad one but it was the right thing to do. Life is not all about winning, sometimes you just need to do what's right."

-Lathi: "I think I get it. Just like I also stopped on stage in the middle of a competition when my dance partner strained his ankle. I could have continued alone and could have won but I just couldn't, not without him. Stopping was the right thing to do."

-Soso: "Exactly, baby. Doing what's right is a win on its own. Always remember that."

I let out a smile. She always does this, teaching them some valuable lessons in a simplest way.

-Her: "Now, girls, could you please go set the table for dinner. I will join you in a bit."

The twins run out to the kitchen which shares an open floor with the dining area, leaving us alone in the lounge. Now I know why she threw the game, she just wanted it to end so she would turn her attention to me without leaving Lily hanging. Without waiting for her to say anything, I quickly explain the other woman's

perfume that she smelled on me when she hugged me.

-Me: "About the feminine scent, babe. It's on my shirt because the woman who attended to us when we got to Rhodes is an avid hugger. She makes sure that she squeezes you in her embrace and let the hug linger. She did that when we got there then again two more times before we left. That's why I now smell of her."

She looks at me with unreadable eyes. I honestly don't know if she believes me or not.

-Me: "You better go freshen up. Dinner is already ready, I just need to warm up some of the dishes."

Then she passionately kisses me on the lips before heading off to the kitchen. That means she believes me, right? Anyway, I go take a shower then join them at the dining table. It doesn't take me much to notice that the girls

have outdone themselves in the kitchen, it must have taken them hours to prepare all of this. I love the effort Soso puts in. And I also love this setting: us sitting at the table as a family, eating and laughing.

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Someleze

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2 days later - Monday

Alice has never been this colorful and vibrant, I say to myself as I walk out of the library. Have I been blind to this town's and campus' beauty all this time? Or is it just the happiness I'm feeling inside right now? I don't know and it doesn't really matter. All I know is that the day I let Doc into my life I plunged into a river of pure love.

There I swam to my heart's content, finally sensing that this must be what people talk about when they talk about true love - a drop in infinity! This river is flowing waters that carried me from a heartbreak that felt like death to a life full of love and excitement.

I stopped taking naps on Doc's couch in his office in between my lectures ever since he and I started dating. Instead I go to the library's silent reading room, pick a cubicle in a corner, put my phone on flight mode, plug my earphones on and let the waves of music transport me to a quiet sleep until the vibrating alert of my alarm wakes me up. Then I'd go to the restroom to clean up my face before heading to my next class. It's not much ideal of a situation but it does the trick.

I'm now smiling because as I stepped out of the library, I took my phone off flight mode then checked my emails because I've been waiting

for an email for this next year's internship program that I've applied for. They haven't replied yet but still, I've found a reason to smile. Doc has sent me a loving candle lit dinner invitation on my personal email address, for this evening. That means I won't be able to go to work, but so be it. I'll just have to call in sick because there's no way I'm going to turn my man down. A quiet romantic night with just the two of us is exactly what we need after the crazy, rowdy weekend we had with the twins. They left today, their father took them to the airport after dropping me off at the campus gate in the morning. It was really good spending time with them but now Doc and I need to spend some quality time together without any disturbances.

Even though I'm going to see Doc on our drive home after this practical session I'm going to reply to his email. It's romantic that way.

Blushing, I type my response and tap send then hurry to the lab.

After the practical session I make my way to Doc's office and together we make our way to his car. As I open the passenger door to get in, I notice Buhle standing across the parking lot, staring at me. Ugh! Whatever. I don't even tell Doc about her, I just get in and we drive home in comfortable silence. As usual, he drops me off at my gate and drives off. Euphoria is what I feel inside as I make my way to my flat. Getting in, I put my bag on my study desk then go straight to the closet to look for a suitable outfit for this evening. I end up picking a red, above-the-knee, body-hugging dress that I bought with Amanda's parents' card three years ago. I don't wear it much, in fact the last time I wore it was 2 years ago. But tonight I'm going to rock it, that's if it still fits me though. I fit it and I smile when I notice that it still fits like a glove. It hugs

my amazing curves and tiny waist perfectly, and shows off my gorgeous legs. Beautiful. Now for the shoes, I pick a black pair of stiletto heels. I'm not a heels kind of girl, but I do wear them on special occasions like this one. Putting on the desk everything I'm going to need, I know that I'm now set. To settle the hole in my stomach I eat some cereal then rest a bit on the bed. I don't want to eat anything heavy because I want to have space for the food Doc is going to prepare.

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By 19:15, I'm standing in front of my mirror already dressed. I apply a layer of lipstick and for good measure, a small dab of my "special occasion" perfume on my wrist and neck. With subtle make-up and my weave tied into a messy

bun, I know that I look effortlessly beautiful. I smile, looking at myself in the mirror. The anticipation of spending a blissful, romantic evening with my man in the quaint solitude of his house is a thrilling concept, it's way better than having a date night out. He said he would come pick me up at 19:20 for 19:30 but I've asked him not to come. I prefer walking to his house, it's only 5 minutes away and I also want to be pleasantly surprised when I walk through the door alone.

At precisely 19:30 I walk through his front door and I'm welcomed by a path of red rose petals bordered with two rows of lit tea light candles on each side. Mmh, this is nice, I say to myself beaming as I follow the path. Before I enter the dining area, where the path is leading me to, I notice a white note on the floor, amidst the red petals, and I pick it up. It reads, "Don't forget to smile". I can't help but laugh, this man is so

corny. I enter the dining area and find a beautifully set table with a nice white tablecloth, candles and flowers. At the centre of the table there's a crystal bowl half-filled with water in which beautiful floating candles are lit. Doc has put in all the effort and it's much appreciated. The food is already on the table in attractive pots and platters. And he's used his best dinner ware. How can I not appreciate that? The light is dimmed for a romantic feel and the soft romantic music playing in the background adds to the romantic ambiance. Everything is just perfect.

"Wow. You look absolutely beautiful."

I hear Doc's voice behind me as I was about to ask myself where he is. I turn to see him standing by the door with his bright, sexy smile painted across his face. He looks so handsome in a navy suit, a white T-shirt and white low-top Salvatore Ferragamo sneakers. He comes to

me and gives me a warm hug. Mmmh, he smells great. The same cologne he had put on the day we shared our first kiss, on his birthday. I can tell that he now wants to pull back from the hug but I just can't let go of him yet, I bury my face in his chest and let my nostrils take in his intoxicating scent. I want to savour this moment and smell him on me. I finally let go of him and raise my head to look at him. Our eyes meet and we hold the look, not a single word escaping either of our mouths. After a moment we draw closer to each other until our lips meet and we start kissing slowly and sensuously. Pulling back from the kiss, I look up at him and I open my mouth just as he opens his. "I love you." We say the three magic words in unison. Then we burst, laughing at what we've just done. Taking my hand, he leads me to the table and pulls the chair out for me before going to sit on the opposite chair. He pours some white wine

in our glasses before we go for the starters. After that we go for the main course over a light conversation, just telling each other our personal stories. He's kept the menu simple but classy. I don't even know how he managed to put everything together in 2 and a half hours. It's after the main course that he gives me this intense look of emotion. It lasts for a moment then he pulls something I think was attached under the table and hands it to me. It's a flat square gift, and I wonder what it is.

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-Me: "What is it, babe?"

-Him: "Open it."

I do, only to find that it's the Søren Bebe CD that I saw in his car on the first day that I caught a

ride with him. Okay, now I'm confused.

-Me: "This CD? I don't understand."

He gives me that intense look of emotion once again and this time he holds it.

-Him: "I got that CD from Lathi. She got it from her dance teacher but she wasn't even using it. I took it, copied it to my laptop then transferred the music to my phone. You know why?"

-Me: "Why?"

-Him: "It was after my divorce, I was experiencing difficulty sleeping and hearing that guy's music in my ears would help me fall deep into a peaceful slumber. Six months down the line I was still going through the same thing even though I had convinced myself that I was moving on. I only stopped using that music to put myself to sleep when I met you. Every fear, every little bit of heartache vanished with the thought of being with you. I wasn't even looking

for love when I met you. But you came into my life and changed everything I thought I knew. And you made me see that I've wasted so many years with someone who wasn't even meant for me. I don't know but I think you're the one I've waited a lifetime to be with. When I'm with you, Soso, I'm free, no inhibitions, nothing. In your eyes, I'm not only alive but I'm home. Sthandwa sam, I'm in this for the long haul. I love you. And I want you to keep that CD as a reminder of where you found me."

The words are said firmly, matching the determination on his face. A slow smile tugs at my lips as I gaze at my handsome boyfriend - a word I refused to say for some time after we started dating.

-Me: "Wow. I uhh...I don't know what you say, babe."

-Him: "You don't have to say anything. I'm just letting you know how much you mean to me."

-Me: "You know my story. You know that I was also broken when you found me. I was walking dead. Stuck in a world of pain that I couldn't get out of. I wished I could just disappear. But you came along and you stood by my side. You loved me back to life, Thando."

-Him: "You just took the words out of my mouth. I can safely say before I met you I was no longer living, just existing. I was a walking zombie among the living. Or you can say I was in a coma. But you woke me up. You loved me back to the land of the living, night after night."

-Me: "To think that I didn't like you the first time you came into our class."

-Him: "You didn't?"

-Me: "No. I didn't like you because you'd replaced a professor that I loved so much."

-Him: "My first impression of you wasn't that great either. I thought you were one of those

rebellious students and I just didn't like you. Little did I know that you are very obedient."

-Me: "Obedient. Especially during sex."

I say laughing. And he follows suit.

-Him: "But I ain't gonna talk about sex tonight. I just want to talk about us. And there's another important matter I want us to discuss."

He gets up and walks over to the sideboard. On its top he retrieves some papers which he comes back with and hands to me.

-Me: "What are these?"

-Him: "Your marks."

I notice that these are printed spreadsheets with my marks for each of my 3 courses. The marks for the other students are shaded out.

-Him: "All your courses. From the first semester to this one. We both can see that your performance has dropped, and we know why."

Baby, please reconsider. Keeping that job is affecting your academic performance. Yes, you still pass but not as good as you used to. I can see your potential, Someleze. If you quit that job that will guarantee you great distinctions in all your modules, I'm talking 90s. And that in turn will increase your chances of getting that scholarship to do your honours degree next year. Please, babe, do this for me. But most importantly, do it for yourself, your future."

Awww, to know that he really cares this much about my future warms my heart. He's been trying to convince me to do my Honours next year even though I just want to take a break and start job-hunting. I take a few moments to absorb everything he's just said.

"Okay."

I say eventually.

-Him: "Okay?"

-Me: "Okay, I'm going to quit my job and focus more on my studies. You don't know how much it means to me to know that you want this for me this badly. It means a lot, babe. And I'm not going to disappoint you or myself. I'm going to pull up my socks and get those distinctions."

He smiles. I can tell that he's happy to hear me talking like this.

-Him: "That's my girl. Thanks, babe, for doing this."

-Me: "No. Thank YOU."

He leans across the table and kisses me. Then we get up and clear the table. For dessert we are having strawberries and chocolate as we cuddle on the couch watching a romcom movie. And even though every ounce of my body is craving to have him inside me, he offers me something better - a more meaningful intimacy. Despite my initial remark to keep our

conversation short after the movie has ended, we remain on the couch for 2 more hours. In a single, marathon conversation, I get to learn more intimate details of his life than he's shared in the previous months. Maybe it's the absence of sex, I don't know. All I know is that we're having a more deeper conversation right now and I like it. We only go to bed around 00:30 and we immediately fall asleep in each other's arms.

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"Here I am, once again, I'm torn into pieces. Can't deny it, can't pretend. Just thought you were the one." - Kelly Clarkson

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Someleze

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The week seemed to be dragging, but thank God it's finally Friday and I'm going home. I can't wait to hear what my mother wants to tell me, I'm dying to know what's going on. If it wasn't for this afternoon practical session that I couldn't miss I'd already be home by now, but here I am, still walking out of this bad-smelling Chemistry lab around 16:30. But fortunately, I won't have to use public transport at this hour, Doc has offered to drive me to P.E. He's such a godsend. A few minutes later I find him already waiting for me at the parking lot downstairs. He doesn't waste time, as soon as I get in the car he drives off. My weekend bag is in his boot, I put it there this morning because I didn't want to have to go to my flat when we drive out of campus.

On the way, it's obvious that he can tell that I'm nervous about finding out what's waiting for me at home and he tries to keep my mind occupied with his captivating conversations, and he succeeds. I didn't feel the 3 hour drive, I only realise that we've arrived when he pulls up in front of my mother's house. Checking the time, I realise that it's 19:45. It would already be pitch black if it was winter, but it's not because it's early in October. I turn to look at Doc with an appreciative smile.

-Me: "Thanks for being my chauffeur, babe."

-Him: "Hey, you don't have to thank me. Helping you out in any way possible is what I'm here for."

I let out a genuine smile then lean over, going for a kiss. He meets me halfway and our lips lock.

-Him: "I hope everything's okay with your mom."

Please contact me before you go to sleep and tell me what's going on, okay?"

He says with his deep yet hoarse voice after pulling back from the kiss.

-Me: "I will, babe. I will."

-Him: "I'm gonna miss you."

-Me: "Me too. But Monday is not too far."

-Him: "Yeah."

I open my door and get out with my books bag just as he also hops out on his side. He goes to open the boot and retrieves my weekend bag. Taking it off his hand I sling it over my shoulder then take a step back, ready to walk away.

-Me: "Thanks once again, and drive safe. See you on Monday."

He doesn't say anything, he just looks at me hard then he moves, closing the space between us. Slipping his arm around my waist he pulls

me against him and before I know it, his mouth is on mine, hard and passionate. What is he doing? Not in front of my mother's house. For all I know my mom could be looking at us through the window right now. I want to push him off of me, but I can't, the truth is I don't really want him to stop. If there's one thing I can't fight off is Doc's kiss. Once his lips touch mine I just lose control of myself, I go weak and kiss him back. His tongue plunges between my teeth, exploring the moist cavity he finds within. His tongue caresses mine, mates with mine, causing me to lean against him. His hand cups my chin, angling my face to please him, lengthening and deepening his kiss. Finally, he pulls back, leaving me breathless.

-Him: "I love you. Don't do something I won't do, okay?"

He says huskily, his mouth still close to mine.

-Me: "I...won't. Love you...too."

My breathing is shallow and my words break. He smiles then pecks my lips before moving for the door of his car. He gets in and I wait for him to drive off before I walk into the yard. Once he motors down the street, I start moving. I get in the yard and make my way to the front door. I knock already pushing the door open. Jeez, my heart almost stops when I find my mom standing in the middle of the lounge, looking at me with her arms folded.

"Hey, mom."

I say nervously.

-Her: "Was that Thando?"

I want to lie but there's no use, obviously she's seen us kissing. My mom and I have a close relationship but we never talk about boys. She even surprised me the day she talked about Doc with me on the phone after he had visited this house.

-Me: "Yes, that was Thando. I'm...I'm sorry I brought him here."

-Her: "Is he treating you well?"

Her voice is calm, and it makes me relax a little.

-Me: "Mama, he loves me in a way I've never been loved before."

-Her: "That's good. Now come help me dish up. Dinner's ready."

And with that she makes her way to the kitchen. Okay, I thought she would give me an earful. I'm glad she didn't, I really am, and now it's time to get to that serious talk. I'm not here for food, I need her to tell me why she summoned me here. I drop my bags on the floor and follow her to the kitchen. Finding her at the stove, I walk over to her and hug her from behind.

-Me: "Mandisa Ndlovu, you know that I love you, right? So you can just tell me what's going on. No need to make me feel comfortable first, just

tell me. Are you dying?"

I say softly as I rest my head on her back. But as soft as my voice is, it still makes her jump and drop the spoon that was in her hand. It must be what I said. I jump back and look at her.

-Me: "Mama, is that it? Are you dying?"

-Her: "What? No. No, baby, I'm not dying."

-Me: "Then what is it? What is so important that you couldn't tell me over the phone?"

-Her: "Baby, just get the plates and help me dish up. We'll talk over dinner."

Defeated, I do as she says.

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Now we're sitting at the dining table, eating my mom's delicious dumplings and beef stew.

Halfway through our meal she stops eating and looks at me.

-Her: "What do you think about marriage?"

-Me: "If you're asking me if Thando and I are going to get married then the answer is: not anytime soon. Mama, he just divorced less than 10 months ago, he's not ready to dive into that hole again."

I'm being too honest right now. Have I forgotten that this is my mother?

-Her: "He's divorced? We'll talk about that a little later. For now I want us to talk about what's in my chest. I wasn't asking about Thando, at all. Early Saturday morning I received a call from the Mejes in Summerstrand, requesting a date to come here and start lobola negotiations. Apparently, their son, Alex, wants to marry you."

-Me: "What?! The nerve! The nerve of that guy! I should have known that he would do something

this stupid after he became so quiet. Who the hell does he think he is pulling a stunt like that?"

I'm shouting. I'm mad as hell. Alex is driving me insane right now. How dare he?

-Her: "I take it you and this Alex no longer see eye to eye. He's the boy you were dating since high school, right?"

She's the opposite of me right now, she's so calm and collected. I'm even surprised that she knew about me and Alex right from when I was still in high school.

-Me: "You knew about me and Alex?"

-Her: "Someleze, I had you when I was 17, I know these things. I, too, used to lie to my mother and go to my boyfriend. That gave me an advantage to see right through your lies. But what made me relax was knowing that I'd raised a responsible young woman in you. I'd find condoms in your bag and a clinic card, I knew

that you were on injection. You didn't want to repeat your mother's mistake and that made me proud of you. That's why I kept quiet."

I look down, not knowing how to respond to that.

-Her: "So, what happened between you and this Alex?"

-Me: "He hurt me, mama. He hurt me so bad. He cheated on me and then he left me."

-Her: "And that's when you met Thando?"

-Me: "Yes. Alex is insane. Just because he's now realising that he made a mistake doesn't give him the right to do what he did. It doesn't give him the right to have his people call you for some stupid lobola negotiations. What is that? He and I are not together anymore. He thinks he's gonna reel me in with marriage and I'm gonna fall for that crap? I'm no longer the Someleze he knew. Getting married to him was my dream and he knew it. I wanted to marry him

because he was my first love and at the time I was head over heels in love with him. But not anymore. I'm no longer that naive."

My mom doesn't say anything, just staring at me.

-Me: "So what did you say to them? What did you tell the Mejes? Did you agree to their stupid request? Please tell me you didn't. Tell me you didn't call me all the way here for those stupid negotiations because I'm telling you right now, I won't be a part of it."

-Her: "Someleze, what do you take me for? You think I'd agree to something like that without talking to you first? Besides, I knew that you were no longer with Alex but with Thando. So why would I agree to something like that? I told them straight that we're not interested."

-Me: "Okay, you didn't agree. Okay, you know that I'm no longer with Alex and I'm never going

to marry him. So why did you call me here?"

-Her: "The whole lobola thing got me thinking. You're a grown woman now, Someleze. You can get married at any time. And when that happens I want you to go be a wife who knows her identity."

-Me: "My identity? What do you mean? I know who I am, mama. I'm Someleze Ndlovu and it ends there."

-Her: "No, you're not a Ndlovu. I'm the one who's Ndlovu, with a deadbeat Zulu father. When the time comes, I don't want you to walk down the aisle as a Ndlovu, Someleze. Your lobola can't be negotiated by the Ndlovus. It's not right. I want you to know your father, baby. That's why I called you here. It's time for you to meet him."

I chuckle. What? She can't be serious. She's joking, right? Oh, but she's not. It's evident in her look.

-Me: "Mama, you can't be serious. My father? I don't have a father, mama. He wanted you to kill me before I was even born. And he was never there for me after I'd made my entrance into this world. You and grandma raised me. I am who I am today because of you and grandma. Because of your hardwork. Now you want me to meet a sperm donor? No. I ain't gonna do that, mama. I ain't gonna do it."

I'm now crying. I'm angry, AND disappointed at my mother. How could she? How could she want me to meet a man who dumped her while she was still pregnant with his baby? Why would she want him to be a part of my life when he didn't even assist her in raising me? Growing up I watched her break her back, doing hard labour and ridiculous jobs just so she could put food on my plate and clothes on my back. She put her dreams on hold just to give me life. And this man that she now calls my father wasn't

there, he wasn't there to assist her. So why does she want me to meet him? Why does she want him to be a part of my life? I don't understand and I'm not going to do it.

-Her: "Baby, please. I know that he wasn't there for you for 21 years but he wants to be here for you now. In fact, he wanted to be a part of your life when you were 15 but I wouldn't let him. I was still mad and bitter, but I'm not anymore. I've forgiven him and all I ask is for you to do the same. Please, baby, do it for me. Do it for your mother. I'm the only family you have and if something happens to me I want you to have someone, a family. Please, baby, please. And it's important that you know who you are, to know your roots."

Tears are now trickling down her cheeks. I can see that she really wants me to do this. If I do it it'd mean a lot to her, and if I don't that'd would kill her. I can see it. My mom is my queen,

hurting her is the last thing I want to do. So I take a moment and let her words sink in my head. Then I get up and go to her side of the table to hug her. She gets up and we pull each other into an embrace, sobbing on each other's shoulders.

-Me: "Okay, mama, I'll do it. I'll meet him. But I'm only doing it for you."

I say, finally. After wiping my tears off.

-Her: "Thank you, baby. That's all I ask. You don't know how much this means to me."

She kisses my forehead.

-Her: "I love you."

-Me: "I love you too, mama."

-Her: "Your father is gonna be here tomorrow. Prepare yourself."

I nod. Then we clear the table and do the dishes together before we go to sit on the couch and

catch up. We only head to bed around 00:00, that's what usually happens when I'm with my mother, we never run out of things to talk about, we only run out of time. Among the things we got to talk about, Doc also made the list. I came clean to her about him being my lecturer and him being 10 years older than me with 9 year old twins. Even though all that made her feel uneasy, she told me that she'd support me as long as I'm happy. And she encouraged me to open up to her about these things going forth. I smiled, my mom is truly my best friend.

I get to my room and put on my PJs then get under the covers. But before drifting into slumberland I call Doc to hear if he got to Alice safely and to give him an update. He, too, encourages me to meet my father, telling me that half of my DNA belongs to the man and knowing him would be good not only for him but for myself too. Well, we'll see about that. We

end up talking for hours until around 04:00 in the morning, none of us wanting to hang up, and Vodacom Night Shift also comes in handy. I really love this guy and I wouldn't mind talking with him 'til sunrise and he tells me that he also feels the same way, but we're both exhausted and we need our beauty sleep. So finally, we hang up and I fall asleep immediately.

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Alex

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My plan to show Someleze that I still love and value her, that I really want her back in my life hasn't worked. I'm in bed thinking about her, the only thing I seem to think about these days, when I hear a knock at my door. I get my phone under my pillow to check the time, and it's 23:30.

So who could be at my door at this hour? I swear if it's Sive and Siya I'm going to lose it. They wanted us to go clubbing since it's a Friday night but I turned them down. Clubbing doesn't interest me anymore, in fact nothing interests me these days, the world is just this one big sour place.

I climb down the bed and go open the door, only to find Iviwe standing there.

-Me: "Iviwe, what are you doing here?"

-Her: "Alex, may I please come in?"

I don't know what she wants but I'm not in the mood to fight so I quietly let her walk inside.

-Her: "I've been calling and texting you but you're not picking up or responding to my texts."

-Me: "Then you should get the message. In fact, I thought you did. I'm surprised you're here."

-Her: "Alex, you never gave me a chance to explain. I'm here to do that."

-Me: "Explain what, Iviwe? How you lied about being committed to our relationship when you knew very well that you are another man's fiancée? A scary man at that."

-Her: "I don't love him, baby, I love you. It's my brother who wants me to marry him. He's forcing me to."

-Me: "I don't care. Just get out of my room."

But she doesn't. She only comes closer until I can feel her warm breath fanning my face. Taking a step back, her eyes engage mine, searching for a sign that I understand. She's wearing a coat dress and she pulls on its belt and it loosens. She peels the dress from her body and let it drop to the floor, revealing nothing but her sexy, naked body underneath. Without conscious volition I bite my bottom lip.

-Her: "You were saying?"

She says licking her lips. Damn, I can't fail to be aware of my arousal. I still want to kick her out of my room but my resolve breaks like a cracked dam when she reaches up to me, kissing and caressing me. It's like I'm under her spell, I can't stop her. Knowing how good she feels in bed doesn't help either. In one swift, powerful jolt I yank her to me, pinning her naked body to mine. I kiss her long and hard before lifting her off the ground and dump her unceremoniously on my bed, with our lips still joined. I quickly get rid of my PJ pants and deep my hard d*ck inside her wet, hot vagina. I ram inside her and pound her in rhythmic succession. Her screams are growing louder and I can't have that at res, I close her mouth with mine in a kiss. Soon, I release inside her, for the first time since I started sleeping with her. Pulling out of her, I go get a towel to clean

us both then I pull her to my chest and she falls into a deep sleep almost immediately. But this feels so wrong. Yes, I loved Iviwe but that was before I got to know that she was lying to me. Things changed after that, I no longer feel the same way about her. And after learning the truth about her, I realised that I made a mistake by letting Soso go. Fuck! Why did I sleep with her again? I snap up, frustrated and angry. She's not Soso and she'll never be. I roll away from her, and she turns over, fully asleep. I get out of bed and go stand by the window. Retrieving my pack of cigarettes on the desk, I take out one, light it and smoke away my frustrations. I seriously hope my plan with TK works. I really want my Soso back.

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Someleze

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"Someleze, come on, wake up."

I hear my mother's voice faintly as if at a distance. I groan and open my eyes to find her standing next to my bed.

-Me: "Mama, please go away and let me sleep."

-Her: "You know what time it is? It's 11:00, just an hour away from noon. Get up. Your father will be here in 2 hours."

-Me: "Fine. I'll be up. Just give me a few minutes."

-Her: "I expect to see you walk into that bathroom to take a bath in 5 minutes. Hear me?"

-Me: "Yes, mama, yoh."

She walks out, leaving me yawning. These are the results of sleeping at 4:00 in the morning.

Knowing my mother, she'll come in here with a bucket of water if I don't get up so I drag myself out of bed and make it. Then I go to the only bathroom we have and take a bath. I'd take a shower if we had one but we don't. Less than an hour later I'm already dressed in a floral, short maxi dress and matching sandals. I'm not going to dress up to meet a man I don't even give a fuck about. For emphasis, I'm only doing this for my mother.

I'm in the kitchen drinking water with ice in this not air-conditioned house when my mother calls me out to the lounge. I put the glass in the sink and go to her.

"Your father is here. At the gate."

She says as I enter the lounge.

-Me: "Oh."

I say without even a drop of enthusiasm.

-Her: "Please show a little enthusiasm. Do it for

me."

-Me: "Mama, are you seeing this guy again? Why are you being nice to him?"

-Her: "I'm not seeing him. And just shut up."

She says as she gets up from the couch to answer the knock at the door. She opens the door and this man in a wine red suit and a white shirt walks in. I don't know how much it costs but I can tell that it's a designer suit, it probably costs more than what my mother earns in 3 months. My mother hugs him then she turns to me.

-Her: "Baby, this is your father, Sandile Mali. Sandile, that's your daughter, Someleze."

I absorb this man's face, frame and manner in one sweeping move. Before last night, my mother and I never really talked about him. Even when we finally did talk about him last night, I didn't ask how old he is but from the way he

looks, I'm guessing he's around 40. And he's handsome, I can definitely see what my mother saw in him but that doesn't mean I like him. I stand exactly where I was, with my lips glued together. I have nothing to say to him. He walks over to me, opens his arms and pulls me into an embrace without saying anything. I don't know but I quickly feel emotional as I feel his arms around me. I've never experienced this before, I don't know what a father's love feels like. And that's exactly what's making me emotional right now. I didn't want to feel like this but my heart is now betraying me. And I'm crying.

-Him: "Don't cry, baby, I'm here now."

I pull back and look at him, he has tears in his eyes too.

-Him: "I know that I'm not your favourite person and with good reason. But, baby, please forgive me. I was 19. I was young and stupid, I didn't know any better. And my parents didn't make

things easier either. They told me to ask your mother to terminate the pregnancy. And then they got me out of town so I wouldn't be with your mother."

His eyes continue to water as he speaks. Last night I didn't ask my mother why he left me, I wanted him to explain with his own mouth. And the way I see it, he's not a man who likes beating around the bush, he goes straight to the point and make his case. I now hear his story but I'm not convinced yet.

-Me: "Then why didn't you look for me all these years? Why only when I was 15? You knew where my mother was but you never came for me. And now you expect me to just welcome you with open arms? No. No."

I speak wiping my tears frequently.

-Him: "I admit that I didn't do right by you and your mother, but I'm here now and I'm trying to

correct those mistakes. Please let me. I want to be a good father to you. I want to make up for the past 21 years."

To think that my mother had it rough all these years trying to raise me when he was out there living a good life is making me sick. But at least he's here now and he's admitting that he was wrong. So maybe cutting him some slack won't hurt. I gesture for him to take a seat on the couch and I sit next to him as my mother sits opposite us. We end up talking calmly, getting to know a little bit more about each other before going to eat the lunch my mother prepared earlier before I even woke up. I get to know that he's originally from Mthatha and that he was doing his first year at the then Vista University (now NMU) when he met my mother and made her pregnant. Upon hearing about that, his parents had him quit his studies, only for them to send him to UCT the following year.

There was a lot of crap after that, but right now my heart is ready to forgive it all. He leaves our house around 17:00 and on a good note. After he left I grab my iPad and search for him online. Even though he didn't reveal much about what he does for a living, I can tell that he's up there, and that means I'll find something about him online. I find his profile from the page of the company he said he's working for. I read that he graduated first in his class from UCT, received his MBA from the University of Lincoln in the UK and worked for five years in London before coming back home. He got his Ph.D. in finance, then worked for a large financial information systems group in the country. Five years ago, he became CEO at MRD and now leads triple-digit growth. He is lauded. He is respected. And he is also something else, I add. I don't know what it is but the intensity in his eyes told me that there's more to him than meets the eye. But I let it go. I'm just going to see how serious

he is about being in my life. And I'm going to see what his story is.

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I spend the rest of the day with my mom, discussing my father and other things. I honestly don't know if my mother is seeing him again or what, but she says she's not. I hope that's true because I don't like him for her, there's just something about him, I can't really put my finger on it but it unsettles me.

The next day, on Sunday, I bid farewell to my mother and go hitch-hike to Alice. I know that I said I was going back on Monday but I miss Doc so much. Being away from him is a torture. The way I'm so addicted to him it's like he put a spell on me.

I get to Alice around 14:30 and I make my way

straight to Doc's house before going to my place. I didn't even tell him that I'm coming, I want him to be surprised when I call and say I'm at his gate and he should open up. But as it turns out I won't even have to make that call because when I get there I find the gate open and there's this car that I don't recognise in his driveway. He probably has a visitor, I say. I walk to the door and knock, only for it to be opened by this half-naked woman. She opens it then blocks the doorway with her half-naked body so I wouldn't come in.

-Her: "Hello. Can I help you?"

What? Who's she?

-Me: "I'm here to see Thando."

-Her: "Well, Thando is busy right now. We're busy as you can see."

Hearing her say that throws me off balance. I think I'm going to get sick. My stomach turns.

And what makes it worse is that I can smell her perfume, the same distinct scent that I smelled on Doc when he got back from Grahamstown the other day. What the hell? Doc is sleeping with this woman behind my back? I'm running out of breath and I can feel the energy being drained out of me. I lean on the wall next to the door for support, just as this woman bangs the door shut. With my hand on my stomach, I let my body slide down the wall until my butt reaches the ground. Oh my God, he lied to me, Thando lied to me.

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I'm going to skip a day before posting, guys. My schedule is pretty tight. And let's please increase the number of them likes.

#22

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"For tonight I'm gonna get my mind off it. Don't

care that someone's got his hands all over my body. Stay out all night, go where the music's loud so I don't have to think about it. I'm beggin', please, don't play no more sad songs." - Little Mix

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Beneath my white duvet, I swallow past a sore throat, feeling worn out. Staying up late last night, crying and drinking have taken their toll. Still, I get out of bed and drag my exhausted feet to the bathroom. It's 6:30 and my alarm has just woken me up, I need to get my shit together and get ready for my 8 o'clock class. If there's one thing I got from that psychotic bitch Thuso is that no man is worth missing classes for. I came to Alice to study and missing classes is just not me, I'm here to slay academically.

I turn on the shower and step into the inviting

tilled enclosure. I immediately feel better as the water cascades down on me. The water feels wonderful on my skin, coursing over my arms, breasts and belly, taking sweat and exhaustion with it. I stand stretching luxuriously in the warm stream, needles of water massaging me. But that good feeling quickly dissipates like steam when the lies Doc told start circling in my head once again. Yesterday after catching my breath, I got up from his stoep and made my way to the gate without even knocking again on that door. I saw no reason to. Doc came home smelling of this woman the other day and lied to me about it, and now I find this same woman half-naked in his house. Well, that was pretty much self-explanatory to me, I needed no further explanations. But how could he do something like this to me? I trusted him. And it's so early in our relationship. Dammit, how could I have been so stupid? I was a fool to think someone like Doc would want to be in a

monogamous relationship with someone like me. But why did he sell me lies? I can almost hear his voice in my head as I stand beneath these jet needles of water, I can hear his lies: "Baby, I gotta go with Prof to Rhodes. Lincoln is apparently not feeling well, so Prof has asked me to fill in for him."..."He called around 6 this morning and I couldn't exactly say no."..."I have to go wait for Prof down by the main road. That's where he's gonna pick me up. I didn't want him to know my address."..."I didn't meet anyone interesting at all. I just couldn't wait to come home to you and my girls."..."About the feminine scent, babe. It's on my shirt because the woman who attended to us when we got to Rhodes is an avid hugger. She makes sure that she squeezes you in her embrace and let the hug linger. She did that when we got there then again two more times before we left. That's why I now smell of her."

All lies, all lies. He lied to me. He pretended as if he didn't even know the woman but she was now in his house, half-naked. How does he explain that? I don't even think he went to Rhodes. Fuck, his voice keeps echoing in my head and in a fit of rage I find myself punching the shower wall repeatedly. Fuck, why did I subject myself to yet another heartache? I wanted to take a break after Alex, I was afraid to love again, but then he came along and made me fall so hard for him. If only I knew that he wouldn't catch me I would have protected my heart and stayed the hell away from him. Now I understand why Thuso shunned love, I understand why she avoided attachments. She's been avoiding this kind of pain. Love hurts, period. It hurts, it hurts like hell. Crying and weak, I let my body slide down the slippery, tiled shower wall until I sit on the floor. I sit there sobbing quietly, with my hand bleeding, until I realise that I'm going to be late for my first

class. I step out of the shower and dry myself. Then I get a bandage out of the first aid kit in a cabinet above the sink and bandage my hand after sterilising the cuts. Damn, my hand hurts, I've really hurt myself, but I can't entertain that pain right now. I get dressed then take some painkillers not only for the hand but also for the throbbing headache. Without a doubt this day is going to be long with this hangover, so I spare some minutes to make myself a hangover remedy I got from Thuso. This thing tastes awful but I bravely gulp it down in one go, then I grab my bag and leave my flat without even having breakfast. Hell, I'm too heartbroken and hungover to push any food down my esophagus.

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My first two classes seemed to be dragging but

thank God they are now over, and I tried to stay focused and absorb as much as I could from the lecturers. Now it's 12:35, time for my third and last class for the day - Doc's class. Hell, I ain't attending that class, not when I'm still this hurt and mad at him. I don't think I'll be able to stand the sight of him. And I doubt I'll even hear anything he teaches. It'll just be a waste of time. Best thing to do is to not go at all. I just sit at the library, continuing with the book I've been reading. I have a Chemistry assignment to submit on Wednesday and I'm trying to gather some more information. With my heart this broken, concentrating is hard but I try, I have to.

At 13:55 I leave the library going to my practical session - Doc's. I can't miss it, I can't miss something that has marks that would count towards my DP for this course. Even though there are lab assistants to help us conduct our experiments, Doc likes popping by in his

course's practical sessions to check if everything is in order. I hope today he doesn't do that. I really don't have the energy to look at him. He doesn't even know that I'm back, he thinks I'm only coming back this afternoon. He called me three times last night but I didn't answer, I was in no mood to hear his lies. Sandile, the man who calls himself my father, also called but I didn't take his calls either. He needs to stop coming too strong, I'm still ambivalent about letting him into my life.

I get to the lab and find some of the students still walking in and I join them. As I pass by Thuso, who's already seated on her chair, she grabs my arm, stopping me on my tracks.

-Her: "This looks like one nasty injury you got on this hand. What happened?"

I yank my arm off of her hand. What makes her think I'd tell her anything? She's been quiet all this time, since the day I saw her at the filling

station, we've just been ignoring each other. So what makes her think I'd want to talk to her now? After yanking my arm back I don't say anything, I just walk away from her.

-Her: "You better bundle up, it's cold out there. Dangerous things happen in this world."

What? I turn to look at her, wanting to ask what she meant by that, but just then Doc walks through the door. Shit! I hoped he wouldn't come. I put my labcoat on and go sit at my designated work station. When I lift my head I find him looking at me. Quickly, I look back down, sickened. He starts talking, giving us pointers on how to carry out today's experiments. Out of the corner of my eye, I watch as he speaks slowly. My gaze drops to his thin, pink lips and bright white teeth - the mouth I know so well and have kissed so many times. But now I visualise him kissing that other woman. That big-bosomed, athletic and

confident white woman who showed off her breasts in a tight and sexy undergarment when she answered his door yesterday. I imagine him kissing her with haste and hunger, not at all the way he's slowly speaking now. I feel myself getting sick at the thought of it all and something inside me snaps. I make a decision, with chilling clarity, that him and I are done, that I'm not going to cry for him again and that tonight I'm going to walk out into the world where dangerous things happen all the time - as Thuso put it - and enjoy myself, just let loose.

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After those pointers, Doc walks out of the lab and we start working. With so much determination I work on my experiments and by 17:00 I walk out of the lab feeling exhausted. All

I want is to get home, eat, rest a little, then hit the streets later. I walk down the corridor to the elevator. I hit the button and wait for the damn elevator to come and transport me down to the ground floor, I'm too tired to take the stairs. But this frustrating machine that breaks more often doesn't come up until this man that I stupidly called mine shows up. He's carrying his laptop bag, also leaving, done for the day.

-Him: "Someleze."

He says as he comes to stand next to me.

-Me "Sir."

I feel like dying right now but I still keep my cool. There's no one around but I still keep it professional.

-Him: "I saw you passing by my office, leaving. Why didn't you come to me so we'd drive home together as usual?"

-Me: "I'm not catching a ride with you."

My voice is calm but evidently I still can't mask my anger. He sees it and he looks at me alarmed.

-Him: "Is everything okay, Soso? And why didn't you tell me that you're back? I called you last night. Why didn't you pick up?"

I notice other students coming.

-Me: "Not here. Not now."

I turn around and take the stairs. I rush down and he follows behind. When we get to the ground floor, I quickly grab the door to walk out of the building's exit but he grabs my hand and pulls me to him. It's like he doesn't care who sees us anymore.

-Him: "Someleze, wait."

-Me: "Don't you dare draw eyes to me."

-Him: "Then come with me to my car."

Not wanting drama, I walk with him to the damn

car. Immediately after we've settled on our seats he asks me what's going on, as if he doesn't know.

-Him: "Baby, talk to me."

-Me: "I came back yesterday, Thando. I didn't tell you because I wanted to surprise you. But guess what? I ended up surprising myself."

-Him: "What are you talking about?"

-Me: "I went to your house around 14:30 yesterday, Thando. And you let the woman you're fucking open the door for me half naked."

The word "shit" escapes his mouth almost inaudible. And he blanches before dropping his gaze, down away from my piercing eyes. That to me is total admission of guilt and I can feel my heart break once again inside my chest.

-Me: "Thando, how could you? I trusted you. I told you that if I give you my heart I don't wanna hold back and that I would be vulnerable. I told

you that I was scared to get hurt again. But you said you loved me and you'd never hurt me. Why did you do this to me, Thando? Why?"

Tears are streaming down my cheeks and I can't hold them back. I'm dying yet another death before the actual one.

-Him: "Baby, I can explain."

He says taking my hand. I yank it off of his grip, angry.

-Me: "Don't you dare touch me."

I open the door and get out. I keep wiping my tears as I walk away from his car. When I look up I see Buhle, once again, looking at me from across the parking lot. I'm starting to feel like this girl is stalking me and she's making me feel uncomfortable but I don't have the energy to go ask her what the fuck she wants from me. I just walk away, going home.

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On my walk home I call Kevin and he answers on the third ring.

-Him: "Hey, buddy."

-Me: "Kev, are you working tonight?"

-Him: "No, I'm at work as we speak. Day shift."

-Me: "That means you'll be out by 18:00. And tomorrow? You have a day shift again?"

-Him: "No. Night. Why are you asking me all this? Soso, you just quit and left me here."

-Me: "Yah, well, I wish I didn't quit. I need my job back but I know that I won't get it, so it's okay. Anyway, I'm asking because I want us to go out boozing tonight. Get your girl and let's hit the streets."

-Him: "On a Monday, Soso? Are you okay?"

-Me: "No, I'm not okay but I don't wanna talk about it. I don't even wanna think about it, I just wanna forget. I wanna go where the music's loud and dance the night away, man. Just as long as they don't play sad songs."

-Him: "Think that's a good idea? What, you and Thando had a fight?"

-Me: "The bastard is cheating on me, Kev. But like I said, I don't wanna talk about it. What I wanna know is: are you up for getting wasted tonight?"

He takes a moment then answer.

-Him: "I'll see if Asanda's up for it then will call you back."

-Me: "Sure."

I hang up and continue the walk home. I get there and throw myself on the bed. I said I was done crying for Doc but I can't help it, I find myself crying all over again. This shit hurts. I

really need a temporary relief. I don't want to be alone crying myself to sleep tonight. I did enough of that last night. I just want to get drunk and dance with strangers, I don't even care if some guy I don't even know puts his hands all over my body. I just want to numb the pain. If I'll be able to wake up for my classes tomorrow, well, I'll worry about that tomorrow. Right now I just want to deal with this pain. Doc has really broken me.

Kevin calls me back and his girl, Asanda, is up for going out tonight. I knew that she'd be up for it, the girl's a lost soul, she doesn't know if she's moving forward or backwards. She can't differentiate between Monday and Friday. She's 20 and not doing anything. She passed grade 12 two years ago then she just lazed around spending Kevin's money and her parents'. But I mostly blame her parents for her behaviour though. They don't show her the right way, they

don't set rules for her, they just spoil her instead. Last year they bought her a car, a Polo Vivo. Why the hell would you buy a child who's not doing anything with her life a car? Some parents though.

Anyway, by 20:00 I'm ready and Kevin calls saying they are outside. I walk out and find Asanda's Vivo parked in front of my gate. I hop in and we drive to Fort Beaufort [eBhofolo], to this pub called Pandarosa. We are about to turn this night into one big party, I'm going to spend some of the money Doc gave me. My rent is sorted and so are my other essentials, so having fun with the rest won't hurt.

We get to Pandarosa 30 minutes later and even though it's a Monday we find the place packed. Clearly people don't care what day of the week it is, if they want to get drunk, they do.

We start with tequila shots. And we down them like it's lemonade. Then we order two bottles of

Johnnie Walker, 2l Coke and ciders. Soon, I can tell that the booze is going down between the legs in these two lovebirds that I came with because they can't keep their hands off each other on the dance floor, with their tongues down each other's throats. At the rate they are going, I swear they'll end up having a quicky in the bathroom. And me? Well, I'm left dancing alone. I know that I said I don't mind if some stranger's got his hands all over my body but fuck, I do mind. These perverts keep hitting on me and they are only making me angry. Ugh! I need some air. Plus, the toilets here are not inviting so I just walk out to use the bathroom at the adjacent Total filling station. I don't need anyone to tell me that I'm tipsy right now, I can tell by the way I walk. My phone keeps vibrating in my pocket and it's Doc calling. Ey makame kancinci. It's now around 23:00, so when is he going to sleep anyway? Even though I don't want to talk to him, I'm still curious to know

what he's saying in the messages he's been sending me all evening. As I'm looking down, opening my WhatsApp to read the messages I bump into this person.

"Hey, watch it."

He says. Fuck, I know that voice. I look up and it's Alex carrying two bottles of still water having just walked out of the Bonjour shop which has an entrance that's only separated by an ATM from the one I was going to use to the restrooms. Our eyes meet, and I can tell that he's shocked to see me here at this hour, not to mention that I'm drunk on a Monday night.

-Him: "Soso? Baby, are you okay?"

#23 [Dedicated to the good-hearted Motsei Dayzee Kau. This darling sent me data.]

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"I'm sorry, yeah I'm sorry. Bad at love, no, I'm not good at this. But I can't say I'm innocent. Not

hardly, but I'm sorry. And all my friends, they know and it's true I don't know who I am without you. I got it bad, baby. Got it bad. Oh, tell me you love me." - Demi Lovato

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Someleze

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I hear my phone ringing, I jolt upright in my bed and look for the offending piece of tech. Where is it? Damn, my head is throbbing and I feel like I've been run over by a truck. Hangover and sleeping late last night and the night before have caught up with me, but at least I'm in my own bed. I look down at myself. I'm still in the same clothes from yesterday, I couldn't even change into my PJs when I got home but at least I managed to slip off the shoes. But no, I don't like this person I'm becoming. What would

my mother say if she were to see me looking like this? Not to mention that it's a Tuesday.

Looking around, I realise that the relentlessly ringing phone is on the floor. How did it get there? I have no idea, all I know is that I have to get to it. With my aching body, I slowly climb down the bed and go pick it up. Glancing at its screen, I notice that there's no caller ID, it's an unsaved number.

"Hello."

I answer, trying to sound more alive than I feel.

-Caller: "Soso?"

It's a woman and I can't say I recognise her voice.

-Me: "Yeah."

I say groggily as I sit down on the floor, leaning with my back on the bed.

-Her: "It's Zizo. Were you still sleeping?"

Oh, Zizo. Zizo, Bhongo's fiancée. Bhongo, Doc's friend from East London.

-Me: "Oh, hey, girl. No, I wasn't sleeping. I'm just coming down with flu. What time is it anyway?"

I say, lying. I can never tell her that I was still sleeping, bushwacked from being out drinking last night. I'm ashamed and embarrassed by my own actions.

-Her: "It's around 8:30. Are you sure I didn't disturb you?"

-Me: "Yeah, it's okay, dear. Is there something you want me to help you with?"

I just have to get straight to the point. I mean, she's a nice person and all, and we had a great time that night at Doc's party, but she's not my friend. I don't even remember giving her my number. So there must be a serious reason why she's calling now.

-Her: "I'm driving to Alice right now, I have a

meeting at Victoria hospital, and I was wondering if we could maybe meet up for drinks later in the afternoon. Are you gonna be busy?"

-Me: "Drinks? Okay. Umh... I guess we can meet up. My schedule is clear this afternoon. Call me when you're ready to meet."

-Her: "Oh, great, fantastic. Talk soon then."

-Me: "Sure. See you soon...And, Zizo?"

-Her: "Yeah?"

-Me: "I'm glad you called. Thank you."

I can tell that she doesn't understand, she hesitates before answering.

-Her: "No problem. Bye for now."

We both hang up. Honestly, I didn't expect her to understand why I was thanking her. Well, I thanked her because with her call she's managed to wake me up from my deep sleep

and now I can go take a shower and go to campus. I almost missed my classes. My alarm must have rang but because I had passed out I couldn't hear it. Thank God my first class of the two I have today is only at 10:45, otherwise I was going to miss them.

I got home around 00:00 last night and I just threw myself on the bed and passed out immediately. I notice that I didn't even lock the door. Damn, I must have been really drunk. But still, I recall last night's events vividly. As I was still with Alex outside the Bonjour shop at Total, Asanda and Kevin arrived telling me that we had to go finish our drinks and get ready to leave, that Kevin's brother would be there in a moment to take us home. Seeing that all three of us were too drunk to drive, Kevin had called his cop brother who works at the Fort Beaufort Police Station to come and take us home, and he had agreed. I guess the lovebirds were both

too horny to stick around some more, I'm sure they couldn't wait to get home and "Marvin Gaye and get it on", pushing my jealousy levels all the way up. But I have to admit, them finding me actually saved me from embarrassing myself further in front of all those people that were at that filling station. I could tell that that jerk Alex was trying to take advantage of the fact that I was in a drunken state. But here's the thing about me, if I have a problem with your ass when I'm sober then you can bet that bottom penny, that problem will be magnified when I'm drunk and I'm going to address it. I could see that he thought because I was obviously hurt and drunk I would, like a cheap little bitch, go home with him. Hell, clearly he doesn't know me as much as I thought he did. I was already up in his face, shouting at him, when my drinking buddies came and pulled me away from him. And thank God they did, I honestly don't know how far I would have gone.

The guy was just making me sick. Moving away from him, I went inside the toilets to do my business then I followed Kevin and Asanda back to that rowdy space. Not long after that, Kevin's brother arrived with his partner in a police van. His partner drove Asanda's car to the police station while he drove us to Alice in the police van. He wasted the state's resources and time driving a bunch of drunks home while he was supposed to be on duty. But I'm grateful he did.

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I drag my worn-out body to the bathroom and stretch my arms wincing before examining myself in the mirror. Damn, I look as bad as I feel. I look like death warmed over. My eyes are bloodshot and I don't fail to notice the bags and

dark circles under them. Will I be able to make it to class looking and feeling like this? I hope the answer is yes, for my own sake. Plus, there's that Chemistry assignment that's due tomorrow and I still haven't finished it yet. I better pick myself up and get ready to go. I get a bottle of painkillers out of the medicine cabinet, shake out a couple and swallow them. Then I strip off my clothes, step inside the shower and let the water bring me back to life. Soon, I'm dressed but I'm not ready to go yet. Even though I've brushed my teeth and also used a mouthwash my mouth still smells like a shebeen. Where are my mints? I don't have any in my bag, but I eventually find a pack in the bathroom cabinet. I'm sure they'll do a better job. I put on my shades to cover up my eyes then down that hangover remedy before pumping up my body with Bioplus and Redbull that I always keep in the flat since the time I was working at the filling station - I had to use these a lot during

that period. They worked then and I hope they'll work even now. I fix my bed and make sure that the windows are open before leaving my flat. I really hope I'll be alive in class. But what makes it all a little bearable is the fact that I don't have Doc's class or even a lab session today, seeing his face was going to be plain torture. Now I understand why there's a line that shouldn't be crossed. How am I ever going to be able to concentrate in his class now? Eish! Speaking of Doc, I remember that I didn't get to read his messages last night, so as I walk to campus I open them after noticing multiple missed calls from him, one of which is from this morning. I'm not going to call him back and I'm going to continue ignoring him. I read the messages: "Baby, I'm sorry. Please pick up." ... "What you saw is not what it looked like. Please give me a chance to explain." ... "Someleze, I love you. I'd never hurt you like that." " Baby, please, pick up. Don't do this." ... "Soso, please, let's talk

about this."..."MaNdlovu, you know me. I'd never do what you think I did. Give me a chance to explain to you. I love you."

I read these messages and a dozen more like them. Ugh, whatever. I just delete them and continue my 25-minute walk to campus. I'm dragging my body but I'll get there. I'm still hurt and dying inside, I can't lie. If I wasn't so serious about my studies I would crawl into my bed and cuddle with a bottle of whisky each and every day... and night, drink my sorrows away and not go out or even take a shower. The sad part about being lifted up so high is that when you fall down you fall very hard and without fail, get badly hurt. That's exactly what Doc has done to me, he lifted me high up only to drop me. Rather you not experience the highs because at least you'd be spared the lows. But I'm glad I got to see the kind of person he really is now before I fell for him any deeper.

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Even though I doubted it, I manage to stay not only awake but also alive in both classes. Apart from having Thuso stealing glances at me every now and then, the classes went well. By 12:25 I'm walking out of my last one and I make my way to the library with my laptop to work on my assignment. As I'm working, my phone is next to my laptop on the desk, on silent, and I keep seeing the screen flashing after every few minutes, Doc just won't stop calling. For some reason I don't want to block him and I don't want to turn my phone off either because I'm waiting for Zizo to contact me. But how am I supposed to focus when he keeps doing this? I've already went to cry in the restroom three times since I walked into this library. One moment I have control over my emotions, and

the next, the floodgates open. I hate what is happening but I just can't help it. But maybe meeting up with Zizo will help me temporary forget about this pain, only if she won't bring up Doc's name in our conversation though. It's 14:30 when she calls, and even though I don't take her call because of the environment I'm in, I text her telling her to wait for me by the campus small gate. She replies with an "okay". I finish up what I was doing then collect my stuff and leave the library. Indeed, I find her waiting in her car by the gate. I hop in and we make a short drive to KFC. On the way she just can't miss the opportunity to comment about how hellish I look. Ugh, as if I don't know it. We get to KFC and we simply order their Hawaiian twisters and sparkling krushers. Then we go sit at a corner table and talk.

-Her: "When you and Thando were in E.L did I tell you how he and I came to know each

other?"

Dear God, why does she have to talk about Doc?

-Me: "Nope. You didn't and neither did he. I just assumed that you got to know each other through Bhongo."

-Her: "We all had a lot to talk about that night, no wonder it never came up. Actually, I knew Thando before I met Bhongo. I got to know Bhongo through Thando, he's the one who introduced us. Thando and I got to know each other when we were still doing our first year at Wits Med School."

-Me: "Oh. Is it?"

-Her: "Yeah. We were still much younger then. And a year later he started dating this white girl in our class who went by the name of Natalie Smith. We called her Nat for short, and less than a year later we realised that the name suited her perfectly because she turned out to

be a nutcase, the girl was a nut. And even today nothing has changed."

I don't know where she's going with this but she's boring the hell out of me right now.

-Me: "Oh."

She takes her phone out of her purse and starts thumbing it. Then she turns the screen, showing it to me.

-Her: "This is Nat. Recognise her?"

Oh my God, that's the woman I saw at Doc's place on Sunday. She's his ex? Woah, so he slept with his varsity ex? This is getting worse by the second. Zizo keeps showing me more pics. Old pics that are obviously scanned from hardcopy originals. Pics of Nat with Doc when they were still younger and in varsity. Some with Nat, Zizo, Doc and other guys, their former classmates I assume.

-Me: "I should have known. You asked to meet

up because Thando asked you to come and talk to me."

-Her: "Because you're refusing to hear his side of the story, babe. So since I was already coming to Alice he thought I should be the one to try and talk to you. He thought maybe you'd listen to me, another woman. The guy's a mess, Soso. And that's because he loves you. He's been so happy with you and now this had to happen. It didn't even happen the way you think it did."

I pull my eyes away from hers to look outside, through the glass, at a passing young couple. They are holding hands, looking all kinds of happy. Doc and I were also that happy at some point. Though not that long, my time with him has been amazing, full of unexpected surprises and emotional highs. Some of the best memories of my life have occurred when I was with him. I fell in love with him regardless of my

initial intentions not to do so. I fell so hard that it caught even me by surprise. And despite everything, I'm still in love with him.

In a split second, reason rights itself. I know that Thando has been good to me so there's probably a logical explanation for what I saw. And I'm now ready to hear it.

-Me: "Fine. Give me his side of the story, I'm ready to listen."

I say looking Zizo in the eye. Then I keep quiet, waiting for her to speak, which she doesn't do for many seconds. Looking at her, I feel the rise of an emotion close to anger. Why is she not talking now?

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-Her: "Thando broke up with Nat after a year

into their relationship because she was now showing a crazy side."

She finally speaks as I was about to snap.

-Her: "The girl became not only clingy but also extremely controlling and insecure. Thando was confused, I remember him saying it's like a switch just flipped and Nat changed into a completely different person. I on the other hand thought she was always like that but was hiding her true nature because the relationship was still new. All of a sudden she didn't want Thando to have female friends or just friends in general. She'd constantly accuse him of cheating and go psycho on him. This other time she even went as far as attacking me on campus saying I was sleeping with her man. She almost killed me."

Without being self-conscious, she easily lifts her top revealing a big but old scar on her abdomen.

-Her: "This is where Nat stabbed me for something I was not even guilty of. You would expect such behaviour from a kasi black woman, but she did it. I didn't press charges but she got kicked out of med school and Thando decided that he was done with her, he just couldn't take her craziness anymore. After that he met Busi and they had a good thing, but Nat continued to be a pain in his butt. The girl was obsessed with Thando. Busi would tell you what she did to her after she found out that Thando was now dating her."

-Me: "Okay, Zizo, I think I get the idea. But still, that doesn't explain why this crazy Nat was half-naked in Thando's house. Or even why he met up with her behind my back and lied to me about it."

-Her: "I'm getting there. The divorce messed Thando up pretty bad. We all know him as this guy who's obsessed with order, always wanting

to do things the right way, but after the divorce he went down a self-destructive path. He quit his job, started drinking excessively and picking up random women every night. In all those hookups he ended up crossing paths with Nat again, and in an impaired state he hooked up with her. In the morning he was sober and as expected he was regretting what he did. Nat wanted something more. But knowing the kind of woman she is and with everything that was going on in his life, Thando had no interest in engaging in something more with her. That's when trouble began. Nat being the nut, she was still obsessed with him as she was back in varsity. He had awakened a crazy monster and he was now living to regret it. His little sister, Anathi, called us worried about him. That was in June, and Bhongo asked him to leave Jo'burg altogether and come to E.L. We tried to help him get his life back on track, and also help him find a new job. He didn't want to work as a

surgeon anymore, so Bhongo used his connections and got him the Fort Hare lecturing job even though the post was long advertised. He was now in a new province away from Nat, and he had also changed his phone number and blocked her on social media but Nat kept emailing him, sometimes threatening him. He kept ignoring the emails and just continued living his life, his clean life. But it is my understanding that Nat kept emailing him even though he was ignoring her, then all of a sudden she just showed up exactly where he was - at Rhodes, telling him that she's now based in Grahamstown and that she still wanted him back. I wasn't there but I know that initially Thando didn't give that crazy woman the time of day, he wouldn't. However, she managed to get his attention when she told him that she'd post online a sex tape she captured the night they hooked up. She even showed it to him. That forced Thando to stop and try to reason

with her. He didn't tell you about this because he was embarrassed and he thought he had a handle on it. Then last Sunday Nat just showed up at his house without an invitation even though he hadn't given her his address. Thando let her in because he didn't want her to do something drastic. I think she paid someone to track him down, the girl is crazy like that. And I wouldn't be surprised if she comes back a few months from now saying she's pregnant with Thando's baby. I think falling pregnant for him was her plan when she decided to come to his house, find a chance to drug him and without a doubt sleep with him."

Yoh, this is too much.

-Me: "So he did sleep with her."

-Her: "SHE slept with him. After drugging him."

On her phone, she shows me more pictures. But now these force me to gasp for air. They are of

Nat naked with Thando in his bed.

-Zizo: "She took these pics AND a video then sent them to Thando as proof that they did sleep together. Well, that would help her when she comes back saying she's pregnant for Thando, wouldn't it? But as you can see in these pics, Thando is out of it."

Everything is starting to make sense to me now, in a way that Zizo won't understand. The pieces are starting to fall into place. I get up from my chair rather abruptly.

-Me: "Zizo, thanks for talking to me. Now I think I know exactly what happened and how it happened. Thanks."

I rush out with my bag because I didn't leave it in Zizo's car. Leaving Zizo confused.

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Thando

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I pace up and down in my office, running out of patience. It's around 15:30 now, why is Zizo not calling me? I don't like involving other people in my business but with Soso not wanting to listen to me I was going crazy last night and I didn't want this shit to drag so I asked Zizo to talk to her today. I really hope Soso listened to her, because I don't know how I will move forward if I lose her. I'd really hate to lose her over something I didn't even do.

With my patience on empty, I take my phone and call Zizo myself. Her phone doesn't even ring, she answers immediately.

-Her: "T-Love, I was just about to dial your number right now."

-Me: "Did you talk to Soso? What did she say?"

Did she listen to you? How did she look? Is she okay?"

I can't help myself, I'm bombarding her with this string of questions without even pausing in between them.

-Her: "Woah, buddy, slow down. One question at a time."

-Me: "Please just answer me, Zee. Put me out of my misery."

-Her: "She's not okay, buddy, that much I can tell you. But she did listen to me even though she just left me there without telling me what she's intending to do next. She left me confused as fuck. All she said is, 'I think I know what happened and how it happened'. Then she just rushed out."

-Me: "What does that mean?"

-Her: "I don't know, hey. Maybe you should call her. Maybe this time she'll answer."

I let out a huge sigh. From where I'm standing, this is still not looking good.

-Me: "Okay. Thanks, Zee."

I hang up and dial Soso's number, but once again she doesn't answer. Fuck. In a fit of rage, something juvenile, I throw the phone across the office and it hits the wall so hard that by the time it reaches the floor the screen is past tense, history.

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Someleze

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It is now around 19:00, I stifle a yawn, my fingers moving rapidly over my laptop's keyboard. Overtaken with great ideas for my assignment I've been sitting here for two hours

dutifully doing what matters the most - my school work. I've kept my head down all these hours typing, not looking up for any reason, not even the ringing of my phone. I have to finish this assignment and submit it tomorrow.

As I'm still typing, I hear a knock at my door.

Eish, it must be my annoying landlord.

Wondering what she wants, I look up for the first time in hours and go get the door. To my surprise, I find Doc standing there. But how did he get in?

-Me: "Thando?"

-Him: "Baby, please don't shut the door in my face. We need to talk about this."

I open the door wide and step to one side, allowing him to walk through the doorway, then I shut the door after him.

-Him: "Sthandwa sam, I didn't do it. I didn't cheat on you, I'm not cheating on you. Please believe

me. I love you, Someleze, I didn't lie about that. I would never cheat on you. I would never hurt you like that, babe. The bond we've created, sthandwa sam, is so strong, I would never just mess things up like that. I know that you think I didn't even go to Rhodes that Saturday, but that's not true. Baby, you know how I love my kids. I would never just choose to go spend the whole day with another woman instead of spending it with them. I wanted to go fetch them from the airport myself and spend the day with them and you. But I abandoned that and went to Rhodes because I was asked to. I didn't leave my house and you in my bed just to go fuck another woman. I would never do that. What Zizo told you is true. It is everything that happened. I'm sure you hate the fact that I brought another person into our private affairs but I was trying to fix things. Baby, I don't know how to go on without you, I don't want to. I don't know who I am without you and my friends

know it too, that's why Zizo agreed to help me out. You weren't talking to me and I had to make another plan. But I don't blame you for not wanting to listen to me. I'm not exactly innocent in all of this. I lied to you the day I came back from Rhodes even though I made a promise to you that I'd let you in, that I'd talk to you about these things before you find out about them on your own and get the wrong end of the stick. I broke my promise and for that I'm sorry. I guess I'm bad at communicating, no, I'm not good at it at all. But I promise you that something like this won't happen again. Just please tell me that you believe me and that you still love me."

He's nervous. The way he sounds, clearly he mentally rehearsed what he was going to say to me. But the look on his face says he thinks the words that sounded so good in his head before now seem inane and ineffectual. I remain quiet, just looking at him. He stands still, his eyes

searching mine. And I can tell that he's getting more nervous. I let out a smile and his face goes soft as his eyes fill with hope.

-Me: "I do. I believe you and I still love you, thando lwam."

-Him: "You do?"

He says flatly, almost in disbelief.

-Me: "I do...I've figured it all out. I know everything. I know what happened and how it happened. And baby, I'm sorry too. I'm sorry I didn't give you a chance to explain."

I pull him to me and kiss his lips. Possesively, he wraps his arms around me and deepens the kiss. In a few moments, I pull back and look at him.

-Me: "Sthandwa sam, we are not just dealing with the crazy Nat here. She just became a convenient and a more than willing pawn in someone else's game."

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See y'all on Monday. Let's please make it to 1.8K likes and keep those comments coming.

#24

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"I've been looking for a saviour. I've been looking for a real one to hold on to. I've been looking for a saviour, saviour, yeah, to save me."
- Quavo [Iggy Azalea]

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My eyes snap open when I hear my morning alarm ringing. It takes a moment for me to realise I haven't died and gone to heaven. I have Doc's arm around me as we are curling into a classic spoon position beneath my pillowy down comforter. He's indeed back in my life and he's spent the night in my bed. I move away

from him to reach for my phone on the bedside pedestal and turn the alarm off. Then I turn to look at him. I smile to myself as I study his face. He looks so handsome even in his sleep. I am so happy I haven't lost him, I'm ecstatic. Without him I was slowly but surely going down a slippery slope.

It's now 6:30 but he's still deep asleep even though he's usually up by 5:00 to take an hour maintaining his sexy abs 4 days in a week or to use that hour attending to my needs on the other days. I don't blame him for still being out though, it's exhaustion. Just like me, my poor baby hadn't had a goodnight sleep in two days. We didn't even get to go deeper into our conversation about Natalie last night. I had to focus on finishing my assignment first, so he pulled a chair, sat next to me at the desk and helped me out. When that was done there was no time to talk. Slowly, oh so slowly, we took off

each other's clothes, we were both naked as our lips locked and hands caressed each other's bodies. Our moist lips would meet and part, creating a bridge of our juices. They would hover, then sensuously kiss flesh. Then he was inside me, making slow and passionate love to me. With almost each movement inside me he told me he loved me, showing me time and again as his body shuddered. We've made love with so much passion before but last night was different, the passion was there in spades. The session was so slow, sensual and he was in no hurry to reach the end, he was more about reconnecting our souls. It was as if he was making love to me with the intent of driving away any fear I have felt about the end of our relationship. Finally, our fingers entwined and tightened; my moans grew louder; he tensed and the moment arrived at the same time for the both of us. The climax became as intense as the entire session was. It was as if I'd been

climbing a tall mountain and now I'd reached its highest pinnacle. With my arms spread, I floated out over the precipice, my cry of fulfillment both mindless and sapped with pleasure. After that he looked deep into my eyes and spoke with unmistakable passion. "I love you, Someleze. You're my everything. You mean the world to me." He didn't wait for me to respond, he kissed me then pulled me into his arms and I lay with my head on his chest. We were both spent and we fell asleep almost immediately. I had to make sure that we used protection though, I can never know what infections Natalie has transmitted to him. Though not a rubber of choice, one condom from a box of government condoms that I've been keeping in my bathroom came in handy. It's a box that I got from my social worker landlord back in May. She likes acting like she's my mother, although that gets a little annoying at times, I appreciate the fact that she's

concerned about my well-being. At the time, I was sure that I would never use those condoms but I accepted them anyway because I didn't want to disappoint her. It turns out I did myself a huge favour by accepting and keeping them because one of them came in handy last night. What I also like is that I'm not the only cautious one in this relationship, Doc is too. He told me that after learning that he'd slept with Natalie he visited his GP and the GP wrote him a prescription for the PEP treatment. He didn't mind having to pay the GP for consultation and then pay for the 28 day course of anti-HIV drugs. A healthy life is priceless.

As I'm still staring at him, he opens his eyes and when they meet mine he gives out a loving smile.

-Him: "Good morning, beautiful."

-Me: "Morning, thando lwam. Sleep well?"

-Him: "Like a vampire in a blood bank."

I can't help but laugh at that. Then I peck his lips.

-Him: "Thank you for not walking away from me."

-Me: "Walk away from a guy who loves me so much that at his age he didn't even think twice about jumping over our fence that's made of a high brick wall just to get to me. Risking being caught by my landlord in the process. I'm telling you, babe, you had me with that."

I say laughing.

-Him: "And given a chance I'd do it all over again."

-Me: "You didn't need to do it though, all you had to do was to not break your phone then call me to come to you. You don't know how worried I was when you didn't answer my calls. I thought maybe you had given up on me, on us, not knowing that your phone's broken."

-Him: "I would never give up on us, babe. Not this soon. Listen, I promise to be more open with you going forth. Okay? And I won't break that promise again. I swear."

-Me: "You know how you make me feel, Thando? You make me feel like there's absolutely nothing I can ever say or tell you that would offend you, hurt you, or make me any less than what you already think of me. You make me feel like I can tell you anything. I'm also trying to make you feel that way with me too. Baby, you don't need to feel embarrassed about anything around me. You can always tell me anything no matter how bad or embarrassing you think it is. I need you to tell me, especially if it it's gonna affect our relationship. I need to hear these things from you, babe, before things spiral out of control. Please."

-Him: "You got it."

He says, gently brushing my cheek with his

hand.

-Him: "I've been around, I've been with a lot of different women in the course of my life. I've dated a few and just had sex with the rest. My 11 years with Busi doesn't mean we were together for 11 years, it means I started dating her 11 years ago. There were a lot of breaks between us in that 11 years, as you know I only got to marry her 3 years ago. We'd take breaks and be with other people, but most people I've been with never heard the L-word come out of my mouth, I don't just use that word lightly and that's because I value and respect the meaning it carries... Because Busi and I had a strong bond, which was not only our kids, we'd always find a way back to each other's arms. And when we got married we took a vow to never leave each other again, which is why the divorce we had in January broke me. It made me realise that we were really over, for good this time. To

numb the pain I'd have a different woman in my bed almost every night. I didn't even need to be drunk to do it, half of the times I'd be sober. I was using sex to sedate myself. But that wasn't working, it'd manage to numb the pain for an hour or two at most and then the pain would catch up with me again. I wouldn't even have half the interest to spend the night next to the woman I've picked up, I would leave them in my bed and go to the couch downstairs, put my earphones on and let the music put me to sleep. I lived like that for months, up until the next woman I picked up was a psycho that would make me regret it - Natalie. So I left Jo'burg and came to EL to clean up my act, and that was a month before I met you. I told myself that I was taking a break from women, but then you came along and turned my life around. I was definitely not looking for love but without doing anything you made me fall for you so hard that I, myself, didn't even know what had hit me. What we

have means a lot to me, Someleze. YOU mean a lot to me. So, going forward, if my not-so-good past threatens to destroy what we have I promise to communicate with you, to let you know about it. I promise to learn to be more open. And I'm never gonna break that promise again."

This is a start.

-Me: "Thanks. That's all I ask, sthandwa sam. And like I once said to you, I would never judge you by the things you did in the past. I love you, Thando, and that won't change any time soon. I also promise to be calm and give you a chance to explain when something happens next time."

He smiles. And we seal the promises with a kiss. But that kiss is cut short when I hear a knock at the door. Jeez! That must be my landlord.

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Anxious, I get out of bed and go put on my robe that's hanging on the back of the door. Then I open the door. And it's indeed my landlord, on her way to work. She works in Adelaide, an hour away from Alice, so she leaves early.

-Me: "Morning, Ma."

-Her: "Morning. Listen, I need to talk to you when I come back from work, okay? Be here."

-Me: "Okay, Ma. I'll be here."

With that she walks away. I just know right there and then that I'm in trouble. She probably heard noises coming out of my flat last night and knew that I was with a man. And if that's the case then I'm really screwed. Grrr! I wonder what she's going to say.

I close the door and go sit on the bed. I don't

communicate my fears with Doc though, I just keep quiet.

-Him: "Everything okay?"

-Me: "I don't know, hey. Guess I'll know when she comes back from work. Right now we need to get up and get ready to go to campus."

-Him: "Not yet. I can be late and I know that your first class is only at 9:50, third slot. So come sit next to me and let's talk about this Nat thing."

He says as he sits up straight on the bed, leaning on my cheap headboard.

-Me: "You have my timetable in your head?"

-Him: "I keep everything about the people I deeply care about. Now come."

I climb back into my bed. I sit next to him and lean on the headboard too.

-Me: "After Zizo told me that Natalie had been emailing you almost frequently and then she

just showed up where you were at Rhodes and at your house, proving that she knew exactly where you were, that got me thinking. It got me thinking about what Alex once did in front of me. Zizo thought Natalie hired someone to follow you but I didn't think so. My theory was: it's Alex and Thuso who fed her that information."

-Him: "Alex and Thuso? Why?"

-Me: "Ain't it obvious? Thuso wants you and Alex also wants me back. So they used Natalie to break us up. I think the plan was for Natalie to come to your house, do what she did, sleep with you and take those pictures, pictures that would end up on my lap and make me not think twice about leaving you. And Natalie was more than willing to do it, for her own obvious reasons."

-Him: "Then why did the pictures not end up on your lap?"

-Me: "Because there was no longer a need for that. I had already seen Natalie half naked in your house and made my own conclusions. Both Thuso and Alex know me very well. They know how I react. And they also know that when I'm extremely angry I punch and break things. Thuso saw my injured hand in class on Monday and made a comment that I figured a meaning to only yesterday when I was talking to Zizo. My injured hand and knowing that I found Natalie in your house the day before meant one thing, that they had succeeded in their scheme."

-Him: "But how did they find out about Natalie to begin with?"

-Me: "From your emails. Alex is doing his Masters degree in Computer Science. Even though I won't say he's a hacker, he knows a lot about hacking, programming and coding. He was my boyfriend for years which means I absorbed enough from him just like I also

absorb a lot from you now. You know me, I like listening more than talking and if something fascinates me I ask about it. He showed me how to access someone's computer remotely as long as the computer in question is connected to the internet. He did it in front of me once, he hacked into Lexi's boyfriend's computer. And Lexi was his twin sister. Now deceased."

-Him: "So you're telling me that that boy hacked my emails?"

-Me: "I believe he hacked your laptop first, then your emails. I believe he first looked through the documents stored on your laptop for something, anything he could use to get me to leave you. And when he didn't find anything he moved to your emails."

-Him: "And how did he do that? How did he invade my privacy?"

-Me: "By creating an email bug that he then sent to you so he could get your IP address. The bug is a piece of code he imbedded in the email he sent to you. An email that caught your attention. Once you opened the email, the bug simply told him that you've read the email, and it also provided your dynamic IP address. Then from there he used your IP address to access your laptop. Dynamic IP is the IP address ordinary people like you and me get, it means every time you disconnect and reconnect to the internet your system is assigned a completely new IP address, contrary to static IP. When you're home your laptop is always connected to your home WiFi, but when you disconnect it to take it with you to campus and reconnect it later that means you get a different IP address. That means anyone who wants to hack you using your IP address will have to obtain it every time they want to access your system. But that wasn't a train smash for Alex because he

wanted to access your computer only once. Remember the email you got from someone you didn't know on Friday night, the night before you were asked to go to Grahamstown? The email with Biochem third year students as a subject and a MPEG attachment that made no sense?"

-Him: "Yeah, I remember it."

-Me: "Well, I think it was from Alex, an email account he created. Once you clicked it, that's how you gave him access to your laptop. But having just your IP address wasn't going to help him. He also needed a backdoor in your system, an open port that could listen to and reply back to his data packets. The bug he sent you also helped him with that. And the fact that you have no firewall made things easier for him."

-Him: "But how did Alex even know my personal email address?"

-Me: "I thought about it. I doubt he even knew your last name. What I'm sure of is that he knew your first name from your birthday party.

Remember, he attended the party not because he knew Bhongo but because Bhongo knows his two friends who are East Londoners, Siya and Sive, and he'd asked them to bring someone when he was inviting them. So he couldn't have asked Bhongo about you. Yes, he could have asked Siya and Sive, but they don't have that information either. So instead of a long chain from him to Sive and Siya then to Bhongo to get to you he worked with Thuso, a person with the same goal as him, a person who knows a whole lot about you. Busi told me that Thuso tracked her through social media and I think that's where they also got your email address. Knowing your name they looked you up on social media and they found your Gmail account username under your contact info on Facebook because you have it displayed there.

Then they sent you the email and got access to your computer. But when they couldn't find anything they could use on the documents stored on your laptop, they moved to your emails. And guessing your password was now easy because Alex already had access to every folder stored on your computer. Just like he did in Lexi's boyfriend's computer. Narrowing it down, he targeted folders that contained more personal documents, especially those that contained memories from the past. I guess he did the same with you too. You know yourself, babe, you're very sentimental, you keep everything. Like the photos of your first girlfriend, Liesl, who died in a car accident when you were both 16. Photos of Rocky, the chocolate Labrador that you shared with Busi. Photos of Lesedi, your first car that your father bought you when you turned 21. Photos of your daughters on the day they were born. All that stuff that's important to you, photos with

captions, they are all stored on your laptop. And I'm guessing Alex used them to guess your Gmail password, I also did. I thought it would be your daughters' names or their birth dates but it was "Lesedi", your first car. I guess they figured it out too."

-Him: "I feel naked, you know. Yes, I know that I'm literally naked right but you know what I mean. My privacy has been invaded by people I don't even have dealings with. I don't have a problem with you seeing my stuff, but them...."

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-Me: "I know and I'm sorry... Google sends you a security alert when your account has been accessed on a new device, they notify you so you could change your password and protect your account just in case you've been hacked."

Did you receive their email and did you even pay attention to it?"

-Him: "This makes sense now, I got the email but I only read it on Saturday. And I changed the password. At first it was my daughters' names combined, then I changed it to "Lesedi". And yesterday I got another telling me about the possible hack, I guess it was you. But I haven't changed the password yet."

-Me: "You better make it stronger this time around, include numbers and capital letters. And also use the two-factor authentication which means the hacker will also need your mobile device as well before accessing your emails. And there is no other way around that...Anyway, from your emails that's where they found out about Natalie and decided to use her as their lil pawn. They could tell how obsessed she is with you and all they needed to do was to put you two together at the same

place and at the same time, away from me. Yesterday I read the emails she's been sending you, they have a signature block, her contact details at the bottom, her work address, work phone number and her cellphone number. Work address in Grahamstown. That's close enough and it worked in their advantage. Everybody in the Biochem department, including Thuso, knew that the Honours students had an academic trip to Rhodes that Saturday but not everyone had a reason to want to see you in Grahamstown, only Thuso and Alex had one."

-Him: "And Lincoln not feeling well at the last minute was no coincidence, was it? With him out I was the next option."

-Me: "Exactly. The guy was not even sick. My psychotic ex-friend just gave him some green to say he was. I talked to him yesterday, I gave him no choice and he admitted to it. They had you sent to Grahamstown that day and told Nat

about it. And they are also the ones behind Nat showing up at your house last Sunday."

-Him: "These kids are crazy, seriously. What is it with them? To go to such great lengths just to break us up? What is that, seriously? Are they that desperate? How did they even know my address? I don't have anything that's got my address on my laptop or on my emails."

-Me: "I believe they got the address through me. I've dated Alex for 3 years, and in that 3 years our lives were connected. The iPhone I'm using was a gift from him and he's the one who set up my Apple ID and my iCloud account. I never changed the passwords after we broke up. So I'm sure he's been using "Find my iPhone", logging in using my details and tracking my phone more closely. And guess where my phone's GPS has been putting me at night lately?"

-Him: "My house."

-Her: "Exactly. So they figured it out. Maybe they even drove by one day just to make sure. And your car, that Thuso knows very well, is mostly parked in the driveway than in the garage."

-Him: "And this past weekend they knew that you weren't around, your phone told them that you were home in P.E, that's why they sent Natalie to my house to do what she did."

-Me: "You're seeing it. Monday night I went out drinking because I was stressed, and guess what? Alex just conveniently showed up and acted as if he was surprised to see me at Fort Beaufort drunk at that hour. With my phone on and data on, he knew exactly where I was, that I was in Pandarosa obviously drowning my sorrows because of what they did. And he went there to take advantage of the situation. But unfortunately for him that didn't work. We sure do know how to attract crazies, don't we?"

-Him: "No kidding. At least Natalie and Alex are

our exes, who I don't get is that girl Thuso. Even if their plan had worked, how did she think she'd benefit in all of this? How did she think she'd make me feel something for her? I mean, I don't want her and she knows it. And how was she even planning to get rid of a psycho like Natalie once she got in the picture?"

-Me: "I really underestimated just how sick Thuso is, I didn't know she'd go this far, especially for a man that doesn't even want her. I guess her craziness even rubbed off on Alex. They used Nat as their pawn, forgetting that in a game of chess a pawn can turn into a queen if it travelled all across the board to the other side. Natalie is the one holding the cards now, because she did this for her own reasons, not theirs. But apparently Thuso had or still has a plan for her. At least that's what Buhle told me after she confirmed my theory. But she doesn't know the details of the plan."

-Him: "Buhle?"

-Me: "Buhle Vilakazi in our class."

-Him: "Where does Vilakazi fit in all of this craziness?"

-Me: "The girl's been using her eyes on me and you a lot lately. So yesterday after I went to see Lincoln I looked for her on campus, wanting to know if she was also involved in Thuso's plot. And if yes, why. She told me everything she knows. Apparently, before Thuso approached Alex for this sick alliance she asked for Buhle's help. Apparently, Buhle has the same skillset as Alex when it comes to computers, only difference is that she's street-taught. She says when Thuso told her about my relationship with you she didn't believe it and she didn't want to help her, she even denied being that computer savvy. But she started thinking it was true when she coincidentally saw me at the airport driving your car. And to be sure she started using her

eye on us, just out of curiosity. But even though she turned Thuso down, apparently Thuso still shares her plans with her but she doesn't give her all the details. Before I left her room yesterday, she promised to get me everything Thuso is planning next. She told that she's against what Thuso's doing and she has her own reasons for feeling that way and they are pure. Knowing that Thuso might not give up after seeing that her plan hasn't worked, I think we could use any intel I get from Buhle to be one step ahead of Thuso in their next plan with Alex."

Doc just gets out of bed and grabs his clothes on the chair. Then he starts getting dressed.

-Him: "You know what, babe? Dealing with one crazy Natalie is enough. I'm too old and busy to be dealing with two bored crazy kids such as Thuso and Alex. I'm just gonna deal with Natalie, get her to surrender the sex tapes she has in

her possession. Because the last thing I want is to be an internet porn star. I'll even pay her if I have to. Money is the only thing I can offer her, nothing more. As for Thuso and Alex, I really don't have time for them and I suggest that you ignore them too. They have failed in their sick game, and they're gonna fail in whatever they try next. Let's just promise each other that. That we're not gonna let their stupid schemes separate us. That whatever happens next we'll know that it's them and deal with it with the highest level of maturity."

I'm not sure about this but I nod.

-Me: "Okay."

He's now done getting dressed. And he comes to me, leans over and peck my lips.

-Him: "Please come open the gate for me, I need to go get ready for work...I'll just strengthen all my passwords and make sure

that I don't get hacked again. Other than that I don't want any dealings with those kids. I'm letting this go."

I sigh then climb down the bed. I put on my morning shoes and go open the gate for him. He tells me that he's going to come get me after an hour so we could go to campus, then he leaves.

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Indeed, after an hour he comes to get me and we drive to campus. I don't see Thuso in all of our classes, I don't know where she is and I'm not sure I care. As we leave in the afternoon, walking to Doc's car, I see Alex looking at us, leaning on his own car in the parking lot. Our eyes lock and I don't miss noticing the anger in his eyes. Clearly, realising that their plan didn't

work is driving him nuts. Well, he should have known that evil doesn't win. It doesn't matter what he and Thuso decide to do next, they are going to fail again. As I'm looking at him, the distinction between him and the man walking beside me is stark. Alex's passion and looks are sexy to be sure. But Doc is more sexier, and his mature and sophisticated demeanor gives him an urbane flair I find compelling in a way I've never encountered. Alex must be insane if he thinks I'd leave Doc and go back to his boyish ass.

With no drama, Doc and I get in the car and he drives away, leaving Alex still standing where he was. Ten minutes later, Doc drops me off at my gate and I walk to my flat to anxiously wait for my landlord to come home. Wondering what she wants us to talk about, I find myself sweating, anxiety getting the better of me.

Around 18:30 she knocks at my door and asks

me to follow her to the main house. I do with my heart banging against my chest, trepidation killing me. We enter her lounge and she asks me to take a seat on the couch next to her.

-Her: "Someleze, Monday night you came home really late, drunk and rowdy. Then last night you brought a man into your flat. I heard you having sex in my yard. Is that respect? What did I say to you about rules in this yard? Would you have sex in your mother's yard?"

Oh my God, I'm screwed. I look down, fucked and paralysed by shame.

-Me: "No, I wouldn't."

My voice comes out as a whisper.

-Her: "Then why did you do it in my yard? It's me you don't respect, is that it?"

I lift my head and look at her with the respect I've always been showing her all these years.

-Me: "No, Ma. I respect you. A lot. And I'm sorry I did what I did. It won't happen again. Ever. I swear. Please forgive me."

-Her: "I'm sure it won't happen again. Someleze, you broke the only two rules I gave you when you first got here. I can't stay with a rebellious child like you in my house. That's why I'm letting you go."

-Me: "Letting me go? You mean you're kicking me out?"

-Her: "Make sure you clear all your stuff by tomorrow. I'll refund you half of your rent money for this month."

As painful as what she's saying is, not a trace of feeling grazes her face. Clearly her mind is made up, there's no changing her decision. She's really kicking me out of her house, just like that. Where am I going to go now? I'll have to figure it out, she doesn't care. I rise from the

couch rather slowly.

-Me: "Thanks for keeping me in your house all these years, Ma. And I'm sorry for disrespecting you. I'll be out by tomorrow."

Without even waiting for her to answer, I make for the door and walk out.

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I don't go back to my flat, I just go straight to the gate and walk out to Doc's house. On the way I feel like crying but I manage to hold it together. In no time I get to Doc's gate and I call him to open up. He does and I walk into the yard and make my way to his front door. I walk in obviously looking flushed because he immediately asks if everything is okay as he leads me to the couch.

-Me: "No, everything is not okay, Thando."

My voice cracks and my tears betray me, they just fall even though I don't want them to. Doc, who's sitting next to me on the couch, pulls me to him.

-Him: "Baby, talk to me. What's going on?"

-Me: "I don't have a place to stay, Thando. My landlord has just kicked me out because Monday night I came home very late and drunk, and because you spent the night in my bed last night."

He pulls back and looks at me.

-Him: "Is that it? Well, don't worry, babe. Just come stay with me. Let me take care of you, with the accommodation and everything else."

-Me: "But that's not right, babe. Cohabiting is just not me. What would my mother say if she were to find out? I can't do it."

-Him: "Of course you can, babe. You don't have much choice. And your mother won't find out."

He says, wiping my tears.

-Him: "This is Alice, accommodation is scarce. Besides, I'd love having you here all the time. We've been practically living together anyway."

-Me: "No, Thando, we have been spending nights and weekends together while we lived separately. That's very different from living a life together."

-Him: "And that was going to be my point. With you living here we can be ourselves, all the time. We'll be much closer, our bond will be strengthened. And anything that's plotted against us won't easily shake us."

-Me: "Ey...I don't know, babe. It's still early for such a big step."

-Him: "I know, but I believe we're ready to take that step. It's gonna be good, babe, you'll see."

Just say you'll do it."

No, this is too much and too sudden. I'm not sure I'm ready for that. It's still too early and I love having my own space. But do I have a choice? I glance around me, at Doc's beautiful house, his beautiful self, and I struggle with the opposing emotions I feel in my head and heart. I'm now going to be completely and utterly dependent on this man.

-Him: "Someleze, I love you. And I want you close to me, I need you here. When I asked you to quit your job, yes I wanted you to have enough time to focus on your studies. But, like I also told you, I also wanted us to have enough time to spend together. My marriage ended because my ex-wife and I couldn't spend much time together. And even though I never said it out loud, I didn't want something like that to happen to us too. And now we have a chance to not only avoid that but to grow closer too, to

strengthen our love, our relationship...Like I told you this morning and even before, I was lost after my divorce. I didn't even know it, but I needed a saviour to save me. I was feeling the weight of the world like I had bricks on my shoulders. I walked down a dark, muddy path; I had a dance with the devil and he got a grip on me. But I managed to escape. You became my saviour. You gave me strength to beat that darkness. And now I want you close to me always. You're not a rebound, you're the real one for me and I want to hold on to you. Please, just say yes you'll move in with me."

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Ncooh thanks for all your encouragement guys. I got to read all your comments today because I had a hectic weekend, and a hectic Monday. I apologise. I really appreciate everything y'all said. And for those who asked: I'm a Xhosa first

time writer from P.E, a University of Fort Hare
alumnus, but I'm now based in Jo'burg. I
understand most of our languages so you can
comment using any language. Thanks guys.
Love y'all <3

#25 [+18S, extreme adult-content]

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"Put you up against the wall. And I'ma go to
work 'til you get off. Baby, soon as you're done
we'll go some more. Girl, just imagine us." -
Chris Brown [Rita Ora]

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3 days later - Saturday

Thando

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Running and sweating early in the morning, I
finally get to slow down and completely stop

when I reach my gate. I turn to look at Soso who's coming at a distance, also running. From where I am standing she looks alright, she's doing pretty good, but as she gets closer I can see that it's not that good. Her body is tense, her breathing ragged. She slows down and comes to a stop in front of me, clutching a stitch in her side.

-Me: "Aw, no, you're kidding. Really?"

I say, with sympathy.

She can't even speak, she looks away and dry-heaves once. Then she takes a deep breath as she can muster and let it out, panting.

-Me: "That banana I tried to make you eat seeming like a pretty good idea right about now, huh."

-Her: "First 2 kilometres were all right, then the wheels came off."

-Me: "That's because you've never made more

than 2 kilometres before, but you'll get used to it. Just stick with me."

-Her: "A couple that exercises together stays together, right?"

-Me: "That's just about right."

-Her: "Crap. Whoever said that was probably high."

I laugh and pull her fully into my arms.

-Me: "I'm glad you moved in."

I say looking into her eyes.

-Her: "Yeah, me too."

I'm not sure if she means that though. I helped her move in yesterday, but I could see that she was reluctant. She only moved in because she had no other choice. I, too, didn't want to force her into doing something she wasn't comfortable with, that's why I've been trying to help her find another place to rent since

Thursday. But like I said, this is Alice, a small town, accommodation is pretty scarce here. But hopefully we'll find something soon, in the meantime she can stay with me.

-Her: "Thanks for being here for me."

-Me: "Hey, that's what I'm here for. Besides, your unreasonable landlord kicked you out because of me."

-Her: "Unreasonable indeed. I really didn't think she'd kick me out, I thought she'd only give me a lecture and a warning. But hey, I did sign the rules when I took the flat. I guess rules are rules. And it's her yard, her rules. Anyway, it doesn't really matter. I'm just glad I'm not out in the street."

She kisses me, we kiss, and my hands move down from her waist to grab her firm ass. She lets out a soft moan in my mouth. And I can feel my cock stirring into life. She feels it too and

she pulls back.

-Her: "Let's go inside."

-Me: "You sure you don't want to go to East London with me today?"

-Her: "No, babe, you know what my first priority is. I'm sorry."

Just then her phone rings. It's strapped to her upper arm and I can see the caller ID: Sandile.

-Me: "Who's Sandile, babe? My competition?"

I ask jokingly. I know very well who Sandile is.

-Her: "Baby, you're too young and handsome to be this senile. I told you that Sandile's my father. You'll never have a competition."

Her face adorned with a smile, she pecks my lips, then she puts her AirPods back on and double taps the outside to answer the call as she walks into the yard. I'm left standing there, watching her as she walks away towards the

house. Damn, God really took His time sculpting her, then another creating her inner being. How can I not be this smitten? Just then, my own phone rings. It's Zizo and I answer as I lean on the half-open gate.

-Me: "Hey, Zee."

-Her: "T-Love. How's it going?"

-Me: "Good. Great actually. How are you?"

-Her: "I'll be okay if you bring Soso around today. I don't feel like hanging out with just you boys."

Today I'm going to East London to meet up with Bhongo and the other guys I made friends with at my birthday party. Zizo will also be there, she doesn't let Bhongo go anywhere without her. That's nice and all but I think it's too much, I'd suffocate if it were me.

-Me: "Yah well, looks like you're gonna be stuck with just us. Soso's not coming, she can't."

-Her: "She can't?"

-Me: "Yeah, she's writing a test on Monday so she's got to study."

-Her: "Ah damn. But I understand...See this thing of yours of dating a student though,..."

I cut her off.

-Me: "Hey, let's not go there, okay? It doesn't matter what Soso does, I love her. Besides, even if she was working, she wouldn't always be available."

-Her: "C'mon, Thando, you know that I was just joking, don't be catching emotions now. I like Soso, you know that."

-Me: "Listen, Zee, I gotta go. See you later."

-Her: "Later."

I hang up and walk into my yard, closing the gate behind. Seriously, I don't like it when my friends make reference to what Soso does. I

don't even understand why it matters to them what she does with her life.

I walk into the house and find Soso in the bathroom stripping off her jogging clothes, about to get in the shower.

-Her: "Sandile says he's coming to Alice today. He wants to see me."

-Me: "Do you want to see him?"

-Her: "Guess it won't hurt. The man's been wanting to see me for days now, I can't keep brushing him off."

-Me: "Yeah, just see him. That's a step towards building a relationship between you two."

-Her: "You won't mind if I bring him here, in your house? I can't sit with him in the car as if he's my blesser."

-Me: "POC, it's not my house, it's our house now. And of course, I won't mind. I won't even be

here by then."

-Her: "Please just don't come home drunk, okay?"

I chuckle.

-Me: "Have you ever seen me drunk, babe? The answer is no. And that's because I no longer drink to get drunk."

-Her: "That's good."

She drops her panties. Now completely naked, she steps inside the shower enclosure and turns on the water.

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Someleze

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I'm really not sure about this cohabiting thing

but I only had two choices; to do it or sleep in the streets. So I did it. But I hope I get another place soon. I must say though, knowing that I now live in this house with the man I love feels good. The only thing I think is going to be a problem so far is that I know myself, I'm not the cleanest glass on the rack. I'm nothing like Doc. Doc is a neat freak, and his house is always immaculate. So now I have to keep up or we will clash.

Facing the wall, with my back to the shower door, I enjoy the feeling of warm water and the creamy lather of the soap on my skin. Then the shower door clicks open and Doc steps inside to join me. With my back to him he hugs me from behind, wrapping his arms around me and interlocking his fingers on my stomach. Mmh, I love the feeling of his naked body against mine.

"Are you okay with me joining you though?"

He whispers close to my ear.

-Me: "Of course, babe."

As if I'd say no. Is he kidding me?

He starts washing my back. I can tell that he enjoys it - but that's nothing new. I'm sure my skin feels soft and silky in his hands with the soap making it wet and slippery. He goes down to wash my bum, working his soapy fingers down on each of my butt-cheeks, the soap making everything slippery. With an effort, he works his way down to my feet before standing up and starting on the front while still standing behind me. Getting everything nice and soapy again, he starts washing my breasts spending a little more time than necessary working around my hard nipples. Finally, he works his way down my stomach to my private part and starts rubbing it gently with his fingers pulling me close to him as he does. And I can feel his erection pressing against my butt as he's standing behind me. The moans I let out when

he washing my back end are nothing to the ones I'm letting out now, they are loud and more frequent. He gently works his fingers up and down over my vagina and then slips one of them up to rub my clit. Working his fingers deeper into me and massaging my clit, it is not long before I climax.

Then he stops and asks me to wash him too. Without hesitating, I start working him the same way he did with me. When I get to the front, I wash his chest and stomach then I excitedly move on to his erect cock. Getting my hands extra soapy, I kneel before him and begin sliding my hand up and down his shaft and over his knob, while I use the other hand to massage his balls. I can see that this excites him but he has nothing to give yet so he just stands there and let me work my recently obtained magic on him. I continue to gently stroke his shaft, until I can tell that he's about to come. That's when he

gently removes my hands off him then pulls me up.

-Him: "Let's get rinsed."

Clearly he doesn't want to get there yet...or he doesn't want to get there at all, I don't know and I don't ask. We just rinse each other off then step out of the shower and dry ourselves. With a towel wrapped around my naked torso, I look at myself in the bathroom mirror as if I would see my disappointment written all over my face. I thought Doc would go get a condom and deep himself inside me right there in the shower, I wanted him to, but clearly he isn't interested. With a towel wrapped around his waist, he comes to stand behind me then turns me around to face him. He pulls me to him and kisses me. Pulling back, he looks into my eyes.

-Him: "Do you trust me?"

What is he asking?

-Me: "Of course I trust you."

-Him: "Then I'd like us to try something a little different today."

Something different? Different how? I don't know but I just nod.

-Me: "Okay."

His finger tugs, ever so gently at my towel. The towel parts, then slides down to the floor. His eyes, meeting mine, smile as they follow the downwards path of the towel.

"I love you."

He says as the finger he used to get rid of the towel wanders downwards between my breasts. Then he steps away from me and leaves the bathroom.

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He comes back with one of his ties. Quickly he binds my wrists together, glancing briefly up into my eyes as he does so, for a sort of permission. And then pulling up my arms over my head, he attaches my bound wrists to a towel ring fitted high up on the bathroom wall. Then he stands back and let out a sly smile, admiring his handiwork. I stand there, naked as the day I was born, stretched up and tied for his perusal. Okay, this is new to me, but I think I like it. I trust him and I know that he won't do anything that would physically hurt me. Down there, I am already growing warm and wet. His eyes lock to mine. Then he moves closer and whispers close to my ear.

-Him: "Are you sure you're up for this?"

Am I? Oh hell yeah.

-Me: "Yes, baby. I'm keeping an open mind."

He smiles. Placing one hand on one of my

breasts, he starts kneading as his mouth lowers to the other, first to suckle, then nibble the nipple. His tongue circles, flicking the nipple to hardness. When he seems to feel he has a satisfactory result, his mouth and that tantalising tongue move to the other nipple, while a hand slides over my stomach, descending. I feel him outlining the curve of my waist, over my hip and belly. His fingers brush over my vagina before slipping in between my thighs.

I can hardly contain myself at this point, I moan loudly. Then I hear his chuckle of approval as he feels how wet I am. His tongue circles the nipple, one finger mirroring the movement over my clit. Torn between the desire to stay still and just let it happen, or to grind my hips around his hand, I find myself simply trembling helplessly and my thighs growing wetter and wetter, and warmer and warmer, my juices beginning to

flow. He pauses and looks into my face, running his hands up and over and down my trembling torso, breasts and shoulders, gauging my reactions. Very slowly and gently he runs his hands back around my shoulders and behind my head, pulling my face to his. He kisses me, very softly on the lips then starts nibbling at my ear.

"Are we enjoying this?"

He whispers and I just nod, panting.

-Him: "Want to take things further?"

I nod. Of course. This whole thing is driving me wild. His slow careful caressing and touching is arousing me far more than any "straight shag" could have. I am quivering with arousal.

His head nestling into the curve of my neck and shoulder, he reaches behind me with one hand, firmly pulling my buttocks to him. His towel still around his waist, his feet slide between mine,

easing my legs apart. I stagger slightly, but his other arm takes my weight as I regain my balance.

-Him: "We don't need to tie those ankles apart, do we?"

-Me: "No."

That comes out as a whisper. My trembling continues and I'm panting, my breath coming in short bursts and my colour rising. He knows exactly what he is doing to me.

With his lean muscled, bare torso and just the towel around his waist which is now bulging at the front, lambent eyed and clearly with a purpose in mind, he is utterly, astonishingly suggestive and inviting. Delicately, slowly, with only the tips of his fingers, he caresses my face. Then he moves down my neck, over my breasts and stomach, his fingers titillating me. Soft moans keep escaping my mouth and I feel my

juices running below. He grins wickedly as I am panting uncontrollably. He kneels down and push my ankles further apart. My legs are now spread wide, my feet further apart and my hands are tied securely above me. He stands up and stands back, looking me up and down, just standing there, arms folded. Just looking.

"You are really beautiful you know."

He says before coming close to me, almost, but not quite touching. I can feel his breath on my skin and I am longing for him to be inside me, but he's taking his time. Carefully, and touching no other part of me, he reaches for and rubs my left nipple. Under the influence of arousal, my nipples are hard, crinkling with stimulation. He tweaks the nipple, smiles and nods, 'Hm-mm' to himself. He releases the nipple. Still touching no other part of me, his hand reaches down between my spread and dripping thighs.

"You do like this don't you."

Does he really want me to answer that?

Carefully - oh so carefully - he touches my clit and delicately rubs. I moan loudly and uncontrollably, and I gush down there. He continues at it, rubbing my clit a little harder now. I gasp and cry out as my knees buckle. But I manage pull myself upright. He pulls quickly at my clit and massages it for a moment longer. This time he holds me by the waist as my legs give way.

"Don't want you hurting yourself in your enthusiasm."

He whispers into my ear.

-Him: "Tell me. What would you like to happen next?"

I am almost beyond reason.

-Me: "I want.... I want...."

I can't get the words out in my state. His fingers make lazy circles around my clit and I gush

again. I am frantic for something inside my hole, but nothing is forthcoming.

-Him: "What do you want? You have to tell me."

His fingers continue flicking and kneading my clit. I am about to come and I feel myself reaching the plateau. And he stops. His hand still holding my waist, he removes the other from my private.

-Him: "You have to tell me what you want, before it goes any further. I won't let you cum until you tell me what you want me to do."

His hand slips between my thighs again and quickly, ever so briefly, his fingers stroke across my vagina. The lips, swollen, engorged and sodden, pulse as one finger strokes between them and then withdraws. I am almost frantic with lust.

-Me: "Let me cum, baby. Let me cum."

-Him: "What do you want me to do?"

His breath by my face is like a promise. He kneads my clit quickly between two fingers, sending electric desire pulsing up through me.

-Me: "I want you inside me."

If I weren't tied and supported I would collapse entirely right now.

-Me: "I want you inside me."

He slides a finger inside me, his thumb over my clit and begins to work me. My climax, which had subsided a little, begins to build again immediately and he feels it.

-Him: "No, no, not yet."

His fingers withdraw. Fuck! My tormented clit and my aching vagina want more.

-Me: "Baby, please."

I mumble. He grins and his finger brush over my p**sy lips. I gasp and moan, writhing in my restraint and his grasp.

-Me: "Please make me cum. Please. Just fuck me."

He kisses me full on the mouth, then pushes two fingers up inside me hard. I feel them almost scrape against me inside, against my G-spot. I cry out but he has already withdrawn and is down on his knees, his face to my thighs. He pushes my ankles, that were already closing, apart again. I look down to see him looking back up at me, at my face. As he looks, his hands are working the lips of my private. He leans forward, and for one delicious moment, I feel his tongue curl around my clit. I scream, just in time to feel him pull my thighs fully apart and his tongue lick up from the back of my vagina through and over the lips. And he stops. I hang, my weight on my wrists, making incoherent gasps and wishing he could continue. He pulls away and stands smiling at me. I stand there with my wrists restrained and

my body sticky with my own sweat and juices.

-Him: "I don't like the taste of soap. You didn't get rinsed thoroughly down there."

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He unties me then takes my hand and walks me back inside the shower. He binds my wrists together again and pulling up my arms over my head, he attaches my bound wrists to the shower fitting on the wall and presses me against the wall. Then he reaches for the hand held shower head, turning it on full but cool. He aims the fine needles of water over my breasts, concentrating on the nipples. I squirm and squeal. The water is just cool enough to make me react without chilling me. He pushes my legs apart and turning the shower head upside down, he sprays squarely up into me, over my

vagina and my clit with the water. Water and my juices run down my legs as I struggle and squeal against the intensity of it all. The sheer scale of the stimulation is beyond bearing. I scream, trying to escape the intense pleasure/pain/over-stimulation of the needle jets of water. I am about to cum uncontrollably. And he stops again. By now I am almost delirious with the desire to cum and I sag in my bonds, head bowed.

He kneels and goes in between my legs with his face. He laps slowly at my private, tongue exploring.

-Him: "Part your legs further. Spread your thighs for me."

I obey. He slides two fingers between my thighs, over my bud and towards my vagina, stroking gently, fondling my clit, massaging the lips. I begin to gasp, and I stagger slightly as my body reacts to the oh-so-gentle stimulation he is

giving me, waves of arousal fanning over me.

-Him: "Don't move."

Jeez! It's not easy to stand still when he's doing this, but I try.

"Spread your legs some more. I want you open."

His voice is harsh, intense. It is difficult to move them further apart now and as I try to obey, I totter, all my weight on my wrists for a moment. From his kneeling position, he forces my ankles further apart, and further, until I can barely stand at all, my wrists taking the strain.

-Him: "That's better. Now we have you properly presented."

Standing back, he takes off the towel around his waist, his eyes never leaving mine. As the towel drops to the floor, his manhood stands upright against him. I watch, hypnotised as I'm staring at his erection. He follows my stare and grins. Damn, I want nothing more than for him

to fuck me stupid right now. Coming close, he tweaks at my nipples, raising them to hard brown buds, then bends to suckle one, whilst pinching and squeezing the other, sending electric waves of arousal through my core to my vagina. My breathing is so heavy now, so fast, and moisture is running down my skin, from the sweat of my rising heat, and from my vagina, now flowing freely down my legs. He looks at me, eyes lingering on my breasts, my flat belly, the parting of my legs. Then he kisses me fiercely. There is nothing tender or gentle here. His mouth is hard on my lips, forcing my mouth open. He drops to his knees, face up close, pulls the lips of my vagina apart and wraps his tongue around my clit, working it mercilessly.

I moan and try to struggle, but I have nowhere to go. Hands tied, spread-legged and weight on my wrists, I cannot move, but only writhe

helplessly against the cascade of sensation. His tongue working my clit, he slips fingers inside me and rubs, hard, against my inner walls. I can hear nothing, feel nothing except the pain of my wrists and the inescapable pleasure/pain/delight/torment of his tongue and fingers. My moaning increases, turning to squeals, fighting against the breathlessness of my rapid breathing. My heart pounding, climax wells up inside and my squeals turn into a triumphant scream as orgasm pulses through me, pounding through my vagina, belly and thighs. My legs give under me and I hang by my wrists, writhing and shaking, helpless in the grip of my crashing climax. I do not hang for long. Before the spasm passes, Doc rises, unties me from the wall and carries me out of the shower and into the bedroom. He puts me on the bed in a kneeling position, face down over the bed. My legs splayed, my private is open and displayed to him, as he stands behind me. He gets a

condom out of the drawer and puts it on. He comes to kneel behind me, then with one hand on my back, pinning me down, he slowly pushes himself inside me. He is huge, and at almost any other time, I would struggle to accommodate him, but in my state of screaming arousal, he sheaths himself, full length, straight into my dripping passage, and starts pounding into me. I scream again, and orgasm wells up once more, my walls grasping and gripping as they throb around him. His hand leaves my back and I feel him grasping me by the waist, forcing me back and forth against his rhythm, deepening the drive of his shaft, intensifying his already deep thrusting as he rams into me, plunging into my depths. Through my own cries, I hear him moan and gasp and feel the pulsing of his cock as he cums. For a few moments, he holds, shuddering against me, then relaxes down onto me with a gasp.

For a few seconds, he simply lies on top of me, spent, then he takes a couple of deep breaths and pulls out of me. I feel him kiss the back of my neck, then he turns me around to face him. He passionately kisses my lips.

-Him: "That was good...I love you."

It was really good.

-Me: "I really enjoyed it."

-Him: "But with you I would never take it any further than this."

Whatever that means. We just lie on the bed, spent. We only get up after an hour and go take a shower again, then we go to the kitchen to make something to eat. We're both famished.

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After eating, Doc goes back to the bedroom to

get dressed for going out. He comes back to the kitchen wearing black jeans cut to flatter his noticeably male physique, white low-cut D&G sneakers and a white D&G T-shirt. He grabs his car keys and comes to me for a kiss.

-Him: "Let me get going, babe. Good luck with your father."

-Me: "I'm probably gonna need it. Enjoy in E.L. Don't do something I wouldn't do."

-Him: "You know I won't...See you later. I love you."

-Me: "Love you too."

He kisses me again then leaves.

I'm left dialling Thuso's number. I really need to talk to this girl, maybe she'll stop her stupid schemes. This nonsense has gone too far. As for Natalie, Doc called her yesterday and asked her to come meet him here in the house tomorrow. I'm not sure what his plan is, he just

said I should wait and see.

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I want to open a group for episodes like this one.
What do y'all think?

Another thing I need to address: This is "Diary ka Soso" and that, by definition, means the story revolves around Soso. That said, you'll get her POV more than of any other characters in the story.

#26

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"I've been drinking, I've been drinking. I get filthy when that liquor get into me. I've been thinking, I've been thinking. Why can't I keep my fingers off it, baby? I want you, na na." - Beyoncé

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Someleze

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"Someleze, what do you want?"

Thuso says after answering the phone on the sixth ring.

-Me: "I want us to talk. About Doc, about you pulling all the stops to try and break us up."

-Her: "What's there to talk about, Someleze? You didn't ask to talk before you went after him, did you? You just went after him even though you knew very well that I liked him."

-Me: "Thuso, first of all, I didn't go after Doc, it didn't happen like that. Second, we didn't even start seeing each other until 6 weeks after you had accused me of sleeping with him, after you went and had sex with my ex. If anything, you're

the one who betrayed me here. Tell me, Thuso...do you even love Doc or you're just doing this to prove a point? I'm asking because I know you, you're incapable of loving a man. You don't do love, Thuso, we both know it."

-Her: "What I'm capable or not capable of is not your business now, is it?"

-Me: "Thuso, we were best friends once. We loved each other, we had each other's backs. Or at least I thought we did. Now why are you letting a man turn us into enemies? Is it even worth it? If you continue doing what you're doing I might just decide to retaliate and the results won't be good. I don't want things to get to that point, Thuso. A cycle of mutual destruction won't get us anywhere. Is that what you want?"

-Her: "The only thing I can tell you is that you wasted your time calling me, girly. Your words are ineffectual."

-Me: "Thuso, just admit it. You don't like Doc. You're only obsessed with getting him because you want to prove that you can get any man you want. You hate the fact that he rejected you. And you also hate that I got him and you didn't. You were enjoying the fact that I was living under your shadow, that you always seemed better than me. Now that I have what you couldn't have that is driving you nuts, literally. Can't you just take a chill pill and a step back? What you're doing is so fucking unnecessary."

-Her: "Like I said, this call is a waste of time. I've got nothing more to say to you, Someleze."

And with that she hangs up. I'm left looking at the screen of my phone. Did she just hang up on me? Oh yes, she did. I let out a sigh then put the phone on the kitchen counter before making my way to the bedroom. Yah well, I've tried, really tried. And I won't be held responsible for whatever I do next.

Getting my iPad from the bedroom, I go sit outside in the back veranda, I need some fresh air. It's now 10:30, and I connect the iPad to Doc's home WiFi to save my data, I need to read more on Sandile before he gets here. I never really had time or interest to look him up again since the day I first met him. Now is the time to do just that. But instead of getting on with the web search I find myself caught up in a trance, images of what Doc did to me before he left circling in my head like a movie - an adult rated movie. I can't believe how hot that was and how much I enjoyed it. I feel myself becoming wet just from the thought of it. And almost of its own volition, my hand ends up between my legs, rubbing my sex over my bum shorts. Damn, the things that man does to me. Any man can insert himself in between my legs and fuck me, but I don't think there's a man that can do me like Doc. I like the fact that he's the backbone of our sexual pleasure, the fact that he calls all the

shots, and whatever we do is so good that I can't help but give all of me to him. He's always in charge of my experience physically, mentally, and emotionally. I like how he takes his time with my body, gently dominating me, killing me with pleasure.

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Alex

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No one likes defeat, no one enjoys failing, and I'm no exception. Knowing that I've failed to get Soso back has knocked my confidence down. But hey, if I'm being honest I don't deserve to get her back. She's probably better off with the guy she's with now. That, of course, doesn't sit well with me but I have to accept it and move on, it is what it is. There's nothing I can do to

get her back, I've tried, even went so low that I felt my head touching the ground but still, I failed. She's happy where she is and she doesn't need me to complicate her life. So I'm taking a step back. There's nothing wrong with accepting defeat.

My phone next to me on the desk rings. It's Iviwe. This woman is really annoying me. What language does she want me to use in order for her to get the message?

I ignore her call and continue typing on my laptop. I need to submit the final draft of my dissertation on Monday and just get this whole thing over and done with. I can't wait to be done with Fort Hare and Alice altogether. Nothing excites me here anymore. My breakup with Soso, which was entirely my fault, has made everything sour and unbearable for me in this small town. I can't stand having to see her around campus every now and then, I just can't.

I need to go start afresh somewhere else.
There's nothing I need more than a clean slate
right now.

Iviwe keeps calling, and I finally decide to
answer.

-Me: "Iviwe, what do you want?"

I ask annoyed as fuck.

-Her: "Alex, don't do this. You know that I love
you."

-Me: "What I know, Iviwe, is that you're someone
else's fiancée and I'm done with you. How many
times must I say that? When are you ever gonna
get it? The fact that we slept together a week
ago doesn't mean anything, Iviwe, I told you this.
Just...just leave me alone tu."

-Her: "I'm never gonna leave you alone, Alex. Not
when I'm still in love you. You know that I don't
love that guy, I love YOU."

This girl is crazy and I don't have time for her bullshit, I don't have time for her stories that don't even make sense. I mean who forces anyone into an arranged marriage these days? She must think I'm stupid, hey. I just hang up and do what I've been avoiding to do all this time - blocking her number. Then I continue polishing up my dissertation.

But it's not long before I get distracted again. This time by a knock at the door. Who the fuck could it be? I seriously hope it's not Iviwe because I swear I'm going to lose it. I get up and go get the door, already pissed. But instead of Iviwe I find TK standing there.

-Me: "TK, what are you doing here?"

She just pushes past me and gets inside.

-Her: "Don't ask me that, Alex. You know what brings me here. You know what brings us together."

-Me: "You mean apart from the fact that we once fucked?"

-Her: "ONCE" being the operative word. That's all it was, Alex - a once-off fucking session. It would never happen again."

She says standing in the middle of my room, her arms akimbo, looking so sure of herself.

-Me: "Oh please, don't flatter yourself by thinking I'd ever want to go there again. Even when I did we both know that I was drunk. I would never in my sober mind do that with a bitch like you."

-Her: "Well, this bitch is gonna help you get your girl back, so you better be nice."

She says without even the slightest anger or irritation in her voice, clearly she's taken no offense.

-Me: "Help me get my girl back how? TK, we've lost. It's time to accept that and move on. I

didn't even want to take part in your sick plan right from the beginning but I went along with it because I was insanely desperate. I went so low but still nothing came of it. Those people are still together. So what makes you think you'll be able to help me get Soso back this time around?"

-Her: "You seriously need to chill. Your plan to get her kicked out of her flat has worked, she moved in with Thando yesterday. And that means we can now build a strong case."

-Me: "And what good is that gonna accomplish? TK, if we go down that route we'll only manage to ruin Thando's life and possibly Soso's. That's all we're gonna accomplish. We won't get what we want."

-Her: "Jeez! Just have a little faith, will you?"

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Someleze

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It's now around 13:30 and I'm still sitting outside in the veranda studying when Sandile calls asking for directions to my place. I give them to him then continue with what I was doing. Earlier I spent only about 30 minutes reading about this guy online. What discouraged me is that I couldn't find much personal stuff about him, it was mostly business reports. And I couldn't get anything off his social media. I guess whatever I need to know I'm going to have to ask him.

About 15 minutes later he calls saying he's in front of my gate. I flip my books and laptop closed then walk to the front of the house to open the gate. He drives through in his....wait a minute. I know this car. I fucking know this car.

What the hell is going on here? As he parks in the driveway I take strides down the three front steps and towards this car, feeling a rise of an emotion close to anger within. I can't believe what I'm seeing, I can't.

Sandile gets out of the car looking all kinds of handsome. Even at his age my father is an eyecandy, I have to admit, but he sure knows how to piss me off.

-Him: "There she is. My beautiful daughter."

He says with a smile as he comes to me for a hug. Oh hell no, not now. I take a step back, avoiding any contact with his body. He looks at me a little alarmed... and disappointed.

-Him: "I'm sorry did I do something wrong?"

-Me: "Sandile, are you sleeping with Thuso?"

-Him: "What?"

-Me: "Thuso Kwena, the Fort Hare student that's

the same age as your daughter. My ex best friend. Are you sleeping with her?"

-Him: "Why are you asking me that? Who told you that?"

He's prevaricating, and he's making me angry.

-Me: "Please don't do that. Don't delay giving me an answer. I know what I'm asking, I know what I saw. I saw Thuso driving this very same car a few weeks back. This red Ferrari with the same registration number. I still remember it, I pumped petrol into it, and I don't forget anything I see with these eyes of mine. Now tell me, why would she drive your car?"

For a moment he looks down, leaning on the car, then he looks back up at me.

-Him: "These things happen, Soso. I didn't even know that she was your friend."

What? What the hell? So he's really doing it. He's sleeping with her. My newly-found father is

sleeping with my ex best friend. What the hell is that? I'm beyond myself right now.

-Me: "So it's true, huh. You really are sleeping with her. A girl that's young enough to be your daughter, Sandile, a young girl. Ah come on, what is that? You're 40, she's only 21. What is that really? Where did you two even meet?"

I'm so disgusted right now. I knew that there was just something not right about this man, and this is probably just the tip of the iceberg.

From what he told me when we were in PE, I know that even though he lives in Jo'burg, working there, his family home is in Mthatha and he also has a house in East London. So where did he and Thuso meet? Here or in Jo'burg?

-Him: "What does it matter where we met? I'm not here to discuss that, Someleze. I'm not here to discuss my sex life, I'm here to see you - my

daughter."

But I'm not ready to let this go yet.

-Me: "You gave her your car. So what does that mean? Are you serious about her or you're just her blesser?"

He doesn't answer. He just tucks his hands in the pockets of his pants and lifts one of his feet to rest it against the car. He looks really good in this smart casual outfit of his; navy chinos, white sneakers and a white loose shirt that's clearly custom made. The shirt is unbuttoned from the neck down to the end of his sternum. He has a lean muscular structure. His torso beneath that shirt bespeaks the kind of man who works out, knowing that women don't go looking for over-muscled morons. Ugh! Why am I even analysing him with my eyes? He's making me sick.

-Me: "Please answer me."

-Him: "Are you sure you want to talk about this stuff with your father, baby?"

-Me: "Please don't 'baby' me? You're not my dad. You're just a man who happened to fertilise my mother's egg."

He looks away and exhales, obviously hurt. Then he looks at me.

-Him: "But I want to be your dad, Someleze. That's why I'm here. I want to be in your life?"

-Me: "Then start by being honest with me. Just please answer my questions about Thuso."

He takes a deep breath before answering.

-Him: "Fine... Thuso and I are just having fun. Nothing more."

-Me: "Oh, so you're that kind of man, huh. A man who goes around having fun with young girls...What about my mother? Are you having fun with her too? Are you sleeping with her

again?"

-Him: "Someleze, I love you, you're my daughter but I don't appreciate the tone of your voice with me right now. I'm still your elder. Don't talk to me like that. Okay?"

I look down, realising just how I've let my anger push me to the zone of disrepect.

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-Me: "I'm sorry. It's just that I wasn't expecting any of this."

-Him: "This is not how I imagined this meeting either. I was hoping for a nice chat with you, not an interrogation about what I do in my bedroom or even who I do it with. But I'll answer your question anyway... Your mother and I are not together. We're just two parents trying to put

everything behind and be civil towards each other for our daughter's sake...And please don't judge me based on what you've just discovered about me. You don't know how it's like to be a man in my current situation."

-Me: "Current situation? You mean the divorce?"

-Him: "What, your mother told you about it?"

-Me: "No. My mother and I don't talk much about you. I've read about it online."

According to the media reports I read, he's single, and he shelled out a confidential but likely considerable amount of money to an ex-wife last year.

-Him: "Life after divorce is not easy, baby. But I don't want to get into it."

I'm surely surrounded by recently divorced men, huh. And from everything Doc told me, I understand how hard it is to deal with divorce. And I understand why he doesn't want to talk

about it. So, I decide to cut him some slack. Still though, knowing that he's sleeping with my ex best friend is making me sick. But I'm going to let it go...for now.

-Me: "Let's go inside."

We've been standing here for longer than necessary, it's time to go inside.

We walk into the lounge and I offer him a seat on the couch. He sits down then let his eye scan the room.

-Him: "Nice place. Who are you staying with here?"

-Me: "A boyfriend. But you won't tell my mother about it."

-Him: "If that's what you want, I won't. Is the guy good to you though?"

Isn't it too late to act as a concerned father now? I want to ask but I decide better of it.

-Me: "Yes. He's good to me. Now what would you like to drink?"

-Him: "Just water will be fine. Bottled water, please, I don't drink tap water."

Amen. This man is so full of himself, huh. This is not his house, he should just take whatever I offer him. Now I understand why he didn't drink water in my mother's house. Does he even know the negatives of bottled water though? I don't ask, I just nod then go to the kitchen to get the damn water. Fortunately for him, there's always bottled water in Doc's fridge because just like my father, he also avoids drinking tap water. I rinse a glass then grab the bottled water out of the fridge and go back to him. I let him finish drinking then I sit down next to him.

-Me: "So, do you have any other children?"

-Him: "No. My ex wife and I couldn't have kids."

-Me: "Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. What was the

problem?"

I ask carefully.

-Him: "The problem was me, it is me. I can't have any more children."

That's hectic. I look away from him, not wanting to pity him. Then I suck in a breath.

-Him: "You're my only child. It's just you now and it will always be just you. But that's not the reason why I looked for you. Even if I had other children I would still want you in my life. You are my blood."

-Me: "So I will never ever have siblings from both sides. That's not very nice to know but it is what it is, I guess. What about you? Do you have any siblings?"

-Him: "Yes, only one. A younger sister. She's way younger than me though. There's a 16 year age gap between us. I'm the first born, she's the last and all 4 children that our parents had after

me and before her never lived past their first birthdays."

Feeling the need to look at him now, I turn my head bravely and look into his intense eyes. His handsome face is completely impassive, no sadness at all. I guess none of this bothers him anymore.

-Him: "My younger sister is a doctor. And she actually lives here in Alice. She's doing her community service at Victoria hospital."

-Me: "Mmh auntie's got brains, huh. Maybe I should meet her some day soon."

-Him: "Auntie, huh? That's interesting considering the fact that you don't even call me 'father'?"

-Me: "We'll get there some day. Don't worry."

-Him: "I'm a very patient man...Let me show you your aunt."

He takes out his phone from his pocket and thumbs it before handing it to me. My eyes land on its screen to see this young aunt of mine who's got brains. Oh my God, what? No friggin' way. No man, what is going on here? What is wrong with this day? Am I being tested or what? I know this woman in this picture. This is Iviwe. Alex's Iviwe is my....aunt? Just the thought of that is enough to make me dry-heave once. The world is not just small, it is a very strange dot. We're all connected in some way or the other.

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This has been one strange day. The discoveries I've made are shocking to say the least. If I had the luxury of time I would still be digesting it all but I can't afford to do that, I have to study. Chemistry has me by the throat and I'm

suffocating.

It's now 18:30 and Sandile left around 15:00, but we'll see each other again soon, he promised. I didn't tell him that I already know his sister though, I decided to keep that piece of information to myself...for now.

I stretch my arms yawning, I've been in this study, sitting in this same position for hours and my body is now tense.

Just then I hear the sound of the gate, then a car driving down the driveway. That must be Doc. He's come back early hey, I wasn't expecting him 'til after 21:00. I get up from the chair and go open the front door for him. A few moments later he comes up and walks in. I can tell that he's a little drunk, even though he clearly didn't go overboard.

-Him: "Hey, baby."

He says as he closes the door behind him.

-Me: "Welcome home, thando lwam."

He comes to me for a hug, and I return it.

-Me: "You're drunk."

-Him: "In love maybe."

In one single motion of power he pushes me against the wall and smashes his mouth on to mine, almost bruising my lips in his fervour. He takes possession of my lips with heated urgency that betrays his hungry need. His mouth smells and tastes of alcohol, but for some reason that's turning me on. I wind my arms around his neck and let him deepen the kiss.

-Him: "I want you."

He whispers against my lips. I want to say "Daddy, I want you too", but I can't. I have to go back to my books, he's just distracting me.

-Me: "Baby, I can't. We can't. Not now. I'm still

studying in the study."

He presses his body against mine, pressing me harder against the wall, and I can feel his erection pressing against me, making me wet down there.

-Him: "Baby, come on, I've been missing you all day. I was in the company of my friends and all the women that were there but all I could think about was you. I just couldn't wait to come home to you, that's why I came back early. This liquor in my body is not making things easier either, I know how I get when my blood is mixed with alcohol... I want you, baby, I want you."

He kisses me hard, constantly murmuring the "I want you" in between the kisses. But I just can't do it. I push him off of me.

-Me: "Baby, just go freshen up and come to the kitchen to eat. I didn't cook but there's pizza, I'll warm it up for you."

-Him: "I don't want food, baby, I'm hungry for you."

-Me: "But you still need to eat so you could take the PEP pills in your pocket before 7."

-Him: "You don't want to give it to me, fine. I'll go take the shower, a cold one."

He turns to walk away but not before he spanks my ass.

-Him: "I still love you though."

He says as he walks away to the bedroom. I laugh.

-Me: "I love your drunk ass too."

I go to the kitchen to put the pizza in the microwave. About 20 minutes later he comes to join me in the kitchen, smelling fresh. I sit with him as he eats and I tell him about Sandile's visit and the fact that he's one of Thuso's fuck buddies.

-Him: "Did you tell him that Thuso is now your enemy, that she's coming after you."

-Me: "No, I didn't."

-Him: "Well, maybe you should. Maybe he can help get her off our backs."

-Me: "You think?"

-Him: "I think it's worth a try."

-Me: "Maybe."

He gets up to get the water to drink his pills.
And I leave him and go back to the study.

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I'm sitting at the desk in the study, my head focused on applied Chemistry when suddenly Doc is behind me, running his fingers through my relaxed hair. Another hand land on my

shoulder and his face presses against my ear.

-Him: "I'll help you study all night if you have to. Just please come to the bedroom with me, we'll be quick."

He whispers so close to my ear. His warm breath feels so good on my skin. But I slowly turn my head away from him so as not to appear eager.

-Me: "Baby, you're a distraction, you know."

-Him: "Did you hear what I just said? I'll help you study soon enough. It's just Chemistry, babe, and I'm good at it...I just can't keep my hands off you, I can't get enough of you."

He kisses my neck. His mesmerizing scent lodges in my nostrils completing the arousing sensation. I am all present; everything else falls away. He scoops me up in his arms and begins to kiss my lips slowly. My body is pressed against his. And he looks into my eyes and

kisses my forehead gently. I don't want this distraction but at the same time I want him, so I let him take me. He carries me carefully to our bed and lays me out on the covers. He lies down next to me and touches my cheek softly.

"I love you."

He says, then leans over to kiss me again. He begins slowly unbuttoning my blouse and kisses the skin exposed above my bra. He buries his face into my neck and breathes in, causing me to shiver happily. I smile at him as he sits up and take off his vest, revealing his smooth skin. He straddles himself over top of me to kiss me more passionately. When he draws back up, I run my hands across his abs and over his strong chest to wrap my arms around his neck, pulling him down to me again. He leans down and kisses my neck, and I feel his fingers close around my wrists. He begins to move my arms up above my head and drags

his lips down across one of my arms. We are both smiling excitedly and he comes to my mouth and kisses me again, faster this time around. I leave my arms above my head as he moves his lips down my neck and over my bra. He continues to move lower, down my chest, and over my stomach. When he reaches the top of my shorts, he sits up and begins unbuttoning them with a wicked grin on his face. He pulls them and my panties down and off my ankles. He presses his fingertips into my hips as he leans down to kiss my lips passionately. I get up and sit up on my knees and he leans back and let me unzip his own shorts and tugs them down. He pushes me backwards once he is down to his boxers, which he quickly tugs off and tosses to the side. My heart rate skyrockets and my eyes light up as they take in his hard cock. We sure are both excited for what we are about to engage in. He leans down again to press his lips into my neck. I breathe raggedly

and he grins. I arch my back as he presses his body down onto mine, ever desperate to get even closer. I moan, but still he refuses to slip into me and give me the inexpressible joy that I can feel building. He presses his warm hands onto my hips and rolls over so I can be on top of him. Trying to take this opportunity, I press my hips onto his, trying to get him inside me, but he grins wickedly and pulls away, evading me. He rolls us over again, so I could be under him once again. He goes down to kiss the top of my breasts, dragging his teeth over them. I moan and arch my body, exposing my skin for him to kiss and tease with his lips and teeth. As I'm still enjoying that he comes up and cups my face before lowering his down for his lips to meet mine in a fast, passionate kiss, slipping his tongue into my mouth and making it last for much longer than I thought I could go without breathing. When he finally pulls back I gasp and moan, feeling his hands across my back,

unfastening my bra. I kiss his cheek and move over to tug on his ear lobe with my teeth while he takes off the last article of clothing between us. I am so ready to feel him inside me right now, I'm even starting to shake. He said we'll be quick, didn't he? Then again I know him, even the up all night studying thing I don't buy it, we'll probably be up all night making love instead.

He runs his hands slowly over my now fully exposed breasts, and up to my neck as he comes down to my lips with his mouth for another feverish kiss. Pulling back, he gets a condom out of the drawer and puts it on. Then looking deeply into my eyes, he gets between my legs and pushes himself slowly inside me. I moan in ecstasy and close my eyes, arching my back, trying to get him to push in deeper. But he pulls out slower than he went in, then pushes back in, making my body shake with pleasure. I moan and my breath gets suspended as he

pushes in ever so slowly and pulls back out again. I am wracked with a feverish eagerness and I try to tilt my hips and get him inside deeper and faster. But he holds them down and kisses my lips just as slow as he was moving inside of me. He runs his tongue over my lips and they tingle. Burying his face in between my breasts, he pushes in farther. He looks back into my eyes and I whimper softly, powerless. Fuck, I want him to go faster.

-Me: "F-faster, baby. Please."

I beg, breathily.

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He grins and tilts his head back, then he pushes in harder and I find myself screaming his name. I can tell that he's enjoying seeing me losing my mind like this because that grin doesn't seem to

leave his face.

-Me: "Fff—ahh—faster! Please."

He suddenly thrusts himself faster into me and the force wracks my body with an instant orgasm. I scream his name again and start yelling as he continues to thrust and thrust, faster, and faster. I am breathing fast and raggedly, the pleasure screaming through my body. I can't even speak properly.

-Me: "F-f...Fuck me!! F-fuck me! Harder!"

He obliges and rams himself inside me harder and faster. I orgasm all over again, moaning and screaming in my ecstasy. I don't want this to end. I keep yelling faster! Harder! And he keeps going, faster, and harder. Thrusting deeper and deeper. I orgasm for the third time but he's still not there yet. He continues to push, deeper and deeper inside me. He's not pulling out, just pushing himself into me harder, until it

feels so blissfully euphoric it hurts. I push him backwards and I feel instantly powerful as I roll us over to be on top of him. His eyes light up as I take control, straddling myself over him.

Without wasting much time, I direct his hard cock straight into my wet love hole. I am sopping wet and his cock slips easily inside me. He grips my hips and pushes me down on to him hard. I start moving back and forth, his cock sliding in and out of my wet pussy. Gosh, this feels so fuckin' good. I've never been on top before but now I'm realising what I have been missing out on all this time. My hips keep moving in sync with his feverish breaths, pushing and thrusting. Reaching up, his hands play with my breasts, intensifying the pleasure. I am bouncing down on him, making his cock hit every spot inside me. His rather loud moans are an encouragement to me, I can tell that he likes me totally in charge. I continue riding him like a pony until I feel my orgasm building up once

again. His hands clutch my waist as he pulls me down hard against him. He's so deep inside me and my stomach muscles become tense, I quiver. His sliding cock creating an amazing rhythmic throbbing inside my pussy. The pleasure keeps getting stronger and stronger with each pounding. My brain keeps sending out a "DON'T STOP!" command, and my body obeys by going faster and faster. We move with the same rhythm, going faster and harder until I explode. And he follows suit almost immediately. Catching my breath, I get off of him and lie next to him. We both lie there panting.

"Wow. That was good, babe. You've got some moves."

He says as he kisses my lips. Then he goes to get a towel from the bathroom to get us cleaned up. After that he pulls me to him and we fall asleep almost immediately.

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I wake up some time later. Getting his phone from the nightstand, I realise that we've been out for about an hour because it's now 20:45. I look at Doc and he's still asleep. Hell no, he needs to wake up, he promised to help me study. I wake him up and he tries to protest but I keep pushing. He finally wakes up and climbs down the bed. We both get dressed and move to the study. Not long after we've entered, my phone on the desk rings. I glance at the screen to see that it's Buhle calling.

-Me: "Buhle, hi."

I answer.

-Her: "Soso, I know what Thuso's next move is."

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"The storm is over. The storm is over now. And I can see the sunshine somewhere beyond the clouds." - R. Kelly

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Sunday - 10:00

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"Baby, we are out of cheese and a few other things in the house."

I say to Doc as he enters the kitchen busy thumbing his phone. I'm busy too, making myself some sandwiches, putting them in a lunchbox.

-Him: "Then we're gonna have to go grocery shopping this afternoon."

He says without even looking up, still busy on his phone.

-Me: "That means I'm gonna have to come back early."

He puts the phone on the counter and comes to stand next to me.

-Him: "You do know that you don't have to leave, right? You can sit in in my meeting with Natalie, in fact I'd prefer if you did."

It's Sunday and Natalie is coming to the house for that meeting Doc requested. I still don't know what his plan is and I won't even be here to find out, I'm going to campus.

-Me: "No, babe, I'd rather sit this one out. I believe Natalie is likely to cooperate if it's just the two of you. Besides, I need a quiet environment to study. And the campus library is the best place."

-Him: "You have a point. Okay, forget the meeting but still, you can study here, you don't have to go all the way to campus. You can have

the study room, and I promise I won't disturb you. Besides, I thought we covered everything last night. Jeez, we only went to bed at 03:30 this morning."

-Me: "I know, babe, and I'm grateful you helped me out, but there's a couple of sections I still need to go through once again before I write tomorrow. And I prefer going to the library. However, I'm not going there for Chemistry, I'm going for the module I'm writing on Wednesday. It's your course, remember? And we agreed that you won't help me with anything that's got to do with it. That would be cheating in a way."

-Him: "I see. I guess I'll see you later then. Anyway, what did your father say? Did he agree to come and meet you?"

-Me: "Yah, he just replied to my text. Says he'll be here around 13:00 or 14:00, he's not sure because he's a bit busy today. And another thing, he's leaving for Jo'burg in the evening. So

I don't know. I really hope he'll come through though."

He chuckles and leans on the counter with his elbows.

-Him: "You know what's funny? You weren't so thrilled about involving your father in this Thuso crap when I suggested it yesterday, but now you're the one who's so eager to involve him."

-Me: "That was before I knew what Thuso was planning, Thando. But now that Buhle has given us the heads up I see the need to act and fast. We can't let Thuso ruin everything."

-Him: "You're so worked up about this whole thing. I, on the other hand, I'm chilled. I really don't care what that bored girl does."

-Me: "I wish I was as chilled as you, you know."

I put my lunchbox in my bag together with a bottle of juice and some snacks, just like a school kid. I'm going to need these, burying my

head in books for hours makes me hungry.

Doc lifts his arms from the counter and pulls me to him.

-Him: "I don't want you to worry about this thing, sthandwa sam. Everything is gonna be okay. Trust me."

-Me: "I trust you. But just let me handle this myself, okay? You handle Nat."

-Him: "I love it when you're in control, you know. It's so sexy."

He bites his bottom lip, then kisses me briefly.

-Him: "Have a great day. See you later. And I'm sorry I can't drive you to campus."

-Me: "Don't worry about it, I need the walk anyway. See you later. I love you."

-Him: "Love you more."

I grab my bag then leave.

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I pass by the Saverite supermarket just around the corner from the Engen filling station I used to work at. I don't miss my days working there, I just miss spending time with Kevin. If he was around today and on duty I would have stopped by just to see his face but he's out of town, he left on Friday to visit the friends he used to visit in my hood in PE.

I go inside the supermarket and just buy two packs of Orbit spearmint flavoured chewing gums. I'm out of these and they always come in handy when I can't brush my teeth after eating.

As I walk out, I bump into... Kevin?

-Me: "Kev? You're back? But I thought you were in P.E for the weekend."

-Him: "Oh, hello to you too, S?"

He says with this naughty smile on his face.

-Me: "Sorry, buddy. It's just that I wasn't expecting to see you here. How are you?"

-Him: "Over the moon. You?"

-Me: "I'm good. And what are you all happy about? When did you even come back?"

-Him: "I came back last night. Asanda wanted me home because she had some news to share. She's pregnant."

His eyes light up as those words leave his mouth. I can tell that he's really excited.

-Me: "Really? You're gonna be a father? Wow! Congratulations, buddy."

I'm screaming as I open my arms to hug him. I'm really excited for him. Children are always a blessing.

-Him: "Thanks, buddy. I know that having a kid

is no walk in the park but we'll make it work."

-Me: "I wish my dad was as excited as you are when my mother told him that she was pregnant."

Kevin knows the story about my father, I told him. What he doesn't know is what I've just discovered yesterday.

-Him: "Don't curse, the man wants to be in your life now. He wants to love you. That's all that matters."

-Me: "I guess. Anyway, what are you here to buy?"

-Him: "Only mints. I was just next door, at Eskom."

-Me: "I have some mints. They are chewing gums though."

I say giving him another pack of chewing gums.

-Him: "Thanks. These will do."

-Me: "Good. Now please accompany me to campus. You don't mind, do you? I missed you."

-Him: "Of course I don't mind. I missed you too. Now come, let's go."

He says wrapping his arm around my neck. And we walk and talk. I tell him about my father and Thuso, and the fact that Iviwe is actually my aunt.

-Him: "You're kidding. Are you for real?"

-Me: "I wish I was kidding but I'm not."

-Him: "This is one small world, huh."

-Me: "Tell me about it."

-Him: "And you're saying that Italian beast this Thuso was bragging about actually belongs to your father? Wow, I'd like to see her face when she finds out."

-Me: "I really don't care about that, you know. I just want to get something out of this web of

madness. My father is gonna have to help me get his plaything off my back. The girl's out to ruin my life and Thando's, Kev. Can you believe that she wants to report us to the department's head and the faculty Dean? She's collected all the evidence to prove my relationship with Thando. She once made claims to the HOD that Thando and I are sleeping together, but because of her rotten reputation no one believed her. And now...she's got proof. Emails exchanged between Thando and I. Just four emails though. In one of them Thando was inviting me over to his house for a romantic candle lit dinner. In another he was telling me just how much he loves me and how much I mean to him. Then my two replies. And apparently the bitch also has photos of me and Thando kissing in front of Thando's gate. Photos taken yesterday when Thando and I were coming from a morning jog. Clearly she's been following me. Plus, she's gonna use the

fact Thando and I are now living together. You know what all of this is gonna do, Kevin?

Thando could lose his job, and I could also be in trouble too. It's gonna look like Thando's been doing me favours when it comes to his course, giving me marks that I don't even deserve, just like Thuso once claimed. I can't let that happen, Kev, I can't."

-Him: "Yoh, this girl's one crazy bitch, hey. To go this far just out of bitterness? Now that's another level of crazy. What is Thando saying about all of this?"

-Me: "Thando's not shaken, Kev. And that's frustrating the hell out of me. He's so chilled. He's not even planning to take action to prevent this disaster. That's why I need to do something. I already had a plan in my head, I knew exactly what I was gonna do to deal with that crazy bitch. But apart from the fact that it's extremely harsh even for a psycho like her, it's also gonna

take time, and time is a luxury I can't afford right now. That bitch is gonna report us tomorrow."

Kevin suddenly stops and pulls my arm forcing me to stop too. Then he looks at me.

-Him: "Listen, Soso. I know you. You're a very nice person. It shows just how well you were raised. So please don't do something that's gonna land you into more trouble. Don't let this psycho change who you are. Don't lose yourself because of her. Okay? Don't do anything drastic."

I nod.

-Me: "You're right. Which is why I've scrapped my plan. Now I want my father to take care of it. It's time for him to play the father role in my life. Besides, Thuso's his plaything so it would be easy for him to deal with her."

-Him: "That's better. But do you think he's gonna

help you though? I mean considering the fact that he's sleeping with her."

-Me: "What's that they say about blood, again? I think they say it's thicker than water. So as my father I expect him to side with me and not with his blessee."

-Him: "I really hope he'll come through for you, hey."

-Me: "Yeah, me too."

We continue our walk to campus, catching up on other things, until we reach the campus small gate, then Kevin leaves me and walk back to town. I really enjoyed catching up with him. He's the only friend I have in this crazy small town.

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It's only around 16:00 that Sandile calls saying he's now in Alice. I had already given up, I thought he was no longer coming, but now that he's here I couldn't be happier. I ask him to wait for me by the campus gate, then I quickly pack up my stuff and leave the library.

I'm almost running as I make my way down to the gate, I really need him to help me stop Thuso.

When I walk out the gate, I immediately spot his car and I take long strides towards it. Seeing me coming, he opens the door for me from the inside and I hop in. Without wasting any time he immediately gets to the point.

-Him: "Hey, baby. Are you okay? You said it was important. What's going on?"

I tell him everything.

-Him: "Your lecturer that is 10 years your senior, baby? Are you kidding me?"

Seriously? Out of everything I just told him all he cares about is me dating my lecturer?

-Me: "Come on, now is not the time for that. Did you hear what I just said?"

-Him: "It's just that I wasn't expecting this from the young lady who stood before me yesterday and threw judgements around."

-Me: "Dad, are you gonna help me or what? Because I'm telling you now, I'm only 5 seconds away from opening this door and not only get out of this car but out of your life as well."

He turns his head and looks at me without saying anything.

-Me: "What? Why are you looking at me like that?"

-Him: "You just called me dad."

-Me: "And I'll continue calling you that if you help me with this. Use this opportunity to

redeem yourself to me. So what's it gonna be? Me or your plaything? Tell me, does she even know that I'm your daughter?"

He pulls his eyes away from me and look forward, out the windscreen.

-Him: "No, she doesn't know. She and I don't have that kind of relationship, Someleze. I told you this. We don't talk about such stuff. I don't know much about her and she doesn't know much about me either. There's only one thing connecting us, and that's the obvious."

-Me: "I wonder what she'll say when she finds out that you're my father."

-Him: "She doesn't have to find out. Don't tell her. My plan to help you will only work if she doesn't know."

-Me: "So you're gonna help me? You really mean that? Because, Sandile, I don't want you to say it unless you mean it, okay? If your heart is not

into it all you have to do is tell me and I'll do it myself. But just don't blame me when I hurt your girl pretty badly, okay? See, there are only two things that are very, very important to me. And that's my education and the people I care about. And right now Thuso is threatening them both. I don't take kindly to that, if you must know. And even though I've never done anything drastic in my life, right now I'm prepared to. It's the only choice I have."

-Him: "But that's just the thing about choices, baby. You can make a thousand right ones but it only takes one wrong one and you're done, your life is over."

-Me: "So what are you trying to say? That I should just let Thuso ruin my future? Is that what you're trying to tell me? I tried to do things the right way, Sandile. I tried to talk to Thuso but she just wouldn't listen. She's so determined to ruin things for me. And I'm not

gonna let her."

He looks at me again, and I don't fail to notice the affection in his eyes.

-Him: "What I'm saying is: the gateway to understanding is through pain. And I'm that gateway. She couldn't understand when you talked to her, right? So now it's time for me to make her understand that no one threatens my family. I may be sleeping with her but that's just all there is to it. And you, you are my blood. And no one, I mean no one, threatens or hurts my blood and gets away with it. You're not gonna do anything that will get you into trouble, alright? I'll handle Thuso myself and I mean that. Don't worry, she won't report you tomorrow, okay?"

-Me: "Thank you."

-Him: "No need to thank me. I'm your father, you've hollered help and I've come to set you free. You've been dealing with Thuso's shit for

some time but, baby, the storm is over now.
You're not alone, your father is here. Okay?"

He leans over to hug me and I don't only let him
but I also return the hug.

-Him: "I love you."

I close my eyes, trying to stop my tears from
falling. It's not only what he's just said that's
making me emotional but it's also how he's said
it, with so much intensity and affection.

-Me: "I love you too...DAD."

I say finally.

He pulls back and looks at me with a smile.

-Him: "I'm sorry but I now have to run. Let me
drive you home."

He says after taking a moment just looking and
smiling at me.

-Me: "You're still flying back to Jo'burg this
evening?"

-Him: "No. Not when my daughter needs me here."

He starts the car and drives me home.

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He drops me off the gate and drives off, after promising to call me tomorrow. I use my own remote to open the gate then get inside. I notice Bhongo's car in the driveway. Oh, he's here? I didn't even know that he was coming.

When I'm about to climb up the three steps to the front door, Doc walks out of the house with Bhongo and one other guy that was also at his birthday party in August. I still remember his name, it's Sibusiso but they all call him Sbu.

-Me: "Hey, guys."

I greet first as I stop and wait for them to get to

where I'm standing.

-Bhongo: "Hey, Soso."

Sbu also replies. And Bhongo comes to me for a hug.

-Him: "How are you? You look good as I still remember you. And I must say, I was hoping to see you in EL yesterday."

-Me: "I'm good, I'm good. You look good too, but that's nothing new. As for yesterday, well I was swamped, I couldn't come with Thando."

-Him: "He did tell us. Zizo was still disappointed though."

-Me: "Uzoqina. [She'll be strong]"

I say laughing then I turn to Sbu.

-Me: "Sbu, are you good?"

-Him: "Yah, I'm alright. It's good to see you again, hey."

-Me: "It's good to see you too, guys. I didn't even know that you were coming though. If I did I wouldn't have left the house."

Bhongo looks at me then at Doc, clearly surprised that Doc didn't tell me that I was coming. Doc doesn't say anything, and the moment quickly feels awkward.

-Me: "Oh, yah, I remember now. Yesterday Thando did mention that you were coming today but it must have slipped my mind. A lot of school work would do that to you."

I say lying, trying to make the moment feel less awkward.

-Bhongo: "Yah, I understand. Anyway, we were already on our way. We'll see you again soon, I hope."

-Me: "Sure thing. Drive safe."

I hug them both then Doc walks them over to their car while I wait for him by the front door.

He waits for them to drive out then he closes the gate and comes back to me.

-Him: "Sorry I didn't tell you that they were coming. I wanted you here so you could see everything for yourself."

He says as he wraps his arm around my waist and walks me inside the house.

-Me: "And what is 'everything' exactly?"

I ask closing the door behind us.

-Him: "That."

He says pointing at a laptop I don't recognise and several storage devices on the coffee table. 2 hard drives and about 4 USB flash drives.

-Me: "What are those?"

I ask walking over to take a closer look.

-Him: "They all belong to Natalie. This was my plan B just in case she refuses to give me the sex tapes."

-Me: "How did you get them?"

-Him: "The day I asked to meet up with her I first asked to meet at her place in Grahastown. She agreed and texted me the address, but I wasn't planning to go there so after that I asked her to come here instead. And she stupidly agreed. Yesterday, Bhongo, Sbu and I talked about my plan of action. So when she was here earlier, Bhongo and Sbu were in her apartment collecting every storage device she could have stored the tapes in. And Sbu being the IT specialist that he is he managed to get into her emails and delete the copy of the tape she sent to me. So now I believe we have all the copies she had."

-Me: "But, baby, I'm sure she knows by now that you're the one behind the break in into her apartment. And she's gonna retaliate. The woman is crazy, you know her better than I do."

-Him: "Of couse she knows. She called. But she

won't retaliate because Sbu got us into her computer and we found a lot of goodies in there. Stuff she doesn't want to get out. So as long as I have those, I control her. And she would never ever come anywhere near us again."

-Me: "Yoh. But this was a gamble, hey. What if you didn't find anything to blackmail her with in her computer? And what if she had other copies of the sex tapes stored somewhere else?"

-Him: "Well, none of that matters now. What matters is that she will stay away from us and she won't release those tapes even if she has other copies."

-Me: "I guess that's a win then. I hope you also asked Sbu to to put up a strong security system to protect your devices from being hacked again. That should supplement your change of passwords."

-Him: "Of course I did. You should see his own

computer in his place. I don't know much about this stuff but I could tell that the guy's got the absolute, most sophisticated state of the art security system. I could tell when he showed it to me."

Well, I guess Bhongo did great by hosting Doc's birthday party and introducing him to Sbu and the others.

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New posting days: Monday, Wednesday and Friday. No episodes on weekends. I know it's NOT enough but I get busy, hey. Still love y'all.

I've realised that SOME people don't read to understand hey. Let me help a little.

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1) Thuso's surname is Kwena. An only child of a MARRIED couple from Mpumalanga [episode 3].

Which means both her parents are Kwena. There was no way Sandile could be her father. Sandile is a Mali, a Xhosa man from Mthatha [episode 21]. And Thuso's father is an industrial engineer, owning his own engineering company in Mpumalanga [episode 3]. Whereas Sandile is in finance. He doesn't own any company but he's a CEO of a big company [episode 21].

2) Sandile is originally from Mthatha [episode 21]. And the only other character that's from Mthatha in this story is Iviwe [episode 4]. So I thought y'all would figure out that the person he's related to is her.

3) Thuso is not sleeping with Sandile for the money. She's just after good-looking men, and age is never an issue to her. Even if her thing with Sandile could end she'd still continue to live her uptown girl lifestyle because her parents are well off. [episode 1,3 & 14].

4) Sandile's interest in Soso is not SUDDEN. He

wanted to be in her life since she was 15 but it's Soso's mother who didn't want to let him. [episode 21].

5) Iviwe is not older than Alex, they are of the same age - both 24 [episode 4]. Sandile said there's a 16 year age gap between him and his younger sister, Iviwe, because of all the other siblings that didn't survive, siblings that were born after him and before Iviwe. [episode 26]. Sandile is 40 [episode 21 & 26]. $40 - 16 = 24$ (basic Maths).

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"Ngiyakudinga lovey wami. Nguwe wedw' empilweni yami. Ngeke ng'suke duze kwakho. Inhliziyo igcwel' uthando. Ngalama gama ngithi I love you." - Thami

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Thuso

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Monday - 06:00

Just having had a shower, I step out of the shower enclosure into the expansive immaculate bathroom that is smelling pleasantly of the owner, a mixture of expensive after shave and musky male scent.

The bathroom is as classy and chic as the rest of the house, betraying the owner's financial status. This is Sandile's house in East London. Sandile is a man who always wears his hefty bank account in his body and that's probably the first thing most people notice when they lay their eyes on him, that he's loaded. But no, not me. I saw something different in him.

I met this man back in July, right here in East London. It was just a week after the accountant from King William's Town had ended our no-

strings-attached affair following the incident that happened at the Pulse Nite Club in Arcadia, right here in East London. I had went to the club with him but I ended up ditching his ass and leaving with Alex around midnight. Getting back at Soso by sleeping with Alex was my plan but I hadn't planned to do it that night. I didn't even know that Alex would be at the club but when I saw him there and in an impaired state, I ceased the opportunity. To say Mr Accountant was pissed when he found out what had happened would be an understatement, he was livid, and he ended things between us. To be quite frank, though, I didn't care, I never involve feelings in these things. And if he thought I was going to beg then he got disappointed. I wasn't going to do that, not when there are a lot of men out there.

A week later, I found a replacement for him in the most weirdest of ways, like those incidents

you see in romance movies, except I wasn't up for love. I was here in EL, in Vincent, getting out of a taxi when it happened. I was feeling light-headed, apparently I was hungrier than I'd thought. I attempted to gracefully hop out of the taxi and by gracefully hop, I mean fall in the most unladylike way I could have possibly imagined. Except I didn't hit the ground. Instead of hitting the warm concrete like I thought was going to happen, I hit a wall of warm strong chest. Two arms corded in muscle wrapped around me to keep my face from hitting the ground. Realising that I'd been caught mid fall I pulled back and stared at said chest covered by a dark grey designer t-shirt. Up even further, I caught a dark stubble across a strong jaw, full lips with quite possibly the whitest teeth I've ever seen in my life, a straight nose and dark eyes shaded by a dark blue baseball cap. Stunning. It's the only word I could think of at that moment. But thank god I didn't mutter it

out loud to make the embarrassing moment much worse.

"Hi."

The deep soothing voice came out of those full lips I'd been staring at and I finally realised that the gorgeous face was talking to me and that I should probably switch where the blood supply was flowing and turn my brain back on to say something intelligent.

"Hi."

That's the only word that managed to escape my mouth. Noticing he was still holding me, I began to peel myself away and I instantly noticed the lack of warmth and comfort. I regretted my decision immediately.

"Thank you, for catching me. I didn't mean to be such a spaz and fall on you."

I said with a nervous smile.

"No problem, it happens. Not that I have beautiful girls fall on me everyday. Not that you're beautiful, I mean you're beautiful but...ugh, you know what I mean."

Oh my god, he was so yummy. And him saying I was beautiful was it for me, he had me with that. That's how it all began, that's how I met Sandile, and as they say, the rest is history. He made me feel all nervous with this warm fluttering feeling in my tummy, but it wasn't love. Of course I like him, I do. He's based in Jo'burg but when he's around he knows how to make me feel good and I enjoy spending time with him, especially between the sheets. Oh don't get me started with that, the guy really knows his stuff, he sure knows how to hit it. Sometimes I would even miss my classes and just spend a day with him in his bedroom. I don't mind the perks of using his expensive toys either, especially that Ferarri. But that's just about it, we are only having fun.

The man I have my eyes on is Doc December. That's one man I happen to really really like, even love, and I'm not going to stop until I get him. But if I can't get him I'll make sure that Soso doesn't keep him either. In fact, I'll ruin both their lives.

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I walk out of the bathroom wet and naked as the day I was born. I step into the stunning, bright bedroom to find Sandile tossing a leather suitcase onto the bed. Bare-chested, I can see that he intends to pack and dress at the same time. He pulls on a beige business shirt and I watch as he buttons the front. Hell, I can't let him get dressed, not when I still have this craving that yearns to be fulfilled by him. He's moving to the cuffs when I step behind him. I

cup his eyes and laugh, my naked, wet body staining his clothes. He twists around and I fall into his arms. For a long moment he holds me, our eyes locked, and I can tell that he knows what I want.

-Him: "Sweetheart, no, you're gonna be late for your first class. You're still going to Alice, remember?"

-Me: "I know that. But you promised to give me your car when I asked. So relax I'll make it in time, that machine flies."

-Him: "Well, you're gonna make ME late. You know that I have a business meeting at 7:30 and after it I have a flight to catch which is why I'm packing now."

-Me: "But, daddy, you can't leave me like this. You know that I won't see you again for a month, so please let's just forget about everything and enjoy this moment."

He peels away from me and take a step back before his eyes take in my wet, exquisite body. I step closer and begin to unbutton his shirt, then rip it open in frustration, kissing his chest and nipples.

-Me: "I'm sorry... so sorry, I... can't... help... it... I... want... you..."

I say in between the kisses. His reserve breaks like a cracked dam. He yanks me up into his arms and carries me to his king sized bed. I crash onto it but I'm up in an instant to undo his pants. Soon he's inside me and our naked bodies writhe in unleashed lust. I cry in pleasure and sweet pain as he grabs my great mane of relaxed hair, riding forward like a charging warrior. We come almost at the same time and we catch our breaths just for a moment before he gets up and asks me to come take a shower with him.

-Him: "Come. We need to get going."

I get up and follow him. Soon we are done with the shower and we get dressed. I grab my stuff and he walks me to the front door. Grabbing the Ferarri keys in their box by the front door, I wrap my arms around him in a hug and bury my face in his chest.

-Me: "Call me immediately when you're around again, okay? And don't worry, your wheels will be safe with me."

-Him: "I don't doubt that for a sec."

He lifts my head and gives me a peck on the lips then releases me.

-Him: "Goodbye, Thuso."

-Me: "Come on, don't say goodbye. You're talking as if we won't see each again and that's not the case."

He just smiles and pulls the door open for me. I'm running late, so I walk out of the house and pace towards the two cars parked in the

driveway, the Ferarri and a stupid Toyota Corolla.

The moment I slide behind the wheel and turn the key in the ignition, Sandile strolls from the walkway to watch me go. The Ferarri's starting motor drones, the cold engine almost catches, then dies. I try it again but again, it dies.

"What the fuck?"

I say frustrated. I really need to get out of here, I'm running late. What is this car doing to me now?

-Sandile: "What's wrong with it?"

-Me: "I don't know, hey."

I say out the window.

-Me: "Maybe you should come check it out."

-Him: "There's no time for that, sweetheart. Just take the Corolla."

Without even waiting for me to respond, he

turns and goes back inside the house. In a moment he comes back with the Corolla keys and take the Ferarri's. Frustrated, I crawl out of the Ferarri and slip behind the wheel of the Corolla. The Corolla's engine catches immediately. I throw it in reverse and it screeches out of the driveway.

Down the road I guide the humble Japanese car. Running late and also wanting to see what it can do, I check the rear-view mirror, seeing no cars behind me I floor the Corolla. It bolts forward. I settle in behind its wheel, enjoying the speed, testing it against one of the less busy roads of East London. Up ahead, in a busy intersection, I see a street light turn red, I apply the brakes. Nothing. Worse, the Corolla hasn't slowed its acceleration. It jets forward, increasing speed. I pull the emergency brake. Useless. The Corolla dashes for the stop light. Cars cross the intersection at intervals. The

light remains red. Desperate, I slam a palm down on the horn. It blares a warning. The Corolla shoots through the intersection, barely missing two crossing cars, and continues on, with me twisting its wheel to avoid hitting anyone and slamming my foot on the brake repeatedly. I pass cars on the right, then left, and knowing I can hold off destruction no longer, I open the driver's door and try to leap free but the stupid seatbelt holds me onto my seat. Focusing on trying to unbuckle the stuck seatbelt, I can't control the car anymore and it impacts against a stone wall and it's lights out to me.

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It's now 13:20 and it's the end of my last class for the day - Doc's class. I didn't see Thuso in any of our classes today but that's nothing new. I just wonder if Sandile managed to get her to back down from what she wanted to do. The university can't find out about my relationship with Doc, no they can't.

I get up from my seat and walk to the exit with the other students, but I immediately stop by the exit when Doc calls my name.

-Him: "Ndlovu, please remain behind."

I wonder why he wants me to do that but I just do as he says without causing any drama. Grabbing his things quickly, he doesn't wait for me to walk over to him, he comes to me and we both walk out of the lecture room to his office. Without saying anything, he opens his office and gestures for me to walk in first. He walks in after me and closes the door then locks it.

He stares at me, his eyes dark and his look intent and dangerous, but despite everything I just can't look away.

-Him: "I want to make love to you. Right here, right now."

He says, and now he moves, closing the space between us. His warm breath fans my cheek and his quickening breathing matches my own. I would back away, though, but his hand at my nape prevents me from moving at all.

"Please let me."

He adds, bending to brush the corner of my mouth with his lips. My breath catches in the back of my throat. This isn't what I expected when he called me here. He's so close I can feel the heat of his body enveloping me, so close I am suddenly aware of the pulse beating at the centre of my core. Warm fluid drenches my panties and my limbs go totally weak, that's the

effect this man has on me.

-Me: "Thando, no."

I try to make a protest, but the truth is my body also wants this. He moves even closer, taking my bag that I'm holding like a barrier in front of me and tossing it on his desk. Then he slips an arm around my waist and pulls me against him, my breasts crush against his chest, my hips against the hard muscles of his thighs. Then his mouth is on mine, hard and passionate. He deepens the kiss and I lose my mind. A hot wave of desire surges over me, making my body tremble, but not enough to sweep all my inhibitions away. Somehow I manage to push him off of me.

-Me: "Thando, what's going on? We agreed that we wouldn't do any of this here."

-Him: "Well, there's no point anymore. The HOD and the entire faculty knows about our

relationship and they've called me to a hearing tomorrow. I'm sure they've also sent you an email in your university email account. They are gonna fire me, so I might as well give them a very good reason to."

-Me: "What? What are you talking about? They know? But I thought my father said he would handle this."

-Him: "Well, clearly whatever he tried didn't work."

-Me: "That's if he even tried at all. Mnxm I shouldn't have believed him."

Just then my phone vibrates in my pocket. I take it out and glance at the screen to see that it's Yonela, one of Thuso's friends. What does she want from me? I hesitate but end up answering.

-Me: "Yonela."

-Her: "Soso, I'm sorry to call you but things are

bad."

She tells me what happened.

-Me: "What? When did this happen and where?"

She tells me, crying.

-Me: "Oh my God. Listen, I'm gonna have to call you back."

I hang up, as a rainbow of emotions washes over me. Shock, surprise, confusion, hurt.

Doc looks at me, also confused.

-Him: "What's going on, babe?"

-Me: "It's Thuso."

-Him: "What has she done this time around?"

-Me: "It's not what she's done. She's gone, Thando. Thuso's dead. Yonela says she got involved in an accident while driving alone from East London early this morning. And she passed away in hospital."

-Him: "East London? Where your father is?
Coincidence?"

-Me: "I don't think it's a coincidence...at all.
Thuso doesn't have a car, Thando. I bet my life
the car she was driving belongs to Sandile.
Dammit! What has he done? Yesterday I didn't
ask what he was going to do to get Thuso to
back off, he just said it would involve pain. But I
didn't think he would go this far. I didn't want it
to be like this, Thando, I didn't."

Doc just folds his arms against his chest,
showing not even the slightest emotion on his
face.

-Me: "Why are you so calm? A person is dead,
Thando."

-Him: "What do you want me to do or say,
Someleze? You want me to lie and say I feel
sorry for that psycho? Hell no, she got what she
deserved. If it's your father who's behind the

'accident' then he did great if you ask me."

-Me: "You're heartless, you know that...Let me call Sandile and ask."

I dial Sandile's number but I only hear:

"Hi, you've reached Sandile Mali. Please try me again later because here's the truth, I don't check voice messages and I don't leave them either. If you still leave me a message after hearing this then you need to have your head examined."

That's his voicemail. Seriously, what kind of voicemail greeting is that?

-Me: "His phone's off."

I tell Doc as I'm already starting to pace around the office. I don't believe this. I can't believe Sandile chose this route.

-Him: "But if Thuso didn't make it to campus today then who reported us? Vilakazi...Buhle

said Thuso wanted to do it in person today. So if she wasn't here, then who did it?"

I stop pacing.

-Me: "Alex. Her partner in this crazy crusade. I really didn't think he would be involved in something this extremely low, you know. What is he gonna get from it? Clearly Thuso's craziness has rubbed off on him, no kidding. I swear if he's involved I'm so gonna hate his ass."

-Him: "You mean you weren't hating him before this?"

-Me: "I hated him at first but over time I stopped feeling anything about him. He's just a part of my past that I chose to lock away in the back compartment of my brain. Which is why the fact that my blood aunt and I were both sleeping with him doesn't bother me."

My phone rings again, only this time it's Buhle.

-Doc: "You're popular today, huh."

-Me: "Please just seal your mouth."

I answer the call.

-Me: "Buhle, are you gonna tell me about Thuso?
I just heard the news."

-Her: "Thuso? No, I want us to meet and talk
about yours and Doc December's hearing. I just
heard about it."

-Me: "Oh, that. Okay. Where are you? I'll come to
you."

-Her: "Freedom Square."

-Me: "Okay, I'll be there in 5."

I hang up and tell Doc that I'm leaving. Then I
grab my bag and walk out.

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I find Buhle sitting under one of the cosy thatched shelters by the staff centre and I join her. But before we get into our business of the day I inform her about Thuso's passing. And just like me when I heard the news, her face tells me that she's experiencing a number of emotions at once.

-Her: "It's sad that she's gone and I don't want to speak ill of the dead but the girl was a crazy bitch."

She says eventually.

-Her: "Now about the hearing. Girlfriend, I'm sorry that it has come to this. Believe it or not I was once in your position too, I know how it feels."

-Me: "What do you mean?"

-Her: "Not so long ago, just last semester. Remember that our two modules in December's course were taught by two professors last

semester?"

-Me: "Yeah. The retired professor and Prof Elliott."

-Her: "And that's when Prof Elliott and I started seeing each other."

-Me: "What? You're kidding, right?"

-Her: "I kid you not. And Mjekula in our class found out about the affair and threatened to expose it. Scared to be in trouble, Elliott ended things before Mjekula could blow the horn."

-Me: "No friggin' way."

-Her: "Trust me you'd want to save your no friggin' way for the next part. I was pregnant when Elliott dropped me and when I told him about it, he forced me to have an abortion. That's what someone like Thuso did to me. And that's why I'm on your side."

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Tuesday

I enter the library in the morning on an empty stomach. I couldn't eat anything for breakfast, all I could think about was the hearing.

Yesterday after I met up with Buhle I read my emails and the first email I read was the hearing invitation from the HOD, more like a subpoena.

A hearing that would be today at 13:30. Ugh. So Thuso has lost her life for nothing because Doc and I are still in trouble anyway. I still haven't talked to Sandile to get all the details about the "accident" but I'm pretty sure that he was behind it. His phone has been off since yesterday, I don't know what's going on but I'm pretty sure he's okay wherever he is.

Clearly it's Alex who reported us. And I swear on my grandmother's grave, if Doc loses his job

because of him, he's going to feel my wrath. I'm angry, I'm boiling, but Doc on the other hand is still not phased by all of this, he's the picture of calm and I don't even know why. When I needed to know the reason yesterday he just said he would like to get this hearing thing over and done with as soon as possible then see what's next. When I asked what that meant, he didn't answer me.

Now at the library, I'm keeping my head down, not looking up for anything, studying for the test I'm writing tomorrow. I don't want to be anywhere near Doc today until the hearing begins.

Some hours later, at 13:00, my phone on the desk reminds me that it's time to drop everything and go to the hearing. I collect my stuff and make my way to the restroom downstairs. Standing in front of the mirror, I make sure that my face is clean then I apply lip

gloss and tie my hair anew. Then I leave the library going to the boardroom in the Science block where the hearing is going to be held. I get there and I feel my stomach clenching as I wait at the closed door after knocking, waiting to be let in. When the door opens, a young professional lady I don't recognise motions me to the table where the head of Doc's department, the head of the School of Biological Sciences, the Dean of the Faculty of Science and Agriculture, and Doc himself, are seated. Everyone is quiet and tense as their eyes bore into me. Seeing how serious they make this to be, I'm surprised they didn't also invite the Dean of Students and the VC himself. I look at Doc. His face is stern, but his manner is relaxed. I glance away, feeling a heat that has nothing to do with nerves. He got dressed in front of me this morning but as it seems, I still can't get over how good he looks. He is so unbelievably striking today, in a dark suit set off

by a blue tie, a deep, electronic hue with a shimmer. I feel my blood pressure drop at both his looks and from my fear at what is about to happen in this room. I've only heard of hearings or disciplinary discussions in school and here in varsity but I have never experienced one myself. I have always been a disciplined pupil, learner and a student. This is my first time "screwing up".

"Please have a seat."

The HOD says flatly, now not looking at me. I approach the table, the set-up unfamiliar to me. I sit on the available chair, legs crossed, hands folded on my lap and wait.

-HOD: "Okay, let's begin. This is the first day of the hearing investigating the violation of the university rules by the newest staff member of the School of Science. Fraternising with a student to be specific. Please state your name for the record, Doc."

-Doc: "Thando December."

His voice is calm and chilled as he was this morning.

-Faculty Dean: "Doctor December, we have evidence indicating that you have a personal relationship outside the lecture room with one of your students. Do you have any witnesses that would help you dispute these accusations?"

-Doc: "No, ma'am."

-Her: "I have to advise you that this is a serious matter and it might destroy your career."

-Doc: "I understand that, ma'am."

-Her: "We can postpone the hearing until tomorrow if you like to bring in some witnesses or representation, something I would strongly advise."

-Doc: "What is the first question, ma'am?"

Looking at him, he's still the picture of calm.

-Faculty Dean: "Alright then, let's begin. Doctor December, do you know Miss Ndlovu?"

Doc stares at me with his penetrating, dark eyes before answering.

-Doc: "Yes, I do."

-Faculty Dean: "Is it true that you have a sexual relationship with her?"

-Doc: "Yes, ma'am."

-Her: "Would you say you broke some rules by engaging in this kind of relationship with her?"

-Doc: "Probably."

-Faculty Dean: "Probably? Well, that's a very care-free answer. You don't seem to care about the implications here."

Doc doesn't say anything.

-Faculty Dean: "Well, Doctor December?"

-Doc: I'm sorry, ma'am, I didn't hear a question."

-Her: "Did you break the rules by sleeping with a student?"

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Before answering, Doc looks at all of them like a pitbull looking at Chihuahuas. He's nowhere near being nervous, he's cool and collected. I swear if he was any cooler than this he'd have frostbite.

-Doc: "According to the rules set forth by the university, yes I did. Ma'am, why don't I save y'all some time? Because clearly the institution is going to fire me anyway. I..."

The Faculty Dean cuts him off.

-Her: "That is not the objective of this hearing, Doctor December. Here we only want to

establish the circumstances surrounding the rule violation, then we will deliberate later."

-Doc: "Ma'am, I met a young woman and I fell in love with her. I loved her and I couldn't act as if I didn't. The truth is, I simply followed my heart."

The HOD can't keep quiet anymore, he voices his thoughts.

-HOD: "You call sleeping with a student following your heart, Doctor December?"

-Doc: "I call it what's necessary to make myself and the said student happy. Considering the fact that we're both consenting adults."

-HOD: "Doctor December, I don't need to explain that you committed the one act I told you was unacceptable when you first came aboard, do I? Was I in any way unclear?"

Doc's handsome face has grown only more so with the contained fury that I now see moving beneath the surface. The muscles under his

jawline are fixed, his eyes burning with controlled anger. Clearly the HOD is brushing him the wrong way and I understand why.

-Doc: "Not at all."

-Faculty Dean: "So basically, what you're saying, Doctor December, is that your happiness comes first and that love trumps rules."

-Doc: "When cupid strikes, when my path crosses that of a woman I love, I believe there is a reason. And that I need to follow my heart to complete one of my missions on this earth, which is finding my soulmate."

-HOD: "Even if it means breaking the rules and falling for a woman you're not supposed to fall for?"

-Doc: "Well, my HOD, Prof ELLIOTT, the difference between me - a real man, and a sorry excuse of a man is that I can stand for what I believe in. Love doesn't care about the rules. It

is what it is, pure and simple. It strikes anyone at any given time, and it doesn't ask questions. And, sir, I'm the kind of man who'd never be scared or ashamed of loving."

The HOD, Prof Elliott, the same man who was sleeping with Buhle, looks down. I bet he can tell that Doc knows about his sexual endeavours too and his hypocritical ways.

-Doc: "To answer your question, Faculty Dean. Is my happiness above everything? No, ma'am. And since falling in love between a lecturer and a student is against the rules and policies, I am more than willing to step down as a lecturer in this university. This is the last week of the fourth teaching block anyway and then the final exams will begin. I'll still make sure that my students write my test tomorrow and I'll mark their scripts, I'll also calculate and submit their DPs. Then I'll also mark their exam papers, and calculate and submit their final marks, then I'll

be done. The university can advertise the post now. But do not sit there with that smug look on your face and expect me to regret the decision I have made because the truth, ma'am, is that I don't. I'd never regret falling in love."

He stops talking and looks at me briefly before he continues.

-Doc: "All I ask is that y'all don't punish Miss Ndlovu in any way. The only crime that we both committed is falling in love with each other. And that's got nothing to do with this university or the course I'm teaching. I haven't been doing her any academic favours. Here, you can see for yourselves. Numbers don't lie."

He says pushing the papers that have been sitting in front of him all this time to the Faculty Dean, and she accepts them.

-Doc: "Those are Miss Ndlovu's marks. From her first year until now. I know that you could

access them on your own but I already took the liberty. You can see for yourself that her performance has been stellar all this time. She's always been an A student in all her courses before I even got here. Her marks in my course or any other course haven't skyrocketed just because she's now with me, if anything they have dropped this semester. I'm sure you can see that I haven't been doing her any favours. So please, just let her write her final exam. But if y'all think I'll give her the paper before the exam, the HOD, Prof Elliott, over here, can make sure that I don't see the paper at all. And he can mark her exam paper himself. That's all I have to say."

-Faculty Dean: "We'll check all this out then deliberate."

-Doc: "Fair enough. I'd like to be excused now if there's nothing else."

-Faculty Dean: "You can go. You'll hear from us."

Doc gets up, ready to leave.

-HOD: "You're willing to lose your job over this, Thando? Couldn't you just end the affair and keep your job?"

-Doc: "It's not an affair, it's a relationship. And I'm cool, y'all can keep the job."

-HOD: "You do realise that if you leave you'll leave with a tarnished reputation? Finding another lecturing job will be close to impossible."

-Doc: "I'm aware of that, but I don't care."

And with that, he walks out. What did this man just do? This is not what we agreed on last night. And to say I'm pleased would be the same as saying the deceased have come back to life. I want to go talk to him and ask what happened to what we agreed on. Seeing that there's nothing left to be said here, I also ask to be excused and they let me go. I walk out and

pace down the stairs hoping to catch up with Doc but I don't see him anywhere. I rush to his office but I don't find him there either. Where could he be? I call him but his phone goes straight to voicemail. Ugh! I'm pissed but I still need to return to the library to continue preparing for tomorrow's test.

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Thando

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When I drive up to my gate around 17:00, I find Soso already there, pacing by the gate. I remember that she left her gate remote behind this morning, and I wonder how long she's been standing here. But why did she walk home alone? Why didn't she come to me so we could drive home together as we normally do? I tried

calling her before I drove out of campus but her phone was off.

I open the gate and through the rolled down window I gesture for her to hop in the car so we can drive in together, but she just shakes her head and walk into the yard. I let her be and go park the car in front of the garage. But I quickly hop out and hurry after her to the front door. We get to the stairs to the front door at the same time and she looks at me, not saying anything. I don't say anything either, I just search her face, focusing on her eyes. I notice that they are red, she's definitely been crying and that breaks my heart. Then without a word, I follow her up the stairs to the door and we stand apart, silent, the energy between us growing. She takes her keys off around her neck and I wait behind her as she unlocks the door, her hand shaking as she twists the key in the lock. The door opens and she let's me walk in first. She's barely closed

the door when I draw her against me. I feel her exhaling as my arms tighten around her, leaving only her toes resting on the floor. I smother her face, cheekbones and eyes with kisses, my mouth moving down her neckline, my warm breath coating her skin.

-Me: "Someleze...I love you. And everything is gonna be okay? Trust me."

I say looking into her red, puffy eyes. Fresh tears escape them and she pushes me off of her, crying.

-Her: "No, everything is not gonna be okay, Thando. It's not gonna be okay. Why did you do that? I tried talking to you about this last night, we agreed on what you should say when we get to that hearing but you didn't say any of it. Why? Now you'll be out of a job, Thando. What are we gonna do? What are you gonna do?"

She's now sobbing loudly, hitting my chest with

her tiny fists. I gently grab them and pull her to me, rubbing her back without saying anything. Finally, I pull back and look into her eyes.

-Me: "Baby, there was no way I was gonna say any of what we agreed on. And there was no way I was gonna do or say any of what Prof Elliott advised me. He wanted me to throw you under the bus and make it look like you're the one who initiated everything, and then not just promise everyone in that hearing that I would leave you but also do it. Just like you told me he did to Buhle. Hell, there was no way I was gonna do that. What I learned from my marriage, Soso, is that it's love before job. I can always have another job, but not always have a love, I can't have another you if I let you go now. I need you in my life, sthandwa sam, I do. You're the only thing that makes sense in my life right now, and I'd rather have you and nothing else. I'll never leave your side, for the job or any other thing.

My heart would be incomplete without you and I don't want that. I love you, Someleze, I love you too much and nothing is ever going to change that. And you don't have to worry about your final exam, they will let you write. But if they are already considering otherwise, which I doubt, Prof Elliott will sure change their minds. I gave him a little encouragement by letting him know that if he doesn't persuade them to change their minds then the university will know about his own affair with a student. I reminded him that my case is way better than his, that I didn't impregnate a student then force her to have an abortion."

Still, what I'm saying doesn't make her feel any better, I can see it in her face as I wipe away her tears.

-Her: "What are you gonna do with your life now? You haven't given me an answer to that."

-Me: "Baby, don't feel bad about me leaving that

job because I don't. You mean more to me than it. It was a rebound job anyway, a job I didn't even deserve. We both know that I only got it because Bhongo used his connections and bribed a few people...Listen, when you were busy worrying about the crazies that were fighting us, I was busy planning ahead because I knew that this would happen. I could see that it was imminent so I took some steps to secure my future, OUR future. I'm going back to being a surgeon."

Her face lights up when she hears the last part. And a tiny smile finds a way to her beautiful face. She doesn't say anything, she just pushes me and we both fall against the wall. Her mouth finds mine, hard and passionate.

-Me: "I can't be without you, Someleze. I can't."

I say against her lips.

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"There's not a thing I won't do. I'd give my life up for you 'cause you are my dream. Girl, 'cause you are the only thing that I got right now." - Justin Bieber [Chris Brown]

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Someleze

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Wednesday - 06:00

"In the past few days I couldn't help but notice that you don't have the textbook Doctor O recommended last week. And trust me, it is very good. Just like Doctor O said, without it you'll experience some difficulties in this course. But don't worry, I have another copy and I can give it to you, free of charge."

I looked at this girl talking to me as we walked

out of the Maths class at Black auditorium. I didn't know her, so I wondered why she was talking to me as if we were friends. Clearly, she also noticed that I was confused and wondering because she then saw the need to introduce herself.

-Her: "Oh, sorry. My name's Thuso. Thuso Kwena from Mpumalanga."

She said offering me her hand.

-Me: "Someleze Ndlovu. PE."

I said accepting her hand.

-Her: "Oh, Soso. Do you mind if I call you Soso?"

-Me: "No. That's actually what my friends and most people I know call me."

-Her: "Well, from now on I also consider myself your friend. I've been eyeing you in this class as well as in the Chem, Physics and Zoology classes. And by 'eyeing' I don't mean it in a

weird way."

-Me: "Oh, that's good...I guess. But I'd be lying if I said I too have noticed you before now. These first year classes are packed, it's hard to notice everyone."

-Her: "I know, right. But I hear the student numbers decrease as the academic levels increase. With that height of yours though, you stick out like a sore thumb, you're not hard to notice."

I chuckled.

-Me: "Oh, gee, thanks for telling me that I'm the tallest lady in class."

She laughed.

-Her: "But I didn't mean it like that, hey. Anyway, come, walk with me to my room to collect the textbook and we can also get to know each other better."

She seemed nice, with a smile that didn't seem to leave her face. I walked with her to her residence, eThembeni, and along the way we talked as if we'd known each other for years. She was loud and out there, a breath of fresh air, and I liked her.

That's how Thuso and I met, just 2 weeks after we started our first year at Fort Hare. And since that day we only grew much closer. We became the best of friends, more like sisters. She always had my back, I always had hers, we simply loved each other. In spite of, and mostly because of, the fact that she was different from me, we had a strong bond and I learned a lot from her. Which is why I didn't, and probably would never ever, understand why she just turned on me, especially because of a man that wasn't even hers. But even though she became a thorn in my side I didn't want her dead, I didn't want things to go this way. I didn't want her to lose her life because of me.

I just got off the phone with Sandile and in not so many words he's confirmed that he caused the accident. He didn't say much though, he just said we'll talk when he's here on Saturday then he hung up on me. I still can't believe he went this far, you know. What kind of an animal is he? How could he just take a life of a young woman like that? Thuso was still young, with so much ahead of her. Yes, she was crazy and she made my life difficult but she didn't deserve to go like this. No, she didn't.

Burdened with emptiness and guilt, I let my body slide down the wall in the kitchen until my butt lands on the cold, tiled floor. Thuso's passing has only managed to sink deeper in my head last night, and it hit me pretty hard. Before last night it did disturb me yes, but I also had this whole hearing thing to worry about so I couldn't afford to give anything else much thought.

Thinking about her parents, the fact that she was their only child, their pride and joy, I find tears flooding out of my eyes as I draw my knees to my chest. Knowing how much they loved her, I wonder how they must be feeling right now. Oh God, they must be so devastated. She was the apple of their eye and now because of me they have lost her. To think that they were nice to me when I visited their home twice before makes me feel even more guilty. The last time I was there was for Thuso's birthday party in May, the party that initially had an all-white theme but changed at the last minute. I met her parents for the second time and they were so nice to me just like they were when I was there during the Good Friday long weekend last year. They are very nice people and they didn't deserve this kind of pain, especially because of me. Oh God, what have I done? Why did I involve Sandile? Why? I bury my face in my knees and sob loudly.

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Thando

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From my morning jog that Soso didn't feel like partaking in today, I walk into my house and make my way straight to the kitchen, wanting to rehydrate. But upon walking into the kitchen, my eyes land on Soso sitting in a fetal position on the floor, crying. I hurry to her and kneel by her side.

-Me: "Baby, what's going on? Did something happen while I was out?"

She lifts her head and looks at me. With all these tears I'm sure her image of me is blurry.

-Her: "It's indeed Sandile who did it, Thando. The woman who's been my friend for almost three

years is now gone because of me. She's gone because of me. It's all my fault. I shouldn't have involved Sandile in this, I shouldn't have done it."

She cries some more. I abandon the kneeling position and sit on my behind next to her before pulling her to me. With her head on my chest, she continues to sob.

-Me: "Baby, what happened is not your fault. At all. Stop saying it is. Sthandwa sam, there's no way you could have known that your father would do this. You ain't no psychic, so please stop beating yourself up about something you didn't do."

-Her: "But still, I feel so guilty. And it hurts that Thuso's gone. Yes, we were no longer friends but deep down I still cared about her. I didn't want her to go like this, Thando. No. It was too soon for her, baby, too soon. Her life got cut short by my own father, because of me."

Eish, I don't know what to say to her to make her feel better. I'm really out of words.

-Me: "She's gone but it's not your fault, babe. Cut yourself some slack, will you? Yes, I'm sure losing her hurts. And I won't sit here and act as if I know what it's like to lose a friend to death. But as someone who's lost a number of patients in the past I know how it feels like to lose someone to death. And I also know that it gets better with time. You'll be okay, sthandwa sam, everything's gonna be okay. Just please don't feel guilty about this. You didn't do it and you didn't know that it was going to happen."

She lifts her head and looks at me. I help wipe away her tears.

-Her: "Considering that Thuso and I were best friends since she got here, I'm sure her parents will expect me to attend the funeral. I have no idea how I'm gonna look them in the eye and offer my condolences knowing very well that I

had something to do with their daughter's death but still, I'm gonna go."

-Me: "Are you sure you wanna do that, babe? You don't have to attend the funeral. You don't have to do it."

-Her: "I don't have to but I want to. Thando, it's the least I can do. I'm gonna call her father today to pass my condolences and also ask about the funeral arrangements."

I know how stubborn she is. When her mind is made up it's hard to convince her otherwise, so I just let her be.

-Me: "As long as you're sure, babe, it's okay you can go."

-Her: "I'm also gonna meet up with Yonela and try to find out how much they know about the circumstances surrounding that accident. I want to know how much they know about the man Thuso was seeing, how much they know

about Sandile and if he's going to be in trouble."

I can see that her protective instinct has kicked in now. I think as much as she's angry at her father for what he did, she still doesn't want him to go down for this.

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-Me: "You can do that. But please watch what you say or how you fish. You don't want to give yourself away."

-Her: "I know."

-Me: "This happened Monday but you are only reacting to it now. Why? If I may ask."

-Her: "Because I had other things to worry about, the hearing to be specific."

She completely pulls away from me and leans on the wall.

-Her: "I still can't believe you gave up your job for me, you know. That's cute, but still crazy."

-Me: "There's nothing I wouldn't do for our relationship to survive, babe. And there's not a thing I wouldn't do for you. I'd even give my life up for you if I have to. That's how much I love you, sthandwa sam. You are all I have right now."

A lazy smile slowly creeps to her face. When I see her smile like this my world feels alright, and I can't help but smile too.

-Her: "You're so corny, you know that?"

-Me: "And I know you like it."

She lets out a soft giggle.

-Her: "Whatever."

-Me: "But if I'm being honest, I submitted my resignation yesterday yes, but I didn't do it for you. I did it for my own selfish reasons. I did it

because I didn't want to lose you. I knew that my heart would be incomplete without you and I didn't want to subject myself through that pain...besides, I was already tired of that job anyway. It's not exciting or fulfilling enough for me, not to mention the pathetic salary. I want more, babe. I miss that adrenaline rush I used to feel working as a surgeon. I miss saving lives. Being a medical doctor is what I was born to do, babe. I wasn't born to talk, I was born to do. And with you by my side I think I'm ready to go back."

Still smiling, she leans over and kisses my lips briefly then pulls back.

-Her: "I don't care why you did it, silly. I still love you. And the fact that you put us, our relationship, first makes me love you even more...Now remind me, which interview are you having tomorrow? The one at Vic?"

-Me: "No, silly. The one at Vic is on Friday."

Tomorrow I'm going to Frere Hospital."

-Her: "Oh, yah, I remember now."

-Me: "With the foundation laid, chances are I'm going to be taken by Frere though. I really want Frere. Victoria hospital is small, I need more."

-Her: "Then I'll be praying and crossing fingers for everything to go according to plan. I want you to get the job you want."

-Me: "But you know what that would mean, right? That I would have to move to East London and leave you here."

-Her: "That's no train smash, babe. I've always known that we won't remain in the same town forever. If...I mean WHEN you have to move to EL I'll be fine with it because I understand that you have to live your own life. We'll still get to see each other when we're both free, we'll be fine, we'll make it work, EL is not that far. But that's if I'll still be in Alice by then, if Fort Hare

accepts me for Honours next year."

-Me: "Of course they'll take you, babe. They have no reason to reject your application."

-Her: "Hopefully."

-Me: "Relax, they'll take you...Another thing, babe. When I go back to the medical field, a lot is going to change and I'm gonna need you to bear with me. The 8:00 to 16:30 thing is going to end. I'm now going to work long, irregular hours. And our leisure plans will be upset by emergencies quite often. I'm going to work under stressful conditions and I'll sometimes take the stress home with me. I need you to understand this."

-Her: "Of course, babe, I understand all of that, it comes with the territory. I know what to expect and I promise not to give you a hard time."

-Me: "That's good to hear. However, and please don't take this the wrong way, what you just

said is exactly what Busi also said. But down the line all I could hear from her were complaints, one after the other. Listen, I know that you're not her but I'm just saying."

-Her: "You're right, I'm not her. And you need to relax and stay positive, we'll be fine...Now, would you like me to help you prepare for tomorrow's interview this afternoon?"

I laugh.

-Me: "You? Help me prepare for the interview? Please remind me, how many formal job interviews have you ever been to in your life? If I remember correctly, the answer is zero, none, zilch. So tell me, how can you possibly help me?"

-Her: "Oh, kulungile delela. [Oh, it's okay, look down on me.]"

She says with this cute side smile.

-Me: "Sorry, my love. But don't worry, I got this.

Now come let's go take a shower and get ready to go to campus. I'm still a UFH employee until the exams are done, and you still have a test to write today. So let's get a move on."

I help her up and we make our way to the bedroom.

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Someleze

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It's now the afternoon, around 15:00, and I'm walking out of Yonela's room at eLitheni residence. After writing the test I called her and asked to meet, and she said I should come to her room. I was cool with that. But before going to her, I decided to call Thuso's father to extend my condolences and also ask about the date of

the funeral. He took my call and even though I could tell from his voice that he was hurt, he tried to act strong. He really appreciated my call, something that made me die a little inside as guilt started eating away at me once again. And from the way he spoke, I could tell that he didn't know anything about the falling out I had with his daughter. Maybe that's a good thing, right?

Anyway, he told me that he was now in EL to get his daughter's body transported to Mpumalanga, and that the funeral would be on Saturday next week. That to me became a confirmation that the girl who's been my friend for years is now really gone. Words got stuck in my throat and I felt like all the energy was being sucked out of my body. I staggered but quickly reached for the nearest wall to steady myself. After hanging up I just sat there, on the stairs of my department's building, for about 10 minutes trying to regain my strength. Then I got up and

made my way to Yonela's res.

All she could tell me is that Thuso left Sunday evening saying she was going with this older guy from EL, one of the guys she was sleeping with. And that all she knows about this guy is his name - Sandile. She doesn't know his last name or his face because apparently she never got to meet him, not even once. Now I realise why Sandile didn't want me to tell Thuso that he's my father, and I can also see that he was telling the truth when he said Thuso didn't know much about him. Without a doubt, if she did her friends would too. This works for me because I don't want him to be linked to me, I don't want him to drag me down with him as an accessory to this murder should he go down for it.

Leaving Yonela's res, I make my way to Alex's. I seriously need to give him a piece of my mind for what he did to Doc and I, for reporting us.

Taking long strides, I quickly get to his res on

the other side of campus. After knocking on his door, he tells me to come in and I walk in only to find him packing his belongings in boxes.

-Him: "Hey, Soso. I wasn't expecting to see you here."

He says stopping what he's been doing.

-Me: "You're packing. Why?"

-Him: "My time here is over. I submitted the final draft of my dissertation on Monday, so there's nothing left for me here. I'm leaving tomorrow, and if there's anything else I need to do pertaining my dissertation I'll communicate with my supervisor via email."

-Me: "Oh, so this was your plan, huh?"

-Him: "What do you mean?"

-Me: "Your plan was to ruin mine and Thando's life then disappear, huh? Why, Alex? What did I ever do to you? Are you that bitter? Alex, you're

the one who left me, you're the one who hurt me and not the other way round. So why are you doing this?"

-Him: "You're talking about the emails and me bringing that crazy Natalie into your lives?"

About that, I'm sorry, Someleze. I truly am. But I'm glad that it didn't shake your relationship."

-Me: "You're glad? You're glad? Fuck you, Alex. Fuck you! And I'm not talking about Natalie here, I'm talking about you reporting my relationship with Thando."

I take in his face. He looks surprised and kind of confused.

-Him: "What? You got reported?"

He sits on the bed rather abruptly, still keeping his eyes on me.

-Him: "Soso, bona, Thuso came to me with that plan on Saturday but I asked her not to go ahead with it. I had already decided to take a

step back in this whole madness and just focus on myself. I asked Thuso to also do the same and just drop the whole thing. I saw no upside in reporting you, I saw no upside in fucking up your lives. I didn't want to hurt you and I really tried to convince Thuso to also draw back, and for some reason I thought I got through to her. Now I'm surprised to know that she still went through with reporting you."

-Me: "She didn't go through with it, Alex, because she didn't make it to campus on Monday. Don't tell me you don't know."

-Him: "Know what?"

-Me: "That your one-night stand is no more."

-Him: "No more? What do you mean?"

He really doesn't know, I can see it in his eyes.

-Me: "Thuso got involved in an automobile accident when she was driving from East London early Monday morning. She passed

away in hospital."

He springs up from the bed like a madman, really shocked.

-Him: "Say what now? Whoa, what? TK is gone? I didn't know any of this. I didn't."

He says, frantically scratching his head.

-Me: "It is true and it is very sad. It really hurts. But I'm not here to talk about it, I'm here to talk about what you did."

He comes closer to me. My first instinct is to take a step back but then for a reason I don't know, I find myself not moving. He stands so close to me and looks into my eyes.

-Him: "Someleze, I know that I lied to you a number of times before but I need you to believe me now. I didn't report your relationship, I didn't do it. I couldn't go that far, no. That is extremely low, even for a scumbag like me. I couldn't have done it. I don't need anything else

from you, I just need you to please believe me. I didn't do it."

I look at him, deadpan, searching his face, his eyes specifically.

-Him: "Please tell me you believe me."

I do, but I just can't say it out loud. I only turn and make for the door.

-Him: "Someleze, I'm sorry...for everything."

Still, I don't say anything. Leaving him standing there, I walk out and take the stairs down, wondering who could have reported us if it wasn't him.

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Out of the res, I make my way to Doc's office. I know that it's not the time to go home yet but I just want to see him and talk to him about this.

I find him sitting behind his desk already marking the scripts of the test we wrote today. As soon as he sees me, he stops and covers the papers. That doesn't surprise me though, it's what he always does: he never lets me see the other students papers or their marks.

-Him: "Hey, how did it go with...what's her name again?"

-Me: "Yonela."

I tell him everything.

-Him: "That works for you...I guess. But why does it look like there's something else on your mind?"

-Me: "Alex didn't do it, Thando. He didn't report us. So if he didn't do it, who did?"

-Him: "Oh, that. Don't crack your skull trying to figure it out, it was Thuso. I was talking with Prof Elliot earlier, asking him the same question and he didn't only tell me who did it but he also

showed me. Using her university email account, Thuso emailed everything to Prof and the management on Sunday, in the afternoon. So Monday morning everybody got the email and yah, shit happened."

-Me: "Are you serious?"

-Him: "I am. I saw it with my own eyes."

-Me: "So it was all her. Oh God."

-Him: "Still feel guilty about what happened to her?"

-Me: "Honestly? Yah. This doesn't change how I feel about the matter. But at least now I know how much she hated me, how much she was determined to ruin my life."

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Saturday - 14:00

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"Baby, Sandile just texted me. He says he's in town and I should meet him at Engen now."

I inform Doc as I enter his study room. He's sitting behind his desk, working on his laptop. Lately, he spends most of his time in this room and behind that laptop. I'm not sure what he does exactly and I never ask, I just give him his space because a nuisance is the last thing I want to be. He went to both his interviews yesterday and on Thursday, and we're both optimistic. If he gets the job in EL then that would mean I no longer need to get a place of my own anymore. He's going to move out of this house and leave me here. This house already feels like home, so much that I no longer want to move out, I think I'll just get housemates to help me with the rent.

-Him: "So you're on your way to him now?"

He asks without even looking up.

-Me: "Yeah. You don't need anything from me, do you?"

He lifts his head and looks at me.

-Him: "Just one thing actually. Please don't give your father a hard time when you meet him. Understand that he did what he did because he was trying to protect you."

Seriously, I've made this clear to this man in the past few days. I told him that if he wants us to get along he should just keep his mouth shut as far as this matter is concerned. He shouldn't tell me what to do, what to feel or even how to feel it.

Irked, I choose not to respond to what he just said.

-Me: "Is there anything you need me to get you from the shops?"

-Him: "Oh, so that's you ignoring me, huh. Fine, go. And no, I don't need anything from the shops."

With that, he pulls his eyes away from me to focus on the screen of his laptop again. I can tell that he's irritated and quite frankly, so am I. Without saying anything more, I leave his study and make my way to the front door.

Fifteen minutes later I get to Sandile's car parked at the Engen filling station I used to work at. Ready to get inside and give him a piece of my mind, I reach for the passenger side door. But before I can open it, he opens it from inside and I simply hop in.

-Him: "Hey. Are we okay?"

He asks looking at me square in the face as soon as I settle in my seat.

-Me: "Okay? What do you think, Sandile? Do you honestly think we'd be okay after what you did?"

Sandile, I came to you for help but I didn't ask you to murder anyone. So why did you do it? Why?"

The way I'm angry at him I'm not even talking, I'm shouting.

-Him: "Why? Someleze, I'm your father, I did what I did to protect you. That's what fathers do, isn't it?"

Unlike mine, his voice is calm and collected.

-Me: "Couldn't you have used other methods to do that? There were so many methods you could have used to deal with the situation. Why did it have to murder? Or is that the kind of person you are? The kind that has no respect whatsoever for human life? Do you enjoy killing?"

He looks away from me and exhales loud enough for me to hear.

-Me: "I hate you for what you did, Sandile. I hate

you. I thought we could build a good relationship, you know. But after this, I'm no longer interested. I don't know you, and I don't even want to know you. You give me the creeps."

He looks at me.

-Him: "Someleze, here's what you need to know. There's not a thing I won't do to protect you. I'd break the law or take a bullet for you without even thinking twice. That's because you're my blood and I love you. You are the only child I got, and making sure you're safe is my job now. And another thing you need to know is that I'm a proactive person. I don't wait for things to get out hand before I deal with them."

-Me: "And by dealing with things you mean killing, isn't it?"

-Him: "I mean dealing with them as meticulously as possible. For example, the car Thuso died in

has no ties to me, whatsoever. But I'm not here to talk about that. Just take the iPad at the back, it belonged to Thuso. The password is 'crocodile', her last name in English, her family totem. Check the iMessages exchanged between her and a person named Slice, then tell me she didn't deserve to go."

Then he looks out the window once again. Clearly looking at me right now disgusts him as much as looking at him disgusts me. Confused by what he just said, I reach for the iPad. And he's right, this iPad belonged to Thuso, I know it.

-Him: "Don't read the messages here. Just take the iPad with you on your way out."

-Me: "Is that you telling me to get out of your car?"

-Him: "Yes, before I say something I'll regret. I don't respond well when the word 'hate' is directed to me. So just go. Besides, I need to go

see my sister, I don't have time for your tantrums."

His sister. He's making me so angry right now but I still think I should tell him that I actually know his sister and how I know her.

-Me: "About that, I..."

But he cuts me off.

-Him: "Don't bang the door on your way out."

Yoh! Seriously? He really meant it, he wants me to go. With the iPad in my hand, I open the door and get out.

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Sandile

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Do I enjoy killing? My own daughter has just

asked me that. Well, unless there's a major short circuit upstairs, I don't think there's anyone out there who enjoys taking another person's life. The fact though is, everyone has it in them to kill someday. People don't seem to get that until it happens to them. They think of themselves as incapable of murder. But it is just a matter of coincidence or circumstance. A misunderstanding, a squabble over something, a reaction to provocation, self defence or simply being at the wrong place at the wrong time can bring out a destructive streak in people who are otherwise good and decent. Anyone can kill. It's just a matter of why or how you do it.

I was also one of the decent fellows, and I still consider myself one, when circumstances pushed me to murder 6 years ago. For me the push factor was revenge, I was avenging my parents' deaths. If I'm being honest, I no longer

have faith in our justice system. Perpetrators walk free everyday and that's exactly what happened with my parents' killers too.

Something inside me snapped when they walked free and I decided to take matters into my own hands. And once I crossed that line there was no going back. Now, killing is my default setting. You come after me or my loved ones, you simply incur my wrath in the worst possible way. Do I enjoy doing that though? The answer is no, but I see it as a necessary evil.

When you kill someone with your hands, something from that person passes to you - a sigh, a smell or a gesture. It clings to your body and seeps into your skin, going all the way into your heart, and thus continues to live within you. Which is why I no longer literally stain my hands with blood, I use other methods to permanently remove obstacles out of my way. Already I am carrying with me traces of the two people I

killed with my bare hands. I wear them around my neck like invisible necklaces, feeling their presence against my flesh, tight and heavy. It is a very uncomfortable feeling. So, do I enjoy killing? Once again, the answer is no. But make no mistake, if you touch my loved ones, you'll take the elevator all the way 6 feet under and never come back up again.

I get to the staff quarters in Victoria hospital to see my sister. She called me earlier asking to see me. She sounded sad and when I asked what was going on, she didn't want to tell me anything over the phone, she just wanted me to come see her. So yeah, here I am.

I knock at the door of their commune and she immediately comes to open.

-Me: "Mntana ka Ma. [My sister]"

I say hugging her. I really love my little sister. Since we no longer have parents, she's the only

family I have, putting Soso aside.

-Her: "Bhut' wam. [My brother]"

She sounds so down, and that tells me that something is definitely wrong. As a man who hates beating around the bush, I go straight to the point, I ask her what's going on. She answers by taking my hand and walks me over to the couches.

-Her: "Please let's sit down for this. I'm alone, everyone's out. But, bhut' wam, that doesn't mean you're free to shout at me when you hear what I have to say."

She says as we both sit down on the couch.

-Me: "What's going on, sis? Talk to me."

-Her: "I'm pregnant."

#30 Finale Part 1

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"If there's a question of my heart, you've got it.

It don't belong to anyone but you. If there's a question of my love, you've got it. Baby, don't worry, I've got plans for you." - Usher [Wale]

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Sandile

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"You're pregnant? Then that's good news, sis. So, why ain't you happy?"

I ask, confused. I don't understand why Iviwe would be this down when she's pregnant for the man she's engaged to.

-Her: "The baby is not Nathi's, bhuti."

-Me: "What do you mean it's not Nathi's? What are you talking about, Iviwe?"

-Her: "I mean the father is Alex. A guy I met right here in Alice. A guy my age, not a man that's 11 years my senior. I'm pregnant for the man I love,

bhuti, not a man you're forcing me to marry."

I don't know how or when I got off the couch but I find myself on my feet. I'm angry and disappointed at Iviwe. How could she? How could she go and get pregnant for another man when she's engaged to be married to another? The wedding is less than 2 months away for goodness sake.

-Me: "Forcing you? Me? A man I'M forcing you to marry? Why do we have to keep going over this, Iviwe? Why? I'm not the bad guy here, Iviwe, and you know it. I'm only making sure that our family keeps its end of the bargain. That's all."

-Her: "At my expense."

We always called Iviwe the miracle child of our family. And that's because every child that our parents had after me and before her never lived past their first birthdays, all 4 of them. But she survived and grew up to be this fine young

woman that she is today. According to what our parents told us, we owe that to Nathi's parents. Nathi Tose is Iviwe's 35 year old fiancé. And his parents are a prophet and a prophetess back in Mthatha. Apparently, they are the ones who protected Iviwe, whatever that means. I'm not religious nor traditional, but I never questioned any of what our parents told us. All I know is that they had an agreement with Nathi's parents that if Iviwe lived past the age of 15 then they would have to marry her off to Nathi. My parents signed the agreement because they believed that they owed the Toses for saving Iviwe's life from whatever "curse" that was bestowed upon them. Now, with my parents gone I'm the one who has to make sure that we honour that agreement. Nathi paid lobola last December and the wedding is supposed to be this coming December. Do I believe in arranged marriages though? Oh, hell no. But because I'm avoiding conflict with the Toses, because I want

peace, I'm going along with this.

-Iviwe: "If you're not the bad guy then stand by my side, bhuti. Support me in this pregnancy and go tell Nathi and his parents to go to hell. I don't love Nathi. I don't love him, bhuti, and you know this."

Trying to calm myself down, I sit back down.

-Me: "And you love this...Alex?"

-Her: "Yes. But I'm not sure if he loves me."

She says looking down.

-Me: "Meaning?"

-Her: "After he found out about my engagement to Nathi, he dumped me. And now he's not talking to me."

-Me: "Does he know about the pregnancy?"

-Her: "No. He's even blocked my number, I can't talk to him."

-Me: "Then this boy needs to deal with me. Give me his number and I'll call him myself. I need to see him today. Now."

-Her: "Does that mean you're gonna tell Nathi to go jump?"

-Me: "That baby you're carrying changes everything."

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Someleze

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Disbelief and anger rise inside me as words from the screen of Thuso's iPad make themselves clear before my eyes. Realising just how Thuso was determined to not only ruin my life but to also have it taken is unsettling to say the least. I can't believe I was feeling guilty

about her death. I wasted my emotions for someone who didn't deserve any of it, and knowing it makes me angry. I'm livid. And now I can safely say I understand why Sandile got rid of her. I can't believe I judged and blamed him for nothing. Thuso asked for what happened to her. It was either me or her, and my father chose me. For that he deserves a medal not insults from me. With that in mind, I reach for my phone on the coffee table and call him. I want to apologise for all the things I said to him, he didn't deserve any of it.

I dial his number but he doesn't pick up. I try again and still, he doesn't answer. Is he still mad at me? I honestly wouldn't blame him if he still is though, I deserve it.

Getting up from the couch in the lounge, I make my way to the study, to talk to Doc. When I got back from Sandile I just sat in the lounge alone and immediately opened the messages to see

what Thuso was up to. And now it's time to share my findings with Doc.

I walk into the study to find him sitting barefoot on the floor, on the thick soft mat, with his back against the corner couch. Immediately when he sees me he stops thumbing his phone, he locks its screen then puts it aside. I can't help but feel like he's hiding something from me but I don't want to ask, not now anyway.

-Me: "Hey, babe. Am I disturbing you?"

-Him: "No, no. Come on in. I'm surprised you're only coming in now though, considering the fact that you came back 10 minutes ago."

-Me: "You've been counting? Then why didn't you come to me in the lounge?"

-Him: "I wanted to give you your space."

-Me: "Thando, are we okay?"

-Him: "What are you talking about? Of course,

we're okay. Why wouldn't we be?"

I don't answer, I just walk over to sit next to him on the mat.

-Me: "You were right when you advised me to not give my father a hard time about this Thuso thing. You were right, he did it to protect me. I didn't listen to you, I waved you off as if you were talking nonsense and for that I owe you an apology. I'm sorry, baby."

-Him: "Don't worry about it, babe. So tell me, what happened? Your father explained to you why he did what he did?"

-Me: "Not really. He just gave me this iPad so I could see for myself."

-Him: "And? What's in the iPad?"

-Me: "The iPad belonged to Thuso. And my father asked me to read the messages exchanged between her and a person named Slice. Here, read for yourself."

I give him the iPad and he reads.

-Him: "What the fuck? Murder?! So Slice is a gun for hire and Thuso hired him to take care of you should her plan to break us up not work?"

-Me: "That's what the messages say."

-Him: "See what I was telling you? Thuso deserved what happened to her. She deserves no compassion from you, her dead self ain't worth it. She wanted you gone permanently, babe. And if it wasn't for your father, she was gonna go ahead and do it. Still think she deserves your tears?"

-Me: "I no longer give a fuck about anything that's got to do with her, Thando. I really underestimated how sick and obsessed she was. She reported our relationship and she also wanted me dead. For what exactly? A man that wasn't even hers. Honestly? I no longer feel sorry or guilty that she got killed. She simply got

what was coming to her. If there's anybody who deserves anything from me it's my father, he deserves my apology. I judged him without getting all the facts first."

-Doc: "So call him and apologise."

-Me: "I've already tried but he's not picking up. I'll try again later."

-Him: "This should teach you to wait for an explanation first before you react next time."

-Me: "Yeah, I know...Now I need to get rid of this iPad."

-Him: "It doesn't have internet connection, does it?"

-Me: "No. So it can't be tracked. But I still need to get rid of it."

I say putting it aside.

-Me: "But first things first. Let's talk about us."

-Him: "Us?"

-Me: "I don't know, babe, but in the past couple of days I've been feeling like you're drifting away from me. I feel like you're hiding something from me. You spend your time in this room, behind your laptop screen, working on something only you knows about. Even when I walked in here just now, you quickly hid the screen of your phone. You ain't telling me anything, Thando. What's going on? Why are you being so secretive? Do I need to be worried?"

He looks down for a moment then looks at me.

-Him: "You don't think I'm cheating, do you?"

-Me: "I don't know. Are you?"

He lets out a chuckle.

-Him: "Of course not. Come on, babe, you know that I'd never do that to you."

-Me: "Do I?"

-Him: "Baby, you've got my heart. It doesn't belong to anyone but you. You've got my love. You know this."

-Me: "Honestly, I haven't been feeling that a lot lately. What are you hiding from me?"

He covers his face with his hands.

-Him: "God, I didn't want things to go this way."

-Me: "What way?"

He removes the hands and looks at me.

-Him: "I wanted this to be a surprise, baby, and now you've ruined it. I've been making plans for us, plans of love. Since I'm going back to medicine soon and knowing how busy my life is going to get, I wanted us to go away on a vacation as soon as you're done with your exams, to spend some quality time together, away from everything and everyone. I've been planning a trip to the Bahamas and my generous father is bankrolling it."

-Me: "Are you for real?"

He doesn't answer me, he just gets up from the mat to retrieve his laptop from the desk. Then he comes back to sit next to me. He shows me everything and I'm honestly taken aback. Aww, ain't he just sweet? I really wasn't expecting this...at all. A romantic getaway? I've never experienced any of this before, and that's me being honest. UDoc undifaka ezintweni ndiyakuxelela.

Without saying anything, I quickly put the laptop aside and attack him with a hug.

-Me: "I'm sorry for ruining the surprise, thando lwam. I'm really sorry, I didn't know."

-Him: "It's okay. Now you know. As for the phone....here, see what I was doing."

He unlocks the screen and hands the phone to me. I can see that he was typing an email, a reply to a travel agent. I find myself smiling,

both at my imagination running wild and at Doc's sweet gesture. My poor man hasn't been doing anything wrong, he was only planning something nice for me, for us.

-Me: "Thank you for this, sthandwa sam. Really. No one has ever done something this nice for me, not that I've been with a lot of people though, but hey...you know what I mean. I'm really sorry it's now no longer a surprise. And I'm sorry for letting my imagination run wild."

-Him: "Don't sweat it. And you deserve this, babe. We deserve it."

He leans in and kisses me softly on the lips, and then puts his finger on my chin, lifting my eyes to meet his.

-Him: "I love you."

-Me: "I love you more."

Just then my phone rings and it's my mother. Not wanting Doc to disturb me, I go answer the

call outside, in the passage. Doc also walks out of the study and past me to the bedroom.

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My mom wants me to go home next weekend...with Thando. She says she wants to officially meet him as my boyfriend. I think she's being a little forward now but I promise to get back to her after I've talked to Doc. Then we talk about other stuff. When I finally hang up, Doc is already back in the study. I find him sitting on the couch busy fiddling with his phone again.

-Me: "Baby, my mother..."

But he doesn't let me finish. With this naughty smile on his face he puts his hand up, shushing me. Then he puts the phone aside.

-Him: "Come here."

From his voice and body language, I already know what he has in mind. I walk over and stand somewhat obediently before him. He rises from the couch to kiss me on the mouth with so much passion, then he pulls back and gradually sits down again.

"Take a step back and take your skirt off."

I don't know what this man does to me but simply hearing him say those words excites me and I feel that inner warmth rising. I unbutton and unzip my skirt then kick it off of me.

"Now unbutton your blouse. Slowly."

I happily obey. I slip the buttons free, until the silky garment hangs loose from my shoulders, my full breasts protruding beyond the folds.

-Him: "Take it off."

He's enjoying the show, I can tell. Obediently, I

let the blouse slide to the ground where it ripples onto the thick soft mat. My push up bra sure has enhanced my cleavage. It is black satin, matching the panties I'm wearing. I start to take off the bra, but he stops me.

"No. Come here. I'll do it myself."

And compliantly I step closer. I feel incredibly erotic right now. My total surrender of will to my man's wishes is so arousing. I warm from within, embers of arousal beginning to fan into flame.

Only in bra and panties, I hover over him. His hands journey to my back and he slowly unclasps my bra. Tossing it aside, his hands run up my thighs, all the way behind, gathering me in and pulling me close, his face against my stomach as he kisses and nibbles my skin. Then, one hand still clasping me from behind, the other moves to my private. With a single finger he slides inside the front of my panties,

pulling them slightly to one side and, lowering his head, nuzzling his face against me. I can feel his hot breath against me as he softly bites at the skin of my sex. My breathing quickens and he chuckles as he hears it. Then he leans back onto the couch.

-Him: "Now, play with yourself."

I hesitate, a little unsure of what he is asking.

"Go ahead, babe. Give me a show. Play with yourself. I want to watch you arouse yourself, then when you're good and wet I'll take over."

Sliding my fingers down the front of my sex, I start to rub myself over the panties. His head tilts and his eyes are dark, pupils wide as he watches. He's not exactly smiling, but his teeth show a little, as I see his breathing deepen.

"I don't think we need those, do we?"

He says, referring to my panties. And I quickly discard them.

"Now start fucking yourself."

I stand close to him as he leans further back into the couch.

-Him: "Closer. I want to see everything."

I try to move closer, but cannot as my knees chafe against the couch.

"Kneel up. Straddle me."

Kneeling up, my legs parted astride my man, he supports me with his hands on my hips, steadying me.

"Now. Play with yourself. I want to see you dripping."

This will not be difficult. The act of opening myself, so close to his face that I can feel the heat of his breath on my loins, is already arousing me and my pussy is moistly warm. Slipping fingers between my legs I start to play with my clit, pulling the hood back with one

hand and rubbing it with the other. Working at my nub, it grows hard under my fingers. A couple of fingers in my pussy for a moment gives me a little juice to lubricate myself, making my clit more slippery and easier to work. He watches as I work myself.

-Him: "Put both your hands on my shoulders. Support yourself."

I do as he says, stopping playing with myself.

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Taking one hand from my hips, he parts the lips of my vagina, leaning in close to suckle at me. His tongue, lapping at my bud is electric and I moan, struggling to remain still in my awkward position balanced over him.

"Don't move."

He says, withdrawing from me for a moment, then he returns to his work, nibbling at me, chewing lightly at my labia, working my clit with his tongue.

My breath is shuddering now, and my balance is precarious.

"Take your hands from my shoulders. Support yourself against the couch back."

When I remove the hands, he slides down, now directly under me, my pussy open for his inspection. Looking down, he peruses my folds, tasting and licking, flicking at my clit with his tongue, working circles around it, nibbling with his teeth. I am very liquid now, my breath ragged and broken. P**sy juices trickle and he licks them away. He tongues my entrance, probing first lightly and then more deeply. His face presses close to me, sucking me as I judder and squirm, fighting the impulse to buck my hips. Through my growing euphoria I feel

two of his fingers going inside my vagina. He finger fucks me for a moment then he pulls out and plays with my clit sending waves of electric stimulation shooting through me. I squeal, convulsing reflexively as he circles my clit with his fingers, first probing into the root, then skimming the tip, now sensitised and swollen. Juices gush from my throbbing p**sy and an unbearable euphoria builds in waves as he works mercilessly at my tender button. Orgasm rises quickly, engulfing me in spasm after spasm of pleasure. At some level I am aware that he is no longer working my clit, but has buried himself in my pussy, drinking from me as I cum, his mouth locked over me, his tongue penetrating prolonging my climax as I shudder and scream.

Barely does my orgasm subside than he pushes me away and down to the floor, on the mat. Standing, he towers over me, stripping off his t-

shirt and pants. As they drop in a heap beside me he has one more thing to say.

"On your hands and knees, baby. Ass up. I want to see you."

I obey, dropping down to rest on my elbows, head well down so that my naked ass is presented for him to see.

With him now kneeling behind me, I feel a slight spank on one of my butt cheeks and I quiver in anticipation of what's about to come next.

-Him: "You like that, huh?"

-Me: "Yes. Yes."

He spanks me again, harder this time, making me yelp. A tingle runs down my spine. I have barely come down from the waves of one orgasm but already I feel my body's response to what he's doing to me. Biting my lip, my ass smarting, I can feel my pussy juices flowing once again. Then his fingers ram inside me,

pumping in and out. I moan loudly. And I want nothing but his cock inside me right now.

-Me: "Please, fuck me, baby. I want to feel you inside me. Please."

He gets up from the kneeling position and reaches for his pants and takes out a condom out of the pocket, I'm sure that's what he went to get from the bedroom when he walked out of here. He puts it on then with a hand pressing my head to the mat, he kneels between my splayed legs, forcing my knees a little further apart with his, then opening my pussy wider with his fingers. His erection presses against my smarting lips then thrusts inwards.

I am slick and slippery. There is no resistance as he pumps into me, hard, meeting my inner walls. My elbows are still on the ground, my back is arched to present my open p**sy.

Pumping me, he spanks my butt cheeks in time with his rhythm, first one side, then the other. I

am so close to another orgasm right now. But he pulls out and turns me around so I could lie on my back on the mat. He enters me again. In he slides and out, in and out. Not hard, nor gentle, but regular and even and smooth as silk, with a rhythm like a heartbeat. My eyes close, my own heartbeat is wild, my pulse banging wildly at my temples, the gliding thrust of him filling my p**sy making me moan and pant. Opening my eyes, I find him gazing down, watching my face as he works me. His eyes are deep, intense. I could drown in them. His teeth lightly gritted, I see a sheen of perspiration as he draws me to my climax. It begins, rising from my core, rippling out through the muscles of my belly and thighs. As I convulse inside, he responds by now thrusting hard in his heartbeat rhythm, my cunt squeezes his cock as I erupt into orgasm. Through my physical rapture I am conscious of arms encircling me as I cum, kisses on my neck and breasts. Gliding down

once more from the heights, I feel warm breath by my face and fingers running through my hair. He does not cease his thrusting. Kissing me briefly on the lips, he raises himself over me as he thrusts, looking down on me as he builds to his own climax. And now, I stroke his face, reaching up to caress his beautiful features as I move with his rhythm, trying to gift him what he just gifted me. With my pussy I relax as he glides in, squeeze as he pulls out, trying to make it good for him. His sweat drips onto my breasts, trickling over my hot damp skin, anointing me with his cologne. With a gasp, his eyes shut tight and he shudders into orgasm, groaning as his hips buck, his cock pressing deep inside me. His chest heaving, he collapses onto me and simply lies there as I brush his damp hair with my fingers, kissing the side of his face.

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Alex

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I walk into KFC to meet up with this guy that I don't even know. He called me and asked me to meet him here in an hour, saying he was Iviwe's big brother and that it was important. My first instinct was to tell him to go to hell because I'm no longer with his sister but I ended up agreeing to the meet. So here I am now.

Without even looking around I immediately spot Iviwe sitting with this guy that I assume is the brother and I walk over to them.

-Me: "Molweni. [Greetings]"

-Iviwe: "Alex. I didn't think you'd come."

-Me: "Yah, well, I'm here now."

-Her brother: "Sit down, Alex. And start telling

me what you're planning to do now that you've impregnated my sister."

-Me: "What?"

That comes out of my mouth as a shout. Noticing that people are now staring at me I slowly sit down, a little embarrassed. Iviwe is pregnant? I don't believe this.

-Me: "What do you mean Iviwe is pregnant?"

-Her brother: "I'm not here to explain Biology to you, Meje. You know what you did with my sister. And you impregnated her, that's a fact. Another fact is, I hate wasting time. What I wanna know is what are you gonna do now that you're aware of the damage you've caused."

This whole thing is a shock to me. I wasn't expecting to be ambushed like this. How does one respond to something like this? How? Dammit! Why did I become so careless with Iviwe? I'm not ready for this, I'm not ready to be

a parent and definitely not with this woman.

I hesitate, not knowing what to say.

-Her brother: "Let me make things easier for you, Meje. You're gonna have to step up as a man and do the right thing. You're gonna have to marry Iviwe."

Marry? What?

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Getting up from the floor, Doc and I are both famished. I suggest that we go take a shower together then go grab a bite at KFC, I'm seriously craving their fried chicken.

As we walk into KFC I immediately spot my

father with Iviwe and Alex. What the hell? Oh God, the thought of my father finding out like this that I actually know his sister literally stops me in my tracks.

-Doc: "What's going on, babe?"

-Me: "Over there, that's my father with my aunt and..."

He finishes the sentence for me.

-Him: "And your ex boyfriend that's now your aunt's boyfriend. Talk about awkward."

My instincts are telling me to walk back up out, now, before my father looks up and sees me. I'm just not ready for this situation right now. But before I can make that lame move, my father looks up and gestures for me to walk over to them when he sees me.

Not in the mood, I slowly walk over to them and Doc walks over to the counter.

-Me: "Dad."

I say, as I stand by their table. As soon as that single word leaves my mouth both Iviwe and Alex look at me as if they've just seen a ghost, their eyes wide. Confused, shocked.

-Them: "What?"

They say in unison.

-Sandile: "Y'all know each other? You know my sister, Soso?"

-Me: "Unfortunately, yes. I know Iviwe. And I also know Alex. Alex was my boyfriend and your sister over here, took him away from me. You, Alex and Iviwe, as you've heard: Sandile over here is my father. How's this for a family get-together, a get-to-know-each-other moment?"

All three of them look at each other. Their facial expressions priceless.

-Me: "Now that the introductions are out of the

way I think I should leave you 3 to whatever you were talking about."

I turn to walk away but Alex gets to his feet rather abruptly and grabs my hand.

-Him: "Please don't walk away like this, Soso. I didn't know. I didn't know that Iviwe's your aunt."

-Me: "I'm sure you didn't. Now let go of my arm."

He releases my arm and I turn to walk away again. But he tries to follow me.

-Sandile: "Hey, Alex, come back here. Leave my daughter alone, you're marrying my sister."

Marriage? That stops me in my tracks. I'm never ever going to be rid of Alex, am I?

#31 Season Finale

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"Inkomo zikababa zilungile, nenhliziyo yami iduduzelekile. Awu vuma sthandwa, vuma vuma

sibemunye. Ng'zokunik' uthando
olungapheliyo." - Thami

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"This whole thing is one colossal mess, Dad."

I voice out to Sandile as I'm sitting with him in his car. After I walked away from their table at KFC I went to ask for the car keys from Doc who was standing at the counter. I just couldn't wait inside, I wanted to go wait in the car, away from that drama. Doc gave me the keys and I walked out, leaving all of them in there. Some moments later Doc came out and we drove home. But not long after we got there Sandile called asking to see me, hence I'm now in his car.

He looks at me and his lips stretch to form a smile.

-Me: "At least one of us is finding this amusing."

-Him: "No, forget this drama. I'm smiling because I love it when you call me dad."

Hearing him say that makes me smile too.

-Me: "After what you did for me you deserve it, Dad. I feel like thanking you non-stop."

-Him: "No, like I said, there's no need for that. I'm your father, protecting you is my job. Whenever you find yourself in a tight corner just know that I'm only a phone call away and I'll be there to save the day."

-Me: "Superman's got nothing on you, right?"

We both laugh.

-Him: "I don't know about that, hey."

-Me: "Superman is only a fictional superhero but you're something more, you're my real life hero, Dad."

-Him: "I don't know about that either."

I laugh.

-Me: "Fine, be modest. I'm just happy you've forgiven me for judging and disrespecting you."

Yeah, the first thing I did when I got into his car was to apologise to him for the way I reacted about this whole Thuso thing.

-Him: "Don't worry about it, just don't repeat it, okay? Respect me as your father, baby, and we'll be good."

-Me: "You got it, pops."

He lets out that beautiful smile again.

-Him: "I love you, baby. Which is why I feel bad about this Iviwe and Alex thing. If I knew the kind of recent history y'all have I wouldn't have suggested that they get married. I only wanted Alex to do the right thing now that Iviwe is pregnant. Soso, I fucked up with you and your mother, and I hate seeing another man doing the same thing."

-Me: "I sure understand where you're coming

from but, Dad, don't you think forcing Alex to marry her is too much? You just told me that Iviwe was about to enter into an arranged marriage with this Nathi guy, and now you want to arrange another marriage for her? Think that's a good idea?"

-Him: "It was going to be different with Alex. Those two are expecting a baby because they were in a relationship at some point, they loved each other and from what I hear they only broke up because of Nathi."

-Me: "WAS gonna be different? Past tense?"

-Him: "Me and too much drama don't mix, baby. After the bomb you dropped on my lap at KFC I decided to take a step back and drop this marriage thing. It's like you've just said, this whole thing is a mess. And I got to find out the wrong way. I felt so stupid, you know."

-Me: "I'm sorry you had to find out that way. I'm

sorry for just dropping a bomb on you like that."

-Him: "Yah well, what's done is done. And I didn't miss the opportunity to give Alex an earful for what he did to you and to my sister. The boy needs to grow up."

-Me: "What did he say when you told him that you're dropping the marriage thing?"

-Him: "Said he's still gonna sit down and think about the whole thing. But if he goes ahead and marry Iviwe then it would be because he wants to and not because I'm forcing him to."

-Me: "God, I wish he doesn't go ahead and do it. That would be a torture to me. Dad, Alex was my first love, my first love, and Iviwe took him away from me. Both those people hurt me, they hurt me so bad, Dad. It is difficult enough that I now have to look at the woman who snatched my first love and treat her as an aunt, but to have to accept the ex that hurt me as an uncle

by marriage would be too much. No, that's too much. I honestly don't care who Alex marries, he can even follow in our former President's footsteps and have multiple wives for all I care, I'm so over him, but him marrying my aunt, him being my family would be too much for me seriously. You know, papa, after everything that guy did to me all I wanted was to keep my distance from him, to completely cut ties with him. But if he marries Iviwe then that won't happen. He's gonna be a part of my life forever. And honestly, just the thought of that is enough to make me wanna puke."

-Him: "I understand, I do. And that's exactly why I no longer want this guy to marry my sister. But if he **CHOOSES** to go ahead and do it then we can't stand in their way, we're just gonna have to find a way to deal with it. Besides, even if they don't get married Alex will always be a part of Iviwe's life and yours because of the baby

they are expecting."

-Me: "A baby that's gonna be my cousin. This is really messed up, yoh. Anyway, what is Nathi and his family going to say about all of this? The pregnancy, and the marriage if it happens."

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-Him: "I'm not worried about that, I can handle them. I'm gonna get them to back off whether Iviwe marries Alex or not."

-Me: "Handle them? Do I even want to know?"

-Him: "Actually, I'm just gonna talk to them, reason with them."

-Me: "And if they don't want to listen?"

-Him: "Then I'll make them listen."

-Me: "Do I want to know?"

He chuckles and shakes his head.

-Him: "With this one, no. Just like you don't need to know what happened to that guy Slice."

-Me: "What, you tracked him down?"

-Him: "I did what had to be done. And, baby, please never ever question my methods."

My father sure has a dark side, it is what I was seeing the very first day I met him, but I'm done judging him.

-Him: "Now let's change the subject and talk about you."

-Me: "About me?"

-Him: "Yeah. The fact that you're living with a man doesn't sit well with me. I know that I don't exactly have much say in how you live your life considering the fact that I wasn't in it for years, but I'm still your father. And as your father I need to tell you when you are doing something I

don't like, something that's ...inappropriate."

-Me: "I know. And I don't like cohabiting either, it's just that I was out of options when Alex had me kicked out of my flat. But it is a temporary arrangement, when I come back here in January I won't be living with Thando."

-Him: "That's better. Speaking of Thando, it's him that you were with at KFC, right?"

-Me: "Yes, that was him."

-Him: "I saw him but I didn't want to say anything to him until I get to officially meet him as the man in your life. I want to meet him and assess if he's good enough for my daughter."

-Me: "What? Come on, dad, you don't have to do that. I know that Thando is good for me. That should be enough."

-Him: "Actually, it's not enough for me. I still need to meet him and talk to him, baby."

-Me: "Fine then. I'm taking him to meet my mother in PE next weekend, so why don't you come too? I know that you're going back to Jo'burg in the morning and that you get busy that side but it'd really be good if you could come next Saturday. I'm gonna have to ask my mom if she's gonna be okay with that though."

-Him: "I'll sure make time and come. And trust me, Mandisa won't mind."

He says the last sentence with a smile that I interpret as that of someone in love.

-Me: "Dad, are you and mom together again?"

He chuckles.

-Him: "Baby, the answer to that question is still the same as the one you got the last time you asked. Your mother and I are NOT together. We're just two parents trying to be civil towards each other for our daughter's sake."

Honestly, I don't believe him. But I don't say that

out loud.

-Me: "Oh, okay. Guess I'll see you in PE then."

-Him: "Yah. Lemme get going now. 'Til next weekend, baby. I love you."

-Me: "I love you too, Dad."

We hug. Then before getting out of the car, I give him Thuso's iPad so he could get rid of it.

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A week later

It's now around 12:00 on Saturday, the day of Thuso's funeral. But instead of going to Mpumalanga to bury the bitch who wanted me dead I've chosen to do something better with my time. I'm now in PE, it's a meet-the-parents day for Doc. We pull up in front of my mother's house after driving for 3 hours from Alice, and I

can't help but notice how nice the house now looks. The renovations are done and the once gateless yard now has gates. Aww, my mom did great.

Doc, who's the picture of calm beside me, kills the engine then looks at me. I really expected him to be nervous but no, he's far from that.

-Me: "Are you ready, Thando lwam?"

-Him: "I am. Let's do this, babe."

-Me: "Why ain't you nervous though?"

-Him: "If I didn't know what I want and what to expect from your parents then I'd be nervous."

I don't know what he means by that but I think I like his confidence.

-Me: "Okay then, let's do this."

He gently brushes my cheek with the back of his hand and smiles.

-Him: "You needn't worry, babe. I have a feeling

everything's gonna go just fine."

I really hope so. The last thing I want is for my father to grill and embarrass him. But despite the apprehension, I manage a smile. However, it's brief because before I know it Doc has pressed a hard kiss to my mouth. He takes possession of my lips and I don't only let him but I also respond to the kiss. Pulling back, he doesn't say anything more, he opens the door and leaps out of the car then walks round to come get my door. He helps me out then we make our way to the small gate with his hand possessing my arm with undisguised ownership, and I let him. We walk into the yard and to the front door. I knock and wait for my mother to come get the door, something I don't normally do.

She opens the door already smiling, her face and eyes beaming.

-Her: "Hey, you two. Come on in."

She immediately steps to one side to allow us through the doorway.

-Me: "Hey, mom."

I say, going for a hug. But the hug is brief, she quickly pulls back and turns to Doc.

-Her: "Thando, it's good to see you again."

-Him: "Same here, Ma."

He stretches out a hand for a shake but my mom doesn't accept it, she goes for a hug instead.

-Her: "Welcome to our home, Thando. Now come take a seat."

She leads us to the couches then brings us something to drink. The atmosphere remains relaxed as we engage in nothing deep but just light conversation. My father is not here yet and we need to wait for him before we have lunch.

-Me: "When did he say he'll be here, Mom?"

I ask because we've been waiting for him for nearly an hour now.

-Mom: "He said by 12:30 he'd already be here but I'm sure that time has already passed...Please go get my phone in my bedroom, baby. I want to call him and ask if he's still coming."

I get up from the couch and make my way to her bedroom. Knowing exactly where she puts her phone in the bedroom, I go straight to the bedside table. But I don't just find the phone there, I also find my dad's wristwatch. I know very well that this expensive, distinct watch belongs to Sandile, he was wearing it the last time he was with me in Alice and it has his initials engraved on the back. Now the first question that comes to my mind is: why would my father's wristwatch be in my mom's bedroom? To me this only means one thing, they are seeing each other again. I just don't

understand why they keep lying to me. Initially, I know that I didn't like Sandile for my mom, but now that I got to know him I think he's okay. Yes, he was sleeping with my ex friend and he takes lives, but I get his reasons for doing all that. The man is not all bad as I thought he was.

I take the phone and walk back to the lounge. But before my mom can make the call we hear the car gate outside opening. I noticed that that gate is motorised, so now that it's opening that means my father has its remote. Now why would he have a gate remote to my mom's house? This is clear as day to me, these two are together. Period.

A few moments later, Sandile walks through the door. He looks every bit as handsome as he was the last time I saw him, moving with a lithe, cat-like grace to meet us in the couches. He's very casual today, in a black T-shirt, black jeans and white sneakers to add a splash of colour in

his otherwise dark outfit. I don't know, but his casual outfit gives me hope. If he's this casual then that means the lunch is casual too and he won't give Doc a hard time, I say to myself.

-Him: "Greetings, family."

He says with a smile as he puts his keys on the coffee table. We greet back then he comes to me and I get up to give him a hug. Doc also gets to his feet and they share a rather strong handshake that lasts longer than necessary.

-Him: "That's quite a strong grip you got there, Nozulu."

He's using Doc's clan name. I'm even surprised that he still remembers it, he asked it the first day he went to see me in Alice.

-Doc: "It's good to meet you, sir."

-Dad: "Well, it's too early for me to say the same about you. Don't be impressed. Just keep your head down and answer all my questions."

Kindness is not your friend until you prove to me that you're worthy of my daughter."

There's not even a hint of humour in his voice. Oh no, he's already starting. I find myself swallowing non-stop as the moment quickly starts to feel awkward. But my mom intervenes.

-Her: "Remember what we talked about, Sandile, please."

The words leave her mouth as softly as her manner. My mom really likes Doc and she wants him to feel at home, I can tell.

My father looks at her and lets out that same smile I noticed on his face when we were talking about my mother in Alice, a smile that comes from a place of undeniable love.

-Him: "Okay, you got it."

My mouth compresses in an effort to control my mirth, these two really think I'm stupid, they think I can't see what's going on between them.

-Me: "Mom, let's get moving and serve the lunch, I'm starving."

I say with my eyes on my father, they are mocking him and he knows why, I can tell by his lazily amused expression.

My mom and I go to the kitchen, leaving the men alone to talk. I just hope they will get along.

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Some moments later we get to sit at the perfectly set dining table. My dad sits at the head of the table where the head of the family is supposed to sit, I just wonder who said he was the head of this family, or maybe he got that from my mother. Doc and I sit on one side of the table and my mother sits on the other. Throughout the lunch, I efface myself and let both my parents speak mainly to Doc. They are

asking him a lot of questions, wanting to know more about him, and what I like is that even my dad is asking the questions in a very diplomatic manner.

After the delectable, passion fruit mousse dessert, they ask me to make myself scarce and go to the bedroom because they want to talk to Doc alone. What? What for? I want to put up some kind of protest when Doc gives me the "it's okay" kind of look.

-Me: "Okay, I'll go. But I won't be in my bedroom, I'll go meet up with Amanda. When I was in the kitchen she sent me a text saying she's around and asking to meet. When y'all need me just call."

I don't know what they want to talk about but I get up and walk out with just my phone. I'm meeting Amanda, the friend who now studies in Jo'burg, at a shisanyama not very far from my home. Just like me, Amanda's only back home

for the weekend.

I get to the shisanyama and find her sitting with Jackie, a friend of hers from the suburbs. When she sees me, she excitedly gets up from her seat to squeeze me in a tight hug.

-Her: "Wow, babe, you're glowing. Thando is treating you well I see."

-Me: "That is very much true, babe. I'm in a very good place in my life right now, I'm happy."

-Jackie: "Then sit down, girlfriend, and tell us everything about this wonderful man of yours."

I know Jackie very well, she's too forward and she loves hearing about other people's relationships but she would never share much about hers. Well, if she thinks she's gonna get anything out of me right now, she couldn't be any more wrong.

I just laugh then sit down at the table and start feasting on their braai'd meat. We all start

catching up on other aspects of each other's lives. But as we're still enjoying, a nuisance comes to our table to spoil all the fun.

-Him: "Hey, Soso. I didn't know you'd be here, I thought you were in Alice."

I raise my head to see him standing by our table, flashing the smile that I found so attractive the very first time I laid my eyes on him. Ugh! But now I no longer find it compelling, it just makes me sick.

-Me: "This is my hood, Alex. It can't be a surprise that I'm here."

With a calm voice, I tell him what he already knows.

-Him: "I hope you don't mind me being here too."

-Me: "This place is open to everyone, you too have a right to be here."

I recite the first diplomatic line that I can think

of.

-Him: "Can I talk to you in private?"

Then he quickly turns to Amanda before I can even answer.

-Him: "You ladies won't mind, right?"

Irrked, Amanda doesn't give him an answer, she only gives him a dirty stare. She never liked him from day one.

-Me: "Fine, we can go talk in private."

I rise from my chair and we go talk by his car that's parked on the side of the street.

Me: "Now please get to the point, Alex. What do you want to talk about?"

He lets a moment pass then exhales before speaking.

-Him: "I don't know how this is gonna sit with you, but I'm going to marry Iviwe."

Oh God, my worst fear is now confirmed. This guy is going to remain a thorn in my side. I'm never ever going to be rid of him.

-Me: "Oh. Well, if that's what you want then go ahead and do it. You didn't even need to tell me about it."

Deep down I know though that what I'm saying with my mouth is not what I'm feeling inside.

-Him: "I'm telling you because I know that the whole thing is going to be awkward considering the fact that Iviwe is your aunt."

Ugh, this guy. If he knows that it's going to be awkward then why is he doing it?

I don't respond to that, not even with a simple "oh".

-Him: "If I'm being honest though, I still love you, Soso. I do. But I know that we can never be together again, and on the other hand I know how difficult it is to not grow up with both

parents under one roof. It happened to me and my sister, as I told you my parents only got married when my sister and I were 10. Now I don't want my kid to go through the same thing I did. That's why I'm choosing to do this. It's the right thing to do."

-Me: "You don't owe me any explanation, Alex. Like I said, do whatever you want. It doesn't concern me really. Can I go now?"

I don't wait for his answer, I leave him standing there and walk back inside to my girls. No longer wanting to be here, I tell Amanda that I'm leaving, that I'll see her again tomorrow before we both leave PE. Despite her disappointment, she understands why I have to leave and she let's me go.

I get home only to find my dad sitting with Doc outside on the boot of his car. I'm surprised by how well they seem to be getting along. They are even laughing. Okay, I expected the worst

so what I'm seeing with my eyes right now is surprisingly good.

I don't say anything to them, I just walk inside to my mother. I ask her what they wanted to talk to Doc about but she simply lies to me, telling me that they just wanted to let him know of the consequences should he mistreat me. I know that's a lie but I accept it. I later accept it from Doc too. Before he leaves me and drives back to Alice around 18:00, he repeats the same line my mother gave me as if that's what they all agreed on telling me. I hate being kept in the dark, I really do, but I just let this go.

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Two weeks later

It's a Saturday once again but the only difference is that Doc and I are now in East

London. We're back in Beacon Bay, at Bhongo's home, for yet another party. But this time we're celebrating Doc's return to medicine, he got the job at Frere, the same hospital Zizo works at, and he's starting in 9 days. He's really excited and he's not the only one, I'm excited for him too. The guy needs his life back, he needs to go back to what he loves.

"You do know that you look hypnotised, right?"

Zizo's voice breaks my reverie. I realise that I've been standing alone like a statue under the back patio staring at Doc who's chatting with the guys by the swimming pool. Daydreaming about a long-term life with this fine guy is no sin, is it?

-Me: "Really?"

For some reason I'm now a little shy.

-Her: "You really are in love with him, hey."

-Me: "Is it that obvious?"

I ask, blushing.

-Her: "Is my name Zizo?"

We both laugh.

-Me: "Okay, point made...I really love him, Zizo. In a way I've never loved any other man."

-Her: "And I'd like to think he feels the same way about you too...You know back when we were still in med school, the guy would walk into a room and not only charm the panties off all of women in there but also make some guys think twice about their nonexistent gym memberships. He's grown now but he's still handsome and charming as fuck. So I understand why you're head over heels in love with him."

-Me: "I still can't believe he's mine, you know. Is that weird?"

She laughs.

-Her: "Maybe a little. Tell me, would you say yes if he were to ask you to marry him?"

I chuckle.

-Me: "Marriage, Zizo? No, I don't think Thando is ready to go there again."

-Her: "You haven't answered my question."

-Me: "I know and I won't answer it."

-Her: "Okay then, I'll let it go. But tell me, are you ready for your trip tomorrow?"

-Me: "Oh hell yeah. It's my first trip out of Africa, so I can't wait."

I'm really excited. I'm done with my exams and Doc and I are leaving for the Bahamas tomorrow. We'll be there for 4 days then come back just in time for him to move into his new rental townhouse here in EL, in Amalinda. He wanted an apartment but we couldn't find a clean, nice apartment so he ended up taking the

townhouse.

I'm so excited about this getaway, my passport will get stamped only for the second time since I had it. The first time I used it was when I'd just had it, during my matric year when we had a school trip to Kenya. It's no secret that people like me can't afford to travel, we only get to travel when the expenses are covered by other people.

-Zizo: "I envy you, babe. Seriously. Make sure you enjoy every minute of it, hey."

-Me: "I plan to. But right now let's join the party. Let's join the other girls."

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We land at Nassau International Airport in the Bahamas on Tuesday around 15:00. It has been

a very long flight, with two boring layovers, but it was worth it because now we've finally arrived in paradise. The New Providence Island is out of this world, I say to myself as I let my eye take in everything out of the window of the metered taxi from the airport to the hotel we'll be staying in.

My stomach does a flip and my breathing gets suspended as we reach our destination - a resort called the Meliá Nassau Beach All Inclusive. Doc didn't tell me that we'd be staying in a beautiful place like this. I'm literally out of breath as we step into the magnificent, extremely spacious lobby of this upscale, beachfront resort. Jesus, this is heaven. Now I realise that Doc's father has spent some serious money on this vacation, he didn't hold back. And I now feel extremely special, more than I felt when Doc took me to meet his family before we took our flight out of OR Tambo

Airport on Sunday. His family is very nice, I got to meet his little sister and both his parents. But honestly, the nicest one has got to be his father. Before we left, he held out his arms and gave me a full bear hug. I felt his admiration, also his warmth and caring.

We check in then take the elevator to our suite, and the porter follows with our luggage. Oh my, the suite is so beautiful, it's island-inspired and it has a spectacular view of the beautiful turquoise blue ocean water.

Because we are exhausted, we immediately shed our clothes and go take a long cool shower together. Then we order room service. Green salad and ice-cream seems innocuous enough to me. And we dig in as soon as our food gets delivered. After the meal I go out onto the balcony. The suite is overlooking the resort's grounds, 3 inviting freshwater swimming pools and the ocean. I rest my

elbows on the rail and breathe deeply, trying to inhale the memory into my lungs. The air is exotic, velvety-soft and scented with a dozen unfamiliar fragrances. As someone who's never been to any holiday before, this is more than a dreamy escape to me. I really can't believe I'm here.

As I'm still enjoying the view, I feel Doc's arms snake around my waist as he hugs me from behind.

-Me: "Baby, this is more than just beautiful. Thank you for bringing me here. Look at this view, it's amazing."

-Him: "No. You're amazing."

He turns me around and kisses me on the lips with so much passion. Damn, he's pouring his entire soul into this kiss and I can feel it. He scoops me up and walks back inside with me in his strong arms. He gently puts me on the bed

and continues to kiss me. Soon we are both naked, and we embrace, arms searching each other's naked bodies. There's a knock at the door but we both ignore it, focusing instead on each other's naked bodies and the intense love between us. We make slow, passionate love and we finally reach the finish line at the same time. Then we lie entwined, lovers whose last drop of passion has been spent on another.

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I must have been really exhausted, jetlagged, because I passed out almost immediately and I only wake up the next day when the morning sun is streaming in through the balcony doors, with the drapes open. I also notice that I'm in an empty bed. Doc is not next to me, but he's left a note: "Couldn't wake you. Out. Be back around

12:00. Order yourself room service. Love you. Tee."

If this was a romantic movie, the note would probably be left with a single red rose but now it is just pinned to the orchid we found on the bedside table. But at least he left it.

I don't even bother myself by wondering where he went, he knows this island, he's been here before. Checking the time, I realise that it is just after 08:00 and I make my way to the bathroom to take a shower. After I'm done with my morning routine I put on white, cotton skimpy shorts, a matching white loose top and white flip flops.

As I'm still waiting for room service, I go out to the balcony again. Mmh the pools look very inviting from up here and watching holiday-makers splashing around in them I just can't hold myself, I leave the suite and make my way down there before I could even eat the

breakfast. I'm not particularly hungry anyway. I don't even put on a swim suit because I know I am not going to have a dip in the water yet, I just want to feel the vibe sitting on the lounge chair.

As he promised, Doc gets back just after 12:00 and finds me by the pool. Taking my hand, he asks me to come have lunch with him at one of this resort's fancy restaurants, a restaurant called O'Grille. Do I like it? No, that would be an understatement, I love it. It features a casual ambiance seamlessly mingling the ocean and beach with dining and entertainment. It's got a breathtaking beachfront location, open air with fabulous views of the sea and the pool.

After our lunch we enjoy a lazy walk along the beach. Then he tells me we are now going to Paradise Island, an island which he explains as located directly off of the New Providence Island that we are now on. When I ask what

we'll be doing there, he just tells me that he has a surprise for me.

-Me: "What kind of surprise, babe? Please tell me. I know it won't be a surprise anymore but please tell me."

He tells me he bought me a swimming with the dolphins excursion in Atlantis at Dolphin Cay. What? I begin to tear up. I'm tearing up because I told him when we'd just met that I would love to swim with the dolphins some day, and now it means so much to me for him to have remembered that and surprise me with it.

We get to Atlantis - a lush, dynamic oceanside resort on Paradise Island. It is a beautiful and unique resort featuring the world's largest open-air marine habitat. But all we're here for is to interact with the dolphins at Dolphin Cay.

As I'm still playing with one of the dolphins, focusing on nothing else, our trainer has me

throw the dolphin a tube to fetch. When it brings me the tube back, our trainer has me open it. Inside the tube I find a banner that says, "Atlantis Dolphin Cay". Okay, what's so special about this? I mean, I know exactly where I am. I look at the trainer confused and that's when she tells me to turn the banner over. On the other side I find the words, "Will You Marry Me?" What? I'm now shocked and emotional. So this was the ultimate surprise, not the trip itself. Doc has been planning and concocting the most romantic proposal ever. The plans of love he was talking about was this, an engagement. I instantly become an emotional mess as the song "Marry Me" starts playing over the speaker and the hundreds of people surrounding us immediately begin cheering and clapping. When I turn around, Doc is back on the beach behind us kneeling on one knee with an arrangement around him. I feel like I'm in a dream. I don't know what to say. I make my way to the beach,

to him, with both shock and happiness written all over my face. I really didn't expect this, I'm in complete shock. But I'm now realising why Zizo was asking me that question on Saturday.

I come to stand before Doc as he's smiling nervously.

-Him: "Someleze, I know that I can't really match your direct style, but I want you. All the time. Everyday. I want you in my life forever. That for a man like me is like saying you came into my life and you rotated my world a few degrees. The gravitational forces are askew and the axis is unbalanced with people falling off. I feel like we are Siamese twins separated at birth."

He stops and chuckles nervously before continuing again.

-Him: "In all seriousness, Someleze. It's like you were made for me. In fact, my heart is telling me that you were made for me. I love you,

Someleze, with all of my heart and I want to continue to love you as my wife. Will you give me the honour and the joy of being your husband?"

I still don't know how to respond, I'm emotional.

-Me: "Thando."

His name comes out of my mouth more like a purr.

-Him: "The lobola back home is ready, baby. Both our parents know about my intentions to marry you. I stole your mother's phone number from your phone and I called her and told her about my intentions, that's why she asked to see me two weeks ago. That's what she and your father wanted to talk to me about when they asked you to excuse yourself that day. Please say yes, sthandwa sam. Just say yes and I promise to give you eternal love."

This is really sweet, overwhelming, exciting, and

shocking but it is also... so sudden. We haven't even hit the 3 month mark as a couple, but he's already proposing? I really don't know how I feel about this. Yes, I know that our relationship has survived several challenges in just a short space of time, but are we ready to take this big step?